

Present: Councillor Ric Metcalfe (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Donald Nannestad, Councillor Chris Burke,
Councillor Bob Bushell and Councillor Neil Murray

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Rosanne Kirk

42. Confirmation of Minutes - 28 August 2019

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 August 2019 be confirmed.

43. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Donald Nannestad declared a Pecuniary Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Lincoln BIG Ballot'. Councillor Nannestad declared this interest as a Director of the Lincoln Business Improvement Group.

Councillor Ric Metcalfe declared a Pecuniary Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Lincoln BIG Ballot'. Councillor Metcalfe declared this interest as a Director of the Lincoln Business Improvement Group.

44. Lincoln BIG Ballot

Further to their declarations of Pecuniary Interests, as outlined at item 43 above, Councillors Ric Metcalfe and Donald Nannestad left the meeting during the consideration of this item.

Councillor Neil Murray was appointed as temporary Chair for this item only.

Purpose of Report

To update the Executive on the Lincoln Business Improvement Group ballot and highlight the potential impacts of a 'yes' and 'no' vote for the city.

The report also sought views on how the nominated officer should vote in the ballot using the votes attributable to Council properties within the Business Improvement District designated area.

Decision

That the Chief Finance Officer be instructed to cast votes for City Council properties with a 'yes' to the Lincoln Business Improvement Group ballot.

Alternative Options Considered

The alternative would be to mandate officers to vote 'no' in the ballot. The implications relating to such a vote were set out in the report.

Reason for Decision

The Lincoln Business Improvement Group would be undertaking its fifth voting process from September to November 2019 for its operational period July 2020 to July 2025. A workshop for all members of the Council was held on 31 July 2019 where the full extent and remit of Business Improvement Group operations were discussed along with a vision for its future role within the levy area.

The Lincoln Business Group Business Plan for 2020-2025 was appended to the report. This set out priorities up to 2025 and specific actions for delivery during 2020-2021, together with the proposed annual budget and benefits of the Business Improvement Group.

The report set out the ballot process that would be followed, with the ballot itself being held on 6 November 2019.

The impacts of a 'yes' vote and a 'no' vote were set out in paragraphs 7 and 8 of the report respectively.

45. Statement of Accounts 2018/19

Purpose of Report

To present the Statement of Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2019, together with a short summary of the key issues reflected in the statutory financial statements.

Decision

That the Statement of Accounts be recommended to Council for approval.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

The Statement of Accounts for 2018/19 provided a comprehensive picture of the Council's financial circumstances and were compiled to demonstrate probity and stewardship of public funds.

The Council was statutorily required to publish its Statement of Accounts for 2018/19 with an audit opinion and certificate by no later than 31 July 2019.

Following updated information on pension judgements, changes had been made to the Statement of Accounts to adjust for the impact of the amended Actuary report. The impact of these judgements to the Council was £621,000 in relation to the McCloud judgement and £294,000 for the GMP equalisations changes.

The Council was required to make the Statement of Accounts available for public inspection for 30 working days. Following notification from the Council's external auditors, this ran from 3 June 2019 until 11 July 2019 and the external auditor was available to answer questions during this period. It was reported that no questions had been asked.

The Council was also required to provide a documented annual review of the effectiveness of its governance arrangements which sat alongside the Statement of Accounts, known as the Annual Governance Statement. The overall level of assurance provided in 2018/19 was substantial and was in line with the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

The Statement of Accounts 2018/19 were presented to the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 17 September 2019. It was reported that the accounts should have been submitted for consideration and subsequent approval in July however there had been delays in their completion of the external audit. The external auditor's work on the financial statements was now substantially complete and, subject to satisfactory conclusion of any outstanding work, they would propose issuing an unqualified audit opinion by 30 September 2019. As part of the audit, the internal controls in place relevant to the preparation of the financial statements had been considered, with three recommendations resulting from this work made as follows:

- production of draft accounts and working papers;
- incomplete disclosures for pension fund plan assets;
- investment property valuations.

It was reported that the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources were adequate. The external auditors therefore proposed issuing an unqualified opinion on the Council's value for money arrangements.

The external auditors had expressed their disappointment in the quality of accounts received as part of the Council's submission. The Chief Finance Officer gave an assurance that work was underway with her team to ensure that this was not the case for next year's submission.

46. Acquisition Policy Addendum

Purpose of Report

To approve minor changes and process amendments to the Acquisition Policy since its implementation in June 2019.

Decision

That the minor changes and process amendments to the Acquisition Policy, as set out in the report, be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

Since the implementation of the Council's Acquisition Policy in June 2019 it had become apparent that a more streamlined process for the acquisition of private dwellings which were not former local authority dwellings, but were of more strategic importance to the Council, was required. In addition, now the Policy was in use, minor changes to the acquisition process were necessary.

In order to streamline the process of acquiring dwellings which had never been part of the Council's housing stock, it was proposed that these acquisitions were made in-line with the existing approach of acquiring former Council dwellings. All proposed changes, including minor amendments to the process, were set out in the report.

47. Interim Air Quality Action Plan for Lincoln

Purpose of Report

To seek approval of the adoption of the interim Air Quality Action Plan for Lincoln.

Decision

That the adoption of the interim Air Quality Action Plan be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

The City of Lincoln Council currently had one declared Air Quality Management Area which was in place due to non-compliance with the national annual mean air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide, a road traffic related pollutant. Where a local authority had declared an Air Quality Management Area, it had a duty to produce an Air Quality Action Plan aimed at improving pollution levels within the Air Quality Management Area. The Council's current Action Plan was produced in 2006 and required updating to reflect the current air quality challenges within the city.

A detailed modelling assessment of air quality was undertaken in 2018 to take account of recent changes in the road network, including the newly created East West Link Road and the Transport Hub, using updated traffic data from Lincolnshire County Council's revised road traffic model for Lincoln. As part of the detailed modelling assessment, a source apportionment exercise was carried out to identify the principal pollution sources affecting air quality within the Air Quality Management Area. The results of the source apportionment exercise suggested that measures contained in any update of the Air Quality Action Plan should primarily seek to address road traffic contributions within the existing Air Quality Management Area, with particular emphasis on reducing the contribution of heavy goods vehicles and buses or coaches along the A15 as they passed through the centre of the city.

Due to the ongoing review of the Lincoln Transport Strategy, led by Lincolnshire County Council, it was expected that opportunities would arise to reduce transport related emissions throughout the city. However, until outcomes of the Lincoln Transport Strategy review were finalised, it was not known which road traffic related measures could feasibly be included in any Air Quality Action Plan.

In order to demonstrate the City Council's commitment to tackling air quality it was proposed to adopt an interim Air Quality Action Plan, concentrating on those improvement measures that could be implemented, irrespective of the outcomes of the Lincoln Transport Strategy review. A full review of the Action Plan would be

undertaken upon completion of the Lincoln Transport Strategy review seeking to take advantage of opportunities afforded by the updated Strategy.

It was noted that the key priorities of the interim Air Quality Action Plan would focus on both committed infrastructure schemes and measures that the City Council could implement directly, which included:

- Priority 1 – reduction in through traffic, particularly in relation to heavy goods vehicles;
- Priority 2 – improvement in vehicle emissions regularly entering the Air Quality Management Area;
- Priority 3 – manage development in a way that minimises any detrimental impact on the Air Quality Management Area;
- Priority 4 – improvements in the City Council's transport emissions;
- Priority 5 – improvements in the City Council's non-transport related emissions.

Councillor Neil Murray asked what the expected benefit on Canwick Road and Broadgate would be once the Eastern Bypass opened next year. The Eastern Bypass was anticipated to remove heavy goods vehicles from that particular route and decrease through traffic by at least 20%. The Highways Authority would be required to have in place a scheme which demonstrated how such a reduction would be encouraged.

Councillor Chris Burke sought confirmation regarding the robustness of the measurements being taken. It was reported that measurements were undertaken at a number of locations across the city and that officers were 100% confident that the data collected was of a sufficient level, collecting good quality data.

48. Exclusion of Press and Public

49. SECTION B

50. Infrastructure Upgrade

Purpose of Report

To inform the Executive on progress made in relation to updating the IT infrastructure, in line with the ICT Strategy and to request authority for the project and its inclusion in the capital programme following the outcome of the procurement process.

Decision

That the recommendation contained within the report be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

The reasons for this decision were set out in the body of the report.