

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Gainsborough, on Thursday 3 March 2016, at 7pm.

Present: Councillor Angela Lawrence (Chairman)
Councillor Roger Patterson (Vice Chairman)

Councillor Gillian Bardsley	Councillor Giles McNeill
Councillor Sheila Bibb	Councillor John McNeill
Councillor Owen Bierley	Councillor Pat Mewis
Councillor Matthew Boles	Councillor Jessie Milne
Councillor David Bond	Councillor Richard Oaks
Councillor Alexander Bridgwood	Councillor Malcolm Parish
Councillor Jackie Brockway	Councillor Judy Rainsforth
Councillor David Cotton	Councillor Di Rodgers
Councillor Stuart Curtis	Councillor Thomas Smith
Councillor Chris Darcel	Councillor Lewis Strange
Councillor Michael Devine	Councillor Jeff Summers
Councillor Steve England	Councillor Anne Welburn
Councillor Ian Fleetwood	Councillor Angela White
Councillor Paul Howitt - Cowan	Councillor Trevor Young
Councillor Stuart Kinch	

In Attendance:

Ian Knowles	Director of Resources
Penny Sharp	Commercial Director
Alan Robinson	Strategic Lead for Democratic and Business Support and Monitoring Officer
Tracey Bircumshaw	Financial Services Manager
James O'Shaughnessy	Team Manager, Business Improvement and Corporate Governance
Luke Brown	Neighbourhood Planning Officer
Dinah Lilley	Governance and Civic Officer

Also in Attendance representatives from Caistor Town Council
representatives from Nettleham Parish Council

Also Present three members of the public

78 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Adam Duguid
Councillor Hugo Marfleet
Councillor Tom Regis
Councillor Lesley Rollings
Councillor Reg Shore
Manjeet Gill - Chief Executive
Mark Sturgess – Chief Operating Officer

79 COUNCIL MINUTES (PAPER A)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 25 January 2016 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

80 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

81 MATTERS ARISING (PAPER B)

It was noted that all items were showing as black as having been completed.

RESOLVED that the Matters Arising be noted.

82 ANNOUNCEMENTS

i) Chairman of the Council

The Chairman noted that the last few weeks had been fairly quiet in terms of civic events, however she had been pleased to go to Doncaster to accept an USHAKOV, North Atlantic Convoy medal on behalf of a serviceman who had not been able to be present. A first birthday party for Tennyson Wharf Care Home had taken place and a model railway exhibition had also been attended. Two funerals had also taken place and been attended by the Chairman.

ii) Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council noted that he had attended as many as 32 Council meetings since the last meeting of Council, whilst all important, the main thrust had been around Devolution, on which a further update would be given later in the meeting by the Commercial Director.

Regarding the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, good progress had been made for the people of West Lindsey, and in particular regarding gypsy and traveller sites. The Leader encouraged all Members to get involved and promote the Plan.

The Council was becoming more closely involved in the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership, supported by the Commercial and Forward Planning Team, and another submission of growth aspirations for West Lindsey had been made.

A briefing had recently been held for Members regarding the plans for future infrastructure improvement for Gainsborough. The proposals for the future, were presented by Mouchel for the County highways department. The other alternative would be for a second bridge. Using the proposed route would deny the opportunity

to develop a significant site on the riverside and direct all west bound traffic using Thorndyke way, along Ashcroft Road which was felt to be unacceptable.

Councillor Darcel stated that much damage had been done to communities due to the three year delay in the production of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, however Councillor Cotton, as the longest serving Member on the Joint Planning Committee asserted that it was never intended to publish the Plan before September 2016.

iii) Head of Paid Service

The Monitoring Officer read out a message received from the Chief Executive, thanking everybody for their kind words and comforting messages from so many people, and that she valued the friendship and support given.

The intention was to return to work on 7 March and pick up the momentum of the Devolution agenda, which would be involving regular meetings with Ministers to prepare the details behind the negotiations. This would remain as the top priority along with starting preparations for next year's budget following approval of the Medium Term Financial Plan setting the budget for 2016.

83 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from the public.

84 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 9

Question from Cllr Smith

Fellow Members, on the 9th of February Grant Shapps, the former Housing Minister, the former Chief of the Defence staff, Lord Richards and others launched Homes for Heroes Foundation a national initiative to ensure those who have fought so bravely for this country are not disadvantaged when they leave the armed forces in getting a home. Can I ask the Leader of the Council to ensure we as a local authority are doing all we can for the brave men and women of our armed forces under the armed forces covenant as well as any other relevant legislation, and that any alterations in legislation that may come from the full review of the armed forces covenant we will not only implement them in a timely manner but we will do all we can and more to fulfil our duty both legislatively as well as morally to our brave members of the armed forces.

Response from the Leader of the Council

“We absolutely recognise the importance of ensuring that people leaving the armed forces are not disadvantaged through having limited local connections to local areas and will work closely with all applicants to explore suitable housing options. This is reflected in the Council's housing allocations policy

(Lincs Homefinder) which includes those leaving the armed forces in housing need in its 'reasonable preference' category. Applicants with a formal discharge notice are automatically placed into band 2 on the housing register however if applicants have additional needs, this may increase their banding to band 1 (please note, band 1 reflects immediate and urgent housing need). The housing register application form is currently being revised to add a specific question to enable us to capture information and respond appropriately and promptly to those leaving the armed forces.

We have a good understanding of the armed forces covenant and have engaged with countywide events and partnership work in relation to this. I can confirm that any alterations in legislation that may come from the full review of the armed forces covenant will be implemented in a timely manner and that we will of course, fulfil our duties and work proactively to respond to the needs of applicants leaving the armed forces.

The Leader also noted that the Welton Neighbourhood Plan included a Statement of Intent which stated "Any proposals coming forward that would provide, on any allocated site, family homes suitably equipped for disabled members and former members of H.M. Armed Forces, injured in the service of the country, will be welcomed and strongly supported."

Question from Cllr Bridgwood

Could the Leader provide any details regarding the purpose of the visit by the Rt. Hon. Priti Patel MP, Her Majesty's Minister of State for Employment, to West Lindsey District Council's Guildhall tomorrow?

Response from the Leader of the Council

"I am pleased to confirm that the Chairman, Cllr Mrs Lawrence, will be welcoming the Minister tomorrow and escorting her to the Guildhall, where I shall greet her with our Chief Executive. The Minister is visiting us to see the Public Sector Hub on the ground floor. It is an opportunity for her to see first-hand the way in which the Department of Work and Pensions and voluntary sector are working together with the Council to get people into work.

The Minister will meet representatives of the Job Centre Plus team, Citizens Advice Bureau, Voluntary Centre Services together with the Council's Customer Service Manager and the Volunteer and Employability Lead officer.

West Lindsey District Council is one of the first councils in the country to set up a hub like this, offering a range of services at one location, and it is saving the public money."

85 MOTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10

None received

86 CAISTOR AND NETTLEHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS (PAPER C)

The Neighbourhood Planning Officer introduced representatives from Nettleham Parish Council and Caistor Town Council who had attended the meeting to hand over copies of their Neighbourhood Plans for adoption by the Council.

The Neighbourhood Planning Officer then described the process that had been undertaken leading to the production of the Plans. Caistor and Nettleham were front runners in the District and had been through independent examination to ensure compliance with legislation and then subsequently to public referendum to seek over 50% support for the document, which was achieved in both cases.

The two Neighbourhood Plans were therefore presented for the Council to approve for adoption, and would subsequently carry significant weight in the determination of planning applications. Members of the Council commended the achievement of the two communities and noted that other Plans were in the process of production and would be submitted for approval in due course.

RESOLVED: that Council formally 'make' (adopt) both Caistor and Nettleham Neighbourhood Plans in accordance with the requirements on the relevant local authority as set out in the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations 2012 (amended).

87 CORPORATE PLAN 2016-20 (PAPER D)

The Director of Resources introduced the Corporate Plan setting out the headlines for noting. The Plan had been developed through Member workshops, which had identified six key themes. The headlines provided continuity between the document and the previous Plan.

The Plan included highlights of the Council's achievements during the lifetime of the previous document and the successes covered a range of services and work areas. The themes generated from the workshops provided clear priorities for the next four years and confirmed a commitment to customer service and an entrepreneurial approach, along with a clear emphasis on collaboration through the Local Plan and Devolution themes.

The Achievements and Themes were set out in a powerpoint presentation.

Achievements

- Localism
- Leisure and Wellbeing
- Public Services Hub
- Property and Assets
- Revenue Collection
- Regeneration and Economic Development
- Value For Money Services

Themes

- Open For Business
- People First
- Asset Management
- Central Lincolnshire Local Plan
- Partnerships/Devolution
- Excellent, Value For Money Services

It was proposed to publish monitoring papers over each of the next four years. The development of projects and services would be achieved through the Programme Board structure and the annual delivery would be captured in the business plans and MTFP.

Members welcomed the content of the Plan and congratulated officers on a superb document, however noted that it would be useful to have a summary document for wider circulation. The Director of Resources agreed that summary documents would be compiled and provided.

Thanks were expressed to Team Manager, Business Improvement and Corporate Governance for his contribution to the Plan.

RESOLVED that the Corporate Plan 2016-20 be approved.

88 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN – INCLUDING BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2016-17 (PAPER E)

The Director of Resources presented the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for Members' approval, and thanked the Head of Financial Services and her team of officers for their input. The Plan provided Members with the necessary information to determine the budget and set the level of Council Tax for 2016/17.

Highlights from the report were set out in a presentation. Savings achieved over the last four years had reduced expenditure by £3.8m and held Council Tax for three of the four years. Proposals to save a further £1.2m were set out and indicated how the remaining funding gap would be covered.

Current assumptions in the MTFP included:

- Employee pay award 1% per annum;
- Council Tax increase at £4.95 per annum (which equated to a 2.59% increase, 10p per week for a band D property);
- Commercial property investments achieves a 3% surplus;
- Trading business cases are achieved;
- Borrowing £39.1m over the planning period;
- Capital Programme in excess of £60.1m, a mix of commercial, growth and service improvement projects.

The current budget position was set out in that there was a balance for 2016/17 with some support from reserves which it was anticipated would be covered by in year

savings, and proposals to balance future years would be brought forward during the year.

It was anticipated that whilst ambitions had been identified, the capital programme should still have a reasonable level of earmarked reserves by the end of the planning period.

Attention was drawn to paragraph 2.5 of the report which set out the Chief Finance Officer Statement on the Robustness of Estimates, the Adequacy of Reserves and the affordability of capital investments.

A number of potential risks were described, and the impact of fluctuating interest rates were questioned, along with the uncertainty in Europe and previously experienced investment failures.

The Director of Resources responded that a balanced approach was being taken to the Capital Programme and whilst reserves would be used to finance projects with no anticipated return, prudence would be exercised with investments, with the interests of residents paramount.

The Leader of the Council stated that he was delighted with the report, the Plan was ambitious to support the Corporate Plan and enable a commercial approach to the future. There was a necessary step change to conduct business differently. The MTFP was proposed for approval.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition acknowledged that any group in control of the Council would be facing difficulties. The matter of charging for green waste collection was raised, as West Lindsey was the only Lincolnshire authority not charging for this service. Staff were acknowledged as the authority's biggest asset and it was important that a proper pay policy was included.

Councillor Giles McNeill noted that section 3 of the MTFP indicated a possible underspend in 2015/16 of £600k, and proposed that an additional recommendation be included to ask that the Director of Resources brings forward proposals to fund the Councillor Initiative Fund and 'Clean for the Queen' from the expected underspend in a way that does not cause additional pressure on the Council's Revenue Budget.

The proposed amendment was seconded, voted upon and agreed.

RESOLVED that the amendment proposed by Councillor McNeill be added to the Recommendations.

Members commended the report and its approval was seconded, however Councillor Smith noted that he would be voting against it due to the proposals to impose charging for parking in Market Rasen which, it was felt would harm local businesses. The Vice Chairman noted however that parking in West Lindsey represented good value for money and that free parking inevitably meant a lack of available spaces.

In line with required legislation for the Council's budget report, a recorded vote was taken.

For: Councillors Bardsley, Bibb, Bierley, Boles, Bond, Bridgwood, Brockway, Curtis, Darcel, Devine, England, Fleetwood, Howitt-Cowan, Kinch, Lawrence, G McNeill, J McNeill, Mewis, Milne, Oaks, Parish, Patterson, Rainsforth, Rodgers, Strange, Summers, Welburn and White.

Against: Councillors Cotton, Smith and Young.

Abstained: None

A total of 23 votes for, three against and no abstentions.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the external environment and the severity of the financial challenges being faced as detailed in the Financial Strategy be recognised;
- b) the Statement of the Chief Finance Officer on the Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves be accepted;
- c) the Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17 to 2020/21 be approved;
- d) a Mid-Year Review of the Medium Term Financial Plan be received during 2016/17;
- e) the Revenue Budget (Appendix A) be set;
- f) the Fees and Charges Policy and set the Fees and Charges 2016/17 (Appendices B and C) be approved;
- g) the Capital Investment Strategy (Appendix D) be adopted;
- h) the Capital Programme 2016/17 to 2020/21 and Financing (Appendix E) be approved;
- i) the Treasury Management Strategy 2016/17 be approved and the Treasury Investment Strategy, the detailed Counter Party criteria, the Treasury and Borrowing Prudential Indicators (Appendix F) be adopted;
- j) the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy as contained in the Treasury Management Strategy (Appendix F) be approved;
- k) the Council Tax (Appendices G-K) be approved;
- l) the 2016/17 Pay Policy Statement (Appendix L) be approved; and
- m) that the Director of Resources bring forward proposals to fund the Councillor Initiative Fund and 'Clean for the Queen' from the expected underspend in a way that does not cause additional pressure on the Council's Revenue Budget.

89 COMMERCIAL PLAN - ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN 2016/17 (PAPER F)

The Director of Resources noted that Council had adopted a Commercial Plan in March 2015. The Commercial Plan was intended to support the Council's ambition to become self-financing by 2020. The plan set out a framework to help guide the Council's cost recovery and income generation activities from 2015-2020.

The Commercial Plan focused on four themes:

- Increasing income from Council services through trading and charging
- 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.

Highlights of the Council's progress with implementing the Commercial Plan so far were listed in the table at paragraph 2.4 of the report, and the success measures under each of the four theme headings were listed in paragraph 6.

RESOLVED that the annual Commercial Delivery Plan 2016/17 be approved.

90 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS PUBLISHED SINCE THE COUNCIL MEETING ON 25 JANUARY 2016.

RESOLVED that the minutes of Committee meetings published since the Council meeting on 25 January 2016 be received.

91 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.

92 VERBAL UPDATE ON DEVOLUTION

The Commercial Director informed Members of the current status of the Devolution programme. Much work and effort had been undertaken to date and this had recently intensified. Work was still required on further details, along with the implications for governance arrangements. It was anticipated that a decision could be imminent.

The meeting concluded at 8.11pm.

Chairman