

## 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 4 June 2024 commencing at 6.30 pm.

**Present:** Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings (Chairman)  
Councillor Emma Bailey (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor Trevor Young (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Owen Bierley  
Councillor Frazer Brown  
Councillor Stephen Bunney  
Councillor Karen Carless  
Councillor Jacob Flear  
Councillor Roger Patterson

**In Attendance:**

Sally Grindrod-Smith	Director Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Ady Selby	Director - Operational & Commercial Services
Nova Roberts	Director of Change Management, ICT & Regulatory Services
Claire Bailey	Change, Projects and Performance Officer
Rachael Hughes	Head of Policy and Strategy
Steve Leary	Policy and Strategy Officer - Climate and Sustainable Environment
Ele Snow	Senior Democratic and Civic Officer

**Apologies:** Councillor Paul Lee  
Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers

### 1 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

### 2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held on 23 April 2024 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### 3 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE**

With no comments, questions or requirement for a vote, the Matters Arising Schedule setting out the current position of previously agreed actions, as at 24 May 2024, was **DULY NOTED**.

#### **5 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY QUARTER FOUR REPORT AND SUMMARY OF YEAR END PERFORMANCE 2023/24**

The Committee heard from the Change, Projects and Performance Officer regarding the Progress and Delivery report for quarter four (January – March) including performance improvement plan and year-end 2023/24 report.

Members heard how quarter four compared with quarter three and included a breakdown of the performance improvement plans in place and explained which of those would be moving forward and which were no longer valid owing to the changed performance measures. The officer highlighted the report contents per portfolio, and noted that it remained a ‘by exception’ report, meaning those areas that were ‘on target’ were not included. With regard to the year end report, there were additional measures in the current report which had not been in place the previous year, meaning there was no comparable data. The correlation with the Corporate Plan was further highlighted to the Committee.

The Chairman thanked the Officer and suggested that the Committee addressed the report according to each section.

There was considerable debate in relation to Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) and in particular the time taken to complete works required. It was recognised that DFGs had been the focus of the Committee on numerous occasions, with Officers reiterating that whilst the funding structure remained as it was, there was no opportunity to improve the timescales. It was highlighted that the funding strategy remained with Lincolnshire County Council.

With regard to the markets data, it was enquired whether there was any way of monitoring footfall within Gainsborough town centre, to be able to ascertain whether anecdotal evidence of increased footfall on market days was a true picture. It was confirmed that footfall cameras in the town centre were in the testing phase and that data would be available to share in the future.

Members of the Committee drew attention to the reduced rates of Council Tax collections and recognised that it was a worrying trend which could lead to significant financial pressures. Officers agreed with the potential risk, and offered assurance to the Committee that work was ongoing to improve collection rates and ensure the reduced collections did not continue.

In relation to rates of fly-tipping, a Member of the Committee enquired whether the increased fines had been shown to have an impact. It was explained that early indications showed that those who had been issued with fines at the new higher rate had been paying immediately. This was assumed to be in order to avoid the increasing costs if payment was delayed. It was also highlighted that the new measures for the 2024/25 reporting periods did include the

fixed penalty charges so Members would see that information starting to be reported in future reports.

Further debate focused on matters relating to the market share for land charges, where it was explained a benchmarking exercise was underway, and also the cleanliness issues which had been raised regarding the Gainsborough Leisure Centre. Members were assured that Officers were visiting on a weekly basis to maintain oversight. With regard to the reduction in the number of outreach sessions, it was explained that in previous years there had been more sessions held but with lower engagement levels, therefore this year had focused on those sessions where there was highest attendance. It was recognised that further detail within the report could provide greater context, however, it was noted that the upcoming Sports and Leisure Development Strategy would help align those areas of work.

As the Committee continued to review the sections contained within the report, comments were made regarding the impact of not having a cross-boundary agreement for the use of household waste recycling centres, with some Members questioning whether that did lead to the incidents of fly-tipping seen in the district. It was recognised this was an area that had previously been discussed, however, there was currently no expectation of a cross-boundary agreement being reached.

Final comments highlighted the success of Planning and Regeneration, the continuation of the garden waste collections and the crematorium business plan which would be presented to the Committee in due course. With Members content there were no further comments, the recommendations contained within the report were duly proposed and seconded and, on taking the vote, it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that

- a) the performance of the Council's services had been assessed through agreed performance measures and areas where improvements should be made had been indicated, having regard to the remedial measures set out in the report; and
- b) the Progress and Delivery Performance Improvement Plan for Quarter Four (January-March) 2023/24 be approved; and
- c) the Progress and Delivery Year End 2023/24 Report be approved.

## **6 ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY REFRESH**

The Committee gave consideration to a report introduced by Councillor Stephen Bunney, in his role as the Chair of the Environment, Climate Change and Sustainability Working Group. Members heard that since the adoption of the Strategy in the summer of 2021, there had been a number of changes made, including significant steps forward in relation to the Council's response to the impacts of Climate Change. The Council had adopted a new Corporate Plan during the summer of 2023 which reaffirmed the Council's commitment to tackling the impacts of Climate Change, and the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan was also adopted in April 2023. This Local Plan was only one of three across the Country taking significant steps towards tackling Climate Change through local plan policy, providing

policies on energy use in all new build development as well as delivering positive steps in biodiversity and nature recovery and fossil fuels.

It was highlighted that the Member Working Group had worked closely with Officers to establish the strategy action plan and monitoring framework, and to develop the ten strategic themes in more detail, identifying strategic aims, objectives and outcomes for each. In doing this, it was concluded that the previously approved strategy needed to become more focussed and responsive to the often fast-paced changes experienced in the sector. It was also felt that the name of the strategy was too long and that whilst the strategy aimed to mitigate against the impacts of climate change, that was in fact an outcome and as such the strategy should promote the actions rather than focus on a specific symptom of past behaviour and choice. The Member Working Group were also keen to more clearly draw out the priorities and pledges the Council had made to ensure accountability in delivery.

In supporting the paper for approval, Councillor Bunney proposed a slight amendment to the wording of recommendation two, in that he felt there needed to be recognition of successful projects, either completed or in progress, as well as reflecting any updated approaches based on fast changing information. To that end, he proposed the paper with the proviso that recommendation two read:

“Members agree that the Environment and Sustainability Strategy Action Plan will be assessed annually as part of the annual monitoring report to ensure it is up to date and reflective of current thinking **and successes**.”

Members of the Committee expressed their wholehearted thanks to all involved in this work, Officers and Members alike, and the importance of the continued focus on the strategy was reiterated. The refreshed strategy document was praised for its clarity and readability, whilst keeping the message at the fore. Opportunities were discussed for working with Parish and Town Councils, if even in an advisory capacity, to help those local communities do their part.

The importance of alternate power sources was discussed, with Members highlighting the need to use existing spaces, such as roof spaces for solar panels, or solar tiles on all new builds. It was also commented that the public transport system required significant investment in order for it to be ‘fit for purpose’ if members of the public were to be persuaded to use it as preference over driving.

Having been seconded, and with the amendment agreed, the Chairman took the vote and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that

- a) the updated 10-year Environment and Sustainability Strategy be adopted, noting the changes that have been made; and
- b) the Environment and Sustainability Strategy Action Plan be assessed annually as part of the annual monitoring report to ensure it is up to date and reflective of current thinking and successes; and
- c) authority be delegated to the Head of Policy and Strategy in consultation with the Chair of Prosperous Communities Committee to make minor

editorial modifications to the Strategy where updates to data or legislation occur, that does not fundamentally change to the core objectives of the strategy.

## **7 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT - UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND**

Members heard from the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities regarding an update on the progress with the delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund programme (UKSPF), which began at the start of 2023 and was now in its final year of delivery. It was explained that UKSPF was part of the current government's flagship 'Levelling Up' agenda. West Lindsey was allocated £2.7million from the fund, with a further £795k from the Rural England fund (REPF). Designed to replace European funding post Brexit, Councils were required to submit an investment plan which set out how the funds would be invested. This work was completed in the summer of 2022, signed off by a concurrent meeting of the Prosperous Communities and Corporate Policy and Resources Committees, and was followed by committee sign off of three full business cases, one for each investment theme:

- Supporting local business
- Communities and place
- People and skills.

Members were advised of the 12 interventions that had been funded and it was explained that expenditure on the programme was reported quarterly to the Corporate Policy & Resources Committee, alongside narrative for each intervention. It was highlighted that spend of the UKSPF / REPF was at 38% of total grant at the end of the financial year, with the majority of expenditure to be achieved in the final year of delivery, as was expected in any grant funded programme.

The contracted monitoring requirements were set out, with the most recent year-end report having been signed off by government. The contents of the appendices were detailed for Members, highlighting the outputs achieved to date, an oversight of the geographic spread of funding being distributed across the district, and an infographic giving a snapshot of progress to date.

Members heard that the next ten months would see a focus on ensuring delivery to March 2025, however there was no funding certainty beyond that point. The paper under consideration recommended that Members receive the final programme evaluation in due course, together with options for the future, as soon as more was known regarding how any future programme may be funded.

The Committee expressed their thanks for a detailed and comprehensive report. In response to a question regarding the recruitment to the post of a 'green spaces officer', it was confirmed that the funding was only secured for that post until the end of the grants period, that being March 2025. Therefore, it would no longer be possible to employ someone on a two year contract.

There was further discussion regarding the geographical spread of funding across the district and the need to involve smaller localities, particularly those where there may not be other funding opportunities open to them. Members were assured that all funding options

were reviewed and with additional streams being available, Officers would be looking to work with Members to identify those communities where monies could be best used.

Having been proposed and seconded, and with thanks again to all involved, the Chairman took the vote and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that

- a) the progress on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Programme to date be noted; and
- b) an evaluation of the programme be reported to the Prosperous Communities Committee, in line with government reporting requirements, at the end of the programme; and
- c) options for future interventions aligned with the programme be developed for future consideration by Members, using learning and experience from the delivery of this programme to ensure the Council is able to respond to any future funding opportunities.

**8 WORKPLAN**

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

The meeting concluded at 7.59 pm.

Chairman