

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held in the Virtual - MS Teams on 13 October 2020 commencing at 2.00 pm.

Present: Councillor John McNeill (Chairman)

Councillor Stephen Bunney
Councillor Mrs Tracey Coulson
Councillor Mrs Caralyne Grimble
Councillor Mrs Angela White
Alison Adams
Andrew Morriss

In Attendance:

Alan Robinson	Director of Corporate Services and Monitoring Officer
Tracey Bircumshaw	Assistant Director of Finance and Property Services and Section 151 Officer
Rachael Grattrick	Assurance Lincolnshire
Natalie Kostiuik	Customer Experience Officer
James O'Shaughnessy	Corporate Policy Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer
Stacey Richardson	Principal Auditor
Ele Snow	Democratic and Civic Officer
Katie Storr	Senior Democratic & Civic Officer
James Welbourn	Democratic and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Mrs Jackie Brockway

33 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

34 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2020 were approved as a correct record.

35 MEMBERS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests.

36 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN (LGSCO) ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER 2019/20 REPORT

Members considered a report on the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) annual review letter for 2019/20. This review letter covered complaints referred, or

decided by the LGSCO in the period 2019/2020. Highlights included:

- There had been a decrease in the number of complaints compared to previous years, with 11 cases referred to the LGSCO in the period 2019/2020;
- 15 decisions had been taken by the LGSCO in total, meaning that 4 cases had been carried over from the period 2018/2019. 1 complaint had been upheld, which was in relation to an environmental protection noise complaint. A recommendation of a BS4142 noise assessment should be carried and payment be made to the complainant.

Following this introduction, Councillors asked questions of officers. Further information was provided:

- Although the overall look of the report was pleasing, there were only a limited number of complaints upheld across Council services so it was difficult to produce meaningful analysis;
- Some complaints did not go to the LGSCO and had different routes to a solution. For instance, if a parish council took a complaint to the LGSCO, they would not investigate. Another example would be where a complaint was investigated, but no injustices were found – this would be taken no further.

Different disputes at parish council level may go through the courts system or the standards process;

- The LGSCO set an average target of 6 months to resolve complaints, but some can take longer than this, depending on the complexity of the complaint. There had been examples of complaints taking many years to resolve.

The report was duly moved and seconded, and following a vote it was unanimously **RESOLVED** to:

- (1) Agree that the content of the report regarding the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter had been satisfactorily scrutinised;
- (2) Be assured that complaint handling procedures were functioning adequately.

37 AMENDMENT TO SECTION 13A POLICY RESULTING IN REQUEST FOR CONSTITUTION TO BE AMEND

Members considered an amendment to the Council Tax Discretionary Hardship (Section 13a) Policy, which if approved would lead to a request for constitutional change.

The report was moved, seconded, and following a vote it was unanimously **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** that the Constitution be amended as follows:

Section and Page Reference	Change required
page 23 of Part IV of the Constitution – Responsibility for	The following be DELETED

Functions – Appeals Board	“5. To hear appeals against decisions not to award Section 13 A Council Tax Discretionary Relief”
page 28/29 of Part IV of the Constitution – Responsibility for Functions – Chief Executive	The following be ADDED “to determine any appeal made against a decision to not award Section 13 A Council Tax Discretionary Relief. Limits on Delegation: - following Consultation with the Leader of the Council” .

38 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL REPORT

Members considered a review of Member development for the previous civic year. The Democratic and Civic Officer introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- Member development sessions have had to be cancelled due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Virtual options to deliver training had been explored as an alternative;
- ‘Chairing Skills’ had been the title of the first workshop; feedback was still being received, but so far those that had responded were very satisfied. There had been some suggestions of improvements, but overall the training was recommended for other Members.

Members then asked questions of officers and also provided comment – further information was provided:

- Roleplaying for chairing meetings could be useful to Members. This could include challenging situations and how to deal with them;
- There were particular accounting methods used in local government – it would be useful to have a short guide to these;
- Support from the political groups would be appreciated as officers cannot mandate Members to attend training;
- One way of engaging more Members may be to lay on a single face to face meeting via video, whilst asking them if there was any particular member development they were interested in;
- Snippets of meetings that had gone well, or had even gone badly would be useful as training materials;
- It can be awkward for an officer to ask Members what their strengths and weaknesses were, however this was easier at the start of a Member’s term of office.

Giving training to those more senior Members could be something to be looked at by the Member Development Group;

- Need to bear in mind those that have outside commitments when arranging training. The training needed to be a mixture of face to face, and online in the future;
- Ongoing training would be helpful to Members. There can be a lot of training within the first few weeks of becoming a Councillor, but to some it felt like the training sessions were fewer in number further into the 4 year cycle.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) Accept this report as an accurate reflection of Member Development for 2019/20 and 2020/21 to date; and
- (2) Note the suggestions for future development opportunities, to be considered by the Member Development Group.

39 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT QUARTER 2 20/21

Members considered a quarterly update from Assurance Lincolnshire, internal auditors for West Lindsey District Council.

At the time the report was published, there was one report at draft stage, in respect of cyber security. The final report on this would be due in the third quarter of 2020/2021. At present, there were four audits in progress.

The profile target had been adjusted to reflect that work would be completed in three quarters of the year rather than four.

There were no outstanding audit actions.

Members then provided comment on the report and asked questions of officers. Further information was provided:

- The follow up to the Food Safety, Environmental Protection and Enforcement audit was given high assurance;
- If an audit was at 'field work' stage, this would mean that it was a work in progress;
- The ICT Cyber Security audit was at draft report stage because it was going through an approval process. As it was a joint audit with North Kesteven, approval would be sought from both councils.

The report was moved, seconded, and following a vote it was unanimously **RESOLVED** to agree the content of the report.

40 WORKPLAN

The workplan was noted.

The meeting concluded at 3.07 pm.

Chairman