

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 18 February 2020 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings (Chairman)
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

Also Present: Councillor Owen Bierley
Councillor Stephen Bunney
Councillor Christopher Darcel

In Attendance:
Alan Robinson Monitoring Officer
Tracey Bircumshaw Strategic Finance and Business Support Manager
Ady Selby Assistant Director Operations
Ele Snow Democratic and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers

Also In Attendance: Mr John Ray, Senior Flood Risk Advisor, Environment Agency
Mr Andrew Haigh, Senior Flood Risk Advisor, Environment Agency
2 members of the public

36 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7 January 2020 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

37 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

38 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

The Chairman stated all outstanding items had now been completed and the Matters Arising Schedule was noted.

39 PARTNERSHIP WORKING - ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

The Chairman introduced Mr John Ray and Mr Andrew Haigh of the Environment Agency. She explained the initial invite to the Environment Agency had been made in the summer of 2019 and the purpose of inviting them had been to understand their roles and how to work together in times of need. She added that since making the first approach, there had since been several instances of flooding across the district and so there was an additional need to understand what had happened and how the Agency was working to reduce the risk of such incidents being repeated. She then handed the floor to Mr Ray and Mr Haigh.

Mr Ray introduced them both as Senior Flood Risk Advisors with the Environment Agency and although they covered different areas, West Lindsey sat in both catchments. He added that they had been provided with a brief for the evening, including a selection of pre-prepared questions and so in their presentation they had attempted to answer those questions. It was agreed that their presentation would be made available to Members after the meeting.

Members heard details of those involved with flood management including county councils, internal drainage boards, district councils and water and sewerage companies. Reference was also made to riparian landowners and the important role they could play in watercourse maintenance and oversight. The Committee was shown a map highlighting the area of West Lindsey, the split of the Environment Agency areas and the rivers and waterways covered within the district.

Information was given regarding the work undertaken by the Environment Agency including capital improvement projects (such as flood storage reservoirs and the Witham embankment strengthening), intermittent maintenance and the annual programme of maintenance. It was explained that aside from meteorological influences, the Agency also had to contend with ongoing difficulties such as badgers burrowing in embankments which, if left unchecked, could cause serious weaknesses in natural flood defences.

Members had specifically raised the issue of dredging, or de-silting, and whether the approach to this had changed in recent years. Mr Ray explained that the cost of such work was not always reflected in the result. He added that, where it would impact for example the workings of a flood defence structure, it would be routinely carried out to ensure the efficacy of the flood defence. In areas where it was not proven to have any significant benefit, dredging often proved too expensive. He noted that, as a result of recent floods, the Government had announced funding of £4billion nationwide and he demonstrated the improvement works this would effect for West Lindsey.

Mr Ray handed over to Mr Haigh who detailed the geographical area he covered and the programme of works which had been completed over recent years. There were many similarities in terms of routine maintenance and regular inspections however he stated there was increased inspection work underway at Morton as there were identified areas where the

banks were lower and therefore at increased risk of flooding. Mr Haigh also provided Members with details of the capital improvement programme for his area including the finances involved with this.

Mr Ray clarified for Members that the Agency had bid for additional funding following the recent flooding but it would not be known whether the bid had been successful until April. The planned work across the capital improvement programmes would go ahead however if the funding bid was successful, it would prove a major boost to the completion of such work.

There was explanation regarding the role of Lincolnshire County Council and their responsibility for surface water, ground water flooding and unlisted waterways. It was explained that the County Council was responsible for investigating incidents of flooding and would look for recommendations or ameliorative actions where possible.

Members heard that funding was based on protection of population rather than land and this impacted where the money was spent. It was explained that local authorities could carry out their own protections but funding was similarly a difficulty. Landowners also held responsibility for their own properties meaning they could carry out protective works however it was necessary for this to be taken into consideration with the Environment Agency to ensure there would be no adverse effects further down the waterway. Mr Ray stated that 2020 would see concerted efforts to communicate with landowners to explain this and offer advice where necessary.

To conclude their presentation, Mr Ray and Mr Haigh explained that the investigations following recent flooding events were ongoing and it was therefore not yet possible to advise of what changes may be made as a result. They did reiterate that additional funding had been applied for but it would be several weeks before it was known if this would be successful. They thanked the Committee for the opportunity to attend and invited questions from Members.

The Chairman thanked Mr Ray and Mr Haigh for their time and thoroughness of their presentation. She spoke on behalf of West Lindsey District Councillors who had experienced flooding in their areas to say they had seen difficult times for their residents and it was important to understand what more could be done to assist those affected and to make attempts to prevent the same happening again.

Note: Councillor A. Lawrence left the room at 7:39pm

Members of the Committee started discussions by relaying specific incidents that had occurred in their areas. It was confirmed that these difficulties were known to the Environment Agency and there would be ongoing investigations.

Note: Councillor A. Lawrence returned at 7:44pm

There was further discussion regarding specific areas and the importance of liaising with Parish Councils. This was agreed with by Mr Ray and Mr Haigh and they explained that they were attending Parish Council meetings of those areas recently affected.

Note: Councillor L. Strange left the room at 7:47pm

The Interim Assistant Director of Operations, who had been co-ordinating the council's actions and response to the flooding highlighted the work the council had already undertaken and the communications which had taken place between West Lindsey District Council, Lincolnshire County Council and the Environment Agency. It was acknowledged that communication was vital, not only between relevant organisations but also within each organisation to ensure information was as open and accessible as possible.

Note: Councillor L. Strange returned at 7:53pm

There were further questions from Councillors regarding incidents of flooding in their areas with Mr Ray and Mr Haigh addressing each one in relation to the problem faced and solutions offered. They emphasised that no area had been sacrificed for the sake of other areas however, the focus was on protection of life rather than land.

Note: Councillor L. Clews left the room at 8:02pm and returned at 8:04pm.
Councillor K. Panter left the meeting at 8:04pm

Members of the Committee continued discussions regarding the increased rate of flooding over recent years and it was confirmed that the likelihood of floods occurring had increased. It was emphasised that surface water flooding was far more difficult to predict and address as there were so many aspects which impacted this. It was reiterated that the council could have an influence, for example with planning applications, but there was no instant answer on how to deal with surface water issues.

Following concluding remarks from the Chairman, reiterating the importance of good communication across all parties, including Parish Councils and local residents, she thanked Mr Ray and Mr Haigh again for their time, detailed presentation and willingness to discuss such important matters with those involved.

Note: The meeting was adjourned at 8:25pm.

40 FORWARD PLAN

Note: The meeting reconvened at 8:39pm

The Chairman explained that the Committee could identify items for pre-decision scrutiny (also known as pre-scrutiny) from those detailed on the Forward Plan. These items could be selected during meetings of the Committee by a proposer, seconder and majority vote. She added that a maximum of four 'pre-scrutiny' items could be identified per municipal year, of which one remained as of 10 February 2020.

A Member of Committee enquired about the report due at Regulatory Committee in March 2020 regarding the consultation on the extension of the district wide dog fouling Public Space Protection Order. It was felt that, as this was a district wide issue, it could be suitable for the Committee to have oversight of any actions. The Monitoring Officer explained that there would be further discussions around the issue of dog fouling at the meeting of Full Council in March and it would be prudent to await the outcome of those discussions.

With no further comments from Committee Members, the Forward Plan was noted.

41 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

The Committee gave consideration to the work plan for upcoming meetings. The Democratic and Civic Officer highlighted there had been some suggestions for additions to the work plan at the previous meeting and explained that these would need to be formally proposed, seconded and voted upon in order to be added to the work plan.

The Democratic and Civic Officer brought Members' attention to the suggested report for the Trinity Arts Centre, to look at the range of services and community outreach programmes, and explained this would be a standalone report to come before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. She then explained that the suggestion to look at leisure provision across the district would be better suited as a theme for the Committee over the next civic year, rather than to ask for a one-off report. This would allow the Committee to look at all aspects of leisure provision, with regards to health and wellbeing, as well as inviting other agencies or involved parties to present at future meetings.

Members of the Committee agreed that this was a suitable way of addressing both areas of interest and so having been proposed, seconded and voted upon, it was

RESOLVED that

- a) a one off report regarding the work of the Trinity Arts Centre be requested for a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and
- b) the nominated theme for the Committee work plan for the 2020/2021 civic year be agreed as 'leisure provision across the district'; and
- c) the work plan be received and noted.

42 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 involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

43 PRE-SCRUTINY CAISTOR SOUTHDALE DEVELOPMENT

The Monitoring Officer introduced the report regarding the proposed development in Caistor. He explained the purpose of pre-decision scrutiny was for the Committee to receive and review the details of the report as it was to be presented to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee and to make recommendations to the policy committee where it was felt there were areas to be further addressed in order to support the proposed decision.

The Committee heard details of the proposals regarding the GP surgery and residential development. The history of the site was explained as well as the unique circumstances surrounding the proposed development. The financial implications of the proposals were explained in full as were the recommendations for the Corporate Policy and Resources

Committee.

There was a question regarding the offset costs which was clarified by the Strategic Finance and Business Support Manager. It was also confirmed that the council would be employing the architect and so there would be the opportunity to have input into the design of the surgery with relation to an holistic health and wellbeing approach.

Following comments from several Members of Committee, there was consensus that the proposition was much needed in the area and was fully supported by Members. The Vice-Chairman asked, on behalf of Councillor Mrs D. Rodgers, whether the development would set a precedent for the council being able to influence similar schemes in other locations. The Monitoring Officer explained that, given the circumstances of this development, it was unlikely to be repeated across the district. However, Councillor O. Bierley as a Visiting Member commented that the potential to set an exemplar and be able to lobby for improvements in other areas of the district could not be underestimated.

Note: Councillor D. Dobbie left the meeting at 9.12pm.

The Chairman thanked all present for their comments and reiterated what was being asked of the Committee. Based on the discussions and unanimous vote of Committee Members it was

RESOLVED that

- a) The following pre-scrutiny comments and recommendations be provided in advance of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee:
 - West Lindsey District Council to be involved with the planning and design of the medical centre;
 - A financial summary of the commitments involved in the project should be provided for ease of reference;
 - A further report to be brought before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee once the final specifications of the medical centre were ratified.
- b) The proposals contained within the report be supported and endorsed to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

The meeting concluded at 9.16 pm.

Chairman