

## **WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL**

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 16 December 2021 commencing at 6.30 pm.

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

Councillor Owen Bierley  
Councillor Matthew Boles  
Councillor Stephen Bunney  
Councillor Michael Devine  
Councillor Ian Fleetwood  
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan  
Councillor John McNeill  
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee  
Vacancy

**In Attendance:**

Tracey Bircumshaw	Assistant Director of Finance and Property Services and Section 151 Officer
Alison McCulloch	Revenues Manager
Katie Storr	Democratic Services & Elections Team Manager
Ele Snow	Senior Democratic and Civic Officer

**Apologies:** Councillor Trevor Young

### **51 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD**

There was no public participation.

### **52 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING/S**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held on 11 November were **APPROVED** and signed as a correct record.

### **53 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **54 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE**

The Senior Democratic and Civic Officer explained that a conversation had been initiated regarding car parking options at the leisure centre in Market Rasen.

With no other comments or questions, the Matters Arising Schedule was **DULY NOTED**.

## **55 INFORMATION GOVERNANCE POLICY**

The Committee heard from the Assistant Director of Finance and Property Services and Section 151 Officer regarding the Information Governance Policy, explaining that the purpose of the report was to set out the details of the policy, including the Information Governance Management Framework, for West Lindsey District Council. It demonstrated management commitment to having sound information governance arrangements in place, gave clear direction to managers and staff, and would ensure that legal requirements and best practice standards were met. It was requested that the Committee formally adopt the Information Governance Policy.

Members of the Committee were supportive of the policy, and, having clarified that in the event of any significant change the policy would be reviewed sooner than the indicated three year period, it was moved, seconded and unanimously

**RESOLVED** that

- a) the formal adoption of the Information Governance Policy be approved; and
- b) any future housekeeping amendments be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairs of the Joint Staff Consultative and Corporate Policy and Resources Committees.
- c)

## **56 INFORMATION CLASSIFICATION AND HANDLING POLICY**

The Assistant Director of Finance and Property Services and Section 151 Officer introduced the next item on the agenda, the Information Classification and Handling Policy. She explained that the purpose of the document was to define the policies and standards that would be applied to maintain the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the information systems supporting the business functions of the council. It was requested that the policy be formally adopted.

Members of the Committee were again pleased with the detail of the policy and recognised the importance of such a document. The recommendations within the report were moved, seconded and, on taking the vote, it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that

- a) the Information Classification and Handling Policy be approved for formal adoption; and
- b) any future housekeeping amendments be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairs of the Joint Staff Consultative and Corporate Policy and Resources Committees.

## **57 LEVELLING UP FUND RESOURCES**

The Committee gave consideration to a report which set out the capital budget and staffing resources required to deliver 'Thriving Gainsborough 2024', LDCs Levelling Up Fund programme. Following a competitive bid process West Lindsey District Council had been awarded £10.275m from the government's flagship Levelling Up Programme, with Officers engaged with government officials to agree the details a memorandum of understanding which would set out the terms and conditions of the funding and what was expected from the Council. The timeframes for delivery were challenging, with some spend expected this financial year. In order to achieve this, Officers were working quickly to establish the project team and to gear up the first elements of delivery. The bid made provisions for project resources to be employed by the council. This would include the following roles:

- Programme Manager
- Project Officer
- Project Support Officer
- Townscape Heritage Project Officer
- Procurement Officer
- Contract Manager
- Project / Grant Accountant

Members heard that the job descriptions and person specifications were being used to agree the appropriate banding for the roles through the job evaluation process and, subject to job evaluation and the approvals sought within this paper, it was the aim to have recruited fully to the LUF team by March 2022.

In response to concerns raised that the roles were already being advertised prior to the agreement of the Committee, it was explained that the funding for the posts had been agreed in principle through previous reports regarding the Levelling Up Fund and the timescales involved had driven the need to initiate the recruitment process. However, it was noted that should agreement not be made at this point, the recruitment would be withdrawn. It was further highlighted by a Member of the Committee that the posts had been agreed in a previous paper and the paper under consideration at this point was regarding amendments to the budgets involved.

Members sought clarification regarding the funding of the cinema complex and it was confirmed that, owing to the Levelling Up Fund, there had been enhancements made to the original proposal and the contribution from the Council had not changed. There was widespread support for the planned regeneration of Gainsborough and the opportunities this would attract now and in the future.

In response to a request for assurance that planned retail and hospitality units would be suitably filled and not left empty, it was explained that, whilst the markets were still a changing entity, there was already interest in the proposed units and Officers were in dialogue with the developer to consider all opportunities.

With further support for the scheme, and having been moved and seconded, the Chairman took the vote and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that

- a) a revised Capital Budget for the Cinema of £5.730m be approved; and
- b) additional Capital Budgets of £6.736m be approved, in line with the Levelling Up Fund Programme to be included in the Capital Programme 2021/22 and MTFP 2022/23 onwards; and
- c) the resources and expenditure of £389k to enable commencement of delivery during 2021/22 be approved; and
- d) the Committee receive a further paper once the Memorandum of Understanding be agreed with Department of Levelling Up Homes and Communities to approve spend of the remainder of the Levelling Up Fund grant funding; and
- e) the Committee receive further reports to approve the expenditure of specific projects within the Programme.

**58 MARKET RASEN LEISURE CENTRE, SWIMMING POOL BUSINESS CASE**

The Committee heard from the Assistant Director of Finance and Property Services and Section 151 Officer regarding a report aiming to present to members the high level business case for a swimming pool at Market Rasen Leisure Centre and to determine the next steps. It was explained that the report presented a business case that was not considered to be financially viable. Whilst the operational costs were estimated to achieve a profit of circa £30k per annum from year 3, this did not include the cost of borrowing. As the Council had no reserves to support this investment and no grant funding had been identified, funding would be met from borrowing. The additional cost of borrowing could be between £350k and £500k and made the business case unviable. Additional costs of construction and borrowing would need to be understood if, in line with the Council's strategy, it was necessary to mitigate environmental impacts.

The Chairman opened discussions to Members of the Committee and Councillor S. Bunney addressed the meeting, noting that whilst discussions were focused on a swimming pool at the Market Rasen Leisure Centre, provision was actually for the eastern part of the district as a whole. He expressed disappointment that the Town Council and Parish Councils in the area had not been consulted as a part of the current presentations and noted that the data used within the report appeared to be outdated, for example with population data quoted from 2011. He highlighted the benefits of, not just a swimming pool, but greater outreach programmes across the district, emanating from the Market Rasen Leisure Centre, and the need for leisure provision to be greatly improved especially for those with mobility issues or unable to travel out of the area. He suggested alternative options for raising capital, such as changing the investment policy of the Council, as well as the need to consider Levelling Up Fund opportunities outside of Gainsborough. He concluded his address to the Committee by proposing an alternate recommendation, that being as follows:

“The paper as presented does not include sufficient up to date details for Members to make an informed decision in the future of a swimming pool and a full leisure programme for the

Eastern segment of West Lindsey District Council based at Market Rasen Leisure Centre. Officers, in conjunction with Market Rasen Town Council, are asked to work on a detailed business case for such a provision that includes up to date population and economic data and the additional details of co-benefits relating to health and welfare and environmental factors. The business case is also to include various options for the capital financing of the project and the input that each would have on West Lindsey if they were to be adopted. As a time scale, I would like to suggest that we get a report back on this in 9 months time, although I do understand that with everything else that's going on, it's a bit of work that might ultimately take longer to reach the fruition of that provision in the Eastern side of the district."

The Chairman thanked Councillor Bunney for his address and noted the financial importance of the Council's investment policy during current financial uncertainty. The proposal put forward by Councillor Bunney, having been seconded, was opened for discussion.

It was noted by a Member of the Committee that the scope of the amended proposal was significantly greater than that of the paper under consideration and it was suggested that the separate issues of provision for a swimming pool and provision for wider outreach programmes across the district should remain separate discussions.

With no further comments regarding the proposal and having been moved and seconded, the Chairman sought to take the vote.

A request for a recorded vote was made and duly seconded by a further Member.

On being put to the vote, votes were cast in the following manner:

**For:** Councillors Boles, Bunney and M. Snee (3)

**Against:** Councillors Bierley, Devine, Fleetwood, Howitt-Cowan, McNeill, Summers and Welburn (7)

**Abstentions:** There were no abstentions.

With a total of 3 votes in favour, 7 votes against and no abstentions, the vote for the amended recommendation was **LOST**.

The Chairman invited further comments from Members. Councillor J. McNeill addressed the Committee and expressed support for a swimming pool to be located at the Market Rasen Leisure Centre, and, whilst recognising that current circumstances possibly precluded a detailed investigation into the options available, supported the comments from Councillor S. Bunney that the report was not as detailed as would have been expected. He reiterated that this was, to some extent, understandable, however, in order to ensure further consideration was given to the matter, he proposed three amendments to the printed recommendations, with wording to be changed in recommendations one and two and recommendation three to be replaced in its entirety with a new recommendation. The proposed recommendations would read as follows:

1. Members NOTE the content of the Business Case
2. Members NOTE that at this time the construction of a swimming pool is

unaffordable and financially unsustainable FOR WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

3. Members request that ongoing consideration be given the matter of bringing a swimming pool to the Market Rasen Leisure Centre site by the Chairman and Vice Chairmen of the Prosperous Communities Committee at their future Chairs' Briefings to ensure that all appropriate opportunities are actively pursued, the frequency of these considerations to be determined by the Chairman of that Committee, but with an expectation that they will occur at least annually.

The proposed amendments to the recommendations were duly seconded by a Member of the Committee and further debate continued. It was acknowledged that such a provision would serve a wider community than Market Rasen alone and as such, population data should take into consideration a wider geographical area. It was also recognised that grant funding would provide the greatest opportunity for undertaking the inclusion of a swimming pool at the Market Rasen Leisure Centre however Members of the Committee were clear in their support of the principle, suggesting that a business case should be prepared in order to be 'ready to go' should any such funding become available.

With the proposed amendments on the table and having been seconded, the Chairman took the vote and, with 7 votes for and 3 abstentions, it was

**RESOLVED** that the amendments to the recommendations be agreed.

There was further debate regarding the collation of attendance data, with queries raised as to the accuracy of such data. The importance of outreach programmes was also reiterated, with Members expressing a desire for gains to be made across the district within existing contracts. A Member of the Committee highlighted the beneficial impacts on both mental and physical health and stated that leisure provision had become imperative for the wellbeing of the district and needed to be considered as a whole.

The Chairman thanked the Committee for their comments and discussions and, with no further speakers, reiterated the amended recommendations to be voted upon.

Having been moved and seconded, the Chairman took the vote and with a majority vote it was

**RESOLVED** that

- a) the content of the Business Case be noted; and
- b) it be noted that, at this time, the construction of a swimming pool be unaffordable and financially unsustainable for West Lindsey District Council; and
- c) it be requested that ongoing consideration be given the matter of bringing a swimming pool to the Market Rasen Leisure Centre site by the Chairman and Vice Chairmen of the Prosperous Communities Committee at their future Chairs' Briefings, to ensure that all appropriate opportunities be actively pursued, the frequency of these considerations to be determined

by the Chairman of that Committee, but with an expectation that they occur at least annually.

## **59 AMENDMENT TO THE START TIME FOR MEETINGS OF THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE**

The Committee heard from Councillor J. McNeill, Chairman of the Governance and Audit Committee, regarding the proposed amendment to the start time for meetings of the Governance and Audit Committee, from 2pm to 10am, commencing January 2022 and for the remainder of the Civic Year.

In response to questions and comments from the Committee, Members were assured that this was a stand-alone amendment for the Governance and Audit Committee and affected only three remaining meetings of the civic year. The Committee was already a daytime meeting and, given the extensions to the Public Participation Scheme through the covid-19 pandemic, the amendment to the earlier start time was unlikely to lead to any difficulties to any members of the public who may wish to participate.

The proposal was moved, seconded and unanimously

**RESOLVED** that the amendment of the start time for meetings of the Governance and Audit Committee from 2.00pm to 10.00am, commencing January 2022 and for the remainder of the Civic Year, be approved.

## **60 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2022/23**

The Committee gave consideration to a report from the Revenues Manager regarding the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2022/23. Members heard that since the inception of the LCTS scheme on 1 April 2013, relatively minor changes had been made, which had enabled claimants to receive a similar level of support each year and enabled the council to maintain an annual council tax collection rate of around 98%. It was highlighted that due to the health and economic impacts of Covid-19 on the residents of West Lindsey during 2020/21 and 2021/22, it would be need to be considered whether it was appropriate to impose a further financial burden during 2022-23 on those already experiencing hardship. The pandemic was still causing considerable financial hardship to some residents, as demonstrated through the discretionary hardship applications. The uplift of £20 per week for Universal Credit claimants had also ended, resulting in additional financial hardship for those individuals affected. A significant change to the LCTS scheme for 2022/23 was likely to have a negative impact on the collection rate and reduce the yield over the year.

With this in mind, Members were advised that the recommended option was given the report as Option 1:

“To apply any new legislative requirements and the uprating of the nondependent charges, applicable amounts, and household allowances and deductions, used in the calculation of the reduction in accordance with the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) annual ‘Upratings’.

To apply any additional changes to government welfare benefit regulations during the year which are intended to increase the income of benefit recipients to avoid unintended consequences to customers.

There would be no direct saving to the council under this option as it would just maintain the current scheme.”

Furthermore, it was explained that Full Council must approve and adopt the finalised LCTS scheme by 31 January 2022 at the latest.

Members were supportive of the proposal and satisfied with the detail provided within the accompanying report. On being moved, seconded and voted upon, it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that

- a) The content of the report be noted; and
- b) the adoption of Option 1 of the report, for the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for West Lindsey District Council for 2022/23, be recommended to Full Council.

## **61 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN**

It was highlighted that the meeting scheduled for January 2022 had been cancelled and, with no further comments or questions, the work plan was **DULY NOTED**.

## **62 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1,2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

**Note:** The meeting entered closed session at 8.02pm

## **63 COUNCIL TAX, BUSINESS RATES AND SUNDRY DEBTOR WRITE OFFS 2021/22**

The Committee heard from the Revenues Manager regarding debts which were irrecoverable. It was explained that every effort was made to ensure that all amounts due to the council were rigorously pursued. At the end of each financial year a provision was set aside for those debts that were proving difficult to recover. Where debts were found to be irrecoverable, it was the role of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee to consider them for write off.

Members sought further details as to how amounts outstanding were pursued with the Revenues Manager explaining the process in different circumstances.

Having been moved, seconded and voted upon, it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that it be approved to:

- a) write off arrears of National Non Domestic rates to the value of £67,247.66;
- b) write off arrears of Housing Benefit Overpayments to the value of £49,564.86;
- c) write off arrears of Council Tax to the value of £8,450.12

#### **64 UPGRADE OF CURRENT INCOME MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

Members gave consideration to a report seeking approval for capital and revenue expenditure for the replacement of the Income Management System. Details of the contractual arrangements were explained by the Assistant Director of Finance and Property Services and Section 151 Officer followed by the benefits of the proposed upgrade.

Members were supportive of the proposals and, having been moved, seconded and voted upon, it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that

- a) the capital budget and expenditure of up to £154,280 for the upgrade of the current Income Management System. (Including 10% contingency on Capital costs £162,140) be approved; and
- b) a revenue budget of £30,000 to support resourcing this project be approved.

The Chairman expressed her thanks to all Members and Officers, wishing those absent a speedy recovery and wishing all a Merry Christmas.

The meeting concluded at 8.22 pm.

Chairman