

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Council held in the West Lindsey Leisure Centre, The Avenue, Gainsborough on 6 September 2021 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 Christopher Darcel	Councillor Timothy Davies
Councillor Michael Devine	Councillor David Dobbie
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 Keith Panter	Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Peter Morris	Councillor Tom Regis
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
Tracey Bircumshaw	Assistant Director of Finance and Property Services and Section 151 Officer
Emma Redwood	Assistant Director People and Democratic Services
Katie Storr	Democratic Services & Elections Team Manager (Interim)
Ele Snow	Democratic and Civic Officer

Apologies

Councillor Mrs Tracey Coulson
Councillor Jane Ellis
Councillor Mrs Judy Rainsforth
Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers
Councillor Jeff Summers

29 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND MINUTE'S SILENCE FOR FORMER COUNCILLOR REG SHORE

The Chairman welcomed all Members to the Leisure Centre, as the Authority continued to hold its Full Council meetings away from the Guildhall due to ongoing capacity restraints. The Chairman reminded Members of the fire procedures and Covid measures in place before formally opening the meeting.

Having offered Prayers for former Councillor and former Leader of the Council, Councillor Reg Shore, prior to the start of the meeting, in opening the meeting the Chairman asked that Members join him in a minute's silence, as a mark of respect. Following which, numerous tributes were made across the Chamber with former colleagues from all political persuasions speaking not only of Councillor Shore's impact in local democracy, his passion, dedication and strong principles, but also of the work he had undertaken and the impact of this work, in his teaching career. An enabler, able to assist people in fulfilling their potential; Reg would be sadly missed by all who knew him, and would be remembered fondly.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised the meeting of apologies received (stated above).

30 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

(a) Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council held on 28 June 2021

Having being moved and seconded, and with no questions raised, it was: -

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council held on 28 June 2021 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

.

31 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

32 MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman introduced the report advising Members that the report would be taken "as read" unless Members had any questions.

With no comments or questions and with no requirement for a vote, the Matters Arising were **DULY NOTED**.

33 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman

The Chairman addressed Council and was pleased to advise that, with the gradual lifting of restrictions, he had been able to carry out some civic duties.

The Chairman had had the opportunity to visit the site of the new memorial garden at Lea Fields Crematorium and had also had the pleasure of presenting a cheque to the children's hospice, the money had been raised from the kindness of bereaved relatives.

The Chairman had had the honour of raising the red ensign outside the Guildhall to honour our merchant seamen and women who were so vital to our island nation. That same day the

Chairman had visited Bransby Home for Horses to witness the remarkable work they undertake with beautiful animals, in many cases, from less than ideal circumstances. The Chairman joked about the friend for the day he had made in Womble a rescued Welsh pony with fancy for mints! He encouraged all Members to visit this amazing place.

Leader

The Leader made the following address to Council:-

“Firstly and reflecting on the recent distressing events in Afghanistan, in particular from Kabul airport, may I give an absolute assurance that we, as a Council (and working collectively and collaboratively with partner organisations) will seek to play as full a part as possible in supporting the Afghan Resettlement Scheme. This has been titled ‘Operation Warm Welcome’.

I’m pleased to report that an application to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for a substantial part of West Lindsey to be designated as a Rural Area under section 157(1) of the Housing Act 1985, as amended, has been successful. The principal advantage of this is to help secure the continuing provision of appropriate affordable homes.

It is especially pleasing to report that West Lindsey’s Crematorium and Operational Services teams have each been announced as finalists in the 2021 Annual Service Awards by APSE, the Association for Public Service Excellence. Almost four hundred nominations were received for the awards this year. Our Crematorium team will be defending in the category they won in 2020.

In July the Housing, Health and Care Delivery Group published an important new document called ‘Lincolnshire Homes for Independence’. It contains a wealth of data and insight into the fundamentally important role appropriate housing provision, that is homes meeting the needs of individuals and communities, plays in supporting peoples’ lifelong health and well-being.

The consultation on the draft Central Lincolnshire Local Plan closed on Tuesday, 24th August, with huge thanks due to all those who took part in it. A pre-submission plan will now be prepared by the Joint Planning Unit, based on the responses received, ready for a second public consultation next spring, after which the document will be finalised for its Examination in Public.

As colleagues will be aware the Council’s budget consultation for the financial year 2022-23 opened on Monday, 2nd August and will run until 9.00 am on Monday, 27th September. I’m really pleased that we are able to have in person conversations again this year, through attendance at the District’s markets and believe that can only increase engagement in this important process.

Finally Chairman, in regard to the Coronavirus pandemic, we now face a

period of considerable challenge and uncertainty as autumn approaches. Continued adherence to all official guidance and regular self-testing remain vital tools to help keep one another and our communities safe. Continuing to do the right things is also the best way to protect our National Health Service.”

With the permission of the Chairman, the Leader of the Opposition posed two questions to the Leader. Firstly seeking an update on the street lighting motion, submitted to the last Council meeting and secondly, when Councillors would be permitted to return to the Chamber for their Full Council Meetings, outlining his concerns regarding suitability of the alternative venues, the costs involved and the impact on the ability to hold appropriate Group Meetings.

Regarding the first matter the Chairman determined, the opportunity to raise that had passed, given it had been in the Matters Arising report earlier in the meeting when no questions had been raised.

Regarding the latter, the Chairman whilst acknowledging, current working arrangements were not ideal, and in the absence of absolute guidance from the Government regarding workplaces, he indicated he was confident the Chief Executive would make decisions appropriately and in the interest of all.

The Leader of the Opposition expressed his disappointment and the lack of willingness from the Administration to provide an update regarding street lighting motion, passed by the Council, and which was important to many residents. He commented on the noticeable absence of any media coverage regarding the motion, surmised at the reasons for this, and spoke of opportunities missed by the Leader.

The Chairman interjected and advised that he would request the Leader to respond in writing, but that Leader’s announcements were concluded and not for debate.

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive addressed Council and advised he had attended at both the LGA and CIPFA virtual conferences. There had also been opportunity to continue Ward visits with Members, visiting the Wards of Lea, Saxilby, Bardney, Nettleham and Sudbrooke. It was intended at the conclusion of the ward visits, to informally feedback, learning gained from the visits, to each Ward Member.

The Chief Executive was pleased to advise that Rachael Hughes had been appointed to the role of Head of Strategy and Policy. Interviews would be held shortly for two reporting roles, which included a dedicated officer to lead the Sustainable Environment Strategy.

Reference was made to the ongoing consultation with Members regarding the frequency of the current weekly Chief Executive’s message. Members were encouraged to feedback through the voting mechanism circulated to them recently.

The Budget consultation events had commenced. The S151 Officer would be in the Gainsborough Market Place, the following day, Market Rasen the following Tuesday and Caistor that Saturday and the 18th of the month. Members were encouraged to visit the

stalls, get involved and promote the events within their communities.

Again with the permission of the Chairman, the Leader of the Opposition posed the same questions, to him as Head of Paid Service, as he had to the Leader of the Council. Seeking an understanding of why there had been no communications issued following the passing of the street light motion.

In responding, the Chief Executive advised that it had not been custom and practice of this Council to issue communications arising from Motions submitted under Rule No.10 unless that motion specifically instructed communication and promotion as part of its content.

The response was challenged, with the Chairman interjecting and reminding Councillor Young that he had previously been advised the Leader would respond in writing, bringing announcements to an end.

34 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chairman advised the meeting that no public questions had been received.

35 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 9

The Chairman advised the meeting that one question pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No.9 had been submitted to the meeting. This had been circulated to all Members, separately to the agenda.

The Chairman invited, Councillor Anne Welburn, Ward Member for Cherry Willingham, to put her question to the Leader, as follows: -

“1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem in any given year. The World Health Organisation predicts that depression will be the second most common health condition worldwide in the coming years. Mental ill health costs some £105 billion each year in England alone. People with a severe mental illness die up to 20 years younger than their peers in the UK. There is often a circular relationship between mental health and issues such as housing, employment, family problems or debt.

As a local authority, we have a crucial role to play in improving the mental health of everyone in our community and tackling some of the widest and most entrenched inequalities in health. Mental health should be a priority across all the local authority’s areas of responsibility, including housing, community safety and planning. All Councillors can play a positive role in championing mental health on an individual and strategic basis.”

Please can the Leader outline the principal actions we, as a Council, are taking to:

- Support positive mental health in our community, including in local schools, neighbourhoods, and workplaces.

- Work to reduce inequalities in mental health in our community

Thank you
Councillor Anne Welburn”

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Owen Bierley, responded as follows: -

“Thank you for your question Councillor Welburn.

As a district council we have no statutory responsibility for health, which includes mental health – this responsibility lies with the NHS Lincolnshire Partnership Foundation Trust known across the system as LPFT. However as providers of key services including housing, leisure, and environmental health services and key enablers including economic development, planning and community engagement, all of which impact on the wider or social determinants of health, we play an important role in supporting the physical and mental health and well being of our residents.

The Health and Social Care White paper published earlier this year sets out the legislative proposals for the Health and Care Bill building on strong collaborations formed during the Coronavirus pandemic. District Councils have long recognised the importance of collaboration and some of the work we are currently engaged in in relation to mental health embraces a system wide approach.

Officers and Members are engaged in a number of forums and partnerships that provide opportunities to influence across the system to reduce health inequalities.

We are members of the Gainsborough Mental Health Partnership – coordinated by local Neighbourhood team (NHS)

We have Member and Officer representation at the Housing, Health and Care Delivery group.

We have a place on the Mental Health, Learning Disability and Autism Partnership Board.

Gainsborough is a pilot site for the LPFT Mental Health Transformation Programme working closely with the voluntary and community sector.

And we have a place on the Health Inequalities Programme Board, led by the NHS and ensuring a system wide approach to addressing health inequalities is embedded in the foundation of Integrated Care System development

Leaders and Chief Executives of the seven district authorities commissioned work earlier this year which has provided an emerging framework identifying the key lever areas where districts have an impact on addressing health inequalities and identifies activities which we will continue to focus on in coming years.

These include;

Economic inclusion, which reduces economic inequalities and alleviates poverty as a fundamental driver for improving mental and physical health.

Environment and Climate which seeks to ensure that the environment in Lincolnshire supports the mental wellbeing of residents.

Activity and Wellbeing, aligning district council work to that of the Active Lincs Physical Activity Blueprint with better use of green spaces, normalising and embedding physical activity, social prescribing to address inactivity, arts, culture and the use of community venues – all which impact positively on mental health.

Housing and Homelessness, where we work to provide services for the most vulnerable. Improvements in housing conditions and access to good quality housing are critical to mental health. Our work with colleagues at Lincolnshire County Council continues towards the objectives set within the Homes for Independence Blueprint, including enabling the provision of specialist accommodation for working age adults, adults with learning disabilities and mental health issues and our ageing population.

And finally Community Empowerment, which recognises and builds upon the role and expertise the voluntary and community sector have and can play in addressing inequalities in mental health.

Operationally on a day to day basis Officers work to meet the strategic aim within the Corporate Plan which is 'to reduce health inequalities and promote wellbeing across the district through the promotion of healthy lifestyles.' This is not only through the key services already mentioned as contributing to the wider determinants of health, but through other channels where we can contribute towards and support positive mental health in our communities. This may be through signposting and communication and also through links to wider partnerships and stakeholders including local businesses, schools and community groups.

Within our own workplace we actively promote positive mental health through our Health and Wellbeing central support initiative 'ONE' which offers advice and support for employees as well as events, tips and activities that support positive mental wellbeing. An example of a popular activity for staff has been a step challenge where teams of officers are encouraged to get out and about in the fresh air to increase their physical activity and move away from their desks by increasing the number of steps they take over a four-week period. The latest step challenge for Officers has commenced today and the benefits to mental health of initiatives such as this are surely to be wholly supported and welcomed.

In summary work in this important area is moving forward at pace and with purpose.

Thank you again for your question Councillor Welburn”

Councillor Welburn thanked the Leader for the response, welcomed the amount of positive work being undertaken but also urged that greater provision of footpaths, recognising their positive contribution to mental health, not be overlooked. This was a matter the Authority was keen to pursue with the County Council.

Following indications to speak, the Chairman reminded the Chamber that questions under procedure rule No.9 were not for debate by other Members.

36 MOTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10

The Chairman advised the meeting that no Motions, under Council Procedure Rule No.10, had been submitted to the meeting.

37 ANNUAL TREASURY REPORT

The Chairman of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee presented the annual Treasury Management Report for 2020/2021 report to Council which stood recommended by her Committee.

The report detailed the outturn position for Treasury activities, and highlighted compliance with the Council's Treasury Management Policy previously scrutinised by Governance and Audit Committee and approved by Council.

The prudential indicators, which had been monitored throughout the year by the Committee, were detailed in section 3 of the report.

Whilst interest returns had remained low and were projected to remain low for the foreseeable future, the Council had maintained an average balance of £21m in investments and had earned an average return of 0.896% resulting in interest of £0.185m, mainly due to the £3m investment in the CCLA Property Fund (£0.152m).

The Capital Financing Requirement, which represented the Council's underlying borrowing need, at the end of March was reported at £38.525m, of which external borrowing had remained consistent at £20m.

Whilst the Council policy was not to charge an annual Minimum Revenue Provision(MRP) for its investment properties, during the year a voluntary revenue provision of £707,000 had been made. The MRP made for the year against other borrowing was £0.251m, and Members noted these payments effectively reduced the Council's borrowing need.

Debate ensued and whilst accepting the report was primarily related to finance, a Member of Climate and Sustainability Working Group considered all activities had an impact on the climate, and as such, Officers should consider these matters and report the implications accordingly. For example the investments held with other banks and money markets could have climate related risks, investing in property brought with it a climate impact.

The S151 Officer responded accordingly. A Member commented on the success of CCLA investments, an opportune discovery which had paid dividends.

In response to questions, regarding promotion of recommendations, referencing comments in the earlier debate, a former Leader of the Council, outlined press activity he had undertaken in his role. Given the previous response of the Head of Paid Service, he questioned if he acted inappropriately, citing the role description of the Leader of the Council in Article 12 of the Constitution.

The Chief Executive clarified his comments, indicating they related to motions submitted under procedure rule 10, as opposed to motions arising from recommendations within reports, confirming the actions of the previous Leader in respect of promotion, had been acceptable within his role.

The response was challenged and the Chief Executive undertook to look into the matter outside of the meeting.

The Chairman of the Governance and Audit Committee, reminded Members that reports style and content was under review this year with the opportunity for Members to be engaged. Furthermore, should the constitution need revision, given the comments expressed, such matters would be considered as part of the Annual Review.

Having being moved, seconded and on being put to the vote it was: -

RESOLVED that the Annual Treasury Management Report and actual Prudential Indicators 2020/21 be approved.

38 APPOINTMENT TO VACANCY ON THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Council gave consideration to a report which sought to appoint a Member to serve on the Governance and Audit Committee, on which there was currently a vacancy, following an unconstitutional appointment having been made at the previous meeting.

RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs Caralyne Grimble be appointed to serve on the Governance and Audit Committee for the remainder of the 2021/22 Civic Year.

Note: - The Deputy Monitoring Officer left the meeting prior to consideration of the next item of business.

39 APPOINTMENT OF MONITORING OFFICER

Members gave consideration to a report which sought the re-designation of the statutory position of Monitoring Officer under the provisions of the Local Government Act Housing Act 1989.

Assurance was sought that the Officer would be supported appropriately in carrying out the role and were referred to the staffing implications section of the box.

Members commented positively on the capability of the Officer proposed for appointment

and offered her congratulations in her absence.

Thanks were expressed to the outgoing Monitoring Officer, for the work he undertaken in the role, both as Monitoring Officer and Deputy.

On being put to the vote it was **RESOLVED** that: -

- (a) In accordance with the terms of Part I, 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (as amended) and all subsequent related legislation, Emma Redwood be appointed as the Council's Monitoring Officer, with immediate effect; and
- (b) the Constitution be amended, as necessary, to reflect this revised appointment.

Note: The newly appointed Monitoring Officer returned to the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 7.59 pm.

Chairman