

## WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 11 November 2021 commencing at 6.30 pm.

**Present:** Councillor Mrs Anne Welburn (Chairman)  
Councillor Jeff Summers (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Owen Bierley  
Councillor Stephen Bunney  
Councillor Michael Devine  
Councillor Ian Fleetwood  
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan  
Councillor John McNeill  
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee  
Councillor Roger Patterson

**In Attendance:**

Ian Knowles	Chief Executive
David Kirkup	
Sally Grindrod-Smith	Assistant Director of Planning and Regeneration
Rachael Hughes	Development Contributions Officer
Andy Gray	Housing and Enforcement Manager
Darren Mellors	Performance & Programme Manager
Sue Leversedge	Business Support Team Leader
Caroline Capon	Corporate Finance Team Leader
Ady Selby	Assistant Director of Commercial and Operational Services
Katie Storr	Democratic Services & Elections Team Manager
Ele Snow	Senior Democratic and Civic Officer

**Apologies:** Councillor Matthew Boles  
Councillor Trevor Young

**Membership:** Councillor R. Patterson was sitting in place of the vacancy for this meeting

### 35 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

### 36 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING/S

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held on 23 September 2021 were **APPROVED** and signed as a correct record.

A Member of the Committee enquired as to whether the negative gender pay gap indicated that female employees were in higher paid roles than male employees, this was confirmed to be the case. It was also enquired as to whether the drivers' pay increase had been well received, it was confirmed that there had been no feedback either way.

With no further comments, the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee held on 7 October 2021 were duly **NOTED**.

### **37 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **38 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE**

As at 3 November 2021, there were no matters arising outstanding.

### **39 RECOMMENDATION FROM PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE RE: FREE PARKING FOR CHRISTMAS MARKETS**

The Committee gave consideration to a report presented by the Senior Property Strategy & Projects Officer, seeking approval for free parking to support the Christmas markets in Gainsborough and Market Rasen. It was explained that at its meeting on 2 November, the Prosperous Communities Committee had agreed the proposal and recommended to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee to also approve, given the financial impact. Specifically, it was suggested that the Council waived parking charges on the Saturday that coincided with each market, those being 4 December in Market Rasen and 11 December in Gainsborough. It was noted that 4 December was also Small Business Saturday. It was estimated that the cost to the Council would be in the range of £800 - £1000. It was also highlighted to Members that, as the request tended to be received each year, it was proposed that the forthcoming parking strategy refresh included the granting of future years' free parking for the duration of the strategy. This would remove the need to bring the request to the Committee every year. If approved, appropriate communications would be carried out each year to ensure that the gesture was publicised.

The Senior Property Strategy and Projects Officer was thanked for his report by the Chairman of the Prosperous Communities Committee, supporting the proposals and highlighting the importance of supporting local businesses and traders through what was still a recovery period after the considerable impact of the pandemic. He also agreed with the gesture being included in the refresh of the parking strategy and moved the recommendation.

Members of the Committee fully supported the proposals, citing the importance of supporting and growing the local economy as well as encouraging visitors to attend the events. It was enquired as to whether there could be an agreement with the Market Rasen Leisure Centre for use of their car park at times of events in the town and it was agreed this would be looked into.

Having been seconded during the course of the discussions, the Chairman called the vote and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that the recommendation from the Prosperous Communities Committee be accepted and free car parking on 11 December (Gainsborough) and 4 December (Market Rasen), when Christmas Events are to be held, be approved.

#### **40 BRIDGING RESOURCE NATIONALLY STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT NSIP**

The Committee heard from the Assistant Director of Planning and Regeneration regarding the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) across the district. She noted that, during the September meeting of this Committee, she provided a brief update regarding the potential for a further decision to be required as a result of two Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) proposals for the development of large scale solar farms within West Lindsey. It was explained that, since then, a third NSIP proposal had been brought forward within the district. Additionally, in the time since the papers had been published eight days prior to the meeting, each of the proposals had been registered with the Planning Inspectorate and the pre-application process had officially commenced.

The paper for consideration by the Committee set out an early resourcing position to support the council in the management of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects through the Development Consent Order process. The three NSIPS all proposed large scale solar farm development. The scale of the proposal was measured in megawatts, with anything above 50 megawatts classed as an NSIP. All three proposals were significantly above this 50 megawatt scale, meaning they sat outside of the realms of the Town and Country Planning Act.

The Assistant Director of Planning and Regeneration explained that NSIPs were considered by the Planning Inspectorate for ultimate decision by the relevant Secretary of State, in this case it would be the SOS for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. West Lindsey District Council would perform the role of 'Host Authority' in the Development Consent Order Process. The role of Host Authority was clearly set out within the Planning Act and at their meeting on 2 November 2021, the Prosperous Communities Committee had approved the decision making and delegation protocol that would be used to manage this process.

It was further explained that, as the Development Consent Orders were considered directly by the Planning Inspectorate, the Local Planning Authority did not receive a planning fee. It was recognised, however, that resources were needed by the Council to support the process. The mechanism for securing such resource was a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA). Each developer had committed to preparing a PPA with WLDC and this process had begun.

The Committee heard that the host authority was required to work on a number of complex elements including responding to impact assessment, assessing adequacy of community consultations, preparing the PPA and S106 amongst other tasks. It was envisaged that dedicated officer resource would be required. In addition, external technical specialists across a range of disciplines would be required. This would ensure that every element of impact from the proposals would be understood. A working group of officers from across

Central Lincolnshire, together with Bassetlaw and Boston, had been established to work together on securing the technical specialities that would be required.

Due to the scale and nature of the proposals, it was recognised that it could take some time to agree the details of the Planning Performance Agreements. However, work on each of the proposals had begun and it was necessary to move quickly to secure the officer and technical support that would be needed. To this end, the proposal within the paper before the Committee was to seek approval for the use of up to £50,000 as a bridging resource, to allow the work to commence. It was expected that any costs would be reclaimed through the PPA process, which would of course be progressed at speed. As highlighted within the financial implications, there was always a risk that the developer walked away prior to signing the PPA, however it was felt this was unlikely in the case of the proposals in question, given they had already progressed to a pre application stage. As a final comment, the Assistant Director confirmed that any resource utilised would be reviewed through the budget monitoring process.

The Assistant Director was thanked by the Chairman of the Prosperous Communities Committee for a well presented report and he noted the importance of starting work as soon as possible, as recognised by his Committee on 2 November. He accepted that there would likely be competition for the specialist resources required and it was in the best interests of those communities who could potentially be impacted to ensure the Council was fully engaged from the outset. With this said, he moved the recommendations contained within the report.

It was noted that the receipt of three applications in such a short time scale was considered to be unprecedented and it was confirmed that the District Council had not acted in the Host Authority status and the scale of these NSIPs was much greater than anything seen previously.

Members of the Committee voiced disappointment that any final decision would be taken outside of the District, however in understanding the processes involved there was widespread support for Officers to be able to act as quickly as possible. Having been seconded and voted upon it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that the allocation and spend of up to £50,000 from the General Fund Balance, to deliver the necessary resourcing requirements of the current Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects as a bridging resource whilst Planning Performance Agreements are signed to resource the Development Consent Order process, be approved.

#### **41 ANNUAL INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING STATEMENT**

The Committee heard from the Head of Policy and Strategy regarding the Council's Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS). It was explained that the Council was required to produce and publish an IFS annually, detailing financial activity in relation to developer contributions. The statement used information presented previously in financial papers, however the purpose of the IFS was to provide greater transparency and accessibility in relation to activity around developer contributions. As such, the IFS and associated report was brought to the Committee to draw it to Members' attention, specifically in the context of

previous reports relating to s106 spend being presented to the Committee in recent months. It was also noted that it was intended for future statements to be shared with Members through the Members' Newsletter.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Policy and Strategy and re-iterated that the report would not ordinarily be presented to the Committee as it was a predominantly information only report. Members enquired as to the allocation of monies based on town or parish boundaries as well as the percentage of monies received distributed out of the District Council. It was confirmed that CIL monies were paid to the Town or Parish Council where the development was taking place. With regard to CIL versus S106 monies, it was explained that S106 arrangements were required to meet three tests and were used for very specific schemes. CIL arrangements provided greater flexibility.

Having been moved, seconded and taken to the vote, it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that

- a) the content of the Infrastructure Funding Statement, for publication by 31 December 2021, be approved; and
- b) future versions of the Infrastructure Funding Statement, for information only, be received through the Members Newsletter.

**42 RECOMMENDATION FROM PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE RE: SELECTIVE LICENSING - FUTURE OPTIONS AND PROPOSALS**

The Committee gave consideration to a report from the Housing and Enforcement Manager seeking approval of funding based on the feasibility information to consult on future proposals for Selective Licensing in West Lindsey. It was explained that, at their meeting on 2 November 2021, the Prosperous Communities Committee approved that the Council would commence consultation on its proposals to deliver a selective licensing scheme across a total of five wards within the district. These wards being Gainsborough South West Ward; Gainsborough North; Wold View; Hemswell and Market Rasen. The Prosperous Communities Committee also approved that the report be referred to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee to seek a decision in relation to the financial commitment of £126, 921 needed to deliver phases 2 and 3 of the scheme.

Councillor O. Bierley, as Chairman of the Prosperous Communities Committee, explained to Members that the proposals had been discussed in detail at the meeting on 2 November and the Committee had been pleased to support the report. The direction of focus had been welcomed and allowed a priority based approach. If property was in need of improvement, it did not matter where in the district it was located, and these plans would help achieve those improvements. He reiterated his support and moved the paper.

Another Member of the Committee welcomed the further district approach and was happy to second the paper.

It was noted that the proposed fee was significantly increased and a Member of the Committee explained his understanding of the reasons for this, as well as understanding the

benefits to tenants under the scheme. The Housing and Enforcement Manager explained that the fee was over a five year period, not an annual fee and there was provision for those under the previous scheme to remain at the same level of fee. Additionally, there would be an 'early bird' fee for new landlords signing up to the scheme. This answer was welcomed by the Member of the Committee who had not realised it was not an annual fee and suggested, as that was a positive to note, it could be made more visible within the details of any future scheme.

With support from the Committee and the Chairman taking the vote it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that

- a) a budget and at risk funding of £122.9k to deliver phase 2 and 3 of the Selective Licensing Scheme as recommended by the Prosperous Communities Committee on 2 November 2021 be approved; and
- b) the use of the £84.2k of general fund balance for the phase 2 consultation costs should a selective licensing scheme not progress, be approved; and
- c) a further report be received once the outcome of the consultation is known, and a Scheme be agreed, for the purpose of setting the Selective Licensing Fee.

### **43 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY QUARTER 2, 2021-22**

The Committee heard from the Performance and Programmes Manager with the report containing Progress & Delivery performance information for Quarter 2 2021/22, which covered the months of July through to September. Where Covid-19 had impacted performance, this was identified and explained within the narrative of the report.

The Chairman took the opportunity to extend her thanks to Ellen King, the Officer who had previously presented the P&D reports, and sent congratulations from the Committee on her new role.

Members heard that as well as the discussion of performance information for Quarter 2, it was also recommended to delete the measure EN04 "percentage of licensed properties in the South West Ward" as the selective licensing scheme ended in July 2021 meaning it was no longer possible to collect data for this measure. It would, however, be replaced for the next financial year.

As an exception report, those measures that had performed above or below agreed tolerances for two consecutive periods would be discussed with a pause at the end of each portfolio to allow for any questions to be asked.

Within the quarter two report, 57% measures had exceeded their target, 19% were within tolerance and 24% were performing below agreed target. In addition, 69% of measures had exceeded their target for two quarters or more whilst the remaining 31% had been below target for two quarters or more.

### Corporate Health

There had been a slight decrease in customer satisfaction compared to the same period last year however performance was still within agreed tolerances. There had been a reduction in calls volume and the performance of answering calls within 21 seconds. A review was to be undertaken to establish the cause of this.

### Finance & Property Services

Performance was returned as green as rental portfolio voids had performed better than target

### Homes & Communities

There were five performance measures that had performed better than target for at least two consecutive periods. Conversely, four measures had performed worse than target for two consecutive periods; these measures related to Home Choices and Homes, Health & Wellbeing. For Home Choices the measures below tolerance for two consecutive periods were regarding number of households and the number of nights in B&B accommodation. A plan had been introduced to reduce B&B stay and produce consistent exit plans for persons within temporary accommodation. It was anticipated that increased monitoring of cases should help to reduce B&B stay, and the team were also working with their partner Framework to reduce complex cases holding up spaces in the leased accommodation. It was expected to see the impact of this plan in next quarter's P&D report.

For Homes, Health & Wellbeing; two measures had performed worse than target for two consecutive periods and these measures included average number of days from DFG referral to completion and long-term empties brought back into use. The number of days taken to complete Disabled Facilities Grant applications was steadily decreasing. A report taken to Overview and Scrutiny committee in September highlighted the issues currently being faced when delivering DFG's which included the availability of both contractors and materials. It was agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny to undertake an internal review of the DFG processes to highlight any areas where timescales could be improved. This is work was scheduled to be undertaken during November and December.

The overall number of long-term empty homes remained low and equated to just 1% of the district's housing stock. The focus for empty homes work remained the Viable Housing Solution, which was looking at a specific area within Gainsborough. Complaints in regards to the worst empty properties were still being dealt with reactively using the Council's existing powers. Compulsory Purchase Orders in regards to specific empty properties were in the process of being pursued. It was not believed that at this stage any further interventions are needed to address this.

Members of the Committee enquired as to further details regarding the long-term empty properties and whether the percentage figure could be expressed as a number of houses, instead of or as well as, the percentage figure. Additionally, it was suggested that it would be useful to have statistics as to where the empty properties were located. The Housing and Environmental Enforcement Manager explained that 1.5% equated to approximately 500 houses and Gainsborough typically had around a third of the total amount across the district. It was possible to provide numbers and percentages, although this had been moved away from in the past as there had been more focus on the number of properties without recognition of how many could actually be dealt with through enforcement powers.

It was also questioned as to how resources were allocated to bring empty properties back into use, to which it was explained that in the past, there had been a very proactive grant scheme however action was now more through the enforcement route.

#### Operational and Commercial Services

There were six performance measures that had performed better than agreed targets for at least two consecutive quarters. On the flip side; there were four measures whose performance was below target for two consecutive quarters. The first of which was Leisure Facilities usages for the Gainsborough centre. Restrictions had now been lifted and both centres were fully open. SLM were working hard to build up the centres, increase the membership and develop more activities for all age groups. SLM were also working to develop a Social Wellbeing Programme to incorporate a range of suitable activities for the referral scheme.

In regards to Markets, quarter two saw traders being able to fully return to the market. Officers were currently working on a Market Traders Grant scheme to help support traders on the general market and farmers market following the impact of the pandemic.

A Member of the Committee highlighted the difficulties at the Trinity Art Centre with ongoing pressure due to staff sickness and sought reassurance that there were contingency plans in place. The Chief Executive explained there was a re-structure underway which would resolve the current issues.

#### Democratic Services

There were no measures where performance was below or above target for two consecutive periods. Apologies were given as there was an error within this section of the report. The performance for attendance at member training events (KPI DS02) should have read as green and not red.

The Chairman highlighted that attendance at development sessions was within the power of Members and asked for Group Leaders to help ensure Members did attend sessions.

#### Planning & Regeneration

There were four measures which had performed better than target for at least two consecutive periods, all of which relate to the Councils Development Management service. There had been no measures that had performed below target for at least two consecutive periods.

There were repeat comments from a Member of both policy committees regarding the performance of the Planning Department and asked for thanks to be passed on.

#### Change Management and Regulatory Services

Nine measures had performed above their targets for two consecutive periods and there were four that had performed below their targets. Of these four; NNDR Collection rate had been below target for the first half of the year due to the award of Emergency Relief Payments as detailed in the quarter one P&D report. This was beginning to show signs of improvement as instalments become due and were either paid or recovery action was able to be taken to secure payment. The Council continued to work with businesses to ensure they received all the reliefs to which they were entitled.



The number of Planning Enforcement reports received continued to exceed the Council's ability to respond. Additional resources were in place and the number of cases opened this year did exceed the number closed, which had resulted in some of the time delays for closure of cases and time taken to provide an initial response. A review of longer-term cases had been undertaken. Temporary agency support had also been brought in to assist

The number of food hygiene inspections was gradually increasing as the volume of Covid-19 related complaints and responsibilities reduced. There was still a general resource challenge in relation to meeting the target number of inspections in the Food Standards Agency recovery plan and steps were being taken to ensure that additional resources were in place to achieve this. Staff vacancies within Environmental Protection and subsequent issues recruiting into these vacancies had resulted in issues within the service. These vacancies were going out to advert shortly.

Having reached the conclusion of the portfolios, Members of the Committee were invited to make further comments. With regard to Member Development, it was noted by the Chairman of the Governance and Audit Committee that the Annual Report had been received that same week and there would be communications in the new year regarding online training options for Councillors, this would allow individuals to undertake sessions as and when it was convenient for them. Additionally, he enquired as to why the P&D report was received at both policy committees when there seemed to be little change between both versions of the presented report.

The Chief Executive explained that historically, there had not been such crossover between committee membership and, as the Prosperous Communities Committee had their own budget, separate to that which was overseen by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee, there had previously been portfolios that warranted greater scrutiny by one committee or the other. It was acknowledged that this could be reviewed afresh.

There was further discussion regarding the environmental protection requests and whether it was possible to identify any cause for the significant increase. It was explained that the figure predominantly demonstrated the increase in requests but it was important to see whether they were dealt with in time. It would be possible to look at the data in greater detail and ascertain whether there was any preventative work that could be undertaken.

The final comments were in relation to climate change and sustainability and whether there were measures in place as a part of the P&D reporting. It was surmised that, as the strategy had only recently been adopted, performance measures would be incorporated in future years.

Having been moved and seconded it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that

- a) the performance of the Council's services had been assessed through agreed performance measures and areas where improvements should be made had been indicated, having regard to the remedial measures set out in the report.
- b) the deletion of key performance indicator EN04 "% of licensed properties in

the Gainsborough South-West Ward” be approved, as the cessation of the Selective Licensing Scheme in July 2021 means it is no longer possible to collect data for this performance measure. EN04 to be replaced with a new measure to monitor wider activity relating to Selective Licensing as part of the annual review of the Council’s Progress and Delivery measures that is currently underway.

#### **44 BUDGET AND TREASURY MONITORING - QTR 2 2021/2022**

The Committee heard from the Business Support Team Leader with the mid-year outturn report for 2021/22, based on the forecast outturn for revenue and capital budgets as at 30 September 2021. With regard to revenue budgets, Members were advised that, as visible by the forecast contribution to reserves for the year of £17,000, it was very close to breaking even at this point. One significant pressure was that, based on last November’s budget announcement of a public sector pay freeze, the subsequent announcement of a pay award had not been budgeted for. Negotiations were ongoing, however the latest employer offer stood at 1.75%. The salary forecast within the report was based on a 1.75% increase for the year, pending the outcome of those negotiations. If a final agreement of 2% was reached, this would result in an additional pressure of around £20,000. The salary forecast also included the 2% vacancy factor of £183,000.

It was highlighted that there were four significant revenue variances which were new when compared to the quarter one report presented to the committee in July. The net cost of the transfer of housing stock to P3 of £27,000, which had been built into the MTFP as an ongoing pressure. Telephony costs for a compliant connection to the voter registration process and the DWP benefits system of £12,000. There was a saving of £20,000 on a corporate contingency budget and the planning pre-application advice income was forecast at £22,000 above budget, based on activity to date.

In relation to covid-19 implications, there was a total of £1.529m to support services with the ongoing implications of covid-19, £1.029m in government support grants and including £0.5m of Council funds which were set aside in reserves as part of the 2021/22 MTFP. It was currently forecast to allocate £789,000 of this to services to offset additional costs incurred and income losses, leaving a balance of £740,000. It was therefore not expected to need to draw down from the reserve at this stage.

In relation to capital, the forecast outturn on capital schemes totalled £8,755m against a budget of £11.331m, including pipeline schemes which were subject to formal approval. The most significant underspend being £2.084m relating to the Trinity Arts Centre improvement projects, where the current scheme had now closed and would be redesigned in line with the national heritage lottery fund bid (NHLF). £2.319m was planned to be re-phased, the most significant being the extra care provision scheme budget of £1.5m which was due to commence in 2022/23 and be finalised in 2024/25. It was highlighted that Members were being asked to approve the capital budget amendments as detailed in 3.2 of the report.

Furthermore, Members were also asked to approve the amendments to the fees and charges schedules proposed at section 2.3.2, for the crematorium, cemeteries and strategic housing. These fees had been included in the fees & charges report as though approved, the report was to be heard later in the meeting, and therefore would require an amendment

to that report if any changes were required.

In relation to the use of reserves, Members were asked to approve use of unapplied grants reserve detailed at section 2.4.1 of the report, to release the balance of the council tax hardship and national leisure recovery grant into service.

The Chairman thanked the Business Support Team Leader for her summary of the report and invited questions and comments from the Committee.

A Member of the Committee enquired as to what had caused the new telephony costs pressure, which was explained to be as a result of a reduced budget following a procurement exercise. It was also queried how the decision had been made in relation to the spend of a bequest received by the Council, it was agreed that further details be shared with Members of the Committee.

The lack of budget for a national pay award was queried, as it had been thought these pay award would be included in budget forecasts. It was explained that where there had been a budget for up to 2.5%, this had been taken out following the announcement in November 2020 that there would be a public sector pay freeze. Allowance for future salary increases had been left in the budget and this would continue to be the case.

There was discussion regarding the use of APSE consultancy services in relation to the climate change strategy and this was confirmed to be on an 'as and when' basis, which, as members of APSE, allowed the Council to access specialist climate change support not otherwise available within the Council. It allowed access to that level of expertise when necessary.

With no further comments, and having been moved and seconded, it was

**RESOLVED** that:

**REVENUE**

- a) the forecast out-turn position of a £0.017m net contribution to reserves as at 30th September 2021 (see Section 2) relating to business as usual activity be accepted;
- b) the use of Earmarked Reserves (2.4.1) be approved;
- c) the use of Earmarked Reserves during the quarter approved by the Chief Finance Officer using Delegated powers (2.4.2), and the contributions to Earmarked Reserves (2.4.4) be accepted;
- d) the use of Earmarked Reserves during the quarter approved by Prosperous Communities Committee under delegated powers (2.4.3) be accepted;
- e) the amendment to the fees and charges schedules (2.3.2), to be effective immediately and recommend to Council any new Fees and Charges be implemented immediately, be approved.

### **CAPITAL**

- f) the current projected Capital Outturn as detailed in 3.1.1 be accepted;
- g) the Capital Budget amendments as detailed in 3.2 be approved.

### **TREASURY**

- h) the report, the treasury activity and the prudential indicators be accepted..

## **45 MID YEAR TREASURY REPORT 2021-22**

Members gave consideration to the Mid Year Treasury Report, presented by the Corporate Finance Team Leader. Members heard that the report provided an update of the treasury management prudential indicators as required in the prudential code and local government act. It was highlighted that covid-19 continued to have an adverse effect on the economy and interest rates remained low at 0.1%. This was obviously having an impact on the Council's investment returns and would continue to do so in future financial years. It was estimated by the treasury advisors, Link Asset Services, to continue until June 2022 at the earliest.

The Capital Financing Requirement had reduced as a voluntary revenue provision was assumed in relation to the borrowing for investment properties of £374,000 and the original forecast did not take into account the voluntary revenue provision actioned at the end of the 2020/21 of £707,000. In addition, there had been small slippage on some schemes funded by borrowing.

The Council was holding around £20m of investments on a regularly monthly basis, this was mainly due to additional grants from government, however the Council's cash flow had been revised and, by year-end, balances were expected to be around £17m. This revision established that the Council's external borrowing would likely be £25m, the anticipated external debt had been revised and reduced down accordingly. Internal borrowing was likely to be around £15.867m at year-end, resulting in total borrowing £40.867m. Members were advised that this all impacted on the cost of council tax and financing costs in relation to the net revenue stream. The Committee was asked note the report, treasury activity and recommend approval of the changes to the prudential indicators to Full Council.

Members gave their support to the report and the Chairman expressed her thanks to the Corporate Finance Team Leader, who was due to leave the Council after a considerable time. The Committee joined in sharing their thanks and best wishes for the future.

With no further comment, and having been moved and seconded, it was

**RESOLVED** that it be recommended to Full Council to note the report, the treasury activity and recommend approval of any changes to the prudential indicators.

## **46 BUDGET CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

The Committee heard again from the Business Support Team Leader, presenting to Members the results of the Budget consultation process for 2021. She explained that

feedback this year saw a return rate of 30% and a reduction in the number of responses from 708 last year, to 513 this year. It was acknowledged that this was a disappointing response rate and it was unclear why this may be the case, however, it may have been due to the amount of people returning to work. In 2019 the response rate was 595 so this year was comparable to pre-pandemic times.

The low response was in spite of the promotion of the consultation with 1,587 members of the citizens' advice panel, over 2,000 registered businesses and market events in Gainsborough and Caistor where 105 forms were issued. Only 22 of these responded. The event in Market Rasen was unfortunately cancelled due to poor weather. Ways in which engagement could be improved for next year would continue to be explored.

It was explained that the consultation covered a number of topics ranging from corporate priorities, valued services, council tax increases, fees and charges and charging for green waste, and gave the opportunity for wider views and suggestions. Members were asked to consider the results and comments contained with the consultation report as part of the budget setting process for 2022/23.

The Chairman thanked the Business Support Team Leader and noted that it had been offered for Members to hold an additional Members' Forum regarding the Budget Consultation. Discussions focussed primarily on how best to improve engagement in the process, with Members enquiring as to whether the Youth Council had continued and had been involved and whether there were opportunities to engage with the under-represented demographics. It was noted that the lack of the usual run of face-to-face events had negatively affected the level of responses and options would be reviewed for the next year. A Member of the Committee suggested there had been an over-reliance on the use of social media and other avenues, even if not face-to-face should be considered.

There was further discussion regarding the setting of the questions, whether they were externally assessed and also the difference it could make if questions were re-phrased. It was explained that the Council had Officers who were trained in setting surveys, rather than using external providers. It was agreed there were always opportunities to consider new options both for content of the consultation and ways to engage with the district.

With no further comment, and having been moved and secondly, it was

**RESOLVED** that the results of the Budget Consultation be accepted and the results and comments be considered as part of the budget setting process 2022/23

#### **47 RECOMMENDATION FROM PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE RE: REVIEW OF BULKY WASTE CHARGES**

The Committee heard from the Assistant Director for Commercial and Operational Services regarding the recommendation from the Prosperous Communities Committee for the review of bulky waste charges. It was explained that at the meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee on 2 November 2021, Members considered the charging regime for the bulky waste service having previously commissioned officers to look at whether changing the charging regime for bulky waste would help reduce levels of fly tipping.

The report considered why a charge was introduced a number of years ago, including the introduction of a user pays ethos and supporting local charities, with these reasons remaining valid when considering whether to reintroduce free or subsidised collections. It was suggested that, of greater relevance, was the negative environmental impacts including the additional fleet required and mileage travelled but also a reduction in reuse and recycling within the district.

The paper looked at the local and national context, with the majority of authorities charging for the service and most locally charging approximately the same as West Lindsey District Council. The exception was the City of Lincoln, where collections were free for pensioners, those entitled to benefit payments and those people with disabilities. No one outside of those groups could arrange a bulky waste collection, either free or paid.

Members heard that the report also highlighted levels of flytipping, particularly the dramatic rise last year, which had been in line with national trends. Further information was provided in a 2019 BBC report which found no link between flytipping and charging for waste services. There was also case study evidence in which one authority reverted to free bulky waste collections but did not benefit from a reduction in flytipping.

Options considered within the paper included introducing a free service, reducing the charge, introducing a 'buy one collection, get one free' schedule or, continuing with the current charge. Members heard that, having considered the benefits or otherwise of all four options, the Prosperous Communities Committee had resolved to recommend to this Committee that the Council should continue with the current charge of £33 for six points plus an inflationary rise for the financial year 2022/23.

The Chairman thanked the Assistant Director for his report and suggested there may be the opportunity to work with the City of Lincoln for the provision of bulky waste collections, given that some of the flytipping in West Lindsey was likely to originate in Lincoln.

**Note:** Councillor R. Patterson left the meeting at 8.23pm and returned at 8.25pm

Members were satisfied with the recommendation from the Prosperous Communities Committee and praised the team responsible for organising and conducting the bulky waste collections. It was suggested that improved communications could be undertaken regarding the points system as well as increasing publicising of the scheme.

Having been moved and seconded it was

**RESOLVED** that the continuation of the current pricing schedule, plus inflation, for bulky waste collections, as recommended by the Prosperous Communities Committee on 2 November 2021, be approved.

#### **48 RECOMMENDATION FROM PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE RE: GREEN GARDEN WASTE CHARGES 2022/23**

The Committee gave consideration to a report presented by the Assistant Director for Commercial and Operational Services regarding the green garden waste charges for 2022/23. It was explained that a subscription based garden waste model was introduced in

2018 and the service had continued to grow with over 28,000 subscriptions being achieved this year. The charge for the service had remained at £35 per bin per year throughout the three years of operation. Through the course of the budget consultation it had been ascertained that whilst residents would prefer no rise in the cost of subscription, it was clear that the charge should not turn into a 'stealth tax' and increase minimally each year. For this reason, it had been proposed to fix the price for two years.

Members heard that whilst the subscription costs had stayed the same, the cost of delivering the service had risen with increases in pay for operational staff, vehicle costs increasing and including the cost of vehicle purchase, maintenance, fuel and tyres. There were also increased costs resulting from the move to the new depot at Caenby Corner.

Having considered all options presented in the report, as well as taking note of the proposal from Government to make garden waste collections free for all through its Environment Bill, possibly from 2024, the Prosperous Communities Committee had resolved to recommend to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee to increase the subscription for receipt of the Garden Waste collection service to £39 per bin per year, for the 2022/23 financial year and £39 per bin per year for the 2023/24 financial year.

Members thanked the Assistant Director for the detail of the report and supported the service provided to residents. Members noted it was the first time the charge was increasing and agreed with the premise of not increasing it each year. Having been moved and seconded it was

**RESOLVED** that the increase for the subscription for receipt of the garden waste collection service to £39 per bin per year, for the 2022/23 financial year and £39 per bin per year for the 2023/24 financial year, as recommended by Prosperous Communities committee on 2 November 2021, be approved.

#### **49 PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES 2022/2023 - INCLUDING THOSE RECOMMENDED BY THE PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE**

The Committee heard for the final time from the Business Support Team Leader regarding the proposed fees and charges for 2022/2023, including those recommended by the Prosperous Communities Committee on 2 November 2021. Members heard that, in addition to the content of the report, the appendices provided service specific detail around performance, future demand and the rationale behind the proposed fee for next year. It was explained that consideration had been given to total cost recovery, benchmarking data, and team manager knowledge of the market when proposing fees, in line with the fees, charges and concessions policy. Additionally, during this years' budget consultation exercise, nearly two thirds of respondents felt that fees should only be increased by inflation this year, and then reviewed again next year. In the majority of cases, this was the increase that had been applied. The percentage would appear higher than inflation in the schedules where the fee had been rounded up to the nearest pound or 50p. Inflation had been applied as at June's RPI rate of 3.9% for 2022/23, then 2% thereafter. Where no increase had been proposed, or an increase above inflation, the reasoning for this was contained within the report. In the majority of cases, the non-statutory fees had 2% inflation already built into the MTFP from 2022/23, therefore the impact of an inflationary increase was minimal.

It was explained that the budget implications included in the report for information, reflected both the impact of proposed amendments to fees, and the forecast demand over the period of the MTFP. The net impact of the fees and charges review across both committees was an increase in income of £20,700 in 22/23, rising to £154,800 in 26/27. The significant increase in the third year related to forecast crematorium capacity and demand, and the increase in the fifth year related to forecast demand for planning fee applications.

Of the 59% of fees which were non-statutory, those with significant budget implications were:

- Lea Fields Crematorium – an increase for cremation services of 2.5% rather than inflation, to ensure the Council remained competitive with other cremation providers.
- Car parking fees – no amendment was proposed at this time, pending the strategy due later in the civic year
- Building control – it was proposed to keep the hourly rate at the same level as currently charged, as this brought the Council in line with other local authorities
- Land charges – inflation had been applied at 3.9%
- Planning pre-application advice – inflation had been applied at 3.9%

Members were asked to consider the proposed fees and charges, and to make recommendation to Council for approval.

On opening discussions, a Member of the Committee noted that an inflationary increase was a positive option and consequently moved the recommendations as written.

A Member of Committee indicated that he wished to discuss the contents of the appendix regarding CCTV services, As this was a restricted document, it was proposed and seconded that the meeting move into closed session. On taking the vote it was

**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 involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

**Note:** The meeting moved into closed session at 8.40pm at which time a short adjournment was called. The meeting reconvened at 8.44pm

The Committee discussed the details contained within the appendix relating to CCTV services and it was confirmed that the pandemic restrictions had impacted on the work of the service, with Officer deployed elsewhere. Members were satisfied with the service review plans as detailed by the Chief Executive and suggested options to be explored regarding the provision of CCTV services in the district.

**Note:** The meeting returned to open session at 8.50pm

The paper, having been moved, was subsequently seconded and on taking the vote it was

**RESOLVED** that Members **recommend to Full Council** the proposed Fees and Charges at Appendices 1 – 3, as well as those recommended by Prosperous



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Communities Committee detailed at Appendices 4 – 18, for approval.

## **50 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN**

The contents of the Committee Work Plan were **NOTED**.

The meeting concluded at 8.52 pm.

Chairman