

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held in The Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 13 December 2018 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Jeff Summers (Chairman)
Councillor Owen Bierley (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Mrs Sheila Bibb
Councillor Matthew Boles
Councillor David Cotton
Councillor Michael Devine
Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor John McNeill
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
Councillor Thomas Smith

In Attendance:
Ian Knowles Executive Director of Resources and S151 Officer
Eve Fawcett-Moralee Executive Director of Economic and Commercial Growth
Michelle Carrington Strategic Lead Customer First
Katy Allen Corporate Governance Officer
Jeannette Anderson Corporate Systems Development & ICT Manager
Ellen King Senior Performance Officer
Alison McCulloch Revenues Manager
Ady Selby Strategic Manager Services
James Welbourn Democratic and Civic Officer
Karen Whitfield Communities & Commercial Programme Manager

Apologies: Councillor Stuart Kinch
Councillor Mrs Maureen Palmer
Councillor Tom Regis
Councillor Trevor Young

Membership: Councillor Thomas Smith substituted for Councillor Maureen Palmer
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan substituted for Councillor Tom Regis

66 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was one question from a member of the public, as detailed below:

"I call into question the actions of this Committee.

My first concern is with regard to the overwhelming desire to plunge this District into a

massive amount of long term debt. I am fully aware of the reduction in Government funding but according to the statement in the year-end financial report there was almost £20m in useable reserves and the Financial Officer said "we have adequate revenue balances to provide financial security".

CIPFA have issued warnings to all Councils to temper overly excessive borrowing to support purchases of commercial property and I strongly suggest that this Council takes heed of this before purchasing anymore properties. For a £6m investment in a commercial property to show a return it relies on one tenant to pay the rent and in the current economic climate that is always a risk. For that same £6m you could build over 100 houses in the old Wilson Street area and rent these out, giving both rent and council tax revenue with virtually no risk; yes there will be maintenance costs along the way, but as these would be new properties this should not happen straight away.

My second concern is regarding the decision making in regard to purchase of properties and the so called 'Delegated Powers' whereby deals are done by a couple of people and then brought to Committee as a 'done deal', where papers have already changed hands - this is fundamentally wrong in so many ways.

My next concern relates to companies under either full or partnered ventures currently under this Council's umbrella, Sure Staff and MSR Ltd. The former losing money year on year and the latter being a total disaster. MSR Ltd was formed with joint capital of £750k and received grants of £171k, making a total of £921k. 3 properties were purchased for a total of £333k; there is currently a balance of £19k and two of the properties are not even finished. That means that it has taken almost £600k to complete the works. That is a ridiculous overspend for this project and you blame this on 'Heritage Factors'; I blame it on poor management, as can be said for the old Gainsborough Standard office. Purchased, stood empty for 5 years, worth considerably less than the original purchase price plus money spent on refurbishment and now likely to cost over £400k to get it to market; again poor management.

My final concern is with the Crematorium venture and cost involved in the process. The Parish Council at the Planning meeting opposed the plan citing both location and their research on cost. I do not concern myself with the location and I also welcome the new facility, but, I have also looked at cost and find similar builds in the middle of a field where all utilities have to be installed and the total cost was £3.6m; mind you I will point out that this particular company have built 187 crematoria around the country, so they know what they are doing. You on the other hand employ DESIGN CONSULTANTS costing over £50k to come up with a £6m crematorium.

So my question is are you looking after this regions money or, at £6m for Coveris, £6m for Market Rasen Leisure centre, £6m for Crematorium, which makes (666) so do we in actual fact have the devil amongst us?

The response was as follows:

"Thank you Mr Morley for your reflections on our investment strategy. I can assure you that all our investments are made based on appropriate professional advice, due diligence and in line with the governance of the organisation. Our approach is supported by the outcome of

both internal and external audits.

CIPFA's concerns are with those local authorities that have borrowed significantly above what might be considered reasonable. I assure you that our borrowings for this purpose will not exceed more than three times our turnover and is fully explained in our treasury management and asset management strategy.

Your reference to housing whilst optimistic with regards the level of risk, is timely, as we are currently exploring the opportunities housing may offer and I appreciate your support for this strategy."

67 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the Corporate Policy and Resources meeting held on 8 November 2018 were approved as a correct record.

The minutes of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee meeting held on 22 November 2018 were noted.

68 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor Matt Boles declared an interest in item 74 as the Leader of Gainsborough Town Council and a trustee of the Trinity Foundation; he would not take part in the debate or the vote and left the Chamber for the duration of that item.

69 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

The Executive Director of Economic and Commercial Growth updated the committee on the matter related to ACIS and Japan Road.

Discussions with ACIS have concluded for the moment; other discussions have commenced with Ongo housing association. The viability of the site was complex, so one option could be to break it down into smaller phases.

The remainder of the matters arising were noted.

70 BUDGET CONSULTATION REPORT 2018

Members considered a report on the Budget Consultation from 2018.

The following points were highlighted:

- The response rates for the consultation were good, and better than the previous year, but not the highest ever seen;
- The most popular support for a raise in Council tax was at 3%, rather than 1% or 2%;
- The service priorities receiving the greatest support, or the highest priority were Waste, Environmental, Housing and Economic Development;

- Significant support was received to use the New Homes Bonus across the whole of the West Lindsey district;
- The Fees and Charges policy received support;
- Support for third party organisation partnership working was given;
- The Rural Services Development Grant was supported at the same level as currently seen;
- The Financial Statement from government agreed not to go ahead with a negative Revenue Support Grant (RSG) (saving £65,000). The level of the 0.4% achievement rate for the New Homes Bonus rate had been maintained;
- There were still deficits for future years that would need to be tackled;
- During the last two years, the consultation had been done through a digital format where people would prioritise where they would make cuts; however people still wanted more information to make a more intelligent decision;
- A new Corporate Plan was being developed; ideally, this would be used as a base for the Budget Consultation;
- The number of Councillors listed as having responded within the survey did not take into account the Councillors that attended budget events; this was a further 6 Councillors, making 8 in total.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) Accept the findings from the 2018 budget consultation and agree to publication of the final report.
- (2) Agree to the proposals for the 2019 consultation exercise.

71 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY REPORT - PERIOD 2 2018/19

Members considered the Progress and Delivery report for Period 2, 2018-19.

The following points were highlighted:

- The report covered the period from June to September 2018; performance across all areas was broadly static, and comparable to the Period 1 report earlier this year;
- The number of complaints had fallen significantly;
- The return on capital investment and the overall budget forecast was exceeding the target that had been set;

- Garden waste was exceeding performance indicators;
- There was an increase in new participants at West Lindsey Leisure Centre;
- A further paper was being brought to Corporate Policy and Resources committee in January 2019 on the amount of time being spent processing Housing and Enforcement cases;
- The figure within the report relating to enforcement was 'days taken'; currently the figure was an average number of days. The cases closed could be long-standing, or short, and the final figure tended to get skewed;
- There had been a concerted effort to close long-standing Enforcement issues; they would get to a point where they would plateau, as the level of Planning cases was consistent.

The whole case load was generally around 120 cases, with around 20 being the highest priority. The challenge for the team was focussing on the highest priority cases, continuing the focus, and then moving onto the smaller cases.

RESOLVED to note the performance of the Council's services and key projects through agreed performance measures.

72 CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (WEBSITE) REPLACEMENT

Members considered a report requesting approval to spend the capital budget of £75,000 to procure and implement a new Content Management System (CMS).

The website contract was coming to an end in March 2020. Before that date, there would be customer engagement and preparation for the transition to the new website.

One Member wanted, if possible, to see an industry standard product that would have a longer shelf life.

RESOLVED to give approval to spend capital budget of £75,000 for the procurement and implementation of a new website.

73 ICT & DIGITAL STRATEGY - 6 MONTH PROGRESS UPDATE

Members considered a report on the delivery of progress made against the Council's ICT and Digital Strategy since Members signed off the Strategy back in June 2018.

The ICT strategy was a key enabler in moving the Council forward with IT, and outlined how digital technology can be used in the best way.

Members provided comment on the update, and the following points were highlighted:

- Members' ICT was not explicit in the paper, but was part of the overall Strategy;
- All green waste customers would be sent an email and/or text message in the first

instance, and then the renewals list would be used as a comparison list to see who hadn't renewed. It was expected that an individual would receive no more than three texts during the renewal period;

- There was a 'moving house process' for council tax payers in the district. Any move that happened from January 2019 onwards would be acted on. In addition, if a resident had notified the Council of a change in address within the district, then that could be acted on, and their record at the old address would be removed.

Residents moving out of the district would need to be looked at;

- Whilst the move towards digitisation was positive in terms of the customer experience, it did not mean that other ways of communicating and conducting transactions would be forgotten.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) Accept progress on the delivery against the ICT and Digital Strategy;
- (2) Accept the direction taken.

74 SUB-LEASE OF ROSE'S SPORTS GROUND

Note: Councillor Matt Boles left the room prior to the start of this item and was absent for its entirety.

Members considered a report on the potential sub-lease of Rose's Sports Ground by Gainsborough Town Council to the Trinity Foundation, with a one-off capital grant to support the development of a 3G community pitch.

The following points were highlighted:

- WLDC own the sports ground, and it was leased to Gainsborough Town Council (GTC) for a period of 99 years back in 2010;
- The Trinity Foundation had identified a funding opportunity to provide a 3G facility;
- A sub-lease to the Trinity Foundation would ensure that they were bound by the terms of the original lease from 2010;
- Aspirations of the Trinity Foundation were to open up the site for wider community use, increase daytime use, establish links with educational establishments and provide sports courses;
- The development of the site would increase the value of a Council-owned asset and would increase opportunities for residents to access facilities to aid physical activity;
- Positive conversations had taken place with the Football Foundation who had indicated they were likely to fund the Trinity Foundation to the region of £600,000,

leaving a funding gap of around £150,000;

- Any funding not used by the development could be 'clawed back' by the Council;
- The suggested Heads of Terms attached to the report not only addressed the financial aspects of the development, but also ensured that any users of the facilities who were displaced by the development were rehomed and given alternative facilities.

Members then asked questions of officers present. Further information was then provided, and is listed below:

- The Trinity Foundation had been in initial discussions with English Cricket, who had no issues with the potential relocation of the cricket club to Marshall's;
- If the report were to be approved, it would facilitate an application to the Football Foundation in January 2019, for a decision in April 2019. Any facility would not be ready until the following winter, which allowed a large portion of time for consultation with those clubs affected;
- The site would not be predominantly for football; there had also been discussions with the rugby club;
- The feasibility study showed that there were approximately 72 teams that currently had nowhere to train;
- The facility would not be solely for the use of Gainsborough Trinity. They would use the site for training, but would pay the same rate as other users and would only require it on two occasions per week. Other teams bearing the Trinity name were not actually affiliated to Gainsborough Trinity Football Club;
- In some ways, the granting of a licence to GTC would ensure the original terms and conditions of this lease would be maintained. WLDC would have influence as accountable body for the Grant provided by the Football Foundation.

GTC approached WLDC some months ago on the basis that they didn't have the resources to invest in the asset – the proposed £750,000 investment would be towards something that was not currently in the area;

- Members requested that an officer from WLDC sit on the Stakeholder Management Group (Steering Group) mentioned at Page 140 of the Heads of Terms document;

Several Members also made it clear that WLDC as landlords should handle the situation very carefully when it came to existing users of the sports ground.

RESOLVED TO:

- (1) Approve in principle to grant a licence to Gainsborough Town Council in order that Rose's Sports Ground may be sub-let to the

Trinity Foundation;

- (2) Approve a Capital Budget and expenditure capped at £150,000 to provide a grant as match funding towards the cost of constructing a 3G pitch at Rose's Sports Ground; this is to be subject to the terms of a grant funding agreement;
- (3) Agree to delegate the final amount and the Grant Funding Agreement to the Executive Director of Resources in conjunction with the Chairman of the Corporate Policy and Resources committee.

75 REVIEW OF THE GARDEN WASTE SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE ROLL-OUT

Note: Councillor Matt Boles returned to the Council Chamber, but Councillor Mick Devine briefly left.

Members considered a report on the performance of the garden waste subscription roll-out.

The following points were highlighted:

- A total of 58.3% of householders subscribed to the service by the end of October 2018, and almost 10000 transactions had been dealt with by Customer Services. In Nettleham and Sudbrooke wards, an uptake rate of 75% was achieved;
- The tonnage of waste collected in 2018/19 was currently down on that collected in 2017/18. There had been a slight rise in residual waste. Officers concluded that the variances in the tonnage collected was due to the long hot summer of 2018; however officers also recommended a minimum of three years' data for a clearer picture;
- There had been a slight increase in the amount of compost bins sold;
- Garden waste fly-tipping had decreased in year, along with fly-tipping as a whole;
- There had been 11 formal complaints, and 11 comments about the service, which had been dealt with acceptably;
- A smaller project team was planned for year 2 of the scheme. The team had knowledge of when residents subscribed, and through which channels. There would be a focus in dealing with the subscriptions online; however, the phone lines would be opened up in February to deal with anyone who couldn't, or didn't want to register over the internet;
- In the next year, addresses would be printed on bin stickers rather than leaving them blank for residents to fill in. There were other options here, such as in-cab technology, but these options would be more costly;

- There were no immediate plans to change collection rounds;
- Financial costs had increased due to a higher than expected take-up of the service, and also due to the pay award for staff;

Note: Councillor Mick Devine rejoined the Chamber at 1940, prior to Members discussing the item.

Following comments from Members, further information was provided:

- The Council must make sure they were contactable by those residents who have no access to IT;
- Officers hope to be able to include a wait time on the telephone when residents call to sign up, or renew their garden waste subscription;
- 121 composters were sold through the Council scheme in the previous year, compared to 33 in the year before that. Unfortunately there was no accurate overall figure for the District as residents can buy compost bins from a number of outlets;
- One Member praised Customer Services when he registered to use the service on the telephone.

RESOLVED to approve a charge of £35 per subscription for the 2019/20 garden waste season.

76 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME FOR 2019/20 AND EMPTY PROPERTY CHARGES

Members considered a report on the local council tax support (LCTS) scheme for West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) for 2019/20.

As well as the LCTS, new legislation afforded Local Authorities (LAs) to increase the premium for long term empty properties. Long term empty properties were defined as those that had been empty for 2 years or more.

There was a scheme for council tax hardship relief; as an example, if a resident encountered problems in a property higher than Band E (above the cap), then they could be considered under that scheme.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) Note the contents of the report; and
- (2) **Recommend that full council** adopt Option 1 of the report for the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for West Lindsey District Council for 2019/20:
 - *To cap council tax support to Band E*
 - *Award 100% council tax support to care leavers on a low income until they reach the age of 25 years*

- *to apply any new legislative requirements and the uprating of the non-dependent charges (these are detailed at 3.4 option 4), applicable amounts and household allowances and deductions, used in the calculation of the reduction in accordance with the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) annual up-ratings.*
- (3) **Recommend that full council** adopt Option 2 of the report for the empty property charges for council tax for West Lindsey District Council for 2019/20:
- *In accordance with new government legislation increase the amount charged in respect of properties that have been empty for 2 years or more from 150% to the maximum amount determined by Government (currently 200%).*

77 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

The Executive Director for Resources reminded Members that purdah would apply to the April 2019 meeting.

The workplan was noted.

78 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 involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

79 NATIONAL NON DOMESTIC RATES, COUNCIL TAX AND HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS WRITE OFFS

Members considered a report detailing irrecoverable debts.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) Write off arrears of National Non Domestic rates to the value of £59,070.92;
- (2) Write off arrears of Housing Benefit Overpayments to the value of £7,135.14;
- (3) Write off arrears of Council Tax to the value of £3,373.67.

80 SUN INN REDEVELOPMENT - PROPOSED VARIATION TO GRANT FUNDING AGREEMENT

Members considered a variation to the Grant Funding Agreement for the Sun Inn development.

RESOLVED to approve the recommendations as written in the report.

Corporate Policy and Resources Committee- 13 December 2018
Subject to Call-in. Call-in will expire at 5pm on 31 December 2018

The meeting concluded at 8.21 pm.

Chairman