

## WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 4 July 2022 at 7.00 pm.

**Present:** Councillor Mrs Angela Lawrence (Chairman)  
Councillor Roger Patterson (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Owen Bierley	Councillor Matthew Boles
Councillor Mrs Jackie Brockway	Councillor Stephen Bunney
Councillor Liz Clews	Councillor David Cotton
Councillor Mrs Tracey Coulson	Councillor Christopher Darcel
Councillor Timothy Davies	Councillor Michael Devine
Councillor David Dobbie	Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor Mrs Caralyne Grimble	Councillor Cherie Hill
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan	Councillor Mrs Cordelia McCartney
Councillor John McNeill	Councillor Mrs Jessie Milne
Councillor Peter Morris	Councillor Jaime Oliver
Councillor Keith Panter	Councillor Mrs Judy Rainsforth
Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers	Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings
Councillor Robert Waller	Councillor Mrs Anne Welburn
Councillor Trevor Young	

**In Attendance:**

Ian Knowles	Chief Executive
Emma Foy	Director of Corporate Services and Section 151
Emma Redwood	Assistant Director People and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Katie Storr	Democratic Services & Elections Team Manager

**Also in Attendance:**

**Also Present:** 1 Member of the Public

**Apologies**

Councillor Jane Ellis  
Councillor Steve England  
Councillor Tom Regis  
Councillor Jim Snee  
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee  
Councillor Jeff Summers  
Councillor Mrs Angela White

## 92 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed all Members and Officers to the meeting. A warm welcome was also extended to representatives from Sturton by Stow Parish Council (Councillor Martin

Cook) and Stow Parish Council (Chairman, Councillor Pam Duncan), who would later in the meeting present their successful Neighbourhood Plan to Council.

Brief reference was made to the “near normal” arrangements in place, allowing for representatives and the public to once again join Members and Officers in the Chamber. Whilst public galleries had been re-introduced, all council and committee meetings would continue to be webcast live for those that simply wished to follow proceedings.

### **93 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

(a) Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Full Council held on 9 May 2022

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Full Council held on 9 May 2022 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **94 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor David Cotton declared a personal interest in relation to Motion 1, given he was a serving Member of the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee, which was referenced within.

### **95 MATTERS ARISING**

The Chairman introduced the report advising Members that the report would be taken “as read” unless Members had any questions that they wished to raise.

The Leader of the Opposition challenged the Leader of the Council over what he considered a lack of action in respect of the motion passed in June 2021 regarding street lighting and questioned when the required report would be submitted to Committee.

In response the Leader advised that no formal response had been received to his communications and he had again this week re-issued such letters. Informally the Leader had been advised of a number of ways in which Parish and Town Councils could approach the County Council direct to seek the re-introduction of lighting.

With no further questions and with no requirement for a vote, the Matters Arising were **DULY NOTED**.

### **96 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **Chairman**

The Chairman addressed Council, advising it had been a quiet start to civic year for her. It had been an honour and privilege to attend the unveiling of the memorial and trail to honour the Polish forces that were based in our part of the county at Witham St Hugh's. Along with other Councillors, the Chairman had undertaken a behind the scenes tour of the

Council's relatively new crematorium at Lea Fields.

The Jubilee weekend had seen the District come alive and the Chairman had had the pleasure of attending several events to mark the occasion of the Platinum Jubilee, including the lighting of a beacon at Lincoln castle.

Finally she drew Members' attention to the Celebration of Life Service which would be held on Sunday 31st July at Market Rasen for former Councillors Malcom Parish, Lewis Strange and Reg Shore and all those who had lost relatives during Covid, and to which all Councillors had been invited.

In concluding her announcements, it was with sadness that the Chairman advised the Chamber of the passing of former Councillors Mr Motley Brant who had served in the region of 21 years and John Indian, former Councillor for the Yarborough ward.

In response to a question from the floor, it was confirmed that "loyal greetings" had been issued from the Civic Office, to HM The Queen, on the occasion of her Jubilee. A report was due at the Prosperous Communities over the summer, outlining all the activities which had taken place across the District.

## **Leader**

The Leader made the following address to Council: -

"Thank you Chairman,

The final formal public consultation period on the Proposed Submission draft of the new Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (Regulation 19) closed on Monday 9 May. An encouraging spread of representations was received from a wide spectrum of stakeholders, with at least one comment relating to each of the policies. All of the documentation, once collated, will be forwarded to the Planning Inspectorate as a further step towards an Examination in Public that we trust will be arranged for later this year, with the favoured location for it being a venue in Lincoln city centre.

Huge thanks go to residents for their participation in and support for the recent introduction of the separate collection of paper and cardboard, the new purple-lidded bin service. This economically and environmentally important initiative has also resulted in a measurable and significant improvement in the quality of the mixed dry recyclables, the items collected in the blue bins.

It was especially pleasing to see West Lindsey communities of all sizes organising events in celebration of HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee last month and on behalf of the Council I'd like to thank the dedicated community volunteers that made these memorable occasions happen. The diverse nature and number of applications to the Platinum Jubilee Community Fund made it one of our most popular funding offers to date. Huge thanks are also due to all those Members, Officers and partners alike that delivered such a successful presence for our District as part of this year's Lincolnshire Show, especially given the context of a constrained planning timescale.

I was delighted that the District Council's Senior Management Team was short listed in their category in the MJ Awards (Municipal Journal) last month, fully reflecting their outstanding and ongoing contribution to the success of 'Team West Lindsey'. Congratulations and sincere thanks are due collectively and to each and every one of them.

The ten upper-tier Councils in Lincolnshire have been working together to respond to the opportunities for devolved decision-making made available through the Government's ambitious Levelling Up White Paper. This signifies a resetting of the relationship between central and local government, giving councils more power to deliver effectively on behalf of the areas and communities they serve. Please be assured that discussions are ongoing to further develop our case, proposals and especially, vision, in order to present a compelling case that will enable our county to enter into dialogue with the Department (DLUHC) at the earliest possible opportunity.

I'm delighted that West Lindsey District Council has been awarded £2.7m of funding spread over three years (up to March 2025) as part of the new UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This is intrinsically linked to the delivery of the Government's Levelling Up agenda and is subject to the approval by the Department (DLUHC), during this summer, of an Investment Plan Development Proposal. The UKSPF Prospectus states 'Places will be empowered to identify and build on their own strengths and needs at a local level, focused on pride of place and increasing life chances'.

In his speech to the Local Government Association Conference last Tuesday, The Right Honourable Michael Gove MP, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, promised to give local authorities greater financial certainty including through a two-year financial settlement from next year, a reduction in the number of funding streams and a reduction in the burdens placed on local government. Whilst we await the detail these proposals are clearly greatly to be welcomed in principle. The full speech is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/local-government-association-annual-conference-2022-secretary-of-states-speech>

Thank you again Chairman."

## **Chief Executive**

The Chief Executive addressed Council and was pleased to advise that from 1 June, the Management Team restructure agreed at Chief Officer Employment Committee, had been fully implemented. A summary of the changes had been included in latest issue of the Members' Newsletter.

The Chief Executive further advised of a visit he had undertaken in May, when he had visited Stockport to learn about their approach to Heritage Regeneration. He ensured there would be benefit from the learning as the Council implemented schemes across West Lindsey.

It had been a really successful Lincolnshire Show, the first in three years not held on-line. He paid thanks all those Members that attended the Show and supported the team with their "Meet the Councillor" sessions.

Members were advised that Management Team, on 24 June had attended the MJ Awards, having been shortlisted for Senior Team of the year. Unfortunately, whilst not winning the Chief Executive spoke of his proudness of the Team at having been shortlisted.

Finally, the previous week had seen the annual LGA Conference held, at which both the Leader and Chief Executive had been present. Key Note speeches were received from Government Ministers and Shadow Ministers which had been most interesting and would help inform the Council's approach to future service plans.

This concluded announcements for the meeting.

## **97 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The Chairman advised the meeting that no public questions had been received.

## **98 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 9**

The Chairman advised the meeting that three questions pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No.9 had been submitted to the meeting. These had been circulated to all Members, separately to the agenda and published on the website.

The Chairman invited, Councillor John McNeill, Ward Member for Market Rasen, to put his question to the Leader as follows:-

"Leader

The equipment that makes the current landline network run is not fit for the future and needs to be upgraded. The technology currently used to make calls on telephone landlines, called 'analogue', is being replaced with an internet-based version, called an 'IP network' (which means Internet Protocol Network).

The changeover has been mandated to happen by December 2025, as this is when the old technology will stop working. Everyone who has a landline will move over to the new system. Phone providers have already started work on switching over the network, but residents and businesses in West Lindsey do not need to do anything until their provider gets in touch with them.

Landlines will still exist, and it will still be possible to have a telephone line in our homes and businesses - but the system that underpins it will be different. Phone and broadband companies are leading this change. The Government and Ofcom (the communications regulator) are supporting it.

For lots of people, the change will be as simple as plugging their phone into their broadband router and in most cases residents and businesses will be able to

keep their current phone numbers.

However, if a phone handset is very old, it might need to be changed. Phone providers will be able to advise their customers on this. Also, things that currently use the landline network - like telecare, personal alarms, burglar alarms and fax machines - will be affected by the change. If a device is relatively modern, it should still work fine - but older devices may need to be reconfigured or replaced, again providers should be able to advise their customers on this.

As the new system runs off the internet, residents and business will not be able to make calls without an internet connection at their home or place of work.

BT, which provides most landlines, have committed to not raising prices above inflation for 'voice only' customers – those who do not have home broadband. This commitment is for at least the next 5 years and will mean that whatever technology a customer's landline uses, the old system or the new, their bill should not rise significantly.

As the new system will work off the premises' electricity supply, if there is a power cut it will mean that residents and businesses cannot make phone calls. In these instances, phone companies are advising that residents and businesses should use a mobile phone as a backup. If residents or businesses do not have a mobile or are located in an area where there is no or poor signal, or depend on their landline, for example because they are disabled, their phone provider should offer them a solution like a battery-operated handset. This will mean that residents and businesses can make emergency calls during a power cut."

Was the leader aware of this change to a vital part of the infrastructure in West Lindsey? Is he able to confirm what, if any, proportion of the district has already been switched over to the new system? If this change has not yet commenced, is he able to confirm when it may begin? This change is likely to have several direct effects on West Lindsey's operations, what assessment has been made of this and do we know what, if any, direct costs will be attributable to this change?

Thank you.  
Councillor John McNeill"

The Leader of the Council responded as follows : -

"Thank you for your question and yes this matter is on the horizon of Officers.

The digital switchover from analogue telephone services to Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) Technology will happen on a telephone exchange by exchange basis, not on a regional basis (which was the case during the switch from analogue to digital television).

The first stage of the switchover process is for Openreach to issue 'Stop Sell' dates for specific telephone exchanges. Once a 'Stop Sell' date has passed, communication providers will be unable to order any copper based products if a fibre solution is available at the customer's address.

Openreach have identified 581 priority telephone exchanges that will be the first to receive 'Stop Sell' notices.

There are 23 telephone exchanges serving West Lindsey. All of these exchanges are fibre enabled (including fibre to the cabinet and fibre on demand), however, none of the exchanges servicing West Lindsey have been identified as a priority by Ofcom. Instead, these exchanges form part of Ofcom's nationwide 'Stop Sell' date of September 2023, which includes withdrawal of wholesale line rental for analogue services.

Both DCMS and Ofcom are working together with the industry to ensure all users are protected during the upgrade process. This includes ensuring power resilience in the case of a loss of power so that no user is disadvantaged / disconnected due to a loss of power. Additionally, all communications providers have a duty to ensure that vulnerable customers are identified and provided with a back-up line that allows 999 voice calls as a minimum. "At risk" customers will also be provided with a battery back-up solution.

Specifically, Openreach and Virgin Media are making provision for rural areas during the switchover. Openreach are making Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) available to over 6.2 million premises in rural areas. Where this doesn't happen, single order ethernet, or Fibre to the Cabinet will be available which will ensure resilience in case of poor mobile signal or loss of power supply.

The Local Government Association has established a Local Government Switchover Working Group, which includes three Council representatives for each region in England to share issues, opportunities and good practice relating to the digital switchover. End communication providers will contact their customers in advance to notify them of the switchover details and what this means for each individual customer. Openreach and Virgin Media have stated that costs to Councils will be "very low" depending on the contract that each Council has with their own Communications Provider and also for other suppliers of Council services such as switchboards, lift alarms or fire alarms for example.

No direct assessments have been made to date - as advised initial indication from wider providers is that costs to Councils will be "very low" as of yet we have not received information from our providers. The Council does have contingency funds for such matters and should costs be considerable, relevant reports will need to be taken to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee."

No supplementary question was posed and the second questioner, was invited to put his question. In the absence of Councillor Snee, the question was posed by Councillor Matt Boles, on his behalf, as follows: -

"Chairman - Why are we still waiting for the "Opening" of the Riverside Walkway (June 13th 2022), when we the Council have clearly indicated to the members of the public that this project would see a completion date of September 21.

The Communications team have made further announcements, December 21

and March 22 indicating that opening was imminent.

After numerous contacts with the CEO and Officers, chasing up and constantly raising concerns over the lack of contract management, could the Chairman please advise what the current status is with regards to this project and provide an opening date.

Can the procurement team please reassure members that when we award contracts to companies, due diligence is followed and that mechanisms are in place to ensure everyone is accountable and transparent in their actions.

I look forward to your response.

Councillor Matt Boles on behalf of Councillor Jim Snee.”

The Chairman of the Council thanked Councillor Snee, in his absence, for his question and responded as follows: -

“Thank you for your question on this important matter.

I am delighted to inform the Chamber that the Council took handover from the contractors last Wednesday – 29<sup>th</sup> June and the new stretch of walk was opened to the public from 30<sup>th</sup> June. Whilst regrettably the project experienced delays, which during the early stages was as a result of lead times on materials, the challenging nature of the site lead to difficulties for the contractor in laying tarmac to the standards required. The first site inspection happened in July 2021 and subsequent remediation proposals and works took longer than anticipated.

The Council’s procurement process, contracting and contract management procedures allowed the council to work with the contracting company to resolve the issues and bring the project to a successful completion.

As with all projects a stage 4 project completion review will now be undertaken and lessons learnt will feed in to future projects.

I have been very pleased to hear about our local community being able to enjoy the new walk this weekend and I look forward to visiting soon as we plan for our public opening, which of course our local Ward Members will be invited to”

The third and final questioner, Councillor Lesley Rollings, Scotter and Blyton Ward, was invited to put her question, to the Leader, as follows: -

“The decision by Lincoln College to cease providing Post 16 education at Gainsborough College has come as a shock and disappointment to many of us who have worked in Education in Gainsborough over the last 30 years.

For the elected Members from the Gainsborough wards, who see first-hand, the impact education has on the life chances of its residents, such a decision appears to demonstrate a complete disregard for the people of Gainsborough – in particular, its young people.

### **Made in Gainsborough**

West Lindsey District Council has done a brilliant job leading on the Made in Gainsborough project – giving local young people the opportunity to take up apprenticeships with Gainsborough manufacturing and engineering companies. Instead of building on this project, establishing a manufacturing base in Gainsborough, it appears that Lincoln College have decided that it is more cost effective to simply expect the learners to travel into Lincoln and forget Gainsborough.

### **Alternative provision on the Gainsborough College site**

The proposal to make money on the site by renting the facility out to an alternative provision company, is, quite honestly, the very last thing Gainsborough needs. Bussing in large numbers of young people with the most challenging behaviour and attempting to keep these young people on site, can only create additional social challenges in the town.

### **The Levelling up agenda**

Post 16 Education and Skills sit at the heart of attempts to create greater equality in our communities, yet the decline in local provision, in public transport links and failure to provide free transport for all 16-19 learners, means that only the most privileged and aspirational access education. Too many young people fall by the wayside.

Without effective Post 16 education provision, the Levelling Up agenda is really just an expensive gimmick.

Post 16 GCSE courses, Automotive engineering, Construction, Hair and Beauty, Hospitality, Performing Arts, Sport, Health and Social Care.

All these courses could take place in Gainsborough, indeed Lincoln College has run some of these courses at Gainsborough, in the past, and dangled the possibility of starting others only to pull out just before the courses were due to start, leaving learners in an uncertain position.

The narrow constraints of how the funding can be used, leaves it highly unlikely that the huge gaps in post 16 education and Adult education will not be met by Levelling Up funding.

### **What can be done about this?**

Other towns in Lincolnshire are linking with Lincoln University. Is this not a possibility in Gainsborough? Why have Lincoln College been allowed to build up its provision in Lincoln at the expense of running down its provision in Gainsborough?

We have a grammar school in Gainsborough. Are we not exploring the possibility

of them taking over the running of vocational courses on the Gainsborough College site?

Whilst I very much appreciate the support that West Lindsey District Council has always given to education in Gainsborough. Can the Leader outline to the Chamber what involvement he has had to date? What actions, the District Council have taken to date and plan to take in the coming weeks? Leader is it not time we invited the Chief Executive of Lincolnshire County Council to account for the lack of provision in Gainsborough, I would welcome your view?

Thank you  
Councillor Lesley Rolling”

The Leader of the Council responded as follows: -

“Thank you for your question Councillor Rollings.

Can I start by being clear that this Council is extremely concerned and disappointed with the emerging plans of Lincoln College Group to relocate post 16 provision away from Gainsborough.

Over the past five years, the Council has committed significant Officer time and financial assistance to support the College. This includes the Made In Gainsborough programme, which was designed to address employer recruitment challenges and retain talent within the local area.

Both the Manufacturing and Construction sector provide more than 20% of total employment within the district. To lose this provision at such a crucial time for the economy is extremely concerning. It is also frustrating for all those companies in the town who have invested significant time and resource into the provision.

The district needs a supply of good quality, higher level, further education provision and that is why skills and employment are included in the Council Corporate Plan. It sets out the strategic aims for the district, which includes the ‘creation of a highly educated and skilled workforce, that meets the present and future needs of the local and wider economy.

As part of the Levelling Up Agenda our emerging UK Shared Prosperity Fund highlights the challenges we face across the education and skills sector and I quite agree with you we face a challenge in relation to making best use of available resources.

We recognise that education and skills, whilst not being the main stay of our work as a District Council, it is actually everyone’s business. We are one of only a handful of districts across Lincolnshire to have a successful Employment and Skills Partnership, and I thank all members of the partnership for their continued support and work on this agenda.

Since the College made the Council aware of these plans, we have sought to find alternative options to continue the delivery of current provision in the town.

This has included working with property agents across the town to find vacant premises that may be suitable. To date this has proven unsuccessful. We have invited the College to brief all Members early next week and today I have been advised that a Member workshop will now be organised for 11 July at 4:45 via MS Teams – invites have been issued to all.

In the meantime, I have tasked Officers with establishing a Further Education Taskforce – to bring together all key partners, including the College, County Council and the University to consider a way forward.

I shall obviously be ensuring that Members are well represented on the Taskforce and I look forward to working with you on this important issue.”

On hearing the response and with the permission of the Chairman, Councillor Rollings made further statements indicating the Leader’s response offered some reassurance but again outlining how vital it was that the town retained provisions, recalling the thriving offer of previous years and to see that disappear was of great shame. Furthermore given the huge skills shortages in certain parts of the economy, the example being construction, to undertake such apprenticeships candidates needed a GCSE in maths and there were many people that didn’t attain that at school, for a variety of reasons. As a fundamental basic such courses needed to be on offer within the Town and it was therefore vital Lincoln College and others partners continued to be engaged about this matter. There were concerns the site had been systematically run down over a long period, the town needed to have the infrastructure and services to offer opportunities if it was to grow and be a place people succeeded. Members and Officers had invested time and energy in to Gainsborough being a success and good educational offer was vital to that.

The opportunity to speak with Lincoln College, outlined by the Leader was most welcomed but Councillor Rollings considered engaging the County Council at the earliest opportunity was also vital given they were lead authority for education. Further assurance was sought from the Leader that he would endeavour to ensure the “the right people were around the table”.

In responding to Councillor Rollings supplementary statement, the Leader again acknowledged the importance of post education courses. He spoke of the need to work in partnership with organisations that had influence in this area to ensure aspirations were raised, met and fulfilled throughout the District, recognising it was in all of our wider interest, especially for the medium to longer term.

In closing he encouraged all Members that were able, to join the session which had been organised for the following Monday.

## **99 MOTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10**

The Chairman advised the meeting that two motions pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No.10 had been submitted to the meeting, these were as set out in the agenda.

Councillor Anne Welburn, was invited to put her motion to the meeting, as follows:

“Members - Do you not think that the first priority of any government or governing body should be to ensure the ability to protect food sources and not become reliant on imports which adds to their carbon footprint?

Using farmland for housing and solar farms means an ever-downward shift to an unacceptable inability to be self-sufficient in food production and recent events on the world stage shows how short-sighted that could be in an emergency.

Food and water is the first basic need for life surely we should be protecting these. We need to ensure that no more productive farmland is taken and if farmers are unable to be sustainable then we need to lobby the government for a fairer package or new cooperatives to make farming work and feed our nation.

I would like Council to support this motion by requiring our representatives on the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee (CLJSPC) to ensure West Lindsey views on this matter be reported to future meetings of the (CLJSPC) and that this Council lobby relevant Government Ministers in a similar manner.

I so move

Councillor Anne Welburn”

With the motion duly seconded, lengthy debate ensued.

Numerous Members from across all political affiliations spoke at concerns in losing food producing land to large scale solar farms. Many acknowledged that farming and food production specifically did not attract the tariffs and support it previously had and for many farmers in food production this offered a route out of a not always viable way of living. Members considered it was this offer that needed to change. Food production needed to be given greater priority and financial protection. Solar farms had a place in tackling climate change and sustainability challenges, but the Chamber agreed that this should not be at a cost of losing food producing land, citing current global affairs as an indication of further reason to ensure self-sufficiency not further reliance.

The impact on the land was as yet unknown and once “developed” the likelihood of it returning to its original use was slim, Members were all agreed that the country should not be losing food producing land for any reason, with Lincolnshire being responsible for not only feeding the county but producing 30% of the nation’s crops. It was suggested that any land granted a solar farm development, would be from then on deemed a brownfield site and could be re-developed, which was another matter of concern. Members considered the Government needed a land Strategy, protecting and increasing food production and ensuring any such large-scale developments of this nature were not at the expense of such valuable land.

Members’ attention was drawn to a current group campaigning against the large-scale solar farms planned for the District and Wider Lincolnshire, and the planning process for such developments in general. An on-line petition seeking to secure 100,000 signatures - the trigger for parliamentary debate, had been established and Members were encouraged to sign up.

During the debate Members expressed concern at the lack of local involvement in such decisions, having it confirmed that it would not be a matter for the District Council to determine but one which would involve considerable resource to respond to in the framework required. Members were also of the view this process needed to be overhauled, favouring local determination or much more favourable local in-put.

Members were unanimous in the view that the protection of food producing land was paramount.

On being put to the vote, the **MOTION AS SUBMITTED** was declared **CARRIED** and as a result it was

**RESOLVED** that: -

- (a) the Council's representatives on the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee (CLJSPC) be required to ensure West Lindsey views on this matter (subject of motion on 4 July 2022) are reported to future meetings of the CLJSPC and;
- (b) the Council lobby relevant Government Ministers in a similar manner regarding this matter (subject of motion on 4 July 2022).

The Chairman invited Councillor Bunney, to put his motion to Council as follows: -

"Additional financial support for the Socially Vulnerable Households

WLDC Corporate Plan for 2019 to 2023 has in its aims '**improving the lives of its residents**' and the development of the '**social and economic prospects**' of the district. It highlights Health & Wellbeing, Vulnerable Groups & Communities, Leisure, Skills, Educational Attainment and Social Regeneration as being priorities to obtain these aims.

Many households are facing the very real risk of poverty as a result of the current cost of living crisis with its associated price rises. This is definitely placing pressure on achieving these aims and objectives, with a high level of risk that they worsen rather than improve. Poverty not only affects living standards but also brings about social unrest and deterioration of both the physical and mental health. The long-term effects of these can be devastating as it brings about a deterioration in education, skills and enterprise adding to the material difficulties, time and pace of recovery. It also has the effect of adding to the already unaffordable burden of Health Services, Adult, and Children's Social Care. In short it creates a self-generating worsening cycle of social decline. It is imperative that we all together to prevent this from happening.

The Chancellor of The Exchequer has during the year announced funding for various measures to help reduce this poverty. However, Think Tanks, including the well-respected Joseph Rowntree and Resolution Foundations, do not believe that the measures are likely to last long enough or indeed are of a sufficient level

to avert all of the problem. They are also concerned that not all households facing poverty will be eligible for the much-needed support. It is likely that being in receipt of Free School Meals will be used to define child poverty. Whilst this makes sense for some it will not catch all in this category as Free School Meals are not available to all low-income families depending on which benefits they receive. Also, they are dependent on a household's income and do not take into account the number of children in the unit.

To mitigate this in the West Lindsey area, we believe that the District Council should look to topping up this support by releasing funds from the general fund working balance. The General fund working balance is currently £5.406m, which exceeds the minimum level of £2.5m.

In particular, this support could be provided to vulnerable households by extending the Household Support Grant Scheme, currently being devised by Lincolnshire County Council on behalf of the Government, by including a discretionary element to extend the time length of the scheme and by making it available to as many low-income households as possible.

Council requests The Chief Executive and The Director of Corporate Services to ask Officers to develop such a scheme and bring it to the next appropriate meeting of The Council or relevant Committee.

I so move.

Councillor Stephen Bunney”

With the motion duly seconded and with no debate, on being put to the vote, the **MOTION AS SUBMITTED** was declared **CARRIED** and as a result it was:-

**RESOLVED** that a Scheme to offer additional financial support for the Socially Vulnerable Households, as described in the motion submitted to Council on 4 July 2022, be developed and brought to the next appropriate meeting of the Council or relevant Committee for consideration.

**Note:** During this item of business Councillor Dobbie left the meeting at 8.05 and returned at 8.07pm

At the conclusion of this item of business Councillor Welburn left the meeting at 8.08 and returned at 8.10pm – prior to the next item of business commencing.

## **100 ADOPTION OF THE STURTON BY STOW AND STOW NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

Members gave consideration to a report to fully ‘make’ (adopt) the Sturton-by-Stow and Stow Neighbourhood Plan following a successful referendum. Once adopted the plan would become part of the development plan for the District and would have major influence on

planning application decisions in both parishes.

Councillor Tracey Coulson, as Local Ward Member, in introducing the report, advised Members that the Neighbourhood Plan had been prepared by a Residents' Steering Group on behalf of both parish councils. The joint plan addressed current issues; it included measures to make development more resilient to climate change and sought to conserve green spaces for the benefit of residents' health and well-being.

The plan had been successful at examination and referendum, which saw residents voting 88% in favour of the plan. In the wider context, the adoption meant that West Lindsey now had 23 adopted Plans, with 19 in preparation.

Councillor Coulson congratulated everyone that had worked to bring the project to a conclusion, acknowledging the phenomenal amount of work and the challenges with producing a Neighbourhood Plan. Tribute was also paid to residents who took part in surveys given Neighbourhood plans were an incredibly important planning tool for residents in shaping and protecting their communities.

Representatives from both Sturton-by-Stow and Stow Parish Councils were in attendance and prior to Members debating the matter the Chairman invited them to make a short address to Council and present their successful Neighbourhood Plan.

Councillor Martin Cook, addressed the meeting and made the following short address: -

“Chairman and Members of the Council.

Thank you for inviting us to present to you the Sturton by Stow and Stow Neighbourhood Plan. From the outset both Parish Councils wanted our Neighbourhood Plan to be for our residents. They make our communities special.

Our residents were involved whenever possible. We held specific public engagement events including drop-in sessions, leafleted all households specifically about the Plan at different stages, had regular articles in our respective village newsletters, carried out online and paper surveys as well as attending Sturton village hall monthly markets, Christmas Fairs and the horticultural shows. We have made sure that our communities were fully engaged. The emergence of Covid 19 did slow us down, but we carried on working steadily towards the plan you have in front of you today.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Nev Brown from West Lindsey, Steve Kemp along with John Bayes from OpenPlan, Janet Clark from Community Lincs and Ian Marshman from Lincolnshire County Council. Their help has ensured that our plan is robust and, as the independent planning inspector confirmed, in-line with the current Central Lincolnshire Plan. Most of all, however, we must thank our residents not only for their contributions to the Plan, but also for their support.

We will review our Plan as needed and at least every five years, but we now intend to work towards, where possible, implementing the aspirations for Sturton by Stow and Stow that our residents identified and that are set out in the

Community Aspirations appendix to the Plan. Working on the Plan has not only illustrated the separate identities of our two parishes, but also that which we have in common and the opportunities that gives us to work together to further enhance the lives of the people that live and work here.

Thank you for your time this evening.”

The Chairman of Council then formally received the Plan from Councillor Cook and Councillor Duncan.

Members across the floor congratulated and applauded the Group on their remarkable achievement with some Members speaking of the honour and pleasure, former ward Member Councillor Reg Shore, would have taken from seeing the Parishes succeed.

Having been moved and seconded it was: -

**RESOLVED** that the Sturton-by-Stow and Stow Neighbourhood Plan Neighbourhood Plan be adopted and made.

## **101 OUTCOME OF THE LGA FOLLOW-UP PEER REVIEW, 2022**

Members considered a report which presented the findings of the LGA Peer Review Follow-Up, which had been undertaken to assess progress against the recommendations made in the original Peer Review conducted in 2020.

The Leader of the Council was pleased to present the report and in doing so highlighted to Members the areas, the LGA Peer Review team had particularly commented on, namely:

- Members’ and officers’ enthusiasm, commitment and skills aimed at delivering the best possible services to the district’s residents, businesses and other customers.
- That members and officers have used their strategic skills and knowledge to progress and plan the refresh of their Corporate Plan. WLDC clearly knows what it wants to achieve and what it needs to do to achieve those aims
- More consolidated internal thinking of council specific concepts and programmes, e.g. around the Together 24 Programme and Levelling Up.
- WLDC’s own self-awareness, openness, honesty and ideas as to what it could do better on its continuous improvement journey and why, both through and outside of this Corporate Peer Challenge process.

He considered the follow-up had been a really positive experience resulting in some further recommendations that would now be integrated into the standard planning process and as such would form a key part of our work going forward.

It had been agreed with the LGA that a further Peer Challenge be undertaken around January 2024.

The Leader took the opportunity, on behalf of the Council, to thank everyone involved in the

successful delivery of the process including, Corporate Peers, the LGA, Members and Officers.

Members were delighted to see openness and honesty feature positively once again in the refreshed opinion.

Opposition Members however expressed a differing view and did not support the outcomes of a process, which they considered, had failed to take in to account their Group's views and thoughts from the outset. The Opposition Leader further considered the 10 recommendations which had been focused on, needed revising to reflect and incorporate areas where the Council was failing in his view, and concerns regarding having had equal opportunity to feed into the process needed raising with the LGA.

Having been moved and seconded, on being put to the vote it was: -

**RESOLVED** that: -

- (a) the significant progress made by the Council against the ten original recommendations arising from the 2020 Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review be noted;
- (b) the findings of the LGA Peer Review Follow-Up Report, be noted, having paid particular regard to the follow-up recommendations, and the actions being taken to ensure these are implemented in full;
- (c) the actions required be built into the Council's ongoing planning processes; and
- (d) the LGA Peer Review Follow-Up Report (Appendix B of the report) be published on the Council's website.

## **102 RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT 2021/22**

The Chairman of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee presented the Annual Treasury Management Report 2021/22, which stood recommended by her Committee. Full Council were asked to accept the recommendation from the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee and approve the Annual Treasury Management Report and Actual Prudential Indicators 2021/22.

The report summarised the Treasury outturn for 2021-22 and confirmed compliance with both the Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Borrowing requirements. The report also advised on the Prudential Indicators as at the end of the financial year.

Members were advised the three main financial implications arising from the report were:

- Treasury Investment activities had generated £0.167m of investment interest at an average rate of 0.762%;
- Non-Treasury investments (Investment Property acquisitions) had generated a gross

yield of 6.79%; and

- Financing activities had resulted in a total of £21.5m of external borrowing at a cost in year of £0.372m.

Having been moved and seconded it was: -

**RESOLVED** that the recommendation from the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee be accepted and the Annual Treasury Management Report and actual Prudential Indicators 2021/22 be approved.

### **103 RECOMMENDATION FROM THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE - TO VARY THE DECISION MADE BY ANNUAL COUNCIL IN RESPECT OF THE STARTING TIME FOR FUTURE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

The Chairman of the Governance and Audit Committee presented the report to Members which stood on recommendation from his Committee. Council were advised that following the decision made at its Annual Meeting, concern had been expressed by serving Members of the Governance and Audit Committee, that the resolved start time (2pm) of the Committee would see difficulty arise for some Members to attend, and as such the Committee had considered this matter further at its meeting on 14 June and had made a revised recommendation which sought to rescind Council's previous decision.

Having been proposed and seconded, prior to opening the matter for the debate, at the request of the Chairman, the Monitoring Officer addressed the meeting advising that procedure 13/1 – rescinding Council and Committee decisions, applied to this report. Given there were only two routes by which to vary a Council decision, amendments were not permitted. Members could choose to either vote for the recommendation presented or against, confirming the Council's original decision would remain if the recommendation from the Committee was not supported.

Councillors who had previously raised concerns at the Committee meeting at 10am again spoke against the recommendation, outlining all those concerns previously raised, and the points which had been raised as a Question to Council previously.

A Member requested a recorded vote, with the request duly being seconded.

Similar counter-arguments to those which had previously been expressed were repeated, when it was noted by some Members, that those Councillors voicing most objection did not serve on the Committee, and as such they considered the needs of the Members' appointed to serve on the Committee needed to be considered as a priority.

Councillor Dobbie raised a Point of information, to correct information given to the Chamber, by advising the reason he did not serve on the Committee was due to the timing having been changed from December 2021.

In response to questions, the Chairman of the Governance and Audit Committee again outlined the reasons the start times were being reconsidered. The matter had been given full

consideration by his Committee at their meeting in June, the proceedings were available to view, and whilst some Members had abstained it had been a unanimous decision in favour.

With points being repeated and Councillors being very clear on their position the Chairman indicated the vote would be taken. Members continued to vocalise their views, with debate becoming heated, and the Chairman's ruling not being adhered to the Chairman again called for order, and requested the Monitoring Officer proceed with the recorded vote.

Votes were cast in the following manner: -

**For:-** Councillors Bierley, Brockway, Coulson, Davies, Devine, Fleetwood, Grimble, Lawrence, McCartney, J McNeill, Milne, Morris, Patterson, Waller and Welburn (15)

**Against:-** Councillors Boles, Bunney Clews, Cotton, Darcel, Dobbie, Hill, Howitt-Cowan, Oliver, Panter, Rainsforth, Rollings, and Young (13)

**Abstain:** - Councillor Mrs Rodgers (1)

With a total of 15 votes in favour, 13 votes against and 1 abstention, the recommendation was carried and as such it was: -

**RESOLVED** that the recommendation from the Governance and Audit Committee be accepted and Minute 87 resolution (c) from the Annual Meeting of Council held on 9 May 2022, relating to the commencement time for Governance and Audit Committee, be varied, as such the start time for the Governance and Audit Committee for the remainder of the civic year be 10.00am.

#### **104 RECOMMENDATION FROM THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE - AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION**

The Chairman of the Governance and Audit Committee presented the report which stood recommended from his Committee, explaining the rationale for having made the proposal.

Members as a whole were supportive of increased flexibility.

**RESOLVED** that the recommendation from the Governance and Audit Committee be accepted and such the Constitution be amended as follows: -

Paragraph 5.1, of Part V, Rules of the Procedure, the following words be inserted after the first sentence, "Where necessary and expedient, the Head of Paid Service can vary the time of committee meetings in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, and where practicable, the Committee as well".

#### **105 TO APPOINT TO THE VACANCIES REMAINING ON THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOLLOWING ANNUAL COUNCIL**

Council considered a report which sought to appoint Members to the vacancies remaining on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee following Annual Council on 9 May 2022. The

report also sought to elect a Vice-Chairman for the Committee, a position which had not been filled at the Annual Meeting.

The following nominations were made by the Leader and seconded: -

**Committee Members**      Councillors J Brockway, P Howitt-Cowan and J McNeill

**Vice-Chairman**              Councillor R Patterson

There was heated political exchange across the Chamber, with both the Administration and Opposition expressing distain and apportioning blame to the other, as to why the Council found itself in the situation it did.

Councillor Anne Welburn, raised a Point of Information, advising the Chamber that the Leader of the Opposition had been gifted a Vice-Chairmanship. This point was disputed.

The Leader of the Opposition was offered further opportunity to make nominations but declined to do so.

A Lincolnshire Independent Councillor, expressed concern that the Committee would lose its objectivity, in the absence of Opposition Members, and following clarification, gave indication he was willing to fill a vacancy if permissible. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that to be the case and on that basis it was: -

**RESOLVED** that:-

- (a) Councillors J Brockway, C Darcel, P Howitt-Cowan and J McNeill be appointed to serve on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the 2022/23 Civic Year; and
- (b) Councillor R Patterson be appointed Vice- Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the 2022/23 Civic Year.

The meeting concluded at 8.53 pm.

Chairman