

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Challenge and Improve Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA on 28 June 2016 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan (Chairman)
Councillor Lewis Strange (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Trevor Young (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Lesley Rollings
Councillor Mrs Angela White
Councillor Stuart Kinch
Councillor Mrs Pat Mewis
Councillor David Bond

In Attendance:

James O'Shaughnessy	Interim Strategic Lead – Transformation
Amanda Boutell	Employment and Skills Officer
Michelle Howard	Team Manager – Home Options
Darren Mellors	Team Manager – Business Improvement
Katie Coughlan	Governance and Civic Officer

Apologies:

Councillor Stuart Curtis

Membership: No substitutes were appointed

Also In Attendance : Mr Steve Walker, Lincolnshire Careers Service

15 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the meeting and introduced, Mr Steve Walker to the Committee.

16 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING.

- (a) Meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 23 May 2016 (CAI.08 16/17)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 23 May 2016 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

17 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Lesley Rollings declared a personal interest in report CAI.07 16/17 (Consideration of Scrutiny of Public Bodies – Issue of Youth Employment in West Lindsey) as she was employed by The Gainsborough Academy and through her employment worked closely with West Lindsey's Employment and Skills Officer.

18 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

The Committee gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule, setting out the current position of previously agreed actions, as at 20 June 2016.

It was reported that all actions, with the exception of two longer-term items, within the report were marked as completed since the previous meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED that the Matters Arising Schedule as at 20 June 2016 be received and noted.

19 SCRUTINY OF PUBLIC BODY - CAREERS SERVICE

The Committee had the opportunity to scrutinise the work of the Careers Guidance Service, Mr Steve Walker was in attendance to answer the Committee's previously prepared questions, by way of presentation and a period of supplementary questioning.

The questions which had been posed were as follows: -

- How "effective" are schools and Colleges at carrying out their statutory duty for Careers Guidance in terms of quality and impact as outlined by the Education Act 2011?
- What Careers Advice and Guidance will the local authority be delivering from September and what support will young people be able to access?
- More specifically, how will young people access Careers advice once they have left mainstream education and how will they be supported into training or employment?
- How might the District Council in West Lindsey ensure that young people are getting access to independent and impartial careers advice?
- NEETs. Where does the responsibility fall for monitoring NEETS as this was traditionally measured and collated by Connexions?

The Chairman welcomed Mr Walker to the meeting and invited him to make his presentation to Members.

In opening Members were provided with context of the issue, what the current youth unemployment figures were for the District, how this compared to the rest of the County, the region and nationally and what were considered to be the key issues currently facing the service provided.

The Local Picture was as follows, with Average levels of unemployment during September 2015 to May 2016 being recorded as below: -

	Y12	Y13
West Lindsey	1.1%	2.2%
Lincolnshire	1.4%	2.7%
East Midlands	2.0%	3.8%
England	2.0%	4.0%

In numbers terms for West Lindsey, this equated as follows: -

Month	NEET	
	Y12	Y13
September	19	37
October	3	17
November	11	20
December	15	23
January	16	25
February	14	23
March	11	22
April	11	23
May	12	20

The Committee noted that as the numbers were relatively low, and as such there was no critical mass, this made accessing funding schemes particularly difficult. Other local issues which needed to be overcome included

- The Wide geographical area throughout which this element of the community were spread, again affecting the critical mass required to access a number of funding streams.
- Accessing support – reduced public funding over recent years had seen a number of programmes previously on offer disappear.
- Lack of Apprenticeships/Traineeships – having run a search of this type of vacancy within a 15 mile radius of Gainsborough there were currently only 89 vacancies; 82 intermediate level and 7 advanced level, there were no Apprenticeships/Traineeships at a degree level currently on offer in Gainsborough. West Lindsey currently had 7366 persons eligible for work based learning under 20, of these currently 248 (3.7%) were in work based learning jobs, 22 were classed as other and only 2 were undertaking traineeships. The large majority of 16-19 year olds were still choosing to remain in full time education / college
- History of worklessness- unfortunately this was a reported inhibitor in a number of Gainsborough households and meant aspirations could often be low.

Moving on to the effectiveness of schools and colleges in providing career guidance, the Committee noted that statutory guidance for governing bodies, school leaders and school staff had been issued in March 2015 entitled “Careers guidance and inspiration in schools”. This document set out the guidelines within which all schools were currently expected to work. The Statutory duty, had since 2012 lay with schools (previously a function of the local authority) and they were free to determine

- How they meet the duties laid out in the statutory guidance
- What services they provided; and
- Which students could access the services

The effectiveness of the guidance they offered was currently assessed by Governors, Ofsted and School Destination Measures.

With regard to the latter, data from 2013/14 was shared with the Committee to demonstrate this. It was acknowledged that this was a blunt tool and made no allowance for differing circumstances, for example a particularly difficult cohort.

However it was noted that new Statutory guidance was awaited and the Gatesby Foundation report entitled “Good Careers” was likely to form the basis for this. It was also hoped that this would address the issues currently being reported, such as certain trainers not being permitted within schools. Furthermore Colleges and WBL providers would likely have the means to report schools not engaging with them under new guidance

The Governance and Civic Officer undertook to source and provide Members with a copy of the Gatesby Foundation report.

It was noted that the Lincolnshire County Council careers guidance service would cease in September 2016, after this time support would be offered by the National Careers Service, with currently two posts planned for the East Midlands. Work Coaches, through the Job Centre, would also be made available for schools to access.

Moving onto Local Authority Support and monitoring of NEETs, Members noted this was a statutory function of the local authority and statutory guidance had been issued in September 2014. From July 2016, in preparation for the demise of the service the County Council would have the following measures in place: -

- Tracking Team
- Revamped website for information and advice
- Individualised support for those with additional factors
- Support to those claiming JSA

Affected persons would be able to access other support through a wide range of sources including: -

- National Careers Service:-
 - Website
 - On-line chat facility
 - Telephone help line

- Wide range of websites
- Foundation Study Programme Providers
- Traineeship Providers
- ESF/Lottery Projects

In conclusion, Mr Walker outlined the ways in which he considered an authority like West Lindsey, with no statutory responsibilities, may be able to assist, including:

- Investigating Lincoln CC model of a hub for unemployed
- Obtaining data from LCC – initiate contact
- Link with other advice organisations/projects
- Champion the need for schools to deliver quality careers support
- Promote Apprenticeships and Traineeships

Discussion ensued and Members were in agreement that they needed to be able to access the data of affected persons but this had proved difficult due to data protection and the absence of data sharing agreements.

Members also expressed concern that so much of a schools ability was assessed purely around its exam results, that there are schools who are putting all their focus into this and not preparing young people for leaving school and the working world.

In response to Members questions, Mr Walker and the Employment and Skills Officer outlined to Members what a traineeship was. It was noted that these usually lasted around 6 months and had no pay attached; this made them not that inviting to young people. They often attracted the hard to reach groups, however this in turn brought about issues of commitment, making them also not that attractive for employers.

The Chairman thanked Mr Walker for his informative presentation and wished him well for the future.

20 C&I OPERATING METHODOLOGY 16/17

Members gave consideration to a report which aimed to outline the role of the Committee with regard to undertaking reviews; outlined the important considerations with regard to scrutiny and conduct; and provided criteria for reviews and draft related processes.

It was noted that the methodology within the report was primarily the same as that which has been operated over the last two municipal years but had two proposed changes:

- It provided for the exclusion of re-discussion of an issue within six months of first consideration. This reflected the approach taken by Policy Committees in the Constitution.
- It provided for Oversight Commissions to be undertaken to support the Policy Committees (section 5 of the report related)

The report also had included within it, for clarity, an additional workflow diagram which reflected the approach to pre-decision scrutiny (by selection from the forward plan).

Members welcomed the document and working examples provided.

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) the proposed Methodology as outlined at sections 3, 4 and 5 of report CAI.10 16/17 be approved;
- (b) the proposed processes outlined at Appendix 1 of report CAI.10 16/17 be approved; and
- (c) the accompanying flow charts, outlined at Appendix 3 be noted.

21 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY - SERVICES - FINAL PERIOD

Members gave consideration to the final Progress and Delivery report for 2015/16 year, 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.

The report also updated Members on those areas which had been highlighted in the third quarter report, these being: -

- Complaints Received
- Gainsborough Markets
- Local Land Charges
- Development Management
- Enforcement

and further updates were given on each.

Further “over performing” measures, not already mentioned were highlighted to the Committee and included the Assets and Facilities Management Function for their work on void properties and customer satisfaction levels, the Council Tax Team for their collection rates and the Trinity Arts Centre for its reduced operating costs.

Whilst the report was primarily an exceptions one, Members were provided with a flavour of activity currently ongoing in those areas which were on target or delivery as anticipated including information on: -

- The Home Choices Team, in particular with regard to Choice Based Lettings
- The HR Team, in particular with regard to the work of the staff engagement group and the lowest sickness absence figures recorded since data collection commenced in 2009.

It was noted that the report had previously been considered by both the Prosperous Communities Committee and the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee and Members

were provided with the minute arising from each.

The Challenge and Improvement Committee congratulated Officers on the performance of the Trinity Arts Centre.

RESOLVED that having examined the responses given to the report by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee and the Prosperous Communities Committee, assurance was received that the appropriate level of challenge was being made by those Committees to the information contained within the report.

22 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY - PROJECTS - FINAL

Members gave consideration to the final Progress and Delivery report for 2015/16 year, which dealt with the projects.

Members were reminded that the Progress and Delivery reports were by exception only, either above or below target, and only reported on those projects currently in delivery stage which were regularly monitored.

The report contained an update on one item contained in the previous report; this Gainsborough South West Ward Programme, previously reported as amber status, now reported as green with supporting commentary.

The following projects were reported as being an Amber Rating during this period: -

- Hemswell Cliff MasterPlan
- Fraud Investigation Services

and further reasoning for such was offered to the Committee. It was anticipated that both projects would be back on track when the next report was due for consideration.

It was noted that the report had previously been considered by both the Prosperous Communities Committee and the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee and Members were provided with the minute arising from each.

With regard to the South West Ward Project, a member enquired as to what, if any, plans there were for the Sandsfield Lane Playing field. The ward was crying out for open green space and this was a prime location, not being made use of and was considered a wasted opportunity by some Members.

In the absence of Key Officers associated with this project, the Interim Strategic Lead for Transformation, undertook to raise this with the Tactical Group

RESOLVED that having examined the responses given to the report by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee and the Prosperous Communities Committee, assurance was received that the appropriate level of challenge was being made by those Committees to the information contained within the report.

23 FORWARD PLAN

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.

Having perused the list of scheduled the reports, the Vice-Chairman, made reference to Quickline, and in particular the difficulty some residents were finding themselves in, as a result of the decision made by BDUK to exclude West Lindsey from its rollout plan. Some areas across the District had no or very limited broadband connection and the Vice-Chairman expressed concern at the position residents found themselves in. Businesses could not compete and grow without reliable broadband.

The Interim Strategic Lead for Transformation, outlined to the Committee the negotiations and communications the Authority had had with BDUK at the highest level. The Director of Resources would be preparing a position paper regarding this matter for likely submission to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee in Autumn 2016, in a bid to dispel some of the misunderstanding.

The Committee considered it would be a worthwhile exercise to write to all residents to understand what their current broadband connection was like. It was accepted that such an exercise could be costly, however further suggestions, such as making use of the Citizen's Panel or Operational Services staff to distribute literature were offered.

The interim Strategic Lead, again offered reassurance that negotiations had been had at the highest level. Broadband connectivity was a national issue.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted

24 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

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

RESOLVED that the Work Plan be noted.

25 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 items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

26 PREPARATION FOR SCRUTINY OF PUBLIC BODY – BRIEFING PAPER IN ADVANCE OF THE 2ND PUBLIC BODY BEING INVITED REGARDING THE ONGOING THEME OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT – SCHOOLS

Members were presented with a briefing paper for consideration, which set out a list of proposed schools to be invited to attend the October meeting, together with a proposed set of questions, derived from comments previously expressed by Committee, to be put to the schools.

The report suggested that a total of five schools from across the District be invited to respond to the same series of pre-determined questions. It was intended to invite five initially with the prospect that there may be a degree of unavailability.

The schools proposed were considered to represent a good geographical spread across the District and carried a range of current school inspection ratings, ranging from inadequate to outstanding.

In response to Members questions, Officers confirmed that it was intended all schools invited would be asked to attend on the same evening. It was Members discretion, as to how many they wished to invite, however the meeting would need to be manageable.

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) All of the schools listed at Section 2.2 of the report, namely: -
- Cherry Willingham Community School
 - De-Aston School, Market Rasen
 - Caistor Grammar School
 - The Gainsborough Academy
 - Queen Elizabeth's High School, Gainsborough
- be invited to attend at the October meeting; and
- (b) the series of questions, as presented, and as detailed in paragraph 3.1 of report CAI.16 16/17, form the basis of the presentations the invited schools are asked to prepare.

15 BRIEFING PAPER ON CURRENT CRIME ISSUES IN ADVANCE OF ATTENDANCE BY SIMON OUTEN AT SEPTEMBER'S MEETING

Members received a briefing paper on current strategic and operational policing issues of specific interest. The report also sought Members approval to series of draft questions relating to these areas, in preparation for attendance of Police and Police and Crime Commissioner colleagues at September's Committee meeting.

It was noted that Challenge and Improvement Committee currently received a 6 monthly update on crime and ASB issues in West Lindsey from Inspector Simon Outen, Lincolnshire Police. This was considered valuable information and these updates were welcomed.

In addition to the information provided by Inspector Outen, there was an opportunity to enhance this session at the September C&I meeting. This was intended to enhance member understanding and further promote effective partnership working with Lincolnshire Police.

Officers had become aware of a number of key areas of work both operationally and strategically which it was felt Elected Members would benefit from an enhanced insight into.

This would enable informed consideration of the issues affecting West Lindsey and enable Members to seek assurance of the work in place to ensure that efforts to reduce crime and promote community safety in West Lindsey were effective.

Additionally, following the appointment of the new Police and Crime Commissioner this presented an opportunity for members to engage with him at the earliest opportunity and to understand his future priorities and content of Lincolnshire's new Police and Crime Plan.

The report provided context around each of the areas for consideration by members, rationale for posing questions, together with a proposed draft question(s).

The proposed strategic areas for discussion were: -

- Integrated Offender Management
- THRIVE
- New Police and Crime Commissioner
- Rural Crime
- Future Capacity, Structure and Local Policing Priorities

The proposed operational issues for discussion were: -

- Hate Crime (and Mate Crime)
- Customers with arrest warrants
- Dangerous Dogs
- Illegal Eviction
- ATM Thefts
- Market Rasen House

Discussion ensued and Members openly welcomed the extended remit of September's Committee Meeting.

Reference was made to the recent County Council decision to turn off street lighting throughout the night, and whether this had resulted in an increased level of crime. Members requested that a question dealing with this issue also be incorporated.

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) the draft questions for Police and Police and Crime Commissioner colleagues, subject to the inclusion of the detailed above, be approved; and matter
- (b) an invitation be extended to the Police and Crime Commissioner and Integrated Offender Management attend at September's meeting lead(s) to

The meeting concluded at 7.55 pm.

Chairman