

Present: Councillor Emily Wood (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Calum Watt, Councillor Debbie Armiger,
Councillor Liz Bushell, Councillor Natasha Chapman,
Councillor Bill Mara and Councillor Mark Storer

Apologies for Absence: None.

15. Confirmation of Minutes - 15 August 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 August 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

16. Matters Arising

Councillor Calum Watt referred to minute number 14 and advised that an update on the Transfer of Museum Artifacts to Lincolnshire County Council would be provided to the next meeting of the Historic Environment Advisory Panel.

Michelle Hoyles, Business Manager Corporate Policy and Transformation referred to minute number 14 in relation to the Armed Forces Covenant and advised that any specific policies that may be revised, updated or created as part of the partnership work through the Lincolnshire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership would be brought to Policy Scrutiny Committee at the appropriate time. There was a meeting due to be held on 1 November 2023 that would set out revised terms of reference for the group and a new proposed framework for the county to help progress the work of the partnership.

Councillor Calum Watt, advised that the Armed Forces Covenant would be discussed at the March meeting of Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee. Michelle Hoyles, responded that advice would be sought to confirm whether it would be best for the item to be considered at Policy Scrutiny Committee or Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee as it would be a duplication of work for it to go to both Committees.

17. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

18. Waste Collection & Street Cleansing Specifications (For New Contracts From 1/9/2026)

Steve Bird, Assistant Director of Communities and Street Scene introduced the report and made the following key points:

- a. presented a report to provide an update on the specification of the waste collection and street cleansing contract prior to commencing procurement, with specific reference to comments received in the All-Member workshops.

- b. explained that the Council had two contracts for street scene services: street cleansing and grounds maintenance, and waste collections. Both of these contracts would end on 31st August 2026.
- c. further explained that the new contracts would commence on 1st September 2026 and would be realigned and packaged as two separate contracts: waste (which included recycling and other domestic waste streams) and street cleansing, and a separate grounds maintenance contract.
- d. explained that there were specialist vehicles required, and that the lead-in time for procuring the vehicles was currently two years, therefore procurement needed to commence in November 2023.

Caroline Bird, Community Services Manager (Programme) gave a detailed overview of the proposed waste/cleansing contract specifications and covered the following key points:

- a. advised that the Council would require its contractors to pay their staff in accordance with the Real Living Wage as a minimum.
- b. explained that the waste/cleansing specification had been drafted and was summarised at Appendix A of the report.
- c. further explained that the changes in Appendix A were just material changes which may be noticeable to service users. Many other changes had been made in the interests of cost control, clarity, ease of navigation, ease of operational use and understanding.
- d. detailed the issues highlighted at member workshops, actions taken to address these issues and the anticipated impact on cost.
- e. updated that since the publication of this report, the contract had been amended to reflect that side waste collections were unlikely to be allowed by 2026.
- f. invited members questions and comments:

Question: What was side waste?

Response: Side waste was rubbish that had been put at the side of the bins rather than inside of the bins. At the moment recycling was collected from side waste. However, due to the risk of contamination it was unlikely to be allowed to continue by 2026.

Comment: There were issues with collections at narrow roads within Boutham Ward. It would be interesting to see how this would be addressed and written into the contract.

Question: What was the length of the contract?

Response: The contract was for 8 years and 7 months, which would bring it in line with the financial year. There was the option to extend the contract for a further 8 years if both parties were happy to continue.

Question: It was currently expected that separate collections for paper and card would be introduced in the future, and it would be likely to change in future to have other separate collections. How would this affect the contract?

Response: There was a flexibility clause in the contract. The Council and the contractor would be obliged to work together to address any future changes.

Question: Would there be an extra charge for changes or additional collections?

Response: Would there be an extra charge for changes or additional collections?

Response: Yes, the contractor would be required to provide costs to ensure value for money. The type of contract meant that the contractor could look to make changes to improve efficiency. If there were fundamental changes to the service, suggested by the contractor, the benefits would be shared between the contractor and the Council.

Question: How would the “in cab” technology work?

Response: A tablet would be integrated into each cab which would instantly report updates from the cleansing and collection crews. This would enable customer services staff to have the relevant information much faster to deal with customer enquiries.

Question: To what extent were the changes to the service driven by costs rather than providing a better service?

Response: The contract would provide best value for money whilst reducing the risk to contractors. We were trying to achieve a balance between value for money and providing a statutory duty. There was no expectation there would be a deterioration in the service provided.

Question: Why had the routine sweeping of car parking bays been removed from the specification?

Response: The sweeping of car parking bays referred to some council housing areas, it was an anomaly in the current contract and a decision was made by the Director of Housing and the Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing to remove this from the specification.

Question: Would there be a smaller charge for garden waste collections if there was a reduction in the service?

Response: This would be a decision to be made by Members through the democratic process.

Question: Should the cleansing of bridges, lifts and stairs be maintained and paid for by Network Rail?

Response: Yes, but their response times were slow and it did not reflect well on the City. The lifts, stairs and bridges would be treated the same as the surrounding streets. It was not a significant part of the contract cost.

Question: What was on-street recycling bins?

Response: It was where litter bins in the street gave recycling options to people disposing of waste while out and about. The Council was not in a position to offer this service yet but it was hoped to introduce the service in the future. It would need to be agreed with Lincolnshire County Council.

Comment: People often did not know what to do if they received a label on their bins for contamination.

Response: It was a balance between discouraging contamination but also not making it too difficult for people to recycle. Some more work on education and enforcement was required.

Question: Would it be possible to move to compostable refuse bags in the future?

Response: The Lincolnshire County Council waste handler had to be able to handle the materials. We were currently waiting for a reply from Lincolnshire County Council regarding the bags. It had been written into the contract that we would like to use alternative bags such as compostable material in the future. The contractor would be expected to work with us to identify alternative bags.

Question: Had any consideration been given to re introducing the Saturday waste service (Civic Amenity Service) where residents could take their waste to a nominated point?

Response: It was not possible to reintroduce this service due to health and safety legislation. There were also issues of businesses taking advantage of the service and an increase in fly tipping at the sites. People would leave their rubbish at the site even if they did not know the collection day.

Question: Some residents did not know what contamination was. What was the communication plan to address this?

Response: With regards to the changes to the contract, a communication plan would be drawn up in due course and would provide plenty of time to advertise any changes. In general terms we were mindful that levels of contamination were high and we would be taking steps to address this. There would be a campaign running up to Christmas.

Question: Currently refuse sacks were provided inside a bag rather than a roll, the bag was not needed, could this be changed?

Response: This would be discussed with the current contractor, and the wording in the new specification would be amended.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be supported and referred to Executive for consideration.

19. Parks and Open Spaces - Income Policy

Steve Bird, Assistant Director Communities and Street Scene:

- a. presented a policy document that set out a framework for permitting charges to be levied, in some instances, for matters relating to parks and open spaces, so as to generate income in support of these sites.
- b. explained that parks and open spaces had a vital part to play in supporting many of the Council's future ambitions for the City and its residents.
- c. advised that funding was required and that in the current economic climate, it was unlikely to be forthcoming for some years.
- d. gave an overview of the proposed policy and explained that it was careful to set clear policy where possible, but where it was not possible, it established a suitable decision-making route with accountability.
- e. referred to the proposed Charging Policy attached as Appendix 1 of the report and advised that it is intended to: generate income in support of

parks and open spaces, enthuse stakeholders to generate income for parks initiatives, and that it was not intended to deter use of the spaces.

f. invited committee's questions and comments:

Question: Could reassurance be given that the policy would not deter people from using parks and outdoors spaces for activities such as wedding photographs?

Response: People using parks for this purpose already made voluntary donations to the parks. We did not want to deter people from using the parks, so opportunities for waivers had been built into the policy.

Question: What was the threshold for using the space for an event and how would the Council ensure that people were paying the charge?

Response: We would charge for formal use of the parks and open spaces however, we would not levy a direct charge for impromptu, casual, and informal use. We were aware of businesses using the sites and would approach them to ask them to pay a fair and reasonable charge.

Question: Was there a more detailed list of activities that would be charged for?

Response: A short life working group would be established to look at ways the policy would be used. For example, we would not seek a charge for community groups using the parks and open spaces if their aims aligned with the Council's,, but if someone was running a business (e.g. a bootcamp) then it would be fair and reasonable to ask them to pay.

Question: Would the money generated be used on the parks and open spaces?

Response: Yes. It was proposed that all income was ringfenced. If significant funds were generated it would be brought to Councillors to decide how the money would be used.

Steve Bird, Assistant Director Communities and Street Scene reiterated that it was not the intention to charge directly for informal use of the parks and open spaces or to deter people from using the spaces. However, if people were generating an income from the sites, then it was fair and reasonable to charge for their use

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

20. Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25

Tracey Parker, Revenues and Benefits Manager:

- a. presented the proposed scheme for Local Council Tax Support for the financial year 2024/25 and accompanying Exceptional Hardship Payments Scheme, as part of the formal consultation period.
- b. gave the background to the scheme as detailed at paragraph 2 of the report and advised that there were currently 8458 residents claiming Council Tax Support in Lincoln.
- c. advised that there were 2,591 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.

- d. further advised that there were 5,867 working age claimants who would be affected by any changes made to the scheme, and as such any potential reduction in support being provided. This figure includes those working age customers considered 'vulnerable'.
- e. highlighted the impacts of Covid-19 on the amount of Council Tax Scheme awarded, with significant increases in caseload and cost of the scheme as detailed at paragraph 3 of the report.
- f. referred to paragraph 4 of the report and gave an overview of the current Council Tax Support Scheme.
- g. advised that based on the current core elements of the existing scheme, caseload increases of 0% and 5% had been modelled, along with Council Tax increases of 1.9% and 2.9%. These were summarised in Appendix 1 of the report which gave an indication of the potential cost and savings to the City of Lincoln Council. Also included was the potential value for non-collection (based on projected collection in the tax base of 98.75%)
- h. 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. Schemes being consulted on were summarised at Appendix 1 of the report.
- i. referred to paragraph 5.3 and 5.4 of the report and explained the technical amendments and assumptions that had been made in developing the modelling for each Council Tax Support Scheme.
- j. reported that the options considered for consultation by Executive on 18 September 2023 were as follows:
 - Option 1: No change to the current scheme;
 - Option 2: Introduction of a 'banded scheme' for all working age customers (as detailed at paragraph 5.6 of the report)
- k. referred to paragraph 5.8 of the report which detailed the Exceptional Hardship Payments Scheme and proposed an Exceptional Hardship Budget of £35,000 be put in place for 2024/25.
- l. asked for Committee's consideration and comments as part of the formal consultation process.

Question: Did the exceptional hardship fund start from the beginning of the financial year?

Response: Yes, the proposal was to increase the exceptional hardship fund to £35k. It was expected that more claims would be made next year if we moved to a banding scheme.

Question: Could members have a copy of the consultation letter?

Response: The letter was available on the website; however a copy of the letter could be circulated to members following the meeting.

Question: Did members of the public have access to a hard copy of the consultation letter?

Response: We encouraged online responses to the consultation; however a hard copy could be provided on request.

Question: When did the consultation start?

Response: The consultation started on 2 October and would end on 13 November 2023.

RESOLVED that:

RESOLVED that –

1. That consultation on a 'no change' scheme for 2024/25 be supported.
2. That consultation on a working banded scheme for 2024/25 be supported as well as further detailed modelling of a working age banded scheme for 2024/25 to take place.
3. The Exceptional Hardship Scheme of £35,000 for 2024/25 be supported.

21. Corporate Document Review 2023

Michelle Hoyles, Business Manager Corporate Policy and Transformation:

- a. presented a report to provide this year's corporate document review, and to summarise how the Council continued to ensure its corporate strategies, policies and other key documents were regularly reviewed and updated.
- b. explained that a project commenced pre-pandemic to identify and collate a list of all corporate documents approved by the Council and to develop a means to regularly review and update them.
- c. advised that a list of all corporate documents was detailed at Appendix 1 of the report and explained that most documents had been reviewed and updated this year with the latest versions available on Netconsent.
- d. referred to paragraph 3.3 of the report and outlined the small number of documents that were either complete and awaiting formal approval for any required changes, or a review was currently underway.
- e. invited committee's questions and comments.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

22. Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/23

Claire Turner, Democratic Services Officer:

- a. presented the Scrutiny Annual Report for 2022/23 for comments, prior to being referred to Full Council for approval.
- b. advised that that the Constitution stated that the scrutiny committees should produce an annual report to Council. Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees did produce individual reports to Council during the municipal year, however, the Scrutiny Annual Report summarised the work of the

scrutiny committees for the full year and highlighted the key achievements made under scrutiny in 2022/23.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted and referred to Council for approval.

23. Health Scrutiny Update

The Chair of Policy Scrutiny Committee explained that she was unable to attend the Health Scrutiny Committee which was held on 13 September 2023. She was also unable to find a substitute to attend in her place.

An update would be provided at the next Policy Scrutiny Committee.

24. Policy Scrutiny Work Programme 2022-23 and Executive Work Programme Update

The Democratic Services Officer:

- a. presented the report 'Policy Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24 and Executive Work Programme Update'.
- b. presented the Executive Work Programme September 2023 – August 2024.
- c. requested Councillors submit what items they wished to scrutinise from the Executive Work Programme and policies of interest.
- d. 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.