

**Present:** Councillors Councillor Bill Bilton (*in the Chair*), Alan Briggs, Jane Loffhagen, Laura McWilliams, Hilton Spratt, Ralph Toofany and Pat Vaughan

**Apologies for Absence:** None.

**Also in Attendance:** Mick Barber (Chair of LTP)

**88. Confirmation of Minutes - 6 October 2020**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2020 be confirmed.

**89. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were received.

**90. Lincoln Tenants Panel Grass Verge Survey Proposal**

Mick Barber, Chair of Lincoln Tenants Panel (LTP)

- a. presented an initial proposal for a pilot survey to be carried out on grass verges parking on the Hartsholme Estate in Lincoln.
- b. advised that all estates in Lincoln suffered from a lack of parking space available for cars, this caused a number of issues including blocked roads, junctions and parking on grass verges.
- c. referred to paragraph 2.3 of the report and explained the number of different solutions to address the problem and advised that before any solutions were decided on an equality and diversity impact assessment would be carried out as part of the options appraisal.
- d. advised that LTP would like to look into the matter further to gain a better understanding as to the scale of the problem and capture residents' views on possible solutions in conducting a survey on Hartsholme. This would be the pilot area and could possibly be extended into other areas of the City if it was successful.
- e. referred to paragraph 3 of the report and highlighted the questions that the survey aimed to answer.
- f. advised that the consultation would be carried out using 3 main methods:
  - Online survey advertised through Facebook but conducted through the City of Lincoln Council's website
  - Postal surveys were sent out if a low response rate was received from online surveys
  - Zoom calls with residents conducted by LTP as part of a public meeting

- g. advised that the LTP would consult with residents of Hartsholme Estate and other local stakeholders such as local school and the police.
- h. advised that the next steps would be to conduct the survey and the results would be reported back to Policy Scrutiny Committee once collated and analysed.
- i. invited members questions and comments

Question: If responses to the survey were received from people who did not live in the Hartsholme area would they still be considered?

Response: They would be taken into consideration but the current focus was the Hartsholme estate.

Comment: The issues were not only on grass verges but were also on large grassed areas. The survey needed widening to include grassed areas.

Response: We did intend to include grassed areas within the survey and will amend the wording.

Question: A lot of people did not have access to the internet, how would their views be collected?

Response: We were proposing that the survey could be completed over the phone or a paper copy could be sent to the resident if requested.

Comment: Work needed to be done to address this issue, however, this issue could not be completely resolved and we needed to be careful not to raise expectations.

Response: The survey would find out the scale of the problem, if work was to be undertaken on a specific area, further consultation would be completed.

Question: When would the survey be completed?

Response: The survey would be undertaken once everyone was in agreement, the survey would run for 28 days and the results would be brought back to a future Policy Scrutiny Committee once they had been collated and analysed.

RESOLVED that the proposed approach to the survey and methodology of the survey by the LTP be supported subject to the broadening of definition to include large grassed areas.

#### **91. Built Facilities Strategy (To Follow)**

This item was deferred.

#### **92. Physical Activity Strategy (To Follow)**

This item was deferred.

#### **93. Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2021/22**

Martin Walmsley, Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits

- a. presented the proposed scheme for Local Council Tax Support for the financial year 2020/21, as part of the formal consultation period, as well as regarding proposals made in relation to an Exceptional Hardship Scheme, also regarding Council Tax changes.
- b. advised that based on the caseload as at 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020, the current cost of the 2020/21 CTS scheme was £8,442,201 – with City of Lincoln Council's share of this being £1,262,488 (14.99%). This was in excess of the budgeted tax base level by £360,971, with the additional cost for City of Lincoln Council's share being £54,110. This increase in cost was a direct result of the increased caseload arising from the impact of Covid-19.
- c. gave the background to the scheme as detailed at paragraph 3 of the report and advised that there were currently 9031(as at 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020) residents claiming Council Tax Support in the Lincoln District.
- d. advised that there were 2,806 pensioners in receipt of Council Tax Support and they were protected under the legislation so that they would not be affected by any changes made to the Council Tax Support Scheme.
- e. further advised that there were 3,874 where a local scheme could be determined.
- f. referred to paragraph 4 of the report and detailed the impacts of Covid-19 including a significant increase in caseload and cost of the scheme
- g. referred to paragraph 5 of the report and gave an overview of the current Council Tax Support Scheme.
- h. advised that based on the current core elements of the existing scheme, a caseload increases have been modelled, along with an increase in Council Tax of 1.9%. These were summarised in Appendix 1 of the report which gave an indication of the potential cost savings to the City of Lincoln. Also included was the potential value for non-collection (based on a reduction of 1% to the current collection rate in the taxbase 97.75% as a result of Covid-19).
- i. explained that as a billing authority the Council could decide whether or not to amend core elements of its Council Tax Support scheme each year. Officers were proposing changes to the core elements of the scheme, as summarised at Appendix A of the report.
- j. referred to paragraph 6.3 and 6.4 of the report and explained the technical amendments and assumptions that had been made in developing the modelling for each Council Tax Support Scheme.
- k. advised that alongside the proposed changes to the Council Tax Scheme for 2021/22, it was proposed that £20,000 for an Exceptional Hardship Scheme be continued.
- l. referred to paragraph 6.5 of the report and explained the Council Tax empty homes premium, from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 Councils would have the powers for any property empty over ten years to receive a premium of 300% (incurring a 400% charge).

m. asked for committee's consideration and comments as part of the formal consultation process.

Question: If the maximum reward was reduced would they be referred to the Exceptional Hardship fund?

Response: It was possible that savings could be made in one area but it could increase costs in another area – for example recovery cost, potential write-outs.

Question: Could a cap be set?

Response: Within the current scheme there was a Council Tax banding cap for properties above band B. The vast amount of properties in Lincoln were band A and B.

Question: How many properties had been empty for more than 10 years?

Response: There were 26 properties affected in Lincoln.

Question: Could more money be added to the Exceptional Hardship fund if required?

Response: It would be a decision of the Council, if it looked like it would be over budget we could request more money.

RESOLVED that the Policy Scrutiny Committee

1. the scheme options for 2021/22 as part of the public consultation, as set out in section 6 of the report be supported
2. the proposed continuation of the £20,000, Exceptional Hardship fund for 2021/22 to top up Council Tax support awards in appropriate cases be supported.
3. the proposed Council Tax changes of any property that had been empty for over 10 years to pay a premium of 300% (i.e incurring a total 400% Council Tax charge be supported.

**94. Policy Scrutiny Work Programme 2020-21 and Executive Work Programme Update**

The Democratic Services Officer:

- a. presented the report 'Policy Scrutiny Work Programme 2020-21 and Executive Work Programme Update'.
- b. presented the Executive Work Programme November 2020 – October 2021.
- c. requested councillors to submit what items they wished to scrutinise from the Executive Work Programme and policies of interest.

- d. advised that an additional meeting had been arranged for 8<sup>th</sup> December to consider the Facilities Strategy and Physical Activity Strategy which were deferred from tonight's meeting.
- e. invited members questions and comments.

Members made no further comments or suggestions regarding the Policy Scrutiny work programme.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. the work Policy Scrutiny work programme be noted.
- 2. the Executive work programme be noted.

**95. Health Scrutiny Update (Verbal Report)**

The Chair of Policy Scrutiny Committee advised that the link to the Lincolnshire County Councils Health Scrutiny Committee agenda and minutes from the meetings held on 14<sup>th</sup> October and 11<sup>th</sup> November had been circulated to Members. He invited members to ask questions.

No questions or comments were received.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.