

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 14 January 2025 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan (Chairman)
Councillor Jacob Flear (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Moira Westley (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Trevor Bridgwood
Councillor Paul Lee
Councillor Lynda Mullally
Councillor Maureen Palmer
Councillor Stephen Bunney

In Attendance:
Nova Roberts Director of Change Management, ICT & Regulatory Services
Andy Gray Housing & Environmental Enforcement Manager
Ele Snow Senior Democratic and Civic Officer
Molly Spencer Democratic & Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Eve Bennett
Councillor Paul Key
Councillor Roger Pilgrim

Membership: Councillor Stephen Bunney was appointed substitute for Councillor Bennett

31 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

On being put to vote it was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 November 2024 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

32 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at this point in the meeting.

33 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

The Democratic and Civic Officer noted that the matter relating to the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership invitation had been completed but would be revisited following the Committee Meeting, subject to any questions raised by Members during the discussions.

With no further comments, or requirement for a vote, the Matters Arising Schedule was **DULY NOTED**.

34 PRESENTATION ITEM - SAFER LINCOLNSHIRE PARTNERSHIP

The Housing and Environmental Enforcement Manager, Andy Gray, provided an overview of the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership (SLP) Annual Report, which was submitted to the Committee by Martyn Parker from Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) and circulated to Members on 13 January 2025. Due to his absence, the Housing and Environmental Enforcement Manager outlined the role of West Lindsey District Council within the partnership and addressed key highlights from the report.

The Housing and Environmental Enforcement Manager explained that the SLP was the statutory community safety body for Lincolnshire and administered by LCC's community safety function. The governance structure of the SLP included representatives from all district councils and other key agencies, such as the police, probation services, health authorities, and the reoffending team. It was noted that the SLP was usually chaired by a seconded police representative on a rotational basis, with Cllr Mrs Patricia Bradwell OBE serving as the Lead Member, who had been allocated by LCC.

The Committee were also informed that the SLP operated with core priority groups: anti-social behaviour (ASB), crime and disorder, drug and alcohol abuse, reducing reoffending, and serious violence. Each priority area had dedicated workstreams, with individual districts contributing based on their expertise and resource. The Housing and Environmental Enforcement Manager emphasised that while all districts were actively involved in the ASB workstream, their participation in other priority areas was more selective to ensure efficient resource allocation.

West Lindsey District Council's contributions to the SLP were highlighted, which included financial support for the ASB coordinator, data analysis resource, and a shared case management system (ESINs). West Lindsey District Council also contributed to the statutory Domestic Abuse Reviews (DARs), formerly referred to as Domestic Homicide Reviews, which were required for every domestic homicide incident.

The Committee was informed of several key initiatives undertaken through the SLP. These included the development of a noxious odour policy to address cannabis-related complaints and a county-wide protocol for handling youth-related ASB, managed via the ESINs system. The Housing and Environmental Enforcement Manager reported that the partnership had implemented a standardised procedure for ASB case reviews, also known as Community Triggers, under which shared arrangements allowed Officers from one district to conduct reviews for another.

A Women and Girls Strategy developed under the serious violence priority area was noted, aimed at addressing safety and prevention issues. The Committee was also updated on the Gainsborough Community Links Programme, which provided support for young individuals aged 11–21 involved in violent crime and aimed to reduce their risk of reoffending. This programme, alongside other initiatives addressing knife crime and youth weapon awareness, was funded through Home Office grants allocated to the SLP.

The Housing and Environmental Enforcement Manager stressed the value of West Lindsey District Council's membership in the partnership, and mentioned benefits such as resource sharing, consistent policy implementation, and access to specialised expertise. It was also noted that while participation required a significant time commitment from Officers, arrangements were in place to ensure feedback from meetings was shared effectively across districts.

The Chairman thanked the Housing and Environmental Enforcement Manager for his briefing and invited Members to comment, it was clarified that any specific queries or areas requiring additional detail could be directed to Martyn Parker, either via email or at a future meeting.

Councillor Bunney noted that he was present when Councillor Mrs Bradwell (LCC) announced the £1 million funding set to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). He went on to state that at that time, concerns were raised regarding how this funding would be distributed and its impact on smaller, rural areas. While urban areas may benefit from standard models of intervention, there were questions about the relevance and effectiveness of these measures in smaller communities, where issues such as ASB may manifest differently. A specific example was provided where a minor incident, like someone knocking on an elderly person's door and running away, could cause distress but might not be categorised as ASB in the same way as urban incidents.

Further concerns were raised about systems used by the police, which only recorded incidents when they were reported. In areas with limited neighbourhood policing resources, there were concerns that incidents may not be reported in a timely manner, leading to a lack of data related to ASB. It was questioned whether the £1 million allocation would lead to visible improvements in local areas, particularly those with less frequent police presence. Councillor Bunney acknowledged the work being done by the police but sought clarification on how more rural areas could benefit.

The Committee discussed the challenges of resourcing community safety, noting that the Police often mirrored policing models based on recorded data and incident locations. They emphasised the rural versus urban challenge, highlighting the differences between areas like West Lindsey and Lincolnshire compared to Central London. Members addressed the issue of underreporting, recognising it as an ongoing challenge for all agencies. It was stated by the Housing and Environmental Enforcement Manager that Inspector Head had previously discussed the levels of reporting, and the Committee acknowledged the perception and challenge of unreported incidents.

Further concerns were also raised regarding the issue of obnoxious odours in rural areas. It was enquired about actions taken to address odours from fertilisers, both natural and synthetic, which affected local villages as well as odours that would come from illegal substances. It was suggested that incorporating responses to those issues into policy would demonstrate responsiveness to the concerns of outlying parishes.

The Housing and Environmental Enforcement Manager clarified that the current procedures primarily addressed the use of illicit substances, such as cannabis, within residential premises. These procedures did not cover agricultural odours, which were considered more of a nuisance and environmental issue rather than a community safety concern. However, normal powers under the Environmental Protection Act were still available to address those

issues when reported.

The distribution of important information, such as anti-fraud measures and community welfare updates, was highlighted, with Members commenting that while there were valuable resources available, they would often go unnoticed unless stumbled upon by chance. It was questioned how the council could improve the reach of said messages, and potential channels such as Parish Councils, libraries, and community hubs were suggested.

The Housing and Environmental Enforcement Manager mentioned a communications plan for events such as ASB Week or Scams Week but noted the lack of a specific regime for local issues. He suggested discussing this within the SLP to better engage communities. He added that Parish Councils, which were proactive in situations such as managing flooding, would also help prevent crime and increase safety during other times.

It was enquired as to whether prominent messages could be included on the West Lindsey District Council's website front page to highlight important information, such as fraud alerts or public broadcasts. The need to use multiple communication methods was highlighted, recognising that not everyone was familiar with modern digital tools. A further suggestion was to make use of Parish and village magazines, which were more likely to reach those residents who did not use online services.

The Chairman thanked Members for their comments, and the Housing and Environmental Enforcement Manager for his briefing in Martyn Parker's absence and the work completed related to previous flooding work, noting his involvement in circa. 15 incidents. The Chairman also extended his gratitude to the SLP, acknowledging the vital nature of their work.

35 FORWARD PLAN

The Democratic and Civic Officer reminded the Committee that they could use the forward plan to identify items for pre-decision scrutiny. She noted that a proposer, a seconder, and a majority vote would be required to include an item in the Committee Work Plan. Otherwise, the item would be for noting only.

Councillor Bunney acknowledged the contributions of Inspector Head in previous Committee Meetings but noted that Lincolnshire Police had entered an extended consultation phase. He suggested inviting a more senior officer, possibly from the Chief Constable's office or the Police and Crime Commissioner's office, to provide insights into the strategic decision-making processes of the police.

Councillor Bunney referred to the 2023 PEEL report, which highlighted areas where the police had made insufficient progress. He stressed the importance of understanding strategic decisions at the constabulary level, beyond the neighbourhood planning of West Lindsey District. Members agreed unanimously. Councillor Bunney suggested that if an invitation were extended, it should focus on understanding the actions being taken within limited resources to address strategic problems, rather than exclusively financial constraints. He highlighted the need to explore this aspect in the wording of the invitation.

Upon being proposed, seconded and voted upon it was

RESOLVED that an invitation be extended to a senior police officer and/or the PCC's Office.

36 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

The Democratic and Civic Officer informed the committee that she had contacted the Lead Local Flood Authority, inviting them to the February Committee Meeting and she would inform Member of progress that had been made.

With no further comments or questions, the work plan was **DULY NOTED**.

The Chairman thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and contributions and closed the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 7.01 pm.

Chairman