

Present: Councillor Gary Hewson (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Thomas Dyer, Councillor Christopher Reid,
Councillor Rebecca Longbottom, Councillor
Laura McWilliams, Councillor Lucinda Preston, Councillor
Pat Vaughan and Councillor Loraine Woolley

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Helena Mair and Jaclyn Gibson

44. Confirmation of Minutes - 21 January 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2021 be confirmed.

45. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Pat Vaughan declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Financial Performance - Quarterly Monitoring'. Reason: His granddaughter worked in the Finance Section of the City of Lincoln Council.

46. Portfolio Holder under Scrutiny - Reducing Inequality

Councillor Rosie Kirk, Portfolio Holder for Reducing Inequality:

- a) presented a report to Performance Scrutiny Committee covering the following key points:
- Development and launch of a brand-new befriending service to provide direct support to vulnerable and isolated residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Launch and delivery of a Community Support Helpline to assist those most in need during the pandemic to access vital supplies.
 - Over £100k had been raised by Lincoln Community Lottery for good causes since its launch in August 2018.
 - Continued success of the Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter, which had seen local businesses encouraged to go above and beyond to support their employees and the local community during this difficult time.
 - Under the governments 'Everyone In' initiative the council successfully offered a place of safety to every person sleeping rough, or at risk of sleeping rough, during the pandemic.
 - 267 successful awards of £500 had been made under the National Test and Trace Payments Scheme (as of 21 January 2021).
 - The Business Rates Team had been instrumental in supporting businesses in 2020/21, awarding £27million in Expanded Retail Discount.

- The council had been successful in securing in excess of £1million to provide 15 units of accommodation with support for the rough sleeping cohort.
 - In 2020 a PSPO was brought in covering Lucy Tower Street, Broadgate and Central Multi-story Car Parks with the aim of further reducing ASB in these areas and enhancing the public image and safety of our city.
- b) explained the key achievements over the past year for the following areas/services:
- Befriending Service
 - Community Helpline
 - Food Vouchers for Vulnerable Families in the School Holidays
 - COVID-19 Crisis Fund
 - Lincoln Community Lottery
 - Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter
 - Universal Credit and Welfare Reform
 - Test and Trace Payment Scheme and Winter Grants Scheme
 - Welfare and Benefits Advice
 - Housing Benefit/Council Tax Support
 - Discretionary Rate Relief Policy
 - Financial Inclusion
 - Skills and Training (including Adult Learning and The Network)
 - Asylum Seekers and Refugees
 - Homelessness and Rough Sleeping
 - Equality and Diversity
 - Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour (PPASB Team)
 - Intervention Team
 - City Centre Issues and Partner Collaboration
 - Safer Lincolnshire Partnership
 - Protecting Vulnerable People
 - Response to COVID-19
 - CCTV Service
 - World Hello Day
 - Holocaust Memorial Day
- c) invited members' comments and questions.

Question: Members asked if what had already been achieved and what more could possibly be achieved within the remit of the portfolio could be looked into in readiness for the next member to take over the portfolio?

Response: Cllr R Kirk was hopeful to meet with the new Portfolio Holder once this had been agreed and carry out a handover.

Question: Members asked how much money was given to Bridge Church and what areas this money was to be used for?

Response: £10,000 was put forward in October to help families that were struggling. Not all this money was initially used and was carried forward to Christmas. This enabled Bridge Church to plan and provide for families over the holidays. The money also enabled the church to gain additional funding. The funding that remained was now being carried forward to Easter. Bridge Church covered the whole of the City via food banks and the community larder. Over the

Christmas period the church went out to schools to offer food vouchers and assisted in identifying children/families that needed help.

Question: Members asked about the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.

Response: There was a panel that met quarterly to look at this policy. The panel last met a couple of weeks ago. There had understandably been a reduction in uptake for this since the impacts of Covid-19 commenced. The policy is regularly reviewed, and will be reviewed in line with what may be required under economic recovery from Covid-19.

Question: There had been only one registered incident of dog fouling in 2019 which was disappointing as it was an issue within the City. Members asked what was being done to help tackle this issue?

Response: It was incredibly difficult to catch people allowing their dogs to foul. If someone was being watched then they tended to pick up the mess and most of the incidents seemed to take place during darkness. There were informal actions that took place for dog fouling.

Question: Members asked whether frontline staff could be trained on domestic violence such as the 'Ask Annie Scheme'?

Response: There were frontline staff that were trained to deal with domestic abuse and information had been shared on our safeguarding page.

Question: Members asked whether action could be taken to try to avoid making cutbacks in CCTV as it was vital to the city centre and had picked up 1000's of matters requiring attention.

Response: The Council wanted to do all we could to protect this service and would strive for more contributions as this was very important to the city and the Police.

Question: Members asked why the Portfolio Holders attendance was low at the Police and Crime Commissioner meetings?

Response: Attendance was low due to a bereavement and unfortunately substitutes could not be sought.

Question: Members asked how many noise complaints resulted in prosecution.

Response: There were 600 complaints received due to noise and 80% of these were resolved when a letter was sent. 20% would move on for evidence gathering but only a few would go all the way to a prosecution. Changing behaviour could be tricky.

Question: Members asked who paid for the Police Constable who worked in City Hall?

Response: This post was fully funded by Lincolnshire Police.

47. Financial Performance - Quarterly Monitoring

Jaclyn Gibson, Chief Finance Officer:

- a) presented a report to Performance Scrutiny Committee on the third quarter's performance (up to 31 December 2020)
- b) provided information on the Council's:

- **General Fund Revenue Account** –The General Fund Summary was currently projecting a forecast underspend of £122,723 (as shown in Appendix A), resulting in general balance at the year-end of £2,645,911 (subject to any final contributions to earmarked reserves). There were a significant number of forecast year-end variations in income and expenditure against the approved budget, primarily as a result of Covid-19 along with variances arising from measures taken to address the budget pressures and the financial support provided by Government, Full details of the main variances were provided in Appendix B.

The most significant impact of Covid-19 had been on the Council's income streams with monthly income levels plummeting across a range of discretionary services as well as through investments and rental streams, as a result of the shutdown of the economy and its likely phased path to recovery. The most significant of income losses had been:

- Car Parking
 - Development Management, Land Charges and Building Control
 - Leisure, Recreation and Tourism
 - Christmas Market
 - Commercial Rents
 - Treasury Management
 - Court Cost Charges
 - Other Income Areas
- **Housing Revenue Account** – the HRA was projecting an in-year variance of a £772,391 underspend, which would increase the general balances to £1,693,462 at the end of 2020/21. Although the forecast position was an underspend there were a number of forecast year-end variations in income and expenditure as a result of Covid19 along with variances arising from measures taken to address the budget pressures. Full details of the main variances were provided in Appendix D.

Significant pressures facing the HRA related to its income streams, primarily its housing rent income, as follows:

- Housing Rents
 - Housing Voids
 - Treasury Management
 - Court Cost Charges
- **Housing Repairs Service** – the HRS was forecasting a surplus of £204,670 in 2020/21. Appendix E provided a forecast summary, with full details of the main variances provided in Appendix F.

- c) provided information on:

- **General Investment Programme** – the original General Investment Programme for 2020/21 in the MTFS 2020-25 amounted to £15.6m. This was increased to £16.4m following quarter 4 approvals and year end re-profiles from 2019/20. At quarter 2 the programme was reduced to £11.1m and at quarter 3 the programme had been reduced by a further £5,987m to £5,117m as shown at paragraph 7.2.

The overall spending on the General Investment Programme for the first three quarters of 2020/21 was £0.885m, which was 17.5% of the 2020/21 programme and 17% of the active programme. This was detailed further at Appendix J.

- **Housing Investment Programme** – the original Housing Investment Programme for 2020/21 in the MTFS 2020-25 amounted to £25.640m. This was increased to £28.505m following approvals and year end re-profiles as part of the 2019/20 outturn. As at quarter 2 the budget was revised to £22.3m and had been further adjusted by £2.6m to £19.7m at Quarter 3. A summary of the changes were shown in paragraph 7.9.

d) invited members' comments and questions.

Question: Members asked whether the £20k that was in the HRA reserves for re-wiring was for new consumer units?

Response: This money was not specifically ring-fenced for this reason but if the consumer unit needed replacing then it would be used for this purpose.

Question: Members asked what the costs were for security at the Christmas Market 2021?

Response: The costs had remained the same or had risen slightly with inflation.

Question: Members asked whether the work on Greyfriars would only take place if funding was secured?

Response: Yes, this would only go ahead if funding was obtained.

Question: Members asked when the Car Park Strategy would commence?

Response: This would depend on what the easing of lockdown road-mapping looked like when it was released by the Prime Minister in the coming weeks. Pricing strategies were being looked at to entice people to the city centre once this was safe to do so.

Question: Members asked for clarification on the money that had been kept for Active Nation as a bond.

Response: Active Nation should have a bond that they would pay to us if they were to go into administration. Currently they could not acquire a bond due to the pandemic so in the first lockdown they were awarded an £83,000 business grant which was kept in lieu just in case the worse was to happen. The bond should be around £200k.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

48. Service Delivery During our COVID-19 Response

Heather Grover, Principal Policy Officer:

- a) presented Performance Scrutiny Committee with a summary of how services had performed during the pandemic with a focus on quarter three, as well as an indication of plans for future operation.
- b) advised that the report was split into the following sections:
 - Temporary New Services
 - Temporarily Closed Services
 - Temporarily Limited Services
 - Fully Operational Services
 - Temporarily Enhanced Services
 - Looking Forward – Our Targets for Next Year
- c) invited members' comments and questions.

Comment: Members commented that the report was fantastically written and proved how important Local Government was in peoples lives. The report painted a picture of how staff operated within the Council and members asked for the document to be circulated to all members.

Comment: Members were impressed on how Covid secure City Hall was and wanted to give particular thanks to the IT Team for their help.

RESOLVED that:

1. The report be circulated to all Elected Members.
2. The report be noted and referred to Executive.

49. Feedback from Budget Review Group

Resolved that the minutes from Budget Review Group held on 3 February 2021 be noted.