

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 7 December 2021 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Owen Bierley (Chairman)
Councillor John McNeill (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Stephen Bunney
Councillor Michael Devine
Councillor Steve England
Councillor Mrs Jessie Milne
Councillor Tom Regis
Councillor Jim Snee
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee

In Attendance:

Sally Grindrod-Smith	Assistant Director of Planning and Regeneration
Ady Selby	Assistant Director of Commercial and Operational Services
Sarah Elvin	Housing Communities Project Officer
Grant White	Enterprising Communities Manager
Marina di Salvatore	Senior Growth Strategy & Projects Officer
Katie Storr	Democratic Services & Elections Team Manager
Ele Snow	Senior Democratic and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Mrs Tracey Coulson
Councillor Christopher Darcel
Councillor Trevor Young

49 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

50 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor S. Bunney wished for it to be put on record that thanks were sent to the Council for having provided free parking in Market Rasen on the day of the Christmas Markets. The event had been well-attended and the gesture from the Council had been much appreciated. With no further comments it was

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held on 2 November 2021 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

51 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

With no comments or questions, the contents of the Matters Arising schedule were duly **NOTED**.

52 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor M. Snee declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 6b, West Lindsey Tenancy Strategy, as she was an employee of Acis. As such she would not take part in the item and would leave the room accordingly.

53 ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN

The Committee gave consideration to a report presenting the Draft Economic Recovery Plan for the District. It was explained that the plan set out a summary of the actions taken during the pandemic to support businesses within the district, which included overseeing the distribution of £32 million to over 1800 businesses. The plan set a medium to long term vision for recovery and inclusive growth, building and supporting the delivery of the Greater Lincolnshire revival plan.

Members heard that economic indicators had continued to be monitored through the shared Greater Lincolnshire Covid 19 dashboard, and this intelligence had been used to drive action through the pandemic and to support plans for recovery. Significant business intelligence, gained through many one to one discussions with businesses over the past 18 months, had also been used to focus actions. Feedback had included

- Desire for more frequent and digital communications
- The need for easily accessible training and business advice
- Support for locally led interventions such as think local and shop local
- A desire for advertising and marketing at a local level to drive footfall into our town centres

It was highlighted that, the approach taken was built on evidence and business intelligence, working with partners across the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum, Growth Hub, LEP and wider Greater Lincolnshire authorities. The recovery plan covered what were considered to be key pre and post Covid economic challenges, as well as global challenges such as climate change and 'Brexit'. Focus had been placed on place-based investment and heritage led regeneration as well developing the narrative for stronger 'rural inclusive' levelling up across rural communities.

This had led to 6 key priority areas for future recovery, these being:

- Green recovery
- Business environment

- Regeneration and levelling up
- Key sector development
- Infrastructure (Physical and Digital)
- Supporting People and Skills

Members were asked to consider that the supporting action plan set out how work would be implemented and delivered against these priorities. This would form the programme of work over the next two years, as well as being used to support the full refresh of the Economic Growth strategy by 2024.

The Chairman thanked the Assistant Director for Planning and Regeneration for her comprehensive explanation of the plan and invited Members of the Committee to comment.

A Member of the Committee noted the importance of working with smaller local businesses in rural areas as well as those larger town-based businesses, and highlighted that it may not always be possible for smaller businesses to engage with daytime support sessions, making the suggestion that they be held as recorded webinars for businesses to access as and when it was suitable for them. It was highlighted that there was work planned in conjunction with the rural network in order to reach those more rural businesses, as well as specialist business advisor for further support. Additionally, it was explained that the sessions were available online and so that message would need to be re-iterated to business owners. It was agreed for a list of the businesses who had signed up to the 'think local' list to be shared with Members.

It was noted that, for a business owner, time really was money and so application processes for grants and financial support needed to be clear and concise, in order to make it worthwhile to undertake the application process. It was highlighted that the application was usually a part of a wider business support package and accessed through the business support advisor, making the process as worthwhile, clear and simple as possible.

Members were supportive of the planned approach and, having been moved and seconded, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that:

- a) the West Lindsey draft Economic Recovery Plan and Action Plan be approved; and
- b) an annual update on progress and performance against the agreed action plan be received by Members; and
- c) the key themes and guiding principles of the Economic Recovery Plan be used to form the basis of the review of the Economic Growth Strategy (due by 2024).

54 WEST LINDSEY TENANCY STRATEGY

Note: Councillor M. Snee left the Chamber at 6.52pm for the following item of business.

The Committee heard from the Homes, Health and Wellbeing Team Manager regarding the West Lindsey Tenancy Strategy. It was explained that the Localism Act 2011 brought in the requirement for all Local Authorities, regardless of whether they were stock holding, to produce a Tenancy Strategy. The main purpose of the Tenancy Strategy was to make best use of existing housing stock with mechanisms such as flexible tenancies, succession rights and affordable rented tenures. The strategy set out West Lindsey District Council's preferred approach to managing existing housing stock. The legislation clearly stated that Registered Providers (RPs) should "have regard" to the Local Authority Strategies when developing their own Tenancy Policies. Even though the Strategy had no statutory weight, it could help to guide the work of Registered Providers and achieve consistency across the sector.

It was explained that in 2013, West Lindsey, in partnership with City of Lincoln and North Kesteven, produced a joint tenancy strategy for Central Lincolnshire. This aligned the authorities across the housing market area in one strategy although the approaches set out within this strategy were different for each district. The existing Strategy expired in 2018. After further discussions with North Kesteven District Council and City of Lincoln Council it was decided that West Lindsey would produce a strategy for only West Lindsey. This was in part due to the other authorities needing to take a different approach as stock holding authorities.

In order to develop the new strategy, a review of the existing strategy was undertaken to understand the requirements of the strategy going forward. Alongside this, a review of the Registered Providers Tenancy Policies was also undertaken. This was to assist with determining which parts of the previous strategy had been embedded but also to evaluate whether all RP's were operating in a similar way so consistency was in place across the sector.

In response to a concern raised that tenants could be moved out of properties in order to manage housing need in the district, it was explained that the idea was to open conversations with tenants as to their housing needs and offer accommodation to suit them as their circumstances may change. For example, what had been a suitable property initially may not remain suitable years down the line as the tenant aged. It was not designed to give free reign to move tenants between properties, rather to allow for tenants to highlight changing needs and for their tenancy needs to be considered.

It was enquired as to why there had been a delay between the expiration of the previous strategy and the consideration of the current one. Members heard that, although the date had expired it remained a valid strategy and, as there was no statutory weight to the strategy, there was minimal risk associated with it. Additionally, there had been no new RP's working in the area since 2018 and the Council's stance had not changed in the intervening period. This explanation was accepted and Members thanked the Officer for the clarification.

A Member of the Committee made reference to a recent information day held by Acis where there had been several useful and informative schemes detailed to Members.

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

RESOLVED that:

- a) the adoption the new West Lindsey Tenancy Strategy be approved; and
- b) any future housekeeping amendment to the Strategy be delegated to the Assistant Director for Homes and Communities, in consultation with the Chair of Prosperous Communities Committee.

Note: Councillor M. Snee returned to the Chamber at 7.09pm

55 VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR GRANTS 2022/23

The Committee gave consideration to the last public report of the evening, regarding Voluntary and Community Sector Grants for 2022/2023. It was explained that the Council provided a range of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Grants to support the delivery of projects and services for the benefit of our communities and residents. The delivery of these services helped contribute towards the Council's Corporate Plan priorities. The current VCS Grants were approved by Prosperous Communities Committee in October 2018 and were due to end on 31 March 2022. The report under consideration sought a one year extension to VCS grants.

It was highlighted that an additional recommendation approved at the October Committee was to undertake a more detailed Community & Voluntary Sector Funding review, which would have taken place during the final year of the three year grant period but had not been able to proceed. Owing to re-deployment and priority tasking of Community Officers during the global pandemic. The organisations being funded were also operating in response mode helping to support pandemic response and recovery work.

Therefore, the report under consideration, sought to commence a broader review of VCS grants to be completed and presented back to Committee by the end of 2022. Conducting the review during 2022 would enable Officers to take into consideration new strategies that had recently been adopted (i.e. Carbon Reduction) and ones currently in development (i.e. Health & Wellbeing Strategy). This proposed approach was in-line with other Local Authorities that also provided this type of VCS grant funding.

Members were supportive of both the VCS grant funding and the broader review to ensure it remained fit for purpose. It was explained that there would be significant consultation with Councillors and local communities however it was important to be realistic in the expectations of what could be achieved with lower funding available. It was acknowledged that there would need to be a measured approach and thanked Officers for their time and efforts over the pandemic and as recovery began.

Having been moved and seconded it was unanimously

RESOLVED that:

- a) the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants for 2022/23 be approved; and
- b) a broader review of all Voluntary and Community Sector Grants be approved, with findings and recommendations to be presented back to Committee before the end of 2022.

56 WORKPLAN

Members gave consideration to the Committee Work Plan and, with no comments, questions, or requirement for a vote, the Work Plan was **DULY NOTED**.

The Chairman thanked all present for their time and, as the last meeting of the year, extended his best wishes to all for Christmas and the New Year.

The meeting concluded at 7.20 pm.

Chairman