

<b>Present:</b>	Councillor Geoff Ellis ( <i>in the Chair</i> )
<b>Councillors:</b>	Gary Hewson, Ronald Hills, Liz Maxwell, Adrianna McNulty, Ric Metcalfe, Edmund Strenziel, Naomi Tweddle and Loraine Woolley
<b>Independent Person(s):</b>	None.
<b>Apologies for Absence:</b>	Councillor Gill Clayton-Hewson

**10. Confirmation of Minutes - 24 July 2017**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2017 be confirmed.

**11. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were received.

**12. A review of the consultation strategy and how the Council engages with the public**

The Legal and Democratic Services Manager:

- (a) Presented a report which provided the Ethics and Engagement Committee with an opportunity to consider the methods by which the Council engaged with the public, assist with the review of the Council's Consultation Strategy and provide any comments to help shape engagement with communities in the future.
- (b) Explained that the Public Sector Equality Duty meant that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out its day-to-day work in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It was noted that this required that public bodies gave due regard to the need to:
  - eliminate discrimination;
  - advance equality of opportunity;
  - foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.
- (c) Referred to the Council's Consultation Strategy which was appended to the report and highlighted that this would undertake a review in June 2018.
- (d) Outlined the Council's general consultation tools, which included:
  - the Citizens' Panel;
  - the Housing bi-annual Star Survey;
  - customer mystery shopping and customer services surveys;
  - other Events Team led surveys or questionnaires, such as the Lincoln Christmas market;
  - elected members.

- (e) Set out other examples of engagement with communities such as the Corporate Peer Challenge, the Lincoln Tenants' Panel, the Lincoln Leaseholders' Forum and tenant empty property inspectors.
- (f) Invited members' questions and comments.

Confirmation was sought as to what the five different aspects of contact were, as referenced in paragraph 3.4 of the report in relation to the Citizens' Panel. It was noted that the five aspects of contact would be the usual ways in which the Council made contact with people when seeking their views or feedback which were anticipated as being via hardcopy letter or form, telephone, email, social media or in person.

With regard to a lack of responses when consulting with the Citizens' Panel, a question was raised as to whether any action was taken to remove people off the Panel should they fail to return the Council's questionnaires. It was agreed that this would be taken up with the Council's Policy Team. Members noted that the Policy Team was currently in the process of reviewing the membership of the Citizens' Panel to ensure that it fully reflected Lincoln's society.

In terms of promoting engagement with the community, the new Central Lincoln Bus Station could provide opportunities via its large screen to promote the Council's engagement activities with a view to generating more feedback and responses.

A comment was made that people had different definitions of the term 'consultation', with most residents being more likely to respond to and make comments on matters relating to planning or service delivery. It was recognised that good consultation and engagement aided effective decision making but it was accepted that there had to be a balance, noting that some consultation was statutory. In addition, there were difficulties with perception where it could come across as though the Council was doing its own thing but had to undergo consultation as part of the process, rather than it being a meaningful exercise that would influence the final outcome. Further to this, Birchwood Leisure Centre was put forward as an example of a consultation that focused on the changes proposed from a physical perspective, rather than focusing on what people may want to use the Leisure Centre for. Officers noted this point but highlighted that the Council was continually improving the way it undertook consultation with the public. The recent consultation on the Council's Neighbourhood Working service was put forward as an example where engagement had made a significant difference to the final outcome in that the initial proposal was changed as a result of the responses received to the first phase of that particular consultation.

Reference was made to the recent Select Scrutiny Committee meeting which had considered a Call In of an Executive decision relating to the Western Growth Corridor. The press and public had been excluded from the meeting due to the commercially sensitive content of the report. It was agreed that officers would in future consider whether reports could be amended in such a way that enabled members of the public to be in attendance.

A member reported a recent issue she had dealt with following consideration of a licensing application whereby a relatively large number of residents did not feel as though their points of view had been taken into consideration. One of the potential barriers was that officers and members understood the language and processes associated with applications, such as licensing and planning, whereas members of the public did not necessarily have that same understanding which made people feel powerless and unable to contribute effectively. It was suggested that a threshold

could be put in place so that if a certain number of objections were received against a particular planning application a more targeted consultation exercise could take place to more effectively engage with those people and better understand their views, which it was felt would make a huge impact as to how the Council was perceived.

It was important for the Council to be explicit in its communication with members of the public regarding the possible opportunities and limits associated with proposals included as part of any consultation activity. This would ensure that people's expectations were managed from the outset. It was agreed that there was more work to do in this respect and that it should be taken into consideration as part of the Consultation Strategy's review.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and the comments made by the Ethics and Engagement Committee be fed into the review of the Council's Consultation Strategy.

### **13. Guidance on casework for Councillors**

The Legal and Democratic Services Manager:

- (a) Presented a report which provided the Ethics and Engagement Committee with an opportunity to review the casework guidelines published by the Local Government Association and the methods used by members to support their residents.
- (b) Referred members to the 'A Councillor's workbook on handling casework' document published by the Local Government Association and the Council's Member-Officer Protocol which were appended to the report.
- (c) Invited members' questions and comments.

Members agreed that the document published by the Local Government Association was very good and should be included as part of the induction pack for newly elected councillors. It was also agreed that the Member-Officer Protocol was an important document.

RESOLVED that the Local Government Association guidelines be circulated to all members and the Council's internal guidelines and Member-Officer Protocol be noted.

### **14. Provision of Mobile Devices to Members (Verbal Report)**

The Principal Democratic Officer:

- (a) Provided a verbal update on the provision of mobile devices to members.
- (b) Acknowledged that the iPads currently used by members were relatively old and may need to be replaced in the near future following a number of complaints that they were running slow, which was due to them no longer being supported by the most recent software updates.

- (c) Explained that consideration would need to be given to the new device that would ultimately replace iPads currently used, balancing cost with functionality, noting that this may be an Android device rather than an Apple device due to the significant cost difference.
- (d) Explained that the iPads currently used would be replaced on an adhoc basis depending on each individual member's circumstances and the performance of their existing device.
- (e) Invited members' questions and comments.

A number of members highlighted particular issues they had recently experienced with regard to their iPads, which the Principal Democratic Officer agreed to investigate outside of the meeting.

Some members did have a preference for Apple devices but understood the cost implications that had to be taken into account. They emphasised, however, that the functionality of new devices should be the same if not better than the current iPads and that members should not feel as though they had been downgraded. An assurance was given that any new device issued to members would be a brand new device that was fit for purpose for the functionality that members would need to fulfil their role. In addition, the Council's IT team would work with each member to ensure they were content with the device they had been issued with and provide them with any necessary training.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

## **15. Member Development (Verbal Report)**

The Principal Democratic Officer:

- (a) Provided an update on member development activity undertaken since the previous meeting and encouraged members to attend future member development sessions.
- (b) Reported that member development sessions on leadership and a member's community leadership role were in the process of being booked via an external facilitator for May or June 2018.
- (c) Confirmed that an item on the member induction programme following the City Council elections in May 2018 would be submitted to the next meeting for consideration.
- (d) Invited members' questions and comments.

It was noted that officers were looking into e-learning opportunities for members and would also arrange for any presentation slides to be made available to members should they be unable to attend member development sessions.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

**16. Timescale associated with producing and publishing draft minutes (Verbal Report)**

The Principal Democratic Officer reported that a comment had been received by a member regarding the timescale associated with producing and publishing draft minutes of the Executive. He had agreed to report this matter to the Ethics and Engagement Committee for consideration.

The member making the initial comment outlined that it had been usual practice for Executive minutes to be published on a Friday, whereas recent sets of minutes had been published earlier than that. This impacted him with regard to the Call In deadline and the time he had to prepare for the potential Call In of any item.

The Principal Democratic Officer explained that Executive minutes were turned around and published as efficiently as possible in order that there was no delay in decisions being implemented upon expiration of the Call In deadline. It was noted that all members were informed of the Call In deadline when Executive minutes were published, ensuring that all members could view the minutes and know when a Call In had to be received by.

It was noted that performance was measured with regard to the publication of draft Executive minutes, with the target being to ensure that they were published within four working days.

The Committee agreed that the current process of producing and publishing minutes as efficiently as possible should be retained.

**17. Work Programme Update**

The Democratic Services Officer:

- (a) Presented the current Ethics and Engagement Committee work programme for consideration.
- (b) Invited members' questions and comments.

It was agreed that early engagement should take place with schools in respect of Local Democracy Week.

RESOLVED that the work programme be approved.