

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA on 23 October 2018 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Mrs Sheila Bibb (Chairman)
Councillor John McNeill (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Owen Bierley
Councillor Christopher Darcel
Councillor Michael Devine
Councillor Steve England
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
Councillor Mrs Pat Mewis
Councillor Malcolm Parish
Councillor Trevor Young
Councillor Giles McNeill
Councillor Mrs Judy Rainsforth

In Attendance:
Mark Sturgess Executive Director of Operations and Head of Paid Service
Gary Reeve Property & Assets Manager
Tracey Bircumshaw Strategic Finance and Business Support Manager
Grant White Enterprising Communities Manager
Katie Coughlan Senior Democratic & Civic Officer

Also Present 3 Members of the Public
1 Member of the Press
Councillor Tom Smith – Visiting Member

Apologies: Councillor Mrs Gillian Bardsley
Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings

Membership: Councillor Giles McNeill substituting for Councillor Gillian Bardsley
Councillor Judy Rainsforth substituting for Councillor Lesley Rollings

36 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman welcomed Mr Adrian Campbell to the meeting, who had indicated he had a question/statement he wished to pose to the Committee.

Mr Campbell addressed the Committee and made the following statement: -

"I am here as Vice Chairman of Market Rasen Action Group which has 1,200 followers at present and I am also part of a new Acting Town Team which has just formed and intends to constitute an official group which it hopes will be a sub-committee of the Town Council.

This is the first opportunity that a group representing Market Rasen town centre businesses has had to contribute to the car park charges issue.

What I am about to report and ask is unanimously supported by all the businesses we have been able to canvass opinion from.

If there is a lesson to be learned here it is that Consultants probably tell you what you wanted to hear. The forecast that the income would be £50,000 with £31,000 costs with £19,000 profit must have been attractive.

To learn that in reality it is costing £43,000 to operate Market Rasen's car parks but only bringing in £27,000 and seeing that even with the nearly 300% permit price rise that is being proposed, the car parks will STILL make a loss....

The business community in Market Rasen unanimously asks that a Member puts to this committee an alternative proposal as follows

Suspend the car park charging by meter for 12 months

Save most of the £43,000 reported running cost

Keep the permit scheme with prices where they are now (to bring some income and stop clogging)

Monitor footfall using the equipment already installed and revisit the issue in 12 months.

It has been reported to you that the majority of respondents in the consultation chose to see permit prices increased but the only choices before them were price increases.

If the general public had been told the extent of the losses and that they would still be making a loss after a huge permit price rise then most would agree with the businesses. Suspend meter operations and save the best part of £43,000.

Thank you"

The Chairman thanked Mr Campbell for his statement and invited him to remain present for the debate later in the evening.

The Chairman then welcomed Councillor Steven Bunney, Deputy Mayor of Market Rasen Town Council to the meeting, who had indicated he had a statement he wished to make to

the Committee.

Councillor Bunney addressed the Committee and made the following statement: -

“I have spoken to Prosperous Communities committee before regarding the willingness of the Town Council and I believe its community to move forward in putting together a wider plan, than has perhaps been involved in the past. I am pleased to thank you for your support in the past but I am pleased to also say we are now starting to work together, including with Local businesses, as stated by Mr Campbell in order that they can put forward their views. The Group, referred to by Mr Campbell, we are looking forward to getting that up and running in the town initially and hopefully extended in the future to look at the wider overall planning of the town.

One thing that has come through is the car parking charges, and whilst this is only a small element of what we want to look at and do, it is however an important element for the town.

The move to having free time for the first two hours visitors came as opposed to free time after 3.00pm certainly benefited the businesses with the town. And we as a Council wish to stress that we are clear that the free parking that has been provided by the system has benefited the community. It has not solved all the problems for the shops, unfortunately, there's a lot more work to be done on that, but we would be very upset and feel any move to get rid of free car parking would be of detriment to the Town, as it is run. We would urge that as much free car parking as possible, as we can get is what we would like to see in the Town. We support local businesses, we support local residents in that. That is my message tonight. We could go through the figures but we have done that. In summary we support the move for free parking and its continuation and the more we can get the better.”

The Chairman thanked Councillor Bunney for his statement and invited him to remain present for the debate later in the evening.

37 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- (a) Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee – 11 September 2018.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held on 11 September 2018 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

38 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

Members gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule which set out the current position of all previously agreed actions as at 15 October 2018.

In response to Members' questions the Executive Director of Operations confirmed that the Leisure Contract monitoring report had been re-programmed for January to ensure a full six months period could be included within the report.

RESOLVED that progress on the Matters Arising Schedule, as set out in the report be received and noted.

39 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan, declared a personal non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 6 (i) – Community and Voluntary Sector Funding as he was the Chairman of Lincolnshire Churches Festival.

Councillor Giles McNeill, declared a personal non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 6 (i) – Community and Voluntary Sector Funding as he was the Authority's representative on The Lincoln Area Dial-a-Ride Management Committee.

40 COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING

Members gave consideration to a report which set out the findings arising from the 2018 Community and Voluntary Sector Funding Review.

As part of the Council's on-going commitment to support and work with the community and voluntary sector, it provided a range of core funding grants. This type of funding was awarded to organisations that delivered key services that benefited residents, local communities and helped support the Corporate Plan priorities, which had been set by the Council.

A CVS Funding Review was undertaken every 3 years in order to ensure the Council continued to support organisations delivering key outcomes for communities in West Lindsey.

The Review process undertaken was outlined in detail and this work had culminated in the production of the Funding Review Report for 2018 attached as Appendix A to the report. Within the report were details of the current agreements, the review process undertaken, the review timeline, the panel's decisions and the financial profile for 2019-2022.

In conclusion, Members noted the intention for a more in-depth review to be conducted over the next three year period, which would include a wider analysis of priorities, needs and demands and gaps in service provision. The last time such an exercise had been undertaken was in 2012. The review would be conducted with Member involvement and wider engagement with the community and voluntary sector, partner agencies and local communities.

Debate ensued and Members initially expressed concerns of the withdrawing of funding for Community Lincs, particularly in light of the invaluable work they undertook in respect of Neighbourhood Planning. Indication was sought as to whether this service would continue and what work had been undertaken to-date to secure alternative arrangements.

In response Officers advised there was already a broad agreement and commitment in place for this element of work to continue. The value added by Community Lincs in this respect had been widely recognised and current Neighbourhood Planning budgets could possibly allow for this work to continue to be funded, albeit outside of the Community and Voluntary Sector Grant monies. Officers would need to work on a finalised arrangement and agreement but gave their assurance that if for whatever reason this was not realised, then a report would be brought back to this Committee.

The reassurance was welcomed and a Member therefore moved the recommendations.

Members shared the sentiment expressed with regard to the support offered by Community Lincs in relation to Neighbourhood Planning. The commitment to continue to offer such provision beyond March 2019 was also welcomed and as such the recommendations were seconded.

The funding offered to Dial-a-Ride was considered to offer real value for money considering the level of provision afforded to the district, and number of service users. The Council representative outlined the funding level to service provision ratio afforded to each partner organisation, and in comparison he considered West Lindsey received a lot of service for not a lot of investment, a point considered worthy of note.

Members were therefore supportive of the small increase being proposed.

A Member sought indication as to why the potential reported underspend had not been utilised in order to give small increases to some of the other organisations. In responding Officers advised that increases had only been considered where a particular organisation had requested such. In respect of Dial-a-Ride requests for an increase had previously been made, but not granted, due to there being no additional monies. Simply using underspends as, in effect, top up grants was not considered appropriate, particularly in the event of the in-depth review being approved, which could see the funding model change in future years.

From a financial point of view the underspend would be re-allocated to general fund reserves, available to fund any service across the whole Council, where a future need was identified. On that basis, if a community based service need was identified in the future then this may be considered for funding if appropriate, but it would have to be considered on its merits and based on the Council's financial position at that time, as opposed to it being a case of simply re-allocating some of the underspend.

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) the CVS Funding Review report and the funding decision recommended by the Member Community Grants Panel, as detailed within the review report and summarised at Section 4.1 of the report, be approved and agreed; and
- (b) a more detailed review of Community and Voluntary Sector Funding be undertaken during the next three years.

Note: Councillors John McNeill and Owen Bierley declared a personal non-pecuniary

interest in the above item of business as they were Members of the Community Grants Panel.

The Executive Director of Operations declared a personal interest to the meeting in that he was a Board Member and Trustee of Community Lincs on a voluntary basis.

41 COUNCILLOR INITIATIVE FUND

The Councillor Initiative Fund had been running since 2006. Since its creation the fund had enabled Members to support local community projects and initiatives with small to medium sized grant awards.

In addition to supporting projects with funding, the fund was a key tool that facilitated greater engagement between Members and local residents, community organisations, and parish/town councils.

The current delivery of the fund was operating with a budget to cover from 2016 to 2019, allocated from Council reserves and approved as part of a re-launch of the Council's Community Grants Programme in 2015/2016.

Under the current scheme Members received an allocation of £3,000 to award to projects during the 3 year time period, a total budget of £108,000.

The current budget for the fund would end in March 2019 and any remaining funds would be returned to Council's reserves.

Members therefore gave consideration to a report which set out options for the future provision of the fund, these were detailed at Section 5 of the report with the recommended option being that the Scheme continue in line with Option 1, this being a £1,000 per year per Member for a four year period, with a maximum award cap of £1,000 per project. If approved the Scheme would launch in June 2019, taking into the account the May local elections.

Debate ensued and Members reflected on the impact the funding scheme had had and the need it demonstrated. All were in agreement that the Fund delivered real community benefit and assistance at a time when other such schemes were disappearing fast and therefore were supportive of its continuation.

There were some concerns however over the capping element being proposed. Officers outlined the rationale for this, advising that as the fund had been designed to deliver small grants, the governance around the funding was proportionate to such. Officers were of the view that the governance arrangements were not secure enough for larger scale monies. Such amounts would require greater checks, balances and monitoring, all of which would require additional resourcing which was not currently available.

Members expressed a variety of views in relation to the cap and posed a number of scenarios as to how they had previously used their funding, seeking indication as to whether this would be permitted under the new cap.

Whilst it was accepted that the pooling of funds in areas such as Gainsborough had the potential to deliver bigger schemes with greater impact, the previous points regarding the requirement for greater governance were re-iterated. In response to a Member's question regarding staffing disadvantages referred to in the report, it was noted that no specific staffing resource was currently allocated to the administration of this scheme, and if approved the position would remain unchanged, another factor which was an important consideration. Greater governance would likely need additional staffing resources, which would be at an additional cost. Finally it was noted that other funding streams were available to deliver larger scale projects and these should be utilised in such cases.

In respect of the scenarios posed, Officers clarified, that the cap related to per Member, per project, per year, not to the organisation and therefore the same organisation could receive multiple awards. Councillors would also be permitted to fund the same project (up to a maximum of £1000) year on year.

A Member suggested that for the avoidance of doubt, recommendation 1 be amended to read "...noting the introduction of the maximum award cap of £1000, per Councillor per project". Despite some being of the view the cap should be removed, this was proposed and seconded.

On being put to the vote the amendment was carried.

On that basis it was **RESOLVED** that: -

- (a) Option 1, as detailed in the report be approved, namely the continuation of the Councillor Initiative Fund, aligned to a four year political term, with £4,000 available to each Member, noting the introduction of a maximum award cap of £1000 per Councillor, per project; and
- (b) the proposal be **RECOMMENDED** to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for financial approval and allocation of budget from General Reserves.

42 MARKET RASEN CAR PARKING CHARGES - 12 MONTH REVIEW

Members gave consideration to a report which sought to determine the Market Rasen Car Parking Policy following a consultation exercise on the first two hours free period currently in force, and to determine the level of permit prices to be applied in the Town.

The background to the review was outlined in Section 1 of the report and the consultation exercise undertaken and the arising results were outlined in Section 2.

The proposed permit changes along with the Car Parking Policy for Market Rasen arising as a result were detailed in sections 3 and 4 of the report.

The overall financial impact of the policy and charges was set out at section 7.

Before opening the matter for debate the Chairman invited visiting Ward Member, Councillor Smith, to address the committee, who made the following statement: -

“Thank you Madam Chairman

The people of Market Rasen would of course like as much free parking as possible that goes without saying. However, I and the Town Council are aware of the budgetary pressures the Council finds itself in. The retention of the two hours free car parking is most welcome as this will assist the local businesses of Market Rasen on its high street who like many high streets across the country are struggling at the moment for a whole host of reasons. Lastly I would like to thank you Madam Chairman and our Director for Economic Growth Eve Fawcett Moralee for the discussions we have had on the matter, as they highlight the other possible options that could be considered in the next financial year.”

The Chairman thanked Councillor Smith for his comments and noted that comments had been made by two members of the public during the public participation session earlier in the evening before opening the matter for debate.

Some Members expressed concern at the accuracy of the figures within the report, having heard from the public speakers and in response the Financial Services Manager offered the following summary: -

It was stressed that the 2019/2020 estimate was not directly comparable with the 18/19 position. The current level of income for 18/19 had a forecasted outturn position of £27,000, the loss of income due to the two hours free parking had been calculated in a previous report at £9,000. The report being considered by Members was effectively forecasting a budget for the running costs of the Market Rasen Car parks during 2019/20.

There were currently 111 permits issued but in preparing the forecast, consideration had to be given, in the event of prices being increased, to the likelihood of these all being retained. Therefore assumptions had had to be made as to how this may impact in the future. These were as follows : -

19/20 – a reduction of 12.5%

20/21- a reduction of 25%

It was stressed these were assumptions and estimates. A further assumption being relied upon was that general parking income would continue at present levels. These factors and assumptions would be reviewed annually as part of the annual review of fees and charges.

The comments made by Mr Campbell regarding saving nearly all of the £42,600 by ceasing charging were addressed. This was considered inaccurate, as in effect, the forecasted costs would not be budgeted for, creating a further financial pressure which would need to be funded from elsewhere. A number of the associated costs were fixed as opposed to variable, for example NNDR, staffing and insurance. Enforcement if ceased would only save around £5,000 and costs were apportioned per space based on the total number on offer across the whole function. The proposal would not deliver the savings suggested.

The Opposition Leader considered the Policy to be a nonsense, it would never be feasible to generate an income from the Car Parks in Market Rasen, in his view this had been evident for a considerable amount of time and yet was still being pursued. There was far too much expenditure incurred in implementing and enforcing charges for income to ever be

generated and he was supportive of the idea of suspending charges. Furthermore he considered, pursuing the policy was damaging to high street businesses and would not be supporting the paper.

Some Members felt the charges were not enough considering the amounts people in other towns, such as Gainsborough were having to pay. Real equity would be the same charges across all car parks.

The suggestion of income generation was challenged, this had never been a driver nor was it the Policy of the Council; this had been cost recovery and equity of the "principle" of charging. The car park had also been refurbished and was considered to offer a great benefit for a modest amount. Space blocking had also been a reported concern and this appeared to have eased. The two hour free parking was to support businesses and the congestion issue and on the whole had been welcomed.

It was considered far too simplistic to relate high street decline solely to parking charges. Towns with free parking were still experiencing high street decline. Those Councillors in support of the proposed Strategy considered, taking into account all the factors, the financing of the car park to be fair one, a contribution from those who used it, and a contribution from the general tax payer.

The recommendations were moved.

Several Members spoke in support of the Policy, the drivers behind it, the need to recover costs but not to generate income, and an acceptance that the offers differed and that without charging Gainsborough's car parks would be subsidising the others.

The following amendments were moved to replace recommendations 2 and 3 within the report : -

- " (2) That Members approve to suspend the car parking charges by meter for 12 months thereby saving approximately £43,000 per annum, to continue to monitor the footfall using the equipment already installed and to re-visit the issue in 12 months.
- (3) That Members approve to keep the permit scheme charges at their current level."

In response the Executive Director of Operations addressed the Committee and sought information from Officers around the assumptions the amendment made. It assumed all the monies would be saved, that permit sales would remain at current levels and that no staffing or enforcement would be required. The Committee had earlier heard of the fixed costs associated with car parking and again these were not considered within the amendment.

Officers in response advised the Committee that permit sales would undoubtedly reduce significantly, as no-one would buy a permit if the car park was free on daily basis. If permits remained in operation there would be some enforcement and staffing costs and therefore this proposal did not produce the savings suggested.

The Financial Services Manager advised that around 50% of the costs related to staffing costs in respect of the car parking function, and therefore these would be a retained cost. Contracted costs, such as machine maintenance, would need to be honoured. New signage

would be a legal requirement and a further cost to be borne into consideration.

Having heard the response, Councillors again expressed differing views as to whether charging was appropriate or not. With some vehemently in support of charging and some vehemently against.

It was noted that any such amendment affecting finances would need to be recommended to the Corporate Policy and Resources. The mover of the amendment accepted this fact and indicated he was content the amendment be further amended to reflect such if supported.

The amendment having been seconded was put to the vote but was declared **LOST**.

The recommendations as set out in the report, having being seconded were then put to the vote and on that basis it was **RESOLVED** that :-

- (a) the results of the consultation exercise be noted;
- (b) the Market Rasen Car Parking Policy be approved; and
- (c) the two stage pricing increase of permits be **RECOMMENDED** to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

Note: Councillor Malcolm Parish declared a personal interest due to his close personal relationship with the Mayor of Market Rasen.

Councillors Judy Rainsforth and Trevor Young requested that their vote against the above decision be recorded.

43 FEES AND CHARGES 2019/2020

Members gave consideration to a report which detailed proposed fees and charges for service areas and functions, within its purview, to take effect from 1 April 2019.

In presenting the report the fees and charges policy and process was summarised to Members.

Section 3 of the report summarised the main increases, it was noted that 246 of the 512 fees reviewed were statutory, thereby set by Central Government. 86% had experienced no change whilst 5% had seen an increase, and 6% a decrease. There had been 6 new statutory charges within planning applications. The increases in fees and charges for statutory services sat primarily within Environmental Services and related to charges set by DEFRA. An announcement regarding any changes to these fees was expected in February 2019 and the schedule would be updated to reflect any amendments once known.

Of the 266 non statutory fees and charges (charges set locally) 40% had experienced no change with 53% having increases proposed and 2% decreases.

The majority of the remaining increases were as a result of Standard RPI increases having

been applied to the following areas, Bulky Waste, Pre-App advice, Cemeteries, Licensing and Land Charges.

The Trinity Arts Centre and Building Control Commercial Services were currently provided with prices on application and it was being proposed that the following services also move to the model, Trade Waste, Private Street Cleansing Work and Room hire.

Debate ensued and a Councillor sought details of the financial impact of the Roseway Car Park completion having been delayed by 4 months, and whether this lost income would have covered the cost of the two hours free parking being offered in Market Rasen.

It was clarified that the Car Park was due for completion in September and therefore the delay had only been one month. Officers undertook to provide the answer to Members outside of the meeting, having had the opportunity to investigate.

This cost was expected to be in the region of circa £2,000.

In response to a Member expressing concern at the wording of recommendation two, Officers clarified its intention and indicated the following words would be added “**and following consultation with Policy Committee Chairmen**, implement changes during the year if required **with relevant committee approvals**”. Members indicated their satisfaction.

A potential error in relation to scrap metal charges, within the supplement, was identified in relation to the new/renewal site fees – Year 2 inspection. There appeared to be an increase in percentage yet a reduction in cost? Officers indicated this would be amended before proceeding to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

A Member made reference to some phrasing within the report, relating to car parking and cemeteries and indicated this could perhaps be amended to read more favourably, making a number of suggestions.

In response to a Member’s concern that increasing bulky waste collection charges would result in increased fly tipping, Officers advised that charges had been raised in the previous year and there had been no evidence of such.

It was confirmed that the charges relating to the licensing of animals were statutory charges.

The amendments as proposed and seconded earlier were put to the vote and carried. On that basis it was

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) having considered the proposed fees and charges, as detailed in Appendix A - J of the report, they be **RECOMMENDED** to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for approval, subject to the amendment required to the Scrap Metal charge; and
- (b) Managers keep fees and charges under review throughout the year and following consultation with Policy Committee Chairmen, implement changes during the year if required with relevant committee approvals.

Note: Councillors Trevor Young and Judy Rainsforth requested that their vote against the above decision be recorded.

44 WORKPLAN

Members gave consideration to the Committee Work Plan.

It was noted that the Executive Director of Operations would provide Members with an update in respect of the Japan Road Project item, at the conclusion of the exempt item of business.

RESOLVED that the workplan as set out in the report be received and noted.

45 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 item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

46 FEES CHARGES 2019/2020 - BUILDING CONTROL

Members had earlier in the meeting given consideration to the Fees and Charges to be set for 2019/20 in respect of services within the purview of the Committee, with the exception of those which related to building control, as these were considered commercially sensitive, due to the way in which the service competed for trade.

RESOLVED that having considered the proposed fees and charges, relating to Building Control, they be **RECOMMENDED** to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

47 JOINT WORKING PROJECT - JAPAN ROAD

The Executive Director of Operations provided Members with a brief update in respect of the Japan Road Project, in light of this having being at the “being scoped” stage on the Committee’s workplan for some time.

Members noted the position.

The meeting concluded at 8.22 pm.

Chairman