

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 5 September 2017 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan (Chairman)
Councillor Lewis Strange (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Angela White (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor David Bond
Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor Mrs Jessie Milne
Councillor Malcolm Parish
Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings
Councillor Thomas Smith
Councillor Mrs Anne Welburn

In Attendance:
Mark Sturgess Chief Operating Officer
Diane Krochmal Housing Strategy & Supply Manager
Katie Coughlan Senior Democratic & Civic Officer
Ele Durrant Democratic and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers

25 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND COMMENDATION

The Chairman addressed Members to welcome all present and introduce the newly appointed Democratic and Civic Officers.

The Chairman also took the opportunity to commend the hard work and dedication to the District of Councillor Stuart Curtis who had recently stepped down as District Councillor through ill health. The Chairman expressed his respect and regard for Councillor Curtis and conveyed his best wishes to Councillor Curtis and his family on behalf of Committee.

26 MEETING OF THE CHALLENGE AND IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 27 JUNE 2017

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 June 2017 be approved as a correct record.

27 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

28 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

The Committee gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule, setting out the current position of previously agreed actions, as at 25 August 2017.

With regard to the amber action entitled "Circulation of Case Studies – SWW" the Democratic and Civic Officer advised that it had been agreed between the Chairman and the Housing and Communities Team Manager for case studies to be circulated to Members following the update he was preparing for the upcoming Prosperous Communities Committee in October.

The Democratic and Civic Officer reported that, of the two green items, the forward plan item had now been updated and this would be marked as complete. The item entitled "Review of C & I Function" was an ongoing matter which was regularly discussed and updated at briefings.

A Member of the Committee enquired about the status of the item "Youth Unemployment Recommendations" and whether it had been considered at the Prosperous Communities Committee on 18 July 2017. Officers confirmed this was the case and it was agreed that a copy of the report presented at Prosperous Communities would be sent to Members.

RESOLVED that the Matters Arising Schedule as at 25 August 2017 be received and noted.

29 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY PERIOD 1

Members gave consideration to the first of four planned Progress and Delivery reports for 2017/18, which reflected the performance of the Council over the 2017/18 municipal year (April 17 – March 18). The report for Period 1 dealt with the progress and delivery of projects which were aimed at the delivery of the Corporate Plan. The report highlighted those projects that had entered the delivery stage and were either off track or at risk of not delivering. The report also dealt with the progress and delivery of the services the council provided. It was an "exceptions" report and dealt with those services which were either performing above the required level or were below the target set for them. The report further provided Members with a summary of activity across services.

It was noted that the report had previously been considered by both the Prosperous Communities Committee and the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee. Members were provided with the minute arising from each.

The Committee were asked to examine the responses given to the report by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee and the Prosperous Communities Committee and assure themselves that the appropriate level of challenge was being made by those Committees to the information contained in the report.

Following consideration of the report, a Member of the Committee commented that Enforcement Officers face difficulties such as travel considerations and budget restrictions and asked for it to be placed on record his thanks for their hard work.

RESOLVED that having examined the responses given to the report by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee and the Prosperous Communities Committee, the Committee have assurance that the appropriate level of challenge is being made by those committees to the information contained within the report.

30 PUBLIC REALM TASK AND FINISH GROUP: TERMS OF REFERENCE AND SCOPE

The Challenge and Improvement Committee had agreed that one of their principal projects for 2017/18 would be to scrutinise the effectiveness of the services offered by public agencies in maintaining the rural public realm. In Committee on 27 June 2017 Members agreed that in order to tackle this work a Member Task and Finish Group would be established. The first meeting of this Task and Finish Group took place on 27 July 2017 where terms of reference and the scope and focus of the work were agreed. Committee noted that Councillor A White had been appointed as Chairman of the Task and Finish Group.

The report was presented by the Lead Officer and Committee were asked to approve the Terms of Reference and scope and focus of the work. Discussion ensued regarding the inclusion of cycle pathways within the review of pavements and footpaths. Committee agreed with the need to address problems faced in relation to the existing infrastructure for cycleways however it was identified that the proposal to extend and expand cycle routes would not fit within the remit of this project. All Members agreed for the Terms of Reference to be amended with the inclusion of cycleways with pathways and pavements and for solutions to be identified through the course of the review into the maintenance of the rural public realm. The Lead Officer undertook to share Members' concerns about the need for an audit of cycleways, and the need for the scope of the cycle path network to be increased, to be raised at the Prosperous Communities Committee.

Members discussed the need to work with other agencies and all were in agreement that it was of high importance to engage the Parish Councils in the scope of the work required.

RESOLVED that:-

- a) Terms of Reference be approved subject to the inclusion of cycleways; and
- b) the consideration of an audit and expansion of existing routes be raised through the Prosperous Communities Committee.

31 PRE-SCRUTINY OF THE DRAFT HOUSING STRATEGY

Members were invited to consider a report on the Draft Housing Strategy 2017 – 2022 in order that the Committee could make a formal response to the consultation on the report

based on four specific questions.

The Housing Strategy and Supply Manager, Lead Officer for the Draft Housing Strategy, presented the report and provided a background to the strategy and an explanation as to the implementation of identified actions.

Discussion ensued regarding the need to take other aspects into consideration, such as renewable energy options, provision of supplementary services, for example schools and leisure facilities, and infrastructure considerations as mentioned earlier in the meeting in regards to footpaths and cycleways.

Members were also keen to highlight the need to work in partnership with other agencies. Members felt that the involvement of County Council, Parish Councils and housing associations would be imperative to the success of any housing considerations.

Members were of the view that consultation questions C and D had been satisfied by the document. Based on comments and recommendations from Members, the Housing Strategy and Supply Manager agreed to make amendments to the report to incorporate project options for renewable energy in the implementation plan and to amend the strategy to add more detail about how West Lindsey District Council would work in partnership with other agencies to achieve the housing plan.

In light of the lengthy debate regarding renewable energy and its ability to go some way to addressing fuel poverty, and in light of the Government's changed stance to such, the Committee considered it worthwhile to lobby the LGA.

RESOLVED that:-

- a) Members' comments around the detail at section 2.1 of the report, as detailed above, be noted; and
- b) the LGA be lobbied around the need for new builds to include solar panels and renewable energy technologies.

32 FORWARD PLAN

The Democratic 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. Items previously requested by Members were noted on the report.

The Committee expressed an interest in affordable housing contributions.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted and the affordable housing contributions report be shared with the Committee.

33 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

The Work Plan for the business of the Challenge and Improvement Committee was presented. Members were advised that there were outstanding items to be scheduled into the work plan, including items pertaining to housing and homelessness which would be scheduled for November or January Committees.

RESOLVED that the Work Plan be noted and updated as detailed above.

34 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.

35 SCRUTINY OF PUBLIC BODY (CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU) IN REGARD TO OUTCOMES BEING DELIVERED FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE DISTRICT THROUGH WLDC'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE SERVICE.

Members were advised that as there would be a speaker from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) at the Committee in October, it would be useful to assemble a list of questions from Members to share with the speaker in advance of their attendance. The Lead Officer suggested that Members proposed their questions and Officers would produce a document to agree with the Chairman and circulate to Members.

Members suggested questions as follows:

- How do CAB react to homelessness and what information do they provide to those facing homelessness?
- How do they help people with monetary issues and where do they direct people to go for financial assistance?
- How has the outreach grant awarded to CAB helped them?
- What are the main issues they encounter?
- What outcomes do they deliver – can they share any case studies?
- Do they have any benchmarking for customer satisfaction rates?
- How have changes to Legal Aid funding impacted on CAB?
- How can WLDC help CAB?

RESOLVED that questions be drafted in line with comments expressed and circulated to Members for further comment with the final set of questions being approved by the Chairman.

The meeting concluded at 8.00 pm.

Chairman