

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 14 September 2021 commencing at 6.30 pm.

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

Councillor Stephen Bunney
Councillor Michael Devine
Councillor Steve England
Councillor Mrs Jessie Milne
Councillor Jim Snee
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee
Councillor Trevor Young
Councillor Jane Ellis

Also In Attendance: Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings

In Attendance:

Sally Grindrod-Smith	Assistant Director of Planning and Regeneration
Ady Selby	Assistant Director of Commercial and Operational Services
Diane Krochmal	Assistant Director Homes and Communities
Andy Gray	Housing and Enforcement Manager
Wendy Osgodby	Senior Growth Strategy & Projects Officer
Katie Storr	Democratic Services & Elections Team Manager (Interim)
Ele Snow	Democratic and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Mrs Tracey Coulson
Councillor Tom Regis

Membership: Councillor Jane Ellis was appointed as substitute for Councillor Tom Regis

24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

25 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held on 29 July 2021 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

26 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

Vice Chairman J. McNeill enquired as to the vacancies on the Platinum Jubilee Working Group and, on receiving confirmation that there remained two vacancies, both he and Councillor S. Bunney offered to be involved. The Chairman thanked them for their offer.

With no further comments, the contents of the Matters Arising schedule were **NOTED**.

27 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

28 MARKET RASEN HISTORIC BUILDING GRANT SCHEME

The Committee heard from the Senior Growth Strategy & Projects Officer, seeking approval of the Market Rasen Historic Building Grant scheme and agreement to proceed to delivery. Through the course of a presentation, Members were advised that TDR Heritage Limited had been appointed to the project, having extensive experience and having delivered similar projects across the country including the successful bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for Gainsborough's Townscape Heritage Scheme. A steering group had been set up created from a selected group of experts, specialists within heritage led schemes, along with representatives from the Town and District Councils.

It was explained that a condition survey had been completed by TDR Heritage Ltd for all 69 properties in Market Rasen town centre to provide baseline data in preparation for extending the scheme and potential funding opportunities. The survey was carried out in line with Historic England guidance and for each building, there was a detailed report which included a description of the building, its historic value, summary of condition and a summary of the work required. Owing to the estimated cost of all identified work to be completed, a priority zone had been established, within which nine buildings had been identified as high priority. The level of grant funding available would be 80% for repair and 90% for reinstatement, with the remaining funding to be met by the building owners. Grants would be awarded on a first come first served basis. It was anticipated that the successful roll-out of the first phase of the scheme would also lead to future funding opportunities.

The Chairman thanked the Senior Growth Strategy & Projects Officer for her report and presentation. Members were supportive of the details of the scheme and felt there would be significant positive impact arising from it. It was confirmed that the steering group would be up and running alongside the initial conversations with building owners.

In response to a question as to whether the incentive was sufficient for building owners to be involved with the scheme, it was explained that a Project Officer would be appointed to work with the building owners and it was hoped that intervention rates had been set to be as appealing as possible. As a pilot scheme, there would be the opportunity to review and amend as necessary.

With support from the Committee and having been proposed and seconded, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that:

- a) the Market Rasen Historic Building Grant scheme, as set out in the report, be approved; and
- b) the Prosperous Communities Committee recommend to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee that approval be given to spend £200,000 on the Market Rasen Historic Building Grant scheme; and
- c) the Prosperous Communities Committee recommend to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee that a further £10,000 be drawn down from General Fund Balances for technical support; and
- d) the Prosperous Communities Committee receive an annual update on progress.

29 SELECTIVE LICENSING - GAINSBOROUGH SCHEME REVIEW

The Committee were asked to consider a report from the Housing and Environmental Enforcement Manager, which provided an update on the Selective Licensing Scheme in Gainsborough following on from its cessation. Members heard that there were estimated to be around 550 private rented properties within the specific area designated and circa 800 private rented properties across the whole of the South West Ward. Over the course of the scheme there were 809 licenses granted within the designated area. This amounted to 98% of the eligible properties, which exceeded the original target of 80% that the original proposals were based upon in 2016. Of the applications received, 77 were for properties which had previously had a licence issued.

Members heard that the scheme had enabled a greater amount of work to be undertaken within the area. It was noted that the number of long-term empty properties within the area had significantly decreased in comparison with the rest of the district and the volume of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) complaints had also reduced. Whilst it was not possible to directly attribute reductions in ASB to the scheme itself, it was evident that the scheme had enabled the Council to take quick effective action with landlords in relation ASB that originated from their properties and as a result, some of these matters were being dealt with by landlords without the need for Council involvement.

It was explained that a further report would be presented to the Committee in November 2021 that would consider the feasibility of any future scheme within the District. This work was currently being undertaken and a workshop for Councillors was held in August, to provide an overview for how the process would work and how any consultation may be undertaken. Members were assured that the lessons learned shown within the report, alongside the comments in relation to scheme improvements that had been received during its delivery, would be taken into consideration and where possible delivered as part of any new proposals.

The Chairman thanked the Housing and Environmental Enforcement Manager and invited comments from the Committee. A Member of the Committee expressed his disappointment

with the scheme and voiced his concerns that landlords had not been consulted with, either during the scheme or at its cessation. He shared his disagreement that ASB figures had reduced in the area and stated that remedial actions had not been put in place to improve matters. He detailed issues he had come across with drug use, intimidation of residents and unsanitary conditions and repeated his disappointment that landlords had not been consulted with throughout the course of the scheme.

The Chairman thanked him for his comments and noted that, as a review of the previous scheme, it was not possible to go back however the paper in November would look at future options.

There were further questions regarding the options for enforcement action following the end of the scheme and whether there were considerations for improved communication with landlords for future schemes. It was explained that enforcement action could still be undertaken using powers under the Housing Act and, with regards to looking at communication with landlords, it was acknowledged that there would be further consideration as to how to facilitate this in the future. It was also acknowledged that, as the scheme came with an additional fee, there was natural reticence amongst landlords to support such initiatives.

Having heard comments from others, a Member of the Committee wished to commend the team for the work undertaken and the improvements displayed in the area. This was echoed by the Chairman with a request that thanks be passed on to those Officers involved with the scheme.

Having been moved and seconded, the Chairman took a vote on the recommendation contained with the report. With two votes against and one abstention, it was

RESOLVED that the report, positive outcomes and lessons learned as part of the scheme be **NOTED**.

Note: Councillor T. Young requested that his vote against the recommendation be recorded.

30 TO CONSIDER PROPOSALS FROM THE JUBLIEE GROUP

The Committee considered a report from the Democratic and Elections Team Manager (Interim) regarding the proposals from the Jubilee Events Planning Group regarding proposals for the celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022. Members heard that, having established a Jubilee Events Planning Group in July 2021, the report focussed on, and set out, proposals from that Group in respect of promotion of, and engagement in, the Queen's National Campaign, 'Plant a Tree for the Jubilee' (<https://queensgreencanopy.org.uk>), a UK-wide tree planting initiative created to mark the occasion. There was further approval sought for a communications plan and the proposed Jubilee specific branding. It was explained that further celebration proposals would be presented to the Committee in due course.

Members were supportive of the activities but enquired as to the proposal regarding the

Platinum Jubilee Community Fund. It was highlighted that approval was sought in principle, with a detailed report to be presented at the November meeting, should initial approval be granted at this point.

Having been proposed and seconded and taken to the vote, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

- a) a two pronged approach be agreed, namely:
 - i. promotion of the Queen’s Green Canopy across the District, encouraging others to engage directly in the Queen’s national campaign, which is being supported by the Woodland Trust who are providing free trees to communities on a first come first served basis;
 - and
 - ii. a project which allows the District Council and its Elected Members to directly participate in the campaign, and in doing so, approve the communications plan and the creation of a tree planting scheme for Members; and
- b) the use of the Jubilee Emblem and associated branding be approved; and
- c) the creation of a Platinum Jubilee Community Fund, be approved in principle, and a further report providing details of the specifics of any such scheme be requested; and
- d) a further report outlining further proposals for Jubilee celebrations be received in December 2021.

31 CULTURAL STRATEGY

Members heard from the Assistant Director of Planning and Regeneration regarding the development of a Cultural Strategy for West Lindsey. It was explained that in early 2020 the Council received a recommendation as part of the Corporate Review which recommended that the council consider the development of a Cultural Strategy. Officers had reviewed the current position and suggested five work streams in order to develop a cohesive approach and cultural offer. Whilst it was recognised that this was not yet a Cultural Strategy by definition, these were the building blocks required to move towards an improved cultural offer.

The five proposed work streams were:

- Events
- Strategic Relationships
- National Portfolio Organisation Status
- Trinity Arts Centre Investment
- Role of culture in placemaking

Members had previously agreed to support work on the development of a Cultural Strategy by earmarking £250,000 to reserve fund and the paper set out a recommendation for spend against an element of the budget allocation. It was highlighted that the Peer Challenge in

early 2020 had suggested the development of a Cultural Strategy and, as work on this had been undertaken, several areas of cultural activity had been identified across the district. This included the Trinity Arts Centre in Gainsborough, markets in Gainsborough, Market Rasen and Caistor, and local events.

The Committee heard how each of the work streams would be developed and future reporting would detail the progress towards one Cultural Strategy.

Members were keen to understand the definition of ‘culture’ in the context of the strategy and how existing work underway, for example the Markets Consultation and at the Trinity Arts Centre, would feed into the strategy. The definition from the Local Government Association was read aloud and Members were assured that existing work streams would continue to support the development of the strategy as opposed to being seen as standalone items. It was also highlighted that working in partnership with strategic oversight would increase the likelihood of securing larger and long-term funds from organisations such as the Arts Council.

Note: Councillor S. England left the Chamber at 7.43pm and returned at 7.45pm

It was acknowledged that there was further work required to maximise the potential of the town markets, however, it was highlighted that consultation was currently underway and future proposals would be presented in due course. In response to an enquiry regarding the costs of the proposed Officer role, it was explained there would be a significant remit across all work streams however there would be clearly measurable progress points in order to ensure attainable targets across the strategy.

With no further comments, the recommendations within the report were proposed and seconded and it was

RESOLVED that

- a) the five work streams set out at 3.1 and the associated action plan (appendix 1) noting the suggested reporting lines for each action, be approved; and
- b) it be recommended to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee that approval to spend from the Cultural Strategy Reserve be given for new fixed term officer capacity £85,000 and support of up to £25,000 to develop the approach to securing National Portfolio Organisation status; and
- c) the submission of a bid for £5m of funding be supported and recommended to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee and that £62,000 of the Cultural Strategy Reserve be used to develop the bid to secure funds from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for capital investment, activities and events works at Trinity Arts Centre up to £5,000,000.

32 REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

The Committee gave consideration to a report from the Assistant Director Homes and Communities with the purpose of updating Members on the Home Office move from the

Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) to the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) and to seek support to explore opportunities to assist with the Afghan Locally Employed Staff scheme (LES). It was explained that, following a pause in the VPRS due to Covid-19, the Government had replaced the VPRS with the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) which almost mirrored the previous scheme, the main difference being the wider defined area from which refugees would be accepted. This was now a global catchment with a focus on the Middle East and North Africa.

Members heard that West Lindsey was a member of the Lincolnshire Refugee Resettlement Partnership. This partnership was in turn a member of the East Midland Migration Partnership which had been tasked with establishing the appetite to transfer the pledges from the VPRS to the new UKRS. At the present time, the Afghan (LES) scheme was the priority for the Government. A number of authorities had already pledged their support but there was an increasing and urgent need for more authorities to come forward with offers.

It was explained that, should Members pledge their support, Officers would liaise with Registered Providers for suitable property and this information would be shared with the lead organisation to co-ordinate. Grant funding was expected to be available for each family relocated, meaning there was no financial burden expected to fall on the Council. It was also highlighted that, given the fast moving pace of events in Afghanistan, figures provided at the time of publication of the report had likely changed, however Officers would be working on the most up to date information available to them.

Members of the Committee voiced support for the schemes and acknowledged the urgency of the situation in Afghanistan. There were concerns raised regarding families being housed in hotels and the longer term impact on access to, for example, healthcare and education. It was explained that the hotel usage was in advance of allocating suitable properties to a family and the wider need assessment for healthcare and education was taken into account when identifying suitable locations for individuals and families. The support in place was arranged across a network of organisations, including the NHS and education authorities.

Having received overall support for the schemes, the recommendations within the paper were moved and seconded, and, on taking the vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

- a) it be approved for Officers to fully investigate the lessons learnt from the previously agreed Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and for a report to be brought back to the Committee with a proposal regarding transferring the commitment from the VPRS to the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS); and
- b) it be pledged to assist with the Afghan Locally Employed Staff (LES) scheme and authority be delegated to officers to facilitate that assistance, subject to the ability to source appropriate accommodation through registered provider (RP) partners and having obtained assurance of ongoing support from Government; and
- c) Details of those assisted be shared with Members as appropriate.

Prosperous Communities Committee – 14 September 2021
Subject to Call-in. Call-in will expire at 5pm on 1 November 2021

33 WORKPLAN

Members gave consideration to the Committee Work Plan and, with no comments, questions, or requirement for a vote, the Work Plan was **DULY NOTED**.

The meeting concluded at 8.27 pm.

Chairman