

Present: Councillor Jackie Kirk (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Biff Bean, Councillor Bill Bilton, Councillor Alan Briggs, Councillor Chris Burke, Councillor Sue Burke, Councillor Bob Bushell, Councillor Liz Bushell, Councillor David Clarkson, Councillor Thomas Dyer, Councillor Matthew Fido, Councillor Gary Hewson, Councillor Rosanne Kirk, Councillor Jane Loffhagen, Councillor Rebecca Longbottom, Councillor Helena Mair, Councillor Bill Mara, Councillor Laura McWilliams, Councillor Ric Metcalfe, Councillor Neil Murray, Councillor Lucinda Preston, Councillor Christopher Reid, Councillor Clare Smalley, Councillor Hilton Spratt, Councillor Mark Storer, Councillor Edmund Strengiel, Councillor Naomi Tweddle, Councillor Pat Vaughan, Councillor Calum Watt and Councillor Loraine Woolley

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Andy Kerry, Councillor Adrianna McNulty and Councillor Donald Nannestad

34. Mayoral Announcements

Mayor's Engagements

The Mayor referred to her engagements since the last meeting of the Council, which had included:

- The Lincoln Christmas Market;
- Christmas Carol Services;
- A 100th Birthday Celebrations for a resident; and
- The Australian Breakfast.

35. Confirmation of Minutes - 30 November 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Mayor as a true and accurate record, subject to *Staffordshire Crescent* being amended to *Staverton Crescent* on page 7 of the Agenda Pack.

36. Confirmation of Minutes - 16 December 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2021 be confirmed.

37. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Pat Vaughan declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Statement of Accounts 2020/21'.

Reason: His granddaughter worked in the finance department and his daughter worked in the welfare team at the City of Lincoln Council.

38. Receive Any Questions under Council Procedure Rule 11 from Members of the

Public and Provide Answers thereon

No questions had been submitted by members of the public.

39. Receive Any Questions under Council Procedure Rule 12 from Members and Provide Answers thereon

Councillor Lucinda Preston to Councillor Neil Murray, Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth

Question

A lot of people have told me how much they enjoyed the Christmas Market. Could you please update us on the Council's view of the 2021 market?

Reply

Councillor Neil Murray stated in reply that the 2021 Market had been a great success despite a number of pressures in the build-up and during the operation of the market, including torrential rain on the Saturday; significant rail disruption; and Covid-19. The Council estimated that around 275,000 people had visited the market over the four days, which it was believed, was the busiest for several years.

Councillor Murray added that the Council had worked closely with Public Health to ensure that its operations had been Covid-19 secure and had delivered a large number of Covid-19 safety messages to visitors in advance such as 'test before you come' and 'please wear a mask'. First-aid and Police incidents had been lower than previous years.

There had been some great feedback on the market from visitors, stallholders and partners and some fantastic engagement on social media, which was always a good indicator of the feeling of the public and visitors. The 'reach' of the communications campaign had been 2.5 million with the now iconic aerial photo of the market at night having reached over 400,000. The Council was currently working through debriefs with agencies and contractors and the planning for this year's event had already begun. Councillor Murray thanked all the staff at the Council for their hard work in delivering the event.

Councillor Dave Clarkson to Councillor Neil Murray, Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth

Question

Can the Executive Member provide an update on the Secretary of State's review of the requested "call-in" of the Western Growth Corridor application?

Reply

Councillor Murray replied that the Secretary of State, via the national casework unit, had contacted the Council, as the local planning authority, to seek assurance that no decision notice would be issued until the Secretary of State had made a determination on whether the application would be called-in. The local planning authority had yet to receive this further notification.

Councillor Thomas Dyer to Councillor Bob Bushell, Portfolio Holder for Remarkable Place

Question

Can the Executive Member please provide an update on the recent closure of Yarbrough Leisure Centre?

Reply

In reply, Councillor Bob Bushell stated that the Yarborough Leisure Centre had been closed, after a routine safety inspection of the suspended ceiling above the pool had revealed some concerns about how some of the support brackets were aging. A swimming pool created a corrosive environment and in a building of this age, maintenance issues of this type would emerge, and as a result there were the regular inspections. As a precaution the pool had been closed and work was in hand to design, procure and implement a replacement ceiling.

Councillor Bushell continued by stating that whilst this work continued, the focus had moved to the learner pool which had a more recent ceiling, to assess if this could be re-opened in a shorter timeframe. This would be known in the coming week or so and councillors would be updated once the Council had the timescales. This was a significant piece of work necessitating a full replacement of the ceiling over the large pool, and the City Council was committed to expediting this work as quickly as possible in recognition this was one of the few pay-as-you-go facilities in the city, and one on which a number of clubs relied.

Supplementary

Councillor Dyer asked if there was any indication of the costs of the remedial works.

Reply

Councillor Bushell replied that there was no information on the costs currently, but members of the council would be updated.

Councillor Eddie Strenziel to Councillor Neil Murray, Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth

Can the Executive Member please update Council with when he expects construction for the Western Growth Corridor to commence?

Reply

Councillor Murray advised that the Council was awaiting the conclusion of the planning process both in terms of the outcome of the call-in application and any subsequent processes. At that point the Council would need to assess the consequences of the delay on funding; budget; contractor procurement; the work required to discharge pre-commencement conditions; the public utility lead-in times; further community engagement; and the delivery programme itself. Work would start with the revised signalised junction, hopefully later in 2022.

Supplementary

Councillor Strengiel asked whether traffic problems arising from the development would be minimised to avoid any disruption to local residents.

Reply

Councillor Murray indicated that he was certain that the Council and its contractors would work to ensure that there would be minimal disruption, which was in the best interests of the local community and businesses.

Councillor Bill Mara to Councillor Neil Murray, Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth

Question

Can the Executive Member commit to the entire Western Growth Corridor development adhering to the full environmental standards in the emerging Local Plan?

Reply

Councillor Murray stated in reply that all planning applications, including the Western Growth Corridor, were assessed against the current adopted development plan for the area, which in this case was the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan. Now that the Western Growth Corridor development had secured planning permission (subject to any decision on the call-in by the Secretary of State), the scheme must be developed in accordance with the approved conditions which were set out in the report to the Planning Committee.

Councillor Murray referred to the emerging Local Plan and advised that until it were adopted, it would carry limited weight in terms of material planning considerations. However, given the significant construction period of the Western Growth Corridor scheme, reserved matters applications submitted from 2023 would be required to adhere to the new local plan requirements, including the environmental standards therein.

Councillor Murray added that the Council was working with its partners to go beyond current Local Plan policy requirements, wherever possible, to deliver an exemplar sustainable urban community, including environmental standards, overall net biodiversity gain and net zero carbon development. Progress in relation to this work would be reported regularly through the Council's performance processes.

Councillor Mark Storer to Councillor Ric Metcalfe, Leader of the Council and Portfolio holder for Our People and Resources

Question

After the success of the livestream at the recent Planning Committee, will the Leader commit to bringing the City Council into the twenty-first century and live-stream all meetings?

Reply

Councillor Metcalfe advised that everyone could all agree that the streaming of the Planning Committee on 12 January 2022 had been very successful, and he

had received much positive feedback that it had been a highly professional and organised event. At its peak, there were 170 viewers of the livestream. This had helped ensure that the meeting had the greatest reach and accessibility; and had also helped safely manage capacity at the venue.

Councillor Metcalfe added that there was equipment available in the committee rooms to support hybrid meetings. However, following testing at a recent committee meeting, this was currently more suitable for smaller meetings. Options for improving this equipment were being explored, which should hopefully enable more meetings to be livestreamed at a good quality. Councillor Metcalfe emphasised that this equipment came at a cost during a time that the council was experiencing ongoing financial pressures. However, more work would be undertaken to see if the additional cost could be justified.

Councillor Metcalfe thanked Democratic Services for their efforts in the arrangements for the of the meeting.

Supplementary

Councillor Storer referred to all the other councils in Lincolnshire livestreaming their meetings and asked if the Leader of the Council would commit to delivering this to make City Council's meetings more transparent.

Reply

Councillor Metcalfe stated in reply that he was in principle enthusiastic about livestreaming all Council and committee meetings, but he referred to the high initial costs of installing equipment and the ongoing costs, such as additional staffing, of providing the service.

Councillor Chris Reid to Councillor Neil Murray, Portfolio for Economic Growth

Question

Can the Executive Member update Council on the current situation with regards to car parking revenue, following the Christmas period?

Reply

Councillor Neil Murray replied that as members of the Council would be aware, as a result of a significant fall in demand owing to Covid-19, it had been necessary to reduce the forecasts for car parking income. This had placed significant strain on council budgets, but it had of course been necessary to be prudent through this time of uncertainty.

Councillor Murray added that the later stages of last year, due to the gradual lifting of restrictions prior to Christmas, had seen business levels return to the point where income in November and December 2021 had tracked very closely to the same months in 2019. Figures for January always dropped compared with the previous season, and at this stage, owing to what was considered as public caution associated with the omicron variant of Covid-19, figures seemed to have fallen a little further than expected. However, overall, owing to the cautious approach to budget setting, and the better than expected income prior to Christmas, there was optimism that the income target for 2021/22 of £4.5 million would be met.

Councillor Hilton Spratt to Councillor Bob Bushell, Portfolio Holder for Remarkable Place

Question

Can the Portfolio Holder provide the Council with an explanation as to how we monitor the performance of our contractors, such as Biffa?

Reply

Councillor Bob Bushell answered that Biffa held the City Council's contracts for two elements of street scene services: waste and recycling; and grounds maintenance and street cleansing. As significant contracts they were carefully monitored and controlled.

At an operational level the contractor was required to meet the demands of the work specification. If it was deemed by staff that the contractor had failed to meet the specification, then they would assess the severity of the failing against one of five categories set out in the contract. Having done this, this set three parameters: the levels of any performance points that were attributed to the failing; a potential level of cost recovery; and finally, the time permitted for the contractor to respond. Having determined this, the member of staff could then issue a formal rectification notice. In rare instances where poor performance could not be corrected, a default notice would be issued. This attracted performance points and costs with immediate effect.

Councillor Bushell explained that at the time of issue of a rectification notice, the contractor had immediately attracted the performance points, and was given the specified time to respond. From this point two things could happen: either the contractor would respond within the allotted time, at which point the rectification notice would be discharged or the contractor failed to do so. If the contractor failed to respond, the financial cost recovery element would be applied and would be charged to the contractor. The contractor still had to put the issue right, so the clock would reset. Repeated failure would attract both repeated cost recovery and performance points, so repeated poor performance at a site could quickly escalate. For this reason, it was very rare.

Councillor Bushell added that each quarter the performance points were totalled and presented to the performance management board, comprising senior staff from the Council and the contractor. One of the tasks for the Portfolio Holder for Remarkable Place was to chair these board meetings. Subject to how many points had been awarded in the quarter, the contractor was required to explain their performance and respond suitably. There were four levels of response set out contractually, with escalating levels of response accordingly. The highest level required specified levels of financial re investment by the contractor in the services.

Councillor Bushell also explained that there were also contractual parameters at which the council may terminate a contract, based on the measured performance recorded at the performance management board, which not only reviewed any areas of poor performance, but also to sought examples of good performance, and acknowledged any specific examples of good work by any members of the contractor's staff.

Supplementary

Councillor Spratt asked how many rectification notices were issued each year.

Reply

Councillor Bushell stated that the performance management board would be receiving this data at its next meeting and these figures would be shared.

Councillor Alan Briggs to Councillor Bob Bushell, Portfolio Holder for Remarkable Place

Question

Can the Executive Member give some detail as to what steps are being taken to proactively tackle fly tipping, outside Park Ward?

Reply

Councillor Bob Bushell stated in reply that fly tipping was both a county-wide and national problem and the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership had established a separate enforcement-based group to focus on how actions could be coordinated across the county for best effect. The Environmental Crime Partnership comprised all district councils in the county, plus representatives from North East Lincolnshire Council, the Environment Agency, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Lincolnshire and Humberside Police forces, the National Farmers Union, the Ministry of Defence, and others. This group considered how fly tipping could be consistently addressed and what opportunities there were to share best practice, learning, resources, and information.

Lincoln's representative was working with partners to deliver 'weeks of action' on fly tipping. These periods would target key hotspots to educate those who fly tip, and where appropriate take enforcement action.

The focus for work was prioritised where the worst problems occurred, and this was generally in Park Ward by some significant margin, so it was right that resources were prioritised in that way, but it was also recognised that fly tipping occurred in many areas across the city, to differing degrees. High profile enforcement, wherever it was undertaken would benefit all parts of the city, and for this reason the Council would be seeking to maximise publicity around its work.

Councillor Bushell added that across the city staff responded to all cases of fly tipping, to ensure it was investigated and removed. Staff were proactively reporting fly tipping and responding to public concerns. However, not all fly tipping was on Council land, which added complexity. Private land had to be cleared at the owner's expense, and they did not always give it quite the same priority. Staff understood that the public did not always appreciate this.

In brief, it should be remembered that the Council did not create the fly tipping, but it was using its resources to do what it could to investigate, enforce, and clean-up, wherever it occurred in the city.

Councillor Matt Fido to Councillor Chris Burke, Portfolio Holder for Customer Experience and Review

Question

What would be the cost saving to the taxpayer should the City Council have one election every four years, like all other councils in Lincolnshire?

Reply

Councillor Chris Burke reported that the approximate average cost of holding previous stand-alone City Council elections had been calculated at approximately £90,000 and added that from this figure an approximate saving of £180,000 could be extrapolated for the two years when the Council would not be holding elections. However, holding all out elections every four years would have increased costs, for example, the cost of printing, stationery and staffing requirements would increase. Councillor Burke referred to the ballot papers needing to be larger for multi-member wards; increased printing requirements for nomination papers and registers; and 'counting sheets' would be required to count the ballot papers. There may be a requirement for more counting staff, and they would work longer hours.

Councillor Burke stated that in his view holding elections every year made the Council more accountable and responsive to the public.

40. Receive Reports under Council Procedure Rule 2 (vi) from Members (a) Councillor Bill Bilton, Chair of Policy Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Bill Bilton, Chair of Policy Scrutiny Committee, presented his report to Council, which had been set out on pages 19 – 20 of the agenda. Councillor Bilton thanked members of the Policy Scrutiny Committee for their input and commitment at meetings.

The Council was provided with an opportunity to make comments and ask questions, where the following points were confirmed:

- Health Inequalities across the City – it was queried whether the Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire was exploring the significant disparities in health across the City's wards. It was also queried whether Birchwood was still considered an area of childhood poverty, as previously identified in 2012. In response, it was advised that the Chair of Policy Scrutiny Committee did not have this information. However, it was noted that an all councillor briefing had been arranged for 9 March 2022 to consider a presentation by City Council officers on *Tackling Health Issues in the City*. It was also noted that the Council published the Lincoln Profile on an annual basis, which provided statistical data of this nature.
- Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire – it was highlighted that the main focus of the Committee at present was on the reconfiguration of certain local acute hospital services.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(b) Councillor Sue Burke, Portfolio Holder for Reducing Inequality

Councillor Sue Burke, Portfolio Holder for Reducing Inequality, presented her report to the Council, which had been set out on pages 21 – 34 of the agenda. It was noted that the report covered a wide range of areas which reflected the Council's commitment to reducing inequality.

Councillor Burke wished her thanks be noted to all staff for their hard work during the pandemic.

The Council was provided with an opportunity to make comments and ask questions, where the following points were confirmed:

- Post-Pandemic Homeless Data – it was reported that there were 239 open homelessness enquiries as at 17 January 2022 of which: 24 were at the initial enquiry stage; 39 were likely to be homeless within 56 days; 143 were statutorily homeless; and 33 were awaiting accommodation. It was also noted that 41 individuals had been placed in temporary accommodation.
- Kickstart Scheme – it was queried whether data had shown whether the Kickstart Scheme had resulted in a decrease in the uptake of universal credit. It was confirmed these figures would be provided to Councillor Strengei.
- Benefits Advice Team Visits – it was queried whether the visits made by the Benefits Advice Team had resumed, following the temporary pause owing to the pandemic. In response, it was advised that this would continue to be reviewed regularly in line with national restrictions / health and safety advice.
- Afghanistan Refugees – it was confirmed that the City Council had settled three families, who had settled in well.
- Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Enforcement – the enforcement action figures, as detailed on page 30 of the agenda, concerning dog fouling were queried, as they were deemed too low compared to the number of incidences. In response, it was advised that more preventative work was required to reduce the incidences of dog fouling.
- University and Students' Union – it was queried what the 'student issues' were, as detailed on page 31 of the agenda, which had previously been discussed at the Performance Scrutiny Committee. It was suggested that in future, reports were updated following the Performance Scrutiny Committee to contain information which was discussed or clarified. In responses to a question on the lack of data on drink spiking within the report, it was confirmed that the data had been requested from the relevant partners.
- Food Vouchers for vulnerable families – it was commented that it was pleasing to see that the City Council had provided a grant of £5,430 towards the Food in School Holidays Christian Incorporated Organisation Project.
- Domestic Violence – the Portfolio Holder committed to speaking to Councillor Matt Fido on a new scheme, similar to *Ask Angela*, which involved the wearing of badges to highlight that individuals could be approached to raise any domestic violence concerns.
- Unemployment Rates / Poverty Line – It was commented that whilst unemployment figures were falling, in Lincoln almost half of the people who fell below the acceptable poverty line were in paid employment, which put into question any correlation between employment and the route out of poverty. Therefore, it was stated that there should be no complacency over raising employment rates.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

41. To Consider the Following Recommendations of the Executive and

Committees of the Council

(a) Statement of Accounts 2020/21

A report on the Statement of Accounts 2020/21 had been circulated.

It was moved, seconded and

RESOLVED

That the Statement of Accounts for 2020/21 be approved.

(b) Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2022/23

A report on the Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2022/23 had been circulated.

It was moved, seconded and

RESOLVED

(1) That approval be given to the continuation of proposed 'no change' to the core Council Tax Support scheme for 2022/23, as set out in Section 4 and subject to the technical amendments described in paragraph 5.3 of the report; and

(2) That an increase in the Exceptional Hardship Payments scheme from £20,000 to £25,000, for the financial year 2022/23 be approved.

(c) Council Tax Base 2022/2023

A report on the Council Tax Base 2022/2023 had been circulated.

It was moved, seconded and

RESOLVED

(1) That it be noted that there were no special items as defined in Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) applicable to any part or parts of the City of Lincoln local authority area;

(2) That the Chief Finance Officer's calculation of the Council Tax Base for the financial year commencing 1st April 2022 and ending 31st March 2023, as set out in Appendix B of this report, be approved; and

(3) That, in accordance with the Chief Finance Officer's calculation, and pursuant to the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as amended), that the Council Tax Base for the 2022/23 financial year be approved as 25,310.01.

(d) Appointment of External Auditor

A report on the Appointment of External Auditor had been circulated.

It was moved, seconded and

RESOLVED

That the Public Sector Audit Appointments' invitation to opt into the sector-led option for the appointment of external auditors to principal local government and police bodies for five financial years from 1 April 2023, be accepted.

42. Freedom of the City

A report on granting of Freedom of the City had been circulated.

It was moved, seconded and

RESOLVED

That, in accordance with Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, an extraordinary meeting of the Council be arranged to award the Freedom of the City to The Lord Cormack.