

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA on 19 September 2024 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Trevor Young (Chairman)
Councillor Paul Swift (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Owen Bierley
Councillor Matthew Boles
Councillor Frazer Brown
Councillor Stephen Bunney
Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor Tom Smith
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee
Councillor Karen Carless

In Attendance:

Emma Foy	Director of Corporate Services and Section 151
Sally Grindrod-Smith	Director Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Lisa Langdon	Assistant Director People and Democratic (Monitoring Officer)
Steve Leary	Policy and Strategy Officer - Climate and Sustainable Environment
Lynne Thomsett	People Services Manager
Cara Markham	Commercial Development Manager
Ele Snow	Senior Democratic and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings

Membership: Councillor Karen Carless was appointed substitute for Councillor Lesley Rollings

36 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND MOTION TO WITHDRAW AGENDA ITEM

The Chairman welcomed all present and extended a warm welcome to Natalie Smalley, Democratic and Civic Officer, who had recently joined the Council.

Prior to starting on the agenda'd business, the Chairman proposed that, under Council Procedure Rules Section 11.1 (g), agenda item 8b, the Resourcing the Cultural Strategy report, be withdrawn. This was on the basis that there would be a report at the next meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee on 29 October which would deal with a second element of the same matter, and he therefore asked Officers to make a note for the full report to be presented to this Committee following the consideration and decision of the Prosperous Communities Committee.

The proposal was duly seconded and the vote taken, and it was

RESOLVED that agenda item 8b, the Resourcing the Cultural Strategy report, be withdrawn.

37 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

38 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING/S

The Chairman explained there were two sets of minutes, one for approving and one for noting.

A Member of the Committee enquired as to an action which had been requested at the previous meeting regarding communication of working group meetings and papers. The Senior Democratic and Civic Officer confirmed this would be added to the matters arising schedule to be addressed.

Having been moved and seconded it was

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held on 18 July 2024 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee, held on 5 September 2024, were **NOTED**.

39 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

40 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

The Senior Democratic and Civic Officer advised Members that the outstanding item regarding details of Levelling Up Fund spends had been completed, with Members having received the information via email from the Section 151 Officer.

With no further comments or questions, the Matters Arising Schedule, setting out the position of previously agreed actions as at 11 September 2024, was **NOTED**.

41 HIGH LEVEL MTFP UPDATE AND BUDGET CONSULTATION

Members gave consideration to the first report of the evening, presented by the Director of Corporate Services and Section 151 Officer who explained that the purpose of this report

was to update the Committee on the current estimated level of savings required from 2025-26 to 2027-28, to approve the process for Budget Consultation and to have discussion, engagement and scrutiny of the governance process surrounding future budget setting. It was requested that options be brought to the next meeting of the Committee to instigate a working group to work together to identify income generating opportunities, monitor savings and efficiencies.

Members were advised that section 1.5 of the report showed the funding gap for three years. There was a significant increase in savings required from 2026 onwards. The expected one-year settlement was hoped to be close to last year's settlement offer for 2025-26. It was noted that 2026-27 would be more complicated as there was time for the Government to implement funding changes to ensure central government financial sustainability, which was likely to significantly impact Local Authorities. In addition to this, the Council had specific further pressures around implementing food waste collections and some fixed term posts in CCTV ending.

With regard to the timing of financial matters, the Autumn Statement would be delivered at the end of October, there would then be the policy statement followed by the draft settlement. Senior civil servants had already advised Local Authorities that this would be late. There are opportunities for the Council to participate in 2025-26 funding consultation, as well as for future years. To date, representations had been submitted into the spending review consultation including issues such as Council Tax capping, Household Support Fund and Council Funding for dealing with planning applications that fall under the NSIPs banner.

It was highlighted that the final part of the report was an opportunity for discussion on how to ensure Member feedback, oversight and engagement into future savings plans. Over the last few years, balanced budgets had been achieved however the level of anticipated cuts for 2026-27 had not been seen for some time. It was highlighted that Officers and Members could not achieve this alone, with decisions on financial sustainability requiring wider conversations.

The Chairman invited comments from Members, recognising the difficulties faced by the Council.

Councillor S. Bunney voiced his support for the contents of the paper, and, in agreeing with the need to address future problems as early as possible, the idea for a working group was welcomed, however he suggested that an amendment to the recommendation would clarify the requirements of such a group. He therefore proposed that recommendation three of the report be amended as follows:

“Officers are tasked with providing options to the next Committee for the creation of a member/officer working group to work together identify further income generating opportunities, efficiencies and savings which will be essential to bring about balanced budgets in future years.”

He also enquired as to whether options such as recruitment freeze should be considered, accepting it was not an easy choice to make. It was explained that it was a tool which had been used in other authorities, however had not yet been considered at West Lindsey District Council. It was requested that a paper be brought before the Committee to consider such options, including all relevant implications.

With this request noted by Officers, the Chairman returned to the proposed amendment to recommendation three, seeking a seconder. Having been seconded and voted upon it was

RESOLVED that recommendation three be amended to read:

“Officers are tasked with providing options to the next Committee for the creation of a member/officer working group to work together identify further income generating opportunities, efficiencies and savings which will be essential to bring about balanced budgets in future years.”

With no further comments or questions, the Chairman addressed the three recommendations contained within the report, having been proposed and seconded, the Chairman took the vote and it was

RESOLVED that

- a) the current estimated level of savings the Council was required to deliver in the period from 2025-26 to 2027-28, be noted; and
- b) the process for Budget Consultation be approved; and
- c) Officers be tasked with providing options to the next Committee for the creation of a Member/Officer working group to work together identify further income generating opportunities, efficiencies and savings which would be essential to bring about balanced budgets in future years.

42 APPROVAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR GRANT BIDS SUPPORTING NET ZERO

The Committee heard from the Section 151 Officer regarding approval arrangements for grant bids supporting net zero goals. She explained the paper was an advanced warning of what may or not be required to meet the fast-paced deadlines required in applications for Climate Change and Net Zero grants. It was highlighted that such grants usually were allocated on a first come first served basis, however the Council’s financial regulations required Committee approval for applications in excess of £50k. The preferred option was to maintain access to the Committee decision, rather than use the urgent delegated decision process, as this consisted of the Chief Executive taking the decision, albeit in consultation with the Chairman of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee. The report set out governance routes for the decision-making process, highlighting the potential requirement to call an extraordinary meeting of the Committee if deadlines could not be met through existing meeting dates.

The Chairman invited comments from the Policy and Strategy Officer for Climate and Sustainable Environment, to enquire whether he had experienced difficulties with this in the past. The Officer confirmed that it had proved problematic because of the short notice of grants available, and the tight timescales in which to apply for them. He explained there was due to be a grant fund opening in November, with preparatory work having taken place already in order to be ready to apply, however there were no details available to understand how the November timings might work. He noted aspects of improvements which were

possible for Council-owned buildings, such as the Guildhall, with feasibility studies being undertaken to understand the potential.

Members noted that the Guildhall was 17 years old and there were undoubtedly improvements which could be made in terms of energy efficiency and aiming for maximum sustainability.

Details of the governance processes available for grant funding bids were accepted and understood by the Committee and with all Members in agreement, the requirement for extraordinary meetings of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee to be called by the Head of Paid Service as needed to approve future bids, and where there was not a scheduled meeting of the Committee at which an urgent item could be considered, was **NOTED**.

43 RECOMMENDATION FROM JSCC: AGILE WORKING POLICY

The Committee heard from the People Services Manager regarding the introduction of the Agile working Policy. She summarised the information as had been presented to the Joint Staff Consultative Committee, explaining that a number of staff engagement workshops had taken place with a total of 73 employees attending. A questionnaire was also available for staff to complete, with 125 employees responding.

On 6 April 2024, new legislation was introduced which provided all workers with a right to request flexible employment from day one of their employment. Acas published a guide to accompany this legislation which included the following examples: part-time working, home working, hybrid working, flexitime, compressed hours, job-sharing. The themes of flexible working covered the times that people work and place of work. It was highlighted that since the pandemic and improvements in technology, agile working arrangements had become more accessible to the workforce and many jobs were now no longer place or time dependant. Many roles across the council were required to work outside of normal working hours, for example evening meetings, site visits or other events, and it was recognised that working in this way ensured that those critical activities were supported.

The Committee heard that the new policy focussed on organisational outcomes, manager responsibilities and the expectations of West Lindsey District Council employees. For example, all employees would maintain a contractual work base, i.e. Guildhall, Caenby Corner Depot, Trinity Arts Centre or Lea Fields Crematorium. It was recommended that teams completed a Team Charter document, setting out clear operating days and times, meeting arrangements and assurance that wellbeing needs were met.

It was highlighted that there were many equality benefits to agile working, for example supporting those with caring responsibilities or their own health needs. Concerns raised through the consultation period had included the financial and time costs of commuting, including fuel and parking, as well as some feeling the configuration of working space in the Guildhall could be improved. Staff members felt certain aspects should be in person, such as 1-2-1s or team meetings, and there had been an agreement that additional guidelines regarding the use of MS Teams would be helpful.

The Committee were advised that the Joint Staff Consultative Committee had fully supported

the policy and recommended it be approved by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for a thorough report. Members of the Committee commended the work that had been undertaken to achieve the new policy, recognising the staff input from the outset. Comments regarding the use of the Guildhall were expanded upon, with Members enquiring whether space could be re-purposed or whether satellite offices could be considered. IT was explained that as a result of the work undertaken for the new policy, option for the configuration of the Guildhall would be looked at.

Members praised the approach taken, recognising that agile working was a significant factor in recruiting and retaining staff. The support of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee was also recognised.

In response to a question as to whether the public had been consulted about their experiences, it was explained that whilst there had not been any direct public consultation, staff had been asked to provide their perception of the impact on the public. Members heard that anecdotal evidence had been overwhelmingly positive, with staff reporting higher rates of customer satisfaction due to the fact more work was being undertaken outside of standard office hours. This flexible approach benefitted customers by being able to interact with the Council at a time that suited them, especially those who worked standard office hours themselves.

Having been moved and seconded, the Chairman took the vote, and it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

- a) the recommendation of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee be supported, and the Agile Working Policy be approved; and
- b) any future minor housekeeping amendments be delegated to the Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Chairs of Joint Staff Consultative Committee and Corporate Policy and Resources Committee, and with the People Services Manager.

44 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

With no comments or questions, the Committee Work Plan was **DULY 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 items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Note: The meeting entered closed session at 7.14pm

46 NOTICE OF URGENT DELEGATED DECISION: LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND ROUND 3 EXPRESSION OF INTEREST – AUTHORITY TO SIGN MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Note: Councillor T. Smith left the Chamber at 7.14pm and returned at 7.15pm

Members were asked to note the contents of a report detailing the recent Urgent Delegated Decision which had been taken regarding round three of the Local Authority Housing Fund. It was explained that this preceded a report to be presented to the Committee at their next meeting, and was to provide background information at this stage.

With no requirement for the vote, the report was **DULY NOTED**.

47 RESOURCING THE CULTURAL STRATEGY

The Chairman highlighted that, following the resolution at the start of the meeting, this item had been withdrawn and so proceeded to the following item of business.

48 TRINITY ARTS CENTRE BUSINESS PLAN

Members heard from the Commercial, Cultural and Leisure Development Manager regarding the performance of the Trinity Arts Centre and seeking to approve the new Business Plan. Members were happy to receive the positive report, noting there had been a significant turnaround in the success of the Centre. Members offered their praise for the programme of events offered, as well as the involvement with the local communities, and the outreach initiatives. There were many examples given regarding personal experiences of Members attending shows at the Centre as well as praise they had heard from other residents and visitors.

With regard to possible improvements, a Member of the Committee suggested that the marketing plan should be looked at, explaining that whilst there was an element of marketing, the reach could be extended. He cited an example whereby there was a show taking place in a nearby area which was also taking place in Gainsborough. However, the other venue achieved greater marketing reach and therefore people booked tickets for the other venue, out of the district, not knowing it was also taking place in Gainsborough. Officers recognised this and assured the Committee there was work ongoing in relation to the marketing plan.

With widespread Member support, and having been proposed, seconded, and voted upon, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the 2024 – 2027 Trinity Arts Centre Business Plan be approved.

49 SCAMPTON UPDATE

Members heard from the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities, seeking to

set out the current position of work to secure investment and regeneration into the site of former RAF Scampton. It was recognised that the announcement from the Home Office regarding the change in approach to the use of the site had impacted the content of the update to be provided to Members. The next steps were set out, with further communications expected between the Council and the Home Office, as well as highlighting the need to remain in communication with the development partner.

Members of the Committee expressed their satisfaction with the recent Home Office announcement, as well as thanking all Councillors, Officers, and those involved who had been committed to achieving the best outcome for the district from the very beginning.

It was explained that there would be a thorough review of the entire process, including lessons learnt, and where actions may have been different. Members welcomed this approach.

With no requirement for a vote, the report was **DULY NOTED**.

The meeting concluded at 7.51 pm.

Chairman