

Public Document Pack



Please note that the following documents were published separately from the main agenda for this meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee to be held on Thursday, 17th August 2023 at 6.00 pm in Committee Rooms 1-2, City Hall.

- (a) Confirmation of Performance Scrutiny Committee Minutes - 22 June 2023
(Pages 3 - 10)

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Present: Councillor Gary Hewson (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Martin Christopher, Councillor David Clarkson,
Councillor Thomas Dyer, Councillor Lucinda Preston,
Councillor Rachel Storer, Councillor Pat Vaughan,
Councillor Joshua Wells and Councillor Loraine Woolley

Apologies for Absence: None.

11. Confirmation of Minutes - 25 May 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

12. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Pat Vaughan declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Portfolio Holder under Scrutiny - Our People and Resources'. His Granddaughter worked in the Finance Department of the City of Lincoln Council.

13. Portfolio Holder under Scrutiny - Our People and Resources

Councillor Ric Metcalfe, Portfolio Holder for Our People and Resources:

- a. presented a report to update on the Council's current progress towards the Vision 2025 strategic plan, together with updates on each service area under the Portfolio Our People and Resources
- b. presented his report regarding activity and achievements within his portfolio, covering the following main areas:
 - Introduction
 - The Council's Priorities
 - Key Achievements in 2022/23
 - Financial Sustainability
 - Revenues Shared Service
 - Service Performance
 - Welfare
 - Procurement
 - Property Services
 - Emergency Planning
 - Business Continuity
 - Risk Management
 - Corporate Health and Safety
 - Safety Assurance Team
 - Human Resources
 - Work Based Learning
 - Craft Apprenticeship Scheme
 - Corporate Communications and Media Relations
 - Civic and International Partnerships
 - Key Performance Results
 - Sickness levels
 - Measures performing below target

- Measures performing above target
- Measures performing within target boundary (acceptable performance)
- Looking ahead

c. thanked officers for their assistance with his portfolio

d. invited committees questions and comments.

Question: Praised the work of the Civic Party and commented that the tours of the Guildhall were excellent. Could further work be done to promote the Guildhall?

Response: Gave thanks and appreciation to the Civic Party for their excellent work. The Guildhall was a huge asset to the Council and was beginning to get national recognition. The comments would be fed back to Officers and we would continue to look for ways to promote the Guildhall to residents and tourists.

Question: Commented that the work undertaken in relation to wellbeing was impressive and asked if a review of hybrid working had taken place to look at the impact that this had on staff both operationally and with regards to their wellbeing.

Response: Extensive staff consultation did take place post covid. It was not a one size fits all approach and opinions were mixed. Some more evaluation was needed to see how it was working in practice.

Question: Asked if the international partnerships could be further developed and promoted.

Response: The international partnerships were not as active as they were previously. This would be fed back to officers to find out if there was scope for a review.

Question: Referred to the difficulties with recruitment and asked how this was being addressed.

Response: Recruitment continued to be an issue for Local Government, some vacancies were hard to fill. There was not an easy answer to address this. Discussions were taking place with neighbouring authorities to see if there was a way to collaborate. There was a long term issue with regard to pay levels and skills shortages. We would look to develop the apprenticeship scheme to concentrate on areas that were harder to recruit to.

Question: Asked if hybrid working was affecting the progress and work of the apprenticeships.

Response: Managers were required to evaluate whether a post was appropriate for homeworking and if it was in the best interest of the Council. Therefore, adverse effects on apprenticeships were not expected as the posts would be considered and evaluated by management.

Question: Asked if the effect of hybrid working on mental health would be considered as part of a review.

Response: The Corporate Management Team were mindful of the effect of

homeworking on mental health. Comments on this would be fed back to the Chief Executive and Town Clerk to suggest a review of hybrid working.

Comment: Referred to some research undertaken by a recruitment agency and commented that the biggest demand from employees was flexible working and the Council needed to offer this otherwise it would lose staff.

Response: Flexible working was considered prior to Covid-19, however, the pandemic accelerated the moved towards flexible working.

Question: Asked for an update on Devolution

Response: Discussions were ongoing, the Unitary Authorities and County Council were pushing for Devolution. There were concerns from the District Councils about governance arrangements.

Question: Asked how the £1.75m revenue savings would be achieved.

Response: Previously the Council had found ways to make savings without affecting services or staff. Business plans would be produced and members would be engaged in the process.

Question: Commented that there was a lot of empty office space due to remote working and asked how it could be utilised.

Response: Rentable space would be utilised, a number of organisations already rent space to make City Hall a Public Service Hub and this would continue. The building was unsustainable in the long term and consideration would be given to this in the future.

Question: Asked how many landlords were signed up to the Trusted Landlord Scheme.

Response: A response would be provided following the meeting.

Question: Commented that the Councils Managed Workspaces should be used for start-up businesses and then they should be moved on to other premises. Further asked what the Councils priorities for the Managed Workspaces was.

Response: The Managed workspaces provided cheap accommodation, for businesses and weekly rents were critical for start-up businesses.

Question: Asked for an update on the Doughnut Economics event that the Leader attended.

Response: The Leader was in attendance at the conference for a short period. The conference was to convey the fundamental message about making do with less and using less of the worlds resources.

Comment: The Apprenticeship Scheme was currently poorly performing and commented that the Council needed to do better in this area.

Response: Apprenticeships were now being undertaken over an 18 month period, therefore, the numbers in the report were distorted as they were reported after 12 months.

Comment: Vacancies created stress for those that had to cover the work of the vacant post. Stress was one of the biggest causes of sickness in the workplace.

Comment : Whilst staff were covering vacant posts they did not have time to spend with apprentices and develop their skills.

Comment: Staff were difficult to retain in Housing as staff were leaving to work for Housing Associations where they were paid considerably more.

Comment: Paying agency staff 50% more than staff wages was expensive.

Response: All of the comments were a real concern for the Council. Vacancy levels had a knock on effect on staff and were making their work more stressful. Vacancies, staff turnover and stress were all monitored through Employee Joint Consultative Committee. Objectively the turnover of staff at the Council was not that high. Pay levels were a factor and it was an issue faced by the whole of the public sector as there were severe financial limits. The Council was reluctant to pay agency staff, but if the service was statutory, we had to employ agency staff to get the work done.

Question: Referred to the report where it stated that “communication had primarily been via our website and social media” and asked how information was being provided to residents who did not have access to social media.

Response: The Council remained conscious of digital exclusion and minded that not everyone used the internet. The Council reached out to them in other ways.

Question: Asked when the market would open and how many traditional market stalls there would be. Further commented that book stalls and nightwear stalls would not be considered and asked why the Council were refusing previously successful businesses.

Question: Asked why there had been a move to more food stall and less stalls that provided a service and further asked if market research had been undertaken.

Response: There was no guarantee given to previous stall holders to return to the market and to continue to trade as were previously. Everyone was found alternative place to trade. Research showed that food dominated markets were the most successful markets. The refurbished market would open later this year, and it would be a fantastic part of our new centre.

Question: Referred to the annual review of the Business Continuity Plan and stated that it was disappointing to see that it was not undertaken in 2022.

Response: Business Continuity was important as the Council needed to be ready for anything. This would be discussed with the relevant Officer.

Question: Referred to the staff survey and asked how the response of 55% compared to the response rate in previous years.

Response: 55% was a good response rate. The Council had highly committed and motivated staff.

Question: Asked for clarification on Legal Services Enforcement.

Response: There had been a significant increase in enforcement this year due to people presenting with very challenging behaviours. We had a small Legal Team and the enforcement was a long drawn out process.

Question: Asked if there had been a review of staff safety procedures.

Response: Health and Safety Procedures were regularly reviewed by the Health and Safety Champion and Simon Walters the nominated person from the Corporate Management Team. It was also reported to Employee Joint Consultative Committee (Health, Safety and Welfare)

RESOLVED that the content of the report and discussions held be noted

14. Lincoln Citizens' Panel Review

Michelle Hoyles, Business Manager Corporate Policy and Transformation:

- a. presented a report to update Performance Scrutiny Committee on the Councils approach to refreshing the membership of the Lincoln Citizens' Panel
- b. advised that the membership of the Lincoln Citizens' Panel was most recently reviewed in 2018, and currently contained 722 members. Of those members 304 continued to actively participate in Panel activities. Currently there was 418 Panel members who had been inactive for more than twelve months
- c. explained that the review would consist of removing from the Panel all members who had been inactive for more than twelve months and would seek to recruit a further 700 new panel members in a way that reflected the current make up of the City based on the latest Census updates.
- d. further explained that the Council would procure a third party to undertake the recruitment on its behalf. This approach was taken for the previous Panel refresh in 2018
- e. proposed that, in future it would be beneficial for the Citizens' Panel to be reviewed and refreshed at more frequent intervals, with a proportional change of membership either annually or every two years.
- f. referred to paragraph 2.5 of the report and highlighted the other options for service feedback and business intelligence to compliment the views of the Citizen Panel as a wide suite of performance an feedback measures that would be explored
- g. invited committees questions and comments:

Question: Referred to the harder to reach demographics of younger people and 30-40 year olds and asked if there were different ways to engage with these demographics.

Response: The current Citizens Panel was skewed in favour of the older age brackets, it was important to achieve a balance and get a full spread of the demographics. We would be working with a third party to recruit to the panel and we would also consider other options of how we could engage people.

Question: Asked what topics the Citizens Panel were consulted on.

Response: The topics were varied, and we tried to focus on key areas. There were also some standard questions. The most recent topics covered were parking and climate.

Question: Asked how many members of the panel were asked to participate each time.

Response: We needed to ask the panel to participate regularly to keep them actively engaged. We would ask all 1000 members unless it was for a specific area such as ward. There was a buffer as we know that some people would not respond to the surveys.

Question: Asked how many responses were received from the surveys.

Response: The most recent survey received 240 responses.

Question: Asked how surveys were sent to members of the panel.

Response: They were internet surveys, but paper surveys could also be sent.

Question: Asked what characteristics would be considered when selecting members for the panel.

Response: It was important that the range of members reflected the current makeup of the City. We were focussed primarily on age and locations.

Question: Asked if the Council would set the criteria for selecting panel members when working with the third party.

Response: The Council set the criteria, based on the most recent Census data, we would work with the third party and their perspectives would be considered.

Question: Asked if the annual or two yearly panel refresh would be completed by the third party and would this be cost effective.

Response: The aim was to make the panel self-sustaining, it would be brought back to committee for consideration.

Question: Asked if active members of the panel would be retained following a panel refresh.

Response: Yes, we would prefer to retain active members and encourage new members to join rather than asking people to leave.

Question: Asked if a timetable for when surveys should be returned by be implemented. This would ensure that feedback from the panel was received before a meeting where the information was needed for consideration.

Response: We would look at timings for the return of future surveys.

Question: Commented that the Citizens Panel results were not included in the consultation of Executive reports and asked what was the purpose of the panel.

Response: The Council needed to consult with residents in the City. A reliable, broad range of responses was needed. Part of the review would be to look at if we were asking the panel the right questions and was there a better way of consulting with residents.

Question: Asked how much the third party consultant would cost.

Response: This information would be circulated following the meeting.

Question: Asked if a heat map of where people lived and who had responded to surveys could be provided.

Response: Yes. A heat map could be provided.

Question: Asked if external factors such as the time of year affected how many responses were received.

Response: There were currently 2 key surveys in the year, November and June. We could track how many responses were received.

Question: Asked if the style of questions asked had been considered.

Response: We would be reviewing the questions so that we could receive the most useful information possible.

Question: Asked if a copy of the most recent survey could be sent to members for information.

Response: This would be circulated following the meeting.

RESOLVED that

1. the contents of the report be noted.
2. an update be brought to Performance Scrutiny Committee due to be held on 17 August 2023.

15. Work Programme 2023/24

Claire Turner, Democratic Services Officer:

- a. presented the draft work programme for 2023/24 as detailed at Appendix A of her report
- b. advised that the work programme for the Performance Scrutiny Committee was put forward annually for approval by Council; the work programme was then regularly updated throughout the year in consultation with the Performance Scrutiny Committee and its Chair
- c. reported that items had been scheduled in accordance with the existing work programme and officers' guidance regarding the meetings at which the most up-to-date information could be reported to the committee; the work programme also included the list of portfolio holders under scrutiny
- d. requested any relevant comments or changes to the proposed work programme for 2023/24.

The Committee discussed the content of the work programme and it was suggested that the Portfolio Holder under Scrutiny for Customer Experience and Review be moved from December to September due to a lighter agenda in September 2023.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Portfolio Holder Under Scrutiny for Customer Service and Review be moved to the meeting due to be held on 28 September 2023.
2. The work programme 2023/24 be agreed subject to the above change.

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