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Performance Scrutiny Committee

12 July 2018

- Present:** Councillor Gary Hewson (*in the Chair*)
- Councillors:** Alan Briggs, Kathleen Brothwell, Chris Burke, Sue Burke, Thomas Dyer, Laura McWilliams and Pat Vaughan
- Also in Attendance:** None.
- Apologies for Absence:** Councillor Helena Mair, Councillor Ronald Hills, Councillor Lucinda Preston and Councillor Loraine Woolley

12. Confirmation of Minutes - 24 May 2018

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2018 be confirmed.

13. Confirmation of Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee Minutes - 18 June 2018

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on 18 June 2018 be confirmed.

14. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

**15. Portfolio Holder under Scrutiny
(a) Portfolio Performance Overview**

Pat Jukes, Corporate Policy Business Manager:

- a) gave a presentation outlining the performance of the Our People and Resources Portfolio, which included:
- contextual information on the corporate environment in the City of Lincoln Council. The following points were noted:
 - the number of full time equivalent staff working for the Council had decreased from 590.9 in 2016/17 to 557.9 in 2017/18. An average of 20.5 apprentices was in addition to this figure. Quarter one performance for 2018/19 indicated a revised figure of 555.4;
 - the percentage of staff turnover at the end of quarter four was 2.83%, which was an increase of 0.48% compared to the previous quarter. Quarter one performance for 2018/19 indicated a figure of 3.31%;
 - there were 73 active projects in Vision 2020 in 2017/18 and going forward into 2018/19 there would be over 60 active projects;
 - during 2017/18 there were 48 new apprentices on the programme, all of which completed on time. For quarter one, six people had completed their apprenticeships and six people had enrolled as new apprentices;
 - the General Fund this year had a net requirement of £14.3 million, which was up from £10.4 million in 2017/18;
 - in 2017/18 the Towards Financial Sustainability target was overachieved by £30,390;
 - as part of the business rate pilot in 2018/19, the Council would receive 60% of business rates, with 40% going to Lincolnshire County Council.

- latest population estimates, with the biggest age range being around the 15-29 bracket due to the impact of the Universities in the city;
- latest population splits, with the gap between the number of males and females reducing. This currently stood at 720 which was down from 1,169 in 2016;
- Lincoln population per square kilometre, with Lincoln having the sixth highest density of population per square kilometre when compared to the Council's nearest neighbours;
- sickness comparisons year on year, by type and with East Midlands local authorities;
- followers to the Council's social media sites and social media following compared to other local authorities.

b) highlighted the following key points:

- sickness levels were growing due to higher than normal long term sickness;
- the City of Lincoln Council continued to increase its social media reach and was the third highest on Twitter per 100,000 population in comparison to its nearest neighbours;
- the Council's online facility 'Myinfo' was increasing in popularity, with over 50% more users in quarter four than in quarter three;
- performance in respect of time taken to answer calls had dropped in quarter four but this was expected to recover well in the first quarter of 2018/19;
- the 2017/18 council tax collection rate overachieved its target;
- non-domestic rate collection, whilst lower than last year, still achieved its target.

c) invited members' questions and comments.

Question

The increase in people using technology and social media, in particular, was excellent, but were there measures in place for people who could not use or did not have access to the internet or social media?

Response

The Council would always cater for people who could not use or did not have access to social media or the internet, with there being other ways for people to access the Council's services not necessarily reliant on such technology.

Question

Was the Council involved in any initiatives to help people improve their ability with technology and the internet?

Response

People could access computers in the Lincoln Jobcentre based at City Hall where officers were able to show them how to use various pieces of hardware and software. This was particularly relevant to Universal Credit applications.

Question

Was the Council considering use of a wider range of social media platform to engage with a younger demographic that did not necessarily use Facebook or Twitter who instead tended to use Snapchat or Instagram?

Response

The Council's Communications Team were in the process of looking into different social media platforms in addition to Facebook and Twitter. It was important, however, that the platforms used by the Council were kept up to date and that there

was a continued presence on them. There would therefore be resource implications associated with managing any additional social media platforms to make the Council's social media presence effective. It was noted, however, that the team was always trying to look a new ways of getting messages out to the public.

Comment

The number of followers to the Council's social media platforms was not a measure of how effective the respective platforms were. The majority of Tweets on the Council's Twitter page appeared to signpost people to the County Council with it not being clear in some Tweets that the person had been acknowledged. The County Council used its Twitter account to provide updates on its public meetings, which was something the City Council did not do but was a good way of promoting this aspect of the Council.

Response

The points raised were valid observations which would be considered further. When someone was questioning the Council or there was a reputational risk to the authority then a public response would often be made, however, lots of enquires are dealt with through direct messages on a one-to-one basis outside of the public facing account. The sheer volume of Tweets and comments on Facebook was difficult to manage, especially given the relatively small size of the Communications Team. It was suggested that a member development session on social media should be held to consider the points raised with a view to improving the Council's presence on social media. Different volumetrics and information other than the number of followers was available and could be shared as part of this session. It was noted that the comments raised were in no way a criticism of the team, with it highlighted that members of the team often responded to posts on the Council's social media accounts over weekends and in their own time.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

(b) Portfolio Under Scrutiny Session - Our People and Resources

Councillor Ric Metcalfe, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Our People and Resources:

- a) presented a report which set out:
- contextual information relating to the changing political landscape nationally and the impact that this was having on the Council's resources;
 - an overview of the Council's priorities via its Vision 2020 and a summary of key achievements;
 - key achievements in relation to the Our People and Resources Portfolio, including:
 - progress on reshaping local government, working with partners which could support a possible future Greater Lincolnshire bid submission for infrastructure projects;
 - financial sustainability and delivery against the Towards Financial Sustainability savings targets;
 - the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service;
 - procurement;
 - asset optimisation;
 - emergency planning;
 - business continuity;
 - risk management;
 - corporate health and safety;
 - Human Resources;

- Work Based Learning, including apprenticeships;
 - communications;
 - Civic and International Partnerships.
- b) highlighted those service areas and responsibilities that were within the former Corporate Management and Customer Services Portfolio and had moved under the responsibility of other Portfolios following the introduction of new Executive Portfolios.
- c) outlined the key Portfolio performance results up to quarter four in 2017/18, as set out in the previous item.
- d) presented future challenges for the Portfolio going forward, including planning for the second phase of projects as part of the Vision 2020.
- e) Invited members' questions and comments.

Comment

The new Central Car Park was opened in November 2017 and the top floor to the car park was still not able to be used. Similarly, part of the fourth floor was recently closed. This did not look good for people visiting the city.

Response

The extremely hot weather experienced recently had prevented works being finalised on the top floor of the Central Car Park. The Council had experienced significant growth in use of the car park since it was opened, with positive feedback having been received from customers, together with national recognition in respect of the standards of the car park. Councillor Metcalfe shared concerns regarding the delay in completion of the top floor. Work was due to commence next week which consisted of complex waterproofing on the top floor of the car park. The recent unavailability of part of the fourth floor was due to the storage of materials in anticipation of being able to commence with works on the top floor. All materials had since been cordoned off, which allowed for part of it to be open. The car park had seen 98,000 visitors since it opened in November 2017 and was running between 50% and 60% capacity.

In terms of car parking generally, Councillor Metcalfe highlighted that car parking in the city had not increased as anticipated over the last few years with people finding new ways of getting into the city. He emphasised, however, that Lincoln was not unique in this respect and that there were a number of contributing factors as to why this was the case. Avoidance of car parking charges and people parking in residential streets was an issue that needed to be addressed. The extension of residents parking zones could be a way of alleviating this. However, with 98,000 people visiting the Central Car Park it was obvious that travelling into the city by car was still popular. Improvements to the city's offer, such as the Cornhill Quarter regeneration project, would further encourage people to visit the city centre. Councillor Metcalfe suggested that fewer, larger car parks that were easy to find would be a much better solution for a city the size of Lincoln. Location and accessibility were key considerations as part of the development of the Central Car Park.

The Council would be looking into the following initiatives going forward to further support better use of car parking facilities in the city:

- improved residents parking zones to eradicate commuter parking and revert people to using the Council's car parks;

- working better at supporting events in the city and promoting the Council's car parks;
- offering more permit parking initiatives for larger employers in the city.

Comment

As an entrepreneurial Council there should be an increase in revenue from the authority's car parks as a result of the introduction of the new Central Car Park.

Response

Income from car parking was increasing and was a lot higher than in previous years, with the introduction of the Central Car Park having a significant impact on spaces.

Question

Was the recent decision for the Council to purchase two NCP car parks a strategic decision, contrary to the statement made earlier that Lincoln needed fewer, larger car parks rather than lots of small car parks?

Response

The decision to acquire the NCP car parks was nothing to do with car parking strategically and was purely a commercial opportunity. In purchasing these car parks the Council became owners and recipients of payment, with NCP continuing to operate them. There was a mixed economy in the city with public and private sector car parking provision. The Council's share of that provision was smaller than the private sector's, so attempting to develop an overarching car parking strategy was not in the Council's gift.

Comment

There had not been any recent updates in respect of the Western Growth Corridor project and it was unclear what the current status of the project was.

Response

Officers were still working extremely hard to secure additional external funding to resolve the infrastructure costs associated with the proposed development and an answer from the Government following an infrastructure bid was still awaited. This was a real challenge in a relatively depressed housing market where the margins at this particular site were already rather narrow. There was a balance in respect of viability against the challenge of improving congestion in the area. The Western Growth Corridor remained part of the Council's Local Plan and was the best opportunity by far for a sustainable urban extension to Lincoln.

Question

Had the Western Growth Corridor project stalled? Additional funding from the Council towards the project had recently been approved yet nothing appeared to be happening. It was not good enough to be waiting for the outcome of a Government grant application.

Response

If the Western Growth Corridor was commercially viable it would have been developed by now. The challenging and complex nature of the site made it very expensive to develop and would result in a low yield. This was why development of the site would only happen as a result of public investment. Without the City Council's intervention the land would remain undeveloped so it was important to keep going because this was the biggest opportunity the city had for significant growth.

Comment

The introduction of new CCTV in the city was excellent but there were areas of the city, such as Witham Ward, that were not covered which should be looked into further.

Response

The city centre in Lincoln had been made a priority in respect of CCTV, however, mobile functionality was available if there were particular issues in other areas that required surveillance. Work was currently taking place to launch free public Wifi in the city centre which was expected to take place in the next month. Additional CCTV cameras were due to be installed in the Sincil Bank area as part of its regeneration project and would act as a trial for CCTV in high density residential areas.

Councillor Metcalfe added that he was pleased to see the progress that had already been made in respect of Sincil Bank, but acknowledged that there was still lots to do.

Question

Did all of the Council's contractors pay the national living wage?

Response

No the Council's contractors did not all pay the national living wage but the Council did not have the means or sanctions to make them pay it. The authority could, however, persuade and encourage its contractors to pay the national living wage, which it had done quite successfully in a number of cases. Other aspects such as health and safety expectations above and beyond statutory requirements, use of apprentices and social value had also featured as part of the Council's procurement processes in this respect.

Question

What would the £3.2 million from Homes England for specialist affordable housing provide?

Response

This funding would support health and social care funding to provide specialist housing which was a step further than sheltered accommodation but was not a care home. This housing element was just one aspect of a wider partnership initiative, with the funding adding to health and social care funding.

Comment

The Shared Revenues and Benefits Team had been nominated for three national awards.

Response

Universal Credit remained very challenging and had not yet been fully rolled out. Evidence from the Department for Work and Pensions had suggested that Universal Credit was not achieving what it was initially set out to achieve. Lincoln had been exemplar in its joined up approach and ensuring that people had the information and support they needed, which was all credit to the team of officers who deserved their nominations for the three awards.

Comment

The Polling Station review should involve all members of the Council, not solely the Ethics and Engagement Committee.

Response

All members of the Council would have an opportunity to put forward their views as part of the consultation process associated with the Polling District, Polling Place and Polling Station review scheduled to be carried out later this year.

Question

How many companies or organisations had signed up to the Social Responsibility Charter?

Response

The Social Responsibility Charter was very important but had not yet been formally launched. In approximately ten days work would take place to seek to sign up businesses and organisations to the Charter, with lots of preparatory work having already taken place to date. The Social Responsibility Charter went further than the legal obligations already placed on employers and conveyed the City of Lincoln Council's values. There were a lot of organisations in the city who took social responsibility seriously, particularly given that this mattered to consumers, and would be keen to sign up to the Charter.

Question

How many of the 200 Waterloo houses had the Council purchased or were likely to purchase?

Response

Of the properties Waterloo were building on former City of Lincoln Council land, the Council was planning to purchase 139 in total. 12 purchases had been completed at Blankney Crescent in February this year, with the next 81 on the sites at Lytton Street and Ingleby Crescent during autumn and the final 46 at Westwick Drive in December 2018 or January 2019.

Question

How many properties was the Council likely to expect to see covered by the Trusted Landlord Scheme and over what timescale?

Response

There was an error in the report whereby the number of properties covered by the scheme at the end of March 2018 was 282 rather than 482. The target for the Trusted Landlord Scheme was to have 15% of the housing stock into the scheme by 2021. With a baseline of 9,632 privately rented homes in the latest stock condition survey, this equated to a target of 1,445 properties to be covered by the scheme by 2021. As of 4 June 2018 there were 343 properties in the scheme, which was 23.7% of the target.

Question

Please could you provide details of the £225,000 improvements that were noted as environmental improvement works across housing sites?

Response

The 2017-18 environmental programme of work was delivered on 25 projects across the city and included communal bin store improvements, car park resurfacing works, communal landscaping, communal drying area works and garage site resurfacing works at a number of areas in the city. Full details were available upon request. All projects were completed as planned with the full £225,000 invested in these improvements. It was noted that local members should be informed of scheduled improvements in their respective wards via the housing newsletter.

Question

What had been achieved in improving employment opportunities for people in the Sincil Bank area? Was there agreement from the Travelodge to only employ local people?

Response

The Council was in discussions with Travelodge about the possibility of providing employment opportunities for local people as a priority and using the local labour market where possible. This was something, in principle, representatives of Travelodge were prepared to consider but, as with any business or organisation, people would ultimately be employed on their own merit. Providing local people with an opportunity to apply for jobs in the first instance would be positive for the area.

Question

Could the new CCTV be applied more effectively to help reduce instances of graffiti?

Response

Instances of graffiti had increased substantially but the process of removal was labour intensive and the Council no longer had a dedicated graffiti removal team. The use of CCTV was an option but it would be difficult to know where exactly to position the cameras. The issue was more problematic when it came to a person being caught as it was unclear how the Police would respond to such a situation, with graffiti being relatively low on their list of priorities. Graffiti did pose an unwelcoming and intimidating atmosphere to an area so it was important that it was addressed and removed.

Question

Were there any expectations in respect of fluctuations in business rates base levels within the city over the next year or so and the impact this would have on gross value added levels, taking into account the pilot scheme involving 100% retention of business rates?

Response

There were lots of things that impacted this issue, with the environment being in a very volatile state. British Home Stores, Ruddocks and House of Fraser were three examples of large, well-established retailers in the city that had closed or would soon be closing which represented the state of highstreets up and down the country. The Council would need to work with retailers to make the city a better place to visit and provide a better offer and experience for people coming into the city, complementing the online offer available to people. Details on the performance of the 100% retained business rates pilot could be provided to a future meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee.

Question

What sort of entries were covered under the deleted and amended lines referred to in the report with regard to the Electoral Register?

Response

Deleted entries reflected those instances where a person had either moved out of a property or had deceased. Amended entries could be instances whereby a person had opted out of the open register or changed their name. A new application would be required even if a person was moving house within the city boundary, resulting in a deletion from the former property and an addition to the new property on the register. Maintenance of the electoral register was therefore an ongoing process throughout the year and did not occur solely as part of an election or the annual canvass.

Question

The percentage of spend on contracts that had been awarded to local contractors had dropped in 2017/18 – was there a reason for this?

Response

Whilst trying to secure as much for the local economy as possible, proper procurement practices had to be adhered to which in 2017/18 had resulted in a drop in the use of local contractors based on the percentage of spend. Value for money and social value were important aspects of the Council's procurement policy.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

16. Thematic Review - Homelessness

Alison Timmins, Housing Solutions and Support Manager:

- a) presented a report which provided the Performance Scrutiny Committee with information relating to the provision of homelessness services following the enactment of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 on 3 April 2018.
- b) explained that the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 placed new duties on Councils so that everyone who was homeless or threatened with homelessness would have access to meaningful help, irrespective of their priority need status or local connection to the authority they approached. The new Act was the biggest legislative change in homelessness in the last 15 to 20 years.
- c) reported that a significant amount of work was required by local authorities to be ready for the new duties which came into effect in April 2018. The Council's Housing Solutions Team had received specialist training to assist them and, following a visit in May by the Homelessness Advisor, the Council was statutorily compliant with the new Act.
- d) explained that it was difficult to predict what the impact of the Act would have, although it was predicted that homelessness applications would increase by 25%, with acceptances expected to reduce together with the use of temporary accommodation. It reported that the team had noted a significant increase in applications since April 2018, with the majority of these being single people who the authority would previously not have had any duties other than the provision of advice and assistance.
- e) highlighted that rough sleeping had become more visible, particularly in the city centre, over the last two years. Despite the city having a night shelter, supported accommodation and a street outreach team, numbers continued to rise and currently approximately 30 people slept rough in Lincoln each night.
- f) reported that the Lincoln Business Community had been working with the Council and had launched a diverted giving scheme to encourage people to give donations to a fund which would be used to help and support rough sleepers. The Council had also successfully bid for £376,474 of funding to target rough sleeping and prevent the flow of new rough sleepers onto the streets of Lincoln.
- g) invited members' questions and comments.

Question

The growth in homelessness in the city was a direct result of reduced funding centrally – had any additional funding been received as part of the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017?

Response

Additional funding had been received but this was currently on a short-term basis with there being no guarantees at this stage that this would be ongoing. It was currently being used for additional staffing due to the increased number of applications that were being submitted.

Question

Lots of different agencies and organisations supported homeless people and rough sleepers, using various funding streams in different ways. Was the Council successfully engaging with them?

Response

Yes the Council was actively engaging with other agencies and organisations in the city to address the issue of homelessness. It was acknowledged that rough sleeping had increased in the city significantly over the last couple of years, but the Homelessness Act did not just focus on the issue of rough sleeping.

Question

Was provision in place for the hidden homeless, such as those people who were 'sofa surfing'?

Response

Yes as part of the 2017 Act these people would still be considered as homeless and would be supported through the application process.

Question

As part of the Countywide Homelessness Strategy, did all District Councils in the county work together to support the City of Lincoln as the main urban area in the county?

Response

All District Councils and the County Council did work together strategically in partnership with a range of services such as probation, social care and health. However, they did not specifically work together to support the City of Lincoln in particular but instead considered collectively the wider strategic implications of homelessness across the county as well as some local issues. Each District Council, for example, would have its own homelessness problems to address.

Question

The City Council had allocated 15 properties from its housing stock to P3 to support homelessness. How was that moving forward?

Response

This particular project was in its very early stages and a second bid for the development stage of the initiative had very recently been submitted.

Question

From the perspective of local connection, in view of the amount of people that were sent to Lincoln, it could be perceived that Lincoln was a 'soft touch'.

Response

Lincoln was certainly not a soft touch but the city did have significant accommodation, services and support compared to other neighbouring areas which were obviously attractive to people suffering from homelessness. This support was now being provided in other areas across the county, as a result of the Countywide Homelessness Strategy and the work of partners.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) The report be noted.
- (2) That an updated report on the first year post-introduction of the Act and outcomes of the rough sleeper initiatives be presented to the Performance Scrutiny Committee in due course.

17. Christmas Market Outturn Report 2017

Simon Walters, Director of Communities and Environment:

- a) presented a report which provided the Performance Scrutiny Committee with the key financial performance in relation to the 2017 Lincoln Christmas Market.
- b) reported that the total direct expenditure for the 2017 Christmas Market was £552,039 against an expenditure budget of £487,080, equating to an overspend of £64,959.
- c) reported that income received was £611,745 against an income budget target of £602,970, equating to an overachievement of £8,775.
- d) reported that core staffing costs amounted to £113,456 against an expenditure budget of £124,550, equating to an underspend of £11,094.
- e) reported that, overall, the 2017 Christmas Market produced a loss of £53,750 which was £45,090 higher than the budgeted £8,660 cost to the authority.
- f) highlighted the following key influencing factors affecting the final outturn of the 2017 Christmas Market:
 - breakdown of the event commenced around 24 hours earlier than planned due to adverse weather conditions and severe weather warnings, which had an adverse impact on both costs and income;
 - the national threat level remained at 'severe' following a number of terrorist attacks in crowded places which occurred early in 2017. Additional police and extra security measures, including the use of controlled vehicle access points, resulted in a significant increase in police and security costs;
 - stall holder income;
 - park and ride income;
 - coach parking income;
 - expenditure resulting from staffing costs, venue hire costs and contractor payments, including policing and security costs;
 - contractors.
- g) reported that the Council was in the process of reviewing the format of the Christmas Market for future years and would seek to consider how it could be improved and the potential for extending it to other parts of the city, such as Lincoln high street.
- h) invited members' questions and comments.

Comment

Too much criticism for the closure of the Christmas Market last year was allowed to be accrued to individual officers at the Council, namely the Strategic Director of Communities and Environment, when 19 agencies were included in discussions leading up to and contributing to that decision. A single officer should not be left to take the blame and a more joined up approach, involving members, would need to be followed should similar circumstances occur in the future.

Comment

There were opportunities for the Christmas Market to extend down Lincoln high street and the prospect of it crossing the railway line should be explored, incorporating places of interest such as the Guildhall and St Mary Le Wigford Church.

Comment

The review of the Christmas Market was welcomed as it was important to develop and improve it where possible.

Question

Lincoln Castle was looking to hold its own Christmas Market this year – how would that impact the Council's Christmas Market?

Response

Heritage Services at the County Council was being encouraged to move to a 'budget zero' model and would be seeking to generate income for themselves as part of holding a Christmas Market. It was proposed that this market would take place after the Council's Christmas Market and would incorporate a different model in that it would be held over a period of two weeks rather than over three days. Officers would be in close liaison with Lincoln Castle representatives and were interested to see how successful the market at the castle would be this year.

Question

The Christmas Market generated huge benefits to the local economy, but this was not very well reflected in the local media with the main concentration in 2017 being on the early closure. Was there anything that could be done to ensure that more positive messages were published by local media?

Response

The Council did continue to push positive messages to local media, such as the significant contribution the Christmas Market had on the local economy, but unfortunately they would always naturally focus on a negative angle.

Question

Did the Council have any insurance in place to cover it for an early closure of the Christmas Market in the event of adverse weather conditions?

Response

Yes the Council did have insurance in place, with the variance being nearer £90,000 to £100,000 should this cover not have been in place. The Council encouraged individual stall holders to take out their own insurance for adverse weather but unfortunately some stall holders opted not to do this. The Council had refused to reimburse any losses to stallholders as a result of closing one day early in view of the fact that they were advised to take out their own insurance. If the Council had reimbursed stallholders it would have cost the authority up to £415,000.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

18. Work Programme for 2018/19 - Update

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.