

Present: Councillor Keith Weaver (*in the Chair*), Councillor Biff Bean, Councillor Bill Bilton, Councillor Alan Briggs, Councillor Kathleen Brothwell, Councillor Chris Burke, Councillor Sue Burke, Councillor Bob Bushell, Councillor Thomas Dyer, Councillor Geoff Ellis, Councillor Jim Hanrahan, Councillor Gary Hewson, Councillor Ronald Hills, Councillor Jackie Kirk, Councillor Laura McWilliams, Councillor Ric Metcalfe, Councillor Neil Murray, Councillor Donald Nannestad, Councillor Lucinda Preston, Councillor Christopher Reid, Councillor Fay Smith, Councillor Hilton Spratt, Councillor Edmund Strengiel, Councillor Ralph Toofany, Councillor Naomi Twedde, Councillor Pat Vaughan and Councillor Loraine Woolley

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Yvonne Bodger, Councillor Gill Clayton-Hewson, Councillor Andy Kerry, Councillor Rosanne Kirk and Councillor Adrianna McNulty

38. Mayor Announcements

The Mayor reported with sadness that the City of Lincoln Sheriff, Roy South, had very suddenly passed away. Members stood for a moment of silence in his memory and were given the opportunity to pay tribute.

It was also report that Councillor Rosie Kirk's mother had recently passed away. Council conveyed its best wishes to her and her family.

39. Confirmation of Minutes - 4 December 2018

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2018 be confirmed, subject to the amendment of a typographical error under item 34(a) where reference to £1 billion should read £100 billion.

40. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

41. Receive Any Questions under Council Procedure Rule 11 from Members of the Public and Provide Answers thereon

No questions were received.

42. Receive Any Questions under Council Procedure Rule 12 from Members and Provide Answers thereon

Councillor Ronald Hills asked the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Remarkable Place:

"Can the Portfolio Holder tell me which children's playgrounds are currently closed, with access denied by padlocks and chains, and the dates that this action was approved?"

Councillor Fay Smith, Portfolio Holder for Remarkable Place, responded and confirmed that decisions had been taken to close children's play areas at the Lawn on 17 November 2018 and Hartsholme Country Park on 20 November 2018 for health and safety reasons.

Councillor Ronald Hills understood that, in relation to the play area at Hartsholme Country Park, the play area had been resurfaced three times and was still not repaired properly. He was unsure where the Council would stand in this respect with people still using these facilities despite notices stating that they were closed. In understanding that the play areas would not be re-opened until the Easter Councillor Hills asked, as a supplementary question, how this situation would be addressed.

Councillor Smith reported that the works required for both play areas was currently out for quotes and anticipated repairs being completed and the play areas re-opened before Easter. They had to remain closed on health and safety grounds and other than erect large fencing to prevent people accessing the play areas Councillor Smith was unsure what further action the Council could take prior to the repair works being carried out. She added that completion of the works would be dependent on the weather.

43. Receive Reports under Council Procedure Rule 2 (vi) from Members
(a) Report by Councillor Rosie Kirk - Portfolio Holder for Reducing Inequality

Councillor Ric Metcalfe, Leader of the Council, provided an update report on behalf of Councillor Rosie Kirk on the work of her Reducing Inequality Portfolio.

Councillor Metcalfe reported that Councillor Kirk's Portfolio had changed significantly to incorporate a number of key service areas and projects which, together, helped the Council to reduce inequality across the city.

The areas covered by the new Portfolio included anti-poverty, corporate social responsibility, social value, community cohesion, community strategies and policies, modern day slavery, asylum seekers and refugees, the Lincoln Community Lottery, Universal Credit, welfare and benefits advice, housing benefit and council tax support, welfare reform, crime and disorder, equality and diversity, financial inclusion, skills and training, young people, prevent, public protection and domestic violence. Updates on each of these aspects to the Portfolio were set out in the report.

Achievements under the Portfolio and in support of the Reducing Inequality vision, were reported as follows:

- the shared Revenues and Benefits service with North Kesteven District Council winning a prestigious national award for 'Excellence in Partnership Working';
- the success of World Hello Day and continuing to support resident integration in the city;
- the launch of the Lincoln Community Lottery;
- the launch of the Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter;
- the implementation of the Universal Credit Support Team, which assisted 448 Lincoln residents with digital support and 235 residents with budgeting support between 1 April and 31 August 2018;

- the adoption of the Council's Social Value Policy which embedded the Council's commitment to social, environmental and economical sustainability through procurement processes.

Councillor Edmund Strengiel was pleased to see reference in the report to a programme aimed at tackling rough sleeping in the city. He highlighted a charity rough sleeping event hosted by the Lincolnshire YMCA on 15 March 2019 and was keen to bring more attention to the event and the issue in general, stating that raising awareness was extremely important.

Councillor Thomas Dyer referred to the Lincoln Living Wage Campaign, stating that thirty businesses had signed up to this at the commencement of the campaign and at the end of the previous financial year this had reduced by over half. He therefore questioned what influence the City Council had in respect of encouraging local businesses to participate. Councillor Dyer also raised the Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter which had felt, in principle, was very good and was pleased to see it being promoted across the city. He was keen to understand how the Council could better encourage participation. However, reflecting on the points system within the Charter which consisted of 45 different points, Councillor Dyer was concerned that in order to qualify small businesses only had to demonstrate that they met three of the 45 points, with medium businesses having to meet five points and large businesses only having to meet ten points. Given that some of the points were relatively easy to demonstrate, Councillor Dyer was of the view that the low point threshold for qualifying for the Charter devalued the scheme and that it should be harder for businesses to qualify.

Councillor Ralph Toofany was very pleased with the Council's progress in respect of tackling the issue of rough sleeping.

Councillor Neil Murray was of the opinion that the current government was effectively putting people into poverty, with the huge spike in rough sleeping and the reliance of a significant amount of working families on food banks being two examples.

Councillor Lucinda Preston was pleased to see praise for the Social Responsibility Charter, stating that society worked when people operated in a socially responsible way. She was also pleased to see the number of businesses that had already signed up to the Charter and said it would be interesting to see examples as to what specific activities these businesses were doing.

Councillor Chris Burke emphasised the importance of the intervention team and its partnership arrangement with the Police, the City Council and other experts coming together to tackle issues such as rough sleeping and drug and alcohol related antisocial behaviour.

Councillor Ronald Hills was concerned about neighbourhood working services which had been significantly cut back, with some areas of the city still not covered by Neighbourhood Boards. There were challenges around the self-sufficiency of these Boards with contracts and support expiring and there being a reliance on other funding sources such as lottery grant funding. With regard to asylum seekers and refugees as referred to in the report, it was unclear whether families would be allocated homes within the city, where these would be and whether the necessary infrastructure was in place to ensure that they were successfully integrated. Councillor Hills also highlighted an issue with Universal Credit

whereby delays in Council tenants receiving their payments resulted in cases being escalated to the Housing Appeals Panel when the circumstances were outside of their own control. He asked whether this particular situation had been resolved.

Councillor Donald Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing, in relation to Universal Credit, reported that he had met with members of the Housing Appeals Panel before Christmas. Action had since been taken which would seek to address the issue and stop unnecessarily summoning tenants in arrears to the Housing Appeals Panel when it was known that their arrears were solely as a result of delays in Universal Credit payments. Councillor Nannestad added that the architects of Universal Credit had no idea how ordinary people lived their lives and that its implementation had a significantly detrimental impact on them and their families, with the assumption that people had money saved up which was not always the case and should not be assumed.

Councillor Gary Hewson said that rough sleeping was a big issue for the city and that the resources put in place via the intervention team should help address the problem and help support the vulnerable people concerned.

Councillor Metcalfe, in response to the points raised, made the following comments:

- it was right for members of the Council to raise awareness of homelessness and rough sleeping. Rough sleeping accounted for approximately 1% of homelessness cases but was the most visible form that people witnessed on high streets across the country. The City of Lincoln Council dealt with a much larger number of people on a daily basis and had provided real leadership in dealing with this problem, encouraging the participation of other partners. The resources it had put in place would make a difference to the people concerned and sought to significantly address these issues which it was recognised were extremely complex. The support provided by the intervention team needed to be sustained so it would be necessary to find a way to ensure that this was the case;
- the pressures businesses found themselves under were significant and the living wage did create problems in respect of differentials as a consequence of the uplift each year. This made it very difficult for them to commit to the Lincoln Living Wage Campaign;
- 30 businesses had already signed up to the Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter with another 30 businesses indicating their interested in signing up, with businesses overwhelmingly in favour of the scheme. The scheme sought to give recognition to the qualities that local businesses already had and brought to their communities, with the majority of those signed up far exceeding the minimum point requirements of the Charter. Many businesses provided innovative incentives for its staff, which included:
 - paying the living wage;
 - staff awards schemes;
 - breakfast briefings with senior management;
 - staff talks with senior management;
 - travel to work schemes;
 - career breaks.

He added that lots more such schemes existed in the city which businesses provided for their staff. There were also other examples of the types of things businesses did for their communities, which included:

- sponsorship;
- charity events;
- signing up to the low carbon charter;
- fair trade;
- providing opportunities for and taking part in blood donation;
- food bank donations.
- the previous Conservative Leader of the Council had cut £267,000 from the neighbourhood working budget to fund a shortfall in the travel concession budget at that time, so it was surprising to hear similar criticism from the opposition on perceived cuts to the neighbourhood working service. The proposals for neighbourhood working had been discussed at length prior to their implementation as it was not possible to have Neighbourhood Working Teams or Boards in every single community of the city, with no other city in the country being able to replicate such a model. The service now consisted of a sensible concentration of resources which was currently focussing on the Sincil Bank area of the city. This project was going very well and in due course other parts of Lincoln would be targeted;
- the Council had been trying to secure partnership working for some time in relation to asylum seekers and refugees. The County Council was fully on board and would be taking action as necessary. A very small number of people would be coming to different parts of the county;
- Universal Credit was one of the worst things ever to be put in place for poor people in this country. In terms the Housing Appeals Panel, the Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing had already reported that this would be addressed.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(b) Report by Councillor Geoff Ellis - Chair of the Audit Committee

Councillor Geoff Ellis, Chair of the Audit Committee, provided an update report on the work of the Committee.

The Audit Committee, as a key part of the Council's corporate governance arrangements, oversaw and assessed the Council's risk management, control and governance arrangements and advises the Council on their adequacy and effectiveness. It also had responsibility for reviewing the statutory financial reporting process through approval of the Statement of Accounts and receiving key reports from the External Auditor.

Councillor Ellis presented the report which summarised the work of the Audit Committee in respect of the following:

- membership and training;
- audit plan, progress reports and the annual internal audit report;
- counter fraud;
- audit recommendations and agreed action;
- the Assurance Lincolnshire Partnership;
- audit standards;
- Audit Committee work programme;
- risk management;
- financial statements;
- Annual Governance Statement and Code of Corporate Governance;

- Treasury Management.

Councillor Ellis reported that by completing the work programme and providing challenge where required, the Audit Committee had:

- increased public confidence in the Council's governance arrangements;
- reinforced the importance and independence of internal and external audit and other review processes that reported to the Audit Committee;
- assisted in the co-ordination of assurance with internal audit and, in so doing, made management more accountable;
- provided additional assurance through a process of independent and objective review, raising awareness of the need for internal control;
- helped ensure the timely implementation of audit recommendations.

Councillor Ellis confirmed that the Council's Audit Committee and Audit function was consistent with best practice.

Councillor Edmund Strengiel raised the issue of partnership working and cited the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service as a good example of a services delivered in partnership. He encouraged the Audit Committee to explore other areas that could be delivered in partnership, therefore bringing down costs.

Councillor Tom Dyer asked what more could be done to ensure that audit projects did not go on for too long and were completed in a timely manner.

Councillor Ellis responded to the request to review other potential partnership working arrangements, which he said the Executive was already in the process of investigating.

With regard to audit projects, regular monitoring took place with update reports submitted to the Audit Committee as part of a programme of projects. Senior managers would be expected to attend meetings of the Audit Committee to provide updates, particularly when targets were not being met.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(c) Report by Councillor Chris Burke - Chair of the Policy Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Chris Burke, Chair of the Policy Scrutiny Committee, provided an update report on the work of the Committee.

Since May 2018, the Policy Scrutiny Committee had considered and scrutinised the following major themes:

- the City of Lincoln Council Fairtrade Policy and Fairtrade Audit;
- the Modern Slavery Statement and Charter Against Modern Slavery;
- Mandatory Licensing of Homes in Multiple Occupation and enforcement of high standards;
- the Commemorative Plaque Scheme for Lincoln proposed to recognise outstanding contributors to the city;
- the proposed introduction of a Public Space Protection Order to allow St Peters Passage in Lincoln to be gated;
- the work of the Protecting Vulnerable People Group;
- the Joint Protocol on Unauthorised Encampments in Lincolnshire.

The Committee was also due to consider the Health and Environment Enforcement Policy and the Housing Strategy this municipal year.

Councillor Burke, as the Council's representative on the County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire and in his capacity as Chair of the Policy Scrutiny Committee, had provided regular updates on the work of the Health Scrutiny Committee. A list of the subjects and organisations scrutinised at these meetings was set out in the report.

Councillor Burke concluded by stating that the Policy Scrutiny Committee in performing its role effectively ensured that the Executive received an informed and well considered guide to its decision making function.

Councillor Edmund Strenziel reflected on the challenges relating to housing in Lincoln, which in being an urban area was constrained by its boundaries. He therefore called for the Policy Scrutiny Committee to look into the provision of housing and housing delivery.

Councillor Burke confirmed that the Committee would continue to look into these issues.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

44. To Consider the Following Recommendations of the Executive and Committees of the Council

(a) Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2019/20

It was proposed, seconded and RESOLVED that Council:

- (1) Notes the consultation responses relating to the Localised Council Tax Support Scheme for 2019/20.
- (2) Approves the continuation of the Exceptional Hardship Scheme fund of £20,000, made available during 2018/19, into 2019/20.
- (3) Approves the City of Lincoln Council's Localised Council Tax Support Scheme for 2019/20, subject to the incorporation of the following changes to the 2018/19 Scheme:
 - reducing the maximum savings limit to £8,000;
 - introducing a 200% premium charge for properties empty over two years;
 - introducing a care leavers Council Tax exception;
 - reverting the discount level for domestic properties that become unoccupied to 100% for the first month.

(b) Annual Scrutiny Report 2017/18

It was proposed, seconded and RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Annual Report for 2017/18 be approved for publication.

45. Decisions Taken Under Special Urgency Measures

It was proposed, seconded and RESOLVED that the report be noted.

46. Annual Timetable of Meetings 2019/20

It was proposed, seconded and RESOLVED that the annual timetable of meetings for 2019/20 be approved.