

MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL – 4 July 2022

AGENDA ITEM 7

QUESTIONS RECEIVED PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 9

1) *Question to the Leader of the Council, from Councillor John McNeill – Local Ward Member for Market Rasen*

"Leader

The equipment that makes the current landline network run is not fit for the future and needs to be upgraded. The technology currently used to make calls on telephone landlines, called 'analogue', is being replaced with an internet-based version, called an 'IP network' (which means Internet Protocol Network).

The changeover has been mandated to happen by December 2025, as this is when the old technology will stop working. Everyone who has a landline will move over to the new system. Phone providers have already started work on switching over the network, but residents and businesses in West Lindsey do not need to do anything until their provider gets in touch with them.

Landlines will still exist, and it will still be possible to have a telephone line in our homes and businesses - but the system that underpins it will be different. Phone and broadband companies are leading this change. The Government and Ofcom (the communications regulator) are supporting it.

For lots of people, the change will be as simple as plugging their phone into their broadband router and in most cases residents and businesses will be able to keep their current phone numbers.

However, if a phone handset is very old, it might need to be changed. Phone providers will be able to advise their customers on this. Also, things that currently use the landline network - like telecare, personal alarms, burglar alarms and fax machines - will be affected by the change. If a device is relatively modern, it should still work fine - but older devices may need to be reconfigured or replaced, again providers should be able to advise their customers on this.

As the new system runs off the internet, residents and business will not be able to make calls without an internet connection at their home or place of work.

BT, which provides most landlines, have committed to not raising prices above inflation for 'voice only' customers – those who do not have home broadband. This commitment is for at least the next 5 years and will mean that whatever technology a customer's landline uses, the old system or the new, their bill should not rise significantly.

As the new system will work off the premises' electricity supply, if there is a power cut it will mean that residents and businesses cannot make phone calls. In these instances, phone companies are advising that residents and businesses should use a mobile phone as a backup. If residents or businesses do not have a mobile or are located in an area where there is no or poor signal, or depend on their landline, for example because they are disabled, their phone provider should offer them a solution like a battery-operated handset. This will mean that residents and businesses can make emergency calls during a power cut."

Was the leader aware of this change to a vital part of the infrastructure in West Lindsey? Is he able to confirm what, if any, proportion of the district has already been switched over to the new system? If this change has not yet commenced, is he able to confirm when it may begin? This change is likely to have several direct effects on West Lindsey's operations, what assessment has been made of this and do we know what, if any, direct costs will be attributable to this change?

Thank you.
Councillor John McNeill"

**2) Question to the Chairman of Council, from Councillor Jim Snee –
Local Ward Member for Gainsborough North**

"Why are we still waiting for the "Opening" of the Riverside Walkway (June 13th '22), when we the Council have clearly indicated to the members of the public that this project would see a completion date of Sept 21.

The Comm's team have made further announcements , Dec21 & Mar 22 indicating that opening was imminent.

After numerous contacts with the CEO and Officers , chasing up and constantly raising concerns over the lack of contract management, could the Chairman please advise what the current status is with regards to this project and provide an opening date.

Can the procurement team please reassure members that when we award contracts to companies, due diligence is followed and that mechanisms are in place to ensure everyone is accountable and transparent in their actions.

I look forward to your response.

Councillor Jim Snee."

**3) Question to the Leader of Council from Councillor Lesley Rollings –
Local Ward Member for Scotter and Blyton Ward**

“The decision by Lincoln College to cease providing Post 16 education at Gainsborough College has come as a shock and disappointment to many of us who have worked in Education in Gainsborough over the last 30 years.

For the elected members from the Gainsborough wards, who see first-hand, the impact education has on the life chances of its’ residents, such a decision appears to demonstrate a complete disregard for the people of Gainsborough – in particular, its’ young people.

Made in Gainsborough

West Lindsey District Council has done a brilliant job leading on the Made in Gainsborough project – giving local young people the opportunity to take up apprenticeships with Gainsborough manufacturing and engineering companies. Instead of building on this project, establishing a manufacturing base in Gainsborough, it appears that Lincoln College have decided that it is more cost effective to simply expect the learners to travel into Lincoln and forget Gainsborough.

Alternative provision on the Gainsborough College site

The proposal to make money on the site by renting the facility out to an alternative provision company, is, quite honestly, the very last thing Gainsborough needs. Bussing in large numbers of young people with the most challenging behaviour and attempting to keep these young people on site, can only create additional social challenges in the town.

The Levelling up agenda

Post 16 Education and Skills sit at the heart of attempts to create greater equality in our communities, yet the decline in local provision, in public transport links and failure to provide free transport for all 16-19 learners, means that only the most privileged and aspirational access education. Too many young people fall by the wayside. Without effective Post 16 education provision, the Levelling up agenda is really just an expensive gimmick.

Post 16 GCSE courses, Automotive engineering, Construction, Hair and Beauty, Hospitality, Performing Arts, Sport, Health and Social Care...

All these courses could take place in Gainsborough, indeed Lincoln College has run some of these courses at Gainsborough, in the past, and dangled the possibility of starting others only to pull out just before the courses were due to start, leaving learners in an uncertain position.

The narrow constraints of how the funding can be used, leaves it highly unlikely that the huge gaps in post 16 education and Adult education will not be met by Levelling up funding.

What can be done about this?

Other towns in Lincolnshire are linking with Lincoln University . Is this not a possibility in Gainsborough? Why have Lincoln College been allowed to build up its provision in Lincoln at the expense of running down its' provision in Gainsborough?

We have a grammar school in Gainsborough. Are we not exploring the possibility of them taking over the running of vocational courses on the Gainsborough College site?

Whilst I very much appreciate the support that West Lindsey District Council has always given to education in Gainsborough, Can the Leader outline to the Chamber what involvement he has had to date? what actions, the District Council have taken to date and plan to take in the coming weeks,? Leader is it not time we invited the Chief Executive of Lincolnshire County Council to account for the lack of provision in Gainsborough, I would welcome your view?

Thank you
Councillor Lesley Rolling”