

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 23 May 2024 commencing at 6.30 pm.

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

In Attendance:
Lisa Langdon Assistant Director People and Democratic (Monitoring Officer)
Angela Matthews Benefits Manager
Lyn Marlow Customer Strategy and Services Manager
Luke Matthews Building Maintenance Technician
Katie Storr Democratic Services & Elections Team Manager

1 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

2 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 11 April 2024 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee, held on 28 March 2024, were **NOTED**.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Bierley declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Household Support Fund report as a Trustee and Director of Age UK Lindsey.

Councillor Smith declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Household Support Fund report as caseworker for Caistor Food Bank.

Councillor Snee declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Household Support Fund as she referred individuals to Housing Support as part of her employment.

4 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

With no comments or questions, the Matters Arising Schedule, setting out the position of previously agreed actions as at 15 May 2024, was **NOTED**.

5 HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND 5

The Committee heard from the Benefits Manager regarding the funding and request for Member approval for the Household Support Fund. It was explained that this was the fifth round of funding being requested, and £1.6m had been distributed to support West Lindsey residents under the previous rounds of funding. Funds for the scheme were paid to Lincolnshire County Council via the Department for Work and Pensions with guidance on how the funding should be distributed. The government had announced the Housing Support Fund on 26 March 2024 and would run for six months with funding required to have been spent by 30 September 2024. The proposal outlined that Lincolnshire County Council would distribute vouchers directly to families who received free school meals and would distribute the remainder of the funding to the District Councils. It was estimated that West Lindsey District Council would receive £245,000.

Members were asked to approve the proposal to use a Lincolnshire based charity to distribute Housing Support funding. The organisation would administer an application-based scheme for residents to apply to receive support, and was proposing to also work with East Lindsey, South Holland, Boston, and South Kesteven Councils for continuity. The Council would work closely with the charity to set the funding criteria and it was proposed that 60% of the funding received would go through to the charitable organisation to distribute, 35% to go towards food banks and third-party voluntary organisations, and 5% of the funding to remain with West Lindsey for administration and contingency costs.

The Chairman thanked the Benefits Manager and expressed that it was a significantly important scheme for the Council to continue providing support and services to residents with the ongoing cost of living crisis.

In response to questions from Committee Members it was confirmed that the application process would be open to those who had benefited from previous support funds as well as those who had not previously received support. In addition, Members voiced their concerns that the fund would be coming to an end and wished to acknowledge the hardships residents

would continue to be experiencing beyond the close of the support fund. Members expressed their wish to lobby government for the continuation of such support funds or a way of supporting those in need by alternative means.

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

RESOLVED that

- a) the delivery of the Household Support Fund 5, which runs to 30 September 2024, be approved; and
- b) where there are relatively minor amendments made to the scheme, unless these are considered ‘significantly material’, the Benefits Manager in consultation with the Director of Change Management, ICT and Regulatory Services be delegated to implement these changes after consultation with the Committee Chairman. This ensures the scheme to adapt to requirements and need to respond promptly if required, as well as remaining consistent with principles of the Lincolnshire Districts scheme.

6 LAUNCH OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY

Members gave consideration to a report presented by the Customer Strategy and Services Manager, seeking to adopt the Customer Experience Strategy which set out the Council’s ambitions and commitment to provide the best possible experience for all customers, regardless of their means of contact. It was explained that ‘customer experience’ was the sum total of a customer’s perception of their interactions with West Lindsey District Council, whether that be seeing Waste Services Operatives on their weekly collection rounds, calling the main customer services telephone number, or involvement with specific teams such as Housing or Planning.

Members heard that the Customer Experience Strategy proposed the approach to creating the best possible customer experience using the tools and resources currently available and, where relevant, exploring new techniques and technologies. The Customer Experience Strategy would start to change perceptions and experiences, whilst the Digital Strategy focused on condensing the number of different technologies in place which supported the wide variety of services offered, all leading to an easier journey for customers. It was highlighted that the Strategy strove to look at how Council Officers interacted and supported each other across different departments, as by recognising that the front-line services were also customers, it would assist to ensure all interactions were productive and consistent.

The Customer Strategy and Services Manager explained the content of the strategy, as well as highlighting the communications plan and future monitoring methods. It was noted that ongoing monitoring information would be included in the Voice of the Customer report which was shared with Members via the Member Newsletter and presented to the Governance and Audit Committee.

Members of the Committee wholeheartedly supported the strategy and commented that the report highlighted the breadth of services provided by the Council as well as the excellent work undertaken by Officers to ensure a positive customer experience.

Having been proposed and seconded, the Chairman took the vote and it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the adoption of the Customer Experience Strategy be approved.

7 REVIEW OF MARKETS FEES AND CHARGES

The Committee heard from the Assistant Director – People and Democratic Services regarding a proposal to amend the fee charged to traders at Gainsborough Market, on a Tuesday or Saturday, where 20 or more stalls were used. It was explained that the Council had in place a Corporate Fees, Charges and Concessions document and as was good practice, this was reviewed which included a robust exercise involving Team Managers and the Finance business partners. Those corporate fees and charges were set by Full Council but were subject to continuous monitoring throughout the year.

It was noted that at the Full Council meeting in March, the revised fee for market stalls was approved and was put in place from 30 March 2024. The market was subject to a comprehensive review and there was an established Markets Working Group which considered ways of developing the markets offer further. Currently, there was a discount for market traders who brought more than 25 stalls to the market, which meant they paid £7.50 per stall. It was explained that the report was seeking two elements. Firstly, acknowledgment from the Committee of the resolution of Full Council on 4 March 2024 to approve the fees and charges presented at that time, and secondly, approval to revise the concession and approve the revised fee of £7.50, where market traders brought 20 or more stalls.

Members of the Committee indicated their support for the proposal, and in response to an enquiry regarding markets at Market Rasen and Caistor, a Member of the Committee raised a Point of Information in that those markets were run by the Town Councils, unlike in Gainsborough where it was run by the District Council.

The premise of encouraging more traders to the Gainsborough markets on Tuesdays and Saturdays was welcomed, with anecdotal evidence suggesting existing traders and local businesses had noticed an increase in footfall on the Saturday markets where there had been more stalls and traders.

The recommendations contained within the report were duly proposed and seconded and, on taking the vote, it was

RESOLVED that

- a) the resolution of Full Council on 4 March 2024 (resolution (g) within minute number 71) to approve the fees and charges presented at that time be acknowledged by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee; and
- b) a revised fee (within Markets) of £7.50 where a market trader brought 20 or more stalls to the Gainsborough market on either a Tuesday or Saturday, be approved, replacing the fee previously approved.

8 AMENDMENTS TO THE APPROVED COMMITTEE TIMETABLE: CHANGE OF MEETING DATE – CORPORATE POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE, JULY 2024

Members gave consideration to a report seeking to amend the agreed Committee Timetable in relation to the meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee scheduled in July 2024. It was explained that, for reasons of availability, it was suggested that the July meeting be brought forward by one week, to be held on Thursday 11 July 2024.

During the course of the debate, the Democratic Services and Elections Team Manager clarified the reason for the requirement of a Committee decision, that being governed by the Local Government Act 1972. In response to a query regarding other requests to change dates, it was confirmed that there would always be a Committee decision required to amend a date, however cancellations of meetings or the calling of additional meetings could be made under delegated authority by the Head of Paid Service. It was explained that the only reason a date change may not be possible would be if there was no meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee ahead of the proposed change.

In relation to issues with availability, it was recognised that the timetable had been approved by the Committee in February 2024. It was also recognised that other commitments may be liable to being changed or added in the time since the timetable was approved. It was noted that a second Vice Chairman had been appointed to the Committee at Annual Council on 13 May 2024 and that according to the Constitution, a meeting could be held so long as quorum was met. It was enquired as to whether this information might negate the need to amend the meeting date.

The recommendation as written in the report, that being for the date of the July meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee to be amended to 11 July 2024, was proposed and seconded. On taking the vote, the motion was **lost** by majority vote and the Chairman confirmed the date of the meeting would remain as 18 July 2024.

9 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

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

10 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 item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

11 TRINITY ARTS NORTHERN BOUNDARY WALL REPORT

The Committee gave consideration to a report seeking approval for the draw down of funding from the Maintenance of Facilities Reserve to repair the Trinity Arts Centre northern boundary wall. Should the funding be approved, it was anticipated that works would be

completed during the 2024/25 financial year.

Members were advised to give full consideration to the details of the legal implications and risk assessment contained within the report.

Members requested that the Committee be presented with a full options paper in order to fully understand the costs, risks and alternative provisions for the works. It was stated by Members that they did not feel they could make a fully informed decision without further information. To that end, the request for an options paper was formally proposed and seconded. On taking the vote it was

RESOLVED that a report detailing all options available regarding work to repair the Trinity Arts Centre northern boundary wall be presented to the next available meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

The meeting concluded at 7.47 pm.

Chairman