

Present: Councillor Ric Metcalfe (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Donald Nannestad, Councillor Jackie Kirk,
Councillor Rosanne Kirk, Councillor Neil Murray and
Councillor Fay Smith

Apologies for Absence: None.

121. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

122. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business because it was likely that if members of the public were present there would be a disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

The items at minute numbers 123 and 124 were considered in private as they were likely to disclose exempt information, as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. No representations had been received in relation to the proposal to consider these items in private.

123. Western Growth Corridor Land Appropriations

Purpose of Report

To provide the Executive with an opportunity to consider the appropriation of land between the Council's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account in order to facilitate the proposed Western Growth Corridor and new build housing development.

Decision

That the recommendations contained within the report be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

The Council's new build housing programme was predicated by land availability in the city.

The appropriation proposal, as set out in the report, would facilitate additional affordable housing in the city and see the sites transfer to the Housing Revenue Account at market value, subject to the payment of any balance. It was a requirement of the grant funding associated with the proposal that the land held for the Western Growth Corridor development was held in the Council's General Fund.

124. Western Growth Corridor Scheme Delivery

Purpose of Report

To provide the Executive with an opportunity to consider the commercially confidential and sensitive elements of the agreements required to enable and demonstrate to the Local Planning Authority that the City of Lincoln Council and the adjacent landowner could and want to proceed with delivery of the Western Growth Corridor, should planning consent be approved.

Decision

That the recommendations contained within the report be approved, subject to incorporation of the revised version of Appendix D.

Alternation Options Considered and Rejected

Other options explored were set out in paragraph 13.1 of the report. Throughout the development of the overall scheme a risk register had been in place and had evolved into a robust document that was reviewed on a regular basis. This document was appended to the report.

Reason for Decision

The report set out progress on the key documents and work required to take the Western Growth Corridor Scheme forward for delivery and to submit an outline planning application for the development. The key landowners document was the Delivery Agreement between the City of Lincoln Council and the adjacent landowners which had been negotiated by officers to meet both the key principles agreed by the Executive on 24 September 2018 and fair commercial terms. It also set out the key parameters for how the landowners would work together to bring forward the development, including governance, viability, procurement and a range of key clauses that protected the Council's interests.

The report also outlined the work that had been undertaken on the Scheme Viability Assessment which demonstrated that so long as the Council did a significant proportion of the development itself or in the form of a joint venture then the scheme was viable to proceed. A review of the Council's land ownership had been undertaken and, now that there was a fixed masterplan, a land equalisation process had been completed. As a result of the Scheme Viability Assessment work, it was proposed that the first 52 units on the Council's land at Skellingthorpe Road be developed by the Council itself for market housing. Sufficient resources, supported by Homes England grant, were available to deliver these new homes with any surpluses being set aside to help fund future phases.

Further details on the following aspects of the scheme, as detailed below, were included in the report which the Strategic Director of Major Development took the Executive through:

- progressing to delivery;
- the Landowner Delivery Agreement, including the key principles for the Delivery Agreement agreed by the Executive on 28 September 2018;
- the Scheme Viability Assessment;

- Council land ownership;
- phase 1a cost and delivery;
- activity and costs up to planning determination;
- timescales, including those subject to planning determination;
- General Fund and Housing Revenue Account considerations.

A revised version of Appendix D to the report was circulated at the meeting, providing updated information and costings as at 20 March 2019.

Discussion ensued on the justification behind the impact on the Housing Revenue Account as a result of the proposals contained within this report and that of the land appropriations as set out in minute number 123 above. The Executive understood and supported the principles behind the land appropriations and the positive impact of the land's market value as a consequence of the infrastructure that would be put in place as part of the proposed Western Growth Corridor development. The contribution from the Housing Revenue Account in this respect was noted and it was acknowledged that later phases of the scheme would consist of affordable housing and a percentage of social housing.

Councillor Ric Metcalfe, Leader of the Council, in recognition of the work that had been done by the officer team given the significant scale, complexity and challenge of this particular development, offered his congratulations to all officers involved and said that this was a demonstration of the Council's ambition.

125. Western Growth Corridor - Planning Application Submission

Purpose of Report

To provide the Executive with feedback on the final element of the development public consultation on the Western Growth Corridor Masterplan and further transport and flood mitigation work and to seek approval to submit the outline planning application for the Western Growth Corridor, based on the proposed Masterplan, with detailed applications for two of the three access junctions into the development.

Decision

- (1) That the feedback from the public consultation be received and support be given to the ongoing work to secure external funding to enable the spine road through the development connecting Skellingthorpe Road with a road bridge over the railway onto Tritton Road as early as possible, subject to planning consent being obtained.
- (2) That the submission of the Western Growth Corridor outline planning application with the two detailed applications for the access junctions at Skellingthorpe Road and Birchwood Avenue and Tritton Road be approved, with the final sign-off on the content of the planning submission being delegated to the Strategic Director of Major Development.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

This report on the planning application submission in respect of the Western Growth Corridor was the final of three reports on the proposed development, further to minute numbers 123 and 124 above.

The Western Growth Corridor was one of four sustainable urban extensions around Lincoln identified and promoted in the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan for development to meet the area's growth projections up to 2036.

The City Council was a significant landowner, owning approximately 60% of the site included within the proposed Masterplan area, and had been leading on bringing forward development of the area in a viable, sustainable and deliverable way since 2016. The Western Growth Corridor was a key priority within the City Council's Vision 2020, delivered across all of the Council's priorities and objectives and was the single largest development area within the city boundary.

A number of documents, as follows, needed to be agreed in order to progress the Western Growth Corridor to the next phase which would steer and shape delivery of the scheme in terms of financials, timescales and objectives:

- Landowner Delivery Agreement, inclusive of:
 - the Scheme Viability Assessment;
 - the Grants Strategy;
 - the Procurement Strategy;
 - the Design Code;
 - the Infrastructure Phasing Plan;
 - the Housing Delivery Phasing Plan.
- the Scheme Viability Assessment from the Council;
- Phase 1a Costs and Delivery.

The Delivery Agreement was the single key overarching legal document between the Council and Lindum Western Growth Community Ltd, as the other main landholder associated with the scheme, which would underpin delivery of the overall Western Growth Corridor scheme and included the elements highlighted at paragraph 3.3 of the report. The Delivery Agreement had been negotiated with Lindum Western Growth Community Ltd on the basis of the key principles agreed by the Executive on 24 September 2018 which had all been met. These were outlined in paragraph 3.4 of the report.

The Scheme Viability Assessment had been prepared by an external expert development cost consultant. Various versions of this had been developed as the Masterplan for the Western Growth Corridor had evolved to ensure that the scheme could proceed to planning and to act as a basis for the commercial terms within the landowner delivery agreement from the perspective of deliverability and commercial viability. Scheme viability was very complex at this stage and depended upon a range of assumptions and variables ranging from building costs to sales values, rates of sales and timing of infrastructure and Section 106 Agreements. Viability also varied depending upon whether the landowner sold un-serviced land, serviced land and developed parts or all of the land themselves as either residential or commercial. However, the Council's assessment showed that as long as the Council delivered a significant proportion of the development itself or in a form of a joint venture then the scheme was viable to proceed.

A final round of developer led public consultation, primarily providing feedback on the additional transport and flood work commissioned following the 2017 public consultation feedback was open from 1 February 2019 to 18 February 2019. Six consultation events were held between 5 February 2019 and 9 February 2019 at a range of locations in the neighbouring communities. The consultation and associated events were publicised in Your Lincoln, a leaflet was distributed to around 16,000 individual households within those neighbouring communities, along with a range of local and social media supported by local councillors also publicising the consultation. Over 400 people attended the events with 48 completed questionnaires submitted which reflected the individual comments made at the consultation events. The questionnaire was based on the most frequently asked questions from the 2017 consultation, which the events themselves were then aimed at addressing. The analysis of the questionnaire responses sought to capture whether the further work undertaken and the information provided in February had helped to address those questions. The results of this exercise were set out in paragraph 4.5 of the report.

Attendees at the consultation event expressed their concerns about the current experience of congestion on Skellingthorpe Road in particular, both onto the A46 and onto Tritton Road as a result of the railway crossing impact and junction design. The overwhelming request was a main spine road that would link Skellingthorpe Road with a bridge over the railway onto Tritton Road, therefore avoiding the level crossing impact, to be put in as soon as possible. From the majority of attendees it was noted that there appeared to be an understanding that:

- congestion in the area would get worse without the development;
- the solutions proposed by the development itself would provide relief to the current issues;
- economically it would not be possible to put the link in from the start.

The February 2019 consultation itself had not led to any proposed changes to the revised Masterplan that had merged following the previous 2017 consultation, attached to the report at Appendix A. The outline planning application for the overall development was shown in the Masterplan at a high level and had been developed on the basis of a wide range of surveys, investigations and analysis that complied with all the planning guidance and policy requirements along with the feedback from public consultation and statutory consultees. Further analysis and work had been undertaken by a second transport consultant to provide an additional technical appraisal of the transport information in relation to both sustainable forms of transport and vehicle movement.

The detailed design for two of the three access points for the proposed new roundabout at Skellingthorpe Road and Birchwood Avenue and the access onto Tritton Road, with a bridge over the railway into the development, had also been prepared to accompany the outline application for detailed consent. These two access points had been designed to enable them to then be developed further for costing, procurement and delivery as part of the first phase of the development.

The outline planning application also proposed four main phases of development delivery, split into further sub-phases, as outlined in the table at paragraph 5.5 of the report with revised target timescales outlined in paragraph 6, including those aspects which were subject to planning consent.

Councillor Fay Smith welcomed the additional consultation that had been carried out, contrary to a perception that the Council had not consulted with residents regarding this proposed development. She recognised that people wanted to see the link introduced at Skellingthorpe Road with a bridge over the railway onto Tritton Road from the start if not as soon as possible, but appreciated that it was simply unaffordable to do this at such an early stage of the scheme.

Councillor Donald Nannestad reflected on the shortage of affordable housing in the city and was pleased to see that this development sought to deliver 640 additional affordable units. He hoped a lot of these would be social housing. Councillor Nannestad was also pleased to see the inclusion of a leisure village as part of the proposals in order to enhance the health and wellbeing offer in the city. He felt that the site was well placed to accommodate this and that the proposal represented a really good opportunity to enhance provision in Lincoln alongside other improvements that had recently been made.

Councillor Ric Metcalfe, Leader of the Council, thanked the team associated with this report and the previous two items relating to the Western Growth Corridor for the hard work, skill and dedication that had gone into it.

126. Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee - Review of Local Community Impact of Welfare Reform

Purpose of Report

To provide the Executive with a report on the key findings and emerging recommendations following the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee's review into the local community impact of welfare reform.

Decision

That the Executive endorses the recommendations of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee following its review into the local community impact of welfare reform.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

Councillor Bob Bushell, Chair of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee, reported that as part of the Committee's previous review into Inclusive Growth it had agreed to undertake a further review on the local community impact of welfare reform, focussing specifically on Universal Credit and housing.

The Committee met with a range of external representatives to gather necessary evidence as part of the review, from organisations including Citizen's Advice, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Residential Landlord Association and the Member of Parliament for Lincoln's office. The following City Council officers also provided the Committee with evidence as part of the review:

- the Planning Manager;
- the Assistant Director of Health and Environmental Services;
- the Assistant Director of Housing Investment and Strategy;

- the Head of the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service;
- the Strategic Development Project Manager;
- the Tenancy Services Manager.

Over the period of the scrutiny review, taking into account evidence gathered from key witnesses, the following emerging recommendations were identified by the Committee:

- i) That the Council, as part of the refresh of the City Centre Masterplan and associated work already underway, sought to increase the vibrancy of the city centre and undertook a review of empty commercial units, particularly units above shops, to ascertain whether there were any opportunities to convert them to residential use.
- ii) In view of the fact that the Welfare Advice Team, Universal Credit Team, Customer Services Team, Tenancy Services Team and Citizens Advice all currently worked independently to provide support to Universal Credit claimants and customers and in light of the national decision to withdraw funding from local authorities and reallocate this to Citizens Advice, that the Council undertook a comprehensive review of the areas within its service delivery that supported welfare advice to the city's residents.
- iii) That the Council agree to lobby local and regional Department for Work and Pensions representatives to better understand why there continued to be a delay in the payment of Universal Credit payments, which caused significant issues for the Council's tenants as well as tenants in the private rental sector.
- iv) That the Council's Housing Directorate undertook a review of housing allocations and tenant services in order to increase and improve the sustainability of Council tenants.
- v) That the Council reviewed the provision and considered a re-launch of a scheme with the Acts Trust, which had previously been set up under a Service Level Agreement regarding the re-use and distribution of abandoned furniture to Council tenants, and identified any further opportunities to work with other charities or organisations to improve access to free furniture or white goods for those tenants struggling to furnish their homes.
- vi) That recommendations i) to v) above be referred to the relevant Vision 2020 Groups for consideration and addition to the respective work programmes.

Discussion ensued on the implementation of Universal Credit and, whilst it was accepted that support varied across the country, the support provided by the City of Lincoln Council in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions had been an exemplary and award winning model which the Executive agreed should have been replicated nationwide. Concerns were expressed regarding the Government's decision in October 2018 to contract all Universal Credit support to Citizens Advice nationally without any consultation having taken place. It had been hoped that Citizens Advice would be able to sub-contract Universal Credit support back to the City Council, albeit with less funding, however it was reported that this would not be permissible as part of the new arrangements scheduled to be rolled out on 1 April 2019. This followed a meeting the Chief Executive had

held with Citizens Advice, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Universal Credit Support Team. The Chief Executive indicated that the Council's team would continue to support and help to upskill staff at Lincoln and District Citizens Advice in view of the imminent rollout date.

Councillor Donald Nannestad provided some assurance regarding recommendation iv) above in that he had met with the Strategic Director of Housing Investment to initially consider this review and the areas that it could include to support tenants. In addition, he and the Strategic Director had met with the Housing Appeals Panel following concerns its members had expressed with regard to cases whereby tenants were falling into arrears as a result of delays in their Universal Credit payments. Changes would be made to the Council's processes to prevent people in such circumstances having to attend meetings of the Housing Appeals Panel in the future.

Councillor Ric Metcalfe, Leader of the Council, praised an excellent report and thanked the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee for its work on this scrutiny review.

127. Absence Management Policy

Purpose of Report

To provide the Executive with an opportunity to consider proposed revisions to the Absence Management Policy.

Decision

That the proposed changes to the Council's Absence Management Policy be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

A revision to the current Absence Management Policy had been proposed to more effectively manage long term sickness.

In accordance with the Policy, when an employee hit a long term trigger point they would be given a target date to return. In discussions with Unions it was considered by their representatives that this was potentially putting pressure on the employee to return to work earlier than necessary. Taking these concerns into account, it had been proposed to change the policy for long term absence so that this perception of any pressure was removed.

The proposed change to the Policy was therefore that employees would not be given a target date to return to work, but would instead have regular meetings with their manager where the employee's absence would be discussed and monitored. This was set out in further detail at paragraph 4.2 in relation to the different stages associated with long term absence, up to the point of a stage three formal meeting.

A copy of the revised Policy was appended to the report. The proposals had been considered by the City of Lincoln Council Employee Joint Consultative Committee, together with the Council's Service Manager Forum and Assistant Director Group, all of whom were supportive of implementing the proposed change.