

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 2 March 2020 at 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Steve England (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Angela Lawrence (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Owen Bierley	Councillor Matthew Boles
Councillor Mrs Jackie Brockway	Councillor Stephen Bunney
Councillor Liz Clews	Councillor David Cotton
Councillor Mrs Tracey Coulson	Councillor Christopher Darcel
Councillor Timothy Davies	Councillor Michael Devine
Councillor David Dobbie	Councillor Jane Ellis
Councillor Ian Fleetwood	Councillor Mrs Caralyne Grimble
Councillor Cherie Hill	Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
Councillor Mrs Cordelia McCartney	Councillor Giles McNeill
Councillor John McNeill	Councillor Mrs Jessie Milne
Councillor Roger Patterson	Councillor Mrs Judy Rainsforth
Councillor Tom Regis	Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers
Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings	Councillor Jim Snee
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee	Councillor Robert Waller
Councillor Mrs Anne Welburn	Councillor Mrs Angela White
Councillor Trevor Young	

In Attendance:

Ian Knowles	Chief Executive
Alan Robinson	Monitoring Officer
Tracey Bircumshaw	Strategic Finance and Business Support Manager
Katie Storr	Senior Democratic & Civic Officer

Also in Attendance: Representatives from Sudbrooke Neighbourhood Planning Group/ Parish Council

Also Present: 3 members of the public
1 member of the press

Apologies Councillor Keith Panter
Councillor Lewis Strange
Councillor Jeff Summers

66 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed all Members, Officers, and Members of the Public present to the meeting.

Representatives from Sudbrooke Neighbourhood Planning Group, who would later in the meeting present their successful Plan to Council, were also welcomed to the meeting.

The Chairman asked Councillors, Officers and members of the public alike to join him in a minutes silence for the family and friends of those who had lost loved ones; for Andrew Hancock, WLDC's former Chief executive, for friend and colleague Councillor Judy Rainsforth on the sad and untimely loss of her son Richard, and for former long standing Councillor, friend to many and the Chairman's personal mentor Malcolm Parish.

Following the minutes silence the Chairman paid tribute to his former friend and mentor Malcolm Parish. Colleagues from all political persuasions across the Chamber also paid tribute to former Councillor Parish, sharing their memories of and fondest moments with Councillor Parish, who had been a larger than life character and permanent fixture on the benches of West Lindsey for over 30 years. Councillor Diana Rodgers advised she would keep Members abreast of funeral arrangements as they were made and personal condolences should be sent to Mr Parish's home address.

67 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- a) Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council held on 20 January 2020

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council held on 20 January 2020 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

68 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

69 MATTERS ARISING

The Monitoring Officer presented the report and advised Members that all actions had been completed within their targets.

The remaining green action relating to referencing Anti-Semitism within the Constitution would be brought forward as part of the Annual Review of the Constitution due for consideration by Council at its meeting in May. Furthermore, a new Equalities Strategy was being developed and was shortly due for consideration by the Prosperous Communities Committee, it was intended to also include reference to Anti-Semitism within that Strategy.

With reference to the action entitled – "sale of fireworks – lobby LCC" the Leader advised that he had now received a response. This was holding in nature and therefore he would further update Council in the event he received further information.

RESOLVED that the Matters Arising be duly noted.

70 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman

The Chairman took the opportunity to bring Members' attention some up and coming events.

Once again WLDC were looking for nominations from Councillors for Parish Council of the Year. The shield, currently held by Great Limber Parish Council, was awarded each year to a Parish Council able to demonstrate a level of excellence and innovation throughout the past year. Councillors were encouraged to make nominations, to celebrate the good work that our town and parishes undertook. The winning council would be invited to a presentation at Full Council in May. Nomination forms were available at the back of the chamber but would also be e-mailed to all Members.

Tomorrow evening would see the launch of the Council's Community Lottery at Hemswell Court, to which all Councillors were welcome to attend. The lottery would provide an opportunity to offer funding from the proceeds to the wonderful community groups who enriched the district by their hard work and dedication.

Since Council's last meeting, the intervening weeks had been rather quiet on the civic front. However, the Chairman had attended several functions, among them: -

- a fund raiser for the air ambulance , commenting on his admiration for their work;
- an invitation from Nettleham Parish Council to perform the turf cutting ceremony of their new play area, partly funded by WLDC;
- the opening of a new kitchen and toilet facility at Wickenby parish church, alongside the Bishop of Lincoln. This had been a long held wish of the church, which again was in part made possible by some of the funding from West Lindsey;
- attending the opening of the superb new development by Lace Housing in Nettleham; and
- welcoming the former England rugby captain Dylan Hartley to Gainsborough Academy to promote "Invest Gainsborough".

The Chairman concluded his announcements by advising Members that he would be hosting a concert on behalf of his charity, Food in School Holidays (fish) at St. Mary's church Welton on 3 April. The Cabra singers and the band of the Gainsborough Salvation Army were freely giving their services. Tickets were priced at £8 and available from the Civic Officer

Leader

The Leader addressed Council and updated the Chamber in respect of the following matters: -

The Leader was very pleased with the positive comments from the LGA Peer Review team about the openness and honesty of both Officers and colleagues on the benches. He considered this a testament to the culture of transparency held by West Lindsey. The initial feedback had been shared with Members at the Strategic Forum at the end of January and was overall very positive about the strengths of West Lindsey District Council but robust enough to offer suggestions about opportunities that could make the Council even better.

He was eager to see the full report in the coming weeks and remained fully committed to publishing this report in the public domain.

The Leader had attended APSE's Association meeting in Edinburgh. One topic of particular interest was Dr. Peter Kenway's discussion 'Climate Change Emergency: from declaration to reality'. It was very pleasing to see colleagues from both North and South Kesteven district councils.

The Leader had been delighted to attend the opening of 'The Burrows' in Nettleham. Situated off Deepdale Lane in Nettleham, the development consisted of 22 two-bedroom apartments for rent and 14 two-bedroom bungalows for shared ownership. Members also noted, the access road – Frith Close – had been named by Nettleham Parish Council in recognition of the service of former district Councillor Alf Frith who had served 27 years as West Lindsey District Council.

The Chief Executive and Leader had attended the District Council's Network Conference at Chesford Grange, Kenilworth. Attendance by a good number of colleague Leaders from across Greater Lincolnshire had provided an ideal opportunity to discuss some of the shared challenges all faced.

Leaders from across Greater Lincolnshire had gathered at County Hall in Lincoln to consider the emerging landscape of devolution and local government re-organisation; a white paper on that subject was expected to emerge in the summer. As a group the Leaders' had agreed that they wished to be "ahead of the game" and had begun pulling together the information resources necessary so they could protect the ceremonial county of Lincolnshire and ensure that they were on the front-foot to respond to the Government's proposals.

On Tuesday of the previous week, the Leader along with the Chairman had attended the Gainsborough Academy where he'd met pupils and former England Rugby Captain Dylan Hartley who had come at the invitation of the Gelder Group to talk to pupils interested in Rugby.

As at the end of February, the Authority had conducted 33 services at the new Lea Fields crematorium. For those who had not yet had chance to see the facility, the Leader shared with colleagues a video which had been prepared for the website and social media use.

Thursday through to Saturday last week, the Leader had attended the CCA Conference on behalf of APSE, where he had chaired two workshops, one on Local Government Finance and Future Structure and the second on Sustainability and the Local Environment.

The Leader had met with a number of ministers including: -

- The Rt. Hon. Alok Sharma MP – Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Industrial Strategy; and discussed with him the Green Finance event attended the previous year and the Greater Lincolnshire Industrial Strategy;
- The Rt. Hon. Robert Jenrick MP – Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government; with whom he'd discussed devolution, the fair funding settlement and the housing projects currently on stream at the moment in Gainsborough.
- The Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Boris Johnson MP and reiterated that RAF Scampton was the best place to keep as the base for the Red Arrows.

The Leader had held 1-2-1 meetings with the majority of the Council's Committee Chairmen about how their committees had been performing over the past year. He hoped to have further such meetings where necessary in the next few weeks.

Since the last meeting of Full Council, the Leader had had numerous meetings with Councillors, Officers, stakeholders and the media. In addition to his duties in the Chamber, he undertook to have further such meetings prior to the next meeting of Council on Monday, 6 April.

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive addressed Council advising of the Council's success in a recent Access Bid, providing up to £5m of funding for Social Enterprise Entrepreneurs. The Council would be working with a local partnership to develop a full proposal over the next twelve months supported by a development grant.

The Environmental and Sustainability Group had met three times since Members had asked for a plan to develop a response to Climate Change. The work was on track to report to Full Council in May 2020, as requested.

It was with pleasure the Chief Executive announced that the first service had been held at the Lea Fields Crematorium on the 3rd February. To-date 33 services had been held.

Members were thanked for their engagement with the recent Peer Challenge. The feedback had been really positive and highly praised the openness and honesty of West Lindsey employees and the self-awareness of the Authority as a whole. The Chief Executive undertook to share with members the full report when it had been finalised.

One of the issues raised by the Peer Challenge was the need for the restructure following the appointment of a Chief Executive. The Chief Executive went on to advise that he had discussed his proposed structure with all employees directly affected and would be providing a general briefing to all staff during the week. Formal consultation would commence in March with implementation of the structure from April.

Concluding his announcements with the Coronavirus, the Chief Executive advised he had issued guidance to all employees regarding the potential for self-isolation following annual leave. The Authority was following the Government guidance on those areas that would require self-isolation on return and those that did not.

That concluded announcements for the meeting.

71 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Monitoring Officer confirmed to the meeting that no questions had been received from members of the public.

72 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 9

Councillor Jim Snee, Ward Member for the Gainsborough North Ward, submitted the following question to the Chairman of the Prosperous Communities Committee: -

“Throughout the West Lindsey area decaying, derelict, run down Grade 2 Listed buildings are a blot on their immediate environment. They are eyesores, frequently in central locations, which do **no** favours for the local economy. The negative vibes extruding from such buildings (like the former Lea Road School in Gainsborough and the HSBC bank in Market Rasen to name just two) create a level of despondency amongst locals and visitors, causing them to hurry past and move on - taking their patronage elsewhere. The results are areas of decline, which are not conversant with the WLDC and LCC objective of promoting a ‘visitor economy’, as expressed in the Central Lincolnshire Plan and other officially approved documents.

The physical state of these buildings is usually one of decay and disrepair. They become magnets for the adventurous and inquisitive minds of young people, and also act as ‘safe havens’ for the vulnerable of today’s modern society. They are a clear health and safety risk, which can not be tolerated by the Council and residents of the district. It is surely a major blessing that the exceptional winds and rainfall of the recent storms, Ciara and Dennis, did not create significant damage to the buildings, infrastructure or more importantly members of the public.

Despite the obvious negative effect these buildings have on our communities there appears to be **no** district wide policies, development plans or financial grant schemes to address the problems created by them.

What is being done to address this lack of policies, on restoring declining listed buildings, and what progress is envisaged to ensure an acceptable, high standard **for all** communities within the district of West Lindsey?

Councillors and residents need to be aware of these policies to be reassured that WLDC is seriously tackling the declining areas of our community, and is taking every available measure to bring about improvements. Even if they do not fit into the ‘enterprise’, economic affordable model of a balanced budget.

Thank you
Cllr Jim Snee”

The Chairman of the Prosperous Communities Committee, Councillor Owen Bierley, responded as follows: -

Thank you, Cllr Snee, for your most prescient question.

Firstly, the importance and value of listed buildings is fully recognised and their ongoing protection ensured by Section 6 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Paragraphs 184 to 188 and within Section 5 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, especially Policy LP25: The Historic Environment. Neighbourhood Development Plans add further richness and understanding in this area by considering those built assets that, although they may not be listed, are nonetheless important to the

community either individually or in groups.

Section 5.10.5 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan states that:

Our positive strategy for the historic environment will be achieved through the implementation of Policy LP25 and through:

- the preparation and maintenance of a list of buildings and other heritage assets of local importance;
- safeguarding heritage assets at risk and taking steps to reduce the number of heritage assets in Central Lincolnshire on the national Heritage at Risk Register and the Lincolnshire Heritage at Risk Register;
- encouraging the sympathetic maintenance and restoration of listed buildings, historic shop fronts and historic parks, gardens and landscapes, based on thorough historical research. Policies LP17 Landscape, Townscape and Views, and LP27 Main Town Centre Uses- Frontages and Advertisements, will also particularly assist in the achievement of this;
- strengthening the distinctive character of Central Lincolnshire's settlements, through the application of high quality design and architecture that responds to this character and the setting of heritage assets.

West Lindsey is fortunate enough to have 25 Conservation Areas and 950 listed buildings within the district and these are all detailed on our website. The breakdown of the listed buildings is:

- 1 - Grade A
- 59 - Grade I (the highest grade)
- 79 - Grade II*
- 809 - Grade II
- 2 - Grade C

<https://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/my-services/planning-and-building/conservation-and-environment/listed-buildings/>

Although 11 Market Place, Market Rasen (the former HSBC/Midland Bank building) is listed, the former Lea Road School building in Gainsborough is not, despite there being a common misconception to the contrary.

The Gainsborough Townscape Heritage Partnership was recently awarded £1.9 million as part of a major project to restore historic buildings and heritage assets in the town. The town centre project will specifically focus on Lord Street and the Market Place, working with owners to transform and restore 28 historic properties.

This funding, from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, has enabled the Council to appoint a Townscape Heritage Project Officer to support the delivery of the programme and they will commence in post at the end of March. Further capacity in the form of a Townscape Heritage Activity Co-ordinator will be recruited shortly and

they will deliver the approved 'Activity Statement' designed to engage a wide audience of stakeholders and partners in the benefits of Heritage Led Regeneration.

Conservation Areas are designated by the Council as a sign of its positive commitment to preserve and enhance the quality of the environment. Parts of the three market towns of Caistor, Market Rasen and Gainsborough are covered by Conservation Areas. Work is currently ongoing to finalise the recently updated Conservation Area appraisals in Gainsborough covering the Town Centre, the Britannia Works and the Riverside. The programme of works covering Conservation Area appraisals will see the team move on to an appraisal in Market Rasen this year and the development of a resourced plan to continue to work on Conservation Area Appraisals as the need arises.

Members will be aware that our recently adopted Corporate Plan 2019-2023 also includes a specific commitment to this end. This is reflected in the 'Our Place' section of the Executive Business Plan before Members for formal approval this evening and for which I trust they will affirm their support.

Finally, the Leisure, Culture, Events and Tourism Working Group are presently engaged in the production of a new Visitor Economy Strategy for West Lindsey. This document is included in the Forward Plan for consideration by the Prosperous Communities Committee in May.

Thank you again for your question"

Councillor Matt Boles, Ward Member for the Gainsborough North Ward, submitted the following question to the Chairman of the Prosperous Communities Committee: -

"The return of parking to Gainsborough Town Centre has long been supported by local traders, residents, the Town Council, LCC Councillors & Officers and the majority of Gainsborough's WLDC members.

Please could you clarify WLDC's position on the subject, does the authority support the re-introduction of Town Centre parking or is it opposed to the proposal?

Many Thanks
Cllr Matt Boles"

The Chairman of the Prosperous Communities Committee, Councillor Owen Bierley, responded as follows: -

"Thank you for your question Cllr Boles

The facts in response are that Lincolnshire County Council owns the town centre and when similar questions have been posed to them previously they have informed us that this proposal would be both complex and very costly.

This is in part due to having to re-design the town centre area including taking up the current paving to install raised kerbs in all pedestrian routes to comply with legislation regarding pedestrian and vehicular segregation.

Other points to note when considering supporting the possibility of parking in the town centre are;

- Ensuring that vehicles are driven at a safe speed in such a highly pedestrianised area is problematic to control
- Carelessly parked cars can obstruct pedestrian routes and reduce the visibility of other drivers and pedestrians
- Over parking and site congestion will result in dangerous manoeuvres and the blocking of pedestrian routes.
- In the interest of public safety a car park in the centre of the town would also require segregation by barriers due to the nature of the proposed area.

Following the acquisition of the old Lidl store with car park and the increase of spaces in both Bridge Street and Roseway car parks capacity has been added within Gainsborough. Analysis shows that 165 additional car parking spaces have been created, representing an increase of almost 50% since September 2017, which could also be seen to reduce any need for Market Place parking.

With the addition of the cinema planned for 2020/21 this will positively contribute to footfall in the town, especially given the inclusion of the 50 car parking spaces proposed to the rear of the development. This will greatly help add to capacity within the town.

Thank you again for the question.”

Having heard the response, Councillor Boles requested and was granted the opportunity to ask a supplementary question.

Councillor Boles disputed the information he had heard in response, stating that he attended the Gainsborough Transport Strategy Board at which both Officers from the District and County Council attended and he was of the belief the County Council would support such a proposal but it was West Lindsey Officers who were less supportive. He believed it would be conducive for all parties to be sat around one table, including Councillor Bierley and therefore requested that Councillor Bierley be invited to the next such meeting.

In response, Councillor Bierley indicated he was happy to attend such a meeting and would find it useful.

73 MOTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10

Councillor Anne Welburn and Councillor Stephen Bunney submitted the following Motion: -

“Council Notes:

1. Dog fouling is not only deeply unpleasant, it is dangerous. Whilst rare, contact with dog excrement can cause toxocariasis – a nasty infection that can lead to dizziness, nausea, asthma and even blindness or seizures
2. Dog fouling is an offence and can result in offenders being issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice of up to £75. If the case goes to court this could cost the owner or person in charge of the animal up to £1,000
3. The law states that being unaware a dog has fouled or not having a suitable

- bag is not a reasonable excuse
4. There are estimated to be more than 8 million dogs producing more than 1,000 tonnes of excrement every day in the UK alone
 5. A Keep Britain Tidy campaign in 2010 had considerable success on the issue of dog fouling. 'There's no such thing as the dog poo fairy' led to massive reductions in dog fouling in participating councils' areas. That some communities saw a decrease of up to 90%, while on average a reduction of 43% was recorded across the 94 participating local authorities

Council Believes:

1. Most dog owners are caring, responsible individuals, however, the small minority of those, who do not clean up after their pets are acting irresponsibly
2. That several councils have had success with the 'Green Dog Walkers' scheme (along the lines of that piloted, developed and trail blazed by Falkirk Council in 2008). They are friendly, non-confrontational projects that bring about the change of community behaviour by the modelling of good behaviour.

Council Resolves to:

1. Request that the Prosperous Communities Committee undertake to:
 - a. Assess the scale of the problem across the District
 - b. Commission work to investigate successful initiatives undertaken by other Councils, including the 'Green Dog Walkers' scheme, assessing them for viability and value for money
 - c. Bring forward and consider proposals to implement suitable initiatives to deal with the problem
 - d. Develop a scheme to educate irresponsible dog owners that not clearing up after their pets is anti-social behaviour that the council does not tolerate.

We so move.

Cllr. Anne Welburn

Cllr. Stephen Bunney”

The motion as submitted was duly seconded.

Numerous Members from across the Chamber spoke in support of the motion, which they considered was a concern for the majority of communities across the District.

A Councillor sought indication of the number of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) the Authority had issued for dog fouling offences in the last three years and Officers undertook to provide the information outside of the meeting.

Another Member advised that the Dogs Trust offered a plethora of advice regarding the matter.

Some parishes had appointed their own wardens, who were fully trained and qualified and could issue FPNs.

Councillor Milne, Chairman of the Regulatory Committee advised that the Council was committed to reducing dog fouling across the District and was in the process of reviewing its district wide PSPO, originally introduced in 2017, with work concluding by

September.

All were in agreement that education was important, but this needed to be supported with enforcement.

Having being moved and seconded, the motion as submitted was **ACCEPTED**.

74 ADOPTION OF THE SADBROOKE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Members were asked to give consideration to a report to fully 'make' (adopt) the Sudbrooke Neighbourhood Plan (NP) following a successful referendum.

Councillor Bob Waller, as Local Ward Member, introduced the report. He expressed thanks to the Group for their hard work, and to the Officers for the support they had offered. He acknowledged the time, effort and commitment needed to complete a Neighbourhood Plan. He considered it a commendable achievement and had resulted in a plan the Group and village could be proud of. In concluding, he paid tribute to former Councillor Curtis, who had been instrumental in getting the Group started on their way in producing such a worthwhile plan, which he commended to Council.

Representatives from Sudbrooke Neighbourhood Planning Group were in attendance and prior to Members debating the matter, the Chairman invited them to make a short address to Council and present their successful Neighbourhood Plan.

Mr Peter Heath, Chairman of Sudbrooke Parish Council addressed the meeting and made the following statement: -

"It gives me great pleasure to present to the Council the completed Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Sudbrooke. The Plan has entailed a great deal of hard work by the Steering group set up to construct it. The Parish Council initially called for volunteers to work on the Plan and were heartened by the response from both the Parish councillors and members of the community. We lost a champion of the village early on when Cllr Stuart Curtis sadly passed away and with him went a font of local knowledge. Our Steering group persevered with the task but suffered from a high drop out rate of members because of the time commitment required and amount of detail that had not been appreciated at first.

The provisions in this plan reflect the opinions of our village residents in looking forward to how we want our village to develop and be viewed by the wider community. With it we look forward to further additions to the village to enhance the quality of life for our residents. It will provide guidance for this council when determining planning applications and hopefully prevent development detrimental to future residents. It has also enabled a review of our village that reflects a history going back to the Domesday Book. The coverage of the natural environment will also benefit the community when assessing environmental changes over the coming decades.

We were greatly assisted and encouraged by Cllr Steve England whose experience and depth of knowledge provided a pathway for the production of the professional

report you see before you. I should also like to mention the support given by Cllr Ian Fleetwood and Mr Luke Brown as a facilitators. I would also like to thank Mrs Barbara Bingham for her dedication and hard work, despite trying personal circumstances, without which I would not be here tonight. I commend this Plan to the Council.”

Councillor Heath then formally presented the Plan to the Chairman.

Members across the floor congratulated the Group on their remarkable achievement.

The Leader, as a member of the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee, confirmed to the representatives of Sudbrooke Parish Council, that through the current review of the Local Plan, there was no intention to change the settlement hierarchy of Sudbrooke, acknowledging that this had been a concern for the village.

This news was welcomed and following a round of applause, it was moved, seconded and duly

RESOLVED that the Sudbrooke Neighbourhood Plan be adopted and made.

75 APPROVAL FOR EXEMPTION FROM PROCUREMENT

Members gave consideration to a report which sought approval for procurement exemption in respect of the contract for the support and maintenance of the Cremator at Lea Fields Crematorium.

It was noted that Officers had delegated authority to approve procurement exemptions up to a threshold of £50k. Exemptions required at a higher threshold were delegated to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee but due to expedience the report had been brought to Council.

In response to comments, it was confirmed that as part of the Council’s financial due diligence, the original business plan identified costs in relation to the purchase and support and maintenance of the crematoria and abatement equipment. The provision of the cremator was included in the overall build contract with Willmott Dixon and was purchased by them directly.

The procurement of ongoing support and maintenance was a task for the District Council as the end user but money had been set aside in the MTFP for such and therefore this was not an additional cost or after thought.

Having being moved and seconded it was: -

RESOLVED that the exemption be approved and Council directly award the contract for support and maintenance of the crematoria and abatement equipment to Facultatieve Technologies Ltd for a 10 year agreement, avoiding the application of the percentage increase that would be applied through the framework route and save the Council up to £10k over the life of the contract.

76 EXECUTIVE BUSINESS PLAN, MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND PLAN 2020/21 - 2024-25

Members gave consideration to a report which presented the Executive Business Plan and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2020/21 – 2024/25. These documents were central to the Council's financial and strategic planning.

The Chief Executive presented the report and in doing so placed on record his thanks to Tracey Bircumshaw and the finance team for their work in preparing the documents presented to Members.

The Executive Business Plan set out the current contextual environment at a national, regional and local level in which the Council operated and identified at a high level the deliverable outcomes over the next three years.

These outcomes were linked to the Members' objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan 2019-2023.

The Medium Term Financial Plan set out how the Council intended to finance the Executive Business Plan and forecast over a five year period the revenue and capital financial position of the Authority. In addition, it attempted to forecast for a ten year horizon the impact of the Council's longer term projects.

The Budget presented to Members for 2020/21 of £14,357m was balanced with a transfer to reserves of £1.2m.

This position had been arrived at due to the one year roll over settlement which was announced in November 2019. However, with the Fairer Funding review, the Business Rate Reset, Business rate retention and the Spending Review to come in 2020, the settlement for future years was very uncertain.

The underlying assumptions for the budget could be found on page 69, section 2.3 and included 2% increase in Council Tax. It was noted this was lower than the maximum the Council could have charged, which would have been an increase of £5 equivalent to an increase of 2.35%.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the MTFP met the requirements of the regulations; the requirement for the local Authority to agree a balanced budget for each financial year, prior to the start of that year; the requirement for the local Authority to establish the level of Council Tax for the coming year on the basis of that budget and, furthermore, met best practice (supported by CIPFA) by setting out the coming year's budget in addition to a 5 year MTFP.

Finally the Chief Executive drew Members' attention to his S151 Officer statement at page 74, section 2.10 on the robustness of estimates, the adequacy of reserves and the affordability of capital investments.

The Leader of the Council made the following speech in response: -

“Thank you, Chairman.

The Executive Business Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2020/21 - 2024/25 are the documents that form the Council’s Budget.

As members who sit on the policy committees will know, the process of drawing together the budget is an almost never-ending task; and I would wish to record my thanks and that of colleagues on the Administration’s benches for all the officers who have played their part in the process. Thank you.

As you might expect, Chairman, the Budget documentation should contain no surprises; these have been through our committee structure over recent months and culminate here at Full Council this evening.

What I am pleased to say is that this budget for £14.357m of revenue spending next year aligns with the Administration’s policy priorities and recognises the good financial position the Council finds itself in.

This budget will support the delivery of the Council’s vision for West Lindsey to be a great place to be where people, businesses and communities can thrive and reach their potential. We can continue to deliver award winning services, improving the experience of our residents and continuing to deliver efficiencies.

Chairman, colleagues may be aware that the referendum threshold, which stood at 3% last year, has been reduced back to 2% this year (or £5, whichever is greater). On that basis if we wanted to increase the Council Tax by the maximum we could, without a referendum, we would be looking at an increase of 2.35%. However, I am pleased to say that the proposal in the paper is for a 2% rise in the district council’s portion of the Council Tax. This is because of the sound management of the Council’s finances by both councillors on these benches and our dedicated team of officers. It is my understanding that West Lindsey is the only authority in the county not to be increasing its share of the council tax by referendum limit.

This budget includes additional resource investing in our priority areas meaning an Environmental Health Officer, and additional CCTV Operator and makes a long-term commitment to supporting our visitor economy with long term funding for the post of a Visitor Economy Officer. We will also be filling a new post of Conservation and Heritage Projects Officer.

West Lindsey is a district that is making real progress. We are delivering on the commitments that we made to local residents in last year’s elections. The Administration’s record is one that has not been about short-term opportunism, or quick fix solutions to the challenges we face; but the dedicated, deliberate and steady long-term approach to policies designed to make the Council’s financial position more resilient – at a time when central government continue to reduce grant funding and consider limiting our ability to find innovative solutions to fund the frontline services that local people expect and rely on from this Council.

The Administration is committed to investing locally to deliver a bright future for everyone across the district. Which is why the tabled paper includes our ambitious

plans for £24,117,619 of capital expenditure next year and a total of £37,767,275 over the five-year period of the medium-term financial plan.

We are investing in our Market towns

Gainsborough

- £40,000 for the Gainsborough Shop Front Improvement Scheme
- £100,000 for the Unlocking Housing, Living over the Shop grant scheme
- £250,000 for improvements at the Trinity Arts Centre
- £332,775 Heritage regeneration in Gainsborough – not just this year but over the next four years a like for like amount each year
- £352,300 for the redevelopment of the 5-7 Market Place, Gainsborough
- £1,010,000 contribution for the improvements to the Corringham road junction scheme
- Funding for the Riverside Gateway project to make progress on that site
- £2,162,000 for the regeneration Gainsborough and the housing scheme on Bowling Green Lane
- £2,350,000 for the new cinema on the old Lindsey Centre site in partnership with Savoy to transform and regenerate Gainsborough's Market Place.

Market Rasen

- £300,000 to develop the Market Rasen 3-year vision,
- And we will complete the new Leisure Centre this summer

Caistor

- We are putting in place a seven-figure sum of funding for the delivery of key improvements to health services in Caistor next year

And in other communities across the district we will be investing money too:

Hemswell

- £150,000 to make improvements to the public realm as part of the Hemswell Masterplan

Glentham

- £4,600,000 for the new central depot at a site near the Caenby Corner roundabout on the A46 in Glentham.

But whilst we are investing substantial sums in the communities of West Lindsey we shall also be investing in our own institution. We will be implementing modern technology which will put the customer at the centre of everything we do by improving accessibility and creating service improvements in addition to cost savings through efficiency. We will invest:

- £19,400 for updated and improved telephony including the contact centre
- £97,000 to refresh and improve storage facilities
- £100,000 to refresh the public sector hub on the ground floor of the Guildhall
- £110,000 to enhance our asset stock
- £220,000 for a new financial management system
- £280,000 in our Customer First programme which is leading the way in which this council delivers effective and efficient services

And we are earmarking £7,000,000 for further commercial property portfolio investments should suitable properties come forward on the market.

Of the more than £24m of capital expenditure next year, over £6m will be financed through grant funding streams, £5½m will be from revenue finance, just over £2m will come from capital receipts and the rest (£10.2m) will come from prudential borrowing.

But, Chairman, as good as the papers tabled in the agenda-pack tonight are, I have wanted for sometime to restore this chamber's function as the place where we debate ideas and engage in topics; not simply nod through and ratify decisions made elsewhere. To that end I am pleased to move the recommendations of the paper as published – but I have a number of amendments that I would like to make.

Firstly, Chairman, you will remember our visit to Nettleham C of E Aided Junior School at the end of last year? The children were very impressive and there is a deep commitment in our young people that we all have a responsibility to tackle the unsustainability of human activity on our shared environment. **So, I propose that we provide the opportunity of educational talks to every primary school in the District, a cost pressure of £6,000, regarding environmental sustainability and recycling – helping our young people to be even better champions and using their influence with their parents and grandparents to improve recycling behaviours at home.**

Chairman, I note that on these benches Members made a commitment to freeze the charge for the green waste service at £35. I am pleased to confirm that that promise is being kept. And let us not forget that we fought so hard to keep the green bin service included within the Council Tax far longer than other colleagues across the county, until it became financially unviable to continue – as austerity cuts from central government continued to squeeze well beyond the original horizon of 2015 – and continue a decade on.

Chairman, West Lindsey District Council should surely be a council that always strives to provide the best possible value for money services? To that end, **I propose that Council increases the number of collections of the Green garden-waste wheelie bin service, for a one-year pilot scheme, with an additional collection at the end of the current cycle and an additional collection at the start of the next cycle. Officers have kindly provided an estimate figure of £76,000 as a cost pressure.**

Many in this chamber will be wondering just exactly how I'm going to pay for these rabbits that I am pulling out of the hat! To balance the budget, **I propose to reduce the transfer to the general fund, identified on page 85 (appendix 1, 3rd table) from £927,500 to £845,500.**

That, Chairman, is two extra collections of green wheelie bins for residents who subscribe for the service, and engaging with our young people to make the next generation drivers for behavioural change in the households of the district – without the need to collect additional Council Tax or charge a higher fee for the service. I trust that our officers will confirm that these proposals will require no changes to the calculations in the paper regarding Council Tax?

I am pleased to commend this budget to the Chamber. and move the additional

recommendations I have set out. This is a budget that will help us to deliver our commitment to build a brighter future for everyone across the district. Chairman, thank you”

The matter was opened for debate and the deputy Leader seconded the additional recommendations the Leader had made through the course of his budget speech.

The Leader of the Opposition questioned whether the budget went far enough, with no mention of monies set aside for the impact of flooding, something the District had experienced recently and would undoubtedly face again in the near future. He was of the view that a resilience fund should be being established for such emergencies.

In response, the Leader re-iterated that it was being proposed that £845,500 be transferred to the general fund balance. Rather than establish a specific resilience fund for flooding, this would give the Authority greater flexibility to tackle such emergencies, whether they be flooding or of another nature. The Authority also needed to bear in mind the future uncertainty regarding future settlements and thereby transferring money to the general balance fund allowed flexibility in uncertainty.

Councillor Bunney took the opportunity to thank the Administration for the money afforded to Market Rasen, more than had been anticipated. The Leader of the Council apologised for his oversight confirming that £200k as opposed to the £300k he had verbally stated had been allocated, offering apologies again.

The amendments proposed and seconded throughout the course of the debate, and shown in bold above, were put to the vote and **CARRIED**

The recommendations, as set out in the report, including the amendments, having being moved and seconded, were then put to the vote. In accordance with required legislation for voting on the Council’s budget, a recorded vote was taken.

Votes were cast as set out below:

For: - Councillors Bierley, Brockway, Coulson, Darcel, Davies, Devine, Ellis, England, Fleetwood, Grimble, Hill, Howitt-Cowan, Lawrence, McCartney, McNeill G, McNeill J, Milne, Patterson, Regis, Rodgers, Waller, Welburn (22)

Against: - Councillors Boles, Cotton, Dobbie, Rollings, Snee, J, Snee M, Young (7)

Abstain: - Councillors Bunney, Clews, Rainsforth, White (4)

With the majority of Councillors voting for the proposals, the motion was declared **CARRIED** and on that basis it was:-

RESOLVED that: -

- a) the external environment and the severity of the financial challenges being faced as detailed in the Financial Strategy be recognised;

- b) the Statement of the Chief Finance Officer on the Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves be accepted;
- c) the Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 to 2024/25 be approved and the associated Risks be noted (Appendix 2);
- d) the Revenue Budget 2020/21 (Appendix 1) be set; **subject to the amendments approved during the course of the debate and highlighted in bold above;**
- e) the movement to and from Reserves (Executive Summary 1.4) be approved;
- f) the Fees and Charges 2020/21 (Appendix 3) be set;
- g) the Capital Investment Strategy (Appendix 4) be adopted;
- h) the Capital Programme 2020/21 to 2023/24 and Financing (Appendix 5 and 6) be approved;
- i) the Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21 be approved and as such the Treasury Investment Strategy, the detailed Counter Party criteria, the Treasury and Borrowing Prudential Indicators (Appendix 7) be adopted;
- j) the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy as contained in the Treasury Management Strategy (Appendix 7) be approved;
- k) a 2% increase in the Council Tax and set a charge of £217.74 Band D Equivalent. (Appendix 8-12) be approved;
- l) the 2020/21 Pay Policy Statement (Appendix 13) be approved; and
- m) the Human Resources Statement 2020/21 (Appendix 14) be accepted.

The meeting concluded at 8.24 pm.

Chairman