

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Gainsborough, on Monday 4 July 2016, at 7pm.

Present: Councillor Jessie Milne (Vice Chairman – in the Chair)

Councillor Gillian Bardsley	Councillor Stuart Kinch
Councillor Sheila Bibb	Councillor Angela Lawrence
Councillor Owen Bierley	Councillor Giles McNeill
Councillor Matthew Boles	Councillor John McNeill
Councillor Jackie Brockway	Councillor Pat Mewis
Councillor David Cotton	Councillor Judy Rainsforth
Councillor Stuart Curtis	Councillor Di Rodgers
Councillor Chris Darcel	Councillor Lesley Rollings
Councillor Michael Devine	Councillor Thomas Smith
Councillor Adam Duguid	Councillor Lewis Strange
Councillor Steve England	Councillor Jeff Summers
Councillor Ian Fleetwood	Councillor Anne Welburn
Councillor Paul Howitt - Cowan	Councillor Trevor Young

In Attendance:

Manjeet Gill	Chief Executive
Penny Sharp	Commercial Director
Ian Knowles	Director of Resources
Alan Robinson	Strategic Lead for Democratic and Business Support and Monitoring Officer
Dinah Lilley	Governance and Civic Officer

Also Present eight members of the public
Rev Sue Deacon

23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Roger Patterson (Chairman)
Councillor David Bond
Councillor Alexander Bridgwood
Councillor Hugo Marfleet
Councillor Richard Oaks
Councillor Malcolm Parish
Councillor Reg Shore
Councillor Tom Regis
Councillor Angela White

24 PRESENTATION OF PETITION

A Petition, signed by over 2,000 people, had been received by the Council, stating: "We the undersigned object to West Lindsey District Council's proposal to charge for car parking in its 3 Market Rasen car parks. We call upon the Council to withdraw the proposal, investigate further the likely effect on businesses and other ways to create more car park spaces. We ask that the Council fully consults with local residents and businesses on any future proposals."

Mr Adrian Campbell, the Lead Petitioner had been unable to be present at the meeting, therefore the Chairman used her Chair's discretion to allow persons in the public gallery to speak on the petition.

Two members of the public addressed the Councillors stating that they felt that the introduction of parking charges would finish traders' businesses. Charges were being removed in other areas as this was felt more attractive to passing trade. If tourists saw parking restrictions they did not stop. Turnover for local traders had dropped over the last four years due to the recession and further losses could not be sustained. Up to 25 shops had been lost in the town. Marshall's Yard in Gainsborough was attractive to shoppers but could not be compared to Market Rasen and it was feared that small shops would shut down.

Councillor Smith as Ward Member for Market Rasen read out a statement submitted by the Lead Petitioner, which he would have made had he been present.

"Thank you for the opportunity to present and introduce the petition about Market Rasen Car Park charges.

Over 2633 people have signed this petition and the population of Market Rasen is only 3,300 so it shows an immense depth of feeling about this issue.

The second **and most important point** is that it is **NOT** a petition asking that the whole issue be abandoned, it is asking to look again into the effect on Market Rasen businesses, come up with revised proposals and fully consult before going ahead.

There are 2 reasons why the issue deserves further thought. One is that the Prosperous Communities Committee has not been given the full facts and the second is that the consultation process was flawed.

There are 2 key facts that the PCC were not made aware of. One is that at the same time as WLDC were considering this, the Scrutiny Committee at ELDC were considering abandoning a charging policy brought in 3 years earlier at 13 car parks because of the damage it had done to businesses there.

The second fact is that despite a WLDC policy to "maintain and enhance the town centre to create a viable and attractive range of shops and services" Market Rasen has actually declined dramatically.

Authoritative statistics from Venuescore that WLDC officers use to show how much Gainsborough has been improved show at the same time how far Market Rasen has declined but this was not reported to the PCC.

Regarding the consultation process there were numerous flaws:-
When it was first announced to the press, this was released and reported:-

WLDC prosperous communities committee chairman Coun Owen Bierley said: “The idea of introducing a car parking charge to Market Rasen is a way of trying to support local businesses.

“It is hoped it will increase the turnover of spaces for shoppers in the town, rather than commuters parking up all day as they commute to other destinations.” but in a letter to Sir Edward Leigh replying to a residents concerns WLDC said that the main driver was one of recovering costs. This gave out a mixed message for the consultation process.

That same press information stated that there would be a 12 week consultation period. When it was eventually announced it was cut down to 4 weeks.

Crucially, the consultation period coincided with an absence of any constituted body in Market Rasen to represent businesses. The Portas Pilot committee had just disbanded and the new Market Rasen Town Centre Partnership has not yet been set up.

The distillation of 120 public responses reported in Paper C presented to the PCC has not fairly represented the response in numerous respects and would have been more fairly analysed by a 3rd party. The most critical omission was the treatment of the by now decision of ELDC Scrutiny Committee to abandon charges in 10 of the 13 car parks where charges had been brought in 3 years ago.

The officers' report to the PCC talks only about Louth and Brigg, large towns similar to Gainsborough whose experience is much more appropriate to future parking policy in Gainsborough.

What is not reported in Paper C is the effect of charges in Horncastle, Alford, Burgh le Marsh, Spilsby, Coninsby etc all communities similar to Market Rasen and now enjoying free parking again.

Paper C does acknowledge that - quote "The implementation of charging may have an initial impact on the level of visitors and footfall in the town" but does not attempt to put figures on how this will affect business.

How many shops will close? What will be the reduction in turnover felt by others? How many shopworkers will be made redundant?

If the information is strong enough to state that a £50,000 profit will be made in Market Rasen then it should be possible to work out a figure for the

collateral damage so councillors can make an informed decision on whether it should go ahead.

But that information is not there and it is not there either to estimate that the measure will return a profit.

Why?

The lead officer said this at the last PCC meeting

"we don't have a lot of data on car park usage in Market Rasen"

That was stated 19 minutes into the webcast of the committee meeting if you care to view it.

To repeat

"we don't have a lot of data on car park usage in Market Rasen"

This is an astonishing admission this far into the decision process and brings us to the heart of the petition, that more research needs to be done on the likely effect of the measures.

What I am advised is that WLDC would not have to pay for this research. There are sufficient funds left in the Portas Pilot account to pay for that research.

So, this is a humble appeal for you to reinstate the consultation process extending it to 12 weeks to allow this research to take place and contribute to a fairer and more equitable solution."

Councillor Smith then stated that he was duty bound to represent the views of the majority of residents, most of which did not want the introduction of parking charges. Councillor Smith had himself voted against that aspect of the Council's budget in March. The charges would be a short term fix for a long term solution and there would be irreparable damage done to Market Rasen.

Councillor Young echoed the views of the public speakers and the petitioner and stated that the final nail in the coffin would be the subsequent parking enforcement which was the subject of a question from himself later in the meeting. There were alternative ways of improving vehicle movement in car parks without imposing charges.

Lengthy debate ensued on the matter during which it was noted that if the consultation process was shown to have been flawed it would have to be done again, however the evidence of the quoted 12 week consultation would need to be produced. The statutory period required was 21 days and this had been extended to 28.

It was felt that Market Rasen had been suffering decline for some time, hence the Portas Pilot, and there had been complaints over time regarding the lack of available parking spaces due to them being filled by commuters taking them for full days.

It was not correct that the primary objective was cost recovery, however car parks had to be funded, not only the cost of ticket machines and equipment, but surface maintenance, which was currently in poor condition for walking upon giving potential for injury. It was commented that many of the signatories on the petition were residents within walking distance of the town centre.

A number of Councillors supported the content of the petition and felt that the imposition of charging in the car parks would harm Market Rasen and this was not the answer to current problems. It was generally felt that further research needed to be undertaken and more statistical evidence obtained.

The Chairman of the Challenge and Improvement Committee, which had carried out pre-scrutiny, stated that it was important to have equity across West Lindsey, and this meant the principle of charging, but not the actual cost. The ticket machines would provide the required usage data for analysis, which was proposed to include an element of free parking.

The Chief Executive assured Members that if the press release which quoted a 12 week consultation period was made available, it would be investigated and an apology issued if appropriate.

It was moved and seconded that the Market Rasen Car Parking report be considered by the Prosperous Communities Committee at its next meeting.

On being voted upon it was:

RESOLVED that the Market Rasen Car Parking report be considered by the Prosperous Communities Committee at its next meeting.

25 COUNCIL MINUTES (PAPERS A and B)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Annual meeting of Council held on 9 May 2016 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of Council held on 25 May 2016 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

26 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

27 MATTERS ARISING (PAPER C)

The Chairman noted that all items were shown as having been completed.

RESOLVED that the Matters Arising be noted.

28 ANNOUNCEMENTS

i) Chairman of the Council

In the absence of the Chairman the Vice Chairman informed Members of some events that she had attended in his stead, namely: Caistor in Bloom; a 100th birthday at Cherry Willingham; and a ceremony marking the anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, at which the soldiers' stories were very moving.

ii) Leader of the Council

The Leader informed Councillors of meetings he had attended regarding the future of John Coupland Hospital, where, whilst changes would be made but whose closure was not planned.

It was announced that the draft Central Lincolnshire Local Plan had now been submitted to the Planning Inspector. A positive response was hoped for.

Thanks were issued to all involved in the display at the recent Lincolnshire Show, which was felt to have been one of the best ever.

A meeting had taken place with Gainsborough traders to discuss improvements to the town centre.

The Leader then invited Councillor McNeill to present a question which had been submitted following the result of the Referendum.

“Does the Leader agree with me that we are rightly proud to live in a diverse and tolerant society? That racism, xenophobia and hate crimes have no place in our country? Would he join me in condemning racism, xenophobia and hate crimes unequivocally? Making it clear we will not allow hate to become acceptable?

Will the Leader work on a cross-party basis with councillors and with our officers to ensure that local bodies and programmes have the support and resources they need to fight and prevent racism and xenophobia?

Would the Leader reassure all people living in the West Lindsey district that they are valued members of our community?”

The Leader gave his assurance of agreement and hoped that Councillors Shore and Devine, the other Group Leaders, would join with him to undertake all possible opportunities to promote tolerance.

iii) Head of Paid Service

The Chief Executive noted that a Devolution workshop had been held prior to the Council meeting and reminded those Members who had not been able to attend that a further workshop was to be held on 13 July.

In noting the two minutes' silence held prior to commencement of the meeting, the Chief Executive spoke of the shared deep respect of all for Irmgard Parrot, past Chairman of the Council who had recently passed away.

The Chief Executive mentioned a Community Action event recently at the Trinity Arts Centre with an exhibition of work by people with mental health problems or disabilities, which was inspirational.

A meeting had been held in partnership with the Director responsible for the Air Show at Scampton at which assurance was sought that the show would remain at Scampton. The air show was commissioned for three years at RAF Scampton and the Chief Executive was working with the RAF Commander and Director regarding plans and the Council will have an active role as a partner.

29 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Group Captain P J Rodgers submitted the following question to the meeting:

"At an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council the Leader compared a Greater Lincolnshire with a Greater Manchester and Cornwall. Is the Council aware that Cornwall is a Unitary Authority with a Leader and Cabinet: and a move to Mayor and Cabinet would have little impact. However, Greater Manchester is made up of 10 metropolitan boroughs, which formed a combined authority in 2011, and moving to a regional authority with a Mayor could be conceived as a rational step. The economy of Greater Manchester is bigger than that of Wales. So could Greater Lincolnshire compare on an extra £15m a year?"

The Leader of the Council responded that he was aware of the different governance systems and maintained that the changes made sense. Whilst he had not previously made direct comparisons with Cornwall and Manchester, he noted that Devolution had made a difference of £11 per capita in Manchester, whereas in West Lindsey that difference would be £13.63.

30 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 9

Councillor Trevor Young submitted the following question to the meeting:

"Civil Parking Enforcement

In 2011, West Lindsey District Council approved a joint working arrangement with Lincolnshire County Council and other districts to adopt a countywide civil parking enforcement scheme.

The original proposal was supported by WLDC as the proposed scheme identified ways of improving the policing of both on and off street parking problems which had been identified within the town.

However over the past five years we seen the scheme develop from taking a reasonable approach to tackling parking problems to a 'more robust approach' which is driving customers and potential new businesses away within the town centre.

On a daily basis we now see a military style approach to dealing with traffic enforcement in the town. Gainsborough does not warrant three or four parking enforcement officers working aggressively to succeed on hitting their personal targets and performance measures.

We have seen a 'creeping effect' which is being extremely detrimental to viability of the town centre.

On reflection I think the council managed parking enforcement far better when it was 'in-house', and certainly in the future we need a far better working relationship with the management body of the current scheme and County Highways to ensure the town centre has a chance to succeed?

As Leader of The Council, I would ask if this issue could be discussed by the relevant committee.

The Leader of the Council responded

"When Civil Parking Enforcement was implemented it encompassed two elements, on street parking (operated by LCC) and the off street car parks operated by districts. West Lindsey is only responsible for "Off Street" parking in its own car parks.

I have asked officers about this matter and they inform me that WLDC have always maintained a middle ground approach to enforcement, seeking to ensure that the car parks are policed in a manner which will facilitates as far as possible, availability of spaces for shoppers and visitors without being too heavy handed.

With regard to the numbers of Civil Enforcement Officers deployed, WLDC only ever have one Civil Enforcement Officer on patrol unless our contractor is carrying out training or monitoring.

No targets are set for the issue of parking fines. The only performance indicators on the contract involve achieving the agreed number of hours deployment per month and timely provision of reports.

That said we do monitor performance and our records for off street parking shows that there has been a decline in enforcement action of around 10% during the year ending 2015/2016.

Contracts are regularly reviewed as always the officers will endeavour to get best value for money”

Councillor Young, given the opportunity of a supplementary question, quoted several instances of over aggressive enforcement which had upset residents and asked that the matter be re-considered by the relevant Committee.

The Chairman assured Councillor Young that the matter would be taken into consideration during the pending review.

During the debate on Market Rasen parking the Leader of the Council had noted that enforcement was only undertaken when a misdemeanour had occurred, and Councillor Brockway had stated that it was particularly stressful for officers attempting to undertake their responsibilities, often with abuse from the public and she would write to the manager in charge.

31 MOTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10

None received

32 MEMBERSHIP OF THE RURAL TRANSPORT WORKING GROUP

At the Prosperous Communities Committee on 29 October 2015 it was resolved that a Member Working Group for Rural Transport be established to assist officers in working up projects and six Members were appointed to the group.

Appointments to the Rural Transport Member Working Group must be legally and constitutionally confirmed at Full Council. At Annual Council on 9 May 2016 Paper D set out appointments of Members to committees, boards and other bodies. The confirmation of appointments to the Rural Transport Member Working Group were not included at this meeting due to on-going work to develop rural transport projects.

Following the above meetings Officers have been working to develop further projects and liaise with other stakeholders including Lincolnshire County Council as the Transport Authority. It is now an appropriate time to hold the first Member Working Group meeting for Rural Transport, therefore membership required confirmation.

RESOLVED that the following Members be appointed to the Rural Transport Working Group.

Councillor Lesley Rollings
Councillor Di Rodgers
Councillor Jessie Milne
Councillor Steve England
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
Councillor Lewis Strange

33 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS PUBLISHED SINCE THE COUNCIL MEETING ON 11 APRIL 2016.

RESOLVED that the minutes of Committee meetings published since the Council meeting on 11 April 2016 be received.

Note The Leader took a further opportunity to remind Members of the second Devolution workshop to be held on 13 July and requested that questions be submitted in advance in order for answers to be researched.

The meeting concluded at 8.05pm.

Chairman