

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 17 March 2020 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Owen Bierley (Chairman)
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan (Vice-Chairman) and
Councillor John McNeill (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Stephen Bunney
Councillor Mrs Tracey Coulson
Councillor Michael Devine
Councillor Mrs Jessie Milne
Councillor Mrs Judy Rainsforth
Councillor Tom Regis
Councillor Jim Snee
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee
Councillor Robert Waller
Councillor Mrs Anne Welburn
Councillor Trevor Young

In Attendance:
Ian Knowles Chief Executive
Ady Selby Assistant Director Operations
James O'Shaughnessy Corporate Policy Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer
Diane Krochmal Housing Strategy & Supply Manager
Grant White Enterprising Communities Manager
Steve Leary Commercial Waste Manager
Katie Storr Senior Democratic & Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Christopher Darcel

Membership: No substitutes appointed for the meeting

61 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND COVID-19 UPDATE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the meeting, making reference to the revised seating arrangements, in light of the Government guidelines around social distancing. He took the opportunity to hand over to the Chief Executive who updated Members in respect of the latest COVID-19 advice and the actions the Council were taking at present.

- The Management Team would be holding a daily meeting at 9.00am to understand the implications of each Government announcement as they were made and briefings would be passed to staff.
- The majority of staff, where they could, had been requested to work from home
- Face to face contact was being minimised wherever possible.
- Vulnerable staff groups had been identified and were being encouraged to isolate
- The Council was currently trying to maintain business as usual where possible and a decision regarding future committee meetings would be made at Council on 6 April, which at present was scheduled to go ahead, albeit on a skeleton arrangement
- Unfortunately the decision had been taken to close the Trinity Arts Centre for an initial period of 4 weeks, this would be kept under review.
- The Local Resilience Forum had established a number of Groups to assess the impact of the emerging situation and the Council was active attendees of these.
- Members and the Public would be kept informed as the situation developed and further Government announcements were planned each day.

62 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

63 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- (a) Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee – 28 January 2020.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held on 28 January 2020 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

64 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

Members gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule which set out the current position of all previously agreed actions as at 9 March 2019.

It was noted that all outstanding actions were either marked as completed, or were not yet due for completion.

The Committee had at their last meeting, expressed concern that the action “feeding birds in the market place” had been closed yet the signs had not been erected as indicated. The action had therefore been re-opened and up to date commentary included. The Chief Executive added further verbal commentary, advising that 20 signs had now been received and would be erected over the coming days and weeks.

RESOLVED that progress on the Matters Arising Schedule, as set out in the report be received and noted.

65 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Trevor Young declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 i) – Viable Housing Solution, as he had previously worked with the provider mentioned within the report.

66 CLIMATE STRATEGY

Members gave consideration to a report which presented an initial scoping document, which allowed for an “interim” update to be provided in respect of work undertaken in progressing the Council resolution to consider environmental and other implications associated with climate change. The report presented set out a strategy development plan, as requested by Council.

Councillor Coulson, as Chairman of the Working Group, presented the report to Committee and highlighted several key points including, the work undertaken to date (Section 3 of the report); the Interim findings (Section 4 of the report) and arising from this, the proposed way in which the Strategy would be developed: namely by adopting the Asden toolkit, which would provide a robust framework around which the strategy could be built.

Debate ensued and the Committee as a whole welcomed the report and the approach, placing on record their thanks to the Working Group.

It was suggested that officers should be encouraged to complete the Climate Related Risks and Opportunities box on all committee reports as this work progressed. The need to ensure linkages to the Council’s Corporate Plan was also raised.

RESOLVED that

- (a) the work to date the Council has undertaken in this subject matter, be supported and endorsed; and
- (b) the approach suggested to develop the Strategy be approved and this course of action be **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council.

67 BRIEFING NOTE ON PENDING CHANGES TO RECYCLING IN WEST LINDSEY

The Committee were presented with a briefing paper, which advised of likely pending changes to the waste collection system across the District.

The briefing paper outlined the reasons for these changes and the likely initial impact on residents.

It was noted there would be no additional cost to collection authorities, as the waste disposal authority (LCC) was proposing to purchase the bins required.

The briefing paper served as an early indication to the Committee, with the plan being to bring a full report to the Committee in May for a decision. Implementation would ideally be expected between August and October, subject to approval.

It was also noted, due to the nature of the announcements being made by Government relating to the Corona virus, the timescales may need to be amended.

RESOLVED that briefing note be received.

68 CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Members gave consideration to a report which presented an updated Consultation and Engagement Strategy, together with an updated Equality Strategy.

The strategies set out the Council's aim to support strong, active and inclusive communities who could influence and shape the district of West Lindsey and both strategies would help create a more transparent and accountable council and promote the Council's vision of:

“West Lindsey is a great place to be where people, businesses and communities can thrive and reach their potential.”

The new Consultation and Engagement strategy outlined the priorities for consultation, how the Council might involve its communities and some of the different pieces of legislation, which involved consultation for the Council, including the Community Rights, which were part of the Localism Act 2011.

The new Equality Strategy outlined West Lindsey District Council's work in meeting its equality and diversity commitments with regard to its equality duty.

Both new strategies helped position the Council to ensure its services, projects and programmes met the corporate plan objectives. In particular any changes to what we do as a council could be guided by the principles and methods set out in both strategies.

Both strategies looked at the national and local context and how they linked to supporting the council's corporate plan. Furthermore, both strategies included an action plan, which had specific actions to help achieve effective delivery of the strategies.

RESOLVED that: -

(a) the Consultation and Engagement Strategy (2020-2024) be approved; and

(b) the Equality Strategy (2020 – 2024) be approved.

69 REVIEW OF WEST LINDSEY HOME CHOICE LETTINGS POLICY

Members gave consideration to report which presented the revised West Lindsey Home Choice Lettings Policy.

The Housing Act 1996 stated that every local housing authority must have adopted a local scheme for allocation of social housing. The West Lindsey Home Choice Policy was created following the separation from the Central Lincolnshire Partnership with City of Lincoln and

North Kesteven District Council known as Lincs Homefinder.

The policy had been reviewed to take into account changes in practice and duties imposed by The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 and the Localism Act 2011.

A detailed breakdown of changes were listed at Appendix 1 of the report, with those changes considered larger also summarised in Section 2 of the report.

In response to questions, Officer confirmed the words missing from paragraph 1.11 on page 71 were “rough sleepers”

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) the changes to the West Lindsey HomeChoice Lettings Policy be approved; and
- (b) delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman of the Prosperous Communities Committee, to make minor housekeeping amendments to the Policy in the future.

70 COMMUNITY TRANSPORT PROGRAMME

Members gave consideration to a report which sought to provide the Committee with an update on the Council’s transport programme. The report further sought approval of continued funding for CallConnect services in West Lindsey.

Debate ensued and Members were supportive of continued funding for CallConnect services. The service was well used, in fact relied upon, and acted as much needed plug in service provision across the District.

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) the Council continue to fund CallConnect with a 2 year grant; and
- (b) the decision be **RECOMMENDED** to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for financial approval.

71 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY REPORT - PERIOD 3 2019/20

Members gave consideration to the Progress and Delivery report for period three (October – December) 2019 – 20.

It was noted that a total of 87.6% of the Council’s key performance indicators were either meeting or exceeding target, compared to 77.5% at the same point last year, representing an improvement of 10.1%. In addition, 12.4% of the Council’s key performance measures were below target compared to 21.5% at the same point last year.

Debate ensued and Members made a number of comments in respect of the Leisure Centre,

Markets, and Heritage.

A member also expressed frustration at the content of the report, particularly in respect of those actions that were not hitting their targets and the lack of supporting commentary. It was considered that details around the causes and impacts, how it was intended to get the target back on track and timescales involved would all be of assistance and were required if the Committee were able to effectively monitor performance.

In responding Officers indicated, they agreed with the sentiment expressed by Members with regard to the lack of supporting commentary against struggling targets. Officers went as far to suggest, that from a Management Team point of view, it would be useful to have that sort of detail even for targets exceeding performance in order that performance as a whole could be better managed. It was hoped the change in reporting style planned for 20/21 would facilitate this. Officers committed to the period four report being better expressed.

With regard to the Leisure Centre, it was acknowledged that cleanliness continued to be a concern. As a result mystery shopper style visits were being undertaken. The contract manager was in regular discussion with the contract provider and was undertaking independent assessments. The Council had also requested data from assessments undertaken by the contract provider. Assurance was offered that this matter was being monitored.

Members suggested that feedback should also be sought from the clubs and schools which used the facilities.

With regard to Markets, Officers reminded Members that they had agreed to a 2 year contract with Dransfield properties in a bid to raise the profile of the market, hold events and attract visitors. This was still considered the right course of action and with the development of the new cinema it was hoped this would encourage and change the footfall in that area. Again assurance was offered that Officers were doing all they could to encourage use of and the longevity of the Market Place.

It was noted there had been difficulty in recruiting to the Heritage posts, however successful appointments had now been made and therefore it was hoped that progress would be seen relatively quickly.

Finally, Members placed on record their congratulations to Trinity Arts Centre and hoped their previous performance would be borne in mind when the performance for period 4 was recorded, bearing in mind the closure that had been enforced earlier in the day.

RESOLVED that having assessed the performance of the Council's services through agreed performance measures and having had regard to the remedial measures suggested in the report, and the information provided in response to Member questions, no further remedial actions be requested at this stage.

72 WORKPLAN

Members gave consideration to the Committee Work Plan. The Chairman advised that it had been anticipated the Regulation 18 Consultation on the Local Plan Review would commence

in July 2020, however this was now likely to be delayed. The Committee, however, would get an opportunity to submit a consultation response, as and when the consultation commenced.

RESOLVED that the workplan as set out in the report be received and noted.

73 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 item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 A of the Act.

74 VIABLE HOUSING SOLUTION

Members gave consideration to a report which updated them on progress made in developing a viable housing solution for the South West Ward of Gainsborough. The report summarised the findings of the option appraisal work undertaken since October 2019, to achieve the objectives the Committee had agreed should govern the preferred solution.

The report outlined the fundamental principles of the preferred solution aligned to the committee's objectives and set out the Heads of Terms of the funding agreement between WLDC and the proposed partner. These would contractualise the delivery and governance arrangements in an open and transparent manner.

In doing so, Members were asked to approve the proposed funding agreement as the preferred option and in turn seek approval from the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for the financial implications of the decision.

The funding principles were outlined in detail, with Officers advising what resources the Council would put into the deal and what resources the partner would provide. The long term outcomes it was hoped would be realised were also shared with the Committee, along with the income which would be lost as a result of asset transfer.

Debate ensued and whilst the Local Ward Member welcomed the investment, and considered the partner a credible one, who was forward thinking and active although he did have concerns as to whether the initial funding would be enough to deliver what was being envisaged. There were also a number of questions as to and how and where such properties would be bought, the costs involved in renovating was questioned, and all were in agreement the scheme needed to deliver as large a number of properties as possible if it was to have the desired outcome.

The Committee were of the view that the report did not have enough detail around these factors and therefore any decision they made would be in principle only at this stage. On that basis the following amendment was moved and seconded: -

That Members approve ***in principle*** the proposed funding agreement (including the transfer of 12 Council owned houses)..... ***subject to receiving a detailed business plan.***

On being put to the vote the amendment was accepted. As the decision would now be an in principle one, it was noted the recommendation to forward this matter to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee would be deferred at this time.

Further debate ensued and Members questioned the level of income generated from the current assets, with Officers accepting these were not value for money investments in their current form, hence recommending they form part of any new partnership arrangement approved.

Members again questioned whether pressure could be put on the relevant body to amend the rate of housing benefit payments for the Gainsborough area, which was a market driving force in the area.

In responding to Members questions, Officers confirmed there would be little financial return from the proposal, the returns would be social and economic regeneration. Any arrangement would see the council retain a proportion of any overage. The preferred provider would not be permitted to sell the properties and was a not for profit organisation. It was envisaged, ultimately the properties would be part of a community trust arrangement. It was stressed the Council would not be assisting a private company to make money using Council funds.

The Committee wanted further assurance that they would have a role in owning the policy and monitoring its impact and success. Any business plan submitted needed to cover all of the points raised at 5.13 of the report.

The Chief Executive gave assurance that the business plan would address all of those concerns expressed by the Committee. Due to the far reaching implications of entering into any such partnership, the Chief Executive further suggested that once in receipt of the Business Plan, a workshop would be held with Members in order that they could scrutinise the detail and be confident in any decision. Furthermore it was suggested the decision be made using the concurrent committee arrangements.

On that basis it was

RESOLVED that the proposed funding agreement with the provider named within the report be approved **in principle** (including the transfer of 12 Council owned properties) as the preferred option to deliver a viable housing solution for Gainsborough South West Ward, to meet the objectives agreed by the Committee on 17 October 2019, **subject to receiving a detailed Business Plan.**

The meeting concluded at 7.58 pm.

Chairman