

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 7 March 2023 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Owen Bierley (Chairman)
Councillor John McNeill (Vice-Chairman) and Councillor
Mrs Tracey Coulson (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Stephen Bunney
Councillor Liz Clews
Councillor Christopher Darcel
Councillor Michael Devine
Councillor Jane Ellis
Councillor Mrs Cordelia McCartney
Councillor Mrs Jessie Milne
Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings
Councillor Jim Snee
Councillor Trevor Young

In Attendance:

Ady Selby	Director - Operational & Commercial Services
Emma Foy	Director of Corporate Services and Section 151
Nova Roberts	Director of Change Management, ICT & Regulatory Services
Sarah Elvin	Homes, Health & Wellbeing Team Manager
Andy Gray	Housing & Environmental Enforcement Manager
James Makinson-Sanders	Economic Growth Team Manager
Marina di Salvatore	Economic Growth Specialist
Ele Snow	Senior Democratic and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Jaime Oliver

56 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

Statement by the Chairman

“At the last meeting held on 31 January 2023 during the Public Participation session, a speech was made by Mr Thomas in relation to the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan and specifically an allocation in the village of Welton, site reference WL/WELT/008A. During the speech Mr Thomas made a number of statements, including that the committee had previously been misled and made a decision based on incorrect information.

Mr Thomas began his speech by stating that the review of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan had deliberately excluded public participation. It is important to go on record that this statement is incorrect and that all consultation undertaken as part of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan was undertaken in line with statutory requirements, including the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee's adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

It is also important to clarify that two out of the three statutory consultations undertaken as part of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan review, extended beyond the 6-week requirement. In addition, all Parish Councils were given 3 weeks' notice of the consultation starting in summer 2021, as well as access to a specific area to the consultation hub which allowed easy access to policies & allocations affecting their particular communities.

Mr Thomas also stated that this Committee was misled, during the meeting held on 3 May 2022, when considering WLDC formal response to the Regulation 19 consultation, specifically relating to a phasing requirement on site WL/WELT/008A in Policy S80.

It is correct that the phasing requirements of the site were highlighted as incorrect during this meeting, however this was on the basis that the phasing requirements were incomplete and, as well as being phased back by WL/WELT/001 and 007, the site also needed to be phased back from WL/WELT/003 which is the adjacent site.

In Mr Thomas's statement, he has interpreted this as West Lindsey being against the phasing of sites in Welton, a position which he has stated without evidence. In fact, the requirement for site 008A to be phased back from the adjacent site was as a result of the assessment of a premature planning request and was to prevent the two sites coming forward in isolation of one another.

A meeting has since taken place between Mr Thomas and two other members of the Ryland Residents Group, and Sally Grindrod-Smith, Rachael Hughes & Russell Clarkson, where Mr Thomas has acknowledged that his statement was incorrect and that the Committee was not misled during the meeting held on 3 May 2022.

As such for the purposes of public record, it is confirmed that the Prosperous Communities' Committee was not misled, and the resolution to submit comments to the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan consultation was appropriate and based on sound evidence.

This statement, as well as the response letter to Mr Thomas, will be shared with Members in the coming days."

57 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Chairman noted there were two sets of minutes for approval, and with each set taken in turn, it was

RESOLVED that

- a) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held on 31 January, 2023 be confirmed and signed as a correct record; and

- b) the Minutes of the Concurrent Meeting of the Prosperous Communities and Corporate Policy & Resources Committees held on 24 November, 2023 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

58 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

With no comments, questions or requirement for a vote, the Matters Arising schedule was **DULY NOTED**.

59 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman declared a corporate non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item No. 6b, on behalf of all Committee Members, in respect of correspondence from Mrs. Emma Bailey on behalf of selected landlords that had been sent to the Committee.

60 ARMED FORCES COVENANT DUTY

Consideration was given to a report summarising the current position in terms of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty and seeking adoption of the action plan to ensure the duty is fully upheld. The Homes, Health and Wellbeing Team Manager explained that the Armed Forces Act 2021 placed a legal duty on specified public bodies to have due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant when exercising certain statutory functions in the fields of healthcare, education and housing. The Covenant Duty came into effect on 22 November 2022.

Members expressed their support for the Covenant and actions in place to enact the duties required of the Council. A Member of the Committee, whilst supporting the paper, commented that it was unfortunate that in today's society there was a need for such duties to be written into law. This was recognised, however it was also noted that for those leaving the Armed Forces, there were pressures and circumstances experienced that were unique to them, and the Covenant sought to ensure full support was available.

A Member of the Committee enquired as to what was put in place by the Armed Forces to signpost and support those transitioning out of Service. It was explained that part of the Council's duty was for information to be clear and accessible, and, based on the experiences of those who had approached the Council for support, it was clear the Armed Forces were sharing such information and signposting people to the appropriate services.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for the report and work undertaken, and echoed the comments of the Committee Members. He highlighted the strong associations between the Armed Forces and West Lindsey, and Lincolnshire as a whole, and, the paper having been moved and seconded, he took the vote. It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that:

- a) the Prosperous Communities Committee recognise the current position with

regards to the Armed Forces Covenant Duty; and

- b) the action plan be adopted to ensure the covenant duty can be met by West Lindsey District Council; and
- c) the action plan be published to the Council's website and the areas of due regard updated when actions are completed.

61 PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING - OPTIONS FOR FUTURE DIRECTION

Members heard from the Housing and Enforcement Manager who presented a report regarding the proposed options and approaches for future work within the Private Rented Sector. The Committee was reminded that in July 2022 they had made a number of recommendations to enable the Council to review its approach to improving the Private Rented Sector (PRS). As a result, a small working group of Councillors was set up to consider this subject and oversee the delivery of workshops to Councillors, aimed at identifying the priorities for the PRS and the approaches that would be preferred to address these. The working group was made up of five Councillors and the commitment and contribution of the working group was noted as key to ensuring that this piece of work developed and evolved over the period of time since July 2022. They also played a key role in reviewing and amending the format of the Councillor workshops which were held in December.

The Housing and Enforcement Manager summarised the options that had been considered, and the rationale for the working group recommending option D, that being, to choose to revisit Selective Licensing at a future date with new data and new proposals. It was recognised that a combination of approaches might be needed in order to deal with the scale of the challenge faced by the Council and Members were asked to focus on their decision in relation to Selective Licensing and from this, consider the approach that they might wish to take for any other activities. It was highlighted that the pros and cons of the various approaches could be seen within the workshop slides that had been distributed to all Councillors, and could also be found at appendix 2 of the report.

The Chairman thanked the Officer and also the Members of the working group. He recognised the importance of PRS throughout the district and highlighted the value of the focus of work on this area.

Vice Chairman Councillor T. Coulson, as Chairman of the Working Group, reiterated thanks and also informed Members that the email referenced earlier in the meeting during Declarations of Interest had been responded to. She highlighted that the working group had spent considerable time discussing the situation and processes, with the focus now to agree a way forward. She recognised that proactive engagement with landlords would be key, and, in voicing her support for the recommendations as printed in the report, moved the paper.

A Member of the Committee voiced his concerns regarding the money that had been spent on the previous consultation for Selective Licensing and questioned the sense behind repeating that process, stating his belief that the scheme had not previously worked to address wider issues such as poor quality housing, energy inefficiency and levels of anti-social behaviour (ASB). He highlighted the need to address those areas of concern, which

he did not feel would be achieved through Selective Licensing. He commented that, whilst ASB should be a problem for the Police to address, there did not seem to have been any improvements despite multiple reports of such. The Member also queried whether Councillors could be provided with a flow chart of sorts, in order to assist with resident enquiries about ASB, and further questioned why there was a proposed six-month timescale for any future report.

In response, the Chairman commented that he felt it was necessary to disaggregate ASB and housing conditions in the Private Rented Sector, as there would be houses in the PRS where ASB was not an issue, equally there would be troubles with ASB related to homes that were privately owned or rented through housing associations. He stated the Council's duty to look after residents in PRS housing, stating a well-publicised case of avoidable death that had occurred nationally. He then requested the Housing and Enforcement Manager to provide further clarity on the points raised.

Members heard that the intention of revisiting the matter with a future report to the Committee within the six-month timescale, was to subsequently set out a policy relating to Selective Licensing, whether that be to re-implement, or not, or another option. It was highlighted that there was no commitment being sought at this stage, however the working group had emphasised the need to have some time for Officers to undertake some focussed proactive work and see what the situation was following that. It had been clear within the working group meetings that the scale of problems to be addressed could not all be dealt with using Selective Licensing and there was no one simple solution. Whatever the future approach may be, there did need to be a Council policy agreed alongside relevant costings.

In reference to concerns regarding ASB, it was highlighted that Selective Licensing had been the only 'housing based' tool to address instances of ASB, and that in the absence of Selective Licensing, Officers had to rely on other avenues of enforcement. However, the team were working to 'scale up' the statutory work, collecting data such as energy efficiency, in order to understand the scale of the issue.

Members were also informed that any subsequent report would be brought before the Committee within six months, meaning it could be brought sooner if Committee so wished, but no later than the six-month mark.

The Member of the Committee who had voiced those concerns answered by the Officer expressed his assent that his questions had been addressed, and the Chairman sought further comments from Members.

The suggestion of a flow chart for Members to have as a quick reference guide was supported and it was hoped this could be included in the Member Welcome Pack for all Councillors after the elections in May 2023. It was also requested that any future iteration of the Committee be provided with full background information to this matter, in order to fully understand the history and breadth of consideration required. It was confirmed that any future Committee Members would be fully briefed.

During the course of further discussions, Members highlighted the need to work with other agencies to address some of the issues raised, such as the Police, Parish Councils, as well as increasing accessibility and ease of use of any such information on the Council website, in order that residents and communities knew who and where to approach with their

concerns. There were further comments regarding the impact of ASB on individuals and communities, with circumstances such as a lack of facilities for young people, being cited as a possible cause. The suggestion for multi-agency working, for example with the education sector, was recognised as a positive holistic approach.

In response to concerns raised that there was no immediate solution to either ASB or the PRS, the Housing and Enforcement Manager clarified that it had not been the remit of the working group to solve ASB in the district. The matter in hand was management of the PRS and its condition. If there needed to be a broader piece of work regarding ASB, it could be looked at separately.

With no further comments from Members of the Committee, and having extended his thanks again to all involved, the Chairman read aloud the recommendations contained within the report and, having been moved and seconded, he took the vote. It was

RESOLVED that:

- a) the policy position in regards to selective licensing be agreed as “Option D”, as set out in the options table on page 8 of the report, and that the timeframe for revisiting selective licensing be scheduled to be between 12 and 24 months; and
- b) a further report be brought back to the Prosperous Communities Committee within 6 months to outline the proposed future approach for delivery.

62 APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME

Members gave consideration to a second report from the Housing and Enforcement Manager, seeking approval for the new Environmental Crime Policy and the Environmental Crime Commitment.

It was explained that the Council had not previously had a formal policy relating to its environmental crime work and it would sit alongside other service based policies, and be informed by the broader Corporate Enforcement Policy. Environmental crime continued to be a high-profile area of work for the Council. This had been identified by residents and Councillors in various forums over the previous 12 to 18 months. The Council’s approach to environmental crime was seen as a key issue and was also specifically identified within the Corporate Enforcement Policy workshops for Councillors that were held in August 2022. The proposed policy aligned with the overall strategic aim within the Corporate Plan which was to “Create a safer, cleaner and greener district in which to live, work and socialise”. It also sought to outline the key work areas for which the Council was responsible, and to compliment and work alongside the objectives of the Lincolnshire Environmental Crime Partnership. Additionally, the Environmental Crime Commitment sought to outline the work that the Council were undertaking to tackle this issue, as well as to set out what was aimed to be achieved in the coming 18 to 24 months. It was confirmed that the document was proposed to be the public facing element of the policy that could be used to raise awareness of environmental crime and its impacts.

The Chairman thanked the Housing and Enforcement Manager and invited comments from

Members. There was widespread support for both the Policy and the Commitment, with Members noting it was a positive way forward. It was also recognised that where there were still improvements to be made, it was equally important to be open with residents. The example was provided of roadside litter, with some volunteers for litter picking reporting they had been stopped from undertaking voluntary litter picks. In response to this, Officers confirmed there were locations and situations where it was simply too dangerous for volunteers to undertake litter picking, however the Council worked hard with volunteers to support them and facilitate their efforts. The Chairman, and many Members of the Committee, expressed their thanks for the sterling efforts of the volunteers across West Lindsey.

There were considerable discussions regarding district-wide concerns, such as dog fouling, with Officers explaining that targeted enforcement could be undertaken if sufficient reports were received by residents regarding problem areas. Similarly, if a person had dashcam footage of other vehicles littering, this could be submitted to the Council and there were instances of enforcement action being successful following the receipt of such footage.

There was a general consensus that more could be implemented at a national level, with the suggestion for Government to be lobbied on the matter.

Note: Councillor S. Bunney left the Chamber at 7.52pm and returned at 7. 53pm

There was further discussion regarding other common issues across the district, such as the abandonment of shopping trolleys and fly-tipping. It was noted that the Council had initiated awareness stickers and tape, in order to both avoid multiple reports of the same fly-tip and reassure residents that it was being dealt with. Additionally, the new CRM system meant that reports of fly-tipping were sent directly to operatives, enabling a faster response and direct resolution information sent back to the reporting person. Members requested that thanks be extended to the teams dealing with the suite of environmental crime issues.

Note: Councillor R. Patterson left the Chamber at 7.56pm and returned at 7. 58pm

Following further discussion regarding littering, dog fouling, the need for a multi-faceted approach, and the importance of educating children from a young age, and with no further comments being forthcoming, the Chairman thanked all Members of the Committee for their thorough and thoughtful consideration of the report as presented and the issues it sought to address. Having been moved, seconded, and voted upon, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that:

- a) the Environmental Crime Policy, as shown in appendix 1, be approved; and
- b) the Environmental Crime Commitment, as shown in appendix 2, be approved; and
- c) minor amendments to the policy be made in line with the scheme of delegation by the Director – ICT, Change Management and Regulatory Services with the consultation with the Chairman of the Committee.

63 ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN ANNUAL UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report providing the annual update on progress with delivery of the Economic Recovery Plan. The Committee heard from the Economic Growth Team Manager who explained that, in December 2021 the Committee approved the West Lindsey Economic Recovery Plan, which identified a programme of pan-council activities that would contribute towards the District's on-going recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the Plan had the aligned purpose of informing both the next iteration of the Economic Growth Strategy, which was due by 2024, and the emerging Corporate Plan. As part of that approval, it was recommended that Members receive an annual update on progress against the agreed action plan. As such, appendix 1 of the report provided Members with a detailed update on progress, as of December 2022, against all of the actions within the Plan and a status position for each action.

It was noted that progress could be broadly categorised as ongoing, complete, superseded or deferred activity. Where an action had been superseded or deferred, reasons were provided. The progress update would provide Members with the assurance that progress was being made against each of the priority areas within the Economic Recovery Plan.

It had been recognised at the point of adoption that the Recovery Plan would be an ever-evolving document and since the plan was adopted the national policy environment had continued to evolve. The Council had developed and adopted a full UKSPF Investment Plan and this had reshaped how the Council would deliver against a number of the actions identified within the Plan.

Within the report papers, Members were referred to appendix 2, which provided an infographic summarising progress to date in a more digestible format, and appendix 3 provided an assortment of testimonials from local businesses that had benefited from ARG funded business support.

The Committee heard that the Growth Team were beginning to work on the development of the new Economic Growth Strategy and the paper under consideration at this meeting, also sought agreement that the final Economic Recovery Plan progress update be provided as part of the Economic Growth Strategy evidence base review, which would be presented to the Committee within the report to consider the new Economic Growth Strategy (by March 2024).

It was highlighted that the details within the report papers identified the significant, positive progress the Council had collectively made so far towards post-pandemic recovery, and the Economic Growth Team Manager extended his thanks to both Marina Di Salvatore and Claire Hill for their work collating the report, infographic and business testimonials. He also extended his thanks to the wider officer cohort for their cumulative effort in providing timely updates on progress towards the delivery of the plan.

Members of the Committee thanked the Economic Growth Team Manager for his clear and detailed summary, and echoed his thanks to all Officers involved. Members expressed their support for the paper, as well as noting the detailed environmental and climate related risks and opportunities, and praised the ease of use of the Infographic.

Having been moved, seconded, and voted upon, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that:

- a) the progress with delivery of the Economic Recovery Plan be noted and supported; and
- b) the final update on progress with delivery of the Economic Recovery Plan be received by the Prosperous Communities Committee as part of the Economic Growth Strategy, due by March 2024.

64 WORKPLAN

On consideration of the Committee Work Plan, detailing items of business due at upcoming meetings, the Chairman stated the item was to be noted, unless Members had any comments or questions.

A Member of the Committee, referencing discussions earlier on in the meeting, suggested that a future item be considered by the Committee regarding the Council's approach to anti-social behaviour. Vice Chairman Councillor J. McNeill suggested that the item be included for discussion at the first Chairman's briefing of the new Civic Year. This would allow for the item to be fully considered and future actions agreed.

It was also suggested that early communication with Parish Councils be included, in order that they could begin collating information regarding issues in their parishes.

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

As the final meeting of the Committee for the current Civic Year and term of office, the Chairman extended his thanks to all Members of the Committee for their involvement and input over the preceding four years, stating it was a privilege to hold the seat of Chairman. He also requested that his thanks to all Officers be placed on record, for their hard work and dedication. In bringing the meeting to a close, the Chairman wished all present his best regards for the future.

The meeting concluded at 8.29 pm.

Chairman