

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 October 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 Paul Key
Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Tom Smith
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee

In Attendance:

Emma Foy	Director of Corporate Services and Section 151
Sally Grindrod-Smith	Director Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Julie Heath	Communications Manager
Sarah Elvin	Homes, Health & Wellbeing Team Manager
Cara Markham	Commercial Development Manager
Ele Snow	Senior Democratic and Civic Officer
Natalie Smalley	Democratic and Civic Officer

50 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

51 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held on 19 September 2024 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

52 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

53 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

A Member of the Committee stated his disappointment that details of the Working Groups, meeting dates and associated papers, had not yet been made available. Officers gave apologies for this and assured the Councillor the matter would be dealt with as a matter of urgency.

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

54 MOVING FORWARDS TOGETHER: EMPOWERING COMMUNITY VOICES (CONSULTATION, COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY)

The Committee gave consideration to a report presented by the Communications Manager, seeking to present and request approval of the Council's Consultation, Communication and Engagement Strategy – Moving Forwards Together: Empowering Community Voices (2024-28). This would replace the Consultation and Engagement Strategy which was adopted in 2020. It was explained that in developing this new strategy there had been several events undertaken, including Member Workshops and involvement with organisations such as the Voluntary Sector Services, Parish Councils, and Officers within West Lindsey District Council. All feedback received had been fed into the Strategy, with the new version outlining the Council's pledges for consultation, how to involve the local communities, and bringing together elements of legislation which involved consultation for the Council, such as the Localism Act 2011.

There was widespread praise for the new strategy, and the work undertaken by Officers to underpin the pledges made by the Council. It was highlighted that, pending the approval of the new strategy, there would be increased communications with Officers in order to emphasise the importance of the strategy and the pledges contained within it. In response to comments regarding closer working with the Parish Councils and smaller communities, it was confirmed that there had been elements of consultation with them for the development of the new strategy, and there was additional work ongoing regarding the Parish Charter and Parish Forums.

In response to comments relating to the use of social media, it was acknowledged that there was opportunity to connect with local communities through social media groups, and whilst this was happening in some areas of the district, it was not yet widespread. It was also recognised that there did need to be engagement with communities outside of social media, such as attendance at weekly markets. It was also recognised that the use of messages and hyperlinks on social media could be a source of negative interaction, for example if a hyperlink was not working, however Members were assured this was regularly monitored and dealt with as necessary.

With no further comments or questions, and having been moved, seconded and voted upon, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the Consultation, Communication and Engagement Strategy be approved.

55 DELIVERY OF THE CULTURAL STRATEGY

The Committee heard from the Director of Planning, Regeneration & Communities who presented the report seeking approval for the drawdown of the Cultural Reserve for activity required to deliver the Cultural Strategy and Action Plan. It was highlighted that the Cultural Strategy and Action Plan was approved by the Prosperous Communities Committee in April 2024, and the associated action plan identified that in year one the Council would seek to create a new role, the Cultural Development Manager. This would be a key role for the Council, seeking to recruit a highly skilled and experienced officer to provide strategic capacity to deliver the Cultural Strategy and support a range of activity to move the Council's cultural work to the next stage.

Building on the delivery of events over recent years, and in order to continue to grow the sector as set out in the strategy, Members were provided with a summary of events and activities which were programmed for 2025 / 2026. The required budget for each event was set out within the report. It was explained that for each event further funding would also be sought and Council funding would only be used when essential to deliver a quality offering. It was anticipated that there was potential to secure further Arts Council England funding for Go Festival / Illuminate.

With regard to use of the Cultural Reserve, Members heard that the Cultural Reserve was established in 2022 when the Council embarked upon work to re-ignite its cultural provision and activity. The report under consideration sought approval for the drawdown and expenditure of the Cultural Reserve to support ongoing work to deliver the Cultural Strategy. The reserve would be used to fund the two-year fixed term Cultural Development Manager role, and to fund the events and activity programme for 2025 / 2026. Where possible this would be supplemented by securing external funding.

The Chairman invited comments from the Committee. There was considerable consternation that the paper appeared to detail a Gainsborough-centric approach, with the remainder of the district receiving little funding in comparison. Additionally, Members enquired as to other funding streams for events, such as local event organisers or Parish and Town Councils. The importance of locally-run events was highlighted, with Members stating it would not be sustainable to continue funding such events, requesting that the emphasis be on supporting local communities to run their own cultural offerings, rather than the Council funding it all. There was further concern regarding the use of the Cultural Reserve, with mention of the uncertainty regarding the Local Government Settlement and the limited opportunity to 'repay' any monies drawn down for the reserve. Members of the Committee questioned the lack of detail in relation to recommendation two of the report, and requested detailed costings for the list of events to be funded. The importance of supporting local communities was further stated, with a Member of the Committee suggesting that even if funding was not available from West Lindsey District Council for smaller, community-led, events, there would still be a role for the Council to play in advertising and promoting those events to ensure their success, with an action requested that this be taken forward.

Note: Councillor P. Key left the Chamber at 7.01pm and returned at 7.03pm

In response, Officers explained that the lack of district-wide focus within the paper was solely due to the events requiring funding being located in Gainsborough, and noted some of

the other events which took place outside of the town, such as the Churches Festival and the Wolds Festival. Members were invited to review the calendar of events on the West Lindsey District Council website, with Officers acknowledging that there was scope for wider communication regarding how to advertise a local event through the District Council. With regard to the funding breakdown, the Committee was offered an additional paper to be presented at a future meeting which would provide a review of the events programme in 2024/25 and further budget information. This offer was welcomed by all.

Through the course of debate, Members were in agreement that they would not be able to support the second recommendation contained within the report, and furthermore, there was obvious need for additional information to be provided. Officers voiced concern regarding the risk to the continuation of the listed events should funding not be available, in particular, the Go Festival.

It was therefore proposed that recommendation two be amended to read:

“Committee approve the drawdown and expenditure of £25k from the Cultural Reserve to support the delivery of the go festival event 2025.”

The following additional recommendation was also proposed:

“That a review of events in 2024/25 is provided to Committee in December 2024 with a further consideration of reserve for events”

With both motions seconded, the Chairman sought agreement from the Committee that Members were content to vote on the amendment and additional recommendation together. Seeing no dissent, he took the vote and it was

RESOLVED that

- a) recommendation two contained within the report be amended to read: Committee approve the drawdown and expenditure of £25k from the Cultural Reserve to support the delivery of the go festival event 2025; and
- b) an additional recommendation be included, that being: That a review of events in 2024/25 is provided to Committee in December 2024 with a further consideration of reserve for events.

With no further comments or questions, and with Members of the Committee indicating their contentment with the amended approach, the Chairman re-confirmed that all three recommendations had been duly moved and seconded, and so he took the vote. It was

RESOLVED that

- a) the drawdown and expenditure of up to £109,300 from the Cultural Reserve to fund the Cultural Development Manager role on a fixed term basis for 2 years be approved; and
- b) the drawdown and expenditure of £25,000 from the Cultural Reserve to support the delivery of the Go Festival event 2025 be approved; and

- c) a review of events in 2024/25 be provided to Committee in December 2024, with a further consideration of reserve for events.

56 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

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

57 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 7.29pm

58 LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND

Note: Councillor P. Key left the Chamber at 7.29pm and returned at 7.33pm

The Committee heard from the Homes, Health & Wellbeing Team Manager regarding the approach to delivery of Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3, as set out in the business case provided to Members, and seeking to gain approval for the budgets and expenditure required to deliver the project. It was explained that the Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3 (LAHF 3) was announced by the Department for Levelling Up Homes and Communities in March 2024 proposing to fund more high-quality temporary accommodation for homeless families, and provide housing for those on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme. West Lindsey District Council had submitted an Expression of Interest in March 2024 to LAHF 3 which proposed to deliver both units of temporary accommodation and resettlement units in the district, hearing on 30 July 2024 that the application for a capital grant had been successful.

The Committee were reminded that delegated decisions had been in place for the submission of the Expression of Interest and the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, and the report being presented at this time was to present the business case as detailed in both those decisions. The business case provided details on the proposed delivery methods for both the temporary accommodation units and the resettlement accommodation. It was also highlighted that the LAHF 3 did not provide full grant funding and as such, there was a requirement from the Local Authority to contribute towards the capital scheme, for which it was requested to use Section 106 funding.

Members of the Committee wholeheartedly supported the proposals. In response to an enquiry regarding data protection implications and whether the Council was aware of families located in the District under the resettlement scheme, who may then require additional support, it was explained that the scheme was delivered by North Kesteven District Council, however if additional support was required, the individuals concerned would

provide consent to share information with West Lindsey District Council, in order to provide that support.

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

RESOLVED that

- a) the full business case (provided to Members as appendix one of the report), which included the approach to delivery of the LAHF 3 project, be agreed; and
- b) the allocation and expenditure of up to £310.7k of Section 106 funding required to deliver this project be approved; and
- c) the establishment and expenditure of a budget within the capital programme for the £1.29 million of external funding be approved; and
- d) authority for the expenditure of up to £821.4k to appointed Registered Provider partner, secured through a Grant Funding Agreement, for delivery of the resettlement element of the project be delegated to the Director of Corporate Services.

59 LEA FIELDS CREMATORIUM BUSINESS PLAN

Members of the Committee considered the final report of the evening, presented by the Commercial Development Manager and seeking to inform Members of the performance of the Lea Fields Crematorium and approval for the new Business Plan. Members were provided with the breakdown of funeral services held at the crematorium, whether those be full services or direct cremations, with the national trends showing an increase in the latter. It was explained that the team at the crematorium worked directly with funeral directors to understand the needs of the local communities, with these working relationships also ensuring families received the best possible service during what was an emotional time for them.

There was significant discussion regarding the financial details contained within the report, with Members recognising that whilst Lea Fields provided an award-winning service, the current economic situation nationally did raise questions as to the usage of the crematorium, particularly with more people choosing the direct cremation option. It was enquired as to what other options were available with a view to addressing the financial shortfalls.

Following Member debate, the Chairman summarised comments from the Committee and noted there was an appetite for a more detailed report to be presented. It was highlighted that approval was being sought for the three-year business plan, however, this approval would not preclude a further review being brought to the Committee. Members indicated their agreement with this approach and Officers were requested to note that the Committee would receive an update in six months' time to consider options for further income generation.

With no further comments, and having been proposed and seconded, the Chairman took the

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Subject to Call-in. Call-in will expire at 5pm on 7 November 2024

vote, and it was

RESOLVED that the 2024-2027 Lea Fields Crematorium Business Plan be approved.

The meeting concluded at 8.13 pm.

Chairman