

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 17 January 2024 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Trevor Young (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Owen Bierley
Councillor Matthew Boles
Councillor Frazer Brown
Councillor Stephen Bunney
Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Tom Smith
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee
Councillor Paul Swift

In Attendance:
Emma Foy Director of Corporate Services and Section 151
Lisa Langdon Monitoring Officer
Darren Mellors Performance & Programme Manager
Claire Bailey Change, Projects and Performance Officer
Andy Gray Housing & Environmental Enforcement Manager
Ele Snow Senior Democratic and Civic Officer

80 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

81 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING/S

Having been moved and seconded it was

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held on 19 December 2023 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

82 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

83 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

With no comments or questions, the Matters Arising Schedule, setting out the position of previously agreed actions as at 9 January 2024, was **NOTED**.

84 2024/25 MEASURE AND TARGET SETTING FOR PROGRESS AND DELIVERY

Consideration was given to the report presenting the Council's proposed 2024/25 Progress and Delivery measures and corresponding targets.

The Performance and Programme Manager introduced the report and advised it had been informed by meetings with team managers and management team. This was part of a full review of the framework which had involved a review of measures and associated targets by an Overview and Scrutiny commissioned cross-party working group prior to the meeting and all measures were circulated to Members and feedback welcomed.

The proposed measures within the framework were designed to provide information and assurance on the delivery of Council services, it was important that the measures provided Members with an understanding of the services being delivered and provided the information to learn and improve these.

The purpose of the report was to seek approval of the measures for inclusion in the 2024-25 framework, ready for an implementation date of April 2024. The report was detailed, outlining works completed to date, an overview of measures recommended for inclusion in next year's framework as well as those measures that were recommended to be amended or removed. The appendix to the report showed a complete list of service measures organised by portfolio.

The Change, Projects and Performance Officer presented the proposed new measures which included 29 new measures, 16 of which, however, were created to replace existing measures. It was noted that some new measures had resulted from Member engagement. The Officer then detailed the new measures proposed.

A Councillor thanked officers for the report and welcomed the review that had been undertaken. In particular, measures relating to communities issues in respect of community grants were important as was external funding. In respect of new measures, the good causes registered with the West Lindsey Lottery and the amount of funds raised was highlighted. A Member concurred and asked how improvement delivery could be assessed for such indicators.

In response the Officer explained that in terms of the Community section of the report, it was an opportunity to provide some transparency of the work that was undertaken through the Council and whilst appreciating it may not specifically fit the criteria in terms of typical progress and delivery it was considered useful to highlight that work.

A Councillor highlighted that it would be beneficial to look deeper at some of the indicators and referred to other grants, such as the Councillor Initiative Fund, that could be included in the indicators. It was suggested that several of the measures were data rather than quality led which was not necessarily the best indicator in some areas and additional commentary

or analysis may be needed. The role of the Working Party in looking at these issues was highlighted, and it was indicated that they should consider alternative approaches in the future. A Member agreed and whilst acknowledging that new indicators would be assessed from scratch there may be some historic data that could inform the process.

In response the Officer acknowledged the concerns and confirmed that baseline data was available to inform some indicators and would be incorporated into update reports if the recommendations were agreed. Some of the measures would be new and, in this case, the 2024-25 cycle would be used to collect information, with the data and indicators being reviewed the following year to identify changes that may be needed. Discussion ensued regarding the criteria for setting initial targets, targets proposed for individual indicators, the benchmarking process, and the frequency of reports to the Committee.

It was suggested and agreed that the indicator relating to website accessibility should be amended to 99%.

Having been proposed and seconded it was

RESOLVED that the 2024/25 Progress & Delivery measure set, as amended, be approved.

85 UPDATE ON DRAFT LOCAL GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENT

The report of the Director of Corporate Services providing an update on the forecast 2024-25 high level budget following receipt of the draft Local Government Financial Settlement was received. It was explained that it also provided an update of the Medium Term Financial Position (MTFP) as a result of the draft financial settlement received on 18 December.

It was explained that all figures provided by the government assumed a council tax by the maximum percentage allowable which was 2.99%. There was a below average increase in spending power this year. It was noted that whilst there was a greater level of New Homes Bonus this was offset by reductions in other core funding. Overall, this related to an initial funding gap of £325k for 2024-25. Full details would be presented at a future meeting but the predicted gap after adjustments was expected to be around £53k. Details of correspondence with the government, and response to consultation documents by the Council and others on the funding issues were outlined.

Councillors raised concern that funding announcements were being made later in the year than previously and the issues this caused for councils, and supported ongoing lobbying to address this. The uncertainty of year-on-year funding was a concern. Disappointment was expressed at the difference in level of the settlement between urban and rural areas and the impact this had on largely rural districts where wages were lower and access to services was limited. It was highlighted that investment in youth services and public transport were examples where rural areas missed out. The importance of economic development and investment for the future as a strategy was highlighted.

A Member referred to flooding in the district and concerns around funding to alleviate that through the local drainage board. In response it was explained that a national group had been established, with representatives from councils that paid levies to internal drainage

boards, to discuss this further alongside lobbying that was already taking place.

There was discussion relating to land supply and the Council meeting housing targets and whilst this was good it was actually proving to be an inhibitor if other funding was being reduced.

Members thanked Officers for their work in addressing the financial challenges and emphasised the need to look at innovative ways to deliver services.

The recommendations in the report were proposed and seconded and on being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED that

- a) the forecast Medium Term Financial Position as shown at paragraph 2.7 of the report be noted; and
- b) the West Lindsey District Council response to the Consultation for 2024-25 Local Government Funding provided in Appendix One to the report be noted.

86 ANNUAL REVIEW OF EARMARKED RESERVES 2023/2024

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Corporate Services detailing the annual review of earmarked reserves in advance of the formal Section 25 report (Section 151 Review of Robustness of Reserves) being brought to Council on 5 March 2024.

The Director of Corporate Services introduced the report and outlined the recommendations to Members. The level of reserves proposed including changes were explained. Decisions required relating to the civic car and IT provision were highlighted.

A Councillor acknowledged the need for reserves to be in place and expressed the hope that they could continue to be used sensibly and not for emergency expenditure to cover service funding. In that regard the proposal for a budget stability reserve was sensible. In respect of the civic car, it was suggested that it was difficult to make an immediate decision as there were practical as well as financial implications.

The Officer responded that one of the biggest challenges facing local authorities was a lack of revenue funding coming from central government so some councils were declaring bankruptcy whilst having reserves which impacted on others who were more prudent. It was confirmed that the Council would always try and maintain adequate levels of reserves.

Discussion ensued regarding the need to continue lobbying for changes in funding processes. It was also suggested and agreed that a further report providing options regarding the civic car could be presented.

A Member asked about reserves for the Uphill Community Centre and Trinity Arts Centre. It was explained that in respect of Uphill this was historic following transfer of the facility and related to any ongoing liabilities for the Council. In respect of the Trinity Arts Centre, this was

a ticket levy and was there for future investment.

The recommendations were proposed, seconded and on being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED that

- a) the levels of reserves summarised in Section 2 of the report be noted; and
- b) the obsolete earmarked reserves outlined in Section 3 of the report be deleted; and
- c) the balance on the Civic Reserve as outlined in section 4 of the report was duly considered; and
- d) an ongoing contribution of £10,000 per year to the Members ICT reserve to cover the cost of new ICT equipment for Members every four years be approved; and
- e) the transfer of £1m from the General Fund Balance to the Budget Stability Reserve as outlined at section 6 of the report be approved; and
- f) an amendment to the minimum working balance on the General Fund from £2.5m to £2.0m be approved (this is recommended to only be taken in conjunction with recommendation 11 as the decrease is mitigated by additional earmarked funding provided in recommendation e).

87 ADDITIONAL ENFORCEMENT RESOURCES

The Committee consider a report presenting proposals for additional community safety resources. The Housing & Environmental Enforcement Manager introduced the report and outlined the financial implications. The aspirations for outcomes relating to the proposed posts and operational priorities were clarified.

Members highlighted the importance of enforcement being undertaken and welcomed the proposed investment in resources. It was suggested it was a priority for many residents and there was a need to make people aware of enforcement issues and it was considered essential for action to be taken.

The Officer outlined the operation of the enforcement team and investment in new technology to help address issues. Work with partner agencies was also highlighted.

In response to a question, officers confirmed that continuation of the additional posts beyond the initial two years would need to be considered and other funding options looked at.

Members discussed the provision of vehicles and uniforms together with branding and that it could be a reassurance to residents. The costs to the council of fly tipping and similar offences were considered. It was noted that additional staff would allow more offences to be dealt with and identified.

Having been proposed and seconded it was

RESOLVED that

- a) the appointment of two additional enforcement officers for a two-year fixed-term period be approved; and
- b) funding via the draw down of £89,000 from the Communities at Risk Reserve and £89,000 from General Fund Balances be approved.

88 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

Members noted the need to add a report relating to the civic budget as agreed earlier in the meeting.

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

89 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Note: The meeting entered closed session at 8.07pm

90 BUSINESS PLAN FOLLOWING MARKET STREET RENEWAL SHARE PURCHASE

The Committee heard from the Director of Corporate Services regarding the draft business plan for Market Street Renewal Limited. Members expressed their satisfaction with the contents of the report and progress to date. In response to an enquiry regarding property inspections, it was confirmed all inspections had been fulfilled with arrangements in place for future requirements.

With no further comments or questions it was

RESOLVED the contents of the Business Plan provided in Appendix One to the report be noted.

91 UPDATE ON SCAMPTON EXPENDITURE

Consideration was given to the report from the Director of Corporate Services providing Members with an update on the legal costs incurred in relation to matters regarding the former RAF site at Scampton.

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Subject to Call-in. Call-in will expire at 5pm on 5 February 2024

The Committee received the report as an informative, and with no requirement for a vote, the legal costs incurred up to and including 5 January 2024 were **DULY NOTED**.

The meeting concluded at 8.19 pm.

Chairman