

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 31 January 2023 commencing at 6.30 pm.

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

Councillor Stephen Bunney
Councillor Christopher Darcel
Councillor Michael Devine
Councillor Mrs Jessie Milne
Councillor Jaime Oliver
Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings
Councillor Jim Snee
Councillor Trevor Young
Councillor Timothy Davies
Councillor Tom Regis

In Attendance:
Sally Grindrod-Smith Director Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Ady Selby Director - Operational & Commercial Services
Emma Foy Director of Corporate Services and Section 151
Sarah Elvin Homes, Health & Wellbeing Team Manager
Sue Leversedge Business Support Team Leader
Ele Snow Senior Democratic and Civic Officer

Also In Attendance: 1 Member of the Public

Apologies: Councillor Mrs Tracey Coulson
Councillor Liz Clews
Councillor Jane Ellis
Councillor Mrs Cordelia McCartney

Membership: Councillor T. Davies sat as substitute for Councillor J. Ellis
Councillor T. Regis sat as substitute for Councillor. C. McCartney

49 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman stated there was one public speaker, and invited Mr Chris Thomas to address the Committee.

Mr Thomas explained he was speaking as representative for residents of Welton and Dunholme in relation to their concerns regarding the review of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (CLLP). He stated that the residents of the area felt they had been ignored throughout the consultation period, and by the District Council, and that issues they had raised had not been addressed. Specifically, Mr Thomas expressed the belief that Welton would become a 'giant building site', with the site allocations within the CLLP seeing a growth rate in excess of 50% for Welton. He stated the residents' concerns regarding the lack of infrastructure, with schools and GP surgeries already struggling to provide adequate services for current residents, and questioned how the predicted developments would be supported under such circumstances.

Mr Thomas highlighted he had previously addressed the Prosperous Communities Committee in May 2022, at which point he had requested the Committee to address the residents' many concerns regarding Regulation 19 of the draft CLLP, stating that a recommendation had been put forward that the text be amended to reinstate site-specific phasing for the Welton allocated sites. He stated his belief that Members had been misled prior to their vote in May 2022, and he requested both a meeting with the Chairman of the Committee, and urgent action to correct the perceived error and reinstate phasing to the plan.

The Chairman thanked Mr Thomas for his time and comments to the Committee. He stated that the plan was still in a consultation period and as such, members of the public or organisations were still able to make representations on any of the points raised. It was explained that a response to Mr Thomas' statement would be sent in writing, and shared with the Members of the Committee, in due course.

Members of the Committee were subsequently permitted to comment, with concerns raised regarding whether there should be a public debate on the issues raised by Mr Thomas. It was explained that there was to be no debate at that time, however it was reiterated that the plan remained in a public consultation period and therefore comments and concerns could still be submitted. In response to Member comments regarding transparency of interaction with public speakers, the Chairman re-asserted that communications would be shared with all Committee Members.

Whilst Members remained unhappy with the perceived lack of open debate, the Chairman brought the item to a close, and continued with the next item of business.

50 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held on 6 December 2022 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

51 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

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

52 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at this point in the meeting.

53 WEST LINDSEY DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT (DFG) POLICY 2023

The Committee heard from the Homes, Health and Wellbeing Team Manager regarding the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) current position and seeking to adopt the Disabled Facilities Grant Policy. It was explained that the Council had a statutory duty under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 to undertake mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants. In December 2021, the Government published their Adult Social Care reform white paper which set out a 10-year vision for adult social care and detailed a number of potential changes to DFG legislation. Details of the proposed DFG amendments were detailed within section 4.2 of the report.

Members of the Committee enquired as to the increased costs for adaptations, and whether there was any scope for further savings, for example if the Council undertook the work rather than sourcing contractors. It was explained that the costs involved would remain a focus of review, as there was no intention to overspend if it could be avoided, however there would have been no reduction in costs had the work been undertaken any differently. In response to a question regarding the £6000 savings amount that triggered means-testing for a DFG, it was confirmed that this was a government-set requirement and was intended to be amended in the upcoming white paper. It was explained that this savings limit did not preclude a person from having a DFG, only that there would need to be a means-test undertaken.

Members of the Committee enquired as to the implications of the government announcement regarding expedited discharges from hospital, specifically regarding the impact this would have on demand for DFGs, as well as whether the discretionary element of DFG funding would be recommenced to help enable hospital discharges. It was explained that the DFG process was not intended to be an emergency response service, that it was an element of assistance that was available but ran alongside multiple services that were better placed to address the requirements on discharge from hospital. A Member of the Committee highlighted the work undertaken by the Royal British Legion and it was confirmed that there was joint working, and signposting of people to, the Royal British Legion and other organisations, and that in some cases they were more appropriate than a DFG.

With regard to the cessation of the discretionary funding, it was noted that it was hoped this would be a temporary stop, however Members would be kept informed of any future changes. The Committee also recognised that the DFG was an element of support and assistance available to those requiring it, and it was requested that, in view of the all-out elections in May 2023, a quick reference flow chart could be included in the Member Welcome Pack, in order for all Councillors, but particularly those newly elected, to have a reference point as to where to direct enquiries if received from residents. Officers undertook to work on this.

Having been moved and seconded, the Chairman took the vote on the recommendation contained within the report and it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the West Lindsey Disabled Facilities Grant Policy 2023 be adopted.

54 PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES REVENUE BASE BUDGETS 2023/24 TO 2027/28

The Committee heard from the Business Support Team Leader regarding the Prosperous Communities Committee Draft Budget 2023/2024 and estimates to 2027/2028. It was explained that, after taking a robust approach to the estimations within the budget for the Committee, the total cost of services for 2023/2024 would be £5.131m (£5.023m 2022/2023). This had resulted in base budget increases in expenditure of £0.451m, and additional income of £0.343m, resulting in a net base budget increase of £0.108m.

Members heard that there were £0.364m of expenditure budgets which were funded from Earmarked Reserves to support one off project resources in 2023/2024 (£0.463m in 2022/2023). This was a decrease of £0.1m from 2022/2023 to 2023/2024. Services within this Committee had also contributed to Earmarked Reserves £0.104m in 2023/2024 for asset replacement programmes (£0.169m in 2022/2023). This was a reduction of £0.065m from 2022/2023 to 2023/2024. Excluding the use of earmarked reserves, there was an increase of £0.143m on the base budgets for the Committee, with the Officer highlighted that further details of which were contained within the report at section 2. The proposed budgets within the report contributed towards an overall balanced position for 2023/2024, with a small surplus being returned to the General Fund.

The Business Support Team Leader explained that salary budgets for 2022/2023 were set based on an estimated 2% pay award, however, the final pay award was based on a monetary value against each scale point for NJC Local Government staff, which equated to an average increase of 6%. The salary costs included in the report were based on an estimated 2% increase each year from 2023/2024. Ongoing pay award negotiations indicated there was a risk that the 2023/2024 pay award might be higher than the 2% applied. To mitigate this risk, a contingency budget had been set aside. The proposed Council budget for 2023/2024 also included a 2% Vacancy Factor of £0.226m, which had been applied to salary budgets for posts which were on the organisational establishment (basic pay, superannuation and national insurance).

Members thanked the Business Support Team Leader for her succinct summary. With regard to the anticipated salary costs, it was enquired as to how the potential percentage increase had been reached, with Members highlighting concerns that a pay award may be significantly higher than that anticipated. It was explained that a benchmarking exercise had been undertaken across Lincolnshire, as well as other national conversations, and it was anticipated that the pay award for 2022/23 had been a larger percentage increase than what would be agreed for 2023/24. Members were assured that, should there be any further details received in advance of the Full Council budget meeting, this would be reflected in the report to Council.

In response to a question regarding the financial details of the leisure contract, it was explained that the income line was recorded as £207k, with the net impact being £161k. It was highlighted that the figures were the contractually agreed numbers, to which there had been no amendments, and did not reflect any usage changes due to the pandemic.

With no further comments or questions, and having been moved and seconded, the

Chairman took the vote and it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the Prosperous Communities Budget 2023/2024 and revenue estimates to 2027/2028 be **recommended** to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for the purpose of budget setting 2023/2024 and for inclusion in the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2023/2024 to 2027/2028 (as amended by any decisions taken on this agenda).

55 WORKPLAN

Note: Councillor T. Regis left the meeting at 7.22pm

On consideration of the Committee Work Plan, detailing items of business due at upcoming meetings, the Chairman stated the item was to be noted, unless Members had any comments or questions.

A Member of the Committee highlighted that he had requested an item to be included regarding car parking and parking enforcement actions across the district. He recognised there was due to be an all Councillor workshop held regarding this area, however expressed his disappointment that it was not included for open debate at a meeting of the Committee. It was highlighted that the Parking Strategy had been debated and resolved by the Committee in July 2022, with the queries being addressed via the workshop having been raised by Councillors outside of a Committee environment, as well as the comments at policy meetings. The Chairman expressed his support for the workshop and his expectations that all queries raised would be addressed.

Two separate areas of work were requested by other Members of the Committee, those being for the Council to look into the possibility of acquiring a mobile device to monitor air pollution, which parishes could use to monitor concerns in their areas, and a question as to whether there was a policy in place regarding the use of, or banned use of, pesticides in the district. It was confirmed that these matters would be shared with the relevant Officers, and added to the Matters Arising Schedule for future updates or work to be addressed.

Members of the Committee reiterated their previously communicated enquiries regarding parking enforcement, seeking assurance that the upcoming workshop would provide information such as the breakdown of parking tickets issued and reasons for enforcement action, this was confirmed to be the case.

With no further comments or questions, and having confirmed that the work plan discussions had been noted for relevant actions, the Chairman thanked all present for their time and involvement, and brought the meeting to a close.

The meeting concluded at 7.34 pm.

Chairman