

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 28 March 2023 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers (Chairman)
Councillor Roger Patterson (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Mrs Jackie Brockway
Councillor Mrs Tracey Coulson
Councillor Christopher Darcel
Councillor Mrs Caralyne Grimble
Councillor Mrs Cordelia McCartney
Councillor John McNeill
Councillor Peter Morris
Councillor Robert Waller

Also Present: Councillor Mrs Angela White

In Attendance:

Nova Roberts	Director of Change Management, ICT & Regulatory Services
Ady Selby	Director - Operational & Commercial Services
Sarah Elvin	Homes, Health & Wellbeing Team Manager
Ele Snow	Senior Democratic and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Cherie Hill

42 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 January 2023 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

43 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this stage of the meeting.

44 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

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

45 DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT UPDATE REPORT

The Committee heard from the Homes, Health and Wellbeing Team Manager regarding the update report on the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs). Members were reminded that in September 2021, a report was presented to the Committee outlining the DFG service in West Lindsey and detailing some of the challenges that had been faced, as well as presenting steps being taken to overcome those challenges. The Committee agreed to a Together 24 (T24) 'light' review being undertaken and for an update to be presented to report on progress.

It was explained that whilst there had been a sharp increase in referrals being received for adaptations, the time taken to complete those adaptations had been reduced, with recent figures showing 44% of all adaptations had been delivered in under 120 days. Additionally, the reviewed application process had seen significant improvements in the time taken to deal with each new application. Despite these improvements, it was recognised that there were new challenges to be faced, with budget concerns and increased referral numbers, and so it was planned for a full T24 Service Review to be undertaken in 2023/24.

Further details were provided to the Committee regarding the formula for allocation of DFG funding from Central Government, as well as the actions that had been undertaken in order to lobby for change.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for the detailed report and concise summary, and invited comments from the Committee. A Member of the Committee, who was also a Lincolnshire County Councillor, confirmed receipt of the lobbying letters and assured the Committee conversations were underway. She also confirmed she had held a conversation with Sir Edward Leigh, MP, who had recognised the importance of the issues raised.

In response to a query regarding the size of a ramp installed in one instance, it was confirmed that there were specific parameters that needed to be adhered to, in conjunction with building regulations and working with the health assessors to ensure the required gradient of the ramp was achievable. It was recognised that some examples were not entirely aesthetically pleasing however they did need to adhere to all the relevant guidelines.

Members sought further details with regard to the reduced time frames for completion, the amended referral process and the concerns regarding the future budget availability, as well as how feedback was sought and recorded. It was explained that there had been such a spike in referral numbers as the County Council was working through their backlog of referrals caused in part by the hold on works being undertaken during the pandemic. However, it was highlighted that despite the increase in referrals, the completion times had still reduced, demonstrating the success of the new process. The future budget availability would see DFG requests prioritised for the first time, with those non-urgent requests essentially forming a waiting list. This method would be kept under review, with lobbying for increased funding continuing.

With regard to feedback, it was explained that customer satisfaction feedback was sought from each service user, the details of which would be fed through the Progress and Delivery reporting. The introduction of a Performance Improvement Plan was noted, initiated through the Progress and Delivery reporting process, with its implementation being another tool in use to improve the DFG workflow and process.

Note: Councillor C. Grimble arrived in the Chamber at 6.48pm

Following a question from the Chairman enquiring as to the success or otherwise of the telephone consultations, it was explained that the introduction of the telephone contact was an additional step and had led to a reduction in the number of home visits being requested. The referral form was a 37-page long document and there had been positive feedback regarding the benefit of going through the questions over the phone compared with just posting the form to be completed and returned. Whilst the telephone contact was an additional demand on Officer time, it had proved worthwhile with both the success of completing the forms first time and also the reduced number of home visits being undertaken to complete the paperwork.

The Chairman, Vice Chairman and Committee Members reiterated their thanks to the Manager and the Team, not only for their work in improving the service delivery but also for the nature of the work they undertook, being of great importance across the district.

The Chairman read aloud the printed recommendations contained within the report and having been proposed and seconded, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

- a) the service improvements to, and current challenges faced within, the DFG service be acknowledged; and
- b) lobbying be assisted with, where possible, to improve the West Lindsey DFG budget position.

46 MANAGING FLOOD RISK IN WEST LINDSEY – TWICE YEARLY REPORT

The Committee gave consideration to a report presented by the Director - Operational & Commercial Services, seeking to update the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the work undertaken by the Officer Flood and Drainage Working Party and the Member Flood and Drainage Working Group. The Committee heard that the update report was following the resolutions passed at the Prosperous Communities Committee at their meeting on 19 July 2022, for the formation of the two working groups and for reporting to feed into the Overview and Scrutiny workplan.

It was explained that the Officer and Member Working Groups were established in order to improve communication across previously isolated work areas. This was starting to be achieved with strong links being forged between strategic and operational functions, and stronger links being established with other Flood Risk Management Authorities, increasing Member and Officer knowledge of the current situation and future risks. This would, in turn, will help Council representatives influence these partners. Additionally, further data input into the Council's mapping system would help inform and present current issues and trend analysis. It was also noted that a further report was due to be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Autumn 2023.

Members of the Committee expressed their thanks for the work undertaken and the progress

made with a number of local flooding issues. Visiting Member Councillor A. White sought to express her gratitude for an issue that had been dealt with successfully in her ward, in a way that had not previously been achieved.

The link between area flooding and drainage issues was explored, with all recognising the flood risk often did not arise from rivers or causeways, rather from blocked drainage channels. It was highlighted that the role for West Lindsey District Council was limited in terms of statutory powers and functions, those sat with the County Council and other agencies, however the role of intermediary, facilitator and influencer had proved to be highly valuable. A Member of the Committee noted the option for inviting the Lincolnshire County Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning to attend a meeting of the Committee and it was requested that this be noted on the Matters Arising Schedule, for the new iteration of the Committee to consider at a future meeting.

Members enquired as to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Lincolnshire Districts and the Lead Local Flood Authority, regarding the immediate operational support offered to residents in the event of flooding, and it was confirmed this had not yet been completed. West Lindsey District Council chose to undertake the operational support without question, in order to best support residents and businesses when needed, however it did remain a function of the Lead Local Flood Authority, and not all smaller Local Authorities were in the same position of providing assistance as West Lindsey. Members suggested a bilateral agreement could be put in place, should the MoU prove unsuccessful and it was noted that, whilst a county-wide MoU was the preferred option, the Council would explore other options in the event of the MoU not coming to fruition.

Members of the Committee reiterated their thanks to all involved, Officers and Members alike, and, having been moved, seconded and voted upon, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the work of the Member Flood and Drainage Working Group and Officer Flood and Drainage Working Party be welcomed.

47 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

The Chairman introduced her Annual Report, to be presented to Annual Council in May following the elections. She thanked all present for their commitment and involvement with the Committee, thanked Officers for their assistance and advice, and repeated her comments contained within the report that she considered it a privilege to have been able to Chair the Committee for the past year. The Chairman explained that the report was to be taken as read, unless there any comments arising from Members.

With regard to the Operating Methodology, a Member of the Committee enquired as to the reduction in 'pre-scrutiny' items from four per civic year, to two. It was explained this had been an amendment passed at the start of the civic year, and the rationale was clarified. It was noted that any subsequent amendments could be included for consideration in the Annual Constitution Review, due to be heard both by the Governance and Audit Committee and presented to Annual Council, although the Operating Methodology would be presented to the first meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2023, to be approved at that point.

The Vice Chairman echoed the thanks of the Chairman, stating he had found the meetings to be not only enjoyable, but demonstrative of effecting change, as detailed within the Annual Report. He extended his thanks, not only to the Members of the Committee and the Officers involved, but also to the Chair herself, for her hard work, dedication and success of the Committee.

The recommendations contained with the report were proposed, seconded and voted upon, and with unanimous vote it was

RESOLVED that

- a) consideration had been given to the content of the draft annual report, and the Operating Methodology, with comments for the latter to be shared through the Constitution Review; and
- b) the submission of the annual report to Annual Council be supported; and
- c) any comments made through the course of debate be further considered by the Director – Change Management, ICT & Regulatory Services and Chairman of the Committee prior to the finalised report being submitted to Annual Council in May 2023.

48 FORWARD PLAN

The content of the full Forward Plan for all Committees was **NOTED**.

49 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN (INDICATIVE)

The Senior Democratic and Civic Officer explained the work plan for the Committee was indicative at this stage, with further details to be provided, discussed and approved at the first meeting of the new Civic Year.

With no comments or questions, the contents of the indicative work plan were **DULY NOTED**.

The meeting concluded at 7.32 pm.

Chairman