

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 12 November 2019 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers (Vice-Chairman) and
Councillor Mrs Angela White (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Liz Clews
Councillor David Dobbie
Councillor Jane Ellis
Councillor Mrs Caralyne Grimble
Councillor Cherie Hill
Councillor Mrs Angela Lawrence
Councillor Keith Panter
Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Lewis Strange
Councillor Lewis Strange

In Attendance: Councillor Michael Devine
Councillor Trevor Young

Also In Attendance:

DI Jenny Waddington	Lincolnshire Police
Alan Robinson	Monitoring Officer
Ady Selby	Assistant Director Operations
Andy Gray	Housing and Enforcement Manager
Wendy Osgodby	Senior Growth Strategy & Projects Officer
Ele Snow	Democratic and Civic Officer

18 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3 September 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

19 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this stage of the meeting.

20 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

The Committee gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule, setting out the current position of previously agreed actions, as at 4 November 2019.

A Member of Committee enquired about the timings of the invitation to the Environment Agency. The Chairman explained that there had been several conversations and discussions regarding flooding issues in the District and the visit by the Environment Agency to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was one element of those discussions.

RESOLVED that the Matters Arising Schedule as at 4 November 2019 be received and noted.

21 PRESENTATION ITEM - LINCOLNSHIRE POLICE

The Chairman introduced Detective Inspector Jenny Waddington who explained her background in CID and that her area covered Lincoln and Gainsborough. DI Waddington had received questions from the Committee in advance of the meeting and explained she had prepared answers as far as possible but was happy to discuss other areas as the Committee wished.

Q1. At the last visit, we heard that there were funding changes in the pipeline – have these changes come into effect and have there been any tangible improvements across the district / county?

DI Waddington explained that unfortunately, circumstances had not changed. There had been no changes to the funding available and although there were new recruits coming into the area, these merely kept the number of officers at status quo, rather than there being an increase. The Government had put caveats on the money available for new recruits, meaning the funds had to be spent on Officer numbers rather than PCSOs, in fact, the number of PCSOs across the county was due to reduce as further savings had to be made.

Q2. There were concerns that Officer numbers would be reduced if funding arrangements weren't improved – have these concerns now been alleviated? Are there any plans for more recruitment?

DI Waddington expanded on her previous answer to explain that there was ongoing recruitment and Lincolnshire Police had continued with their recruitment drive ahead of receiving any of the Government funding. She also explained that the recruits were being brought in under the previous schemes meaning there was no requirement for them to be university graduates. The new scheme of recruits having to be graduates was currently being appealed against and so Lincolnshire Police were continuing under the terms of the previous recruitment criteria.

Q3. What are the responsibilities and powers of PCSOs across the district?

The Committee were offered a written summary of the roles and responsibilities of PCSOs across the district and this was distributed to all Members.

Q4. What are the priorities for the Force across the district / county?

The Committee heard that the West Division was running an initiative against knife crime and offensive weapons. This was in partnership with other agencies and local schools with

the aim of educating young people about the dangers. DI Waddington added that protecting people from fraud and scams, protecting the vulnerable in the community and dealing with drug related issues were also Force priorities. Given the nature of the area covered by the Force, rural crime was also a focus, with crime prevention teams working with communities to highlight prevention methods and to disrupt any criminal behaviours. Committee Members discussed the benefits, or drawbacks, of communities using social media as a way of reporting or discussing crimes and DI Waddington emphasised the need for all crime to be reported as it was not possible for the Police to monitor social media for incidents of unreported crime. She highlighted that often, rural crimes were more likely to be solved if there was a pattern to the crimes, or a spate of them, giving the Police more information to work on. If such crimes were not reported, it was more difficult to trace the perpetrators. A Member of Committee also commented on the success of Lincs Alert and encouraged fellow Councillors to support the widespread use of this app.

Q5. What increase have you seen in drug related activity, for example the County Lines problems, and how do you work with other agencies? Is there anything the Council could do to promote inter-agency working? What percentage of crimes across the county and the district are related to drug use?

The Committee heard that there have been several initiatives to tackle drug issues across the area but it was not possible to quantify how many crimes were directly related to drug use. DI Waddington explained that current figures, accurate as of the day prior to the meeting, showed a reduction in drug possession and drug trafficking in West Lindsey. She explained that there was significant multiagency working to not only identify those who were vulnerable to exploitation for drug trafficking but also regarding child and sexual exploitation, such as what had been seen with County Lines.

Note: Councillor Liz Clews arrived at 7.10pm

Q6. What information is distributed regarding scams across the district (such as scam telephone calls), how are they dealt with, and, again, is there anything the Council can do to assist?

DI Waddington showed Committee Members an information leaflet that was ready for distribution in the coming days. She explained that the crime prevention team worked with Trading Standards and frauds and scams were usually dealt with centrally as it was not always clear where in the country they had originated. She stated those who were identified as vulnerable in the community, local Police Officers would visit them to support and assist.

Q7. Is there any focus being given to road safety across the district, in light of recent accidents that have resulted in fatalities?

It was emphasised that speed limits on the road network were controlled by the Highways Agency but DI Waddington explained that the Police worked in partnership with the agency to monitor and maintain road safety. The Police were responsible for dealing with speeding offences and in this regard, they had recently taken charge of two laser speed guns which were more efficient for the road side speed checks. She also highlighted that the annual drink drive campaign would be launching at the beginning of December and linked with this there would be a text number where people could anonymously report those who were deciding to drink and drive.

Q8. Are there any issues of which Members should be aware, but maybe aren't, and are there any suggestions for how the Council can support the police?

Committee Members were encouraged to promote the reporting of all crime as crime statistics had an impact on the numbers of Police Officers and funding across the area. Examples of putting problems on social media but then not reporting them were common but then did not give the Police the opportunity to work with those affected.

The Chairman thanked DI Waddington for her time and commended her team and the Force for the work they do across the district. This was loudly supported by all Committee Members with applause for DI Waddington and the Force.

Note: The meeting adjourned at 7.44pm and reconvened at 7.46pm.

22 PRE-SCRUTINY OF 5-7 MARKET PLACE REFURBISHMENT

The Senior Growth Strategy and Projects Officer introduced the report on the refurbishment options for 5 – 7 Market Place, Gainsborough. She explained that the premises had been purchased by the Council in the past and the report would be seen at the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee in order to make a decision as to how to proceed with the premises. She summarised the options that had been explored, namely to sell it at auction as it is, to sell it with conditions attached, to enter into a joint venture with a development partner or, as the option that was being recommended, for the Council to refurbish the premises for business and rental purposes. The Committee heard there was grant funding available in order to complete this work and the proposals worked together with the regeneration of Gainsborough Market Place.

The Monitoring Officer highlighted to Committee Members that the item was on the agenda for pre-decision scrutiny and the recommendation for Members was to support the progression of the report to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee and offer any comments or suggestions to aid that Committee making their final decision.

The Chairman thanked the Senior Growth Strategy and Projects Officer and invited comments from Committee Members. There was discussion regarding the funding structures and grants which were available, all of which was clarified by the Senior Growth Strategy and Projects Officer. It was stated that the cash flow information provided as supporting information was overly complicated to read in the current format and Members suggested that it could be simplified prior to going to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee. The Chairman also suggested that the report could be made easier to follow if the options for the property were in a quick reference table summarising the salient points of each option.

There was significant discussion as to how the Council had come to be in charge of the property in the first instance and it was highlighted that the purpose of the report at this point was to agree future actions, and for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make suggestions for improvements to the report in order to make those decisions. A Member of Committee suggested that, considering the costs involved, a second valuation should be sought and local tradespeople should be consulted to ensure best value for money. It was

agreed these suggestions could be included in the recommendations from the Committee.

The Senior Growth Strategy and Projects Officer explained that the building was in need of refurbishment as it would otherwise become a danger to the public. This meant that doing nothing with the property was not an option. A Member of Committee suggested that the Members of the policy committee may wish to undertake a site visit in order to understand the challenges of the project.

The Chairman reiterated the purpose of pre-decision scrutiny and summarised the suggestions that had been made by Committee Members. With no further discussion it was

RESOLVED that Members support the progression of the report to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee with the following suggestions:

- a) The report should be succinct with all three options clearly identified for ease of reference, for example in a table;
- b) The cash flow should be simplified;
- c) Opinions should be sought from local tradespeople and businesses to ensure best value for money;
- d) Consideration should be given to an independent valuation; and
- e) Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend that a site visit be undertaken prior to any decision.

23 SELECTIVE LICENSING ANNUAL UPDATE O & S

The Committee heard from the Housing and Enforcement Manager regarding the annual update for the Selective Licensing Scheme. He explained that this was an update for the Prosperous Communities Committee and there was no decision to be made. The key requirement from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was to identify whether any additional information could be included for the next Committee. The Housing and Enforcement Manager highlighted that the scheme had started in 2016, it covered a small area of the South West Ward in Gainsborough and was initiated under the Housing Act, requiring all private rental properties to be licensed. He explained that it was the smallest of such schemes in the country, with around 50 schemes operational nationwide. He stated that around 90% of private rental properties in the area were now licensed, with the initial numbers having been underestimated, both as a result of lack of local knowledge to begin with but also an increase in rental markets in recent years. The Committee heard that information about antisocial behaviour had been included as this was one of the areas taken into consideration when making the decision to designate an area for selective licensing. It was also explained that this was a five year designation, due to end in 2021.

The Chairman invited comments from the Committee and highlighted that there was no decision to be made but the Committee could make suggestions for further information to be included in the final report for the Prosperous Communities Committee.

It was suggested that areas of the report could be condensed, for example the initial background information, as this had been detailed in previous years. There was discussion regarding the successes of the scheme, for example the increased rate of successful prosecutions and the Housing and Enforcement Manager agreed these details could be included in the final report. There was significant discussion regarding other difficulties faced within the area, however it was noted that the information discussed was not relevant to the purpose of the report for the Prosperous Communities Committee.

As discussions drew to a close, the Chairman summarised the points raised, such as including the case study information regarding successful prosecutions and it was

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

24 FORWARD PLAN

The Monitoring Officer explained the purpose of receiving the Forward Plan for those Members of Committee who had not previously been involved with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He explained that, in accordance with the Operating Methodology, the Committee could choose up to four items per year from the forward plan to receive for pre-decision scrutiny. He highlighted that three items had been chosen already which left one remaining choice. He highlighted that this did not have to be decided on at this meeting.

RESOLVED that the forward plan be noted.

25 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

The Monitoring Officer commented that there would be an additional item for the Committee Workplan in relation to preparation for the Environment Agency.

RESOLVED that the workplan be noted.

26 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 item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Note: Councillor David Dobbie left the room at 9:04pm

27 PRE-SCRUTINY OF GAINSBOROUGH MARKET REPORT

The Committee gave consideration to a report from the Interim Assistant Director of Operations regarding the proposals for Market Street, Gainsborough. As this was a pre-decision scrutiny item, the Committee were invited to make comments and suggestions for the final report going to the Prosperous Communities Committee.

Note: Councillor David Dobbie returned to the meeting at 9:06pm.

There was significant discussion regarding the success of the farmers' markets and options for other areas across the District. Members praised the work to date and discussed the costs involved with events that had taken place in recent months. It was explained that it was not possible to separate costs as events were generally 'packaged' as one price for the whole event, with contributions from the Council as well as partner agencies.

With no further discussion it was

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted and supported to be presented to the Prosperous Communities Committee.

The meeting concluded at 9.17 pm.

Chairman