

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 12 December 2024 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present:

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

Ian Knowles Chief Executive
Emma Foy Director of Corporate Services and Section 151
Sally Grindrod-Smith Director Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Alison McCulloch Revenues Manager
Sarah Elvin Homes, Health & Wellbeing Team Manager
Cara Markham Commercial Development Manager
Katie Storr Democratic Services & Elections Team Manager

74 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

75 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING/S

Councillor I. Fleetwood reiterated his thanks and acknowledgement to the Democratic Services Officers for their work over the past year.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held on 14 November 2024 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

76 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor T. Smith declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to agenda item 6d, Review of Cultural Events 2024 and Provision for 2025/26, as he volunteered with the Caistor Food Bank, which had received grant funding. Additionally, relating to agenda item 6c, the

Wellbeing Lincs Service, he declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he was a County Councillor and the item related to a Lincolnshire County Council contract.

Councillor M. Snee declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to agenda item 6c, Wellbeing Lincs Service, as she occasionally made referrals to the service as a part of her work.

In the spirit of declaring membership of Lincolnshire County Council, this was also relevant for Councillors I. Fleetwood, S. Bunney, T. Young and M. Boles.

77 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

The Democratic Services Manager noted there had been a request at the previous meeting for the cost of blue waste sacks to be shared with the Committee. She confirmed this had been circulated via email. A Member of the Committee sought additional information, the Chairman noted this would be communicated with the Councillor separately.

With no further comments or questions, the Matters Arising Schedule, setting out the position of previously agreed actions as at 4 December 2024, was **NOTED**.

78 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2025/26

The Committee gave consideration to a report presented by the Revenues Manager, seeking to adopt a Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2025/26. It was explained that the Local Government Finance Act 2012 placed a legal requirement on every billing authority to adopt a Localised Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme. Since the inception of the LCTS scheme on 1 April 2013, relatively minor changes had been made which had enabled claimants to receive a similar level of support each year and enabled the council to maintain an annual council tax collection rate of around 98%.

In 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023, following the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government awarded a grant to all local authorities for a payment to be paid to all working aged council tax support claimants. This was paid directly to council tax accounts and it also permitted the use of any surplus to support economically vulnerable people and households. No such grant had been made available for 2024/25 and therefore those struggling financially had not had this assistance during the current financial year. A significant change to the LCTS scheme for 2025/26 was likely to have a negative impact on the collection rate and reduce the yield over the year. It was explained that Full Council must approve and adopt the finalised LCTS scheme by 31 January 2025 at the latest.

Members heard that some potential changes to the current scheme had been modelled but the only group of claimants affected were those on the working age scheme. Many of those people fell into the vulnerable group so were therefore unaffected. When modelled the changes were also found to be more expensive than the current scheme, and, with the budget constraints moving forward, this was not considered appropriate.

Consultation had taken place with the Citizens Panel, via the website, with Lincolnshire County Council, and the Lincolnshire Police & Crime Commissioner. The majority had voted in favour of a no change scheme apart from to apply any new legislative changes and increase the Department for Works and Pensions annual upratings in accordance with their

annual increases. It was also suggested that a full Universal Credit claim, received via the Department for Works and Pensions, be accepted as a claim for Council Tax Support. This would avoid the requirement for those claimants to apply separately for Council Tax Support and would ensure financially vulnerable residents received any entitlement to which they were due which, in turn, should improve the council tax collection rate.

Members of the Committee expressed their support for the paper and thanked the Manager and team for their work. It was noted that the scheme had proven successful to date, and therefore Members were content to continue as detailed.

Having been moved and seconded, the Chairman took the vote and it was

RESOLVED that

- a) the contents of the report be noted; and
- b) the adoption of Option 1 of the report for the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for West Lindsey District Council for 2025/26 be **recommended to Full Council**. That being:
 - to make no changes to the current council tax support scheme apart from to apply any new legislative requirements and the uprating of the non-dependent charges, applicable amounts, and household allowances and deductions, used in the calculation of the reduction in accordance with the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) annual ‘up-ratings’;
 - to apply any additional changes to government welfare benefit regulations during the year which were intended to increase the income of benefit recipients to avoid unintended consequences to customers; and
 - to accept a Full Universal Credit claim received via the Department for Work and Pensions as a claim for Council Tax Support.

**79 RECOMMENDATION FROM PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE:
RESPONSE TO MOTION - INCREASED STREET SWEEPING CAPACITY**

Members were presented with a recommendation from the Prosperous Communities Committee that street sweeping capacity be increased. It was explained that, following a Motion to Full Council in March 2024, work had been undertaken to ascertain how capacity could be increased, the outcome of which had been presented to the Prosperous Communities Committee at their meeting on 3 December 2024. The Committee had supported the Motion and recommended that option three, to employ an additional HGV Driver to work a four day on, four day off rota with current sweeper driver, be approved.

It was highlighted that whilst there were no financial implications in terms of increased costs associated with option three, in fact there was a small amount of savings, it was considered prudent for the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee to maintain the final approval level, in view of recent, and upcoming, budget discussions.

Members of the Committee echoed the thoughts of the Prosperous Communities Committee, recognising that it was an unexpected outcome that capacity could be increased whilst achieving a small saving. Some Members of the Committee noted that the sweeper had not been seen in their wards for some time, and they welcomed the fact that increased capacity would lead to a greater presence across the district. In particular, it was noted that Nettleham had been visited that week however Bardney had not been visited for some time.

In response to a question as to whether increased running time would lead to increased maintenance costs, it was explained that the costings had been undertaken based on the present rates of use, however the predominant change was to employ a second driver, rather than run the vehicle with one driver on overtime, meaning there was likely to be lower risk involved.

With Members of the Committee voicing their support, and having been proposed and seconded, the Chairman took the vote, and it was

RESOLVED that the implementation of option three within the report be approved, that being: to employ an additional HGV Driver to work a four day on, four day off rota with current sweeper driver.

80 WELLBEING LINCS SERVICE

The Committee gave consideration to a report presented by the Homes, Health & Wellbeing Team Manager, seeking approval for the establishment of the budget for the new Wellbeing Lincs service. It was noted that a decision was made by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee on 11 April 2024 to submit a partnership bid for the new Wellbeing Service contract with East Lindsey as host organisation and North Kesteven and City of Lincoln also making up the partnership. A bid was submitted to Lincolnshire County Council for the new contracted Wellbeing Service on 15 July 2024, and, after a number of delays through the system, a decision was received on 24 August 2024 that the partnership had been successful in obtaining the new Wellbeing Service contract. The contract was due to start on 13 January 2025 and would run for a period of five years with potential extensions thereafter of up to a further five years.

Members were provided with a summary of the new contract arrangements, including the transfer of staff members to West Lindsey District Council, the updated collaboration agreement and the budgetary implications. It was explained that a report had also been presented to the Prosperous Communities Committee at their meeting on 3 December, where it had been approved for the signing of the agreement to be delegated to the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities, in consultation with the Chairman of the Prosperous Communities Committee.

The Chairman thanked the Homes, Health and Wellbeing Team Manager for a comprehensive report and invited comments from the Committee. Members expressed their support for the proposals, and extended thanks to the team for their work over the previous five years. The importance of promoting the service throughout the district was highlighted, with Members noting that the more rural communities may not be as aware of the service opportunities as those living in towns. It was also requested that Members be provided with an information session to raise awareness and understanding which they could then take out

into their wards.

It was confirmed there would be such a session for all Members, and there would also be a comprehensive approach to communications and engagement across the district and county.

With Members of the Committee reiterating their support, and having been proposed, seconded, and voted upon, it was

RESOLVED that the establishment of the revenue budget in the MTFP for the delivery of the Wellbeing Lincs Service, to commence on 13 January 2025, be approved.

81 REVIEW OF CULTURAL EVENTS 2024 AND PROVISION FOR 2025/26

Members heard from the Commercial Development Manager who provided a review of the cultural events programme delivered during 2024, and explained the report was to seek approval for use of the Cultural Reserve to support the cultural events programme in line with the Cultural Strategy and Action Plan. It was explained that for the previous 18 months, the cultural events programme had been delivered in-house, covering the delivery of events including the market in Gainsborough. In that time, the team had overseen delivery of two Christmas lights festivals, the Revive Festival, the Go Festival, two Word Fests, one in Gainsborough and one in Market Rasen, three Trinity on Tours and the continuation of the highly popular illuminate event, which was centred around the Mayflower heritage.

It was highlighted that the wider district had been supported, working with the parish and town councils, and had included support from the Cultural Events and Marketing Officer, the Towns Manager, and the Cultural Support Officer. Community support and engagement had progressed, and the team continued to work on strengthening the development with partners, community organisations, and colleagues across the district who wanted to be involved in the cultural delivery. It was planned to increase workshops, activities, events, and become more sustainable in the long-term delivery, having those partners on board across the district.

The Committee heard that, to date, success had been evidenced through workshops and collaboration with schools, community and cultural groups, Gainsborough Hall, libraries, the parish church, extra church, connections, ACES and many local businesses. Most recently, the Advocate Arms had been a great support with some of the events that had been delivered in Market Rasen, alongside the town council. Additionally, Alfie's coffee shop in Gainsborough had been fully supportive, helping make local links into the town centre. There had been sponsorship money received from a few local businesses, although the team were aiming to approach more businesses for similar opportunities.

It was explained that the report as presented to the Committee was asking for the continuation of the service for 2025/26. The figure proposed was for a drawdown from the cultural reserve of £65,500, to maintain the current programme of cultural activity whilst recruitment was underway for the Cultural Development Manager, who would help lead the Council forward with the Arts Council applications for further funding, as well as other organisations and funding bodies which had not yet been explored. The aim was to continue

build the portfolio whilst maintaining delivery.

The Officer was thanked for providing a greater amount of detail regarding district-wide offerings, as it was noted this had been missing in previous reports. Members were encouraged by the spread of support on offer across the district, whilst recognising there was further work to be done to extend and maintain the cultural programme outside of the main towns.

In relation to funding opportunities, a Member of the Committee enquired as to whether there were assurances available for achieving outside funding, rather than relying on drawdowns from the reserve funds. It was explained that there were ongoing conversations with the Arts Council, the Greater Lincolnshire Cultural Network, and Lincolnshire County Council, all with the aim of building relationships and securing onward funding in the future. The role of the Cultural Development Manager would be to seek external funding for the continuity and development of the cultural offering in the district, and it was imperative that the Council was in a position to showcase the cultural strategy in order to be successful in those funding bids.

Members of the Committee highlighted the aspiration for the Council to be a conduit for communities to facilitate their own events and programmes, and for funding to be used to support those community groups and organisations in those endeavours. The role of volunteers was recognised as being key in the success of any events, with Members praising the Council Officers who regularly volunteered for the events such as the Christmas lights and Illuminate. The need to involve grass-roots organisations was emphasised, with events such as the Churches Festival, which brought visitors into the district, being supported by those smaller groups as well as receiving additional funding.

Members expressed thanks and recognition for the events and work which had taken place over the previous 18 months, whilst accepting there was further work to be done to extend the reach and type of cultural opportunities across the district.

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

RESOLVED that

- a) the delivery of the 2024 cultural events programme be noted; and
- b) the draw down of £65,500 from the Cultural Reserve as a contribution to the cultural events programme for 2025/26 be approved.

82 AMENDMENT TO APPROVED COMMITTEE TIMETABLE: CHANGE OF TIME FOR GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE 21 JANUARY 2025

The Committee heard from the Director of Corporate Services regarding a request to approve amendments to the agreed Committee Timetable in relation to the meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee scheduled in January 2025. It was explained that due to the delay in approval of the statutory accounts, in excess of 10 items of business were expected at the January meeting of Governance and Audit Committee. In recognition of the detailed discussions that will be required for the scheduled business, it was requested that an earlier start time be approved.

Members were understanding of the request, and recognised there would also be a training session taking place ahead of the meeting. Having been moved, seconded and voted upon, it was

RESOLVED that, for reasons of volume of work programmed for the January Governance and Audit Committee, the following change to the 2024/25 Committee Timetable be approved:

a) the meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee currently scheduled for Tuesday 21 January at 2pm, be brought forward to 1pm.

83 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

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

84 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 paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Note: The meeting entered closed session at 7.26pm

85 COUNCIL DEBTS FOR WRITE OFF 2024/25

Members considered a report which detailed debts in respect of Council Tax, National Non-Domestic Rates and Housing Benefit Overpayments which were now deemed irrecoverable, and for which approval was being sought for the debts to be written off.

All the accounts listed for write off had been through a rigorous collection process and/or trace enquiries prior to the submission for write off. Details of the recovery action taken were included at point 6 in the report, along with an explanation of the Insolvency Act 1986.

None of the accounts listed currently had any possibility of payment. However, assurance was given that in the event of any dividends or other payments being received, debts could and would be written back onto the accounts.

Members asked a number of questions of Officers, and it was stressed that Officers could only collect data legally required to perform the task, additional fields could not be introduced, and any data collected could only be used for the purpose it was collected. Any deviation from this would see the Council's access to DWP data removed.

Assurance was offered that due diligence was undertaken to ensure no grants/assistance payments were made to previous/current debtors with Officers undertaking to double check the debtor referred to in the meeting.

It was confirmed that a single person discount review was undertaken approximately every two years, and an outline of the process was provided.

Noting that some accounts to be closed occasionally had positive credits, Officers confirmed monies from these accounts was transferred back to the collection fund once all avenues to return the money to the relevant estate had been exhausted.

Having been proposed, seconded, and voted upon it was

RESOLVED that the following arrears be approved for write off:

- a) Council Tax arrears to the value of £152,536.45; and
- b) National Non-Domestic rates arrears to the value of £106,329.13; and
- c) Housing Benefit Overpayments arrears to the value of £20,722.80

86 AMENDMENT TO BUILDING CONTROL FEES AND CHARGES 2024/2025 AND 2025/2026

Corporate Policy and Resources Committee at their meeting on 14 November 2024 considered two reports, namely, Budget and Treasury Monitoring – Quarter 2 2024/2025; and Proposed Fees and Charges 2025/2026

Both reports had included proposed amendments to the fees and charges schedule for Building Control however the schedules which were reported in November had been found to contain an error on some of the charging lines (seven lines for 2024/2025 and four lines for 2025/2026).

The report before Members therefore sought to amend the schedules to enable the correct fees, in respect of Building Control, to be applied in both financial years.

Members were content and, on taking the vote it was

RESOLVED that

- a) the proposed Fees and Charges at Appendix 1 of the report be **RECOMMENDED** to Council for approval and inclusion within the 2025/2026 Revenue Budget; and
- b) the amendments to the Fees and Charges Schedules for 2024/2025 at Appendix 1 of the report be approved.

87 THURROCK/APSE LITIGATION UPDATE

Members considered a report which sought to update the Committee on the current position relating to the legal action being pursued by Thurrock Borough Council.

In presenting the report the Section 151 Officer outlined why West Lindsey had been named as one of the 23 Councils against which action was been filed.

Debate ensued and Members asked a number of questions pertinent to the matter. Members thanked Officers for a clear precise report for what was a legally complex matter. The merits or otherwise of the action being taken by Thurrock Borough Council were

debated, as were the merits of APSE.

All were supportive of the action taken to-date by Officers which sought to provide additional time and keep any costs to a minimum. Recognising the multiple litigations which were ongoing, and the challenges being made, the final outcome was difficult to predict. Costs were currently being shared equally amongst the 23 named Councils and spend to date was clearly set out in the report provided.

Members suggested that all Member appointments should be reviewed to ensure the Council was not open to similar risks going forward. It was also suggested that there should be thorough scrutiny of APSE and its role.

Given the report was for information and noting purposes, with no requirement for a vote, the Committee formally received the information and **NOTED** the current deadlines.

Members further **NOTED** that if further funding was required between now and the next Committee meeting, up to £10K would be vired (under delegated powers of the Section 151 Officer) from the forecast year end underspend to fund further advice.

Further reports would be submitted to the Committee as the matter progressed.

88 SCAMPTON UPDATE

Members considered a report which sought to provide an update on the latest position in respect of the former RAF Scampton and approval to submit an expression of interest to the Home Office for the potential acquisition of the site.

Following the Governments announcement on 5 September to reverse the decision to use the site for asylum accommodation, The Home Office had now declared the site as surplus to their operational requirements and listed the site on the governments Electronic Property Information System (ePIMS), triggering a 40-day expression of interest period, during which time any public sector organisations could set out their case for acquisition.

The report set out the proposed expression of interest submission, the related legal and financial matters, an updated masterplan and information on the contractual matters and planning position.

In presenting the report Officers stressed that a joint fresh valuation of the site would be critical, and the development needed to be affordable to progress. The work to be undertaken post submission was outlined and the timelines were unclear, however given the holding costs been incurred by the Government, there was an expectation that they would wish to resolve the matter swiftly. If the submission was not successful, the site would go on to the open market. The masterplan and other planning documents provided some safeguards around future usage.

Further updates would be provided to Committee. A Communications strategy had been developed and Officers would be meeting with parish councils in the area early in the new year and hosting a number of drop-in sessions.

Members thanked Officers for their continued hard work in respect of RAF Scampton.

Members asked a number of questions pertinent to the matter, including the status of the SDO, the implications of discharging the conditions, current interest in the site and the position of the Council's development partner.

The Local Ward Member expressed his thanks to the Leader for the support he had shown his local community, through what he described had been a nightmare. The Council still had a real opportunity to change the local area, with developments that would have both county and regional impact, and he hoped the Home Office could recognise this and look favourably on the submission made.

RESOLVED that

- a) the updated position with matters relating to the former RAF Scampton be noted;
and
- b) the submission of the expression of interest, detailed at appendix 2 of the report (with attachments), to the Home Office, for the potential acquisition of the land at former RAF Scampton be approved and delegated authority be granted to the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities in consultation with the Chairman of Corporate Policy and Resources Committee, to make any final amendments required to the document.

89 CLOSING REMARKS

This being the last meeting before the festive period the Chairman extended Season's Greetings and good wishes for the New Year to all.

The meeting concluded at 8.41 pm.

Chairman