

## WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA on 9 November 2023 commencing at 6.30 pm.

<b>Present:</b>	Councillor Trevor Young (Chairman) Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings (Vice-Chairman)
	Councillor John Barrett Councillor Owen Bierley Councillor Frazer Brown Councillor Stephen Bunney Councillor Ian Fleetwood Councillor Lynda Mullally Councillor Tom Smith Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee Councillor Paul Swift
<b>In Attendance:</b>	
Emma Foy	Director of Corporate Services and Section 151 Officer
Nova Roberts	Director of Change Management, ICT & Regulatory Services
Lisa Langdon	Assistant Director of People and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Peter Davy	Financial Services Manager (Deputy Section 151 Officer)
Sue Leversedge	Business Support Team Leader
Grant White	Enterprising Communities Manager
Claire Bailey	Change, Projects and Performance Officer
Katie Storr	Democratic Services & Elections Team Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
<b>Also Present:</b>	Councillor Paul Key
<b>Apologies:</b>	Councillor Matthew Boles Councillor Roger Patterson
<b>Membership:</b>	Councillor Lynda Mullally substituting for Councillor Matthew Boles Councillor John Barrett substituting for Councillor Roger Patterson

### 54 WITHDRAWAL OF AGENDA ITEM - GOOD HOMES ALLIANCE

In opening the meeting, the Chairman sought Committee's consent to withdraw report 6 (iii) -

The Good Homes Alliance, from the agenda. The reasoning being that the Autumn Statement was not due until 22 December. Post that Statement, the Council would have a clearer understanding of the demands on the Health and Wellbeing earmarked reserve, which was the proposed funding source for the Good Homes Alliance.

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

**RESOLVED** that report 6 (iii) be withdrawn from the agenda for the reasons outlined above, and the position be re-considered post the Autumn Statement.

## **55 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD**

There was no public participation.

## **56 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING/S**

The Chairman explained there were two sets of minutes, one for approving and one for noting.

Having been moved and seconded it was

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held on 12 October 2023 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

The minutes of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee held on 5 October 2023 were received.

Reference Minute 24 and the final paragraph on page 15 of the JSCC Minutes, a Member expressed concern that the guidance given, in those minutes, did not reflect the practicalities of how elected Members worked. Members cited various occasions when it was required and appropriate to visit residents in their Ward Member role, questioning the indicated "ban" on such activity and whether this was necessary.

Officers reflected on the minutes, and noting the recent change in Officer acknowledged the points made by Members, and the practicalities of their role. Whilst it was important to consider personal safety, as some residents may be unknown to a Member in advance, a practical guidance sheet would be of more assistance.

Officers indicated this matter would be raised with the Joint Staff Consultative Committee, with a view to a guide being created about how Members could risk assess home visits to ensure personal safety and seek information from the Authority regarding the difficult and dangerous customer register held.

With no requirement for a vote, the minutes of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee held on 5 October 2023 were **NOTED**.

## **57 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

## **58 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE**

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

## **59 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY QUARTER TWO (2023/24)**

Consideration was given to the Progress and Delivery report for quarter two 2023/24 (July-September).

The Change, Projects and Performance Officer introduced the report and explained that it set out performance across the period July to September 2023. It was advised that there had been some slight changes to the overall summary with a view to making the information clearer and more accessible. The content of the report was detailed, and it was noted that the Council budget forecast outturn position needed to be updated to minus 1.83%.

The performance improvement plan was also outlined for the Committee. Information regarding markets in the district was highlighted and clarification was given that the performance in terms of average weekly number of stalls took into account farmers' markets and events held throughout the quarter, and where it referenced stalls, one trader could have more than one stall.

A number of indicators and their respective ratings against the agreed targets were highlighted particularly in respect of crematoriums. The performance of individual portfolios including Change Management, ICT and regulatory services, Finance, Business and Property Services, Homes and Communities, Operational and Commercial Services and Planning and Regeneration were detailed.

Debate ensued, Members acknowledged the significant work that had been undertaken in recent years to improve the quality of the performance reports. Given that a number of measures were to be reviewed shortly, a Member sought indication as to whether the ultimate goal was to have performance information accessible, almost real time information, in a dashboard format available to Members.

In responding, Officers welcomed the acknowledgement of the improvements which had been made to-date. The primary objective over the ensuing year was to ensure the new processes and systems were working effectively and robustly. Further developments to reporting would be considered and whilst daily reporting may be a way, off monthly dashboards accessible to Members were something which could be considered going forward.

Members indicated such a development would be of great assistance to them in the future. Others expressed caution that viewing measures on a daily basis could indicate pressures

that weren't truly there.

Members noted the pleasing position the report indicated but in doing so sought further information as to how targets were set and whether these were stretching enough. In response, Officers advised that measures were set in a variety of ways, some in line with Government targets, such as the planning measures, a number in line with service level agreements and others were set locally. All targets and measures were scrutinised with the next suite of measures looking to be renewed and approved in February 2024 with the involvement of Members.

Referencing the corporate health measures and the information contained within the report about surveys, Members suggested this information offered them little insight, given there was no departmental split, complaint themes or information that could be used to inform future policy setting.

In responding, Officers advised that a more detailed report regarding complaints, outcomes and the information to which Members had referred was routinely reported to the Governance and Audit committee in detail. The intention of the P&D report was to give the high-level information regarding the service and its measures. Officers undertook to include a link and reference to those more detailed reports in future performance and delivery reports going forward.

**RESOLVED** that the Committee had assessed the performance of the Council's services through agreed performance measures and had indicated areas where improvements should be made, having had regard to the remedial measures set out in the report.

## **60 BODY WORN VIDEO POLICY**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities which recommended approval of an updated Body Worn Video Policy, following consideration by the Joint Staff Consultative Committee.

Officers outlined the key changes to the Policy, summarised at Section 1 of the report, the reasons why body worn cameras were used, the legislation which needed to be complied with when using such recording equipment and finally the training staff would be required to undertake.

Debate ensued with Members recognising the use of the body worn cameras provided protection for all, particularly in today's world.

Members sought to understand the training which was provided and how often this was undertaken. Whilst no mandatory refresher training was scheduled, given this was a new Policy, all those previously trained would be required to re-sign their declaration to confirm they had read, understood and would comply with the Policy requirements. The practicalities of using the device, once learnt, did not need to be re-visited, and no-one was issued with a device, prior to undertaking training.

Responding to questions about how the Policy was audited and how assurance was gained that the devices were used in line with the Policy, Officers advised that any footage gained through body worn devices was covered by the CCTV code of practice. The Code of Practice covered such matters as data retention and security. It also set out accountability for regular checks by appointed service managers. Members were advised who could access footage and the retention policies which applied to the data.

**RESOLVED** that: -

- (a) the updated Body Worn Video Policy, attached at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved; and
- (b) delegated authority be granted to the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities to make minor housekeeping amendments to the Policy, following consultation with the Chairmen of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee and Corporate Policy & Resources committee.

## **61 GOOD HOMES ALLIANCE**

As per the announcement at the commencement of the meeting, it was **NOTED** this item had been withdrawn from the agenda.

## **62 DIGITAL ICT VISION**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Change Management, ICT and Regulatory Services which sought approval of the new Digital ICT Vision.

The report provided an executive summary and an overview of the Vision which was a forward looking framework, enabling the Council to benefit from the advances in technology and be open to new opportunities in support of two key corporate plan objectives, under the "Our Council" theme, namely: -

- to deliver high quality customer centric services that offer an excellent customer experience; and
- to deliver modern and sustainable services that offer quality and access to all.

The Digital Vision had a set of guiding principles, worked with the existing business planning and set a good focus and framework to plan, deliver and respond to the service improvements.

The approach taken was considered to be a very adaptable and measured one with its foundations in the T24 transformation programme. The key focus was very much about it being adaptable, delivering outcomes and ensuring alignment to the corporate plan.

Highlighting the speed at which technology changed, writing a five-year fixed term strategy would almost definitely result in the Strategy being out of date very quickly. Therefore, the Vision presented, provided clear direction whilst providing the ability to utilise the best digital

tools available. It was stressed that Officers recognised that digital was only part of the solution and it was really important that the overall model was a blended approach combining traditional routes of interacting with customers but allowing for the use of digital technology where this delivered desired outcomes.

Debate ensued and Members acknowledged there was vagueness to the document but were fully supportive and understanding why this was the case. Increasing numbers of residents were looking towards a digital service, and a service which operated outside of traditional office hours. Increased connectivity and a vision of this nature were required to enable the Council to function in a changing world.

The phrase architecture was explained to the Committee, with those Members experienced in IT offering their lay person interpretations.

Members were very supportive and welcomed the blended approach, as opposed to residents being made to transact business on-line, which did not suit everyone.

Having been proposed and seconded, on being put to the vote, it was

**RESOLVED** that:-

- (a) the Digital ICT Vision, to provide structure to the delivery of the digital services in the Council be approved; and
- (b) delegated authority be granted to the Director of Change Management, ICT & Regulatory Services, following consultation with the Chairman of the Corporate Policy & Resources Committee to make minor housekeeping amendments to the Digital ICT Vision.

## **63 BUDGET AND TREASURY MONITORING - QUARTER 2 2023/204**

The report of the Director of Corporate Services, setting out the revenue, capital and treasury management activity from 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023, was received and considered.

The Business Support Team Leader presented the report. In relation to revenue budgets, the forecast outturn position was a net contribution to reserves of £301,000, which was an increase of £244,000 from the forecast position reported at quarter one.

This was mainly due to the increase in interest received, as a result of the current base rate being higher than the peak expected, and there was also a forecast underspend on interest payable, resulting in a net increase in income of £234,000.

The outturn figure did not include the impact of the pay award as it had not been agreed at the time the report was written. However, on 1 November, agreement was reached, with £1,925 per annum to be applied to all JNC scale points, pro-rata for part time staff, and 3.5% for Chief Officer pay. The impact of the pay award resulted in an additional cost of £360,000, changing the outturn position to a net use of reserves of £59,000.

In regard to capital expenditure, schemes were reporting a net £5.736m underspend against the revised budget with Members asked to approve the revised capital budget of £18.441m, which included the amendments to the capital programme detailed at section 3.2.

The detailed capital monitoring table was included at Appendix 2.

Debate ensued and Members sought to understand why a number of forecasts had not been met. In responding, Officers advised that in respect of trade waste, some large customers had been lost. With regard to the crematorium, the business case had been built around standard cremations. The increase in direct cremations, which could not have been predicted at the time, therefore had impacted the income generated from standard cremations.

Members sought to understand what sort of benchmarking was done around the crematorium fees. Given funerals were expensive and people would shop around if necessary. Officers confirmed benchmarking was undertaken but of vital importance was cost recovery whilst remaining competitive. Residents should not be subsidising commercial services. The Section 151 Officer outlined the reviews which were being undertaken in this area, noting that a revised Business Plan was due to be submitted to the Committee.

In response to further questions, Members were advised that it was proposed to increase the Green Garden Waste charge, again to reflect increased costs of running the service, this matter was covered in greater detail in the fees and charges report. Referencing the Government's intention to introduce mandatory food waste collections, Officers outlined the preparatory work being undertaken to understand the associated costs and implementation plan. Consideration was being given as to whether it would be more prudent to commence collections before they became mandatory, with the reasons for this outlined. Members were advised that associated costs would likely be added to the capital programme from 2024.

Finally with regard to Scampton, Officers confirmed costs that had been incurred to date, both in terms of the judicial review work and the previous procurement of the development partner, were all included within budget monitoring reports. What was not reflected currently, was the uncertain potential future income that may or may not be received. Officers continued to liaise with the Home Office regarding this matter and Members would be advised as soon as the position was known, as was advised to Council, earlier in the week, in response to a question under Rule 9.

**RESOLVED** that: -

**REVENUE**

- (a) the forecast out-turn position of a £0.301m net contribution to reserves as of 30 September 2023, Section 2 of the report, relating to revenue activity be accepted;
- (b) the use of Earmarked Reserves during the quarter approved by the Chief Finance Officer using Delegated powers (2.4.1) be accepted;
- (c) the contributions to Earmarked Reserves (Section 2.4.2). be accepted;

- (d) the amendments to the fees and charges schedules for 2023/2024 (2.3.2) be approved and recommended to Council that any new Fees and Charges be implemented;

### **CAPITAL**

- (e) the current projected Capital Outturn as detailed in 3.1.1 be accepted;
- (f) the adjustments to the Capital Budget as detailed in 3.2 be approved;
- (g) the revised Capital Budget of £18.441m (section 3.1) be approved; and

### **TREASURY**

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

## **64 MID-YEAR TREASURY UPDATE 2023/24**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Corporate Services which provided the Mid-Year update for Treasury Management Indicators in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003.

The Financial Services Manager introduced the report and clarified that the report was required to comply with the CIPFA code of practise on treasury management and also to keep Members updated with the current situation. Members noted the report had been written during a time of high inflation and high interest rates and it contained commentary on the Council's treasury position and included explanation by the Councils treasury advisors, Link Asset Services.

The main parts of the report showed that interest rates had been rising and could potentially increase further which meant the Council was currently receiving additional investment income as shown in the quarter two budget monitoring report which had been considered earlier in the meeting. Members were also reminded however that the counter to this, was that if Council needed to borrow during these times of high interest rates, it would be more costly to source funds.

The report showed the movements in the Council's prudential indicators which had changed as a result of the Council closing its accounts for 2022/23 after the original strategy was written and also as a result of a revised capital programme for 2023/24.

An economics update supplied by Link Asset Services was included in the report and provided an understanding of the national and international context the Council was operating within when undertaking its treasury activities.

Appendix B to the report gave the latest list of approved countries for investment as at 30 September but Members were advised that typically the Council only invested within the UK.

With no questions, having being proposed and seconded on being put to the vote it was: -



**RESOLVED** that the report and treasury activity be noted and the revised prudential indicators detailed at sections 5.2, 6.1 and 6.2 of the report be **RECOMMENDED** to Council for approval.

## **65 PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES 2024/2025**

The report of the Director of Corporate Services, which outlined proposed Fees and Charges to take effect from 1 April 2024, was considered.

The Business Support Team Leader presented the report and detailed fees and charges to be implemented from the 1 April 2024, for services within the committee remit at Appendix A, as well as those recommended by Prosperous Communities Committee at Appendices B and C.

The sections which provided service specific detail around performance and demand were included within the report at appendices 1 to 19. Consideration had been given to total cost recovery, benchmarking data, and team manager knowledge of the market when proposing fees. The budget implications included in the report reflected both the impact of proposed amendments to fees, and the forecast demand. It was noted that 41% of the fees listed were statutory, with the remaining 59% being non statutory and determined locally.

Although the Retail Price Index stood at 8.9%, as of September 23, it was proposed to apply 6% where non-statutory fees were to be increased by inflation. This represented the average pay award increase for 2023/2024, with staff costs being the main cost driver for fees and charges. There were several non-statutory fees which had been increased above inflation to reflect cost recovery calculations and benchmarking data; these included, crematorium fees, and the garden waste collection service. Where the proposed fees were above inflation this was to reflect the forecast cost of providing the service

Where no increase was proposed this was to ensure that market share was maintained or increased whilst remaining comparable to benchmarking data – no increase was proposed at this time for car parking, land charges search fees and market stall fees.

The impact of proposed fees, alongside forecast demand meant a net increase in income for the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) of £10,000 in 2024/2025, rising to a benefit for the MTFP of £148,400 in 2028/2029.

In respect of statutory planning applications, increases were approved in the House of Lords during October, and confirmation of the implementation date and final version of the schedule was awaited and would be presented to committee once confirmed. This amendment was expected to increase planning fee income by £165,000 from 2024/25.

There was a recommendation from Prosperous Communities committee – that members approve a new fee within the Markets schedule of £7.50 where a trader utilises more than 25 stalls at the Gainsborough market on a Tuesday or Saturday. This discounted amount had been omitted from the schedule included within the report but had been added in for Council, if approved.

With no questions or debate, having been proposed and seconded, on being put to the vote

it was: -

**RESOLVED** that:

- (a) the proposed Fees and Charges at Appendix A, as well as those recommended by Prosperous Communities Committee detailed at Appendices B and C\* (\*commercially sensitive) be **RECOMMENDED** to Council for approval; and
- (b) it be **RECOMMENDED** to Council that a new fee, within Markets, of £7.50 be introduced where a trader utilises more than 25 stalls at the Gainsborough Market on a Tuesday or Saturday.

## **66 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN**

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

The meeting concluded at 7.50 pm.

Chairman