

Present:	Councillor Geoff Ellis (<i>in the Chair</i>)
Councillors:	Chris Burke, Ronald Hills, David Jackson, Ric Metcalfe, Hilton Spratt, Ralph Toofany and Loraine Woolley
Independent Person(s):	Chris Elkington and Roger Vine
Apologies for Absence:	None.

9. Confirmation of Minutes - 29 May 2013

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 May 2013 be confirmed.

10. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

11. Code of Conduct: Cases Review

The Assistant Director of Legal and Corporate Support Services:

- a) presented a report containing information on recent cases relating to other local authorities' codes of conduct.
- b) noted broad similarities between the case highlighted for the Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council and the Western Growth Corridor's position for the City of Lincoln Council. Officers were giving careful consideration to the committee process and would circulate relevant guidance to members.
- c) highlighted that members should identify any issues raised within the report as being relevant for further consideration with regard to their impact upon members.
- d) invited members' questions and comments.

Members:

- welcomed the production of guidance regarding the Council's position with the Western Growth Corridor.
- discussed the limited nature of the powers available to councils seeking to sanction councillors in breach of a code of conduct, noting the role of political parties in sanctioning their members.

The Assistant Director of Legal and Corporate Support Services responded to confirm the sanctions still available to the Council in cases regarding a breach of the Code of Conduct.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

12. European Citizens' Electoral Turnouts

The Assistant Director of Legal and Corporate Support Services:

- e) presented a report in response to the Committee's previous consideration of electoral turnout, focusing upon turnout among European Union citizens.
- f) highlighted that while turnout in the sampled areas did appear to be significantly lower among European Union citizens than for other groups, it was not possible to conclude the reason for this from the available data.
- g) drew members' attention to the opportunities available to bid for funding from the Cabinet Office to introduce schemes intended to improve electoral registration among difficult-to-reach groups.
- h) advised members of planned work with the National Union of Students to pilot new ways to encourage student registration.
- i) invited members' questions and comments.

Members:

- noted the low overall turnout and discussed the extent to which it would be appropriate to focus resources on encouraging European Union citizens to vote given low turnout rates among other larger sections of Lincoln's population.
- considered the arrangements in place to assist students in registering to vote.
- discussed the possible reasons behind European Union citizens' lack of engagement with the electoral process, particularly noting the need to ensure citizens were properly integrated within local communities, and the possibility that voters were not fully aware of the differences between political parties.
- agreed that it would be appropriate to take advantage of any opportunities to gain additional funding to improve local voter registration, while also seeking to maximise electoral turnout.
- discussed the role of politicians and central government in affecting people's likelihood to vote.
- suggested seeking to raise funds to provide information on voting in languages other than English.

The Independent Person welcomed any attempts to improve electoral turnout, noting the importance of democratic legitimacy for those who were elected.

RESOLVED that officers be requested to bid for the available funding to increase electoral registration rates.

13. Increasing Democratic Engagement with Young People

The Assistant Director of Legal and Corporate Support Services:

- j) presented a report regarding the development of a format for member-student panels between councillors and local schools.
- k) summarised proposals for the content and membership of a panel provisionally scheduled for September 2013.
- l) explained that, if successful, the format would be used as a basis for further events with other local school.
- m) noted that the timing of the event had been arranged to fit with the timetable for the school and pupils.

n) invited members' questions and comments.

Members:

- discussed the visit by pupils to a previous meeting, and the need to ensure the Committee was flexible about visiting pupils in schools or being visited by them.
- emphasised the benefits of using a format which encouraged a dialogue between councillors and students.
- noted the value in ensuring the representative councillors were selected in accordance with political proportionality, and, if possible, included a suitable councillor from Lincolnshire County Council.

RESOLVED that:

1. the proposed format of the proposed member-student panels be approved.
2. officers be requested to arrange for suitable councillors to take part in the member-student panel.

14. Local Democracy Week

The Democratic Services Officer:

- o) presented a report regarding the Council's participation in Local Democracy Week.
- p) emphasised the limited staff and financial resources available to support additional activities, which had led to the development of broadly-based proposals for democratic engagement.
- q) noted that members' input on the proposals would be valuable in developing activities which, given the short timescales in advance of the 2013 event, would be suitable for development with a view to participation in future years.
- r) invited members' questions and comments.

Members:

- discussed the provision of citizenship lessons within schools and the benefits of local elected representatives attending events with pupils.
- noted that lesson plans were often subsumed into normal school work and so could miss the original focus of the plans.
- suggested that greater use of social media and the website should be made in order to reach young people.
- considered the short time span available in advance of Local Democracy Week 2013 and the likely impact of this upon the possible activities
- suggested that a format be developed to allow young people to present solutions to local problems to a panel of councillors with a prize awarded for the best solutions.
- discussed the most effective ways to engage young people, including debates involving role play.

The Reserve Independent Person noted the proximity of the event to the member-student panel and suggested that the events could be linked.

RESOLVED that:

1. officers be requested to coordinate with the Chair suitable activities for the Council's participation in Local Democracy Week.
2. regular updates be scheduled to update the Committee on progress with arrangements for Local Democracy Week.

15. Webcasting Cost-Benefit Analysis

The Democratic Services Officer:

- s) presented a report regarding the potential adoption of technology to allow the webcasting of committee meetings.
- t) outlined the potential costs and benefits associated with different webcasting systems.
- u) noted that officers and the Chair had viewed the operation of an existing webcasting system at a neighbouring council.
- v) highlighted a related proposal to allow members of the public greater freedom to record Council meetings.
- w) invited members' questions and comments.

Members:

- noted that while the principle of webcasting was to be supported, the cost could not be justified given the cutbacks made to the Council's budget.
- considered the operation of the webcasting system at Lincolnshire County Council, noting that it was not obtrusive and that the expense was more easily justified in a local authority covering a large geographical area.
- discussed the openness of Council meetings and the opportunities for members of the public to record meetings.

The Reserve Independent Person noted his concerns regarding the possibility of members of the public recording meetings without notifying the Chair of their intention to do so.

RESOLVED that:

1. no further action be taken with regard to webcasting meetings.
2. Council be recommended to amend article 27 of the Council Procedure Rules as follows:

The recording, broadcasting, or photographing of the proceedings of any Council or committee meetings shall be permitted. In the event that this causes significant disruption to the proceedings of a meeting, the Mayor (in the case of a Council meeting) or the Chair (in the case of a committee meeting) shall be entitled to prevent any further recording, broadcasting, or photographing of the relevant meeting.

16. Work Programme Update

The Democratic Services Officer:

- a. presented the current Ethics and Engagement Committee work programme for consideration by members.
- b. noted that updates on Local Democracy Week had been scheduled for the two following meetings.
- c. invited members' questions and comments.

RESOLVED that the work programme be approved.