

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held in The Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 9 October 2018 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan (Chairman)
Councillor Lewis Strange (Vice-Chairman) and Councillor
Mrs Angela White (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Bruce Allison
Councillor Mrs Angela Lawrence
Councillor Mrs Jessie Milne
Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings
Councillor Thomas Smith
Councillor Mrs Anne Welburn

In Attendance: Councillor Jeff Summers
Councillor Mrs Pat Mewis
Councillor Trevor Young

Also In Attendance:
Mark Sturgess Executive Director of Operations and Head of Paid Service
Ele Durrant Democratic and Civic Officer
Two Members of the Public

Apologies: Councillor David Bond
Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers

34 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming all present, including visiting Members, and extending a special welcome to Chief Inspector Stewart Brinn and Inspector Nigel Key of Lincolnshire Police.

35 MEETING OF THE CHALLENGE AND IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 4 SEPTEMBER 2018

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2018 be approved and signed as a correct record.

36 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs Jessie Milne declared a non-pecuniary interest for agenda item 6a in that she was a Member of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee.

Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan declared a non-pecuniary interest for agenda item 6a as he was a Reserve Member for the Joint Staff Consultative Committee.

37 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

The Committee gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule, setting out the current position of previously agreed actions, as at 1 October 2018.

The Democratic and Civic Officer advised Members that there was one outstanding amber item regarding public artworks and general street scene across the district which would be reviewed and added to the work plan as appropriate.

RESOLVED that the Matters Arising Schedule as at 1 October 2018 be received and noted.

38 PRESENTATION ITEM - LINCOLNSHIRE POLICE

The Chairman introduced Chief Inspector Stewart Brinn and Inspector Nigel Key and welcomed them again to the meeting. Chief Inspector Brinn thanked the Committee for the invite and explained that he and Inspector Key would cover the areas of interest as requested by Members prior to the meeting, however, should there be any queries that could not be addressed on the night, they would find out the relevant information and feedback to Members in the following days.

Chief Inspector Brinn explained that, in relation to recruitment and retention of officers, there had been 60 new recruits across the county in the previous six months. Over 10% of these new recruits had been placed within West Lindsey and after the recruitment of additional Police Community Support Officers, the area was considered to be up to numbers for PCSOs. Members heard that there was a very low transfer rate out of Lincolnshire and that the most common reason for leaving the force was, in fact, when officers retired.

Of concerns regarding funding cuts, Members heard that although there had been plans around 2016 for the police funding to be reviewed and awarded under a different format, the review had never been enacted. Chief Inspector Brinn explained that if current funding arrangements were to continue, by financial year 2021/2022 the savings required to meet the budget would equate to the loss of 56 police officers across the county and a 40% reduction in numbers of PCSO's. He highlighted that they were hoping there would be a funding uplift and by the time of his next visit to the council he hoped to have a more accurate picture.

The Chairman assured Chief Inspector Brinn that Members of West Lindsey District Council would do all they could via the local MP to support the police to receive increased funding. It was also highlighted that the Police and Crime Panel worked hard to support the police in seeking increased funding.

Note: Councillor Mrs Anne Welburn declared a non-pecuniary interest in that she was on the Police and Crime Panel.

As a result of these discussions it was proposed, seconded and voted upon unanimously that it be

RESOLVED that a letter be written to Sir Edward Leigh, MP, from the Challenge and Improvement Committee in support of additional funding for Lincolnshire Police.

A visiting Member enquired of the police how numbers of officers had reduced specifically in Gainsborough over the past few years. Members were given a snapshot of numbers of police roles in the area since 1991 through to the present day and it was stated that current numbers were a fraction of how it used to be. This was reflected in funding cuts and how policing had needed to evolve in order to function most efficiently. It was also highlighted that this was not an issue just for Gainsborough or West Lindsey but was in fact a nationwide problem.

A Member of Committee enquired whether there were any areas that had not been effected by funding cuts and Committee heard that every police force had faced significant financial constraints and it had been necessary to be honest about what the priorities should be. Examples were given such as city forces having to deal with knife violence and gang crimes as well as increased resources required to deal with terrorism threats.

In response to a query regarding traffic policing, it was highlighted that this was an area that had effectively been cut as a result of funding issues. Prior to 2015 there had been a standalone traffic section, however as a result of funding cuts this had been merged with East Midlands. In the past five years, officer issued traffic enforcement tickets had reduced from over 10000 in 2014 to less than 3000 so far in 2018. It was explained that traffic enforcement was now managed through static cameras and roadside camera vans. Members heard that the fatality rate on the roads was consistently dropping year on year, however this was because of engineering improvements in modern day vehicles rather than improved road safety.

There was significant discussion regarding speed limits across the area as a Member of Committee stated there seemed to be a noticeable difference between speed limits in West Lindsey and Lincolnshire in comparison with other areas in the East Midlands. It was explained that speed reductions were usually as a result of public requests with significant road safety data to support the request. It was also highlighted that speed limits were not set by the police rather they would be approached as a consultee if a speed limit change was being considered. With regards to the Corringham Road junction in particular, Chief Inspector Brinn confirmed that the police would be completely supportive of a speed reduction in that area but they had not been approached for comment by the Highways Agency.

A Member of Committee then enquired about police strategy for gathering information from the public, especially in the face of reduced police numbers. It was explained that where the police used to have local informants and used them to gather relevant information, this was no longer the case. There was a difference between 'information' and 'intelligence' and the need for evidence on which to base police action. Members heard that there was no fixed strategy for information gathering but the importance of neighbourhood beat managers could not be underestimated. Chief Inspector Brinn made mention of Police Constables Rebekah Casey and Ian Shaw who were both particularly involved in their community areas as beat managers. Members enquired about the involvement of Specials across the district and

heard that over the past few years, the numbers of Specials had reduced mainly because individuals had in fact started permanent employment with the force as PCSO's or police officers.

There was significant discussion regarding issues local to Gainsborough and the importance of gathering information and intelligence from as many sources as possible, especially the local residents. Inspector Key acknowledged that there were areas where there were greater problems with issues such as drug use and anti-social behaviour. He reported several successes within the area but acknowledged there were still improvements to be made. He also reported close working links with the local primary school and several projects that were aimed at educating local children and involving them in community improvements.

A Member of Committee noted a recent success story that had involved the use of a drone by the police and enquired to what extent the police intended to continue use of drones in the area. It was explained that drones could be invaluable tools in cases of missing people, public disorder and identifying houses used in drug production, as such the force intended to continue the use of drones wherever appropriate. Inspector Key noted the successful use of drones in the Hemswell Cliff area and Committee Members agreed that there had been significant progress made in the area. There was further discussion about the importance of beat managers and also the need to prioritise resources according to demand. The Chairman stated that whilst he had thanked the police personally for work undertaken in his ward, he wanted to put his thanks on public record. The Vice-Chairman also sought to commend PCSO Julie McFall for her fearless dedication and stated she was a credit to the force. This was acknowledged by Inspector Key and Chief Inspector Brinn explained there was an Area Commander's commendation for which PCSO McFall could be nominated should Members wish to do this.

Inspector Key concluded with a summary of recent statistics which demonstrated an overall reduction in numbers of burglary and theft related crimes. Whilst this was welcomed, it was also acknowledged that there were fewer arrests or convictions although this reflected the reality of reduced policing numbers. A Member of Committee enquired whether there had been any impact of the streetlights being turned off and it was noted that, although there was no direct impact on crime numbers, residents in affected areas demonstrated a very sharp increase in the fear of crime. It was stated that darkened streets could also impede the police when searching for people if crimes were committed. Further statistics demonstrated that violent crimes across the county had increased, although reporting methods had recently changed and so more instances were now recorded meaning the increased statistics could not provide a realistic reflection and it would be easier to compare data in the next year. There was also a reduce level of drug possession but an increase in instances of drug trafficking.

With no further question from Members, the Chairman extended the thanks of the Committee to Chief Inspector Brinn and Inspector Key and assured them once again that the police had the full support of West Lindsey District Council.

39 STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

The Committee gave consideration to a report detailing the results from the 2018 staff survey. This had been seen previously by the Joint Staff Consultative Committee (JSCC) and Members were asked to review the results of the staff survey and assure themselves that the JSCC were sufficiently supporting the staff engagement group with actions and communications as a result of the survey. It was explained that staff were asked to respond to the same 14 questions as the previous year and that, of these questions, all bar one had shown a positive improvement on the results from last year. It was also highlighted that the results in 2017 had been hugely positive in comparison with previous survey results and it was testament to the work accomplished in recent months that the results continued to improve.

A Member of the Committee enquired why only a few areas had been discussed in the JSCC and whether there had been any discussion about increasing staff engagement. It was explained that the staff engagement group played an important role in the communications with the wider staff body and that it was important for the group to focus on specific issues so as to be able to make clear and measurable changes. It was also noted that the survey response rate was significantly higher than demonstrated in other sectors and was considered a strong level of response for local government. There was a further question regarding staff recognition schemes and it was confirmed that the 'Thank You' card system was still in place as well as formal recognition through the annual appraisal process.

It was highlighted that the poorest rating was regarding dissatisfaction with the work environment, with around 40% of employees stating they were not happy with the accommodation. It was explained that this was an area of focus for the staff engagement group and that some changes, such as the breakout space on the third floor, had already been implemented. Other initiatives, such as screening the top windows to avoid sun glare and also replacing the office lights, would start to have a beneficial impact across all teams. The Committee was told about several staff consultation events that had been held in order to gauge comments and feedback for suggestions as to how the office space could be redesigned for better use. It was agreed that the involvement of staff in these consultations was a massive step forward and that the importance of engaging staff could not be underestimated.

There was discussion regarding difficulties within the building such as temperature control and use of space and it was asked whether the responses to the survey had been departmentalised. The Head of Paid Service explained that, in order to ensure a maximum level of response, the survey did not request any information that might make it possible to identify a person from their responses. This meant that details such as role, department or area of work were not disclosed via the survey.

Members were in agreement that the survey outcome showed a massive positive uplift amongst staff and reflected how Officers now felt much more at ease with sharing their thoughts and opinions. The Chairman offered his thanks to all those involved with the survey and to the staff as a whole for their hard work.

RESOLVED that the details of the staff survey responses be accepted and Committee be assured that the Joint Staff Consultative Committee are supporting the staff engagement group with work on an action plan and communication plan.

40 FORWARD PLAN

The Democratic and Civic Officer introduced the forward plan for all committees and explained that the items selected by C&I were already highlighted.

There was discussion about the planned reports regarding broadband options and the leisure review, with a view to Members being kept informed of updates and progress. It was agreed for the Democratic and Civic Officer to action this as appropriate.

RESOLVED that the forward plan be noted.

41 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

Members of Committee gave consideration to the committee work plan for the coming months. It was noted that there were several items to be considered by the Committee over coming months however with no further comment it was

RESOLVED that the work plan be noted.

The meeting concluded at 8.10 pm.

Chairman