

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 28 July 2022 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Mrs Anne Welburn (Chairman)
Councillor Jeff Summers (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Owen Bierley
Councillor Matthew Boles
Councillor Stephen Bunney
Councillor Michael Devine
Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
Councillor John McNeill
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee
Councillor Robert Waller
Councillor Trevor Young

In Attendance:

Emma Foy	Director of Corporate Services and Section 151
Ady Selby	Director of Commercial & Operational Services
Nova Roberts	Director of Change Management, ICT & Regulatory Services
Russell Clarkson	Development Management Team Manager
Cara Markham	Commercial Development Manager
Ele Snow	Senior Democratic and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Liz Clews

Membership:

15 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

16 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING/S

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held on 16 June 2022 were **APPROVED** and signed as a correct record.

The minutes of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee held on 7 July 2022 were **NOTED**.

17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

18 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

With no comments or questions from Members, the Matters Arising Schedule was **DULY NOTED**.

19 LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES POLICY

The Committee gave consideration to a report presented by the Director of Corporate Services on behalf of the Data Protection Officer / FOI Officer. It was explained that the Legal Responsibility Policy set out the legislation and regulations that governed how the council managed information, and aimed to highlight the risks to both the authority and individual officers should there be failures in compliance. It was noted that no changes to the policy had any effect on the current processing at the council.

Members of the Committee expressed their satisfaction with the report and policy amendments. A Member of the Committee proposed an additional recommendation be put to the Committee, that being for authority to be delegated for minor housekeeping amendments, explaining this was the usual practice for such policies. This was seconded with the Democratic Services Officer confirming there was standard wording used for such a delegation.

Having been moved and seconded, with the additional recommendation included, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

- a) amendments to the Legal Responsibilities Policy be approved by the Corporate Policy & Resources Committee for formal adoption; and
- b) future minor housekeeping amendments be delegated to the Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Chairs of the Joint Staff Consultative and Corporate Policy and Resources Committees.

20 INFORMATION SHARING POLICY

The Committee gave consideration to the second report of the evening, presented by the Director of Corporate Services on behalf of the Data Protection Officer / FOI Officer. It was explained that the purpose of the policy was to provide a framework for the Council and those working on its behalf to: provide information to deliver better services, consider the controls needed for information sharing; and, ensure that partners sharing information were aware of the Council's Minimum Security Standards for securing information, the obligations of consent, and how to take appropriate account of an individual's objection to the sharing. As previously, it was noted that no changes to the policy had an effect on the current processing at the authority.

As with the earlier report, Members of the Committee expressed their satisfaction with the report and policy amendments. The same Member of the Committee proposed the additional recommendation be put to the Committee, for authority to be delegated for minor

housekeeping amendments. This was seconded with the Democratic Services Officer confirming the same wording would be used as for the previous item.

Having been moved and seconded, with the additional recommendation included, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

- a) amendments to the Information Sharing Policy be approved by the Corporate Policy & Resources Committee for formal adoption; and
- b) future minor housekeeping amendments be delegated to the Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Chairs of the Joint Staff Consultative and Corporate Policy and Resources Committees.

21 BUDGET AND TREASURY MONITORING QUARTER 1 2022/2023

The Director of Corporate Services presented the quarter one budget and treasury monitoring report of 2022/23, based on the forecast outturn as at 31 May 2022. It was explained that whilst it was early in the financial year, the report highlighted known pressures and savings and potential budget risks at this stage.

In relation to revenue budgets, the forecast outturn position was a net deficit from reserves of £38,000. There was a saving of £74k on the grounds maintenance contract following a tender exercise. The reduced costs were due to the economies of scale as the contractor who was able to secure all tendered lots in the Lincolnshire framework.

There was a pressure of £25k against the insurance premium budgets, again following a tender exercise. Fuel costs were reporting a pressure of £48k, this was based on the price paid per litre in May (£1.42) and the consumption during 21/22. The latest price paid in June was £1.61 per litre which would increase the pressure the £90k if that price was maintained for the rest of the year. Fuel was a significant budget risk and both factors would be monitored with an updated position reported at quarter two. For context, every 1p increase in fuel price equated to around a £200 pressure per month. Income from the sale of parking permits was forecast to be £42k below budget, as many sectors continued to work remotely.

Another significant budget risk was the potential pay award for 22/23. Salary budgets 2022/2023 were based on a 2% pay award. This was not expected to be sufficient based on current inflation rates, and feedback from the East Midlands Council pay briefing. £250k of the 2021/2022 surplus was approved as a budget carry forward into 2022/2023 which would allow for up to a 4% increase. However, there would be an ongoing budget pressure from 2023/2024 to be considered through the MTFP and Budget Setting process.

FEES & CHARGES

There were changes to some statutory planning fees which the council had been made aware of in recent weeks, which were included within the report at section 2.3.2.

RESERVES

Members were asked to approve use of the unapplied grants reserve. £122.4k being the balance of the Outbreak Prevention Grant paid to West Lindsey in 21/22, which would be

spent on agency staff to carry out food safety inspections to help clear the backlog due to the pandemic, and to ensure obligations were met. It was noted there might be a small underspend on this which would be known later in the year.

CAPITAL

The Capital Forecast Out-Turn for 2022/2023 was £15.018m, a variance of £0.445m against the approved budget of £15.464m.

The Committee was asked to approve the following amendments to capital schemes:

- 1) Unlocking Housing (living over the Shop) - capital budget reinstatement of £0.070m. This scheme was closed in 2021/2022 with the balance declared as an underspend and removed as it was grant funded. However, the grant funding deadline has been extended.
- 2) Smart Device Refresh-Members - bring forward budget of £0.028m from 2023/2024 into 2022/2023, as refresh due to take place this year.

The Chairman thanked the Director of Corporate Services and invited comments from the Committee.

Members expressed concern regarding the costs pressures, particularly the potential pay award and energy costs. It was recognised that there would need to be close monitoring and the use of independent assessments to manage the associated risks.

With regard to the grounds maintenance contracts, a Member of the Committee enquired whether the service provided would remain the same, even if provided at a lower cost. It was confirmed this was expected to be the case, with standards being monitored and addressed if necessary.

In relation to the food inspection backlog, Members were assured there was an action plan in place in order to work through the backlog over the coming months.

In response to a question as to when the third month of the quarter would be reported, it was confirmed this would be included in the next monitoring report. It was also confirmed that Members would be provided with details as to the amended Officer post within the homelessness prevention team, following a concern raised that specialist Officers were being replaced with generic roles and whether this would impact negatively on the work of the team.

The Chairman thanked all for their comments and, having been moved and seconded, took the vote, whereon it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

REVENUE

- a) the forecast out-turn position of a £0.038m net deficit from reserves as of 31st May 2022 (see Section 2) relating to revenue activity, be accepted
- b) the use of Earmarked Reserves (2.4.1) be approved

- c) the use of Earmarked Reserves during the quarter approved by the Chief Finance Officer using Delegated powers (2.4.2) be accepted
- d) the contributions to Earmarked Reserves (2.4.3) be accepted
- e) the amendments to statutory fees and charges for planning applications (2.3.2) be accepted

CAPITAL

- f) the current projected Capital Outturn as detailed in 3.1.1 be accepted
- g) the capital budget reinstatement of £0.070m as detailed at 3.1.3, and to bring forward budget of £0.028m from 2023/2024 into 2022/2023, as detailed at 3.1.2, be approved

TREASURY

- h) the report, the treasury activity and the prudential indicators be accepted.

The Chairman placed on record her thanks to the Officers for their efforts with the reports and to the Director of Corporate Services for her clear presentation.

22 BUDGET CONSULTATION 2022

Members considered a report which presented the proposed Budget Consultation process for 2023/24. It was explained that each year a consultation was undertaken on the following years' budget prior to it being set. Although there was no legal requirement to undertake this, there was a legal requirement under the Local Government Act 1992 section 65 to consult ratepayers who were persons or bodies appearing to be representative of persons subject to non-domestic rates within the district and must be about the authority's proposals for expenditure. Members heard that the council were members of the Consultation Institute and in accordance with best practice, ensured that all consultations were legal, and appropriate processes were in place to lower the risk of a judicial review. Consultation according to the Consultation Institute was the dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups, based upon a genuine exchange of views, with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action. It was highlighted that the purpose of the report was to approve the process, with details of questions open to amendment outside of the meeting.

Members expressed their satisfaction with the process as given in the report, noting that there had been some inconsistencies in previous years with face-to-face vs virtual interactions.

There was discussion amongst Committee Members regarding the setting of some questions, with Members concerned as to whether there were too many specifics, such as a swimming pool at Market Rasen, which would not engage people across the district. It was suggested the question regarding the pool could be re-worded to include leisure facilities and leisure provision district-wide.

There was also significant discussion regarding issues such as littering and fly-tipping, with Members taking the opportunity to offer their thanks to the local communities who organised and undertook their local litter-picks.

Further comments included the suggestion to include monetary amounts rather than, or as well as, percentages, in relation to potential cost increases, as well as consideration of who would be approached for inclusion in the consultation, with a Member of the Committee noting County Councillors had not been approached previously.

The Chairman reiterated the recommendation of the report to approve the consultation process and, having been moved and seconded, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the Budget Consultation process be agreed.

23 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

With no comments or questions, the work plan was **DULY NOTED**.

24 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 items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Note: The meeting entered closed session at 7.17pm.

25 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Members gave consideration to a report seeking approval for funding to procure, implement and maintain a Development Management software system to maintain the quality of the statutory service and support the council's growth ambitions and transformation agenda. Members were presented with the details of the reasoning behind the proposals, including a recent service review which had clarified that in order for the Development Management team to deliver and maintain a quality statutory service, the current software solutions were unsuitable. It was explained that the team were using a legacy system which had been in place since 2005 with no significant improvements to functionality or benefits of improved service delivery to customers and businesses. Of the four options considered within the report, one was to simply maintain the status quo, with the preferred option being the procurement and implementation of a dedicated Development Management system alongside the council's CRM.

Note: Councillor P. Howitt-Cowan left the meeting at 7.28pm

Members welcomed the proposals and sought clarity on details of option three, such as licence costs and 'shelf life' of any chosen system. It was explained that, at the procurement stage, those elements would be taken into consideration. It was noted that with newer technology there tended to be continuous updates, meaning the end of the contract would usually be customer choice rather than dictated by the functionality of the system.

Following further discussion regarding the difficulties faced by Officers, Members and public alike with the current systems, it was moved, seconded and unanimously

RESOLVED that the expenditure of funding to procure and implement the new dedicated Development Management software system as detailed in option 3 of the report, be approved.

26 LEA FIELDS CREMATORIUM BUSINESS PLAN

The final report of the evening was presented to the Committee by the Commercial Development Manager, seeking to inform Members of the performance of the Lea Fields Crematorium and requesting approval of the new Business Plan. It was explained that the Lea Fields Business Plan had been produced to demonstrate to Members and Management Team the performance of the Crematorium since opening in January 2020. The facility had achieved the number of cremations predicted in the original Business Plan, having also won plaudits and awards on the national stage, with an outstanding reputation and resilient team.

It was highlighted that there had been significant changes in the previous two years, with an increasing and noticeable trend being a move towards direct funerals, which, alongside a number of new costs which had not been anticipated in the original Business Plan, had led to the revised Business Plan as presented to the Committee.

The Committee sought additional details regarding the impact of direct funerals, as well as seeking clarity on the process. It was highlighted that any service at the facility was treated with the same respect and the team had a positive reputation for maintaining that high standard of service.

Members voiced their support for the Business Plan as well as sharing thanks to the team at the facility. Having been moved, seconded and voted upon, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the 2022-23 Lea Fields Business Plan be approved.

The meeting concluded at 8.10 pm.

Chairman