



WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Challenge and Improve Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA on 4 April 2017 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan (Chairman)

Councillor Mrs Sheila Bibb
Councillor David Bond
Councillor Mrs Pat Mewis
Councillor Mrs Maureen Palmer
Councillor Mrs Angela White

In Attendance:

Mark Sturgess	Chief Operating Officer
James O'Shaughnessy	Team Manager BI and Corporate Governance
Oliver Fytche-Taylor	Planning Services Manager
Andy Gray	Housing and Communities Team Manager
Katie Coughlan	Governance and Civic Officer

Apologies:

Councillor Lewis Strange (Vice - Chairman)
Councillor Trevor Young (Vice - Chairman)
Councillor Stuart Curtis
Councillor Adam Duguid
Councillor Hugo Marfleet
Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings

Membership:

Councillor Mrs Sheila Bibb substituting for Councillor Lewis Strange
Councillor Mrs Maureen Palmer substituting for Councillor Hugo Marfleet.

79 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING.

(a) Meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 21 February 2017

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held on 21 February 2017 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

80 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

81 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

The Committee gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule, setting out the current position of previously agreed actions, as at 27 March 2017.

RESOLVED that the Matters Arising Schedule as at 27 March 2017 be received and noted.

82 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE UPDATE REPORT

Members gave consideration to a report which sought to provide an update on performance, staffing and fee income in the Development Management Team.

In presenting the report, Officers outlined the service's current performance compared to previous performance, the staffing changes which had been implemented, information on the duty planner service, the level of income being received, one of the highest recorded, and the challenges and opportunities which faced the service over the coming months.

Members congratulated the Planning Services Team Manager and all Team Members for the work they had undertaken. It was confirmed that all agency staff had been replaced with permanent staff and this change was welcomed by Members. An interim Officer currently held the post of Conservation Officer but this position was currently out to advert.

In response to questions, Officers confirmed that the statistical information contained within the report did include the previous backlog of applications. Officers further confirmed that the backlog had been the Team's priority and such cases had been addressed first. No backlog currently existed.

Members again congratulated the Team for all their hard work and wished them continued success.

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) the contents of the report be noted and the continued changes within the Development Management section to sustain an improved service delivery be supported; and
- (b) having received this report, performance of the Development Management Service be reported in line with other services via Progress and Delivery Reports (as previously resolved by Members of Challenge and Improvement Committee at their meeting on 11 October 2016).

83 ENFORCEMENT PERFORMANCE UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report which provided Elected Members with an update in regards to the performance of planning enforcement services.

In presenting the report, Officers outlined the service's current performance in its key measures, compared to previous performance, Section 2 of the report referred. This included the number of cases which were open, the types of cases, by priority, the time taken to resolve requests and ultimately the action which was taken.

Section 3 of the report outlined the resources which were currently allocated to the service and further advised that it had recently been agreed to recruit an additional full time temporary post. No administrative or direct customer service support was offered to the work area and steps were being taken to also address this.

The Chief Operating Officer addressed the Committee and provided some background and context to the service function. Planning Enforcement was not a statutory service and thus not a service the Council had to offer. It was a demand led service and therefore it was important that there were policies in place to prioritise cases. The Policy in operation had previously been agreed by Members and was one based on risk. i.e. the highest risk, for example, threat to life cases would be dealt with as priority. In contrast, this did mean some cases, such as, sheds, garages or cases where if planning permission was sought it would likely be granted, would not be pursued potentially after an initial visit.

Officers advised that the Policy would be reviewed by the appropriate Policy Committee during the next civic year. It was accepted that feedback was not always positive as a result of the prioritisation approach, however, this was essential if resources were to be managed.

Ultimately the most serious cases were submitted to Court and it was important that Officers could focus on preparing evidence that when presented to Court, would be upheld. The Council took steps to publicise successful prosecutions to the maximum level as this served as an extra deterrent.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

84 YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT CONCLUSION REPORT

Members gave consideration to a report which summarised the work undertaken by the Committee in respect of their enquiries into the issue of youth unemployment and which identified possible actions the Committee could recommend Prosperous Communities Committee undertake to address the issues that had been raised.

Members present indicated that they had found the investigation both interesting and informative and were supportive of the suggested concluding event.

Members were of the view that all of the identified actions were worthy of further consideration by the Policy Committee and as such all would be submitted.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the concluding report be noted;
- (b) no additional actions be incorporated into Section 6 of the report;

- (c) all of the high and medium priority actions identified within the report, Section 6, be **RECOMMENDED** to the Prosperous Communities Committee, for further consideration and implementation if supported; and
- (d) to conclude the work into youth unemployment, the holding of an event for young people, to be attended by Members of the Committee, as detailed in Section 7 of the report, be supported.

85 C&I ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to a report which presented the draft Annual Report for Member comment and agreement prior to submission to Annual Council.

Members commented on the amount of work they had undertaken throughout the year.

Members were asked to give further consideration to Sections 11 and 12 of the report which set out the “Look Forward” to next year. Debate ensued and a number of suggestions were posed namely: -

- Homelessness – significant Changes to legislation and impact on the service
- Focus on Closer to the Customer Programme
- Neighbourhood Planning Support
- Attendance by ACIS following changes in working practices/partnerships
- Rural Community Issues
- Continued work of the Health Commission.

Officers indicated that a themed approach, as previously used, would be considered where appropriate. It was suggested the work plan and suggestions posed should be further developed between the Chair of the Committee and the lead officer following the annual Council meeting before being agreed by the Committee, to which Members indicated their agreement.

Officers undertook to incorporate the Committee’s suggestions into the Annual Report. The Chairman further indicated that he would prepare a concluding paragraph for inclusion, prior to the report being submitted to Annual Council.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Annual Report be noted and supported for submission to Annual Council;
- (b) the comments made throughout the course of the debate be further considered by the Chief Operating Officer and the Chairman of the Committee and incorporated prior to the finalised report being submitted to Annual Council; and
- (c) the workplan and suggestions posed be further developed between the Chair of the Committee and the lead officer following the annual Council meeting, before being agreed by the Committee.

86 FORWARD PLAN

The Governance and Civic Officer, presented a report setting out the items of business due to be considered through the committee system and asked Members to identify any reports that they wished to be brought before the Challenge and Improvement Committee for pre-scrutiny.

No reports were identified.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

87 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

The Work Plan for the business of the Challenge and Improvement Committee was presented.

As earlier resolved, the Lead Officer and Chairman of the Committee would give further consideration to the suggestions previously made with a view to submitting a completed work plan to a future meeting for Committee agreement.

RESOLVED that the Work Plan be noted.

The meeting concluded at 7.30 pm.

Chairman