

COUNCIL

21 JANUARY 2020

REPORT UNDER RULE 2(VI) OF THE COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

Report by Councillor Neil Murray, Portfolio Holder for Inclusive Economic Growth

Our local economy continues to be relatively buoyant despite crippling austerity policies and the uncertainties regarding the potential effects of Brexit. The expansion of Lincoln University and Bishop Grosseteste University promise a bright future for our city as a centre for Higher education. The refurbishment and regeneration of Sincil Street by the Co-op is a great vote of confidence in Lincoln city centre as an increasingly important retail centre.

We are playing an important role in the local economy facilitating development and directly influencing the economy by building hundreds of new homes in Lincoln in our role as a social landlord.

But we can always do more. Too many Lincoln people are in insecure, part time employment. Too many people in the city are in “self employed” jobs where in reality they work for one business. We need to do whatever we can to build decent homes for people especially in the most deprived areas of the city and we need to encourage investment in Lincoln.

The Inclusive Economic Growth portfolio is very broad and this is my political overview of some of our activity over the last year or so with a particular emphasis on Sincil Bank regeneration and Heritage.

SINCIL BANK AREA REGENERATION

Our officers have carried out some excellent work in the Sincil Bank part of Park ward based at the community hub on Portland Street. They have worked with residents to stimulate social inclusion and have worked hard to integrate new residents from different countries into the community through a place shaping strategy. It is vital that people new to our city and country are made to feel welcome and are encouraged to play a part in civic life.

Hermit Street.

We are at an advanced stage with plans to regenerate the Hermit Street area to turn it into a more balanced community with fewer single people and more couples and families very close to the city centre. We want to transform the area and make it a popular place to live. The area has a poor reputation but with imagination and commitment we can remodel the accommodation and the street scene in a profound way in consultation with residents.

Residents Parking/Environmental improvements.

I was very pleased to see that residents in the Sincil Bank area voted positively for the introduction of the Residents Parking Scheme (RPS) in the consultation exercise last year. This will be very helpful by removing parked cars which at the moment clog up the streets around Sincil Bank and will improve the quality of life for residents. I hope Lincolnshire County Council as Highway Authority will address the problem of “rat runs” through the area given that the East-West link road is now well established. At the moment Park ward residents’ air quality and road safety is spoilt by the numerous vehicles taking short cuts down residential streets in the area.

The new RPS zones will come into effect soon and I hope we will carry out further consultations into the rest of the Sincil Bank area up to the football stadium so that the whole area is covered by the RPS scheme rather being one big car park for commuters and shoppers. Residents in the part of Boutham ward adjacent to the Sincil Bank area also voted in favour of RPS in the consultation vote. This will have a positive effect for those residents also.

The RPS scheme is not a panacea for parking issues, it is imperfect. But, it can be helpful because it puts residents first and we can clearly see where we have implemented the scheme in the central area of Lincoln it is positive for residents.

To Let Signs.

Another positive development was the introduction of a ban on “to let” signs. In April 2019 the council introduced the ban and it had an immediate beneficial effect on the street scene. Overnight, streets blighted by these signs were cleared. Perhaps a small improvement in the bigger scheme of things but a tangible improvement for residents nonetheless.

HERITAGE AND TOURISM

Lincoln’s Christmas Market.

Our unique historic environment is what makes the Lincoln Christmas Market so special. The castle at one side and the cathedral at the other offers a brilliant spectacle especially for visitors and especially in the evening. The continued success of the event is down to a huge amount of effort by council officers working in partnership with the emergency services to ensure that such a massive event goes off safely. This year we had nearly 250,000 people over the four days. 6,888 park and ride customers, 195 coaches and 495 trains carried thousands of people into the city.

When I visited the control centre on the Saturday I was impressed by the professionalism and thoroughness of the city council staff and emergency services staff who work diligently to keep our visitors safe.

An event of this size needs a huge number of people to make it work and it is a truly corporate effort. Officers from all over the different parts of the council are heavily involved particularly in the hectic four days of the event. Preparation for the 2020

market has started already. I would like to thank all the staff involved for making the 2019 event such a success.

Our Historic Environment.

The Guildhall is now part of the Lincoln tourism trail and the Mayor's staff have done us proud in opening up the building to the public. We tend to take the building and the stonebow for granted and neglect their value and importance as an historic centre of democratic representation.

We are very fortunate with our rich historic environment and we are working with partners to preserve and conserve the different elements of our built heritage. We are well into the process of bringing the Greyfriars building back into use and making it accessible to the public again. The building has been closed since the Collection was opened.

We are negotiating with potential partners to refurbish and bring the Harlequin building back into public use. It is an important building at a popular resting point on the walk up Steep Hill and given its age and physical structure it needs a great deal of care. We are working with the East of England Building Preservation Trust on the Harlequin building and 40-42 Michaelgate.

It is sad that our view of the Usher Gallery is so different to that of the County Council. The Usher is a jewel and should be protected and cherished. I hope that there is sufficient goodwill available to retain the building and to invest in the cultural offer to make it a viable venue for visitors and Lincoln people into the future.

Heritage Action Zone.

We are running a Heritage Action Zone scheme from this year through which we hope to see improvements in the built environment in some of the most historic parts of the city some of which are run down and in need of investment. Council officers are working with partners on the scheme and I look forward to seeing it develop and positive results on the High Street.

The scheme is worth up to £1.75 million and could go towards reinstatement of traditional shopfronts, the refurbishment of St Mary le Wigford churchyard, restoration of the Barbican/Albion hotel building on St Mary Street and condition and a feasibility study for St Mary's Guildhall on High Street.

Archaeology

The archaeological work at the cathedral has provided more evidence regarding the defences of the Roman city and has given more clues regarding the buildings which existed before the Romans came to Lincoln. Further evidence of Roman burials has been discovered on Newland towards Brayford Pool and a major dig at Western Growth corridor has begun to unearth a nationally significant site for pottery production in the Roman period.

I would like to thank members of the Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology for their help in identifying unlisted buildings of historical significance in the city with a view to listing. They have working with our officers and will bring recommendations for the listing of buildings with a particular historic value.

PARKING AND TRANSPORT

Our parking service has been significantly improved with the increasingly popular central car park with wider spaces and pay as you leave facility. In our other car parks we have responded to anti social behaviour (ASB) by investing in security equipment to keep people safe. We have installed CCTV and sensor equipment to deter ASB with an immediate positive effect. Our staff provide a good service despite some difficult situations.

WESTERN GROWTH CORRIDOR

Our long held ambition to see good quality homes and new leisure facilities on the Swanpool site linking into the city centre remains despite delays outside our control. The Swanpool development gives us the opportunity to build good quality, environmentally sound houses close enough to the city centre to allow for walking, cycling and public transport accessibility. It also offers us the opportunity to have more leisure facilities in the city close to the city centre.

CITY CENTRE (TOWNS FUND)

We are taking part in the Town Funds scheme designed to contribute to the regeneration of High Streets around the country. We will be working with a range of partners to deliver improvements in the city centre to support private investment.

This approach suits us as a council because we have been keen to work with partners over many years in order to stimulate the local economy. There is potentially £25 million available which should help us to improve the city centre and fill in some the gaps we have.

Sincil Street.

Our planning and Heritage officers have worked closely with the Co-op in relation to the redevelopment of the Sincil Street area. The results are excellent and are being viewed as an exemplar by an increasing number of planning, heritage and regeneration professionals. Most importantly it is great to see what was a run down area of the city centre being transformed to a very high standard.

We look forward to contributing to the further improvement of the area by refurbishing the Central Market and the Cornhill area.

PLANNING POLICY

The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan is not that old but it is being reviewed currently and a great deal of time is going into ensuring that we address the pressing issue of climate change.

Officers are looking into ways we can address developments in the central residential area where on street parking is at a premium. It is difficult for the planning committee when considering new development in those areas and we may develop supplementary planning policy.

The future look of the upper High Street could be very different if the House of Fraser application for a hotel development on that site is approved. No doubt planning committee members will consider the application very carefully.

COUNCILLOR NEIL MURRAY.
EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH.