

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 7 November 2019 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Giles McNeill (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Anne Welburn (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Owen Bierley
Councillor Matthew Boles
Councillor Stephen Bunney
Councillor Michael Devine
Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
Councillor John McNeill
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee
Councillor Robert Waller

In Attendance:

Eve Fawcett-Moralee	Executive Director of Economic and Commercial Growth
Ian Knowles	Executive Director of Resources, Head of Paid Service and S151 Officer
Ady Selby	Assistant Director Operations
Alison McCulloch	Revenues Manager
Rachel Parkin	Home Choices Team Manager
Elaine Poon	Local Development Order and Major Projects Officer
James Welbourn	Democratic and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor David Cotton
Councillor Trevor Young

Membership: Councillor Caralyne Grimble was in attendance.

33 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

34 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING/S

The minutes of the Corporate Policy and Resources meeting held on 19 September 2019 were approved as a correct record.

The minutes of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee held on 3 October 2019 were noted.

35 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan declared an interest in item 37 – Locally Defined Discount for Almshouses, as he chaired the Charles Cooper Almshouse Trust in Gainsborough. After seeking advice from the Head of Paid Service, he announced that he would leave the Council Chamber for the entirety of that item.

Councillor John McNeill declared an interest in item 37 – Locally Defined Discount for Almshouses as his father-in-law was a trustee of Market Rasen Almshouse.

Councillor Mandy Snee declared an interest in item 37 – Locally Defined Discount for Almshouses, as she was a representative on the Charles Cooper Almshouse Trust in Gainsborough. After seeking advice from the Head of Paid Service, she announced that she would leave the Council Chamber for the entirety of that item.

36 VARYING THE ORDER OF THE AGENDA AND WITHDRAWAL OF ITEM

The Chairman, with the support of Committee informed those present that the 'Proposed Fees and Charges 2020/21' item and the 'Mid-Year Treasury Management Report 2019/20' item would be swapped around, to allow the two treasury reports to be taken consecutively.

In addition, item 48 – Budget and Treasury Monitoring Mid Year Review 2019/20 Exempt Appendix was withdrawn as it was not ready in time for committee.

37 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

The Assistant Director of Operations addressed committee on the matter regarding agency workers. He raised the following points:

- To the year ending 31 March 2019, Surestaff supplied 66 staff across nine service areas, undertaking the equivalent of 7410 weeks of work;
- Waste services was the biggest user of this staff, with 43 operatives used across 5520 weeks of work. Five staff were employed for the full year, mainly to cover long-term sickness, staff on training, or as an interim measure whilst service need was reviewed. The average worker stayed with Surestaff for 26 weeks;
- Most staff were employed on garden waste, which runs for eight months of the year. Turnover of staff was quite high in Waste services, especially with those assignments that were shorter in length;
- The only alternative to using agency staff would be to have casual contracts as the need was unknown in many cases, for example short-term sickness and last minute absence requests. This was trialled by Operational services some years ago, but they found that keeping a list of casual staff was difficult and time consuming to maintain;
- Less than 1 in 2 agency staff that undertake the induction process take up an assignment. If this were to be replicated with a 'casual staff' list, it would make recruitment and retention of staff time consuming and expensive. Also to be considered would be the additional cost of any corporate training and disciplinary

action;

- The cost of an agency operative was almost equivalent to the hourly rate and on-costs for permanent staff. All other councils within Lincolnshire used agencies for their short-term staffing needs; any move away from this model would result in increased costs for West Lindsey District Council (WLDC), especially with regard to supervision of staff;
- Agency staff were paid the same rate as permanent staff, and enjoyed the same rights in terms of annual leave, union membership, workwear, access to welfare facilities, training and pension auto-enrolment, and were able to apply for internal vacancies. Twelve Surestaff workers across five service areas had found permanent roles at WLDC.

The remainder of the matters arising were noted by Members.

Note: Following the conclusion of this item, Cllrs Howitt-Cowan and Mandy Snee left the Council Chamber.

38 LOCALLY DEFINED DISCOUNT FOR ALMSHOUSES

Members considered a report on a locally defined discount in respect of unfurnished and unoccupied almshouses, and whether such a discount would be appropriate.

This report had been written following a motion raised at Full Council by Councillor Jeff Summers.

Since the publication of the report, the lead officer had been informed of 5 further almshouses in Gainsborough. They were all Band A Council Tax properties that could equate to over £6,000 were a full year exemption awarded.

Following this introduction and comment from Members, further information was provided:

- There were no indicators on council tax records to say that a property was an almshouse. These properties were only found by performing an address search on council tax systems;
- All almshouses qualify for a 6 month exemption whilst unoccupied and unfurnished. If after this 6 month period had elapsed the property remained empty, the almshouse could apply for section 13a hardship relief, by filling in an application and submitting financial details. Consideration would be given to the application in accordance with policy;
- All of the almshouses discovered by the lead officer were occupied. One property had been empty, but now had a resident;

Note: Councillor John McNeill left the Council Chamber at 1841.

- If a locally defined discount was decided upon, it would be the district council rather than the county council that would have to pay in full.

Note: Councillor John McNeill returned to the Council Chamber at 1842.

The Chairman moved a recommendation from the Chair that it would not be necessary to develop a policy in respect of unfurnished and unoccupied almshouses; this was seconded, and **AGREED** by committee.

Note: Councillor John McNeill did not vote as he had previously left the Chamber.

39 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY PERIOD 2 2019/20

Members considered a report on progress and delivery for period two of 2019/20, which encompassed June to September 2019.

The Head of Paid Service reminded Members that those areas within the report that were exceeding their target were listed in green; those underperforming were in red. Whilst the Home Choices figures were not classed as exceeding their target, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) fed back at a recent meeting that West Lindsey was identified as being in the top 10% of all local authorities for the number of people housed in the private sector. There was a target of having no individuals housed in bed and breakfast accommodation; officers did not want to set a target above 0 as it was felt 0 is where this figure should be.

Following this introductions, conversations between Members and officers provided further information:

- Feedback to some local Members on customer satisfaction at the West Lindsey Leisure Centre did not mirror what was mentioned in the report. Officers reported that negative feedback on the site related to the 'wet-side' of the Leisure Centre, rather than the new gym. It had been hard to retain cleaners at the site, which had led to some issues with cleanliness.

The investment by WLDC into the Leisure Centre did not include any major refurbishment of the wet side (the swimming pool). The contract did include a deep clean of the pool side of the Leisure Centre, as well as the lockers and toilets. There was a clear discrepancy between the gym and the pool.

Issues with the Leisure Centre had been raised by the Business Development Manager for Contracts and Procurement recently when she had visited the facility.

RESOLVED to note the report.

40 REVIEW OF SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Members considered a report on a county wide safeguarding policy, which contained policy changes, information on training and internal procedures.

The Home Choices Team Manager introduced the report; it was her opinion that it made sense to have one policy across the county, and not to have seven different councils within Lincolnshire developing their own policy. The main changes were the addition of two new

chapters on:

1. County lines and cuckooing;
2. Stalking.

These chapters had been introduced as there had been emerging themes across Lincolnshire. Both of these chapters had directly affected West Lindsey as a district.

An attempt had been made to revise the referral process. The previous referral process used a list of names; now the approach was to categorise concerns. A fictional example was given of a customer owing council tax arrears flippantly saying they were going to harm themselves; a referral process would be used for such comments.

The safeguarding training programme had been reviewed; following consultation with staff, it was suggested that the training was intensive, and not necessarily relevant to all job roles within WLDC. What Home Choices were now trying to do as a team was visit other teams within WLDC and suggest the level of training that they might require.

Following this introduction, Members provided comment on the report and officers responded to this. Further information was provided:

- Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks were the responsibility of the Human Resources (HR) department, and do depend on the job role as to whether they are necessary. Enhanced DBS checks were necessary for those job roles where significant time was being spent alone with individuals;
- Part of the new Domestic Abuse Charter that had been released recommended that each district had its own domestic abuse policy. This would be available at a future committee when it had been formulated. Currently, there was an internal recording process for those staff members concerned about colleagues;
- There was an officer at WLDC that was trained to deliver domestic abuse courses. For modern slavery training, WLDC would ask specialist agencies to deliver this; the Home Choices Manager received alerts when such training was available in the county.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) Support a shared county wide safeguarding policy and the below amendments to the current policy:
 - (a) Agree to the refined safeguarding training programme;
 - (b) Agree to the amended safeguarding referral process;
 - (c) Accept the introduction of safeguarding representatives.
- (2) Delegate minor amendments and housekeeping to the Executive Director of Economic and Commercial Growth in consultation with the Chairmen of the Corporate Policy and Resources and Joint Staff Consultative Committees.

41 BUDGET AND TREASURY MONITORING MID YEAR REVIEW 2019/20

Members considered a report setting out the revenue, capital and treasury management activity from 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019.

The highlights from the report included:

- There was a forecast net contribution to reserves of £628,000. This was after taking into account the approved carry forward of £25,000, and £170,000 of carry forward requests from services for future approval;
- £389,000 of the forecast contribution related to the interest payable on borrowing, which had previously been approved by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee to set aside at the year end to the Valuation Volatility Risk Reserve should it be required;
- Treasury Management – an average return of 1.555% had been achieved for the quarter. Total investments at the end of the period stood at £16.2 million.
- The forecast outturn position for capital expenditure was £22.655 million.

Further information was provided by officers and Members:

- WLDCs earmarked reserves were allocated for spending, and having requirements to use those reserves. WLDC choose to earmark reserves at the earliest opportunity. WLDC was well placed compared to some other authorities;
- A Crematorium Manager was appointed in June 2019; one of the reasons for doing this well in advance of opening was to be able to review the plans for the crematorium. The level of cremations expected was around 35% of the marketplace at a previous point in time; after reviewing how many cremations were expected in year one, this level of 35% was exceeded by around 20 cremations;
- The Car Park Strategy Investment Reserve was a method of funding future car park development. Due to the way this income came forward, it would be insufficient to provide this contribution. Users of car parks on West Lindsey would be unaffected;
- The green waste service income figure target was being exceeded – however there were two different figures within the report. The correct figure of £102,000 was made up of £100,000 of additional income and £2,000 of net operational savings;
- The underspend for the viability funding capital grant for the Sun Inn of £58,000 had been retained until the restaurant underneath the Travelodge in Gainsborough had been provided;
- Negotiations were ongoing with a factory close to the riverside walkway so that the Riverside Walk could be completed. WLDC were working with ACIS to provide 130 homes at this site in Gainsborough;
- The unforeseen overspend of £547,000 at the site of the new Market Rasen Leisure Centre was due to underground pipework being discovered that had to be diverted;
- Following the meeting with the Gainsborough Investment Network on 31 October, the

next stage of the four bid process would be a visit to Gainsborough by the Access Foundation on 18 November. If the bid from WLDC was successful, there could be an award of £100,000 development grant towards the final bid process;

- The bad debt provision had dropped because of the transfer of service users in receipt of universal credit; this debt was no longer being held by WLDC;
- The CLLA - LAPF £3 million investment had generated an interest rate of 4.22%.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) Accept the forecast out-turn position of a £628,000 net contribution to reserves as at 30 September 2019;
- (2) Accept the use of Earmarked Reserves during the quarter approved by the Executive Director of Resources using delegated powers;
- (3) Approve the creation of a new earmarked reserve 'Feasibility Fund';
- (4) Approve the Capital Budget amendments as detailed in the report at 3.2.1 and approve that the current projected Capital out-turn becomes the revised Budget for future monitoring purposes;
- (5) Accept the Treasury Management and prudential indicators to 30 September 2019.

42 MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT 2019/20

Members considered the mid-year update for Treasury Management, including the revision of prudential indicators in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003.

The report reflected implications of the revised capital programme that had been presented in the Budget and Treasury monitoring mid-year report that had just been considered; in addition this report also developed the strategy for 2020/21.

There had been no changes to the Treasury Management Strategy, and no breaches of either Treasury or Prudential indicators.

The latest forecast net borrowing requirement was £40,589,000, down from the estimate of £43,184,000 from the start of the financial year. This revised estimate was mainly due to slippage on the capital programme.

Members asked questions of officers; further information was provided:

- Over 50% of the value of the asset register was due to the commercial portfolio;
- Members were reminded of the process for borrowing that had been delegated to officers. All borrowing was taken with due diligence, looking at the interest rates that WLDC would incur in accordance with the capital programme. Councillors were part

of the approval process; in addition all borrowing had to be signed off by the Section 151 Officer, with a review from the Deputy Section 151 Officer.

RESOLVED to note the report and the treasury activity and recommend the changes to prudential indicators to **Full Council**.

43 PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES 2020/21

Members considered proposed fees and charges to take effect from 1 April 2020 for the year 2020/2021.

At their meeting in October, Prosperous Communities Committee had recommended their fees and charges schedule for approval by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

Since the publication of the agenda pack, there had been a change to one of the proposed charges on the crematorium in relation to the book of remembrance, which was contained within Appendix 15. The original charge had been based on the industry standard of 2, 5, or 8 lines of text within the book; the Crematorium Manager proposed making a charge for 2 lines and then an additional £10 charge for every extra line. It was also proposed to add a charge for every illustration that was requested for the book of remembrance; this would be priced on application.

There had been a full review of fees and charges by Service Managers and their Finance Business Partners, taking into account total cost recovery and benchmarking data to determine whether any increase could be applied to non-statutory charges in line with the Fees and Charges policy. Where possible, a minimum increase of inflation of 3% had been applied, and in some cases a larger increase had been allocated if it had been shown that WLDC were charging in the lower quartile.

There were 41 new charges; 34 of which related to the new crematorium, 4 related to Strategic Housing, 2 to Licensing, and there was one new charge within Planning Services.

4 charges relating to Licensing have decreased to avoid challenge as the reduced charge achieved total cost recovery and brought Licensing charges in line with benchmarking data. There was no impact on budgeted income for this service.

The base Budget for 2020/2021 had increased by £17,600, rising to £24,100 in 2024/2025.

Fees and charges for the crematorium would apply upon its opening to the public.

Following this introduction, Members and officers provided further comment:

- The Crematorium Manager had looked at benchmarking data from the local area, as well as nationally to arrive at the proposed charges. It had been felt that these charges were reasonable;
- The costs of hiring and using the Trinity Arts Centre were now seen as the market rate. This had had an impact on local groups; however officers felt that users were now receiving a more professional service as a direct result of the increased money that had been spent on the venue.

WLDC were looking to increase the amount of money that could be retained from ticket sales. However in the meantime, the market rate would continue to be charged; if groups were struggling to pay this then another method of funding their use of the Trinity Arts Centre could be through a subsidised grant;

- The issues of rates being charged by Trinity Arts Centre was considered by the Prosperous Communities Committee as well as the Community Grants Panel. One of the problems identified was groups hiring the Trinity Arts Centre for rehearsal space, which could have been done at a variety of other venues at a cheaper rate. This study also showed that the space was being hired for longer than was needed;

Finally, the Head of Paid Service agreed to feed back to officers advice from Gainsborough Town Councillors present that fees for burials of under 16s could possibly be recouped through a new fund that had been proposed by Parliament.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) **Recommend to Council** for approval the proposed fees and charges as detailed in Appendices A and B;
- (2) **Recommend to Council** for approval the proposed fees and charges at Appendices 1-3, as well as those recommended by prosperous Communities Committee detailed at Appendices 4-17;
- (3) Approve the charges for the Crematorium, which were to include those new charges for the book of remembrance, and that these charges were to apply upon the opening of the Crematorium;
- (4) Approve the introduction of the new non-statutory charge within Planning Services called 'Do I need planning permission?'; this was to be applied from 1 January 2020.

44 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

The Democratic and Civic Officer informed those present that a new column had been added to the workplan to indicate when a forward plan item had first been added.

Following this update, the workplan was noted.

45 CHANGE OF MEETING DATES

It was **AGREED** to move the following meetings to new dates in the 2019/20 municipal year:

Corporate Policy and Resources Committee – move from April 9 2020 to a new date of April 23 2020;

Licensing and Regulatory Committees – move from December 5 2019 to a new date of December 10 2019.

46 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 paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

47 POTENTIAL COMPULSORY PURCHASE OF RIVERSIDE GATEWAY

Members considered a report on the potential compulsory purchase of the Riverside Gateway at Carr Lane, Gainsborough, subject to final approval of the Orders at a future Corporate Policy and Resource Committee.

The site had been derelict for many years.

The project at Riverside Gateway had received support from partnering organisations, and had ranked highly as an infrastructure project for the marina element. However, this proposal would not include the marina land; only the residential land.

The location of the Gateway, and its potential could have a transformational change to the South West Ward in Gainsborough. It could also support the Gainsborough Town Centre regeneration schemes. The complication of the site was the current landowner, and the scope for them to deliver a scheme of this size. There was also a disagreement between the landowner and WLDC over the valuation of the site.

It was important for Members to remember that Compulsory Purchase Orders should always be seen as a last resort.

Following comment from Councillors on certain aspects of the site, it was **RESOLVED** to:

- (1) Prepare the case in principle for a Compulsory Purchase Order under Section 226(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, for the acquisition of the site at Carr Lane, Gainsborough (known as Riverside Gateway – this would specifically exclude ‘marina’ land), subject to final approval of the draft at a future Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.
- (2) Approve a capital budget of up to £1,450,000 to acquire this site;
- (3) Approve that the Executive Director of Economic and Commercial Growth and the Executive Director of Resources, in consultation with the Chairmen of Prosperous Communities and Corporate Policy and Resources Committees, with the requisite legal representation be authorised to:
 - (a) Acquire interests in the property by agreement;
 - (b) Liaise with Homes England and any funders to pursue any funding mechanism to deliver the scheme;
 - (c) Liaise with Muse as West Lindsey District Council’s Development Partner to carry forward with the development of a residential scheme;
 - (d) Procure an alternative developer or contractor to carry forward the

- development of a residential scheme;
- (e) Take all necessary actions to give effect to these recommendations;
- (f) Approve a capital budget to acquire the land.

48 BUDGET AND TREASURY MONITORING MID YEAR REVIEW 2019/20 - EXEMPT APPENDIX

This item had been previously withdrawn.

49 PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES - EXEMPT APPENDICES

The exempt appendices were noted.

The meeting concluded at 8.18 pm.

Chairman