

Public Document Pack

West Lindsey District Council - 26 June 2023

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA on 26 June 2023 at 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Stephen Bunney (Chairman)
Councillor Matthew Boles (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Emma Bailey	Councillor John Barrett
Councillor Eve Bennett	Councillor Owen Bierley
Councillor Mrs Jackie Brockway	Councillor Frazer Brown
Councillor Karen Carless	Councillor Liz Clews
Councillor Christopher Darcel	Councillor David Dobbie
Councillor Jacob Flear	Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor Sabastian Hague	Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
Councillor Paul Key	Councillor Mrs Angela Lawrence
Councillor Paul Lee	Councillor Jeanette McGhee
Councillor Peter Morris	Councillor Lynda Mullally
Councillor Maureen Palmer	Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers	Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings
Councillor Tom Smith	Councillor Jim Snee
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee	Councillor Paul Swift
Councillor Moira Westley	Councillor Trevor Young

In Attendance:

Ian Knowles	Chief Executive
Emma Foy	Director of Corporate Services and Section 151
Jeanette McGarry	Assistant Director People & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer)
Peter Davy	Financial Services Manager (Deputy Section 151 Officer)
Katie Storr	Democratic Services & Elections Team Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Ellen King	Policy & Strategy Officer – Corporate Strategy & Business Planning

Also in Attendance: Reverend David Cotton

Also Present: 5 members of the public

Apologies Councillor Trevor Bridgwood
Councillor Roger Pilgrim
Councillor Baptiste Velan

17 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Having been proposed and seconded, it was: -

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Full Council held on 23 May, 2023 be confirmed, approved and signed as a correct record.

18 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made at this point in the meeting. The Chairman reminded Members that they could make a declaration at any point in the meeting should they feel it necessary to do so.

19 MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman introduced the report advising Members that it would be taken "as read" unless any Members had any questions that they wished to raise.

With no comments or questions and with no requirement to vote, the matters arising were **DULY NOTED**.

20 CHAIRMAN'S CHAPLAIN

The Chairman advised that the Council's Chaplain for the remainder of the Civic Year would be the Reverend David Cotton. As a former serving Councillor and friend to many, the Chairman considered it an honour to work with him and invited the Reverend Cotton to the dais to receive the Chaplain's Stole.

Members in turn congratulated the Reverend Cotton on his appointment, with a round of applause.

RESOLVED that the appointment of Reverend David Cotton as the Chairman's Chaplain be received.

21 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman

The Chairman addressed the Council, referencing briefly some of the events with which he had been involved since Council last met.

The Chairman reported that he had presided over a flag raising event to celebrate "Pride Month" as well as a flag raising event to mark "Armed Forces Day" outside of the Guildhall. The Chairman spoke of the importance of recognising the contribution made by these groups of individuals to the local community and to the nation as a whole.

The Chairman had attended the formal opening of the new “quiet garden” at Market Rasen Library. The initiative aimed to provide an opportunity for young and old alike to sit outside in the sun and enjoy reading.

The Chairman had also attended a concert given by the Claxby Community Choir and in complimenting them on their talents, encouraged Members to take whatever opportunity they might have to do likewise. It was hoped that the Community Choir would lead the Council’s Christmas Carol Concert in December.

On Saturday, 17 June, the Chairman had attended the street entertainment in Gainsborough and was pleased to see so many people enjoying themselves. The event had given the Chairman an opportunity to speak with residents from Gainsborough, Lincoln and further afield.

Later that same evening the he had travelled to Scunthorpe to attend the opening of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Mosque as a special guest of Dr Awan Dr Marwan, a local Gainsborough resident. The formal opening ceremony had been undertaken by the world leader of the group, his holiness Hazard Meza Mersood Ahmed.

Along with other Councillors and staff, the Chairman had attended the Lincolnshire Show and had had an opportunity to visit at least twenty stands set up by companies which traded in the West Lindsey area. This had provided a great networking opportunity. The Chairman thanked all those individuals from the Council who had been involved in the organisation of this year’s show.

Leader

The Leader made the following address to Council: -

“This is my first report to Full Council and although it has been an extremely busy first few weeks, I will try to keep my announcements brief.

I have the following items to report:-

With regard to the (former RAF) Scampton migrant camp proposal, the Council continues to fight the Conservative Government's decision to use the former RAF airbase at Scampton as a migrant camp. Our legal fight continues and the next court hearing is on the 12th to 13th July. We meet on a weekly basis with our colleagues from Lincolnshire County Council, Lincoln City and the police to challenge this wrong decision regarding this historic airbase.

We also meet on a regular basis with the other authorities faced with similar issues where the Home Office has similar plans to create migrant camps. The Authority has spent hundreds of hours fighting this Government decision, and I would like to pass on my thanks to all the staff for their hard work to protect our district. I am conscious that we have a motion on this evening’s agenda regarding Scampton, but would like to reassure Members that regular updates on Scampton will be provided by our Communications Team. Meetings are

being arranged with our local MP, and we are demanding that the Home Office starts engaging and communicating meaningfully with the local community regarding their intentions.

Along with a number of other Members, I attended the recent event held at the Trinity Arts Centre. These exciting plans on the West Burton site will create thousands of jobs to boost our local economy for the next 50 years. The Fusion site will bring endless opportunities for the District and we look forward to working with our neighbours Bassetlaw District Council and Nottinghamshire County Council on how this site is developed. This is a fantastic good news story for our area and future updates will follow.

I attended the latest consultation event with Officers and Members regarding the Tillbridge solar farm application and we are trying to arrange an urgent meeting with the 7,000 acre action group to hear their views on the latest solar planning application.

After several years of discussion, devolution is back on the agenda for Greater Lincolnshire which includes North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire. Following this May's elections, early discussions are taking place with the Leaders of each authority regarding the governance and approval processes for the participating Councils. Further updates and a Member workshop will follow over the next few months.

Finally, in an endeavour to work closer with our Town and Parish Councils, I have asked the Chief Executive to arrange twice yearly meetings with our main Town and Parish Councils with a view to improving joint working for the benefit of all the District's residents. We are starting with Gainsborough and Market Raisin and will report back regularly on progress".

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive addressed the Council and started by thanking the Elections Team, noting some of whom worked for over 24 hours straight on 4 May through to 5 May.

Thanks were also expressed to the Democratic Services Team for the work they had put into the Member Induction Programme. Some sessions had had to be rescheduled but he expressed the hope that as many Members as possible would find time within their busy schedules to attend the sessions. Members were encouraged to offer feedback on the induction and to let the Chief Executive know if there were any general issues which they would like to be covered and which would help Members better carry out their civic and community representational roles, particularly first time Councillors.

The Chief Executive advised that arrangements had been made for the Leader's Panel to attend a Strategy Away Day on 28 July. The objective was to ensure that Members' aspirations and expectations could be fully integrated into the work plans of the organisation.

The Joint Staff Consultative Committee (JSCC) had provision for two staff representatives. One was a Union representative and the other was elected by staff – representation had

been ad-hoc, as there was low union representation within the authority, so terms of reference had been amended to ensure they did not impede the work of the Committee. The Chief Executive was pleased to report that seven members of staff had expressed an interest in serving on the Committee and rather than force an election of any kind, the individuals had been asked to work together as a group and engage with staff to better represent the staff cohort at JSCC meetings. Only one individual would have voting rights but it was a real bonus to have so many people engaged in that way. The Chief Executive thanked the individuals concerned.

A number of individuals had attended the LGC Awards ceremony earlier in June. Unfortunately, however, the Council did not win the "Council of the Year Award" but encouragement could be taken from the fact that West Lindsey was the only District Council shortlisted.

The Council's Land Searches Team had been voted "Team of the Year" and the Council had also won the Government and Public Service Apprentice Champion Award. The Chief Executive was particularly proud of the fact that staff had managed to win awards due to the level of support and development opportunities offered by the Authority.

Members were advised that West Lindsey had been the first Council in Lincolnshire to publish its financial statements. The Authority had been one of only a handful of local authorities across the country to have met the statutory deadline. This had been achieved whilst also implementing a new financial system. The team were congratulated on the achievement.

The New Lincolnshire Local Plan had been adopted on the 13 April 2023 and was considered groundbreaking in its approach to carbon neutrality and its attempts to drive policies that worked towards that end.

The Community and Business Grants Scheme, funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund had been launched straight after the May elections. Members were encouraged to engage with the local communities they represented to make them aware of the scheme. The Council had two years in which to spend its allocation.

Council Officers would be starting the business planning process over the summer in respect of the financial year 2024/2025. Discussions would be held with the Leader's Panel and Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs. The budget process for 2024/2025 would start formally in November.

And finally, as mentioned by the Leader, the Chief Executive confirmed that court dates had been set in relation to the use of the former RAF base at Scampton as a migrant centre. The outcome would determine whether or not the Council could proceed with a judicial review of the Government's decision.

This concluded announcements.

22 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chairman advised the meeting that no public questions had been received.

23 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 9

The Chairman advised the meeting that no questions pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No. 9 had been received.

24 MOTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10

The Chairman advised the meeting that one Motion had been submitted pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No. 10 and was set out on the agenda.

Councillor Hague was invited to put his Motion to the meeting as follows:-

“Motion for the Home Secretary to take urgent action to halt plans to turn RAF Scampton into an alternative accommodation centre for migrants.

“I, Councillor Sabastian Hague, propose that this Council:

1. calls on the Home Secretary, Ms Suella Braverman, to immediately halt the government’s plans to turn RAF Scampton into an alternative accommodation centre for migrants.
2. Calls on Lincolnshire County Council to join West Lindsey District Council in standing for evidence-based, consultative decisions that align with the welfare and aspirations of West Lindsey residents; and those seeking asylum within the UK.

This motion is proposed for the following reasons:-

Significance of RAF Scampton

RAF Scampton stands as more than a landmark; it's a symbolic emblem of our national history and pride. The sudden proposition to convert this site into an accommodation centre for asylum seekers fundamentally undermines its historical and sentimental significance.

Effect on Planned Community Projects

Our council, with the support of residents has-secured a £300m investment plan to transform RAF Scampton which will preserve, protect and enhance by providing aviation heritage, business and aerospace, space and aviation technology. The government's—sudden proposal disrupts these plans, casting a shadow on the future economic growth of our local community and dampening the entrepreneurial spirit of our residents.

Sustainability and Infrastructure Deficiencies

RAF Scampton and its vicinity lack the necessary infrastructure to support a large influx of asylum seekers. This population requires comprehensive access to essential services, such as healthcare, social care, and other public services. The current proposal overlooks these fundamental human needs and the subsequent strain on our existing infrastructure.

Absence of Consultative Decision-Making

A decision of this magnitude demands transparency, inclusive dialogue, and thorough evaluation. However, we have witnessed a lack of all these elements in the decision-making process. This approach raises considerable doubts about the leadership of the Home Secretary.

Moral Implications

The moral implications of this proposed plan cannot be understated. Asylum seekers are individuals who have experienced profound hardship and are looking to us for compassion and refuge. It is our duty to provide them with suitable accommodation that affords them the dignity they deserve, and that can cater to their needs for healthcare, social care, and other public services. The use of RAF Scampton as an asylum accommodation centre does not align with these values.

Conclusion

This issue, however, is more than a critique of a single decision. It is an indictment of an absence of common sense and empathy in leadership that we are witnessing. The Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, who has been entrusted with the welfare of both our citizens and those seeking asylum within our borders, appears to have given little thought to the impact, viability, and humanitarian consequences of such a decision.

Hence, I, Councillor Sabastian Hague, on behalf of the West Lindsey District Council, propose this motion to call on the Home Secretary to immediately halt the government's plans to turn RAF Scampton into an alternative accommodation centre for migrants; and to call on Lincolnshire County Council to join West Lindsey District Council in standing for evidence-based, consultative decisions that align with the welfare and aspirations of West Lindsey residents; and those seeking asylum within the UK.

I so Move".

With the Motion duly seconded, a debate ensued.

Councillor Fleetwood, Leader of the Opposition, highlighted to the Chamber that WLDC and Lincolnshire County Council had been engaged over a long period of time and each Council had been supportive of the other. He also pointed out that whilst the Motion mentioned the welfare of Scampton residents, it was not actually tailored to ensuring the welfare of those residents. Furthermore, he considered that the Motion should make it clear that this was to be a migrants centre and that residents of the facility would be free to come and go as they pleased.

Accordingly Councillor Fleetwood moved three amendments which were duly seconded:-

- (a) That the Motion should delete reference to calls on Lincolnshire County Council to join West Lindsey District Council in seeking evidence based consultative decisions.
- (b) That statement number two should be tailored specifically to Scampton and the word "Scampton" included within the Motion.
- (c) That the Motion should make it clear that the facility was a migrant centre and that residents were free to come and go as they pleased.

Upon being put to the meeting, the amendment was declared to be **LOST**.

The meeting then proceeded to debate the original Motion during which it was stated that it was essential to keep all the local communities within West Lindsey updated with developments so that they could consider their responses. Reference was made to the duty of care which the Council would need to have for the residents of the centre should it be approved.

The motive of the motion was questioned by the Opposition, suggesting it was not focussed on the local community or on securing the councils investment and this is what this Council should be fighting for. Referencing the considerable amount of work undertaken by the Council in developing a £300 million development for the site which recognised its importance as a heritage site and the significant contribution it could make to the local economy. This is where assurances needed to be sought from the Government on these proposals.

During the course of the debate Councillor Fleetwood proposed another amendment to statement two, as follows and this was duly seconded:-

“That West Lindsey District Council stands for evidence-based, consultative decisions for Scampton which should align with the welfare and aspirations of the residents of West Lindsey”.

Upon being put to the meeting, the amendment was declared to be **CARRIED**.

It was thereupon proposed by Councillor Brockway and duly seconded that:-

“Where appropriate within the Motion it be made clear that West Lindsey District Council would continue to work with Lincolnshire County Council in relation to this proposal”. to acknowledge the work undertaken by the County Council to date.”

Upon being put to the meeting the amendment was **CARRIED**.

The meeting proceeded to debate the original Motion as now amended.

Some Members considered that the Scampton situation should be put into context, stating that this was wholly avoidable and that the Government had failed in its approach to immigration and this had resulted in the creation of a “breeding ground” for illegal gangs and irregular entry to the country. In addition illegal trafficking of human beings had resulted in fatalities occurring.

Members recognised that this was serious issue and that it was essential for properly thought through policies on immigration that considered local communities and the most vulnerable people affected by illegal immigration. However, all were in agreement that the site at Scampton was not appropriate for a number of reasons, including access to services but also due to the planned regeneration and investment secured for the site.

It was considered unacceptable that the Government had not undertaken proper and

meaningful consultation with local residents.

There was political heated exchange regarding the MPs approach and involvement to date, with differing views expressed as to whether this had been appropriate and effective to date. This was met with further suggestions regarding the true intent of the motion.

It was felt that all Parishes in the area would be affected by the Scampton proposal – not just those within Scampton. It was therefore imperative to consult all local communities. A lot of the discussion hinged around the definition of local residents. Some felt residents of Scampton were the most affected, but it was pointed out that all surrounding local communities would be affected.

After all those Members who had asked to speak had contributed to the meeting, the mover of the original Motion, as now amended, was invited to exercise a right of reply.

The Motion as amended (by the changes referred to above) was then put to the vote and declared to be **CARRIED** and as a result it was:-

RESOLVED that: -

1. This Council calls on the Home Secretary, Ms Suella Braverman, to immediately halt the Government's plans to turn RAF Scampton into an alternative accommodation centre for migrants;
2. that West Lindsey District Council stands for evidence based consultative decisions regarding Scampton that align with the welfare and aspirations of West Lindsey residents.
3. It be made clear in the reasoning for the Motion that West Lindsey District Council wishes to continue to work closely with Lincolnshire County Council.

25 THE CORPORATE PLAN, 2023-2027

The Leader of the Council presented the Corporate Plan for 2023 to 2027 for formal adoption by Full Council in accordance with the unanimous recommendation of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee on 8 March, 2023.

The new Corporate Plan, which set out the Council's proposed strategic aims and objectives, was the culmination of over 12 months of extensive and collaborative stakeholder sessions to which all Members had been invited. These sessions had included workshops linked to the development of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and had regard to the Council's environmental sustainability aspirations.

The proposals set out in the Plan had been informed by statistical evidence of needs, issues and opportunities available to the Council, as published in the annual "State of the District" report, a copy of which was attached to the report. The concept of the Corporate Plan was well embedded across the organisation and an internal audit conducted in November 2021 had returned an opinion of substantial assurance, particularly in the areas of stakeholder engagement, communications and the management of strategic risk. The Plan carried

across the Council's vision to ensure that West Lindsey remained a great place to be, where people, businesses and communities could thrive and reach their potential.

The changes made to the previous Plan included an updated policy context, a change in tone and language to ensure clear understanding of its purpose, updated strategic aims and objectives and outcomes to reflect the priorities of Members.

In summary, the Plan was ambitious with clear objectives and expected outcomes.

In presenting the updated Corporate Plan the Leader expressed his thanks to Members and Officers for their hard work in bringing the Plan up to the point where it could be recommended for formal adoption. He recognised that there were some very challenging issues facing the Council over the next four years and the Plan had been developed with a view to ensuring that these issues could be addressed effectively and efficiently. Of particular importance was putting customers at the heart of everything the Council did. The Plan was intended to deliver economic growth in a sustainable way and protect the health and wellbeing of local communities, particularly those who were most vulnerable. The Council remained in a reasonably strong financial position and was able to continue to deliver high performing, value for money services.

Members were supportive of the new Plan but wished to recognise the work undertaken by the Council's former ruling administration to ensure a seamless progression to an updated Plan that sought to address all emerging issues. Officers also clarified the position around some of the evidence data relating to levels of obesity within the District. It was confirmed that there were some quirks in the interpretation of the figures and that Officers would circulate more information outside this meeting which, hopefully would better explain the position.

Having been moved and seconded, it was

RESOLVED that the recommendation from the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 8 March, 2023 be accepted and the new Corporate Plan for the period 2023 to 2027 be approved and adopted.

26 RECOMMENDATION FROM CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES FOR AMENDMENTS TO FEES AND CHARGES 2023/2024

The Leader presented a report setting out the rationale for some amendments to the fees and charges schedule for 2023/2024, as recommended by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

The first related to the introduction of a new charge of £150 for carrying out checks in connection with loans to first time buyers who were entitled to discount.

The second related to the fee for CON29 information as part of the Land Charges function. This fee was set by Lincolnshire County Council and had been increased from £62 to £63 (inc. VAT). The charge for a printed copy would also increase from £24 to £28.

The third related to charges in the Licensing Function. The charge for a copy of a licence

(under the Council's licensing function) had been rounded up to £11 in April but should have remained at £10.50, this being the actual cost of the service. Inflationary increases to 'skin piercing' and 'street trading consents' licences, which should have been applied in April, but were not were now being recommended.

Members supported the proposed changes and having been proposed and seconded it was

RESOLVED that the recommendation from the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee be accepted and the amendments to the fees and charges schedules for 2023/2024 be approved, namely: -

(a) **NEW FEE** – Homes, Health and Wellbeing – First Home Check – £150 - effective from 1 April 2023;

(b) **AMENDED FEES** - Land Charges: -

- fee for CON29 information – increased from £62 to £63 (inc VAT)
- printed copy fee - increased from £24 to £28

all effective from 1 April 2023; and

(c) **AMENDED FEES** - Licensing –

- Fee for copy of licence – reduced from £11.00 to £10.50
- Skin piercing premise registration – increased from £198 to £210
- Skin piercing personal registration - increased from £55 to £59
- Street trader consents - increased from £206 to £219

All effective from 26 June 2023.

27 RECOMMENDATION FROM CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT 2022/23

The Council was required to receive as a minimum the following reports: -

- An annual treasury strategy in advance of the year (March 2022).
- A mid-year (minimum) treasury update report (January 2023).
- An annual review following the end of the year describing the activity compared to the strategy (the report now before Members this evening).

The Leader of the Council introduced the report which was required in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management.

The report had been recommended for approval by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee of 7 June 2023 and had been written during a time of high inflation levels and high interest rates which had not been experienced for some time. The report contained a commentary on the Council's treasury position from the Section 151 Officer and also included a commentary from the Council's economic and treasury advisors.

The main parts of the report showed that interest rates had been rising and therefore the Council's investments had benefitted from this, generating £544k during 2022/23. This had overachieved the original budget by £395k. Through close monitoring of cashflow and the

capital programme underspending during the year, external borrowing had not been increased. This had meant that the exposure to increased costs payable had been minimised.

The debt maturity profile table set out at section 4 of the report showed that some existing borrowing would need to be refinanced in the short term, and this would mean higher rates would be payable on loans.

Section 3 of the report showed that the Council's Capital Financing requirement had reduced during 2022/23 mainly due to the setting aside of minimum revenue provision in the year, which was in line with the Treasury Management Strategy.

The treasury management indicators were detailed throughout the report, and there had been no breaches of the prudential indicators during 2022 /23.

The final part of the report was an economics update which had been supplied by The Council's Treasury Advisors and was considered useful in understanding the national and international context the Council was operating within when undertaking its treasury activities.

Members complimented the Officers on the level of detail included within the report and in particular its attempt to contextualise the Council's position with the national position. Members also sought some clarification around interest rates payable to the Public Works Loans Board and Government gilts.

Having been proposed and seconded it was

RESOLVED that the recommendation from the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee be accepted and the Annual Treasury Management Report and actual Prudential Indicators for 2022/2023 be approved.

28 APPOINTMENT OF MEMBER CHAMPIONS - ARMED FORCES AND RISK

Council was advised of the policy concerning the appointment of Member Champions for particular areas.

It was reported that there were two Champion roles which were linked to wider best practice or adopted covenants and to which it would be prudent to make appointments to at the earliest opportunity. These were the Risk Champion (linked to the work of the Governance and Audit Committee) and the Armed Forces Champion (as part of the Council's covenant commitment)

Having been proposed and seconded it was:

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) Councillor Sabastian Hague be appointed as the Council's Member Champion for Armed Forces until the end of the Civic Year 2024/25;

- (b) Mrs Alison Adams, lay independent Member on the Governance and Audit Committee be appointed as the Council's Member Champion for Risk until the end of the Civic Year 2024/25; and
- (c) the expectations of Member Champions as set out in the current role description (Appendix A of the report), be noted.

The meeting concluded at 8.31 pm.

Chairman