

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held via <https://west-lindsey.public-i.tv/core/portal/home> on 1 December 2020 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Owen Bierley (Chairman)
Councillor John McNeill (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Stephen Bunney
Councillor Christopher Darcel
Councillor Michael Devine
Councillor Mrs Jessie Milne
Councillor Mrs Judy Rainsforth
Councillor Tom Regis
Councillor Jim Snee
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee
Councillor Mrs Anne Welburn
Councillor Trevor Young

In Attendance:

Ady Selby	Assistant Director of Commercial and Operational Services
Sally Grindrod-Smith	Assistant Director of Planning and Regeneration
Andy Gray	Housing and Enforcement Manager
Sue Leversedge	Business Support Team Leader
Ellen King	Senior Performance Officer
Katie Storr	Senior Democratic & Civic Officer
Ele Snow	Democratic and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
Councillor Mrs Tracey Coulson

Membership: No substitutes were appointed for the meeting.

27 REGISTER OF ATTENDANCE

The Chairman welcomed all present to the virtual meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee and undertook the customary roll-call of Members, which was followed by a roll-call of Officers in attendance.

28 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

29 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- (a) Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee – 20 October 2020.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held on 20 October 2020 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

30 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

The Chairman introduced the report advising Members that the report would be taken “as read” unless Members had any questions.

With no questions raised and with no requirement for a vote, the Matters Arising were **DULY NOTED**.

31 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Judy Rainsforth declared a personal interest in agenda items 6 (b) Appendix 13 (Fees and Charges relating to the Crematorium) as she had recently made enquiries about the introduction of a new type of service.

32 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY REPORT, APRIL - SEPTEMBER 2021

Members considered the Progress and Delivery report for quarter 2 (July to September) 2020/2021.

The format of the report was new, as were the types of measures being reported. For those key performance indicators (KPIs) where it had been identified that significant remedial action was required, actions would be created. In order to monitor progress, these action plans would be included in Progress and Delivery reports on a rolling basis until all actions identified had been completed. It had not been necessary to include any actions plans within the quarter two report.

It was noted that the Corona virus pandemic had had a significant impact on the Council's performance in quarters one and two. In some cases this had led to improvements the example cited being increased recycling rates as a result of people being at home longer. In other cases the effects had been negative, with some services unable to operate fully, or at all for lengthy periods of time, including the Leisure Centre, Town Centre Markets and the Trinity Arts Centre. Services seeing such impacts were unlikely to meet their performance target by year-end. Other services such as Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support had experienced unprecedented spikes in demand placing additional strain on capacity. The easing of lockdown in June, would see performance improve in some of these areas, however it was currently too early to estimate whether or when performance would return to pre-Covid levels. Update and analysis would continue to be provided through the Progress and Delivery reports.

Members noted the overall summary position across all indicators as follows: -

Overall, 54% of KPIs were above target, 19% were meeting their target, and 27% were below target. Of those measures exceeding their target, 75% had been above target for two quarters or more. Of those below target, 25% had been below target for two quarters or more. Where performance was below target, it was overwhelmingly because of Covid 19 – some underperformance was likely to continue due to new national restrictions.

Discussion of the report was then broken down into sections of the organisation the first two areas being Corporate Health and Finance and Property.

It was noted that during the last two quarters staff sickness absence had increased on previous reports; however WLDC was benchmarked against other similar-sized Councils and was currently out-performing them in this category.

Members raised no questions in respect of these service areas.

The next section discussed was performance relating to the Homes and Communities portfolio, in which a number of performance indicators sat below target. Members asked a number of questions in respect of this section during which it was noted that the target for the 'number of nights spent in Bed and Breakfast (B and B) accommodation was a statutory target set by government at 0. This meant it was unlikely to ever be met. However, the target remained at 0 rather than be changed as the authority did not want to place people into B and B. WLDC had recently been informed of some grant funding that would be put towards 6 units of accommodation. A Member enquired the cost to the Council of using bed and breakfast accommodation and in the absence of the data being to hand Officers undertook to provide the information outside of the meeting.

Officers shared Members 'concern' regarding the wording of the target 'number of households prevented from becoming homeless and indicated this would be further considered during the planned light touch review.

An additional piece of contextual information had been provided to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee in respect of the 'Long Term Empty Property' performance. Officers undertook to share the same information with Committee Members.

The next service area under discussion was the Operational and Commercial Performance Summary. Members asked a number of questions in respect of this section and made a number of suggestions regarding amended and additional targets they considered would be useful.

In response to questions, Officers outlined the additional grant funding which had been awarded following a successful bid, to assist in the recovery of the Trinity Arts Centre. Whilst the crematorium currently had no targets, it was performing as expected and in-line with its Business Plan. Fly-tipping had increased nationally, however the authority had undertaken a significant amount of work including action days and work focussing on prevention. Commercial waste in recent months appeared to be recovering well.

In respect of Markets it was suggested that a better measure may be the number of stalls

occupied, as opposed to the current number of traders. A target capturing users or footfall, Members felt was worthy of consideration in the future. Officers indicated that such matters would be further considered during the planned light touch review. Including the number of stalls occupied would be added to the report going forward. Officers undertook to investigate whether data was held in respect of the number of subscriptions resulting from visits to the Market Rasen Leisure Centre and would provide this to Members outside of the meeting.

In response to comments regarding the wider community role the Trinity Arts Centre could play in the future, Officers were pleased to confirm that a new measure was already being developed around the number of engagement activities hosted at the Centre. Monitoring of this would commence from the Spring. The wider community role of the Centre in the future was a shared aspiration.

Members had no questions in respect of the performance relating to the Planning and Regeneration portfolio, which was performing above target, or the Regulatory Services and Change Management portfolio. The work being undertaken in the Land Charges Service to improve performance, including granting Covid safe access to the Office for personal search companies was highlighted to Members. This service had seen a number of 'Covid side effects' combining to impact delivery.

The Chairman thanked the Senior Performance Officer for the report and also thanked members for the points raised during discussion of the paper.

Having been moved and seconded on being put to the vote it was: -

RESOLVED that having assessed the performance of the Council's services through the agreed performance measures, and having had regard to the remedial measures set out in the report, no areas required improvements, additional to those stated in the report, at this time.

Note: The above vote was conducted by the Vice-Chairman due to the Chairman having temporarily lost connection to the meeting. The Chairman did not therefore vote on the above item of business, but re-joined the meeting prior to the next item of business.

Councillor Young, who had advised the Chairman he would be late to the meeting, also joined the meeting at this point in proceedings.

33 PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES 2021/22 PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES

Members gave consideration to a report and multiple appendices which set out the proposed fees and charges for 2021/22 for services which sat within the remit of the Prosperous Communities Committee

It was noted that the Council had in place a corporate Fees, Charges and Concessions Policy which provided clear guidance on a number of areas, with particular focus on how fees and charges could assist in the achievement of Corporate Priorities, the Council's approach to cost recovery and income generation from fees and charges and eligibility for concessions.

Work had been undertaken to bring the fees and charges in line with this policy, through reviewing existing fees and charges and considering the introduction of new charges for Council services, to recover costs and control demand. Full details were contained in section 2 of the report with outcome summarised in Section 3, namely: -

Of the 610 fees and charges reviewed 41% were statutory and 59% were non-statutory.

Of the 252 statutory fees and charges set by Central Government 97% had experienced no change in the level of fees, with 3% seeing an increase in fees chargeable.

The increases in fees and charges for statutory services sat within Environmental Services for private water supply work.

Of the 358 non-statutory fees and charges, 49% had experienced no change and 51% had increased.

Of those 182 (51%) non-statutory fees and charges increased, this equated to an average of £9.72 in monetary terms (net of VAT).

The proposed fees and charges would apply from 1st April 2021, unless there were other preventing constraints, in which case the operative date would be as soon as practicable after 1st April.

The complete schedule of proposed fees and charges was set out at Appendix 1 of the report, each subsequent appendix providing detail and analysis of pricing and demand, and the proposed charges.

In response to Members' questions Officers confirmed why the 3% increase figure had been used and also that not significant increase in burial or crematorium fees was being proposed.

Referring to the fees related to Markets, it was suggested that market stalls provided a great opportunity for start-up business, and as such market stalls should be priced accordingly particularly given the current economic climate. There were also calls for markets wider than Gainsborough's to be supported across the District and a requirement for a more joined-up thinking approach to Markets and the wider benefits.

Assurance was offered that both matters would be addressed by future reports, currently included within the work plan. Rents were due to be reviewed in the early New Year. A wider review was underway and would include exploring the option of extending market provision across the District. A report was expected in the early Spring.

Members confirmed that they had no questions or concerns on the exempt appendices associated with this report.

Having been moved and seconded, on being put to the vote it was unanimously: -

RESOLVED that

(a) the proposed fees and charges for 2021/22 as set out within the report, **BE**

RECOMMENDED to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

- (b) Fees and charges be kept under review throughout the year. If necessary changes identified during the financial year, be reported directly to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for their approval as appropriate.

34 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION POLICY

Members gave consideration to a report which presented a newly developed Policy. The New Environmental Protection Policy provided a framework for the functions undertaken by the Environmental Protection work area. The development of the Policy was in response to the work area audit review carried out in 2019 in which substantial assurance was achieved.

The Policy covered the following functions and sat underneath the Corporate Enforcement Policy;

- Statutory Nuisance (Noise, Smoke, Odour, Accumulation of Waste)
- Smoke Control
- Air Quality
- Environmental Permitting
- Public Health Drainage
- Contaminated Land
- Prevention of Damage by Pests
- Private Water Supplies
- Sunday Trading

The Policy aimed to provide a clear framework in which to make decisions and to ensure that the Council's position was clear in relation to the matters covered within it.

If approved the Policy would to come into effect immediately, following any call- in period.

Debate ensued and given the nature of the Policy and its potential linkages with work being undertaken by the Council's Sustainability Working Group, a member of that Group suggested that this and any such Policy should be reviewed by that Group, as part of a Policy's development. There were also concerns that if the Policy was for external customers, its presentation and language could be more customer friendly in its design. The use of flow charts and diagrams to express timelines involved was a favoured approach, and something it was considered the Council should consider adopting more widely.

In response, whilst Officers initially indicated they were happy to receive comments from the mentioned Working Group, others Members expressed caution. The Working Group had a clear terms of reference, set by its parent committee. It was for the parent committee to decide whether any working Groups remit should be extended. Giving a working group the power to review all policies in their development stage was not something considered appropriate, with Policy being within the remit of this Committee to set. Regarding the style and wording of the document, given the Policy's regulatory nature, some of the language used was unavoidable. Assurance was given that the Policy would be supported by more

customer facing / friendly documents as suggested.

There was some debate regarding the wording of the Aims and Objectives within Section 2 of the Policy, in particular the use of the word “acceptable”. It was questioned whether this was appropriate or whether the Council should be striving for more, should there be an acceptable level?

In response Officers again re-iterated that this was a regulatory policy and many of the areas covered by the Policy, within law and regulation were dealt with within a framework which included an acceptance; a tolerance level, air quality being the cited example. Given this, the consensus was that the wording should remain unchanged.

Having been moved, seconded and on being put to the vote it was unanimously: -

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) the Environmental Protection Policy be approved; and
- (b) delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive in consultation with Chair of the Prosperous Communities Committee to undertake any housekeeping amendments arising in the future.

35 S106 PRECEDENT WORDING AMENDMENT

West Lindsey have a standard precedent wording for S106 agreements which had previously been agreed by Members. This precedent was increasingly causing delays to the planning process due to the Mortgagee Exemption Clause being unacceptable to Registered Providers (RP.)

Members considered a report which sought to amend the exemption clause wording currently used, replacing it with the National Housing Federation Mortgagee Exemption Clause wording (as detailed in appendix 2 para 1).

In presenting the report Officers outlined the current approach, what had changed in recent years, giving rise to the current issues experienced, and finally, the risks to the Council in making the change or not, as outlined in Section 3 of the report.

Note: Councillor Mandy Snee made a declaration of interest, in that she was currently working with ACIS Housing through a secondment arrangement, as such she would not take part in the debate or vote.

Councillor John McNeill raised a point of order, seeking clarity on the nature of the Councillors interest and whether it did preclude her from taking part. The meeting was advised that whilst the Councillors interest did not meet the threshold for a disclosable pecuniary interest, mandating the Councillor to leave, it was an individual’s choice as to whether they chose to be part of the debate/ vote in such circumstances.

Following further clarity from the Councillor as to the nature of his question, Officers confirmed that there was an adopted to procedure to ensure that when a Councillor did have

a disclosable pecuniary interest, they could be legitimately removed from the meeting by the administrators for that item of business. The procedure had been in operation for the Planning Committee and had worked effectively.

On being moved, seconded and put to the vote it was unanimously: -

RESOLVED that the National Housing Federation Mortgagee Exemption Clause wording (as detailed in appendix 2 para. 1) be accepted as the standard S106 precedent wording, replacing the wording previously used.

Note: Having left the meeting during consideration of the above item of business, Councillor Mandy Snee returned, prior to consideration of the next item of business.

36 TOGETHER 24 PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report which sought to inform Members of the new, transformational programme, Together 24 (T24), a collaborative programme designed to ensure all Council services were able to move to the next level in service delivery.

With technology moving fast and customers' expectations changing; their experience through whichever channel they choose to access Council services should have the right look and feel, and be consistent. Furthermore it should enable learning for the Council to ensure it improves its service delivery.

This new programme had arisen following the recommendations of the Peer Review in early 2020. T24 had developed a clear Vision and a condensed number of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) Objectives, detailed at Section 2.5 of the report

The Project would have its own Programme Board within the governance structure of the Council. The Programme would be implemented through a five step approach detailed in Section 4.4. of the report. Service reviews had been divided into 7 tranches. Those services included in tranche 1 were detailed at 4.5 of the report.

The programme aimed to have delivered the recommendations from technology-led service reviews in all front and back office service areas by December 2024. The resources and risks associated with the Project were also outlined to Members.

In response to some Members' comments that the report lacked detailed, assurance was offered that each objective had a detailed Action Plan behind it with specific targets. Ultimately, the project aimed to streamline all services, ensuring the best use of technology was made, provide instant feedback to customers and inform future service delivery. A number of examples as to how this change in approach could be deployed in the fly-tipping services, improving response times and providing instant feedback to customers, were cited.

It was suggested by Members that the Programme could bring with it some climate related benefits and this should have been expressed within the relevant section of the report template.

Having been moved and seconded, on being put to the vote it was unanimously: -

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the achievements of the Customer First Programme be acknowledged;
- (b) The Objectives of the Together 24 Programme, as set out below, be approved;
 - All Council services have been redesigned with approved recommendations implemented by December 2024
 - Customer requirements are identified and factored into service redesigns with focus on digital enablement by December 2024
 - Maintain and or improve levels of customer and officer satisfaction by December 2024
 - Ensure that officers have the right level of skills and behaviours and have the right tools to do their job by December 2024
 - Efficiencies totalling a minimum of £300k are realised by December 2024
- (c) progress related to the Together 24 (T24) programme be reported annually through the Members' Newsletter, with oversight of the Project being reported quarterly to the Chairs Briefing Meeting, as part of the wider project update report regularly received

37 WORKPLAN

Members gave consideration to the Committee Workplan.

With no questions raised and with no requirement for a vote, the Work Plan was **DULY NOTED**.

The meeting concluded at 8.22 pm.

Chairman