

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 4 March 2019 at 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Mrs Pat Mewis (Chairman)
Councillor Steve England (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Mrs Gillian Bardsley	Councillor Mrs Sheila Bibb
Councillor Owen Bierley	Councillor David Bond
Councillor Mrs Jackie Brockway	Councillor David Cotton
Councillor Michael Devine	Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan	Councillor Stuart Kinch
Councillor Mrs Angela Lawrence	Councillor Mrs Jessie Milne
Councillor John McNeill	Councillor Richard Oaks
Councillor Mrs Maureen Palmer	Councillor Malcolm Parish
Councillor Roger Patterson	Councillor Mrs Judy Rainsforth
Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers	Councillor Thomas Smith
Councillor Jeff Summers	Councillor Robert Waller
Councillor Mrs Anne Welburn	Councillor Mrs Angela White
Councillor Trevor Young	

In Attendance:

Mark Sturgess	Executive Director of Operations and Head of Paid Service
Ian Knowles	Executive Director of Resources and S151 Officer
Alan Robinson	Strategic Lead Governance and People/Monitoring Officer
Tracey Bircumshaw	Strategic Finance and Business Support Manager
James O'Shaughnessy	Corporate Policy Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer
Katie Coughlan	Senior Democratic & Civic Officer

Also in Attendance: Councillor Sharron Brylewski and Councillor Paul Moore

Also Present: 4 members of the public, including Mrs Randall who would be speaking under public question time

Apologies for Absence

- Councillor Bruce Allison
- Councillor Matthew Boles
- Councillor Chris Darcel
- Councillor Hugo Marfleet
- Councillor Giles McNeill
- Councillor Tom Regis
- Councillor Lesley Rollings
- Councillor Reg Shore
- Councillor Lewis Strange

52 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed all Members, Officers and Members of the Public present to the meeting.

A warm welcome was also extended to representatives from the Cherry Willingham Neighbourhood Planning Group, who would later in the meeting present their successful Plan to Council.

53 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

(a) Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council held on 21 January 2019

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council held on 21 January 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

54 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were made.

55 MATTERS ARISING

The Monitoring Officer presented the report and Members noted its content.

RESOLVED that the Matters Arising be duly noted.

56 ANNOUNCEMENTS

i) Chairman

The Chairman addressed Council and advised that whilst February had been a quieter month for engagements, it had still been a varied and interesting period.

Council noted some of the events the Chairman had had the pleasure of attending including:

- * The High Sheriff of Lincolnshire's Annual Legal Service at Lincoln Cathedral, which had been a great honour.
- * The open evening of "Think2Speak" who were a social enterprise based in new offices in Marshall's Yard. The evening was to celebrate their achievements in empowering people to be confident communicators.
- * A very useful feedback session, which had been held at Gainsborough's Old Hall and which advised on how Discover Gainsborough had been helping to promote businesses in the town and surrounding areas. It also provided an opportunity to find out about Pilgrim Roots and Mayflower 400.

- * As part of the Chairman's programme of visits to West Lindsey businesses, she had undertaken a very informative tour around the Ping factory in Gainsborough, something the Chairman had been very keen and interested in doing.
- * The Old Nick Police Museum had hosted a most enjoyable morning of tours of the newly upgraded premises which had included re-enactments of court cases by local school children.
- * Love Market Rasen Race Day had been a most wonderful day out. It not only provided some exciting racing but also promoted local businesses. The local support shown to the event was outstanding.
- * Only last week, the Council had held its sixth annual Community Awards ceremony at Hemswell Court. The evening celebrated many well deserved West Lindsey citizens, from volunteer coaches teaching children to swim to a community project restoring a station. The Chairman spoke of how she was particularly proud to present the Chairman's Special Award to a lovely lady in Scotter who had done so much for the community.

In concluding her announcements the Chairman advised of two up and coming events she would like to draw to Members' attention: -

Staff and Members had been invited to nominate a Parish Council they considered should receive the Annual Parish Council Shield. It was planned to present this at Annual Council. All Members were encouraged to submit a nomination. Information had been circulated by the Civic Officer. Members requiring further details or nominations forms were requested to liaise with Democratic Services.

There was also an exciting photographic competition that the Chairman encouraged Members to help promote within their wards. Winners of the Hidden Gems competition would have their work displayed at the Lincolnshire Show and visitors to the show would be voting for their 'People's Choice' winner. Full details of the competition were currently being promoted on the District Council website.

Finally the Chairman shared with Members how generous West Lindsey staff had been in donating toiletries and items for one of her charities – Barnardo's Leaving Care. The Chairman spoke of her passion for the service who looked after young people who when they left care and had to fend for themselves, usually moving into accommodation with very little to call their own. Small boxes of gifts were packed up to suit the person and help them settle in to cope on their own. Images of the donations were circulated around the Chamber.

ii) Leader of the Council

The Leader addressed Council and advised that during the last period he had had the pleasure of attending the District Councils Network (DCN) Conference.

More than 100 of the 201 district councils were represented at the District Councils' Network's annual conference recently and a considerable number of cabinet ministers had

been in attendance, which had been most encouraging.

A keynote speech had been given by the Communities Secretary, James Brokenshire, as well as appearances from Local Government Minister, Rishi Sunak, and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Elizabeth Truss.

The biggest round of applause at the Conference was given to the announcement that Shire Counties would not have to have “metro mayors” if they wished to seek devolution. Despite the Secretary of State’s comment that the devolution framework, promised in last year’s election manifesto, would be appearing soon, the latest news suggested that it wouldn’t emerge before June.

There had also been a most useful session from Grant Thornton on the transformation toolkit which they had been commissioned to produce for the DCN and which would be published in May. This would look at a wide range of collaborative measures that district councils had implemented from shared services and the localism agenda, through to more radical steps such as mergers. It would provide a valuable and practical guide to further changes that councils could consider depending on what best met their local circumstances and it certainly did not prescribe a single solution.

Finally one of the best received sessions of the Conference was that given by the Rt Hon Stephen Dorrell, a former Secretary of State for Health, and Duncan Selbie, Chief Executive of Public Health England, when they had spoken powerfully about the important role that District Councils played in health and well-being. This had been a key work stream of the DCN over the last couple of years.

One of the most thought provoking and invigorating presentations of all had been that of the Grimsey review, presented by Bill Grimsey.

The review had looked at how to address the shrinking commercial world of town centres and high streets.

The first recommendation arising from the review was “to establish an empowered organisation or Town Centre Commission under strong, established leadership through the local authority for each town centre, with a defined remit to build a 20-year vision/strategy for their unique place. Ensuring that the vision was underpinned by a comprehensive business/place plan.”

The Leader spoke of his gratification to know that that was exactly what West Lindsey had in its plans going forward.

A presentation given by Barry Wood from Cherwell Council described how they had dealt with the Ministry of Defence in taking on an ex MOD site near Bicester. This was most useful considering the developments at RAF Scampton. The Leader would be meeting with Mr Wood later in the year to learn more.

The Leader further advised that he had attended the Lincoln Transport Strategy meeting. This had been a consultation evening at Lincoln which had provided the Leader with the opportunity to express views from West Lindsey’s perspective and context to future highway provision around Lincoln. This had also included rail and cycle integration.

A Transport Strategy Group for West Lindsey was being established with LCC to better understand and present West Lindsey views on future improvements.

Finally the Leader spoke of the successes achieved by the Market Rasen Race Day, which had also been a most pleasurable day.

iii) Head of Paid Service

The Head of Paid Service addressed Council on behalf of the Management Team during which the following points were made: -

- * As Members would be aware, the Pre-Election Period (Purdah) would commence on 12 March 2019, guidance had been issued to all concerned. However the Head of Paid Service wished to draw to Members' attention that a full induction programme was in place for all new and returning Members immediately following the elections on 2 May. It was emphasised that these sessions were not just for Members who were new to Local Government but for all Members including those returning. The importance of attending was stressed.

Regulatory Committees including Planning and Licensing had requirements that Members kept their training up-to-date and the induction session would be a good opportunity to do this. Furthermore, returning Members would have a wealth of knowledge and experience which could be shared with newer Members at these sessions. Finally the induction offered the opportunity to ensure all Members started the new electoral cycle on the same footing, starting as they meant to go on.

Members were advised that the initial induction dates had been included within candidate briefing packs. Members standing, were encouraged to log the dates within their diaries and ensure they attended.

- * The Head of Paid Service had attended a meeting of the LGA Joint Leadership Group. This was a Group of Council's that operated the joint Chief Executive Model, currently operated by West Lindsey. It was apparent that this model was becoming increasingly popular across the sector with 14 District Council's now operating it. It was noted that the Council's which operated this model did so because it provided additional capacity at a senior officer level and helped to save money. West Lindsey's Executive Director's would continue to liaise with the Group in order to share and keep up-to-date with best practice.

57 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Monitoring Officer advised the meeting that questions had been received under the Public Question Time Scheme from Mrs Judith Randall, who was in attendance to put her questions direct to the meeting. Members had been provided with the questions submitted.

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Randall to the meeting, and invited her to put her questions to the meeting.

Mrs Randall's questions were as follows: -

Regarding funding for Market Rasen: -

- 1 What population does West Lindsey count as the surrounding area?
- 2 Looking at a map what population lives within a five and then a ten mile radius including any outside WLDC ?
- 3 Does WLDC appreciate the demand for a swimming pool?
- 4 Has a fair share of investment gone into Market Rasen?
- 5 Does WLDC focus on the high density population of Gainsborough which is placed peripherally to the District? Thus effectively depriving areas including Market Rasen of a fair share of investment?

However the Scheme did permit participants to speak for up to three minutes to provide explanation/ put their questions into context and in doing so Mrs Randall made the following statement: -

"I have been a resident of Market Rasen for 26 years and a member of Market Rasen Action Group since it formed last year. Years ago, I took my children regularly to swim in the pool at Cleethorpes. I know how important swimming is for health and wellbeing. In the year 2008, and after that year, Market Rasen came so close to having its own swimming pool. That dream was snatched away by a financial crisis, fuelled by global political ineptitude.

We had high hopes for a pool; hopes were raised then cruelly dashed by a newly elected District Council. Market Rasen was deemed a viable location for a swimming pool back then – a location in the heart of Lincolnshire, on the edge of the Wolds with its own railway station, its local holiday accommodation and the people of Rasen have never forgotten what was taken away and the price we had to pay for the financial crash.

Last year Rasen residents were astonished to learn of an imminent development of a dry leisure centre. Why no swimming pool? Where was the consultation process? It is as if we are to have one half of a leisure centre – what people really want is a whole complex including a much needed swimming pool.

Can the Council apply for outline planning permission instead of just setting aside a vague patch of land that may be developed for a pool at a later date? Instead of investing outside the county, the residents of Rasen and its hinterland would love to see investment in their health and wellbeing.

Investment in a swimming pool would be welcomed by thousands of people, irrespective of age or disability.

I fear that for far too long, Rasen has lost out to the peripherally located but more

densely populated town of Gainsborough.

I would like to ask that measures are taken to ensure the new leisure facility is as green as can be:

- Lighting that does not create light pollution
- Areas of land given over to meadow and native trees such as oak
- Bricks used designed to accommodate Swift nests
- Roofs that have the capacity to capture sunlight for energy

The town has recently lost a beautiful Horse Chestnut tree in Kilnwell Road. We need more, not less, trees for our declining insect populations.

Priority needs to be given to mitigate climate change. We cannot afford to lose natural habitat for our wildlife.

Tawny Owls use the site that is to be turned into a leisure centre; their numbers are in decline – as are our once thriving population of Swifts.

We need a green leisure complex and I ask the Council does all it can to prioritise the addition of a much needed swimming pool.”

The Chairman thanked Mrs Randall for her questions and asked Councillor Sheila Bibb as Chairman of the Prosperous Communities Committee to respond.

Prior to her response, Councillor Bibb advised that in accordance with the Scheme, she would only be responding this evening to the questions which had been submitted in writing. Officers would, in due course, respond in writing to any relevant additional points Mrs Randall had raised in her explanation speech.

The answers were given as follows: -

“Q1 and 2 - Since the focus of your question is Market Rasen, there is a catchment population of 16,000 within a 12km radius of Market Rasen. If we increase this radius to 15km, Welton could also be served by Market Rasen. This is a 15 – 20 minute drive and increases the catchment to 29,000.

Regarding leisure there are no meaningful facilities within 25-30 minute drive time.

Q3 - Moving on to your question regarding a swimming pool, while cognizant of a demand for such a facility, independent feasibility studies have demonstrated that, should a pool be provided in Market Rasen, this would require a significant subsidy in terms of running costs. In the current financial climate this is not a position this Council can support. As a District Council we have to provide services for a wide range of residents across the whole of the district in a way that provides value for money for all tax payers.

The Council are not ruling out a pool development in Market Rasen in the future. The site acquired for the dry leisure facility is large enough to accommodate future expansion, and the building has been designed in such a way that a pool

could be added at a later date should this prove viable.

Q4 - In 2012 MR BIG were successful in winning the first round of Porta's Pilot funding and were one of twelve towns nationally to be granted £100k of funding to regenerate the town centre. They won a further £110k through the Government's High Street X Fund in 2013. (Various M R development groups have since tried unsuccessfully to secure further funding to capitalise on this project)

The recently approved leisure investment for Market Rasen is valued at £6.3m which is three times the leisure investment into Gainsborough.

Also Market Rasen Town Council, supported by WLDC, are currently developing a 3 year vision and strategy that could net £200k funding from WLDC to develop their strategic growth projects.

Q5 - Coming full circle to the effect of population size on investment, when submitting bids for external funding, the Council must work within specific parameters and criteria, in the case of European Funding for example. In most cases funding organisations are very clear about what they will and won't fund and they establish a pre-determined set of eligibility criteria at the outset. Population density is not usually a factor here.

Indeed, at this time, along with the investment in both Gainsborough and Market Rasen, WLDC is also investing in other parts of the district such as Caistor and smaller projects elsewhere."

The Chairman thanked Mrs Randall for her attendance and indicated she would receive a copy of the responses to her written questions, provided verbally at the meeting, in writing, in due course.

58 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 9

Councillor Trevor Young submitted the following question to the meeting: -

1) *Question to Cllr Sheila Bibb, Chairman of the Prosperous Communities Committee, from Councillor Trevor Young*

"Disabled Facilities Grants are aimed at supporting and assisting the most vulnerable individuals especially the frail and elderly in maintaining their independence to help them either remain living in their own accommodation longer, or to help facilitate earlier discharge from hospital settings.

Timeliness is therefore essential, and in a lot of cases it is critical.

Could the Chairman of Prosperous Communities Committee please explain why in West Lindsey it takes 12 months to process a DFG application?

Are we not failing the most vulnerable people we serve, and impacting on other key services such as the NHS and Social Care?"

Councillor Trevor Young
Gainsborough South-West Ward

The Chairman of the Prosperous Communities Committee, Councillor Mrs Sheila Bibb, responded as follows: -

“First I would like to thank Cllr Young for submitting this question. As he rightly points out, Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG’s) are an important tool for assisting the frail and elderly in maintaining their independence and allowing them to either remain in their own accommodation longer or help facilitate an earlier discharge from hospital. It is therefore essential that we as an authority discharge our part of the process in a timely manner and in West Lindsey the average delivery time across 18/19 from the point of referral to the completion of the grant is 127 days – very different to the 12 months he states. In 17/18 it was 140 days and in 16/17 it was 129 days. The Council is focussed on ensuring that there are no delays in regards to the delivery of the grant once it is received via the County Council. In some exceptional circumstances, where cases are particularly complex the timescales can increase, however this is not the norm.

I cannot comment on aspects of the process that are dealt with by our county colleagues, such as the initial referral via adult social care, however we are engaged in work with fellow districts and the county which is considering a wide range of issues relating to early intervention and prevention, of which DFGs are one part. Cllr Young can also be assured that West Lindsey are fulfilling their part of the process as speedily as they can. Additionally, updates on the County wide situation regarding DFG’s, as well as discharge from hospital, are regular agenda items on the Housing, Health and Care Delivery Group of which he is now a member. From those discussions it becomes very clear that any failing lies not with the Districts but elsewhere.

Having heard the response, Councillor Young requested and received permission to pose a supplementary question. He stated that as he suspected there was a hidden waiting time He was aware that initial assessments by Occupational Health had up to a six month waiting time. Regardless of where the delay was this all impacted on and affected the end to end time for service users. This was not something the District Council should be simply accepting and urged that this be dealt with, indicating he would like the matter to be further investigated by the Challenge and Improvement Committee.

No response was given and the meeting proceeded to the next question which had been submitted.

Councillor Gillian Bardsley submitted the following question to the meeting: -

2) Question to Cllr Jeff Summers, Leader of the Council, from Councillor Gillian Bardsley

“I am writing this on 22nd February 2019, the day that yet another report, this time from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, warns that land use changes, pollution, and climate change are all causing biodiversity loss, and apart from anything else that “places the future of our food system under severe threat, because “the

plants, animals and micro-organisms that are the bedrock of food production are in decline.” Bees and other pollinators, worms, soil fungi which work to keep soils fertile and purify the air and water, all provide essential services to support life as we know it, but they are globally a rapidly dwindling resource. Urgent action is needed to reverse the worrying implications highlighted in this latest warning.

The current Government issued its 25 Year Environment Plan last year, but can we as District Council begin to look now at where we can have an impact straightaway, however minor, on these huge issues, to reassure our residents that we are aware and willing to act, changing current best practice if need be.

Reviewing management of green space and grounds maintenance regimes to provide opportunities for pollinators to thrive, focussing more on biodiversity? Looking at the Local and Neighbourhood Plans for opportunities to connect vestiges of wildlife habitat to create corridors to support declining populations? Should all new houses be fitted with swift bricks as standard? Pressing home the message that discarded litter impacts adversely on wildlife with environmental costs far beyond that of our waste collection service. Can this District Council within its restricted area of activity help reverse the habitat and food supply loss that together with global warming threaten our very existence?

Working with partners wherever it is appropriate to support initiatives? Taking advice on what can be done now, from the many charities and other organisations who are suggesting ways of reversing these increasingly alarming trends?

Do you agree with me that there is now an urgency to act and be seen to act, at all levels, to reverse the threats now facing the natural environment on our planet, as this UN report states?”

Councillor Gillian Bardsley
Gainsborough North Ward

The Leader responded as follows: -

“Thank you for your question Cllr Bardsley and the interesting points you raise within it. All in this room will have evidenced the unseasonably warm weather at the back of last month. We should be concerned about the impact climate change is having on both the environment and bio-diversity.

Personally I have concerns about the lack of flora and fauna within the new and many existing housing estates because of the need to cover gardens with hardcore to create parking for cars due to inadequacy of approvals.

Trees and varied ground cover is essential for both the softening of a development but also introducing the ecological element that people no longer get the opportunity to recognise or understand.

Open stretches of water are essential for the support of insects, aquatic species and birds. Approximately 1000 living organisms are sustained in the existence of an oak tree. Trees within community areas and developments are essential to helping maintain a healthy atmosphere. The benefits of planting trees within developments is

well understood but badly supported. UK forests and woodlands contain around 150 million tonnes of carbon in their biomass and 640 million tonnes of carbon in the soil. UK forests and woodlands are a carbon sink, as they remove about 10 million tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere every year. As a nation I believe we have failed by not planting trees at a greater rate in the non-food producing areas of the UK which amounts to hundreds of thousands of hectares.

Your question is timely, as tonight we present our new Corporate Plan. I know that during its development you raised similar concerns and suggested that reference to environmental matters be highlighted within the document.

I am pleased to advise you that the Plan does pay attention to the challenge for the Council to preserve and enhance the wonderful natural environment we all currently enjoy, even though we know it is depleted, and ensure that future generations also benefit.

The Plan addresses your reference to the need to preserve green space and the natural environment.

We continue to fully support the creation of Neighbourhood Plans which allow communities to highlight what is important to them and what they want to protect from development.

While growth is a key driver, we must ensure that where development does take place, we simultaneously see that appropriate green space and that means more than grass, plus recreational facilities are provided.

We all know that litter is both unsightly and threatens natural habitats and food chains. Hence the Plan makes a commitment to improve cleanliness across the District and increase the quality of life for residents, whilst also protecting the natural environment.

Finally, as a Council, we must play our part and conduct our business in an environmentally sustainable manner. We already have an energy efficient Council building which has recently been enhanced by the introduction of LED lighting. We must also consider technological advance and appraise developments such as the suitability of electric vehicles for Council use and low-energy usage ICT equipment or Cloud storage for our ICT infrastructure. Using technology such as video-conferencing and providing the means for on-line contact with the Council are developments we must push ahead with. These will reduce carbon emissions by removing the need to travel to the Guildhall for meetings, or for residents to conduct their business with the Council.

Thank you.”

59 MOTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10

Councillor Owen Bierley submitted the following Motion: -

“This Council recognises that the Rural Services Network (RSN) is now the only

organisation focussing full-time on rural issues ‘in the round’ and acknowledges RSN’s achievements on behalf of rural authorities and the wider rural community. Accordingly this Council fully supports RSN in calling on the Government to take the lead, working with other interested organisations, to produce a comprehensive, long-term and funded Rural Strategy and shares RSN’s view that there is now a compelling case for such an approach.

This document should set out the Government’s priority objectives over the next decade for England’s rural communities and rural economies. It should also define a set of policies and initiatives that will achieve them. Some of these policies and initiatives will be new, whilst others may exist now and simply need enhancing to better meet rural needs. It is time for a Rural Strategy that is forward looking and ambitious, recognising the contribution that rural areas make (and those they could make) to the well-being and prosperity of the nation as a whole.

I so move”

The Leader of the Council responded as follows: -

“Thank you Councillor Bierley for your motion.

I second this motion and propose it goes forward to the Prosperous Communities Committee for a formal response to Government and a debate on next steps.

With everything that is going on in the way in which our country’s governance is about to change, this motion could not be more opportune and timely. The RSN clearly have a view and understanding of the issues which are adversely affecting rural communities.

The Rural Strategy Template, which the RSN believe is essential for the enablement of an equitable social environment and wellbeing across and inclusive of all areas of the UK includes the following elements.

- A Thriving Rural Economy
- A Digitally connected countryside
- A Place everyone can get around
- An Affordable Place to live
- A fair deal on health and social care
- A Place to learn and grow
- A settlement (including fair funding for rural services) to support local action
- A rural proofed policy framework

These elements are supported by evidence.”

Debate ensued and a number of Members across the Chamber spoke in support of the motion and the need to safeguard rural community life. Affordable Housing in its truest sense was considered to be of paramount importance, if rural life with mixed communities was to continue. Many residents currently found themselves unable to remain in the villages they and their families grew up in due to housing prices alone.

Having been moved and seconded, on being put to the vote the Motion, was declared **CARRIED** and referred to the Prosperous Communities Committee.

60 ADOPTION OF THE CHERRY WILLINGHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Members were asked to give consideration to a report to fully 'make' (adopt) the Cherry Willingham Neighbourhood Plan following a successful referendum.

Councillor England, Member Champion for Neighbourhood Planning, introduced the report, the plan on tonight's agenda, would see the number of adopted plans across the District reach a total of 13, with up to 30 more currently at some stage within the process. He expressed thanks, both to the Group for their hard work, and to the Officers for the support they had offered.

Representatives from Cherry Willingham Parish Council were in attendance and prior to Members debating the matter the Chairman invited them to make a short address to Council and present their successful Neighbourhood Plan.

Councillor Paul Moore, addressed the meeting and expressed thanks to all Members of the Steering Group, paying particular tribute to Andy Booth for the technical advice and expertise he had provided, which it had become apparent, at a very early stage, was absolutely essential in creating a Plan which would be successful at the Examination Stage and to former Parish Councillor Anne Welburn for her much needed impetus at certain stages of the process.

Councillor Moore also expressed thanks to the residents of Cherry Willingham for attending the numerous consultation events, the Group had always been of the view that it was of paramount importance that villagers understood what the Group and the Plan were trying to achieve and what its key objectives were.

Thanks were also expressed to all the professionals which had been involved in the process for their help and advice and finally to the voters for turning out and supporting the Plan's content.

Councillor Moore then formally presented the Plan to the Chairman.

Members across the floor congratulated the Group on their remarkable achievement. Neighbourhood Plans were considered a vital component to communities, and Members thoroughly understand the effort, determination and dedication it took to produce a successful plan.

Councillor Welburn, Local Ward Member and former Parish Councillor also indicated, following the early questions around climate change, that Cherry Willingham had taken the opportunity to address climate change, bio-diversity and green spaces within its Plan. Outlining some of the activities undertaken already to-date, including the planting of a new woodland.

Thanks were again expressed to the Group and it was moved, seconded and duly

RESOLVED that the Cherry Willingham Neighbourhood Plan be adopted and made.

61 CORPORATE PLAN 2019-23

Members gave consideration to a report which sought approval of the Corporate Plan for the period 2019 – 2023.

The Leader of the Council presented the report and in doing so outlined how the Plan had been developed over recent months, by both Members and officers, resulting in the key priorities for the Council for the next four years being identified together with the outcomes the Council wanted to achieve.

The Plan aimed to ensure that attention was paid to all of the District's communities, residents and businesses; to ensure lives were improved and the District prospered.

Before summarising the content of the new Corporate Plan the Leader reflected on some of the Authority's key achievements over the last few years, during which the following points were noted: -

- * From a financial perspective the Authority had purchased five commercial properties both inside and outside of the District, these were due to provide an income of over £1m to the Council next year, meaning the Authority could continue to deliver its services and support communities such as Hemswell Cliff;
- * The introduction of charges for green waste – the last Council in Lincolnshire to do so, and the service would continue for 2019/20 with no increase in charges.
- * Regeneration of the District was taking place, with business units having been delivered in Saxilby, with a further similar development now underway in Caistor.
- * A new hotel had been built in Gainsborough and both the Roseway Car Park and the street scene had been vastly improved.
- * Having secured a development partner, options for the former Guildhall site were taking shape.
- * The Crematorium project was well underway, with a provisional opening date of early 2020.
- * The Leisure offer had been enhanced, with massively improved facilities in Gainsborough, an out-reach service taking shape and plans for facilities in Market Rasen.
- * The Council had also secured a contract to deliver the Wellbeing service, which was supporting residents to stay well and lead independent lives in their homes and communities.
- * Work had also commenced to ensure that the residents of Scampton were left

with a sustainable future once the MoD depart the site.

- * The Council had actively supported Neighbourhood Plans, with 13 fully “made” and over 30 more in development. Neighbourhood Plans were a key means by which communities could ensure they shaped and influenced future development in their area.
- * A revised, flatter senior management model had been introduced and was working extremely well.
- * The Council had continued to provide excellent services with Council Tax and Business Rate collection rates remaining high. Performance in development management and land charges had both significantly improved and the waste collection service remained highly regarded both by residents and amongst its peers nationally.
- * Investment in and a vastly improved programme of events at the Trinity Arts Centre had paid off with record numbers through its doors.

The Leader then summarised the key priorities in the new Corporate Plan namely:

- Health & Wellbeing – to reduce health inequalities and promote wellbeing
- To provide support for vulnerable groups & communities to create strong and self-reliant communities and promote positive life choices
- Education & Skills – to facilitate the creation of a highly educated and skilled workforce that meets present and future needs of employers
- To ensure economic regeneration across West Lindsey is sustainable and benefits all of our communities
- To promote Housing Growth and bring about quality and choice in the housing market and meet demand and need for housing services
- To focus on public safety and the environment and create a safer and cleaner district
- As a Council, to ensure we remain financially sustainable.
- To make sure we put the customer at the centre of everything we do and for our staff and Members; to ensure we remain well-managed and well-governed, making the right decisions and getting things done.

The Leader was of the view that by achieving these priorities during the next four years, the Council would deliver its vision for the District, that West Lindsey is a great place to be where people, businesses and communities can thrive and reach their potential.

The Leader placed on record his thanks to both Council Members and Officers for their ambition, drive and valuable contributions before moving the recommendation.

Debate ensued and Members on the whole spoke in support of the Plan and praised the progress achieved over the last four years. The Plan was considered aspirational ambitious and stretching but encompassed and covered all aspects of the district, all of its communities and all of its stakeholders. Members were encouraged by the previous track record and were confident the Plan could be delivered.

Members were also supportive of the fact that the link between Well-being, appropriate housing and the environment in ensuring a good quality of life had been identified and were engrained throughout the document.

The Leader of the Opposition questioned the figure quoted by the Leader with regard to the level of income expected to be generated by the property investments over the coming year. In response the Executive Director of Resources clarified the gross figure was circa £1m pound with the net figure being circa £500,000.

It was suggested that the Leader was trying to mislead Council and the investments were high risk. In response the Leader advised the acquisition programme was ongoing with more than one option currently on the table. He anticipated all of the money set aside for such investments would be invested over the coming year and the portfolio completed and therefore the income levels he had referred to, he anticipated were more than achievable.

Doubt was again expressed by the Leader of the Opposition who expressed concern that the Leader was not being held to greater account regarding the figures he had quoted and was of the view Members needed greater reassurance around these types of investment.

RESOLVED that the Corporate Plan 2019-2023 be approved and its aims and objectives supported.

62 EXECUTIVE BUSINESS PLAN AND MTFP 2019/20 TO 2023/24

Members gave consideration to a report which presented the second Executive Business Plan and the Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24.

The purpose of the Executive Business Plan was to set out the actions to be taken by the Executive to deliver the Corporate Plan over the next three years.

The purpose of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) was to set a robust overall framework for the Council's spending plans over the next five years in supporting the delivery of the Corporate Plan and underpinned by the delivery of the Financial Strategy.

The report therefore outlined the Council's revised financial plans having taken into account the Financial Analysis for changes in Government funding, the economic environment, local engagement and the priorities for the Council.

The plan reflected the revisions to the previous estimates for the years 2018/19 to 2022/23 and included the proposed budget for 2019/20 and the inclusion of estimates for 2023/24.

The report also covered the setting of Council Tax for 2019/20, Fees and Charges for 2019/20, and the Capital Programme 2019/20 to 2023/24.

The Executive Director for Resources presented the report and in doing so placed on record his thanks to Tracey Bircumshaw and the finance team for their work in preparing the documents presented to Members.

It was also noted that 4 Parish Councils had made late changes to their precept requirements, resulting in amendments having to be made to Appendices G, I J, and K. These had been circulated to Members, however, additional copies had been placed on Members' desks for ease of reference.

The Business Plan reflected the deliverables the organisation would focus on over the next three years, whilst the MTFP showed the financial requirements to support that plan and deliver the Corporate Plan, agreed earlier in the meeting.

The MTFP was the primary strategic financial document of the Council and meet the regulatory requirement to: -

- * agree a balanced budget;
- * establish the level of Council tax for that year; and
- * Met best practice by setting out the coming year's budget within a medium term financial plan.

In 2017 the Government had provided Local Government with a four year projected settlement which established the basis for the Authority to have its Revenue Support Grant reduced to zero over the period. The Council had managed the loss of over £1.4m of grant during that period through a range of efficiency and income generating measure which had ensured the Authority could continue to offer award winning services to its residents. The on-going revenue benefit to the Authority of those actions totalled in excess of £1.6m

The principles of the Financial Strategy were set out in paragraph 6 of the Executive Business Plan and the assumptions within the MTFP were listed at paragraph 9.2 of the Executive Business Plan. It was noted that the proposed increase in Council Tax for 2019/2020 was 2.99%

A range of benchmarking information had been provided at paragraph 2.5 of the MTFP and within Appendix N. This reflected that the Authority was well placed against its national peers for the challenges ahead.

Section 2.14 of the MTFP reflected upon the resilience indicators proposed by CIPFA and which indicated the Council was in a strong position in its ability to manage financial risk and future sustainability.

Sections 3.10 and 3.11 of the MTFP set out the Capital Investment Programme and Funding together with borrowing requirement which totalled £37m reflecting the ambitions of the Council.

Finally the Executive Director of Resources drew Members' attention to his statement at Section 4 of the MTFP on the robustness of estimates, the adequacy of reserves and the affordability of capital investments.

The Leader of the Council made the following speech in response: -

“This is an MTFP that funds an ambitious growth programme, with the increased efficiencies already achieved. It supports our creative business aspirations whilst providing security for the council’s longer term ambitions.

I will mention the three main headings under our plan.

1. Our People - Our Customer first programme is an investment in the way we do business / interact with our customers. With the acquisition of new technology we will engage with residents and business in a more efficient and pro-active way, helping to create safer communities and positive enforcement in a timely manner.

2. Our Place - Improved ways of working will again bring benefits to Housing and social regeneration. Our delivery of the Japan road development with partners, a new Leisure facility at Market Rasen involving a £6m investment. The largest single investment ever for Market Rasen. Our growth agenda includes projects like the Food Enterprise Zone at Hemswell Cliff, the Townscape Heritage Initiative for Gainsborough breathing new life into the Town Centre. The Crematorium, another substantial investment as part of creating that complete community provision. Due to open early 2020.

3. Our Council - Our ambition is to continue to improve operation efficiencies, building on the robust assurance provided by a number of recent internal audit reports to deliver a customer centric organisation with a work force fit for the 21st century. We will also be investing in an ICT infrastructure and estate to support and improve all our services. A comprehensive corporate strategy which supports the council for the next five years and continues to improve the experience of people living in the district of West Lindsey.

I’d like to take this opportunity to thank all staff and members for the part they have played in the production of our plan. Thank you”

The Leader concluded his budget speech by moving the recommendations.

The Leader of the Opposition then addressed Council advising he was of the view that the Capital Investment Strategy was wholly inappropriate and that it was dreadfully wrong that two individuals were solely responsible for the investment of up to £30m of council tax payers money. He proposed the delegation granted to these individuals be revoked and all such capital investments should be by way of Committee decision.

Members across the Chamber spoke in support of the Capital Investment Strategy noting that every decision had been made and reported via the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee. Assurance was offered that investments were sensibly spread and would generate considerable sums of much needed money for the Authority. Investments were made under strict guidelines agreed by Committee and were genuine property investments. It was noted that such investments were now common practice and an accepted way of funding services in light of Government funding reductions.

In response to a Member’s question the Executive Director of Resources advised that whilst the world economy would always impact on the wider UK economy the Council was at no greater risk than that in the normal commercial environment.

Some Members reported of having previously being concerned, but having met with the Executive Directors, now considered the portfolio to be well balanced, investments well spread and the income generated was a welcome addition to Council funds.

The proposal to revoke the delegation was not supported

The recommendations, as set out in the report having being moved and seconded earlier in the meeting, were then put to the vote. In accordance with required legislation for voting on the Council's budget, a recorded vote was taken.

Votes were cast as set out below:

For: - Cllrs Bardsley, Bibb, Bierley, Brockway, Devine, England, Fleetwood, Howitt-Cowan, Kinch, Lawrence, J McNeill, Mewis, Milne, Oaks, Palmer, Parish, Patterson, Rodgers, Smith, Summers, Waller, Welburn and White

Against: - Cllrs Bond, Cotton, Rainsforth, and Young

With the majority of Councillors voting for the proposals, the motion was declared **CARRIED** and on that basis it was

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 2019/20 to 2023/24 (Appendix 2) be approved and Members are aware of the associated Risks included at Appendix B;
- (d) a Mid-Year Review of the Medium Term Financial Plan be received during 2019/20;
- (e) the Revenue Budget 2019/20 (Appendix A) be set;
- (f) the Fees and Charges 2019/20 (Appendix C/Ci) be set;
- (g) the Capital Investment Strategy (Appendix D) be adopted;
- (h) the Capital Programme 2019/20 to 2023/24 and Financing (Appendix E) be approved;
- (i) the Treasury Management Strategy 2019/20 be adopted and the Treasury Investment Strategy, the detailed Counter Party criteria, the Treasury and Borrowing Prudential Indicators (Appendix F)

- (j) the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy as contained in the Treasury Management Strategy (Appendix F) be approved;
- (k) a 2.99% increase in the Council Tax (Appendix G-K) be approved; and
- (l) the 2019/20 Pay Policy Statement (Appendix L) and Human Resources Statement 2019/20 (Appendix M) be approved.

63 CONSTITUTION AMENDMENTS - TO REMOVE THE NEED FOR MINI MEETS FOLLOWING ANNUAL COUNCIL AND ALSO TO PERMIT THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE TO REJECT QUESTIONS DURING THE PURDAH PERIOD WHICH HE DEEMS TO BE POLITICALLY MOTIVATED

Members gave consideration to a report which sought agreement to a number of minor amendments to the Constitution, namely to the Council Procedure rules.

These amendments would remove the need for Mini Committee Meetings to elect Chairmen following Annual Council, making this a function of the Annual Council Meeting itself.

A further amendment was proposed to permit the Head of Paid Service to reject questions under Procedure Rule number 9, during the Purdah period, which he considered to be politically motivated and therefore an unjustified use of Council time and resources.

The amended affected pages were detailed in Appendix A, Ai and B attached to the report.

In response to a Member's concern regarding the additional criteria for the rejection of questions under Procedure Rule No.9, the Monitoring Officer outlined the rationale for the proposed amendment advising that this was in fact to safeguard Members and avoiding there being any accusations that Council resources were being used for electioneering purposes.

Opposition Members indicated they could not support such an amendment.

Councillor J McNeill noted he had identified an historical drafting error in Section 23.1 of Appendix Ai. Having spoken with the Chairman of the Governance and Audit Committee this would be reviewed and amended as necessary as part of the Annual Review.

RESOLVED that the amendments to the Constitution as detailed in Appendices A, Ai and B be approved.

The meeting concluded at 8.47 pm.

Chairman