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West Lindsey District Council - 22 January 2024

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA on 22 January 2024 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 Trevor Bridgwood	Councillor Mrs Jackie Brockway
Councillor Liz Clews	Councillor Frazer Brown
Councillor Karen Carless	Councillor Christopher Darcel
Councillor David Dobbie	Councillor Adam Duguid
Councillor Ian Fleetwood	Councillor Sabastian Hague
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan	Councillor Paul Lee
Councillor Jeanette McGhee	Councillor Maureen Palmer
Councillor Roger Patterson	Councillor Roger Pilgrim
Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers	Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings
Councillor Tom Smith	Councillor Jim Snee
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee	Councillor Paul Swift
Councillor Baptiste Velan	Councillor Moira Westley
Councillor Trevor Young	

In Attendance:

Ian Knowles	Chief Executive
Emma Foy	Director of Corporate Services and Section 151 Officer
Lisa Langdon	Assistant Director for People & Democratic and Monitoring Officer
Katie Storr	Democratic Services & Elections Team Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Also in Attendance: Mr R Quirk – Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

Apologies

Councillor Jacob Flear
Councillor Paul Key
Councillor Mrs Angela Lawrence
Councillor Peter Morris
Councillor Lynda Mullally

46 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND TRIBUTES FOR FORMER DISTRICT COUNCILLOR AND GAINSBOROUGH TOWN MAYOR TIM DAVIES

The Chairman welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting.

A warm welcome was also extended to Mr Richard Quirk Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel, who would later present his Panel's recommendations in respect of Members Allowances for the next Civic Year.

Before commencement of the formal business, the Chairman paid tribute to former District Councillor Tim Davies, who had passed away in December 2024 and who had also been the serving Mayor of Gainsborough Town Council, at the time of his passing. Members were asked to join the Chairman in honouring Councillor Davies, with a minutes' silence.

Following which, several personal tributes were made, with Members sharing their memories and experiences of having worked with Councillor Davies, noting how he had continued to undertake duties, despite being very ill, such was his community spirit. The Council's thoughts and good wishes were expressed to Councillor Davies wife and children.

47 MOTION TO VARY THE ORDER OF THE AGENDA

Having received apologies and opened the meeting the Chairman proposed a motion to vary the order of business, seeking to take motion two prior to motion one (Agenda Item 8) stating his reasoning for this. With the motion duly seconded, on being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED that the order of the agenda be varied as detailed above.

48 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - 6 NOVEMBER 2023

Having been proposed and seconded, it was: -

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council held on 6 November 2023 be confirmed, approved and signed as a correct record.

49 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman advised that for the avoidance of doubt Members did not need to make a declaration in respect of the Members' Allowance report, as this was an area in which all Councillors were granted an exemption by the relevant legislation.

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.

50 MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman introduced the report advising Members that it would 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.

51 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman

The Chairman addressed the Council, referencing briefly some of the events with which he had been involved and attended since Council last met which had included both the Christmas and New Year period.

Firstly, referencing the Civic Carol Service, he had held on 8 December in Market Rasen, which had been well supported by the local community and enjoyed by all. In the run up to Christmas the Chairman had also visited the various departments across the Authority to thank staff for the work they had undertaken over the year, including staff at the Arts Centre, Depot and Crematorium, as well as an invitation to the Authority's Middle Management Meeting (WMT) to discuss the highlights and achievements of 2023.

Other events attended in the Christmas period had included a Christmas Lunch in Market Rasen, hosted by the Jockey Club, during which the Chairman presented the second donation of the year of £14,000 from the recycled metals from the Crematorium. This was a marvellous scheme which sought to support bereavement charities in the local areas.

Whilst it had been a sad occasion, it had also been an honour and privilege to attend the funeral of the serving Mayor of Gainsborough and former District Councillor Tim Davies. It had been uplifting to hear the many fantastic stories of his work in the local community and the impact he had on others.

On Christmas Day the Chairman had been present at the Christmas Day lunch held in Gainsborough, hosted by volunteers for those considered vulnerable.

On behalf of the Leader, the Chairman had visited the Grammar School in Gainsborough, to attend an awards evening, it had been lovely to celebrate the successes of the young people.

Finally, the Chairman took the opportunity to thank all the staff of West Lindsey for the tremendous work that they had done during the incredible number of storms that the District had seen. The Community spirit and willingness to help one another, regardless of the hour or conditions, was something to be applauded.

Leader

The Leader made the following address to Council: -

"I have three items to report to Council, and I will try and keep my announcements brief, first of all, the Local Government Finance Settlement for West Lindsey District Council has been met with disappointment and concern. The allocation of funds from Central Government to the Council is woefully inadequate, leaving the District struggling to meet the needs of its constituents,

one of the main issues which this settlement fails to take into account, is the unique challenges faced by rural areas like West Lindsey.

The Council is responsible for providing essential services such as waste management, housing services in a vast geographical area with dispersed population centres, however, the funding provided does not adequately reflect on these demands. Inadequate funding, means more and more local government authorities are struggling to meet the demands and challenges to deliver local services. This poor financial settlement also puts additional pressure on their already stretched council resources. Staffing levels have been reduced to the minimum, a poor funding settlement means that there is limited capacity for investment in economic development initiatives that could stimulate growth and job creation in the area.

The Conservative Government's deliberate attempt to starve rural councils of desperately needed cash, has detrimental effects on both residents' quality of life and the overall development of the District, it's crucial that Central Government recognises these challenges and provides adequate funding to ensure that the essential services can be maintained effectively in rural areas like West Lindsey.

In the recent weeks, as Leader I've written to our local MP and I await the decision from the Minister of the Local Government requesting a better deal for West Lindsey District Council.

My second item is devolution. The three upper tier councils are now undertaking consultation with the residents of Greater Lincolnshire to get their views before deciding whether to submit a proposal to Government in its current form. Guarantees from the onset of the proposal were given that devolution would have absolutely no impact on the delivery of the seven district councils within Lincolnshire. However, it was extremely disappointing that at last week's Greater Lincolnshire Leaders' meeting to hear that the Government are already seeking agreement for local government reorganisation, as part of the deal.

Local government reorganisation would have an impact on residents massively and hundreds of local jobs would be put at risk. Can this Government be trusted with a devolution deal? Clearly, this is an attempt to dissolve the powers of local democracy and get rid of local district councils through the back door, I'll leave it at that for now, chairman, because I realise that we've got a paper on that this evening.

My third update relates to Scampton. The fight against the Conservative Government's unjust decision to house the asylum seekers at RAF Scampton continues. The former World War site, which saved the nation nearly 80 years ago.

As a Council, following the outcome of the judicial review, we have filed an appeal against the court decision, and we continue doing the right thing. Fighting on behalf of the local communities we represent and trying to save the £300 million investment deal for the site in the next few weeks.

It will be critical on how our talks with the government develop and we will try and keep Members updated as regularly as we possibly can over that period, thank you, Chairman.”

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive addressed Council and opened with recording his thanks for the emergency response teams, who once again had been out at weekends ensuring that the residents and communities were supported during storm Henk over the weekend of the 6 and 7 of January. Particular thanks were expressed to Mr Selby who had worked five weekends over the last eight weeks as a result of the ongoing storms – a supposed once in a 100 year event!

The Chief Executive was pleased to announce that from next week the Authority would be offering business recovery grants, for businesses that were affected by the storms, further information would be distributed by the Growth Team in coming days. The funding being made available was from central government, who had also determined the criteria for qualification.

As referenced by the Leader, in November the Officers had attended the Judicial Review hearing of the Authority’s case against the Home Office with regards to Scampton. Unusually in the judgement, Mrs Justice Thornton, did give us permission for the Council to appeal against the judgment. The decision to appeal had been taken by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee 19 December, Members would be updated as matters progressed.

Finally it was with delight, that the Chief Executive advised the Chamber that the Waste Team had once again won the best performer, in the category of waste refuse collection at the APSE awards in December, noting this to be the second year in a row. A massive well done to the whole team was extended for their achievement.

Thanking the Chief Executive for his announcements, and in response to the information about a further business grant scheme being due to open, the Chairman took the opportunity to highlight the amounts of flooding grants paid to date: -

The Council had paid 122 community recovery grants of £500 per household who suffered internal flooding to their properties, and five £2,500 business support grants.

These grants were available to people who have suffered internal flood damage to their homes or businesses during Storm Babet or Storm Henk.

This brought announcements to a conclusion.

52 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

53 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 9

The Chairman advised the meeting that one question pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No.9 had been submitted to the meeting. This had been circulated to all Members, separately to the agenda, and published on the website.

The Chairman invited, Councillor David Dobbie Local Ward Member for Gainsborough East, to put his question to the Leader as follows:-

“As the WLDC Representative on the Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board I am fully aware of the Beckingham Marshes and alleviating measures on the Nottinghamshire side of the river that were put in place over a few years to try to keep this main transport artery open during such flooding events, recognising the key role the road plays in our transport network.

Having found myself using the A631 – the day before the decision was made by Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) to close the road, it would appear, that all that investment and mitigation measures failed due to around a 100m stretch of road – near what is termed locally, as 8 Arches. The remainder of the marshes had done the job they were intended to do, and if it wasn't for this small section of the road which sits lower and has little to no raised embankment, the travel chaos which ensued would not have resulted. In my opinion this is incompetent and renders the rest of the measures a simple waste of money.

My question is did NCC explain why they decided to close the road for the period? did they give this authority any advance warning? and further more have NCC advised us of any plans they have to improve this and any other weak points in the flood defences along the A631 to prevent a reoccurrence of this road closure during future flooding events, recognising the key role it plays in feeding this District , its businesses and residents.

Thank you”

The Leader of the Council responded as follows : -

“We were advised at the 11.30am TCG meeting on the 6th January that Nottinghamshire Police had advised Lincolnshire Police that they were planning on closing the A631 at Trent Bridge from 15.30hrs that afternoon. As the closure was being ignored, then a physical closure was implemented on the Monday of that week.

We have since written to Nottinghamshire County Council to ask if they have any plans to improve the A631 to avoid such closures in the future, and as of today have received a response from Nottinghamshire County Council, confirming there are plans to upgrade the A631”.

The Leader of the Council undertook to share the response with the Member who had raised the question.

54 MOTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10

The Chairman advised the meeting that two Motions had been submitted pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No. 10 and these were set out on the agenda.

Noting the resolution Members had passed at the outset of the meeting, to vary the order of the agenda, taking Motion two prior to Motion one, the Chairman read aloud his motion on behalf of the Flood Working Group as follows: -

“Members, Climate Change has brought about not only record levels of high rainfall but also an increase in the frequency of high intensity rainfall episodes. The result has been an increase in surface runoff, groundwater, pluvial and fluvial flooding – causing serious problems for affected householders, road/rail users, farmers etc. throughout the district, county and country. All predictions, and indications, are that the trends will continue increasing the risk of serious flooding problems – meaning that ever-increasing numbers of people and businesses will suffer social, health, wellbeing and economic issues from water flooding incidents.

In West Lindsey agencies, voluntary/community and council groups all worked on the flooding incidents and did their very best to keep damage to a minimum and keep our communities safe. It is important that we pay tribute and thank these groups for their sterling work. However, as Storm Babet on August 20th indicates all these positive efforts were hampered by a lack of resources and co-ordinated working between the agencies. It is essential that this is addressed if the consequences of weather-related incidents are to be reduced in the future.

It is also important that resilient measures are planned and delivered to cope with the ever-increasing quantities of water from higher rainfall levels and thereby prevent the flooding from occurring in the first place. As several different agencies are responsible for the flood water – Anglian Water, Environmental Agency, Lincolnshire Highways, Lincolnshire County Council Flood Management, District Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and Landowners, under Riparian Responsibilities it is essential that they all work together on this task and that they are properly and adequately funded to do the job.

This Council asks the Chief Executive, Chairman and Leader of The Council to write to the Chief Executive, Leader of Lincolnshire County Council, Chairman of Lincolnshire County Council’s Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Group and DEFRA endorsing the decision* (attached to the agenda) by LCC at their December 1st 2023 Meeting to set up an enhanced water management partnership to strengthen the County’s flood resilience, adaptations and management of the water management system and also to lobby for extra funding from Central Government to ensure this partnership and member agencies have sufficient resources to carry out this essential mitigating work.

I so move”.

With the motion duly seconded, debate ensued. Members spoke at length of concerns in their local wards, recent experiences and the need to look at much wider areas and

tributaries which were contributing to the flooding of the District.

The issue of riparian ownership was raised. This was an area that was difficult to enforce, sometimes residents legitimately did not understand their responsibilities. The filling in of ditches and dykes was often historic. There were also sometimes issues with some riparian responsibility holders not having either the physical or financial capability, sometimes both, to deal with remedial and maintenance work. This was an area Members felt needed a greater understanding and a way of working together established. Especially given how these culverts dykes and streams were intended to alleviate water and were now always able to for reasons outlined to the meeting.

A Members who served on the County Council's Flood Management group undertook to refer the matters raised back to the Group, but acknowledged riparian ownership and the matters raised were not clear cut always.

Some Members considered inadequate funding, for such agencies as the Environment Agency and all those agencies concerned with flooding, played a part. The Government Policy of not dredging and maintaining rivers, particularly downstream of where flooding or flooding events have occurred was questioned. This was a practice that routinely used to be seen and was now absent. It was suggested it maybe needed to be re-introduced. Maintenance was considered essential.

A point of information was raised, noting the directive with regard to dredging was more likely a European directive, as opposed to Government.

Internal drainage boards were praised for the work they undertook on the water courses for which they had responsibility. Other agencies were not always as easy to contact and less willing to provide assistance. Some Members spoke of robust discussion had with such agencies and their unwillingness to commit to dates for remedial works needed.

Members thanked Officers at the District Council for their work on flooding, with tributes to Ady Selby for his work in facilitating the establishment of a flood and drainage working group within the District Council, a forum through which Members could raise resident issues for escalation, in the absence of a response from another agency. Members were of the belief this was an invaluable forum and was really helping residents and communities. Thanks, were also given to those Officers who had been on the ground during the flooding. The support West Lindsey had shown its residents was to be applauded.

It was suggested that greater support should be sought from the MP and another key agency to engage with was Severn Trent, important in the top north-west corner of West Lindsey.

Further debate ensued and it was suggested there should policies in place to recompense farmers whose land served to protect homes.

Members also spoke of the impact flooding was having on the sewage systems, the health and safety issues this raised and the need to lobby such companies for upgrades to systems. On being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED that the Chief Executive, Chairman and Leader of The Council

write to the Chief Executive, Leader of Lincolnshire County Council, Chairman of Lincolnshire County Council's Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Group and DEFRA, endorsing the decision by LCC at their December 1st 2023 Meeting, to set up an enhanced water management partnership to strengthen the County's flood resilience, adaptations and management of the water management system; and also to lobby for extra funding from Central Government to ensure the partnership and member agencies have sufficient resources to carry out this essential mitigating work.

Councillor Bailey was invited to put her Motion to the meeting as follows:-

Leader, Council Members, in my capacity as Local Ward Member for Lea I have been in correspondence with Severn Trent, in light of recent news about their profits and commitment to investing billions of pounds to support its networks..

In 2017, Lea Parish Council, highlighted issues in the area to Severn Trent and this Local Planning Authority has applied conditions to planning applications in light of the Pick Everard Report (DE-1709-989 Nov 2017) which was commissioned by Severn Trent.

That report defined and quantified a specific deficiency in the system, and further indicated that an upgrade was required before any additional load was to be added to the network.

Residents have experienced firsthand the lack of upgrade, when their homes and gardens have been flooded year after year. Now as we head into the autumn/winter months, they are rightly concerned it will happen again. Residents of West Lindsey deserve a better service from Severn Trent.

This report was commissioned in 2017. I believe, Severn Trent has failed the residents of West Lindsey, as well as the environment all this time by not upgrading a system which they have identified as having a specific deficiency, and in my opinion knowingly.

In recent weeks, I have been able to ascertain from Severn Trent that they will do some temporary work by the end of the financial year (March 2024) but they have not given a timeframe for when they will upgrade or do the necessary works to the pumping station to allow for extra capacity.

Whilst a temporary measure is all very well it does not solve the issue and residents should not have to wait another 6 years until its properly resolved. Surely we have a duty as the District Authority to ensure these much needed (by evidence of report by Severn Trent) improvements are made to systems which supply services to our residents.

We need answers and the residents need to know how long will it take to rectify this problem and who is going to bring forward a timely solution?

I've sought assistance from OFWAT, the Environment Agency and Sir Edward as Local MP none of whom have provided assistance to resolve this.

I therefore move that Members support me in requesting the Leader, in his formal capacity, on behalf of West Lindsey District Council, urgently writes to Severn Trent Water Agency requesting answers as to when a more permanent solution will be in place, and the needs of local residents met.

I so move."

With the motion duly seconded, debate ensued.

A Member raised a number of concerns with the motion in its current format, and the language used, indicating she would be seeking amendments.

Her reasoning for which was outlined to the meeting in detail. Firstly, she had been unable to locate the Pick Everard report referenced, in the motion, and therefore questioned the accuracy of the reference, but also highlighted this was not the main concern, that being the tone and impliedness of the motion, which she did not feel all Members should be asked to support. It was suggested it was not reflective of the partnership working needed.

Furthermore, it was suggested that the reference to Edward Leigh was wholly inaccurate and should be removed. The Member seeking to amend the motion outlined correspondence and dates when Edward Leigh had addressed this matter and the action he had taken. Acknowledging there had been a change in Minister during the period, it was suggested Edward Leigh MP had referred the matter to the highest level and continued to chase the matter up, and as such the motion was inaccurate, and required amending.

The Member indicated that whilst she wished to support the merit of the motion, she could not, given how in her view, it was inaccurate and misleading.

With the Chairman having sought clarity from the Member seeking to amend the Motion, the specific amendment to be moved was as follows: -

Paragraph 5 – removing the words “and in my opinion knowingly”

Paragraph 9 – removing the words “none of whom have provided assistance to resolve this”

The amendment was duly seconded. Along with a request for a recorded vote of the amendment, which again was duly seconded.

Members were invited to debate the amendment. Ruling Group Members were supportive of the motion in its current format. The motion as submitted stated Edward Leigh had not resolved the matter, and in some Members' opinion he hadn't resolved it, the motion didn't say he hadn't written back, as such they did not support the amendment. There was lengthy political debate regarding the MP and his actions to date and what was intended by the motion. In the absence of new points, the Chairman called for the amendment to be put to the vote, which would be a recorded vote, as the required number of requesters had been met.

Votes were cast as set out below:

For: - Councillors Barrett, Bierley, Bridgwood, Brockway, Brown, Duguid, Fleetwood, Lee, Palmer, Patterson, Pilgrim, and Smith (12)

Against: - Councillors Bailey, Bennett, Boles, Bunney, Carless, Clews, Dobbie, Hague, Howitt-Cowan, McGhee, Rodgers, Rollings, J Snee, M Snee, Swift, Velan, Westley, and Young (18)

Abstain: - Councillor Darcel (1)

With a total of 12 votes for the amendment, 18 against, and one abstention the amendment was declared **LOST**.

With no further discussion, the substantive motion was put to the vote.

RESOLVED that Members request the Leader, in his formal capacity, on behalf of West Lindsey District Council, to urgently write to Severn Trent Water Agency requesting answers, as to when a more permanent solution will be in place, and the needs of local residents met.

Note: Councillor Tom Smith requested that his vote against the above decision be recorded.

55 RECOMMENDATION FROM THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL - MEMBERS ALLOWANCE SCHEME 2024/25

The Chairman again welcomed Mr Richard Quirk, Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel to the meeting and invited him to introduce the report.

Mr Quirk outlined the process that had been undertaken to produce the recommendations set out in the report. Consultation had taken place with Members and thanks were expressed to those that had responded, noting the response rate had again been low.

Mr Quirk also outlined the factors which had been taken into account, summarised in paragraph 1.2 of the report by the Panel in reaching its recommendations.

Mr Quirk explained his rationale for having included options this time and highlighted to Members the issue the Panel had specifically been asked to look at Section 2 of the report.

Acknowledging that Members had rejected their increases in some previous years and whilst also recognising the reasons for this, Members were reminded of the importance of keeping remuneration at a level to avoid a one-off large increase should remuneration fall below comparable rates. Remuneration was there to ensure no one was prevented from being a Councillor due to out-of-pocket expenses.

Debate ensued and one of those Councillors affected by recommendation 1(a) and who currently shared an allowance, indicated he felt it appropriate the allowance was shared and

could not support the proposal. He provided the chamber with a brief reasoning as to why additional positions had been created but did not believe they needed an allowance each.

Other Members were also supportive of keeping the sharing arrangement and did not believe the Committees affected needed two fully remunerated Vice-Chairmen.

With there being no appetite for recommendation 1 (a), and no one willing to propose or second the content, the status quo and sharing of the allowance would remain.

General discussion ensued with Members generally being of the view that they should have no role in the setting of their allowances, but acknowledged it was a legislative requirement. However, it was acknowledged that needing to be able to attract and retain a diverse set of Councillors was important.

Option 2 (a), a proposed increase of 5% on the basic allowance, throughout the course of the debate appeared to be the more palatable and was ultimately moved and seconded.

On being put to the vote it was: -

RESOLVED that Option 2(a), An increase of 5% to the individual Basic Allowance, be supported and the new rates for the Civic Year 2024/2025 as detailed in the attached Appendix, be approved.

Note: The Vice-Chairmen of Governance & Audit Committee, and Overview & Scrutiny Committee would continue to share the Special Responsibility Allowance for the role.

The Remuneration Panel were thanked for their work by Members across the Chamber and across the political parties.

Mr Quirk in turn thanked Members and the Officers of the Council who supported the Remuneration Panel's work.

56 DEVOLUTION IN LINCOLNSHIRE - TO MAKE A FORMAL RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION

Council considered a report which provided Members with a briefing and the opportunity to debate the Devolution proposals agreed by Lincolnshire County Council, North Lincolnshire Council and the North East Lincolnshire Council, in order that a formal consultation response could be submitted on behalf of West Lindsey District Council. The four main areas it was suggested the consultation response should focus on were highlighted to the Members, as detailed in Section 3.5 of the report, and the purpose and intent of the proposed Joint Committee was briefly summarised, with Members noting this would be the subject of a future report, subject to approval.

The Chief Executive provided Members with a brief presentation in support of the report which provided an overview of the Devolution arrangement, the policy landscape in which

devolution sat. Three levels of devolution could be sought, Lincolnshire had sought the maximum level three, which gave a commitment for power and funding to come to Greater Lincolnshire, more powers, meant more responsibility, having more of a say which would increase flexibility, more flexibility would allow for better results.

To receive the powers granted by Devolution, a new body called a Combined County Authority (CCA), usually chaired by a Mayor, would need to be established.

It was stressed Devolution was not local government reorganization, whilst some transport and LEP functions would move to the CCA, the city, district and borough councils would continue to keep doing what they currently did.

The aims of the CCA and devolution were shared, these being: -

- Investing in infrastructure
- Boost growth and innovation
- More high skill high wage jobs in key sectors
- Provide training for new jobs
- Housing in the right place
- Improve transport links

Further details under each of those headings was provided to Members. Finally, the stages and steps in reaching devolution were shared with Council.

Debate ensued and the former Leader expressed gratitude to colleagues in the upper tier authorities for their work in getting this far, referencing a similar exercise in 2016, when a deal could not be achieved.

Members were encouraged by the fact that the proposed funds to be devolved into Greater Lincolnshire, and the draft agreement compared favourably in comparison with similar agreements elsewhere, both in terms of the level of funding available and the increased representation envisaged for district councils compared to other areas.

The need for fairer funding was something the District Council had always championed for. It was suggested that having a link to the Vision 2050 document would be useful for newer Members.

It was confirmed the village referred to at paragraph 2.2 was Kirkby on Bain, with Members noting this sat outside of West Lindsey.

Giving different comments around whether devolution was in fact re-organisation, Members sought clarity and were concerned that if this was the case this was not clear in the consultation, and in their view should be, questioning whether the consultation was valid.

In responding the Chief Executive was clear that devolution did not automatically carry any implication for local government reorganisation, so the consultation was purely about seeking to devolve powers from central government and the funding that came with that.

Alongside that the South East Lincolnshire Partnership had written to the Department for Levelling Up back in February 2023, asking for a unitary proposal to be considered.

The Chief Executive stressed this had not been supported by any of the other districts at the time, and once the devolution deal was announced, the Department wrote back to the South East partnership and asked for their suggestions and that there may be conversations about reorganisation if there was general support for it within the area.

These were two distinctly separate conversations, but happening at a similar time due to the approach made by the South East Partnership and the timing of that.

The Leader disputed to some degree the Chief Executive's re-collection and was of the view re-organisation had been a discussion point, that there would be a creeping effect stemming from devolution, and re-organisations conversations would continue. In his view Members had been told at the outset devolution would not affect the role of the District and Borough Councils, and as such was therefore disappointed that these conversations had started before devolution had been achieved. As such he suggested the Council's response should be clear that the District was against re-organisation.

Arising from questions it was confirmed any Mayor of CCA could levy a charge on the Council Tax bill for the services of the CCA, arising in a suggestion that this could and should have been made clearer in the consultation.

Members were reminded that they could make individual responses to the consultation and should encourage others to do so.

Members were outspoken in their support of no re-organisation, but many acknowledged this was a different debate. In terms of the CCA proposal many could see the potential benefit of a single voice, the areas the CCA would be responsible for, were areas where the District had aspirations for improvement and would need to work in partnership. As such the general consensus was the proposal was to supported and exploration be continued.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the progress on the proposed Greater Lincolnshire Devolution Deal be noted;
- (b) the Council Continues to engage with the implementation of devolution arrangements;
- (c) the submission of a Council response to the consultation be delegated to the Chief Executive following consultation with the Leader, in line with paragraph 3.5 and comments expressed during the debate and detailed above;
- (d) a further report be received by Council on completion of the consultation process; and
- (e) a report and recommendations, on the establishment of a Joint Committee for District Councils, be prepared by Officers for presentation to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee in March 2024, with a final report to an appropriate Full Council Meeting.

57 COLLECTION FUND - COUNCIL TAX SURPLUS 2023/24 & COUNCIL TAX BASE 2024/25

The Section 151 Officer presented the report and advised that the Council was required to set its Council Tax Base and declare an estimate of its Council Tax Surplus which should be taken into account when setting the Council Tax for the following year.

The Council Tax Base for the year 2024/25 would be 32,093.99.

The S151 Officer summarised how the calculation was undertaken and how the collection rate affected the calculation. West Lindsey's collection rate was above the national average and this impacted positively.

The Council Tax Surplus of £1,938,700 had been calculated in accordance with statutory guidance. The Surplus had to be shared between Lincolnshire County Council, The Police and Crime Commissioner and West Lindsey District Council, with West Lindsey's share being £290,100.

This amount would be built into the 2024/25 Budget prior to setting the Council Tax.

Members noted that West Lindsey District Council received a slightly higher proportion of the surplus, than the Police and Crime Commissioner, despite the Police and Crime Commissioner element of the Council Tax being higher than West Lindsey's. This was due to the fact that West Lindsey District Council's precept total, for the surplus calculation, included that precepted for by its parishes.

Testament was paid to all those working in the Revenues department and the Finance department for the work they undertook.

Having been moved and seconded on being put to the vote it was: -

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the estimated surplus of £290,100 be accepted and declared as accruing in the Council's Collection Fund at 31 March 2024 relating to an estimated Council Tax surplus;
- (b) the Council uses its element of the Collection Fund surplus/deficit in calculating the level of Council Tax in 2024/25; and
- (c) in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulation 1992 (as amended) the amount calculated by the Council, as its Council Tax Base for the whole of the District area for 2024/54 be approved and set at 32,093.99 as detailed in the report and appendices.

58 RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - COUNCIL TAX EMPTY HOMES PREMIUMS 2024/25

The Chairman of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee presented the report to Council, which sought approval of the Council Tax Empty Homes Premium 2024/25, on recommendation from the Corporate Policy Resources Committee.

As such, Option 1 within the report, had been supported by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee at their meeting in November 2023, and as such was recommended to Full Council for approval and adoption from 1 April 2024.

This being to increase both the second home charges from 90% to 100% and the long-term unoccupied and substantially unfurnished property charges from 100% premium for those empty between 5 and 10 years to 200% premium ie charge 300% council tax and for those empty over 10 years to 300% premium ie charge 400% council tax.

Alongside an additional local exception and discount for any new owners of empty properties.

Councillor Young concluded his introduction by moving the recommendation, which was duly seconded.

On being put to the vote it was:-

RESOLVED that the Recommendation from the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee be accepted and Option 1 of the report be approved, that being to; increase both the second home charges from 90% to 100% and the long-term unoccupied and substantially unfurnished property charges from 100% premium for those empty between 5 and 10 years to 200% premium ie charge 300% council tax and for those empty over 10 years to 300% premium ie charge 400% council tax.

Furthermore, an additional local exception and discount for any new owners of properties, subject to a council tax premium, be approved providing evidence is provided of a firm commitment to bring the properties back into use within 12 months.

This reduction would mean they would not be liable to pay council tax on the empty property for a maximum period of 12 months but, should the property become occupied within 12 months the new resident would become liable in accordance with council tax legislation.

In the event that it is not brought back into use within this time period the appropriate premium charge will be restored and become due and payable.

These changes to be effective from 1 April 2024.

59 RECOMMENDATION FROM CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2024/25

The Chairman of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee presented the report to Council, which sought approval of the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2024/25, on recommendation from the Corporate Policy Resources Committee.

Members noted the Scheme has not been amended significantly since 2019/20 due to the implementation of Universal Credit and the subsequent pandemic.

Data available showed that it has been an effective scheme and that the collection rate for the previous year was 98.3%. Members noted this was “top quartile” performance and current indications were that similar collection rates would be achieved for the current financial year.

As such, Option 1 within the report, had been supported by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee at their meeting in November 2023, and as such was recommended to Full Council for approval and adoption from 1 April 2024.

Councillor Young concluded his introduction by moving the recommendation, which was duly seconded.

On being put to the vote it was:-

RESOLVED that the Recommendation from the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee be accepted and Option 1 of the report, be adopted as the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for West Lindsey District Council for 2024/25. That being: -

to make no changes to the current council tax support scheme apart from to apply any new legislative requirements and the uprating of the non-dependant 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.

To also apply any additional changes to government welfare benefit regulations during the year which are intended to increase the income of benefit recipients to avoid unintended consequences to customers.

60 RECOMMENDATION FROM CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - MID-YEAR TREASURY UPDATE 2023/24

The Chairman of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee presented the report, which sought approval of the Mid-Year Treasury Report 2023/24 and changes to prudential indicators.

The report had been presented to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee, where it had been fully considered and debated and stood referred to Council for approval.

Members were advised that the report was required to comply with the CIPFA code of practise on treasury management and also served to keep Members updated with the current situation.

The report showed the movements in the Council's prudential indicators which have changed as a result of two things. The first being the Council closing its accounts for 2022/23 after the original strategy had been written. The second being, as a result of a revised capital programme for 2023/24, as outlined in the quarter two budget monitoring report considered previously by the Corporate Policy and Resources committee.

Councillor Young concluded his introduction by moving the recommendation, which was duly seconded.

In responding to a question, Officers confirmed the movement in the capital programme and the need for re-profiling, referenced in paragraph 1.4 of the report, was primarily arising from the Levelling Up Programme. On being put to the vote it was:-

RESOLVED that the recommendation from the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee be accepted and as such the Mid-Year Treasury Management Report and treasury activity be noted and the changes to Prudential Indicators as detailed at Sections 5.2, 6.1 and 6.2 of the report be approved.

61 RECOMMENDATION FROM CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - NEW FEES RELATIVE TO CREMATORIUM FOR 2023/24

The Chairman of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee introduced the report which sought to introduce two new fees relative to the Crematorium following recommendation from Corporate Policy and Resources Committee, as detailed at section 1.2 of the report, and moved the recommendation.

This was duly seconded and with no questions, on being put to the vote it was: -

RESOLVED that the recommendation from the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee be accepted and the two new fees (paragraph 1.2) – namely : -

Individual handmade ashes into glass ornaments containing a small amount of loved one's ashes and comes with a certificate of authenticity.

o Robin ornament - £115 incl. VAT

o Memorial bauble with stand - £145 incl. VAT

be approved for immediate implementation.

62 AMENDMENTS TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS

The Chairman introduced the report which sought to make amendments to Committee Memberships following requests from both the Administration and Opposition Groups.

Whilst nominations were included in the published report, for the majority of the positions being appointed to, a nomination for the Opposition Group's seat on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was sought. The Opposition Group Leader indicated he would not be making a nomination, and as such the seat would remain vacant.

With no further nominations made for any of the positions available, having been proposed and seconded, the recommendations were put to the vote en-bloc.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) Councillor Karen Carless be appointed to the Planning Committee, for the remainder of the current civic year, replacing Councillor Baptiste Velan; and
- (b) Councillor Baptiste Velan be appointed to Licensing and Regulatory Committees, for the remainder of the current civic year, replacing Councillor Karen Carless.

Note: - The seat on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to remain vacant in light of no nomination from the Opposition Group.

63 AMENDMENTS TO EXISTING OUTSIDE BODY APPOINTMENTS

The Chairman introduced the report which dealt with amending appointments, previously made, to Outside Bodies. The reasoning for the revisions was detailed within the body of the report.

Whilst nominations were included in the published report, for the majority of the positions being appointed to, nominations for the seat on the Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire were sought, with Councillor Jeanette McGhee being proposed and seconded.

With no further nominations made for any of the positions available, the recommendations, having been moved and seconded, were put to the vote en-bloc.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) Councillor Matthew Boles be appointed to the Trustees of Gainsborough Education Charity until Annual Council 2025 replacing Councillor David Dobbie;
- (b) Councillor Jeanette McGhee be appointed to the Housing Health & Care Delivery Group, until Annual Council 2027 replacing Councillor Lesley Rollings; and
- (c) Councillor Jeanette McGhee be appointed to serve on the Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire until Annual Council 2027 replacing Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers.

West Lindsey District Council - 22 January 2024

The meeting concluded at 9.21pm

Chairman

Minute Item 55

Appendix to Minutes : Members Allowances 2024/25 – Agreed Rates.

Allowance	Current Rate 2023/2024	Proposed Rate 2024/2025
Basic Allowance - proposed 5% inc	£6,429	£6,750
SRA – Leader of Council	£12,989	£12,989 - no change
SRA – Deputy Leader/s (in the event of two or more being nominated, the payment to be shared)	£4,710	£4,710 – no change
SRA – Chair of Council	£4,161	£4,161 – no change
SRA – Vice-Chair of Council	£1,433	£1,433 - – no change
Civic allowance for the Chairman of Council	£1,683	£1,683 – no change
Civic allowance for the Vice Chairman Of Council	£460	£460 – no change
SRA – Committee Chairs (excluding Licensing Cttee and Regulatory Cttee)	£3,247	£3,247 – no change
SRA – Regulatory Chair	£1,625	£1,625 – no change
SRA – Licensing Chair	£1,625	£1,625 – no change
SRA – Committee Vice-Chairs (excluding Licensing Cttee and Regulatory Cttee)*1	£1,537	£1,537 – no change
SRA – Regulatory Vice-Chair	£768	£768 – no change
SRA – Licensing Vice-Chair	£768	£768 – no change

*1 The Vice-Chairmen of Governance & Audit Committee, and Overview & Scrutiny Committee will share the Special Responsibility Allowance for the role.

SRA – Leader of the Opposition (in the event of the Council being a ‘hung’ Council, the Leaders of the two largest groups be paid the same special responsibility allowance as for the Leader of the Opposition)	£4,710	£4,710 – no change
SRA – Deputy Leader of the Opposition	£857	£857 – no change
SRA – Minority Group Leaders (per group member, and including the Group Leader)	£105	£105 – no change
Independent Members: Governance & Audit and Standards Committees – A payment of £60.00 for the first four hours of attendance at a meeting/event and a second payment for attendance in excess of four hours. The first four hours would commence from the start time of the meeting (To be paid when not chairing a meeting).	£60	No change
Dependent Carer’s Allowance	NLW + £1	No change
Car Allowance (per mile) (the mileage rate to be increased or decreased in accordance with any changes to the tax efficient rate authorised by the HMRC).	0.45p	No change
Passenger supplement – each passenger	£0.05	No change
Motorcycle allowance per mile	£0.25	No change
Bicycle allowance per mile	£0.21	No change
Subsistence		
Absence of more than four hours but no more than eight hours – only the cost of one meal can be reimbursed up to a maximum of £15		
Absence of more than eight hours but no more than 12 hours – only the cost of two meals can be reimbursed up to a maximum of £25		
Absence of more than 12 hours but no more than 16 hours- only the cost of three meals can be reimbursed up to a maximum of £33		

Absence of more than 16 hours but not including an overnight stay – only the cost of four meals can be reimbursed up to a maximum of £40

Overnight	£83	No change
Overnight (London or LGA)	£208	No change