

## WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA on 6 March 2017 at 7.00 pm.

**Present:** Councillor Roger Patterson (Chairman)  
Councillor Mrs Jessie Milne (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Gillian Bardsley	Councillor Sheila Bibb
Councillor Owen Bierley	Councillor Matthew Boles
Councillor Jackie Brockway	Councillor David Cotton
Councillor Christopher Darcel	Councillor Michael Devine
Councillor Adam Duguid	Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan	Councillor Stuart Kinch
Councillor Angela Lawrence	Councillor Giles McNeill
Councillor John McNeill	Councillor Richard Oaks
Councillor Judy Rainsforth	Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers
Councillor Lesley Rollings	Councillor Reg Shore
Councillor Thomas Smith	Councillor Lewis Strange
Councillor Jeff Summers	Councillor Mrs Angela White
Councillor Trevor Young	

**In Attendance:**

Manjeet Gill	Chief Executive
Ian Knowles	Director of Resources and S151 Officer
Mark Sturgess	Chief Operating Officer
Alan Robinson	SL - Democratic and Business Support
Dinah Lilley	Governance and Civic Officer
Jana Randle	Governance and Civic Officer
James O'Shaughnessy	Team Manager BI and Corporate Governance

**Also in Attendance:** Rev Sue Deacon

**Also Present:** one member of the public

**Apologies for Absence**

Councillor David Bond
Councillor Stuart Curtis
Councillor Steve England
Councillor Hugo Marfleet
Councillor Pat Mewis
Councillor Maureen Palmer
Councillor Malcolm Parish
Councillor Tom Regis
Councillor Anne Welburn

Councillor White had advised in advance that she may be arrive late.

## **87 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND TRIBUTES TO THE LATE ALAN CAINE**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and took the opportunity to pay tribute to past West Lindsey District Councillor, Alan Caine, who had passed away on 20 February 2017. A minute's silence had been held during the prayers prior to the commencement of the meeting. A donation had been sent by the Council in lieu of flowers to MacMillan, and the Council's flag was flying at half-mast. Alan had served as a West Lindsey District Councillor from 1995 to 2015 and had held the position of Chairman from 1999 to 2001, and was also a prominent member of Caistor Town Council.

Several Members also spoke warmly of their memories of Alan and the sentiments of all were that he would be missed, by his colleagues on the Council and also by the town of Caistor – where he had been known as 'Mr Caistor' due to his commitment and the work he undertook. Condolences were sent to his family.

## **88 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2017 were confirmed as a correct record.

## **89 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made at this point of the meeting.

## **90 MATTERS ARISING**

The Monitoring Officer noted that all items were showing black as having been completed.

## **91 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Chairman**

The Chairman noted that he had attended a number of engagements, which had been circulated to Members. One particular highlight was a visit to a business in Saxilby, which had begun as a single individual who then moved into farm buildings to expand, and subsequently went on to employ over 100 people. There were plans to expand further, and all this was over a period of just seven years. This was a good example of a real success story.

The Chairman also noted the distribution of envelopes, containing surveys, in front of Members, requesting that they distribute these in their wards. This was an important project, initiated by the Prosperous Communities Committee to establish the level of Broadband Provision across the district. It was particularly important that the surveys were returned to the Council in order for the results to be collated and a clearer view of the area's facilities obtained.

### **Leader of the Council**

The Leader informed the Council of various meetings he had attended and speakers heard. On 1 February Andrew Percy MP had confirmed that the Devolution process had ceased.

On 2 February the Leader had met with a number of MPs at the District Councils Network Conference. Gavin Barwell had spoken regarding the Housing White Paper and emphasised the need to build for the future, and outlined plans for loans to developers and first time buyers. Greg Clark, the Minister for Business, Energy and Industry had highlighted the need for infrastructure and spoken on the emerging Green Paper, urging a response to be made. Sajid Javid, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government discussed greater integration with CCGs and to provide more support to Adult Social Care. There was a £2.3b fund available from April, which it would be good to access, but would have been more accessible, had Devolution progressed.

There had also been a meeting with Lincolnshire Leaders at the Farming Forum, and Thonock and Somerby Estates had discussed the water course through Blyton which was to be modified. The Trent meeting of the associated drainage authorities, where discussion took place on the Environment Agency's intention to hand over responsibility for water courses to either local authorities or riparian owners. This needed to be monitored as it was felt that Drainage Boards would be a better option.

The Leader had also attended the County Council's meeting where the County Leader affirmed that opinions were to be sought from District Councils regarding the proposals for a unitary authority.

### **Head of Paid Service**

The Chief Executive noted that the Leader had briefly mentioned the Devolution process, the Partnership working with the other authorities was clearly not at the same point as six months previously, and the Housing and Infrastructure Group was not meeting as regularly now as partners focus on other priorities and in absence of a Combined Authority for Greater Lincs and funding to it no longer being the driver. The current situation was not clear and an update would be provided following the May elections.

Work was ongoing with the LEP and the University to form partnerships in order to facilitate accessing funding. Bids had been submitted however there was not yet any news. Priorities at the moment included the Gainsborough Town Centre regeneration project and the Market Rasen Leisure Centre. There was a focus on the Planning and Enforcement services. The Chief Executive would be leading on this with officers. Much work had been done with recruitment of officers and the formulation of the Local Plan. There had been an increase in planning applications and there needed to be a consistent approach to dealing with these, and lessons learned from complaints. A report was to be submitted to the Prosperous Communities Committee.

### **92 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions from members of the public.

### **93 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 9**

Councillor Trevor Young queried that he had submitted a question to Council, however this had not been circulated. Officers verified that this question had not been received, and undertook to investigate. Meanwhile Councillor Young was requested to re-submit the

question which would be considered for the following meeting.

#### **94 MOTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10**

Councillor Shore had submitted the following motion:

Dear Members,

I am bringing this motion to you tonight after several instances where I have been let down by the planning department of West Lindsey District Council where there appears to be a disregard for the views of Ward Councillors.

If you recall, I have brought this matter up before, as misunderstandings between the Councillor role and the role of planning was evident - planning believing that their role is black and white and ALL judgments should be made on planning grounds alone. If this were the case then there would be no need whatsoever for a Planning Committee consisting of Members. It is now clear to me that this confusion still remains and decisions are being made without listening to the local democratic voice. If you recall I received a public apology on this matter.

The last straw came for me recently when, despite at least 17 email interactions between myself and other objectors, Parish Councillors, Executive level officers and Planning Officers; a delegated decision was made. I was only informed after the event had completed. It did not go to committee as requested previously and I was not communicated with, despite several requests to be updated so that I could check whether the committee option had been taken. This was an application, virtually identical to others, which had been previously refused.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time this has happened to me and all Councillors should be concerned that decisions are being made on controversial applications without Members being able to present the local perspective to committee. We are all aware that this is the essential democratic counter measure to what may be inappropriate decisions.

**I therefore move that in the forthcoming audit of development management the issue of how the planning department communicates with ward councillors is included within the scope of that audit and that the training given to officers around political awareness is reviewed and strengthened.**

**Meanwhile I await the outcome of an investigation regarding a separate complaint about how the processing of the application I referred to was handled.**

Cllr Reg Shore

**Note:** Councillor White joined the meeting at 19.38.

Councillor Giles McNeill, Chairman of the Governance and Audit Committee responded to

the motion and set out the scope of the forthcoming audit to be undertaken by the Committee. The scope was to include communications with the public and Councillors and invitations would be issued for interviews with Councillors from 2 May 2017. The Chairman had met with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Planning Committee and the Chief Operating Officer. The purpose of the audit was to undertake a full review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning and enforcement services. Twenty audit days were being dedicated to the work, as there were different issues being experienced to those of two years ago.

Councillor McNeill then seconded the motion.

The Chief Executive then informed Members that whilst normal practice was to wait for the improvement actions following the audit, she would be sending a table to all Members to enable cases to be listed to record issues of concern, to establish the trends and causes. In this way there could be improvement prior to the outcome of the audit, in September.

Having been moved and seconded, the motion was voted upon. It was then **RESOLVED** that the content of the motion be included within the scope of the Governance and Audit Committee's audit of the Planning Service.

## **95 CORPORATE PLAN (2016-2020) ACTION PLAN UPDATE**

The report detailed key strategic activity in progress in support of delivery of the objectives of the Corporate Plan (2016-2010), and the key achievements during 2016/17 in support of the Corporate Plan.

The Council approved its Corporate Plan 2016-2020, at the Full Council meeting of 3 March 2016.

The Corporate Plan presented the vision as being "West Lindsey to be seen as a place where people want to live, work, invest and visit" and identified future priorities and outcomes which were based on evidence of assessments, surveys and key statistics such as deprivation and health related matters.

The Corporate Plan also detailed values which guided the Council' working:

- Delivering a surplus to re-invest
- Investing in communities
- Delivering customer focussed priorities
- Generating growth

and set out the approach based on the Entrepreneurial Model of:

- Investing in communities to help themselves and others
- A more commercial Council
- A modern, innovative and collaborative Council

The Corporate Plan contained six themes with a number of priorities and desired outcomes associated with each theme:

1. Open for Business
2. People First
3. Asset Management
4. Central Lincolnshire Local Plan
5. Partnerships/Devolution
6. Excellent Value for Money Services

To ensure that the Corporate Plan remained a working document, a commitment was made to provide an annual update in relation to progress of key activity undertaken in support of the achievement of the Plan's objectives.

Appendix One, attached to the report, provided Members with an overview of the key strategic work activity currently in progress against each of the Corporate Plan themes.

The Leader of the Council introduced the Corporate Plan document stating that it set out an ambitious vision both for the Council and the people of the district. It was well understood that it was no longer possible to rely on the government as in the past. Change and delivery for the electorate relied upon embracing of the commercial element of the Corporate Plan. Customers and partners had to be prioritised within that Plan delivery at a realistic cost. In noting that there were many key activities listed in the report, the Leader commended the report for approval.

Brief discussion ensued with Members complimenting the Plan on its visionary approach, however some Members felt that the proposals within it appeared too Gainsborough-centric, with insufficient focus on the smaller towns, villages and rural areas. Other Members responded that the regeneration of Gainsborough and the encouragement of business growth would help to enhance the whole district.

The recommendation was seconded and on being voted upon it was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) the key activity detailed within the report to facilitate the delivery of the objectives of the Corporate Plan be supported;
- b) the activity set out be agreed as the basis for an external publication.
- c) the report be approved.

## **96 FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2017/18 TO 2021/22**

The Director of Resources presented the report for Members' approval.

The paper had been presented to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee on 9 February 2017 based on the provisional settlement announced on 15 December. On 20 February the final settlement was announced with little change. Therefore the document was as presented to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

NNDR settlement funding had now been finalised and was contained at paragraph 2.6. The budgeted NNDR income was provided in Appendix A.

The budgeted net income was £2.266m after funding the previous year deficit of £1.060m.

The overall benefit continued to be £276k from the pool. This would be updated for the budget book.

The Medium Term Financial Plan was the primary strategic financial document for the authority and set out the local and national context, and the revenue and capital plans for the next five years.

The document also met a number of regulatory requirements:-

- i) The requirement to agree a balanced budget for the coming year 2017/18;
- ii) The requirement to establish the level of Council Tax for 2017/18; and
- iii) Meet current best practice (supported by CIPFA) by setting the budget in a medium term time horizon.

Over the last four years West Lindsey had reduced expenditure by £4.4m reflecting the reduction in core spending power as calculated by central government.

The impact of the settlement included:-

- i) Reduction in Rural Services Grant (RSG) by a further £626k
- ii) Changes to New Homes Bonus reducing expected income by £371k
- iii) The settlement reflects the four year deal offered in February 2016 and therefore delivered the expected level of RSG.

The document had been restructured this year to incorporate the Council's business plan commitment in section 3. The financial implications of the settlement and the authority's business plan commitments were reflected in section 4. Members were then referred to paragraph 4.11.2 which set out the underlying assumptions of the MTFP.

On that basis, and with the savings reflected in paragraph 4.12 the Council was able to agree a balanced budget for 2017/18 and 2018/19 with a remaining deficit in year 2020/21 of over £400k.

The Council Tax position was set out for Members in paragraph 3.5.

The Medium Term Financial Plan set out an ambitious capital programme in Appendix E. the programme totalled over £53m and was planned to be funded from reserves, capital receipts, borrowing and grants.

A risk analysis was included in Part 9 of the document. As the authority took a commercial approach to its activities there were specific risks to be highlighted. Firstly the assumption of commercial returns on the acquisition of investment properties. If it was not possible to find suitable acquisitions this could be an issue going forward. Secondly the assumption of introduction of Green Waste Charging in 2018/19, which, if not introduced would need alternative strategies to deliver the budget indicated.

Finally, Members were reminded that earlier in the financial year the authority's budget process had received a full assurance outcome from internal auditors and the S151 paragraph and the statement on robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves, was set out at section h of the report.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Director of Resources and the Finance Team for an

excellent report and budget position. The Plan should be seen as a journey to be taken over a four year period, with the route set, but not in stone. The budget was sound but had the flexibility needed to address external influences outside of the Council's control. The Leader moved the 12 Recommendations.

Debate ensued with Members welcoming a positive report, seeking and receiving clarification on a number of matters, such as New Homes Bonus, Market Rasen Car Parking, and the status of the Municipal Bonds Agency.

The Ward Member for Fiskerton noted that whilst the Council had received national recognition for its progress on Neighbourhood Plans, this could not be said for Fiskerton as the Plan was not what the village wanted. A Point of Order was raised that the matter was not relevant at this point. The Chairman also noted that WLDC had no control over the production of Neighbourhood Plans, merely provided support at the preparation stage, and that it was up to residents to decide at Referendum.

Further clarification was then sought on the increase to borrowing limits when risk should be minimised wherever possible. The response was that investments should generate enough head room to fund borrowing, and that the Treasury Management Strategy only allowed borrowing that was covered by such means.

The recommendations were moved and seconded en bloc, and in accordance with required legislation for voting on the Council's budget, a recorded vote was taken.

**For:** Councillors Bardsley, Bibb, Bierley, Brockway, Devine, Duguid, Fleetwood, Howitt-Cowan, Kinch, Lawrence, G McNeill, J McNeill, Milne, Oaks, Patterson, Smith, Strange, Summers, and White.

**Against:** Councillors Cotton and Darcel.

**Abstained:** Councillors Boles, Rainsforth, Rodgers, Rollings, Shore and Young.

A total of 19 votes for, two against and six abstentions.

**RESOLVED** that:

- a) the external environment and the severity of the financial challenges being faced as detailed in the Financial Strategy, be recognised;
- b) the Statement of the Chief Finance Officer on the Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves be accepted;
- c) the Medium Term Financial Plan 2017/18 to 2021/22 be approved;
- d) a Mid-Year Review of the Medium Term Financial Plan be received during 2017/18;
- e) the Revenue Budget 2017/18 at Appendix A, be set;
- f) the Fees and Charges Policy be approved and the Fees and Charges 2017/18 (as amended) (Appendices B&C) be set;
- g) the Capital Investment Strategy (Appendix D) be adopted;
- h) the Capital Programme 2017/18 to 2021/22 and Financing (Appendix E) be approved;



- i) the Treasury Management Strategy 2017/18 be approved and the Treasury Investment Strategy, the detailed Counter Party criteria, the Treasury and Borrowing Prudential Indicators (Appendix F) be adopted;
- j) the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy as contained in the Treasury Management Strategy (Appendix F) be approved
- k) the Council Tax (Appendix G-K) be approved; and
- l) the 2017/18 Pay Policy Statement and establishment numbers (Appendix L) be approved.

## 97 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

## 98 SURESTAFF BUSINESS PLAN 2017-18

The report submitted for Members' approval provided a business summary and an outline of the benefits delivered following the investment in Surestaff

The original proposal to buy Surestaff had been based on four potential benefits:

- 1 – To have a reliable local provider of agency staff to WLDC
- 2 – To minimise the cost of managing suppliers within the Operational establishment
- 3 – To generate an income stream from charged in services
- 4 – To generate a shareholder return

The report provided an update on current performance and had the full business plan for the next three years attached.

A recent reforecast, compiled on a relatively prudent basis, illustrated the potential for a positive contribution resulting from a local enterprise which was already generating a social return for the local communities of WLDC.

Clarification was sought on some of the processes involved and assurance was given that all due diligence was undertaken during the management of the business and there was an ethical focus on its activity.

On being moved, seconded and voted upon it was **RESOLVED** that, as the single shareholder, the Council agreed the Surestaff Business Plan attached to the report.

## 99 MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

**NOTE:** The meeting resumed in open session for consideration of the following item.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Committee Meetings published since the Council meeting of 14 November 2016 be received.

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The meeting concluded at 8.42 pm.

Chairman