

SELECT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 17 December 2013

6.00 pm

Committee Room 1, City Hall

Membership: Councillors Karen Lee (Chair), David Jackson (Vice-Chair), Bob Bushell, Gary Hewson and Ronald Hills

Substitute member(s): Councillor(s) Jim Hanrahan, Tony Speakman and Edmund Strengiel

External attendees: Matthew Corrigan, Fay Smith and Inspector Judith Kent

Officers attending: Democratic Services, Sam Barstow, Simon Walters and Simon Colburn

SECTION A

Page(s)

1. Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 May 2013
2. Declarations of Interest

3 - 12

Please note that, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, when declaring interests members must disclose the existence and nature of the interest, and whether it is a disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI) or personal and/or pecuniary.

3. Updates
 - a. Police – Crime Statistics including trends/threats
 - b. West Lincolnshire Community Partnership
 - c. Lincoln BIG
 - d. City of Lincoln Council
4. Progress on the Street Drinking Strategy
5. Anti Social Behaviour By Students in the Central Wards of Lincoln - Update on Success of Initiatives to Date

Verbal Report

**Verbal Report
Verbal Report**

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday, 26 March 2014 (18:00)

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Present:	Councillor David Jackson (<i>in the Chair</i>)
Councillors:	Bob Bushell, Gary Hewson and Patrick Vaughan
Apologies for Absence:	Councillors Ronald Hills
Substitutes:	Geoffrey Kirby

1. Confirmation of Minutes - 28 March 2012

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2012 be confirmed

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

3. West Lincolnshire Community Safety Partnership Update

In the absence of a representative from the West Lincolnshire Community Safety Partnership a briefing note advising on the following matters was tabled:

- Community Safety re-structure
- Engagement from local Health Network Coordinators and children services teams in Target Youth Services
- Lincoln ASB renewed focus on Neighbourhood priorities
- Lincoln Substance Misuse group focus on the renewal of the Purple Flag accreditation
- Funding Applications for 2012/13

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted

4. Lincolnshire Police Update

Inspector Mark Garthwaite provided an update on Policing in Lincoln and advised on the following:-

- Crime statistics for the periods April 2011 - March 2012 and April 2012 and February 2013
- Impact of the DPPO and Section 27 of the Violent Crime Reduction Act
- Creation of a Street Drinking Strategy
- Highest rate of incidents occurred around midnight on Saturday
- 50% of violent crime in the City Centre was alcohol related

Members commented as follows:-

i) Whilst alcohol is a factor are there any other ones for example are they committed by locals or visitors?

Response - Of those persons arrested under Section 27 60% of offenders are local. All offenders are sent a letter the results of which seem to suggest that they are unlikely to offend again.

ii) Are any incidents reported through CCTV or are they all Police reported?

Response - CCTV is a huge benefit. We have a 40 % detection rate in the City Centre which is the highest in the County. CCTV provides good evidence which when presented in front of offenders normally results in a guilty plea.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted

5. **City of Lincoln Council - Public Protection Team - Update**

Sam Barstow (Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Manager) provided an update on the work of the Public Protection Team and advised as follows:-

- The Team had received 1,038 requests in 2012/13 compared with 491 in 2011/12
- Target response was 3days and this was currently being achieved in 89% of cases
- The Team had issued 272 warnings, 47 Anti Social Behaviour Contracts and had applied formal enforcement in 9 cases
- Current satisfaction levels were at 70%
- The priorities for the Team were

Youth Anti Social Behaviour - Tower Estate, Hartsholme and Boultham
Street Drinking

Members commented as follows:-

i) What is provided for within the 3 days response, is it just an acknowledgement?

Response - It depends on the nature of the complaint. We do try and provide some tangible action which may be a visit or offering some other form of support for the victim.

ii) Is it possible that the first course of action would be to try and get the complainant to resolve the problem themselves?

Response - Yes - we do try and encourage complainants to take action themselves before we get involved

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted

6. **Request for Call - In's - Overview**

The Chair advised members of the procedure to be followed in considering a Call - In request. In addition he further advised that as the request detailed three different decisions they would be considered individually.

7. **Request to Call - In an Executive Decision - Urban Rangers Service**

The Chair invited the councillors presenting the request, Councillors Hills and Spratt, to speak to the Committee regarding their request to Call - In the Executive Minute No 137 in respect of the Urban Ranger Service

Prior to the specific decisions Councillor Spratt outlined his concerns generally relating to the decisions by Executive, focusing upon the following points:-

- Accepts that the Strong Leader Model provides the capability within the system to Call - In Executive decisions
- Fully accepts that the Labour Group do not want to make these cuts but due to an unfair grant settlement and other factors within the economy they have no choice
- The Conservative Group have an issue with the consultation that has taken place and believe that more time should have been taken with this
- When his Group were in control decisions were taken on a number of controversial items which concluded with them taking up to a year to implement. For example the Tourism Service was Called - In which provided more time for alternative options to be considered
- The Conservative Group would like further reflection and discussion to take place on this item and more consultation to take place including alternative options
- Would like to see the item presented to Full Council for further discussion and would request that the Call - In request is agreed

Councillor Hills then gave specific reasons for Calling - In the Urban Ranger decision and raised the following points:-

- The Urban Rangers are a valued service which can be seen by the number of incidents they have dealt with
- Contends that the decision maker has failed to give adequate reasons, take relevant considerations into account and not considered any viable alternative
- The Urban Ranger Service does not fall into any of the revised priorities and a lot of other Council services may also fall outside their scope as well
- The Business Case indicates that it is inevitable that the withdrawal of the service will lead to both a perceived and actual reduction in the provision of services in the Council's parks and open spaces
- None of the consultees supported the withdrawal of the service
- There does not appear to be a case to withdraw the service the only criteria is that it saves us money
- Would wish to see the request for Call - In agreed

The Chair invited members to ask any questions of the councillors who had requested the Call - In

Members:

- Councillor Spratt has indicated that more time should be given to consultation yet Councillor Hills refers to extensive consultation having taken place do you think sufficient consultation has taken place?
- Councillor Spratt has acknowledged his regret in reducing a service. Clearly there will be resistance to cut backs however some services we provide are discretionary. What are your alternatives?
- Is it not the case that the opposition would contest any cutbacks the controlling group make?

The members requesting the Call - In responded that:

- Yes consultation has taken place however it is five weeks since this application was submitted and there has been no discussion at Full Council which would be the only way to get public debate
- It is not for us to direct the Executive. The Council has to make cuts and this is their decision. Do not appear to have looked at alternatives for a service which has been running for 14 years
- We believe in consensus politics. If this was the only option we would agree with the proposal

The Chair invited Councillor Metcalfe, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management and Customer Services to make a short response in respect of the Call - In request.

Councillor Metcalfe, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management and Customer Services:

- Welcomed the opportunity to address the committee
- The financial position of the authority is unprecedented
- There are no factual errors in respect of Councillor Hills response
- Alternatives were looked at but there are never any easy options when having to take decisions of this nature
- Business cases have been prepared on all of the proposals. There are unwelcome consequences to cutting frontline services. The precise consequences are not known and it is not possible to quantify the effect
- The withdrawal of services is only a small part of the way savings will be made.

The Chair invited members to question Councillor Metcalfe.

Members queried whether other options had been significantly scrutinised

Councillor Metcalfe responded that:

- He could give a general reassurance that the Executive had looked thoroughly at alternatives. All 167 budget lines had been looked at to try and find discretionary savings.

- He could give evidence of what was considered and discounted. The guiding light was the redefined priorities.
- The Executive considered a fairly long list of candidates which also included CCTV and the ASB Team and then had to make a judgement.
- This was a thorough robust process and only a relatively small number of front line services were identified

Having considered the information provided to it, members voted upon the determination of the request for Call - In

RESOLVED that the Call - In request be agreed

The Chair then requested the Committee to identify the scope of their concerns which led to the decision being Called - In.

Members identified the following issues:

- Whether sufficient consultation had taken place with relevant authorities including the Police
- Whether an amalgamation of the Urban Rangers and the Commons Warden services been considered by the Executive

The Chair requested Councillor Metcalfe to respond in respect of issues raised.

Councillor Metcalfe advised:

- There probably can never be enough consultation. We consulted with a wide range of stakeholders including the Citizens Panel at which we took the opportunity to give examples of services that could be affected. These events were well attended and revealed an understanding by attendees of the difficult position the Council was in
- When we knew the candidates for savings consultation took place with service users and the wider community. People rallied around the services they valued. The value of this service is not in question, this is not a position we want to be in
- The scale of the required savings does not allow us not to consider discretionary services
- In addition an all member workshop was held to which 3 opposition members attended. Last year nobody from the opposition attended so the system was changed. Does the opposition want to return to the original budget scrutiny process
- A reasonable amount of consultation took place against a backdrop of having to set a budget by the 5 March 2013
- If we had fallen behind with our savings process we may have had to make bigger cuts
- The Police made a submission based on the loss of the service which the Executive were mindful of when bringing this proposal forward

The Chair advised that the Committee having considered the information they had to resolve either:-

- To take no further action; or
- To refer the decision to the decision maker, with a recommendation as to whether the decision maker should rescind the decision, or amend it, and if so how and why; or
- To refer the matter to full Council for the Council to exercise the power of scrutiny and review (this latter option is most appropriate where committee believes that the executive decision is contrary to the budget and policy framework agreed by Council).

It was proposed and seconded that no further action be taken

RESOLVED that no further action be taken

8. **Request to Call-In an Executive Decision - Commons Warden Service**

The Chair invited the councillors presenting the request, Councillors Hills and Spratt, to speak to the Committee regarding their request to Call - In the Executive Minute No 138 in respect of the Commons Warden Service

Councillor Hills outlined his concerns relating to the decision by Executive regarding the Commons Warden Service [minute no. 138], focusing upon the following points:-

- The contention with this decision is the same as the points made in relation to the Urban Rangers Service, the only difference with this one is that consultees have responded
- The service is being treated in exactly the same way

The Chair invited members to question the councillors who had requested the Call - In. There were no questions for the councillors

The Chair invited Councillor Metcalfe, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management and Customer Services to respond

Councillor Metcalfe:

- Confirmed that the Commons Warden Service was an excellent service dealing with a range of issues including protection and promotion of the Commons in the City
- Advised that the arguments for the retention of this service are the same as those for the retention of the Urban Rangers Service this is a discretionary service
- The ceasing of the Commons Warden service is no reflection on the service provided however it does offer a significant savings contribution

The Chair invited members to question Councillor Metcalfe:

Members:

- Questioned whether we had ring fenced income to assist this area
- Questioned whether sponsorship or alternative methods of funding had been

considered

Councillor Metcalfe responded that:

- The Executive had not specifically considered sponsorship
- The Council needed to front load £3m worth of saving and there was an urgency about making decisions which would deliver cash savings

Having considered the information provided to it, members voted upon the determination of the request for Call - In

RESOLVED that the Call - In request be agreed

The Chair then requested the Committee to identify the scope of their concerns which led to the decision being Called - In

Members identified the following issues:

- Had alternative options been considered including sponsorship
- Had the ring fencing of income been considered

The Chair requested Councillor Metcalfe to respond in respect of the issues raised:

Councillor Metcalfe advised:

- That ring fencing income would not assist in making the required savings
- That income was already taken into account and whilst the principle of finding sustainable sources of income was good it would not assist us in trying to achieve our savings target

The Chair advised that the Committee having considered the information had to resolve to either:

- To take no further action; or
- To refer the decision to the decision maker, with a recommendation as to whether the decision maker should rescind the decision, or amend it, and if so how and why; or
- To refer the matter to full Council for the Council to exercise the power of scrutiny and review (this latter option is most appropriate where committee believes that the executive decision is contrary to the budget and policy framework agreed by Council).

It was proposed and seconded that no further action be taken

RESOLVED that no further action be taken

9. **Request to Call - In an Executive Decision - Ceasing of Ward Budgets**

The Chair invited the councillors presenting the request, Councillor Hills and Spratt, to speak to the Committee regarding their request to Call - In the Executive Minute No 140

in respect of ceasing the Ward Budgets Scheme

Councillor Spratt outlined his concerns relating to the decision by Executive in relation to the ceasing of Ward Budgets [minute no. 140], focusing on the following points:

- Ward Budgets were introduced by the Conservatives and the Labour Group was against the introduction of them however a number of Labour councillors have used them
- Whilst the report suggests that alternatives were considered there is no indication what they were
- Could we not find £33k from elsewhere within the budget to keep the scheme in place

The Chair invited members to question the councillors who had requested the Call - In

There were no questions for the councillors

Having considered the information provided to it, members voted upon the determination of the request for Call - In

RESOLVED that the Call - In request be agreed

The Chair then requested the Committee to identify the scope of their concerns which led to the decision being Called - In

Members identified the following issues:

- Alternative options considered
- Additional partnership working to provide savings to support the future provision of the scheme

The Chair requested Councillor Metcalfe to respond in respect of the issues raised.

Councillor Metcalfe advised:

- The majority of the revenue budget pays for staff. We also need to remember the past context, £4.5m in savings has been made a lot of which had not been visible to the public
- We have been looking at staff at all levels several times over. We are currently redesigning and modernising services eg. Planning and Regeneration
- We are at risk of trying to do too much with a small workforce
- We have been doing partnership working for some time and whilst this might not have been exhausted significant savings have been made through Procurement, Revenues and Benefits and the Joint Planning Unit

The Chair advised that the Committee having considered the information had to resolve to either:-

- To take no further action; or
- To refer the decision to the decision maker, with a recommendation as to whether the

decision maker should rescind the decision, or amend it, and if so how and why; or

- To refer the matter to full Council for the Council to exercise the power of scrutiny and review (this latter option is most appropriate where committee believes that the executive decision is contrary to the budget and policy framework agreed by Council).

It was proposed and seconded that no further action be taken

RESOLVED that no further action be taken

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