



Annual Council

14 May 2018

Subject: Annual Report from the Challenge and Improvement Committee 2017/18

Report by:

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Purpose / Summary:

To present the Annual Report.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1) That Members receive the Annual Report from the Challenge and Improvement Committee.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

The Chairman of the Committee is required constitutionally (Part II, Article 7, page 17, paragraph 7.6) to submit an annual report to Council on the work his Committee has undertaken.

Financial: FIN / 32 / 19

None arising directly from this report

Staffing:

None arising directly from this report

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:

N/A

Risk Assessment:

N/A

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities :

N/A

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Agendas and Minutes arising from the meetings of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held during 2016/17 located on the website

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

1. Introduction and Context

- 1.1 The Chairman of the Committee is required constitutionally (Part II, Article 7, page 17, paragraph 7.6) to submit an annual report to Council on the work his Committee has undertaken over the previous year and the proposed work plan for the coming year. This report must include an update of any operating methodology put in place.
- 1.2 The Chairman's Annual Report is set out below.

2. Chairman's Annual Report

- 2.1 Within the Challenge and Improvement Committee we understand that our emphasis should be on making a positive contribution to the development of policy and to be active in scrutinising the decisions made through the policy committees in an open and transparent manner. Colleagues will be aware there have been some major programmes of work undertaken across the District in the past year and I am confident that the involvement of the Challenge and Improvement Committee in some of these decisions has been a positive influence.
- 2.2 The Committee this year has been involved in both outward facing projects, such as the Public Realm Working Group, as well as more introspective work such as the reconvening of the Progress and Delivery Working Group. To this end we attended the highly recommended Scrutiny training, run by our external auditors KPMG, with the aim of enhancing our functionality and finding our collective 'roar'. The success of this training will be measured through the coming months but I am pleased to say we found significant benefit from the two hour session and we look forward to continuing to grow together as a Committee.
- 2.3 Our activity over the past year has been varied and wide-reaching, with a number of external visitors also attending to assist the Committee in ensuring that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working. Set out below is a summary of the activities we have been involved in:
 - Continued work of the Progress and Delivery Working Group which has led to the development of a new performance management framework which will be considered by the Committee in June.
 - Establishment of the Public Realm Working Group due to report in the autumn of 2018.
 - Items selected for pre-scrutiny to assist in policy development across a range of subjects
 - Conclusion of C&I's study into youth unemployment and support for the re-focus of the West Lindsey employment and skills partnership.
 - Ongoing progress of the Health Commission

- Continued involvement in the work arising from the South West Ward Working Group
- Continued programme of public body scrutiny including the working partnership between West Lindsey District Council and Acis Group Ltd in view of:
- Significant focus on the Housing Strategy and Homelessness Service through pre-scrutiny and involvement as a consultee. This was also triggered through the drop in performance indicated through the progress and delivery measures in accordance with the operating methodology.

3. Review of Operating Methodology – as agreed in previous years this review has become an annual requirement for C&I. In June 2017 the Committee approved the methodology for 2017/18 which remained largely the same as in previous municipal years.

3.1 The Committee accepted there had been minor revisions to ensure C&I continue to achieve four main objectives, those being:

- To be able to scrutinise poor performance wherever it might be occurring within the Council – either a service or a project.
- To be able to call reports into the Committee for pre-decision scrutiny.
- To exercise part of the Council’s role as “community leader” by scrutinising the work of other organisations or agencies which deliver services to the people of the District.
- To act as a scrutinising committee for those decisions which have been taken by a policy committee and have been “called in” by members in accordance with the procedure outlined in the Council’s Constitution.

3.2 The Committee agreed with the proposal to commission external expertise to assist the Committee in becoming more effective and to take advantage of national best practice for scrutiny and overview. A development session took place in February 2018, facilitated by the external auditors for West Lindsey, as further detailed below.

4. Provision of Scrutiny Training by KPMG – At the beginning of the Civic Year, C&I requested for some externally led training to be provided regarding best practice for scrutiny bodies in order to maximise the committee’s effectiveness.

4.1 The training took place in February 2018 and was both useful and thought provoking, asking questions not just of ourselves but our colleagues as well. Having also studied the APSE Scrutiny Report of August 2017, we were encouraged to really explore the role and purpose

of scrutiny and to consider how we might make improvements to our own practice.

4.2 The session was attended not just by C&I Members but also those from other Committees and it was agreed by all that the focus provided by the session would be carried onward to influence new practices and build on previous successes of the committee as we move forward into the new Civic Year.

5. Establishment of the Public Realm Working Group – In response to issues highlighted across the District in relation to matters such as maintenance of footpaths, cycleways and grass verges, C&I established the Public Realm Working Group in the summer of 2017. The group has a core membership of Councillors A. White (Chairman of the Group), A. Welburn, T. Smith, C. Strange, J. Milne, B. Allison and M. Parish. It was agreed other Members could attend as may be appropriate according to the focus of the group at any given meeting.

5.1 The terms of reference stated the purpose of the group as:

“To investigate the efficiency and effectiveness of the services (both those provided by West Lindsey and others) which impact upon the public realm in the District and make recommendations to the Prosperous Communities Committee on any improvements which have been identified as being necessary.”

5.2 The group agreed that the scope of work would consist of the following themes:

- Street Scene (*highways, streetlights, street cleaning*)
- Rights of Way (*footpaths, cycle paths*)
- Rural Environment (*green spaces, waterways*)
- Environmental Crime (*fly tipping, littering, dog fouling*)
- Rural Crime (*agricultural crime, wildlife crime, ASB/burglary*)

5.3 To better understand the issues faced across the District, a comprehensive survey has been developed for completion by Parish and Town Councils. The survey will be open over a period of several weeks in order to maximise response rates and to allow each Council time to discuss at their respective council meetings.

5.4 The working group has agreed to meet prior to each C&I meeting. Representatives from the key organisations involved in maintaining the public realm (for example the Environment Agency, Lincolnshire County Council or Parish & Town Councils) will be invited to attend a meeting of the working group in order to discuss issues as highlighted in the survey responses.

- 5.5 Once the project is completed, there will be a detailed Public Realm Report which will explore current issues impacting the public realm and how organisations are working to tackle these issues and make improvements. The report will be approved by C&I with recommendations to the Prosperous Communities Committee for any possible improvements or projects that could be delivered to enhance the public realm.
- 5.6 The next interim report is due to be seen at C&I in May 2018 with the final report due to be completed for C&I in November 2018.
- 6. Continued work of the Progress and Delivery Working Group – C&I looked to continue the previously established Progress and Delivery Working Group. Following a change of membership, this group for 17/18 comprises Councillors D. Bond, J. Milne and L. Rollings.**
- 6.1 The remit of the group is to review the effectiveness and usefulness of the current measures used to examine the progress of West Lindsey District Council. This must be measurable against the aims and objectives of the Corporate Plan and reporting methods should provide Members the information they need to be able to assure themselves, and therefore the public, that performance across the council is being appropriately managed.
- 6.2 The review of progress and delivery must be robust and C&I has agreed this should take place annually. This will ensure reporting remains relevant and issues or concerns can be addressed as they emerge. Work towards the 2018/19 monitoring cycle is continuing and will be incorporated into the reporting structure.
- 6.3 The outcome of this year's review will result in a new performance management framework for 2018/19 which will be considered by the Committee in June 2018.
- 7. Continued involvement in the work arising from the South West Ward Working Group – Following the work undertaken by the South West Ward Working Group in 2016/17, C&I has continued to receive updates throughout 2017/18.**
- 7.1 In May 2017 Committee heard of the emerging successes of the Selective Licensing Scheme and the focus in the area to help support vulnerable people and build a sense of community. Although the Working Group had closed by this point, C&I felt strongly the need to maintain a level of involvement and scrutiny over the development of the amelioration schemes.
- 7.2 By November 2017, the significant and growing connection with Benjamin Adlard School was emphasised and C&I was assured of the high quality work underway in the area to really tackle some of the ongoing anti-social behaviour. It was clear that there could be no 'quick

fix' to address some of the presenting concerns however C&I was encouraged to hear that, not only had the work originating from the South West Ward become 'business as usual' within the council, but the approaches used in this area had been transferred to projects across the District with some real benefits being seen.

- 7.3 C&I acknowledged that there remained local concerns about anti-social behaviour and there would need to be long term involvement in order to ensure the continued regeneration of the area. C&I was assured, however, that efforts were continuing without the need for further scrutiny. Committee agreed for a further update within 12 months of the last report (November 2017).

8. Significant focus on the Housing Strategy and Homelessness Service – C&I has been heavily involved this year in the council's development of the housing strategy and the implementation of the new homelessness service.

- 8.1 In September 2017 C&I was presented with the consultation for the housing strategy as a pre-scrutiny item. Committee offered a formal response to the consultation and this was included in the final paper to Prosperous Communities Committee.

- 8.2 Committee was joined in January 2018 by Michelle Howard, Wellbeing and Health Manager, and Mr Jonny Goldsmith, Operations Manager for P3 in Lincolnshire. The upcoming legislative changes were presented in detail and Committee made several enquiries about the provision for emergency housing as well as additional support services. It was clear from the presentation that West Lindsey works in close partnership with organisations such as P3 and Members were satisfied with the level of input both from Officers in the council and outside agencies.

9. Ongoing Progress of the Health Commission – The establishment of the Joint Health Commission with the Prosperous Communities Committee was a success story of the previous Civic Year and this work has continued apace through 2017/18.

- 9.1 Through interactions across council departments and the emphasis brought by Members through Prosperous Communities Committee and C&I, considerations for Health and Wellbeing are becoming embedded within WLDC services. Examples are the role of health and wellbeing which are covered in the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans, as well as the work regarding Green Spaces within the District, and the development of leisure facilities.

- 9.2 Collaborative working between Members and Officers continues to be a driving force for the development of new strategies and focussed work streams. The support of the Health and Wellbeing Manager has been invaluable.

- 9.3 C&I continues to receive six monthly updates from the Health Commission, with the next report due at Committee in June 2018.
- 10. Items selected for pre-scrutiny to assist in policy development –** As part of the Committee’s remit for calling items for pre-scrutiny, C&I requested to hear from Officers on a number of matters. Housing has been covered as above, the involvement from Acis is detailed below.
- 10.1 Committee was advised in October 2017 about the planned commencement of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Although there was little influence C&I could have over the contents of CIL, as this was largely controlled by the Examiner, it was an excellent opportunity for the Committee to scrutinise the decision making behind choosing CIL and the impact it would have on the council and planning department. CIL has since been through the full committee process and is now in force.
- 10.2 As had been highlighted in the Progress and Delivery reports, there have been ongoing concerns about the performance of the enforcements team. With this in mind, C&I asked for the paper on Planning Enforcement Policy to be brought to Committee in February 2018 for pre-scrutiny. The background to the policy was explained in detail and whilst Committee was happy with the changes to service provision this would bring about, there were additional comments made to be added to the policy.
- 10.3 Committee requested to see more input on how the success, or otherwise, would be measured and communicated to relevant agencies. It was also requested that more detail was provided about cross-departmental working between the planning and enforcement teams. These amendments are to be made prior to the report being seen at Prosperous Communities Committee in March 2018.
- 11. Continued programme of public body scrutiny –** C&I has a strong background of collaborative scrutiny of public bodies and other agencies with whom the council works. This has continued throughout 2017/18 with Committee being joined by a number of colleagues also interested in hearing the views of our visitors.
- 11.1 In June 2017 we were joined by Inspector Nigel Key, of Lincolnshire Police, who provided us with a six month verbal update on crime and anti-social behaviour across the District. There were aspects of his data with which we were already familiar however there was some surprising data regarding rural crimes which was eye-opening. C&I was pleased to hear of the success of joint working initiatives between the police and West Lindsey and it was clear this approach could prove highly beneficial for all involved. Lincolnshire Police are due to join C&I again in April for a further six-month update.

- 11.2 In October, there was an in-depth presentation from Jenny Barnett, CEO of Citizens Advice West Lindsey, in relation to the work of the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) across West Lindsey and nationally. C&I was particularly concerned about the impact of funding cuts for the CAB and how this impacted the provision of assistance for West Lindsey residents as well as the impact on those in rural areas with limited access to CAB offices. Ms Barnett was clear on the provision of out-reach services and was able to demonstrate situations where individuals had seen a real benefit from the CAB rural services. It was clear that the organisation was working hard to maximise its provision across the District and C&I thanked Ms Barnett and her teams for their continued efforts.
- 11.3 February 2018 saw the Committee joined by Mr Paul Woollam, Director for Customer Excellence, and Ms Hina Patel, Head of Customer Operations, of Acis Group Ltd. This was in support of the recent focus on the housing strategy and homelessness service and also as a chance for C&I Committee to scrutinise the partnership working between Acis Group Ltd and West Lindsey District Council. Committee had highlighted areas of discussion prior to the meeting and discussions focussed around pre-identified questions.
- 11.4 It was clear from both Mr Woollam and Ms Patel that the Acis Group Ltd are committed to providing good quality, affordable housing across the District for people from all walks of life. C&I was satisfied to hear that, where there had previously been concerns about the maintenance of properties and the time they were left empty between tenancies, this was no longer a problem as Acis had brought the maintenance services back under their provision.
- 11.5 The partnership working between Acis and West Lindsey has gone from strength to strength and C&I was comforted by assurances that this will continue to develop with development plans in the pipeline.

12. Conclusion and Look Forward to Next Year

- 12.1 At the Committee's last meeting of the 2017/18 Civic Year, Members gave consideration to areas they may wish to incorporate into their work plan for 2018/19.
- 12.2 It has been agreed that the Committee will further scrutinise the impact of the green waste project once it has been operating for between six to 12 months. This review will look at any environmental impacts such as fly tipping or contaminated recycling items alongside the benefits within West Lindsey.
- 12.3 It has also been proposed that the Committee takes a detailed look at complaint handling within the council, specifically in view of the implementation of the Customer First programme. In the first instance, the Committee will receive a presentation on this subject area in order to provide a benchmark against which any improvements can be measured.

- 12.4 The Committee will also give frequent consideration to the Forward Plan in order to identify areas where greater scrutiny may be required.

13 Other Areas

- 13.1 The Committee will oversee the introduction of the revised Performance and Delivery Monitoring Reporting and evaluate its effectiveness.
- 13.2 The Committee will continue to monitor progress in the South West Ward and the development of partnership arrangements.
- 13.4 The Committee will see the Public Realm work to a conclusion and formulate recommendations back to the Prosperous Communities Committee.
- 13.4 The work of the Health Commission will continue with regular updates provided to the Committee.
- 13.5 The Committee will continue to respond to direct requests to undertake work made either by Council or the Policy Committees.
- 13.6 The Committee will continue to build on effective working relationships with Lincolnshire Police.
- 13.7 The Committee will establish a programme of external visitors to attend throughout 2018/19.

14. Concluding Remarks

- 14.1 It has been a busy and productive year for the Committee and it is reassuring, when looking back at the Civic Year, to realise just how much has been achieved. I look forward to the continuation of the Public Realm work, a project which seems sure to open possibilities for improvements over the coming months and years and will be of benefit for all in the District, and I am certain we will all be interested to hear the thoughts of the other agencies involved.
- 14.2 Alongside the work of all Members of the Committee, I must express my gratitude to our Vice Chairmen who continue to remain faithful to the ethos of our Committee to scrutinise the workings of the Council in a non-partisan manner and with the integrity expected of us. My thanks, also, to Mr Mark Sturgess who has been steadfast in his help and support over the past twelve months. Finally, may I express my appreciation to Ele, who, under the expert guidance of Katie, has worked hard to learn the details of our Committee, and the quirks of our Members, and has quickly picked up the ropes to keep us in line! As we look forward to the coming Civic Year, I am excited for the opportunities in front of us and I look forward to building on the strong foundations of scrutiny within West Lindsey District Council.