

Present: Councillor Ric Metcalfe (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Donald Nannestad, Councillor Jackie Kirk,
Councillor Rosanne Kirk, Councillor Neil Murray and
Councillor Fay Smith

Apologies for Absence: None.

110. Confirmation of Minutes - 25 February 2019

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2019 be confirmed.

111. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

112. Financial Performance - Quarterly Monitoring

Purpose of Report

To provide the Executive with the third quarter's performance, up to 31 December 2018, on the Council's General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, Housing Repairs Service and Capital Programmes.

Decision

- (1) That progress on financial performance for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 December 2018 and the projected outturns for 2018/19 be noted.
- (2) That the underlying impact of the pressures and underspends identified in paragraphs 3.2, 4.3 and 5.2 and Appendices B, D and F of the report be noted.
- (3) That the proposed contributions to earmarked reserves, as set out in paragraph 3.7 of the report, be approved.
- (4) That the changes to the General Investment Programme and Housing Investment Programme, as detailed in paragraphs 7.4 and 7.10 be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

The forecast financial position of the Council up to 31 December 2018 for 2018/19 was set out in paragraph 2.1 of the report with further details shown in sections 3 to 7 of the report and accompanying appendices.

General Fund

For 2018/19 the Council's net General Fund revenue budget was set at £14,276,460, including a planned contribution to balances of £288,360. This resulted in an estimated level of general balances at the year-end of £1,897,724.

The General Fund summary was currently projecting a forecast budget shortfall of £206,302 as set out at Appendix A. This forecast variance was the result of a number of forecast year-end variations in income and expenditure against the approved budget. Full details of the main variances were set out in Appendix B, with key variances noted as follows:

- car parking – reduced income and reduced expenditure equating to £908,090;
- Christmas Market – increased expenditure and reduced income equating to £85,950;
- Housing Benefit overpayments – reduced income of £225,280;
- homelessness Bed & Breakfast – increased costs of £157,990;
- development management – increased income of £114,190;
- Houses in Multiple Occupation fees – increased income of £65,930;
- borrowing costs/contingency – reduced costs of £272,050;
- balance sheet review – increased income of £70,170;
- earmarked reserves – increased income of £280,220;
- contingencies released – reduced costs of £175,930.

Given the scale of the shortfall in car parking income targets, as identified in previous quarterly reports, the Council's Corporate Management Team continued to accelerate the implementation of the car parking income generation strategy. Action taken to date had demonstrated a positive effect in terms of the forecast shortfalls against the car parking income targets which had improved from a forecasted shortfall of £1.141 million at quarter one to £1.011 million at quarter three. It was anticipated that this positive trend would continue, however, reflective of the significant shortfall in achieving the income targets the Medium Term Financial Strategy had been revised, with a significant reduction in income targets to be set in the early years of the Strategy, increasing over time as per paragraph 3.4 of the report.

Included within the forecast budget shortfall of £206,302 were a number of proposed transfers to earmarked reserves, as follows:

- Planning Delivery Fund – transfer of £95,000 grant income received to fund additional posts to support large scale applications in 2019/20;
- overachievement of Crematorium income – transfer £100,000 of surplus income, net of increased cost, to an income equalisation reserve to mitigate against future fluctuations in income levels;
- Revenues and Benefits Shared Service – transfer of £100,000 of New Burdens funding to a reserve to be utilised in 2019/20, as determined by the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service Joint Committee.

Towards Financial Sustainability Programme

The savings target included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2018/19 was £3,850,000. Progress against this target, based on quarter three performance, showed that secured and confident projections totalled £3,828,050.

This had resulted in a current forecast under achievement of the target in 2018/19 of £21,950. A summary of the current position was set out at paragraph 3.10.

Housing Revenue Account

For 2018/19 the Council's Housing Revenue Account net revenue budget was set at break even, resulting in an estimated level of general balances at the year-end of £1,023,099.

The Housing Revenue Account was currently projecting an in-year underspend of £4,849 which would increase general balances to £1,027,950 at the end of 2018/19 as set out in Appendix C of the report. The components of this underspend were detailed in Appendix D of the report, with key variances summarised as follows:

- staff vacancies – reduced spending of £90,000;
- Council Tax payable on void properties – increased spending of £74,000;
- repairs and maintenance on void properties – increased spending of £208,000;
- rental income – additional income of £80,000;
- Housing Repairs Service surplus – additional income of £145,570.

Housing Repairs Service

For 2018/19 the Council's Housing Repairs Service net revenue budget was set at zero, reflecting its full cost recovery nature.

At quarter three, the Housing Repairs Service was forecasting a surplus of £145,570 in 2018/19 with a forecast summary and main variances set out in Appendix E and Appendix F of the report respectively.

Earmarked Reserves

The details of all the earmarked reserves and their forecast balance as at 31 March 2019 were attached at Appendix G and summarised in paragraph 6.1 of the report.

General Fund Investment Programme

Movements in the General Fund Investment Programme during the third quarter had decreased overall planned expenditure in 2018/19 to £16,635,318. A summary of the overall changes to the programme was shown in paragraph 7.2 of the report.

Budget changes this quarter that required Executive approval for the third quarter were as follows:

- non-disabled facility grant – £26,026. The current scheme had been completed and this would be re-profiled into contingencies pending the new grant scheme;
- diving boards at Yarborough Leisure Centre. The new scheme to improve the existing three boards at Yarborough Leisure Centre.

A summary of the General Fund Investment Programme was set out in the table at paragraph 7.6 of the report. The overall spending on the Programme for the third quarter was £12,430,196, which was 74.72% of the agreed programme and 83.8% of the active programme as detailed further in Appendix J of the report.

Housing Investment Programme

The last quarterly report approved a Housing Investment Programme for 2018/19 of £33,047,788. Movements in the Programme since had reduced overall planned expenditure in 2018/19 to £31,457,789. A summary of the changes were shown in the table at paragraph 7.9 of the report.

Changes to the Programme requiring approval from the Executive were detailed in Appendix K and summarised as follows:

- bathrooms and water closets equating to £255,937 and kitchen improvements totalling £214,009 to be re-profiled to the Central Heating Upgrades 2019/20 budget due to budget pressures;
- landscaping and boundaries equating to £2,000,000 in 2021/22 to be re-profiled to the Central Heating Upgrades programme due to budget pressures on the current scheme. Roll out of £1,000,000 was proposed for 2020/21, £450,000 in 2021/22 and £550,000 in 2022/23;
- movements from the land acquisition fund of £105,000 due to completion of the De Wint alteration programme;
- movements into the contingency reserve of £105,000 due to completion of the De Wint alteration programme.

The table at paragraph 7.13 of the report provided a summary of the projected outturn position.

Expenditure against the Housing Investment Programme budget during the third quarter was £15,681,670 which was 49.85% of the approved programme. Although this appeared to be low at this stage of the financial year, a large element of the programme in 2018/19 was the new build programme which was planned to be delivered during quarter four of 2018/19.

Councillor Donald Nannestad queried whether the increased income as a result of new licensing arrangements for Houses in Multiple Occupation covered the administrative and running costs of the new regime. It was noted that, based upon current projections, the anticipated income would exceed the cost of implementing the new licensing arrangements.

Councillor Jackie Kirk queried the re-profiling of money allocated to a Skate Park into 2019/20. It was noted that this had been re-profiled to the 2019/20 budget as it was known that this money would not be spent within this financial year. The £168,037 associated with the Skate Park scheme had therefore been re-profiled into the 2019/20 budget, although such a project had yet to be brought into fruition.

113. Quarter 3 2018-2019 - Operational Performance Report

Purpose of Report

To present to the Executive a summary of the operational performance position for quarter three of the financial year 2018/19.

Decision

That the report be noted and that the relevant Portfolio Holders be requested to ensure that management has a focus on those highlighted areas showing deteriorating performance.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

Key headlines from performance results in terms of those areas performing well included:

- the number of users logged into the self-service system MyInfo this quarter had increased from 6,409 last year to 7,651 this year;
- the in-year collection rate for business rates had surpassed its upper target of 84.22% at a figure of 86.23%;
- the total number of users of the Council's health and recreation facilities had increased by 55,176 users since Q3 last year;
- the satisfaction of Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour complainants relating to how the complaint was handled had seen a large increase of 12.4% increasing from 80.3% last quarter to 92.7 % in quarter three;
- the percentage of premises that were full or broadly compliant with food health and safety inspections had improved on its target of 97% with a figure of 97.6%;
- the percentage of non-major and major planning applications determined within the government targets were above their targets at 94.51% and 97.96% respectively;
- the rent collected as a proportion of rent owed had surpassed its target of 96.50% at 99.83%;
- the current level of tenant arrears was better than the target of 3.50% with a figure of 2.47%, but was still a little higher than at the same time last year at 2.22%;
- the percentage of reactive repairs completed within target time was above the target of 97.50% with a figure of 98.51%;
- the number of face to face enquiries at City Hall had decreased again in quarter three to 4,893, compared to 10,388 in quarter three last year.

Areas where performance could be improved included:

- the average time taken to answer a call in customer services had increased by 73 seconds compared to quarter three last year, at 122 seconds, below the lower target of 50 seconds;
- the level of outstanding customer changes in the Revenues Team had increased to 401 in quarter three this year, from 80 in quarter three last year;

- the percentage of waste recycled or composted had decreased from 38.20% in the last year to 34.70% in this year, below its lower target of 35%;
- the average re-let time calendar days for all dwellings, including major works, was slightly below its lower target of 28 with a figure of 28.35;
- the percentage of rent lost through dwellings being vacant had deteriorated 0.14% to 0.84% this quarter;
- the average days taken to process new housing benefit claims had decreased slightly since quarter two but was still below its lower target of 26 at 27 days;
- the average days taken to process housing benefit claim changes of circumstances was outside its lower target of six with a figure of 8.03;
- the number of housing benefits and council tax support customers awaiting assessment had increased from last year's quarter three figure of 556, which was now at 1,339;
- the number of homelessness applications progressed within the housing team had increased from quarter three last year by 343, now reporting at 526.

It was noted that, following the introduction of Universal Credit in March 2018, there had been a lengthening of time taken in most aspects of housing benefit work. In addition, due to the introduction of the Homelessness Act in April 2018, there was an increased number of applicants relating to homelessness.

In terms of key headlines from corporate measures, the following updates were noted:

- the overall sickness data for quarter three was 2.45 days per full time equivalent, excluding apprentices. This brought the cumulative total of sick days to 7.28 days which was 2.56 days less than last year and was the lowest quarter three average in the last five years;
- the cumulative average time across all directorates to respond to formal complaints was 7.9 days, which was an increase of 1.4 days from quarter two in 2017/18;
- 90.2% of all staff appraisals were completed by quarter three in the year 2018/19.

In terms of other achievements this quarter, the Council took part in the national social media publicity event for local government #OurDay, which provided the Council with an opportunity to use Twitter to promote its day to day business. The day was a huge success for local government with 33,000 tweets sent out using the Our Day hashtag from more than 9,000 contributors. The Council's tweets were liked more than 340 times from Twitter users as far away as Australia and Canada.

It was highlighted that the Transport Hub had won another award, this time for the development project at the Greater Lincolnshire Property Awards 2019 and the Central Car Park had recently won the accolade of best new car park at the Car Park Awards. The Housing and Investment Directorate had also been shortlisted for an award at the UK Housing Awards 2019 for the 'Homebuilder of the Year – Less Than 1,000 Programme', with final interviews taking place on 14 March 2019. In addition, the Council had been nominated as a finalist for the Local Government Chronicle Awards 2019 for 'Council of the Year', with Matthew Hilman, Maintenance Manager of the Housing Repairs Service, having been nominated for the Rising Star Award.

Councillor Ric Metcalfe was pleased to see the Council, and individuals within the Council, getting the national recognition they deserved for the things they were doing in the city.

Councillor Jackie Kirk praised the work that had taken place in relation to the Social Responsibility Charter and was pleased to see how well it was doing.

Discussion ensued on the success of the Lincoln Lottery and the many good causes for the community it had already provided and influenced. Councillor Metcalfe referred to this as a good example of creative risk taking as a Council.

114. Strategic Risk Register - Quarterly Review

Purpose of Report

To provide the Executive with an update report of the revised Strategic Risk Register as at the end of the third quarter 2018-19.

Decision

That the Strategic Risk Register as at the end of the third quarter for 2018-19 be noted.

Alternative Options Considered

None.

Reasons for Decisions

A number of further control actions had now been progressed or completed and the key movements were outlined as follows:

- risk two – failure to provide a sustainable Medium Term Financial Strategy. A draft Medium Term Financial Strategy had been developed and was approved by the Council at its meeting on 4 March 2019;
- risk three – failure to deliver the Towards Financial Sustainability Programme whilst ensuring the resilience of the Council. Progress continued to be made against the existing Towards Financial Sustainability Programme with only a small number of schemes left to complete. Work had been progressing during quarter three on the development of a new programme of schemes in order to deliver the increased savings targets as per the approved Medium Term Financial Strategy;
- risk six – unable to meet the emerging changes required in the Council's culture, behaviour and skills to support the delivery of the Council's Vision 2020 and the transformation journey to the 'One Council' approach. As part of the People Strategy the Council had launched an annual staff recognition scheme which would assist in celebrating the hard work and success of the Council's employees. Other initiatives to promote rising stars and the work of teams through award submissions and the entering of a team for the East Midlands Challenge would also take place during quarter four. A transformation change lead would be recruited in quarter three to support the 'One Council' approach to deliver a single organisational approach more efficiently and cost effectively;
- risk seven – insufficient levels of resilience and capacity existed in order to deliver key strategic projects and services within the Council. Service

planning had commenced together with work allocations for Vision 2020 projects. Revised management structural changes were continuing to take place with recruitment for an Assistant Director of Growth under the Major Developments Directorate currently in progress;

- risk 8 – decline in the economic prosperity within the City Centre. A fundamental review of the place shaping strategy had commenced alongside review of the market within the city centre. Work had also started on scoping the development of activity and investment to support the vibrancy of the city centre engaging with government to submit an application for the Future High Street Fund.

Two new risks had been added to the Strategic Risk Register, as follows:

- risk 9 – failure to mitigate against the outcome of Brexit. Monitoring continued and regular updates were provided to the Council's Corporate Management Team and political leadership;
- risk 10 – failure to deliver key strategic projects. Relevant Boards were in place to monitor key milestones including financial, reputational and resource and partnership implications together with effective communication plans and risk registers which were owned and understood. Work was commencing to share and understand the implications of delivery and non-delivery and utilising external experts for advice and independent review.

A copy of the revised Strategic Risk Register was attached to the report at Appendix A.

115. Cornhill, Markets and City Centre Vibrancy Project

Purpose of Report

To seek Executive approval for the Cornhill, Markets and City Centre Vibrancy Project.

Decision

- (1) That consent be given to remove the Cornhill Kiosk and tree, subject to planning permission and vacant possession.
- (2) That authority be given to officers to trial an extension of the outdoor market on City Square.
- (3) That authority be given to develop proposals for the remaining £250,000 budget and for work to take place with stakeholders to agree on a schedule of delivery.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Alternative options considered and rejected were set out in paragraph 7.1 of the report.

Reason for Decision

The City Council had made a public commitment through both the City Centre Masterplan and Vision 2020 to develop an enhanced market offer for the city and provide improved public realm on the Cornhill Square. The Council was now in a position, subject to planning and some tenancy negotiations, to move forward with capital works to demolish the Cornhill Kiosk and make good the associated public realm in order to create an enhanced space for events.

Approval was therefore sought for the following aspects of the Cornhill, Markets and City Centre Vibrancy Project:

- demolition of the Cornhill Kiosk and subsequent reinstatement of the associated public realm;
- removal of a tree adjacent to the Cornhill Kiosk to open up Cornhill Square;
- allocation of funds for the demolition of the Cornhill Kiosk and removal of the adjacent tree and costs incurred in obtaining vacant possession of the Cornhill Kiosk which was currently leased;
- extension of the outdoor market offer on City Square to explore the viability of an outdoor market offer in this location;
- identify sources of external funding to bring forward the redevelopment of the Central Market and the Cornhill and City Squares;
- development of the financial business case to ensure the Council's risks and financial exposure were minimised;
- negotiation of any legal agreements required to enable delivery of the proposals as the scheme developed.

Whilst the full proposals for the city centre were still being developed, all partners agreed that the removal of the Kiosk on Cornhill Square to open it up to the High Street and create a much more effective public open space as part of the Public Realm Strategy was long overdue. The demolition of the Cornhill Kiosk and removal of the tree in front of the building therefore formed the first phase of improvements and would then allow the City Council to focus on creating a robust market offer around Central Market and City Square. This would allow the Cornhill to become a more appropriate space for events and encourage additional footfall and activity within the city centre.

Work was currently taking place to bring together a more joined up approach regarding the use, application and enforcement of a range of rights and licenses affecting trading in the city centre to further support the vibrancy, health and future of the city centre. The Council was also working with support from key project partners to submit a bid under the Government's Future High Street Fund for city centre vibrancy projects including the market, public realm and accessibility projects.

Councillor Ric Metcalfe said that this proposal was another example the regeneration taking place in the city. With regard to the tree, the Council was reluctant to see the removal of any tree in the city but appreciated the need for this particular tree to be removed given its condition and location. He asked for clarity regarding its replacement and where this would be located in view of the Council's policy of planting a new tree for every tree it removed.

Councillor Jackie Kirk asked what timescales were associated with the proposed works. It was noted that there were a number of processes to go through as part of the scheme, but the target was after summer 2019 with a possibility that it could be completed before the summer depending on how things developed.

Councillor Neil Murray praised the proposal and said that Lincoln was really bucking the trend with regard to its high street when compared to other high streets across the country, with the completion of Sincil Street adding to this. Councillor Murray was particularly pleased to see an extension of the market offer as part of this proposal. He was of the view that enhancing the Central Market would be a useful addition to the regeneration of the area as well, which he felt was looking quite tired compared to markets in other towns or cities.

Councillor Metcalfe made the point that there was a misconception by some people that the Kiosk was Victorian, when in fact it had been built in 1999. It was noted that the burger bar located behind the Kiosk was built in 1982 and that nothing had been located in that area previously. With regard to the tree replacement, it was reported that the Council's Public Realm Strategy identified areas in the city where more greenery was required or desired.

Councillor Fay Smith made the point that there were approximately 84,000 trees in the city, reiterating the point that it was the Council's policy to plant new trees for every tree the authority removed in the city.

Councillor Donald Nannestad requested that more information be provided to members to clarify where new trees were being planted, in order to report this to residents upon requests which he often received. It was noted that consent was required to remove this particular tree due to it being located in a conservation area.

116. Commerical Property Investment Strategy

Purpose of Report

To approve a revised Commercial Property Investment Strategy and approve an amendment to the delegate of Executive powers given to the Council's Strategic Property Manager with regard to the acquisition of General Fund commercial property investment opportunities.

Decision

- (1) That the revised Commercial Property Investment Strategy, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved.
- (2) That the Strategic Property Manager delegated function, as set out in the Constitution, be amended to reflect that the postholder can negotiate terms to acquire the freehold of land or premises, in consultation with the City Solicitor, Chief Finance Officer, Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

The revised Commercial Property Investment Strategy, attached as Appendix A to the report, had been updated to reflect recent guidance issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Council's latest financial position and desire to achieve further sustainable income through property investment. It also strengthened the set of assessment criteria by which all proposed commercial property assessments would be scored.

The principal reason for property investment by the Council was defined as being to secure the economic wellbeing of the city by generating additional income for the provision of services, for the purpose of economic development or regeneration, or a combination of both. This was supported by the five key objectives, as follows:

- deliver sustainable income, to support the continued provision of Council services by growing the Council's property portfolio in a measured and incremental way;
- build financial resilience through the creation of a diverse portfolio in order to balance risk and return;
- acquire land or property for the social and economic wellbeing of the city on a long term investment basis;
- support the economic development of the city by acquiring assets that encouraged local business growth, inward investment and/or new entrepreneurial business start-ups;
- develop a governance framework that enabled the Council to move at a timely pace in line with the market.

The strategy built on the criteria for investment as agreed by the Executive in August 2017 and strengthened this criteria through the development of an assessment matrix. All investments would be subject to an initial pass or fail criteria in respect of the initial yield, which was expected to be in the range of 5% to 8% per annum. Subject to meeting this criteria investment opportunities would then be assessed against the following criteria:

- tenure;
- covenant;
- occupiers lease length;
- building quality/obsolescence;
- repairing obligations;
- location/sector;
- sector;
- rent review mechanism.

In terms of the governance process, wherever possible a report would be submitted to the Executive for approval to acquire the investments. However, given the often fast pace of the property market and the four-weekly frequency of Executive meetings, the situation may arise where an offer for an investment which met the assessment criteria needed to be submitted ahead of the next available meeting. In such cases, and with the agreement of the Corporate Management Team, the following approval process would be undertaken:

- the Strategic Property Manager, in consultation with the City Solicitor, Chief Finance Officer, Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth shall have authority to submit, offer and negotiate on behalf of the Council with a subsequent report to be submitted to the next available Executive meeting.

117. Amendment to Strategic Property Manager Delegated Powers

Purpose of Report

To approve an amendment to the delegation of Executive powers given to the Strategic Property Manager to enable the postholder to negotiate terms to acquire the freehold of land or premises in relation to the Housing Revenue Account.

Decision

That the amendment to the Strategic Property Manager delegated function as set out in the Constitution in that the postholder can negotiate terms to acquire the freehold of land or premises, in consultation with the City Solicitor, Chief Finance Officer, Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth also covers acquisitions through the Housing Revenue Account.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

Further to the decision at minute number 116 above relating to the amendment to the Constitution in respect of the delegation of Executive powers to the Strategic Property Manager regarding property acquisitions, this proposal sought to ensure that the delegation also covered acquisitions through the Housing Revenue Account.

118. Housing, Health and Care - Memorandum of Understanding

Purpose of Report

To report that the City of Lincoln Council, along with all Lincolnshire District Authorities, Lincolnshire County Council and NHS Health Trusts, was a signatory to the Memorandum of Understanding.

Decision

That the Memorandum of Understanding be endorsed.

Alternation Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

The Memorandum of Understanding was in place to support joint action in Lincolnshire on improving health and wellbeing throughout the home and provided for local government, housing, health, care and the voluntary sector to work together.

The Health and Wellbeing Board was a partnership of key agencies in Lincolnshire which must undertake a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Lincolnshire's Strategy included a housing priority. The key signatories of the Memorandum of Understanding would review progress annually against the agreed priorities for housing.

A copy of the Memorandum of Understanding was appended to the report.

119. Lincoln Crematorium - A Strategy for Investment

Purpose of Report

To update the Executive on the outline concept stage design work to enhance the facilities at Lincoln Crematorium and seek approval to progress the next stage of work to finalise these designs and crystallise the level of capital investment required.

Decision

That the Executive:

- (1) Approves to sanction a further budget in 2019/20 of up to £210,000 for design work, survey work and professional fees to conclude RIBA stage 4 to be funded from existing revenue budgets and earmarked reserves.
- (2) Approves the submission of relevant planning permissions as landowner.
- (3) Approves the purchase of a new software package as proposed and to allocate £20,000 in the General Investment Programme, funded from the strategic priorities reserve.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Other options considered were set out in paragraph 9.1 of the report.

Reason for Decision

The report set out a strategy for maintaining the high standards of service the Lincoln Crematorium offered residents of the city and surrounding areas, and for growing the service to meet developing customer needs both now and for the future. The strategy consisted of three strands, as follows:

- options for capital investment in the existing crematorium site to enable it to continue to maintain its unique compassionate and professional offer and to increase its capacity to meet the future demands of a fast growing city and surrounding area;

- pursue options for the development of new service offerings, some of which would be the subject of a further detailed report in the spring of 2019;
- continued discussions with funeral directors to explore joint relationships, ensuring that the Council could continue to deliver their requirements now and in the future so that together it could continue to deliver exactly what its service users needed at such a difficult emotional time for them.

Lincoln Crematorium had completed investment to improve the seating capacity of the chapel and improve the front of house experience for the bereaved. This enabled the Council to continue to meet service users' expectations and those of funeral directors by improving the internal facilities in the public areas. Further to this investment, the City Council now needed to consider the less visible but equally important aspects of the back room workings of the Crematorium, as well as some new additional external facilities of direct benefit to service users.

The two existing cremators were approaching an age where they needed to be replaced as part of prudent asset management. Additionally, it was proposed that a new extended area of permanent parking was developed on the area of ground behind the existing car park, leaving the current overflow as additional parking for occasional use when needed. This would enhance the Council's service provision to match the demand for the increasingly larger number of mourners attending some funerals.

Regarding the proposed next phase of investment in the crematorium service, the Council had engaged the services of an architect, landscape architect and quantity surveyor for the design and cost options in respect of the various refurbishments. Some of their concept visuals were set out in Appendix A of the report. Proposed improvements to the crematorium facility and aesthetic improvements were set out in paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2 of the report, together with options for developing new customer interaction and service enhancements which were outlined in paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2.

Councillor Ric Metcalfe acknowledged that the Council had always paid a lot of attention to this service and the proposals would take the Crematorium and the services associated with it to another level in terms of the quality it could offer. He was of the view that members of the Council, as well as members of the public, would welcome this.

Councillor Fay Smith made the point that there had been problems in the past with bookings but that this had normally been due to Funeral Directors being unavailable on certain days rather than the Crematorium not being able to accommodate a service. A new booking system as part of the proposals would address this. In addition, work was taking place between the Council and Funeral Directors to improve relationships and work together to continue to improve service provision in this respect.

120. Property Purchases

This item had been withdrawn.