

## **WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL**

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Regulatory Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 5 June 2025 commencing at 6.30 pm.

**Present:** Councillor Jim Snee (Chairman)  
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor John Barrett  
Councillor Paul Lee  
Councillor Maureen Palmer  
Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers  
Councillor Tom Smith

**In Attendance:**  
Andy Gray Housing & Environmental Enforcement Manager  
Natalie Smalley Democratic and Civic Officer

### **1 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

### **2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Regulatory Committee held on 5 December 2024 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **3 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

### **4 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE**

There were no Matters Arising to note.

### **5 FOOD, HEALTH AND SAFETY WORK PLAN 2025/2026**

The Committee gave consideration to a report presented by the Housing & Environmental Enforcement Manager. It was explained that the report was detailed the Food, Health and Safety Work Plan for 2025/2026, as had been done in previous years, information was provided on a six-monthly basis along with a mid-year update. The Manager gave an overview of the structure of the report, as well as summarising its contents.

Attention was drawn to Section 3.1 of the report, it was noted that just under 90% of inspections had been completed for 2024–2025, which exceeded expectations based on the mid-year update from December. A total of 336 inspections had been carried out, representing a significant increase from the previous year. In addition to inspections, various other tasks had been undertaken by the service, including revisits, health and safety intervention visits, and accident investigations.

The Manager outlined future challenges detailed in Section 4.1, which provided a breakdown of premises and the frequency of their required inspections. According to Sections 4.4 and 4.5, an estimated range of between 412 and 441 inspections would need to be completed in 2025–2026, subject to fluctuations due to businesses opening or closing. It was highlighted that the projected inspection target of 441 presented a significant challenge. However, it was stated that with additional resources introduced in October 2024, confidence was expressed that the target could be met, provided those resources remained beyond their temporary period. It was confirmed that an agreement had been reached to extend the temporary contract until October 2026, with efforts ongoing to secure permanent funding for the role. The Manager explained that the additional full-time employee would be capable of completing approximately 120 inspections annually. He continued, adding that evidence indicated that increasing staffing capacity had historically been necessary to meet inspection targets, and the business case for additional resources had been reinforced through previous annual work plans and mid-year updates.

The increase in projected inspections was contextualised as it was noted that a significant number of Category E inspections had been included in the programme, involving premises such as home bakers and home takeaway businesses. The Manager highlighted that with Category E inspections, an alternative enforcement approach was typically used, but due to resource pressures following COVID-19, physical inspections had been delayed. These inspections had now been added to the workload, increasing the total potential figure to 441.

In terms of risk, it was stated that achieving 90% of inspections without additional capacity was uncertain. While the target of 100% was ideal, a realistic benchmark of 90% had been set to allow for variation in progress and delivery. The previous year had achieved nearly 100%, but challenges were anticipated for the current year, notably regarding additional responsibilities placed on Environmental Health Officers impacting their ability to conduct inspections.

According to the Manager, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) had been consulted regarding the Council's inspection plan and assurance measures. Communication from the FSA had indicated satisfaction with the current plan based on the temporary contract running until October 2026. If the temporary position were to be made permanent, further assurances could be provided to the FSA regarding the Council's ability to meet its inspection targets.

Overall, the situation had significantly improved since the last update in December 2024. While challenges remained, a positive outlook on future inspection capacity was expressed. The Chairman Cllr Snee thanked the Officer for his presentation and opened the floor to discussion.

A Member of the Committee emphasised the significance of food safety inspections due to their direct impact on public health and their role in deterring poor business hygiene practises, which was later reiterated by the Manager. Concern was expressed by the

Committee Member that failure to secure an additional staff member could result in a decline in inspection effectiveness.

In response to a question regarding the likelihood of securing a permanent staff member, the Manager stated that whilst guarantees could not be provided, a strong evidentiary trail existed to support the necessity of the role. It was explained that the contingency budget had been utilised for both agency staff and the temporary contract for several years, reinforcing the case for permanent funding. Confidence was expressed that this need was well documented.

Responding to comments regarding the importance and demands of funeral parlour inspections, the Manager discussed the broader scope of environmental health responsibilities. It was noted that Officers qualified in multiple environmental health areas but were primarily focused on food safety. The funeral director audits, previously highlighted in the mid-year update, had presented significant resource challenges. While no new information indicated that these audits would become an annual obligation, expectations were that further guidance would be received within the next 12 months regarding potential regulatory changes. Should new regulations be introduced, they would likely fall under environmental health's jurisdiction, and given Officers' prior experience with this work, securing additional capacity was viewed as essential for maintaining effective service delivery.

A question was raised by a Member of the Committee regarding whether the addition of one staff member would be sufficient, considering potential recruitment difficulties. In response, the Manager stated that Members had been supportive of the request for additional resources. He continued, adding that the budget had already been agreed as part of the pressures information discussed within Prosperous Communities Committee and Corporate Policy and Resources Committee; while specific details of the work plan were not included, there was clear visibility that funding had been allocated to this area.

A Member of the Committee acknowledged the significant improvement in inspection figures compared to previous reports and recognised the efforts of the team. A question was raised regarding the substantial increase in accident investigations, the Manager responded that accident investigations stemmed from Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) reports, which recorded workplace health and safety incidents. Certain premises fell within the Council's jurisdiction, where investigations were required for serious accidents or fatalities. The increase was attributed to a higher number of reportable incidents rather than a specific trend. Investigations were conducted based on risk assessments, and where necessary, warnings and cautions were issued to businesses. Targeted intervention visits complemented this process, allowing proactive monitoring of high-risk premises.

The Committee Member then posed a question regarding food hygiene ratings, with particular attention given to the 1.6% of businesses rated as one-out-of-five. The Manager clarified that detailed explanations of the issues observed during inspection were given to the business owners. Immediate action was required, for example, temporary closure, and follow-up visits were conducted to verify compliance. For businesses consistently failing to meet hygiene standards, formal action, including prosecution, could be pursued. Reinspection procedures allowed businesses to either wait for their next scheduled inspection or pay for an expedited visit within 12 weeks. The Manager noted that ratings

could not immediately return to a five, as a period of compliance stipulated by the FSA framework was required before regaining a higher rating. It was highlighted that most businesses recognised the need for improvement and opted to pay for a revisit to reassess their rating. Appeals could be submitted to the Council, but the majority of businesses accepted their score and took corrective action.

A question was asked by a Committee Member regarding the regulation of mobile food vendors, with concerns raised about their registration. In response, the Manager explained that food businesses register within the local authority where they are based, but they can operate nationwide. Vendors attending events such as the Lincolnshire Show were often registered with different local authorities, meaning their food hygiene ratings were issued by their respective councils. If a vendor was registered within the district, they received routine inspections and complaints were handled accordingly. For vendors not registered within the district, complaints were investigated, and inspectors could act upon findings in the interests of public safety, however, findings would then need to be reported to the appropriate local authority. It was clarified that when complaints were received about businesses registered within the district, inspections were conducted unannounced at the next opportunity. It was assumed that similar protocols were followed when reports were shared with other councils.

A Member of the Committee enquired about the prevalence of food vendors operating regularly within West Lindsey, despite being registered in other areas. The Manager responded, stating that this was not a significant issue for district. It was emphasised that food businesses relied on maintaining high standards to attract customers, consumers were noted to be discerning, choosing not to purchase from vendors that did not meet expected hygiene and safety standards. It was stressed that the existing regulatory framework enabled inspections to be conducted on vendors operating within the area, regardless of their registration location.

Members of the Committee expressed support for the report recommendations, emphasising the importance of ensuring that inspections were effectively conducted. The Vice-Chairman concluded by recognising the significant achievements of the Council in meeting inspection targets despite difficulties experienced mid-year. The importance of securing additional staffing to maintain standards was reiterated.

With no further questions or comments and having been moved and seconded, the Chairman took the vote, and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that

- a) the Food, Health and Safety Work Plan 2025/2026, as detailed in Appendix 1, be approved; and
- b) an update on progress against the plan be brought to Regulatory Committee at its December 2025 meeting.

The meeting concluded at 7.06 pm.

Chairman