

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 8 February 2024 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings (Chairman)
Councillor Stephen Bunney (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Owen Bierley
Councillor Matthew Boles
Councillor Frazer Brown
Councillor Tom Smith
Councillor Karen Carless
Councillor Jeanette McGhee

In Attendance:
Emma Foy Director of Corporate Services and Section 151
Ady Selby Director - Operational & Commercial Services
Peter Davy Financial Services Manager (Deputy Section 151 Officer)
Sue Leversedge Business Support Team Leader
Sarah Elvin Homes, Health & Wellbeing Team Manager
Ele Snow Senior Democratic and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Trevor Young
Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee

Membership:

99 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

Councillor L. Rollings, Vice-Chairman in the Chair, gave apologies for the Chairman, Councillor T. Young, and sought agreement from the Committee to appoint a Vice-Chairman for this meeting of the Committee. She duly nominated Councillor S. Bunney. This nomination was seconded, and, with no other nominations on the table, the Chairman took the vote. It was unanimously

RESOLVED that Councillor S. Bunney be appointed as Vice-Chairman for this meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

100 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

101 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Having been moved and seconded it was

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held on 30 January 2024 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

102 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

103 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

With no comments or questions, the Matters Arising Schedule, setting out the position of previously agreed actions as at 31 January 2024, was **NOTED**.

104 CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE DRAFT BUDGET 2024/2025 AND ESTIMATES TO 2028/2029.

The Committee gave consideration to a report presented by the Business Support Team Leader, setting out the proposed budget for 2024/25 and the forecast budget for the following four years for services within the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee, and those recommended for approval by the Prosperous Communities Committee in January. Members heard that the proposals formed part of an overall balanced budget for 2024/25, as detailed in the next item on the agenda. The net movement from the 2023/24 base budget for this committee was an increase of £0.49m, with the significant movements including the following:

- An increase in salary costs of £0.376m to reflect the incremental impact of the current year's pay award, plus a forecast increase of 3.5% for 2024/25.
- An increase of £0.113m for 'contingency' budgets which included member led growth items, to be drawn down as required.
- Inflationary increases had been applied to utilities and to reflect contractual increases within supplies and services budget lines with an increase in budget of £0.061m.
- These increases in expenditure budgets were offset by a decrease in the use of earmarked reserves of (£0.271m)

Members were asked to recommend the draft 2024/25 budget to Council for both this Committee and those of the Prosperous Communities Committee for inclusion in the Medium-Term Financial Plan to be reported to Council in March 2024.

Members thanked the Officer for a clear and detailed report. A Member of the Committee suggested that there could be improved communication with members of the public regarding costs incurred by the council, such as salary increases, in order to help explain other financial considerations, such as council tax increases.

Further discussion highlighted the limited financial settlement which was announced by central government prior to Christmas, with many local authorities lobbying for greater recognition of the work undertaken by local councils. It was confirmed that an additional £120,000 had been awarded.

Members again thanked Officers for their time and efforts and, having been proposed and seconded, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

- a) the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee budget 2024/2025 be accepted and **recommended to Council** for inclusion in the overall Council budget 2024/2025; and
- b) the Prosperous Communities Committee Budget 2024/2025 be accepted and **recommended to Council** for inclusion in the overall Council budget for 2024/2025; and
- c) any minor changes be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Chairman of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee; and
- d) Members **recommend to Council** the 2025/2026 to 2028/2029 estimates for both this Committee and those of Prosperous Communities Committee for inclusion in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2024/2025 to 2028/2029 (as amended by any decisions taken on this agenda).

105 EXECUTIVE BUSINESS PLAN AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2024/25

Members considered a report regarding the Executive Business Plan 2024/25 to 2026/27, the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2024/24 to 2028/29, the 2024/25 budget as well as the capital programme 2024/25 to 2028/29.

It was explained that the report presented a balanced budget for 2024/25, without the requirement to support it with funds from the General Fund Balance. It addressed the financial implications arising from the recommended revisions to the MTFP and the requirement to determine the Council Tax for 2024/25 taking into account the approved Tax Base 32,093.99 and Council Tax Surplus £0.290m.

The Provisional Settlement local government finance settlement was announced on 18 December 2023 and had been incorporated into the report. Allocations were made for 2024/25 only, therefore it was not clear whether these grant streams would continue after 2024/25.

It was also explained that the 2024/25 Draft Budget totalled £18.415m, was fully funded and was a balanced budget. Contributions to Earmarked Reserves totalled £1.708m and Use of

Earmarked Reserves totalled £0.617m, these excluded capital reserve movements. The movement on the General Fund Balance was a reduction of £0.053m and was forecast to be £2.499m at the end of 2024/25; and the Capital Programme totalled £27.661m over the Medium-Term Financial Plan and was fully funded.

Members again thanked Officers for the clarity of information and clear risk management approach. The economic uncertainties facing many local authorities were highlighted and recognised, with Members appreciating that there could be further difficulties faced in the future.

Having been proposed and seconded, and with no further requests to speak, the Chairman took the vote and it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

- a) the approval of the Executive Business Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2024/25 – 2028/29 be **recommended to Council**; and
- b) the review of Reserves and the proposed use and contributions to both the General Fund Balance and Earmarked Reserves as detailed at 2.8 within the Medium-Term Financial Plan be approved; and
- c) a balanced Revenue Budget for 2024/25 (Appendix A) be considered and **recommended to Council**; and
- d) the Capital Programme 2024/25 – 2028/29 (Appendix 4) be considered and **recommended to Council**; and
- e) the Statement of the Chief Finance Officer on the Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves be accepted; and
- f) the Pay Policy Statement (Appendix 6) be considered and **recommended to Council**; and
- g) any housekeeping or changes required to this Draft Executive Business Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan, due to the final financial settlement and any approvals elsewhere on this agenda, be delegated to the Director of Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer) in consultation with the Chairman of this Committee prior to the final consideration by Council on 4 March 2024.

106 BUDGET AND TREASURY MONITORING - QTR 3 2023/2024

The Committee considered the last of the finance reports on the agenda, hearing that the quarter three budget monitoring report for 2023/24 was based on the forecast outturn as of

31 December 2023. Members heard that in relation to revenue budgets, the forecast outturn position was a net contribution to reserves of £79,000, which was an increase of £138,000 from the forecast position reported to Members at quarter two. This was mainly due to the increase in interest receivable, as a result of the current base rate being higher than the peak expected when the budget was set, plus a forecast underspend on interest payable resulting in a net increase in income of £612,000.

The outturn figure now included the impact of the pay award as agreement was reached on 1 November 2023, with an average increase of 6.27% across all scale points, compared to the 2% allowed for within the budget for 2023/2024 plus a £200,000 contingency. Salary costs were £231,000 above the budget for the year, as the impact of the pay award had been offset by savings arising due to vacancies.

In relation to capital, schemes were reporting a net £6.832m underspend against the revised budget, £3.975m of which was requested as a carry forward into 2024/2025.

Members were asked to approve the revised capital budget of £11.609m which included the amendments to the capital programme detailed at section 3.2 of the report. The detailed capital monitoring table was also included at Appendix 2.

On opening the floor for comments, it was enquired as to why there was a carry forward amount for the Richmond House conservatory, when Members understood this scheme had been ceased. It was explained that there had been a recent meeting with Gainsborough Town Council to look at alternative improvement plans, therefore the carry forward was requested. Members were assured that, in the event of alternative plans, there would be a separate report to the Committee.

In relation to the savings made due to staff vacancies, assurance was sought that this was as a result of vacancies not being appointed to, rather than job roles simply not being re-advertised once vacant. It was confirmed that savings were as a result of roles not being appointed to, for example where there may be a delay between a person leaving the authority and a new person joining.

Having been proposed and seconded, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

REVENUE

- a) the forecast out-turn position of a £0.079m net contribution to reserves as of 31 December 2023 (see Section 2) relating to revenue activity, be accepted; and
- b) the use of Earmarked Reserves during the quarter approved by the Chief Finance Officer using Delegated powers (Section 2.4.1) be accepted; and
- c) the contributions to Earmarked Reserves (Section 2.4.2), be accepted; and

- d) the amendments to the fees and charges schedules for 2023/2024 (Section 2.3.2 and **Appendix 7**) 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; and
- f) the adjustments to the Capital Budget as detailed in 3.2 be approved; and
- g) the revised Capital Budget of £11.609m (3.1) be approved.

TREASURY

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

107 LINCOLNSHIRE GOOD HOMES ALLIANCE

The Committee gave consideration to a report represented by the Homes, Health & Wellbeing Team Manager, detailing proposals for a pilot scheme to support people to live independently, to stay connected and have greater choice in where and how they live. It was explained that, following consultation and engagement across the county, gaps in availability of services had been highlighted, with several themes set out within the project as follows:

- Keeping warm and improving energy efficiency of properties
- Access to trusted tradespeople
- Opportunity to access financial solutions
- Support when trying to commission work
- Providing advice on all options available to people in relation to their homes
- A healthy homes assessment - which would tap in to professionals who are already visiting homes to help to identify any housing related issues.
- Other practical support that might be needed to overcome barriers to completing work within their homes

The project then went on to design how a full Good Homes Alliance would respond to all these identified themes with a two phase approach. Phase 1 was the information and signposting phase and would look to ensure all relevant information was available and accessible for all, whilst also including progress with the healthy homes assessment form which would then see people signposted to relevant services.

Phase 2 was the advice and support pilot and was the basis of the requirement for approval of funding being considered by the Committee. It was highlighted that the pilot service would bring together all the different elements of the identified project themes and would deliver the

following:

- Provide triage for those completing the healthy home assessment;
- Provide advice and support to residents to help them to maintain and improve their homes;
- Liaise with relevant organisations to resolve housing condition issues for residents;
- Help residents to access any available funding; and
- Co-ordinate an holistic response to issues facing residents, helping them to access a range of other services.

It was estimated a pilot with three caseworkers would provide advice to between 1,000 - 1,500 households a year across the whole of Lincolnshire. It would also deliver “hubs” throughout the areas where people would be able to drop in to access advice and support about their homes.

Members were asked to consider approval of £43,933 of funding from the Health and Wellbeing reserve to undertake this pilot, the amount having been determined using existing funding formulas in use across the county.

Members heard that the Centre for Ageing Better would be undertaking an analysis of the project successes in order to determine whether the objectives of the project were being delivered, to then consider opportunities to continue the pilot, including how that might be funded.

The Chairman invited comments from the Committee. Councillor T. Smith declared a non-pecuniary interest as he was a member of the advisory committee assisting veterans with difficulties such as those detailed in the report.

Members were supportive of the pilot scheme, although assurance was sought regarding the monitoring of the scheme and whether it would be realistic to assess the successes if the only action taken had been to signpost an individual to a different service. It was explained that there was a robust matrix in place to ensure points of contact were followed up and offered further support if necessary or to confirm resolution of the reason for having made contact with the service. Members were advised that there would be progress updates shared and Member input, for example identifying the need for an area hub or making a referral, was welcomed and encouraged.

Concerns were raised regarding the size of the geographical area to be covered and whether the scheme could prove successful when travel time and cross-county requirements were taken into consideration. It was highlighted that there would be area hubs in different locations, there were already Officers across the county who travelled and visited homes, and a large portion of the success of the pilot scheme would be based on expanding and strengthening new and existing pathways and networks. As the pilot progressed and results were monitored, changes could be incorporated to continue improvements.

Further questions from the Committee included whether there was online support, such as zoom calls, and whether residents in social housing would be able to access the scheme.

Both were confirmed to be the case.

The Vice-Chairman voiced his support for the scheme and echoed previous comments regarding the need to monitor the benefits and successes, or challenges, as the scheme progressed. To this end, he proposed an additional recommendation for consideration. That being:

“An interim report on the impact of the Good Homes Alliance in the West Lindsey area be presented to the Prosperous Communities Committee after 12 months of data has been collected.”

The addition of the recommendation was duly seconded and voted upon and it was

RESOLVED that there be an additional recommendation, as detailed above, for consideration by the Committee.

With no further comments or questions, the recommendations as detailed within the report, to also include the additional recommendation as voted upon, were proposed and seconded en bloc.

The Chairman took the vote and it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

- a) the delivery of the Good Homes Alliance across Lincolnshire be supported; and
- b) £43,933 of funding be allocated from the Health and Wellbeing reserve to fund the Good Homes Lincs pilot project; and
- c) an interim report on the impact of the Good Homes Alliance in the West Lindsey area be presented to the Prosperous Communities Committee after 12 months of data has been collected.

Note: Councillor T. Smith left the Chamber at 7.23pm and returned at 7.25pm

**108 RECOMMENDATION FROM PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE:
TEMPORARY EXCESS WASTE SOLUTION FOR RESIDENTS (BIG BIN CLEAR
OUT)**

The Committee heard from the Director of Commercial and Operational Services regarding a recommendation from the Prosperous Communities Committee to approve the commencement of a temporary excess waste solution for residents, to be known as the Big Bin Clear Out. It was explained that the premise of the idea was to allow residents to rent one of two sizes of large trade waste bins to dispose of household waste, for example after parties, clearing out rooms or outbuildings, or at other times when they had excess waste which was too much for normal disposal routes, but not sufficient to warrant the hiring of a skip.

Members heard that the proposal had been based on a cost recovery basis and bins would come in either 660 litre or 1100 litre sizes, at a cost of either £50 or £60 for a week' hire. It was anticipated that initial anticipated demand could be delivered through the normal bulky service, with potential for additional demand to require dedicated resource, details of which had been financially appraised within the report. Members heard that the Terms and Conditions, including disposal conditions, would be included in refreshed Waste Services Policies document which was due at a future meeting of the Committee. As with the bulky waste service, residents would be encouraged to reuse or recycle waste material.

It was highlighted that the Prosperous Communities Committee had recommended the scheme for approval to run as a 12 month pilot, with financial approval requested from the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee. In addition, should there be any need for minor amendments to the scheme as it commenced, approval was sought from the Committee for such amendments to be delegated to Officers in consultation with the Chairmen of the two policy committees.

Members of the Committee were in support of the proposed scheme, recognising the benefits of the pricing in comparison to hiring a skip as well as the flexibility on bin size. In response to a question regarding the charging structure and limitations on use, it was confirmed that residents would be able to sign up for the service as often as they wished, with charges being on a 'per bin, per collection' basis. Residents would be expected to secure the hired bins and comply with the terms and conditions of usage.

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

RESOLVED that

- a) weekly hire charges of £50 for a 660 litre bin or £60 for a 1100 litre bin be approved for the Big Bin Clear Out service; and
- b) minor changes to the service and charges to be delegated to the Director of Commercial and Operational Services in consultation with the Chairs of the Prosperous Communities and Corporate Policy and Resources Committees.

109 REVIEW OF CIVIC CAR

Members of the Committee were asked to consider options regarding the provision of the civic car. The Director of Corporate Services explained that the Council owned a car which was purchased in 2020. The car, with a driver also employed, was for use by the Chairman or Vice Chairman when carrying out civic duties. It was noted that in the last two years, the car had been rarely used, although the availability of a vehicle was essential in ensuring that all Members, regardless of whether they could drive or have access to a car, were fully able to carry out the role of Chairman.

Since 2019, an annual revenue contribution of £10,000 had been made to reserves to ensure there was sufficient funding available in an earmarked reserve to replace the car when needed. It was originally anticipated that the car would be replaced during 2024-25. In January 2024, a report on reserves was brought to the Corporate Policy and Resources

Committee and requested that the contribution of £10,000 be drawn down from revenue into reserves. At that time, Members of the Committee challenged the value for money in replacing the car in 2024-25 and asked Officers to consider further options and for the decision to be brought forward to the next Committee meeting.

The Committee heard that the current annual cost of the existing vehicle was approximately £2,400 dependent on mileage and use of the driver. This included insurance, vehicle road licence and MOT / Servicing. Funding for these costs was in the budget throughout the Medium-Term Financial Plan. There was £20,000 in the replacement reserve currently with the vehicle having a second-hand value of approximately £16,000.

Members were presented with three options for consideration, those being: to maintain the existing vehicle for 2024-25, with no further contribution made to the reserve, and a decision on the future vehicle provision to be sought no later than February 2025; to replace the vehicle with an electric vehicle using the trade-in value and reserves fund; or for the vehicle to be disposed of and no replacement sought.

On consideration of the options, Members expressed the need for additional work to be undertaken in terms of alternative options, such as using the civic car more akin to a pool car, climate friendlier options other than an electric vehicle, or ad hoc rental options. On this basis, recommendation a) within the report was duly proposed and seconded.

On taking the vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the existing civic car be maintained for 2024-25 with no further contribution made to the reserve for its replacement in 2024-25. A further decision for later replacement be brought back to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee no later than 28 February 2025.

110 COMMITTEE TIMETABLE 24/25 FOR APPROVAL (DRAFT 25/26- 27/28)

The final report of the evening requested approval of the proposed committee timetable for the 2024-25 Civic Year, and for the draft timetable for the 2025-26 Civic Year to be noted. Members heard there was an increased number of meetings scheduled in for 2024-25, as there had been a need to call several additional meetings in the current year, and by including dates in the timetable, this sought to reduce the impact of calling meetings with little notice. The Constitution did allow for meetings to be cancelled where there was insufficient business, and this approach would be taken if needed.

It was highlighted that that the timetable showed a scheduled meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee to take place on the second day of the Lincolnshire Show. In accepting that this may not be suitable for Members, the Committee was asked to consider proposing an amendment to the timetable which would see the meeting delayed by one week, to take place on 27 June 2024.

During the course of debate, Members of the Committee were in agreement that the date of the June meeting should be moved, and this amendment was duly proposed and seconded. With all present indicating their consent to take the recommendations en bloc, and with all recommendations having been proposed and seconded, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

- a) the meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee scheduled to take place on 20 June 2024 be rescheduled to be held on 27 June 2024; and
- b) the timetable for the 2024/2025 Civic Year be approved; and the indicative committee dates for the 2025/2026 Civic Year be noted; and
- c) the indicative committee dates be presented annually for approval, with each subsequent report noting any changes proposed from the previous version noted.

111 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

With no comments or questions, the Committee Work Plan was **DULY NOTED**.

The meeting concluded at 7.43 pm.

Chairman