

SUBJECT:	LINCOLN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY CHARTER
DIRECTORATE:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND TOWN CLERK
REPORT AUTHOR:	GRAHAM ROSE – STRATEGIC SENIOR POLICY OFFICER

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide Policy Scrutiny Committee with an update on the progress of the Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter following the charter being in place for a period of 18 months.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Building on the success of the Lincoln Living Wage Campaign, City of Lincoln Council launched the Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter in October 2018. This followed consultation with the Reducing Inequalities Vision Group, elected members and the Lincoln Living Wage Forum.
- 2.2 The aim of the charter is to encourage organisations in Lincoln to undertake socially responsible activities, above the statutory minimum, which benefit both their employees and the local community in which they are located.
- 2.3 This report provides an update on the progress of the charter following this being in place for a period of 18 months.

3. Background

- 3.1 In 2014 City of Lincoln Council launched the Lincoln Living Wage Campaign which encouraged organisations in Lincoln to pay the real Living Wage to their employees.
- 3.2 The real Living Wage rate is higher rate of pay than the National Living Wage and is calculated annually by the Living Wage Foundation. The rate is based on the real cost of living.
- 3.3 In 2017 it became apparent some organisations were noticing the pay differentials at the lower level were slowly eroding – for example some team leaders were receiving the same pay as the people they managed. Annual increases in the real Living Wage rate also meant paying the real Living Wage was becoming unaffordable for some organisations.
- 3.4 As a result of this the Corporate Policy Unit, working with the Leader and the Lincoln Living Wage Forum, developed a new approach to recognise good employers in the city. This resulted in the development of the Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter. The charter gives recognition for the wide range of socially responsibly activities undertaken by organisations to support the employee and the local community.

3.5 Promotion of the real Living Wage rate and the advantages paying this higher rate of pay can bring to employees and their employers continues as part of the charter.

4. Reminder of how the charter works

4.1 The Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter aims to give recognition to those local organisations going above and beyond to support their employees and the local community.

4.2 There can be several benefits to organisations which undertake socially responsible activities above the statutory minimum. These can include:

- Increased staff retention
- Reduced recruitment costs
- More productive workforce
- More attractive to customers
- Increased customer loyalty
- Better brand recognition
- Improved business reputation
- Profits may increase
- Recognised as an ethical employer

4.3 In order to ensure accreditation to the charter is fair, local organisations are required to meet specific criteria which differs depending on the number of employees the organisation has. As a guide, organisations are required to demonstrate the following as a minimum:

- Small organisations (1-10 employees) should proactively undertake a minimum of three activities, with at least one benefitting the employee and one benefitting the local community
- Medium sized organisations (11-49 employees) should proactively undertake a minimum of five activities, with at least two benefitting the employee and two benefitting the local community
- Large organisations (50+ employees) should proactively undertake a minimum of ten activities, with at least five benefitting the employee and five benefitting the local community

4.4 Following organisations demonstrating that they meet the criteria to gain accreditation, all organisations receive an accreditation certificate endorsed by the Mayor of Lincoln, together with an accreditation window sticker. Signees are encouraged to display both the certificate and window sticker within a prominent position within their organisation to demonstrate to their staff and customers that they are a signee to the charter and a socially responsible employer.

4.5 All signees also receive promotion via a range of routes from the council which helps to promote the organisation as a signee to the charter, together with the range of socially responsible activities they are undertaking. This includes regular promotion via the following routes:

- council social media channels
- dedicated online directory of signees
- press releases

- case studies
- bus station advertising screens
- City Hall customer information screens
- Your Lincoln resident's magazine
- local business networking forums

This promotion is key to signees and is a driving factor in encouraging organisations to undertake socially responsible activities and to join the charter.

- 4.6 During March 2020, all signees to the charter received a new accreditation certificate valid for a period of three years. Previously accreditation certificates were valid for just one year, however it is clear that those organisations who undertake socially responsible activities are unlikely to stop undertaking these activities, therefore a decision was taken to extend the accreditation period to three years.
- 4.7 However, to ensure organisations continue to meet the criteria to retain this accreditation, on an annual basis all signees are required to complete an online accreditation questionnaire. The questionnaire requires organisations to declare that they continue to deliver all the socially responsible activities they have committed to, whilst also provides the council with an opportunity to find out about any other socially responsible activities they are now undertaking.

5. Progress to date

- 5.1 To date 76 local organisations have gained accreditation to the charter, with each demonstrating they have gone above and beyond to support their employees and the local community in which they are located. Please see Appendix A for the current list of signees to the charter. Signees to the charter to date include a mix of small, medium and large organisations from a range of sectors. The total number of signees to the charter exceeds our target of 50 signees by this stage.
- 5.2 To help ensure signees to the charter are kept up to date with all the latest news on the charter and also the great socially responsible activities being undertaken by other local organisations, the Lincoln Social Responsibility Forum is usually held twice each year. The forum, which is chaired by Cllr Ric Metcalfe, is very well attended and provides a great networking event for local organisations to attend and share best practice in relation to social responsibility. The forum regularly welcomes guest speakers.
- 5.3 Unfortunately, due to COVID 19 and following government instruction, we have decided to cancel the next forum originally scheduled for October 2020. However, we hope to restart the forum at least annually from next year.
- 5.4 To support local charities and community groups during the COVID 19 pandemic, organisations signed up to the charter were asked to contribute to the COVID 19 Crisis Fund of which a number of contributions were received demonstrating socially responsibility.
- 5.5 Looking ahead City of Lincoln Council will continue to actively promote the charter and its signees, together with the benefits of undertaking socially responsible activities, with the aim on encouraging more organisations to gain accreditation to the charter. The council will also continue to support Living Wage Week.

6. Strategic Priorities

- 6.1 The charter directly supports the strategic priority, 'Let's reduce all kinds of inequality', as it encourages local organisations to provide better working conditions for residents and provide support within the local community. It also supports other strategic priorities – 'Let's drive inclusive economic growth', 'Let's enhance our remarkable place', 'Let's address the challenge of climate change' and to a lesser extent 'Let's deliver quality housing'.

7. Organisational Impacts

- 7.1 Finance – The current and expected ongoing costs for the charter are minimal with these costs being covered by the existing Corporate Policy Unit's social policy budget.
- 7.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules – There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 7.3 Land, property and accommodation – There are no land, property and accommodation implications arising from this report.
- 7.4 Human Resources – The continued success of the charter requires ongoing support from the Human Resources team to ensure City of Lincoln Council continues to undertake a range of socially responsible activities to support our employees and the local community. This support helps to ensure the council leads by example in encouraging other organisations to embrace social responsibility. A list of the current socially responsible activities undertaken by the council can be found in Appendix B.
- 7.5 Significant Community Impact – The Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter encourages local organisations to undertake a range of socially responsible activities above the statutory minimum which benefit not only the employee but also the local community. These community activities combined are likely to continue to have a significant positive impact on local communities across the city.
- 7.6 Corporate Health and Safety implications – there are no corporate health & safety implications arising from this report.
- 7.7 Equality, Diversity & Human Rights – The charter aims to recognise good employers in the city which undertake socially responsible activities which benefit both their employees and the local community. As a result of these aims, the charter will continue to have a positive impact overall on one or more of the protected characteristics.

8. Risk Implications

- 8.1 There are no risks associated with the continuation of the Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 Members of Policy Scrutiny Committee note the progress made to date with the Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter.
- 9.2 Members are encouraged to promote the charter and the benefits of social responsibility to local organisations, with the aim of encouraging more to gain accreditation to the charter.

Is this a key decision? No

Do the exempt information categories apply? No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply? No

How many appendices does the report contain? Two

List of Background Papers: None

Lead Officer: Graham Rose, Strategic Senior Policy Office
Telephone (01522) 873658