



Scrutiny

Annual Report 2016-17

Introduction

During 2016-17 the City of Lincoln Council operated an Executive system, comprising the Leader and five other portfolio holders. Much of the decision-making within the Council takes place within the Executive. To improve the quality of the decisions made by the Council, a scrutiny structure remained in place under the local government modernisation agenda, which provided the opportunity for the remaining 27 non-Executive Councillors to challenge decisions made by the Executive, as well as to help the Executive in reviewing and developing new policies.

Background to Scrutiny

The scrutiny structure is:-

- Performance Scrutiny Committee
- Policy Scrutiny Committee
- Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee
- Select Scrutiny Committee
- Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee

What Did We Achieve in 2016/17?

Main Scrutiny Committees were:

| Committee | Chair |
|--|--------------------------|
| Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee | Councillor Lee |
| Performance Scrutiny Committee | Councillor Hewson |
| Policy Scrutiny Committee | Councillor J Kirk |
| Select Scrutiny Committee | Councillor Hewson |

With the exception of the Select Scrutiny Committee, the work programmes for these scrutiny committees were formally approved by the respective Committees in June 2016, and updated regularly throughout the municipal year. The Select Scrutiny Committee meets annually in order to consider crime and disorder, as well as considering any call-in requests made throughout the year.

This report identifies some of the key achievements made by the Committees. Current work programmes for scrutiny committees, can be found on the Council's website.

Sub/ Task Groups were:

| Name of Group | Chair |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee | Councillor Hewson |

This sub committee sits under Performance Scrutiny Committee and reports back to this meeting on a quarterly basis.

Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee

This year the Committee carried out an in-depth review of the suicide rates in Lincoln. This work ties in strongly with the Council's vision 2020 objective 'Let's Reduce Inequality'. The Committee held regular meetings to gather information on this review and invited key partners relevant to the topic.

The following summarises the work of the Committee:

1. The first meeting was held on the 21 June 2016, which scoped the Suicide Review for the remainder of the year. The Committee was advised that the suicide rates in Lincoln had been above the regional and national average rates for a number of years and were often cited as the worst in the Country. The Committee heard that suicide and undetermined causes were the third biggest loss of life in Lincolnshire with a rate of 12.8 per 100,000 against the national rate of 8.8 per 100,000. The Committee heard evidence from Public Health and put in place a topic for each meeting for the remainder of the municipal year, these topics were:
 - 30 August 2016 – Data Trends and Risk Factors;
 - 25 October 2016 – Support and Care – Statutory Mental Health Service;
 - 20 December 2016 – Support and Care – Voluntary and Community Sectors, Training and Care;
 - 31 January 2017 – Improving Practice – Was there any Gaps in Service Provision and was Enough Being Done?
2. At the meeting on 30 August 2016 the committee was presented reports and information relating to key statistics surrounding the suicide rates in Lincoln and Lincolnshire. The Committee was informed that between 2011 and 2013 the rate for suicides in Lincoln had risen to 13.2 per 100,000 with 11 deaths by suicide in 2014. Information revealed within the reports from the National Research Observatory, Public Health and the Coroner's Office that within Lincoln the rate of death for young males were proportionally higher. Presentations from Public Health and Shine Lincolnshire were heard at the meeting prior to the committee being split into two separate workshop groups to discuss the information presented. This resulted in the Committee identifying a complex list of issues which led people to commit suicide, however it was agreed that it was a very complex issue with no one cause standing out as a key reason for suicide or the high rates within Lincoln.
3. At the meeting held on 22 November 2017 members heard evidence from the following statutory services Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company, Lincolnshire Partnership Foundation Trust, Lincolnshire West Clinical Commissioning Group and Keith Waters who had undertaken extensive research into Self-Harm and Suicide Prevention. The key information heard at that meeting was:
 - The HLNCR had dealt with over 1,400 people at risk from suicide when leaving the prison system in the previous year. However they were only funded up to March 2017.
 - Drug and Alcohol were large contributory factors within the prison and probation populations towards suicide.

- Overall deaths in the prison service (324) had increased by 21% (from 267), with an increase of self-inflicted deaths of 13%, this equated to 107 suicides up from 95 in the previous year.
- That suicide prevention in Lincoln was not black and white, there were many organisations that were responsible for mental health provision and suicide prevention.
- LPFT worked with the wider groups to try and remedy suicidal behaviour, Lincoln was in the bottom 25% for mental health referral, based on patients being referred from doctors to mental health trusts.
- The Southwest Lincolnshire CCG commissioned groups to fill gaps in provision for mental health services, including dealing with suicidal behaviour and prevention for the entire county.
- Advised that recently there had been a lot of political energy surrounding the subject of suicide awareness and prevention and that this was positive to see.
- Expressed that it was important for people to realise that suicide was everyone's responsibility, making contact and supporting those in distress was a powerful mechanism to engage and hopefully bring that person on a path to better mental health.
- Explained a lot of positive work was happening currently to raise awareness but the momentum needed to be maintained to ensure that the rate of suicides continued to decline.

4. At the 31 January 2017 meeting the Committee heard from various non-statutory volunteer organisations which included the Lincoln Samaritans, Newark Mind and Lincoln Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (Lincoln SOBS). The key information that was heard at this meeting was:

- The Samaritans provided a completely confidential and anonymous telephone listening service where people could ring in for support without being judged;
- The Lincoln Branch of the Samaritans worked until 3 a.m. and were capable of covering all peak hours. They offered support to not only those feeling suicidal but with a variety of personal and mental health issues.
- Newark Mind was a small organisation separate from both Lincoln Mind Shops and was based in Newark. It was staffed by four employees and equated to two full time posts;
- Despite being based in Newark they provided a lot of support to Lincoln residents, roughly 30% of their services provided were to residents in Lincoln;
- Within the previous three years there had been no reports of suicide from customers that had used the services at Newark Mind, though they often received donations from those bereaved or affected by suicide;
- Lincoln SOBS met monthly in the Wellbeing Centre on Mint Lane and was a local branch of the national charity Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide;
- The group met once a month support one another. Members of the group ranged from being bereaved for two weeks up to several years;
- Highlighted that as many as 75% of people who died by suicide were unknown to mental health services;
- Many people who died by suicide were transitioning between services and fell between 'the cracks' when vulnerable;
- The best way to decrease suicide rates in Lincoln was to increase awareness about suicide, self-harm and mental health and slowly break down the stigma attached to views and opinions associated with these topics;

- More public understanding was required regarding self-harming, as suicide could be seen as the ultimate version of self-harming and coping mechanisms;
5. The final report from this review was presented to the Committee on 21 March 2017. At this meeting the Committee heard from a professional ASIST and safeTALK trainer, the key points of which were:
- to reduce the suicide rates in Lincoln partnership working was a must. This required effective working relationships with actual outcomes and action plans, not just attendance at meetings.
 - the most effective action to take was at the intervention stage, teaching people to recognise when people were thinking suicidal thoughts etc.
 - Scotland had successfully reduced suicide by 20% nationally by following the training contained within the ASIST and safeTALK courses.

A summary report was also presented at this meeting by the Lead Officer of the review and following discussion by the Committee they recommended:

1. A number of staff in areas such as Customer Services, Estate Officers, Property Shop Team and Benefits be trained in ASIST and safeTALK training.
2. The Samaritans contact details be promoted on public Council publications such as, Anti-Poverty Newsletter, Councillors Ward Surgery Leaflets and the Council Website on pages with benefits and housing links.
3. A press release be issued following approval by Executive detailing the committee's findings.
4. Newark Mind be given a free space to meet on a regular basis in one of the Council's community centres for a trial period of 6 months whilst they understood demand and develop funding if required.
5. The Council to sign up to level 1 of the Suicide Safe charter and consider the feasibility of signing up to level 2.
6. Council publications where links to suicide services were already listed to be checked to ensure that they remain up to date.

Performance Scrutiny Committee

As part of the Performance Scrutiny Committee's (PSC's) remit, it held regular 'portfolio under scrutiny' sessions, where portfolio holders were invited to report on service achievements under their portfolio. Members were then able to ask questions about the performance of these service areas. The consideration of portfolio reports included the provision of a template for reports which places a focus upon providing performance information relating to the member's portfolio. By doing so, the Committee is able to focus on the performance of a portfolio with fewer diversions into detailed analysis of policy issues. The chair of PSC remained proactive during meetings reminding members of the remit of their deliberations to focus on matters of performance.

A regular report was provided in the form of a Portfolio Performance overview presented by the Policy Unit to the relevant PSC meeting with the purpose of

bringing out key contextual benchmarking indicators about issues in the city overall related to the portfolio under scrutiny. This process helped promote effective scrutiny of the portfolio holder's report.

PSC worked from a defined subset of the full IMPS data formally agreed by members and the Corporate Management Team representing the key operational activities to be monitored by PSC.

In addition to the regular scrutinising of portfolio holders, PSC received quarterly reports on financial monitoring to provide members with a summary of actual income and expenditure compared to the revised budget and appropriate allocation of any surpluses to reserves.

Performance update reports were scrutinised on a quarterly basis by PSC to ensure regular monitoring of the Council's operational performance as a key component of the Local Performance Management Framework.

In addition, progress reports on strategic projects against their milestones were received on a quarterly basis as well as a summary of the projects delivered during the year in order to monitor that value for money was achieved.

A quarterly review of the Strategic Risk Register was presented to PSC.

A report on Treasury Management and Actual Prudential Indicators was also received as a requirement of the Council's reporting procedures under regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003.

Members were provided with an annual report detailing progress made by the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee.

Income and arrears monitoring reports provided updates to members on the position with regard to amounts of monies owed to the City Council as at 1st April.

Revenues and Benefits performance updates provided members with an update on performance in the Revenues and Benefits shared service.

The Lincoln City Profile 2016 was presented to PSC in October 2016, which acted as the evidence base behind the City of Lincoln Council's strategic priorities. It also provides information to help the council continue to target resources where they are needed most.

Members were also updated on progress with projects identified under the Towards Financial Sustainability strand of the 2014-2017 delivery plan, the last delivery element of the old Strategic Plan, as well as an update on the Year four TFS savings programme.

Members took part in the Budget Review Process for the scrutiny of the proposed budget and Council Tax for the 2017/18 financial year and the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017-2022. undertaken in two separate stages; firstly all members were invited to a briefing session to afford all members the opportunity to gain a greater understanding and awareness of the Council's financial position, thus aiding further scrutiny of the budget and in the case of the opposition party if desired the preparation of an alternative budget. This was followed by a more traditional scrutiny process undertaken to review in more detail the MTFs and the robustness of the proposed budget options and Council Tax for the 2017/18 financial year. This was undertaken in a committee format as the Budget Review Group with the appropriate governance arrangements in place.

The Committee held reviews during the 2016/17 year in respect of:

Lincoln Christmas Market Outturn Report 2015

Performance Scrutiny Committee had played a large part in monitoring the operational/performance costs of the Christmas Market for several years. Members were provided with a detailed report for the 2015 market and its meeting held on 9 June 2016.

The Chair highlighted that looking across financial losses in previous markets the council seemed to be moving in the right direction to bring down costs. He emphasised that the situation would need to be reviewed year on year, however he recognised the wider picture to the markets continued success.

Channel Shift Update

Members received a presentation on channel shift, an initiative to encourage customers with access to the internet to move towards electronic interaction. This would improve customer satisfaction, provide good value for money and contribute towards the councils' savings programme.

Members supported this initiative. It was agreed that training for members on navigating our new website would be rolled out by officers.

White Bridge Replacement - Post Implementation Review

Members received a report on the findings of the Post Implementation Review (PIR) of the White Bridge replacement at Hartsholme Country Park.

The Work of the Private Housing Team

Members were updated on the activity of the Private Housing team based on a review of the financial year 2015/16 relating to matters reported into the IMPS internal database for monitoring performance or into government databases, comparing available figures with previous year's performance.

County Council Rejection Rates for Recycling

Members were presented with a report at the request of Performance Scrutiny Committee to provide an update on the current position with regards to 'contamination' within the recycling waste stream. The County Council's recycling contractor was reporting that the amount of contamination being found across Lincolnshire, and in Lincoln's recycling materials was rising and as a result the recycling rate for the city was falling.

Members offered feedback and noted positive actions and initiatives ongoing to improve performance.

Christmas Market 2016

Members received a Christmas Market Stalls/Budget: Brief Pre Event Report at its meeting held on 6 October 2016. Income from stalls was projected to be on budget including the 8% year on year increase in stallholder fees/income target. Overall at that stage at Quarter 2 there was an operational surplus of £7k projected due to a small underspend on expenditure budgets.

On 19 January 2017 an Interim Christmas Market Outturn report was welcomed by members detailing positive progress made in the financial position of the market which generated income for local shops to help sustain their business prospects over the remainder of the year.

Performance Scrutiny Committee received the final outturn report on the Christmas Market 2016 at its meeting in July 2017 during the 2017/18 municipal year Members were extremely satisfied and requested their thanks and praise to be given to the team for a job well done. It was the first time that the Christmas Market had managed to pay for itself and all in all it was an excellent event.

What Affects Wage Rates in the Lincoln Economy and Can We Influence Them

A report was given by Kate Ellis, Strategic Director, Major Developments on what affects wage rates in the Lincoln Economy and how we could influence them due to the following issue: Average Lincoln annual salary in 2015 decreased by £1,304 to £18,054 from the 2014 level. Figures from November 2015-November 2016 showed a worsening position.

Update- Transport Hub

Kate Ellis, Strategic Director, Major Developments gave a verbal update on progress with the Lincoln Transport Hub development, which was progressing well.

Lincoln Anti-Poverty Action Plan 2014-2017

Members were updated on the key actions delivered in the Lincoln Anti-Poverty Action Plan 2014/17, and briefed on the upcoming Lincoln Against Poverty Conference 2017.

Key Changes 2017/18 Looking Forward

The City of Lincoln Council will launch its Vision 2020 Strategic Plan for the 2017/18 year .

Vision 2020 contains four strategic priorities as well as a strand focusing on high performing services. Under each priority are a number of actions that will be delivered between 2017 and 2020 to work towards delivering Lincoln's ambitious future.

These projects will be reported to Performance Scrutiny Committee at a rate of one strategic priority per quarter in the next financial year, to enable a specific detailed focus on one topic area at a time, whilst ensuring all four strategic priorities are reported within a one year period. Proposed reporting arrangements will be presented to PSC in June 2017.

These reports will replace the reviews held in 2016/17 (detailed above), although members may request adhoc reviews to be presented to PSC at their discretion as and when they feel necessary.

Policy Scrutiny Committee

During 2016/17, the Committee met nine times, principally to scrutinise decisions due to be taken by the Executive or Council. The Committee provided its insights and recommendations on a variety of topics, which were suitably reflected in the eventual decision-making process.

The Committee scrutinised the following topics in particular detail:

Expansion of Residents Parking Scheme

The committee was advised of the process and responsibilities of expanding the Residents Parking Scheme. Members were asked to support and comment on the proposals to commence consultations to introduce the extensions.

- Members considered the list of possible new zones and streets covered in the proposal and suggested additional streets in Park Ward.
- The committee discussed the suggested consultation process that would be undertaken.

Members generally supported the proposals for the commencement of the consultation on the proposed scheme and in addition asked for the Park Ward Councillors to be consulted with to suggest additional streets to be included from the Park Ward/ Lower Higher Street area.

Trusted Landlord Scheme

Executive at its meeting of 15 December 2014 considered the impact of HMOs within the City and directed that the council should pursue development of a local authority led accreditation scheme. A project plan was created and this led to the detailed proposal presented to the Policy Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

Members of the committee:

- discussed the Local Authority Led Accreditation Scheme project. Officers had proposed an umbrella scheme that encompassed existing schemes and promoted them with a common badging.
- considered the consultation responses that been received
- asked questions of clarification on the process of becoming an accredited landlord and of the enforcement process.

Following the discussion members recommended that the Executive approve the Trusted Land lord scheme.

In addition to these key topics, the Committee also scrutinised the following items and forwarded its comments for consideration by the Executive:

- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Proposal for Implementation of Council Tax Penalties
- Information Management Policies
- RPS- Proposal for Operational Policy Adjustments
- Public Conveniences Option to Charge
- Community Services Review
- Revised Noise Policy
- Localised Council Tax Support Scheme
- Vision 2020
- Housing Strategy
- Contract Procedure Rules
- People Strategy
- Customer Experience Strategy

The Committee also received regular updates from the Health Scrutiny Committee. Committee.

Select Scrutiny Committee

The principal functions of the Select Scrutiny Committee are to meet as the Crime and Disorder Committee and to consider any requests for the call-in of Executive decisions.

The call-in process allows scrutiny members to challenge a decision made by the Executive or any of its individual portfolio holders, prior to the implementation. This gives the Select Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to examine a decision where particular concerns have been raised and respond accordingly.

During 2016/17 the Committee considered one request for the call-in of an Executive decision in relation to the Community Services Review.

After discussion, the members presenting the call-in request agreed to the withdrawal of the request following the outcome of the discussion.

The Committee met on one occasion sitting as Crime and Disorder Committee on 27 July 2016 considering the following items:-

- Lincolnshire Community Safety Partnership
- Lincoln Crime Figures
- Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour
- Debate: Issues Raised
- Lincolnshire Police Performance Overview

Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee

The Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee, is Chaired by myself as part of Performance Scrutiny It was established in 2008 to increase engagement between backbench Members and Tenant Advisory Panel representatives. The Sub-Committee has continued to meet and tenants on the Committee consider that it has helped them have their say when scrutinising housing matters. The Committee met six times during 2016/17.

The Committee considered many reports, including reports on the following topics:

- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Strategy 2014-17
- Lincoln Tenants Panel Annual Report
- Annual Report to Tenants and Leaseholders 2015/16
- Improvements in ASB Case Management 2015/16
- New Build Strategy and Progress
- Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy and Rechargeable Repairs Policy
- Housing Investment Programme.
- Home! Magazine Editions 2017-Article Planning

The Committee also effectively scrutinised Housing performance on a quarterly basis and received regular updates on the progress of the Lincoln Tenants Panel.

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