

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 14 February 2019 commencing at 6.30 pm.

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

 - Councillor Mrs Sheila Bibb
 - Councillor Matthew Boles (up to and including item 104)
 - Councillor David Cotton
 - Councillor Michael Devine
 - Councillor Stuart Kinch
 - Councillor Giles McNeill
 - Councillor John McNeill
 - Councillor Mrs Maureen Palmer
- In Attendance:**
- Mark Sturgess Executive Director of Operations and Head of Paid Service
 - Alan Robinson Strategic Lead Governance and People/Monitoring Officer
 - Tracey Bircumshaw Strategic Finance and Business Support Manager
 - Cliff Dean ICT Manager
 - Andy Gray Housing and Enforcement Manager
 - Sue Leversedge Principal Accountant
 - James O'Shaughnessy Corporate Policy Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer
 - Wendy Osgodby Senior Growth Strategy & Projects Officer
 - James Welbourn Democratic and Civic Officer
- Also in attendance:**
- Councillor Mrs Pat Mewis
 - Councillor Mrs Angela White
- Apologies:**
- Councillor Ian Fleetwood
 - Councillor Trevor Young
- Membership:**
- Councillor Giles McNeill substituted for Councillor Ian Fleetwood

97 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

98 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2019 were approved as a correct record.

99 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests.

100 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

The Democratic and Civic Officer outlined the completed and ongoing matters arising as of February 6 2019.

The matters arising were noted by Committee.

101 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY REPORT PERIOD 3 - 2018/19

Members considered the Progress and Delivery of the Council's services and key projects for period 3, 2018-19.

There had been two meetings of the Progress and Delivery working group, where the measures used in the Progress and Delivery reports could be shaped by Members.

Members queried whether benchmarking could be used for planning enforcement; officers replied that it was difficult to decide on a figure for 'days taken for enforcement cases'. However, other authorities were used as comparators.

It was pointed out to Members that there were large variances on time taken to complete different enforcement cases, as some cases can be solved within 2 weeks, and some can run for up to two years. Officers would be reporting cases under the banners of 'six months or more', and six months or less'.

Planning enforcement officers were working to a 20 working day acknowledgement policy for planning enforcement cases.

As a final comment, one Member remarked that Planning Enforcement still appeared to be under resourced, and that it would be good to look at caseloads in different ward, potentially through an online portal.

RESOLVED to note the report.

102 GAINSBOROUGH TOWN CENTRE - HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND APPLICATION

Members considered an update on the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for Townscape Heritage funding for Gainsborough town centre.

The 'Round One' application to the HLF was successful, and resulted in the award of around £70,000 for working towards the Stage 2 bid.

The grants would be targeted at buildings in the Market Place, and Lord Street in Gainsborough. Alongside that work was a complementary activity programme to make sure the local community were involved in the project. Events such as the Gainsborough Beer Festival were visited by officers to make sure that 'hard to reach' groups were consulted about plans in Gainsborough town centre.

Officers travelled to Nottingham on 13 February to present their stage 2 bid to the HLF, and this was successful.

Members congratulated growth officers on their work in getting the scheme to this stage, and pointed to other examples in the district where similar schemes had already had an impact.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) agree to proceed with the submission of a Stage 2 Townscape Heritage bid to the National Lottery Fund;
- (2) approve the release of £0.348m from the Investment for Growth Reserve as capital match funding for the Townscape Heritage Delivery Phase, subject to the Stage 2 bid to the National Lottery Fund being successful;
- (3) agree to delegate the final signing of the Grant Funding Agreement to the Executive Director of Resources in the event that the Stage 2 bid is successful.

103 VALUE FOR MONEY STRATEGY

Members considered a report on the Council's Value for Money (VfM) strategy, along with its outline action plan.

It was the opinion of the external auditors that the authority was in a position to provide VfM. The approach in the report was about strengthening this position.

Items such as greater commercialism and use of assets contribute to greater VfM. Against each of these activities, an assessment had been conducted looking at how effective the authority thought it was; out of this, a workplan had been developed. This would make sure that VfM was integral to business and service planning.

To support staff on VfM a strategy had been produced; this was also available for Members. Once Council had commented on the Corporate Plan, the VfM strategy would be refreshed.

An additional recommendation for housekeeping amendments was proposed and seconded, therefore it was:

RESOLVED to:

- (1) Support the Council's commitment to securing greater Value for Money across service delivery, and approve the strategy as outlined in the report;
- (2) Agree that any housekeeping amendments to the strategy be undertaken in consultation with the Chairman of the Corporate Policy and Resources committee.

104 REFRESH OF MEMBERS' IT DEVICES

Members considered a report proposing to bring the provision of IT devices for Members 'in-house' in time for the start of the forthcoming municipal year.

The Democratic and Civic Officer introduced the item, and outlined how Members currently had their IT provided, and what had been done to try and provide a new solution:

- Members could be reimbursed up to the value of £500, as agreed back in 2015;
- They were free to purchase any device they liked; however, some rough guidelines had been provided for them to help them with their purchase;
- The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) rules that had been brought in were at odds with the current process of allowing Members to purchase their own devices;
- An invite to all Members to take part in a consultation was sent through the West Lindsey Members' Bulletin in July 2018; following this there were two steering groups later that year;
- There then followed a trial with 5 Members, who were asked to trial an iPad tablet to see whether they could access their West Lindsey email, committee papers, and whether they could do their everyday constituency work;
- The feedback from the trial was largely positive, albeit with some teething issues highlighted;
- The spend detailed at recommendation three was 'up to £29,000'; this had been agreed in the capital programme, but the plan was to spend around half of this amount;
- The trial Members had been selected on a cross-party basis, and a range of abilities had been chosen;

Following this introduction, three of the Members that had been part of the iPad trial provided insight into how they had coped with the device:

- The device gave access to secure emails;
- It was quick to use, and was light to carry. The addition of the keyboard had been very useful;
- Printing was available provided that Members had a wireless printer;
- Documents could be filed and stored on the device;
- The iPad's battery did not run down quickly between charges;
- The iPad performed all of the basic functions needed by Members;
- Members would need to get used to a change in working as some of them would be used to working on a bigger screen;
- It might not be possible universally, but some Members may need access to additional email accounts;
- 'Dual-hatted' Members, i.e. Members who were County Councillors as well as West Lindsey District Councillors could potentially have to carry around two devices with them;
- Members would need to be migrated to Microsoft Office 365 to enable access to Microsoft applications;
- The built in keyboard would enable those Members who are not familiar with Apple devices to interrogate documents as they would have done previously;

Debate ensued following these comments, and the points raised in favour of iPads are highlighted firstly:

- Democratic Services and the IT team at West Lindsey were not linked with their counterparts at Lincolnshire County Council. Therefore, it was not possible at this time to provide one device with both email accounts and committee papers to those 'dual-hatted' Members affected;
- There were numerous attacks on IT systems, from both in and outside the UK. This was also happening on personal email accounts;
- A secure platform for Members had been developed in conjunction with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Cabinet Office;
- The iPads themselves were very robust, and could be supported remotely;
- North Kesteven District Council adopted iPads in 2015, and the Leader of that Council spoke favourably of them;
- Additional applications, such as Adobe Reader could be added to the device before being given to Members;
- The email forwards that were currently in place for many Members were a security risk and officers would look to turn these off as soon as practicable;
- The last few updates of iOS (Apple's operating system) should address any concerns Members have had with previous iterations of the iPad;
- Having two spare devices would enable the authority to get those Members who have found themselves without a device access to email in the short term whilst their original device was being fixed;
- As many Members were being asked to use a device that they were not familiar with, 'buddying up', along with iPad masterclasses would be provided by Democratic Services and IT;

Finally, some Members spoke against an iPad as the chosen device, and gave the following reasons for this:

- An iPad was more suitable as a leisure device rather than a work device;
- Members at Lincolnshire County Council have a choice between two devices; Members at West Lindsey should be afforded the same courtesy;
- iPads were too small to be an effective piece of kit;
- the introduction of Member iPads seemed too complicated; there wasn't a problem with the current setup;
- Some members were happier using a laptop rather than a tablet.

Following the debate, the recommendations were moved and seconded, and following the vote, it was:

RESOLVED to:

- (1) Accept the rollout of West Lindsey District Council owned devices, and in doing so, the previous policies related to this matter were revoked;
- (2) Approve the refresh of Member devices on a four year cycle (to run concurrently with the electoral cycle);
- (3) Approve the spend of up to £29,000 for the provision of IT devices to Members; this spend to take place in the 2018/19 financial year.

Note: Councillor David Cotton requested that his vote against the recommendations was recorded.

Note: Councillor Matt Boles left the Chamber following the conclusion of this item and did not return.

105 BUDGET AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING - PERIOD 3 2018/19

Members considered a report setting out the revenue, capital and treasury management activity from 1 April 2018 to 31 December 2018.

Currently, Finance colleagues were estimating a £379,000 surplus for 31 Mar 2019, which would be a contribution to the General Fund balance. This was after taking into account £248,000 of underspends which would be carried forward; these underspends include those projects who had a timescale that exceeded the year end.

The capital forecast outturn was estimated at £29.967m; that included £7million for commercial investment properties.

The scheme at Caistor Southdale, which had been provided as an addendum, related to the property and land that was partially owned by WLDC. The NHS owned the GP Surgery. Conversations had been held with LACE housing, and the GP and Property team at the NHS. A proposal had been reached which would allow the scheme to go ahead; the accommodation would be for over 55s, the GP surgery would be owned by WLDC, but be let to the GPs on a 20 year lease. A Parent Company guarantee would be granted by the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) for this. A further report including more detail on the scheme would be considered by Corporate Policy and Resources committee in due course.

The average interest rate achieved by the authority was 1.514%; the total cost of investments at the end of quarter 3 were £13.4 million. An additional loan of £2.5 million was borrowed from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) at a rate of 1.7%. This increased the amount of borrowing to £8.5 million as at 31 December. However, a further loan of £2.5 million was taken out in February 2019, and it was anticipated there would be further borrowing before the year end.

The commercial strategy approved in 2015/16 had now exceeded its target of £1million; officers were thanked for this.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) Accept the forecast outturn position of a £379k net contribution to reserves as at 31 December 2018, as at section 2 of the report;
- (2) Note the use of Earmarked Reserves during the quarter approved by the Executive Director of Resources using delegated powers, as at paragraph 2.5.1 of the report;
- (3) Accept the Commercial Income position, as at paragraph 2.3 of the report;

- (4) Approve the revised Capital Budget of £30.17m to reflect the additional Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) of £0.069m, and approve the budget and spend for the Trinity Arts Centre sound equipment of £0.032m and the reduction of £0.039m for Council owned asset maintenance as detailed in paragraphs 3.1.4, 3.1.5 and 3.1.6 of the report.

In addition, it was resolved to approve a capital budget of £1.92m for the Caistor Southdale Scheme and a spend of £340k for the acquisition of land.

- (5) Accept the Treasury Management position and prudential indicators for the quarter.

106 DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2019-2023

Members were presented with the Draft Corporate Plan for 2019-23.

The Corporate Plan, the Medium Term Financial Plan and the Executive Business Plan were the key strategic documents for the Council.

The Draft Corporate Plan set out the new vision for the District, and the actions required to achieve this (known as the 'mission').

As this was still a draft version, there were still some tweaks and housekeeping needed prior to its presentation to Full Council.

RESOLVED to consent to the submission of the Draft Corporate Plan (2019-2023) to Full Council on 4 March 2019.

107 CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES DRAFT BUDGET 2019/20 AND ESTIMATES TO 2023/24

Members considered a report on the overall Draft Revenue Budget for 2019/20, which included the Budget specifically for Corporate Policy and Resources Committee, along with the Budget recommended by Prosperous Communities Committee. Also included were estimates for these budgets up to 2023/24.

The Budget included capital charges, and those pressures and changes that had previously been reported internally to Leader's Panel between November and January, as well as those that had been approved during the course of the year. The revenue implications of capital schemes and projects had also been built into the base budget figures.

For the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee, there had been a decrease of £48,000 from the 2018/19 base budget; this did exclude the use of earmarked reserves. There were significant movements within this figure, including the return on commercial property investment, which had increased income by £511,000 in 2019/20.

For Prosperous Communities Committee, there had been a decrease of £93,000 from the 2018/19 base budget, with net additional income of £205,000. The leisure management contract had resulted in a £206,000 reduction in year.

Planning fee income had reduced by £185,000; it was difficult to estimate the number of planning applications that would be considered by the Council, but work was underway with Planning Officers to develop a forecasting tool.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) Accept the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee Budget 2019/20 and recommend it to Council for inclusion in the overall Council budget 2019/20;
- (2) Accept the Prosperous Communities Committee Budget 2019/20 and recommend it to Council for inclusion in the overall Council budget 2019/20;
- (3) Recommend to Council the 2021 – 2023/24 estimates for both Corporate Policy and Resources and Prosperous Communities Committees for inclusion in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24.

108 DRAFT EXECUTIVE BUSINESS PLAN, MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2019/20 - 2023/24

Members considered the Draft Executive Business Plan and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2019/20 – 2023/24, which included the financial strategy, financial analysis and the capital programme.

The Strategic Finance and Business Support Manager highlighted to Members that there would be uncertainty in future years on funding; national issues were contained within the Executive Business Plan.

A balanced budget was being proposed; the authority was able to do this by allocating £119,000 to the general fund balance. It was also proposed to set aside £400,000 into earmarked reserves to support the Customer First programme, and £680,000 for the business rates volatility reserve.

The budget requirement was £14,709,200, and there would be a proposal to Council to set the Council Tax level at 2.99%. There was a 3% Council Tax cap set by central Government; West Lindsey's level would be set at 2.99% so that none of the bandings exceed 3%.

The MTFP looked at a five year profile for the Council. There was a funding gap of £439,000 by 2023/24; officers are working towards business planning to achieve that efficiency in the future.

Information on resilience, and the partnership in Riseholme with MUSE was highlighted by Members as being positive.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) Approve the new Retail Rate Relief scheme, fully funded by Government.

(2) Recommend to Council the approval of the Draft Executive Business Plan and Draft Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20 to 2023/24.

(3) Approve the use of and contributions to Reserve.

(4) Recommend to Council the Revenue Budget 2019/20.

(5) Recommend to Council the Capital Investment Programme 2019/20 to 2023/24.

(6) Delegate any housekeeping changes to the Draft Executive Business Plan and the Draft Medium Term Financial Plan to the Executive Director of Resources in consultation with the Chairman of Corporate Policy and Resources Committee prior to the final consideration by Council on 4 March 2019.

(7) Accept the statement of the Chief Finance Officer on the Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of reserves.

109 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

The workplan for the next 12 months was noted.

The meeting concluded at 8.30 pm.

Chairman