

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA on 15 December 2022 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 Liz Clews
Councillor Michael Devine
Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
Councillor John McNeill
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee
Councillor Robert Waller
Councillor David Cotton

Also Present: Councillor Roger Patterson

In Attendance:

Ian Knowles	Chief Executive
Emma Foy	Director of Corporate Services and Section 151
Sally Grindrod-Smith	Director of Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Nova Roberts	Director of Change Management, ICT and Regulatory Services
Alison McCulloch	Revenues Manager
Ele Snow	Senior Democratic and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Trevor Young

Membership: Councillor D. Cotton sat as substitute for Councillor T. Young

46 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND STATEMENT OF URGENT ITEM OF BUSINESS

The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting and advised the Committee that there was an announcement to make regarding an urgent item of business to be heard. She stated that arrangements for handling urgent business at committee or sub-committee meetings were now governed by statute, which required the Chairman's approval before an urgent item could be considered and for the reason for the urgency to be recorded in the minutes. The item for consideration was the Supplementary Estimate – Trinity Arts Centre and it would be heard for consideration as the first of the public reports.

For the purpose of the minutes, it was explained that quotations for the work required at the Trinity Arts Centre were received on 30 November and these prices were only valid for 60 days. It was essential that the Council fulfil their health and safety obligations on a timely basis and accept the most appropriate tender to deliver the works. If these quotations were not taken forward then the work would need to be re-tendered which could significantly delay the process. For that reason, the Chairman stated her agreement with the request for this to be considered as an urgent item at this meeting.

47 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

48 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING/S

Members noted there were two sets of minutes for approval with each set taken in turn, it was

RESOLVED that:

- a) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held on 10 November, 2022 be confirmed and signed as a correct record; and
- b) the Minutes of the Concurrent Meeting of the Prosperous Communities and Corporate Policy & Resources Committees held on 24 November, 2022 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

49 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor P. Howitt-Cowan declared a non-pecuniary interest regarding the urgent item of business for the Trinity Arts Centre, as Chairman of the Leisure, Culture, Events and Tourism Working Group.

Councillor D. Cotton declared a non-pecuniary interest regarding agenda item 6b, Saxilby Footbridge Refurbishment, as Chairman of the Parish Council. He also declared a non-pecuniary interest regarding agenda item 8b, Potential RAF Scampton Purchase, as a member it had been raised as an interest at the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee.

Councillors O. Bierley and S. Bunney declared non-pecuniary interests as Members of the Leisure, Culture, Events and Tourism Working Group, in relation to the urgent item of business for Trinity Arts Centre.

Councillors I. Fleetwood, R. Waller and O. Bierley declared non-pecuniary interests as Members of the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee, in relation to agenda item 8b, Potential RAF Scampton Purchase.

50 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

It was noted that since the last meeting a letter had been sent to the local MP, Sir Edward Leigh, on 9th December, regarding the challenges the district faced in meeting demand for disabled adaptations.

Furthermore, in regards to fly tipping, the Enforcement team were looking into options for CCTV and a report would be received in the new year.

With no comments, questions, or requirement for a vote, the Matters Arising Schedule was **DULY NOTED**.

51 URGENT ITEM: SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE, TRINITY ARTS CENTRE

In accordance with the previously minuted Chairman's agreement, the Committee heard from the Director of Corporate Services regarding the urgent item of business. It was explained that the purpose of the report was to seek a supplementary budget to enable the replacement of fire doors at the Trinity Arts Centre. The original budget allocated to the project was £30,000, however the Council had been to the market for quotation and the received quotes were in the region of between £50,000 and £80,000. The quotations were received on 30 November and these prices were only valid for 60 days. It was essential that the Council fulfilled their health and safety obligations on a timely basis and therefore accepted the most appropriate tender and deliver the works. If these quotations were not taken forward then the work would need to be re-tendered which could significantly delay the process.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the Council needed to act promptly and it was essential for health and safety that this work be completed. The building was Grade II listed, hence the costs were greater, and there was a total of 20 doors that required replacing. Members were assured that the asset management plan would continue to review works and report back in a timely matter. Furthermore, it was agreed for the Strategic Asset Plan to be shared with Members.

Having been moved and seconded, the Chairman took the vote and it was unanimously

RESOLVED that a further allocation of £50,000 from the Capital Receipts Reserve be approved, to enable the renewal and refurbishment of Trinity Arts Centre fire doors.

52 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2023/24

The Committee heard from the Revenues Managers received a report regarding the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2023/24. It was explained that the scheme required approval by Full Council and the consideration by Corporate Policy and Resources Committee was to make the recommendation to Full Council for approval.

It was explained that the Council Tax Benefit was a national scheme providing means-tested financial help for low-income households to pay their Council Tax liability. This was

abolished on 31 March 2013 by the Local Government Finance Act 2012 which placed a legal requirement on every billing authority to adopt a Localised Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme.

In 2020 and 2021, following the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government awarded a grant to all local authorities for a payment to be made to all working aged council tax support claimants. This was paid directly to council tax accounts. It also permitted the use of any surplus to support economically vulnerable people and households.

These funds were now exhausted but had supported 374 families. A further discretionary hardship fund was agreed by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for 2022/23 in the sum of £31,717.85 which was the result of a refund of overpaid Magistrates court fees. To date, 27 families had been assisted from this fund.

It was highlighted that Full Council must approve and adopt the finalised LCTS scheme by 31 January 2023 at the very latest. The new Council Tax support scheme must be defined by individual Local Authorities

Officers were working with partners across the public and voluntary sectors to support West Lindsey residents, and particularly those who were vulnerable and hardest hit by the cost-of-living crisis. The current West Lindsey scheme was one of the most generous in Lincolnshire and, if looking at changing the scheme, all must be aware of impacting on those most affected by the cost of living increases and adding to their financial burden. The financial modelling showed that West Lindsey District Council could still bridge the funding by continuing with the current scheme for a further year. The existing scheme worked well and offered a high level of support for low income families who may otherwise find themselves in debt.

There had been a slight decrease this year in the number of households claiming LCTS which suggested that the situation was improving gradually as more claimants returned to work. Collection rates were being maintained under the current scheme. This option ensured the LCTS rules stayed consistent with the DWP rules which avoided confusion for claimants. Retaining existing policy principles of keeping LCTS in line with other key welfare benefits promoted equality.

It was noted that whilst option two, to make no changes to the current scheme for 2023/24, would afford slight savings to the Council, under this option it would effectively create a reduction in income for those affected.

Members thanked the Revenues Manager for the concise report and requested that thanks be extended to the team for their hard work and success with the collection rate.

Having been moved and seconded, and on taking the vote, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee **recommend** to Full Council the adoption of Option 1 of the report for the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for West Lindsey District Council for 2023/24. Option 1 being:

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'.

53 SAXILBY FOOTBRIDGE REFURBISHMENT

The Committee gave consideration to a report regarding the refurbishment of the Saxilby footbridge. It was advised that the purpose of the report was to seek a supplementary budget to enable comprehensive off-site repair and paint works to the footbridge. The last works carried out were in 2009 when the decking boards were replaced and the bridge was repainted in situ without removal. The original budget allocated to the project was £100,000 for a full off- site renewal in 2021/22.

Members heard that the preferred option was to repair the bridge off site, the estimated costing of the work was in the region of £250k. The work was originally approved and carried forward from the 2021/22 budget when an estimated cost for the works was approved at £100k. The repairs to the bridge had a lifespan of approximately 20 years and as part of the budget approval process, a proposal would be brought forward to create a specific earmarked reserve to enable the Council to grow the budget for work required in 20 years. It was noted that it was requested to fund the supplementary budget from the Capital Receipts Reserve.

The Committee noted the report and the proposal. Councillors agreed that the preferred option was to refurbish the bridge off-site, with the preference being around Autumn 2023 if it was possible. It was highlighted that the Fosdyke was a particular area of interest attracting a significant number of visitors and the bridge was important as visitors mooring at Saxilby used it to come across and visit. The Council did own the bridge and it was suggested that it be renamed after the late Bob Ballerini who had originally sourced the bridge for the Community.

Officers confirmed that there would be regular health and safety inspections carried out for the maintenance and upkeep of the bridge. There were continual discussions with the Parish, the river trust and other stakeholders to ensure work was carried out promptly. The aim being Autumn 2023 depending on agreement.

With Members having moved and seconded the Officer recommendation within the report, the Chairman took the vote and it was unanimously

RESOLVED that a further allocation of £150,000 from the Capital Receipts Reserve be approved to enable the refurbishment of Saxilby Footbridge to take place subject to a further tender exercise.

54 COST OF LIVING CRISIS UPDATE

The Committee heard from the Director of Change Management, ICT and Regulatory Services, with a report that provided an update on actions and initial proposals in response to the motion resolved by Council on 4 July 2022, for additional financial support measures for 'socially vulnerable households', with future costings to be determined as part of the budget setting report at the February Committee meeting. Members were advised to

consider the first appendix with the report, which provided a table of all support available to those impacted by the cost of living crisis. It was also confirmed that updates would be distributed as necessary by way of the monthly Member Bulletin newsletter.

The Committee extended thanks to all Officers involved in the cost of living work, recognising that it did not constitute core business but it was important to understand the implications of the breadth of work undertaken. Members enquired as to the Warm Spaces scheme, with many having received enquiries from Parish Councils.

Note: Councillor D. Cotton declared a personal, non-pecuniary interest in that he was an emergency Chaplain in the area and was on standby constantly as a result of the cost of living crisis. He also declared he was in receipt of PIP payments.

In response to the Warm Spaces enquiries, it was confirmed that this was a developing scheme with specified venues tending to manage their own timings and advertising of such. It was noted that in Market Rasen, there were notices in the town detailing venues and times, with new Warm Spaces being set up to 'fill the gaps' between existing schedules. Members expressed the importance of their role within local communities, being best placed to understand the individualised needs within their own wards.

Note: Councillor O. Bierley declared a personal, non-pecuniary interest as a Trustee of Age UK Lindsey, noting that it was a partner agency through the cost of living work.

Note: Councillor D. Cotton left the Chamber at 7.17pm and returned at 7.18pm.

A Member of the Committee enquired as to whether there was work underway to co-ordinate independent schemes set up within local communities. An example was given of a local school having set up their own food bank and it was questioned whether that would be included in details of local support available, as it might not be well-known. It was recognised that there was a huge amount of work to undertake in terms of gathering every element of support available, including those independent schemes such as had been referenced. There was also work underway in terms of larger food banks offering to support and mentor those wishing to set up smaller, locally focussed food banks. Members were assured there was work underway to gather the breadth of support and co-ordinate the publicising of everything available to those who may be in need of support.

Members were also keen to highlight the concerns around those residents who perhaps were 'just about managing' but were at high risk of requiring further support as the cost of living crisis continued and potentially worsened. Additionally, it was recognised that those living in rural areas would not always have the same access to the support as those living in more populated areas, such as Warm Spaces or food banks.

The Committee was supportive of the work that had been undertaken so far and was appreciative of the continuing work involved.

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

RESOLVED that:

- a) the initial proposals to provide support, information and funding via partnership working and central government schemes for Cost of Living crisis support, models and key actions, be approved; and
- b) further development of the WLDC website be supported, to provide increased focus on specific local cost of living initiatives, support, guidance and advice; and
- c) the further development of costings be approved, to be incorporated in the February budget setting report to committee after the Local Government settlement on 21 December 2022.

55 RECOMMENDATION FROM THE COMMUNITY AWARDS PANEL - 2023 AWARD PROPOSAL

The Committee heard from the Senior Democratic and Civic Officer, with a report seeking approval for the recommendation from the Community Awards Panel to sponsor an award within an existing awards scheme, in lieu of holding a West Lindsey District Council Community Awards ceremony in 2023. It was explained that this recommendation had come about due to concerns raised regarding the waning support for a West Lindsey District Council awards scheme, the heightened time constraints due to the all-out elections in May 2023, with any ceremony having to take place prior to 13 March 2023, as well as overall recognition for the district-wide community involvement over the preceding few years, meaning there was some reluctance to recognise only a limited number of individuals or groups.

There was general agreement amongst Committee Members that the existing scheme no longer seemed suitable, however there was limited support for the proposed sponsorship of an award within an existing scheme. An alternative proposal was moved, that the existing recommendations be replaced with the following:

‘the Committee recommends for the Community Awards in 2023 to be suspended, on the agreement that further work is undertaken to review the awards scheme with any subsequent proposals for 2024 onwards being presented to this Committee no later than November 2023’.

This was duly seconded, and on being voted upon, it was

RESOLVED that the printed recommendations be replaced with a single motion, as detailed above.

There was further discussion amongst Members, with one noting he thought it a shame that there would be no award scheme. With the final comments from the Chairman being to recognise the opportunity to refresh the scheme as a whole, and on having had the amended motion moved and seconded, she called the vote and it was

RESOLVED that the Community Awards in 2023 be suspended, on the agreement that further work be undertaken to review the awards scheme, with any subsequent proposals for 2024 onwards to be presented to this Committee no later than

November 2023.

56 AMENDMENTS TO APPROVED COMMITTEE TIMETABLE ARISING FROM THE EARLIER COMMENCEMENT OF THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD IN WEST LINDSEY

The Committee gave consideration to a report seeking approval for amendments to the agreed Committee Timetable, as a result of the earlier commencement of the pre-election period in West Lindsey.

With Committee-wide understanding and agreement of the reason for the amended dates, having been moved and seconded and vote upon, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the following changes to the 2022/23 approved timetable, be approved, due to the Pre-Election period now starting on 13 March 2023. Namely:

- a) that the meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee currently scheduled for 21 March 2023 be moved to Tuesday 7 March 2023; and
- b) that the meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee currently scheduled for 23 March 2023 be moved to Wednesday 8 March 2023.

57 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

It was recognised that the previously approved amendment to the date of the meeting due to take place in March 2023 would be updated for the work plan and notified to those Officers effected as a matter of priority.

With no other comments or questions, the work plan was **DULY NOTED**.

58 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. 8.

Note: The meeting entered closed session at 7.45pm

59 COUNCIL DEBT WRITE OFFS 2022/232

Members heard from the Revenues Manager with a report detailing those debts that were irrecoverable by the Council.

Members sought assurance regarding details contained within the report, this being provided by the Revenues Manager and Director of Corporate Services.

In recognising the nature of the irrecoverable debts, the printed recommendations were 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 £53,098.83; and
- b) write off arrears of Housing Benefit Overpayments to the value of £15,640.71; and
- c) write off arrears of Council Tax to the value of £11,475.41.

60 POTENTIAL RAF SCAMPTON PURCHASE

Members gave consideration to a report presented by the Director of Planning, Regeneration & Communities, providing an update on work to date to secure a prosperous future for RAF Scampton and to seek approval to progress to the next stage. The Chairman welcomed Councillor R. Patterson as a Visiting Member, highlighting his involvement in the area a Local Ward Member.

There was widespread support for the proposals at the RAF Scampton site, with thanks extended to Officers for the work being undertaken to secure a prosperous future and avoid the difficulties that had been experienced by other ex-military communities in the district.

The Committee was provided with in depth explanation of the process as had been realised so far, as well as the stages yet to be completed. Members voiced their own concerns regarding the transition from RAF base to successful community, with assurance being given that it was a priority to ensure as smooth a transition as possible.

Following significant discussions amongst Committee Members, and having had the recommendations as printed moved and seconded, the Chairman took the vote. It was unanimously

RESOLVED that:

- a) the Market Value established for the site at RAF Scampton be noted and authority be delegated to, with the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of the CP&R Committee, to negotiate a final purchase price with the [Defence Infrastructure Organisation /Ministry of Defence] based on the draft Heads of Terms and considering the findings of the technical due diligence work; and
- b) subject to recommendation 4 and the entering into a Development Agreement with a development partner following conclusion of the Public Procurement exercise, the acquisition of the site at RAF Scampton be

approved and the completion of the acquisition of the site be delegated to the Director of Corporate Services, with the Chair of this Committee; and

- c) it be agreed that the site purchase should be funded from the Investment and Growth Reserve. In due course this item will be placed on the 2023-24 capital programme with the final amount for approval as part of the 2023-24 budget process; and
- d) the issue of the 'Alcatel' letters be delegated to the Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Chair of this Committee. It should be noted that the final outcome of the Public Procurement exercise to select a development partner and enter into a Development Agreement will be determined through a further decision by this committee.

The Chairman reiterated thanks to all involved, and extended thanks to all present for the meeting, wishing a happy Christmas and New Year to all.

The meeting concluded at 8.37 pm.

Chairman