

Present: Councillor Ric Metcalfe (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Donald Nannestad, Councillor Chris Burke,
Councillor Bob Bushell, Councillor Rosanne Kirk and
Councillor Neil Murray

Apologies for Absence: None.

31. Confirmation of Minutes - 15 October 2020

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2020 be confirmed.

32. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

33. Lincoln Town Deal Programme

Purpose of Report

To approve the Lincoln Town Investment Plan proposed for submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by 29 October 2020.

Decision

That the Executive:

- (1) Approves the Town Investment Plan, proposed for submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by 29 October 2020.
- (2) Approves works for Cornhill Square and Lincoln Central Market as the priority for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Accelerated Town Funding of £1 million.
- (3) Approves the Council's role as accountable body for the Town Deal Project Programme.
- (4) Approves the Council's role as Project Lead in delivery of the following Town Deal Projects:
 - Lincoln Central Market;
 - Tentercroft Street.
- (5) Approves the Council's role as Project Lead in delivery of the following Road to Zero Carbon Reduction Projects:
 - SME Green Recovery Grant Scheme;
 - Community Investment Bond Scheme;
 - Construction Retrofit Project.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Other options considered, together with prioritisation criteria, risks and associated mitigations, were set out in the report.

Reason for Decision

Lincoln was one of 101 towns selected by the Government to work towards a Town Deal, with the potential to secure up to £25 million of funding to support proposals which would deliver long-term economic growth.

In response to selection in December 2019 and the Government's published Town Deal prospectus, a multi-agency Town Deal Board was established to oversee the development of a Town Investment Plan in January 2020, a prerequisite for securing Town Funds. Over the past nine months the Town Deal Board had considered the economic evidence alongside engagement and consultation with local stakeholders and communities in order to develop a long-term vision, strategy and five-year project intervention programme to support the growth and development of the city. This work, together with ongoing discussion with the Government's Town Fund advisors, had been the basis for the Town Investment Plan as appended to the report and proposed for submission.

The following vision for the Lincoln Town Deal, aligned to the Town Fund Intervention Framework and developed from the analysis of evidence, had been supported by the Town Deal Board:

'A world class heritage city, which has embraced the opportunities presented by the digital economy to drive investment, innovation and productivity, creating opportunities for all, attracting new talent and securing Lincoln's future as a dynamic, sustainable and inclusive place.'

This vision was supported by the following priorities:

- digitalisation;
- skills to support inclusive growth;
- sustainable transport;
- urban regeneration to support arts, culture, heritage and enterprise infrastructure.

Further information was contained within the report in relation to each priority, together with specific projects allocated to each priority area.

The development of the Plan had also been considered in the context of Covid-19 recovery, carbon reduction and inclusive growth needs. It was structured in line with Government guidance and comprised two sections. Section 1 set out the context, strategy and process planning whereas Section 2 outlined the details of the project proposals.

It was reported that a total of £24.75 million Town Fund Investment was required to support the overall programme. This would lever direct co-funding support of £20.50 million to drive growth and underpin further private sector development.

The City of Lincoln Council was the recognised accountable body for the Town Fund Programme and the authority would continue to manage the overall programme of delivery as well as lead on delivery of a number of key projects.

Resources had been identified to enable the Council to carry out this function through a combination of in-house staff, recruitment and consultancy expertise. The budget for this programme management function had been included within the overall Investment Plan and Town Fund 'ask'.

In addition to the main Town Deal programme, a grant of £1 million was being offered to fund capital projects that could be delivered this financial year. The delivery of the wider public realm works to the Cornhill Square, to follow on from the demolition of the kiosk, tree retention and gateway treatment had been identified as a proposal that could be accelerated for delivery in the current financial year. This proposal was supported by the Lincoln Town Deal Board on 25 July 2020 and subsequently by Government in September 2020 with the scheme able to proceed to formal contract and mobilisation for delivery in early 2021.

Councillor Ric Metcalfe took this opportunity to place on record his thanks to Jo Walker, Assistant Director, and her team and other colleagues from across the authority for producing an excellent Town Investment Plan for Lincoln. This had been an outstanding example of good partnership working with a very wide range of partners, with the final result speaking for itself in the shape of a very impressive document ready for submission.

It was unclear at this stage what the full extent of support would be in terms of the amount of money that would be successfully bid for, but the proposal consisted of a range of good projects for delivery. It was also pleasing that funding had already been received in respect of the Cornhill improvement scheme in addition to the package of projects included as part of the proposal.

Councillor Neil Murray reiterated the thanks to Jo Walker and officers for the huge amount of work they had undertaken and emphasised how much this investment would be needed in the city. He was also pleased that money for the Cornhill improvements had already been received which would complement the recent refurbishment of the area very close to it. Councillor Murray felt that the inclusion of the Central Market as a project in the Town Improvement Plan was important. Overall he felt that the Town Deal would be significant to Lincoln's local economic recovery.

Councillor Bob Bushell acknowledged that it was unknown at this stage whether the full bid would be accepted, but he said there was every chance that it would. In respect of the Cornhill improvement scheme, he questioned whether any greenery would be included as part of its specification.

It was noted that it would be a recommendation of the Lincoln Town Deal Board and, ultimately, a decision of the Executive as to how funding was allocated to projects. A prioritisation exercise had already been undertaken which would be reconsidered as soon as the outcome of the submission had been confirmed.

The Cornhill improvement scheme would seek to provide an open events space, with other projects such as the Sincil Bank project, making provision for more greenery and green spaces in the city.

Councillor Chris Burke agreed with all of the points raised and highlighted the importance of the Sincil Bank scheme.

34. Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2021/22

Purpose of Report

To provide the Executive with an update to the current Localised Council Tax Support Scheme for 2020/21 and propose options to consult upon for a 2021/22 scheme, together with proposals in relation to an Exceptional Hardship Scheme and other Council Tax changes.

Decision

- (1) That the options for public consultation in respect of the Council Tax Support Scheme 2021/22 as set out in Section 6 of the report be approved.
- (2) That the continuation of the £20,000 Exceptional Hardship fund for 2021/22 to top up Council Tax Support awards in appropriate cases be approved for inclusion in the consultation.
- (3) That the proposal of a premium of 300% in relation to any property that has been empty for over ten years be approved for inclusion in the consultation.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Alternative options considered and rejected were set out in the report.

Reason for Decision

In order to contain the cost of the 2021/22 Council Tax Support Scheme within budget parameters of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, particularly in view of the impact of Covid-19, a number of options had been modelled as follows:

- no change to the current Scheme;
- change to the minimum weekly Council Tax support entitlement from £2, ranging from £2.50 to £4);
- reduction of capital cap from £8,000, ranging from £6,000 to £7,500;
- reduction of maximum entitlement from 100%, ranging from 80% to 97.5%;
- amendment of banding cap from B, ranging from C to D.

It was noted that of the options above, the only option likely to reduce the spend against budget in the Medium Term Financial Strategy was to decrease the maximum entitlement. For example, reducing the maximum Council Tax support customers could receive from 100% to 80% or 85% would mean they would need to then pay at least 10% or 15% of their Council Tax charge, when they had not had to pay anything previously. Based on an overall Council Tax increase of 1.9% and a Council Tax support caseload increase of 2%, this would mean on average a Council Tax payer would have to pay an additional £3.57 Council Tax per week or £2.47 per week, based on maximum entitlement of 80% or 85% respectively.

The other modelled options would reduce Council Tax support expenditure, but would still be a cost above the amount budgeted in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

35. Internal Audit Recommendation Follow Up

Purpose of Report

To provide the Executive with an update on outstanding internal audit recommendations and recommendations over 12 months old.

Decision

That the report be noted.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

The latest review of internal audit recommendations was considered at the meeting of the Audit Committee on 24 September 2020 where it was agreed that an update on changes to the recommendations be referred to the Executive.

Details of relevant audits, outstanding recommendations, agreed actions and the current position from relevant service managers were set out in the appendix to the report. It was acknowledged that some slippage had occurred in the delivery of recommendations due to the reprioritisation of resources during the emergency and recovery responses to Covid-19.

36. Next Steps Accommodation Programme

Purpose of Report

To advise the Executive of the Council's recent Next Steps Accommodation Programme bid and seek approval to deliver the capital element of this bid.

Decision

- (1) That, subject to confirmation by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government of a successful bid, the capital and revenue funding for the provision of move-on accommodation be approved.
- (2) That the Director of Housing and Investment, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, be authorised to approve the acquisition of one-bedroom self-contained dwellings and result the resulting budget implications in the Housing Investment Programme and the Housing Revenue Account.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

On 18 July 2020 the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government announced the Next Steps Accommodation Programme which consisted of revenue funding to provide immediate support to people living in Covid-19

emergency accommodation and capital and revenue funding to provide resettlement accommodation in the form of supported longer-term move-on housing for people recovering from rough sleeping.

The criteria associated with each aspect of the Programme was set out in the report.

Further to moderation by the Ministry, the City of Lincoln Council's bid comprised:

- £62,026 revenue funding for 2020-21 to provide immediate support to people living in Covid-19 emergency accommodation. This funding was announced on 17 September 2020 and had been accepted;
- capital and revenue funding to provide supported longer-term move-on housing for people recovering from rough sleeping for the purchase and repair of 15 one-bedroom units of self-contained accommodation at an estimated total scheme cost of £1,499,250, a capital grant ask of £824,118 and a revenue grant ask of £150,188 for 2021-24. All unites would be practically complete and occupied by 31 March 2021.

It was reported that, since the writing of the report, the capital grant of £824,118 and a revenue grant of £150,188 had been confirmed subject to further due diligence. The Director of Housing and Investment took this opportunity to thank those colleagues from across the Council who had worked together collectively to deliver the bid in such a short time scale.

37. Boole Sculpture - Lincoln Railway Station

Purpose of Report

To seek approval to agree formal Heads of Terms and enter into the necessary legal agreement to enable the gifting and ongoing maintenance of a new bronze sculpture to commemorate the work of George Boole.

Decision

- (1) That the Director of Major Development and Director for Environment and Communities be authorised to work jointly with the Heslam Trust, East Midlands Trains and Network Rail in the satisfactory delivery and conclusion of the proposal.
- (2) That the Director of Environment and Communities be requested to adopt the sculpture on the basis of the principles set out in the report, subject to agreeing the transfer of ownership and the maintenance agreement.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

The Heslam Trust had commissioned the Boole Sculpture and wished to gift this sculpture to the City of Lincoln Council on completion of its installation at the Lincoln Central Railway Station. The City of Lincoln Council would also like to take on full maintenance and repairing obligations for the Sculpture.

The statue commemorated the work of George Boole, a former resident of Lincoln widely recognised as the forefather of the information age and self-taught mathematician born in Lincoln in November 1815.

Details of the design, scale and proposed location of the sculpture were set out in the report. On completion of the installation of the sculpture, anticipated to be 2021, the City of Lincoln Council would add the sculpture to its inventory of public art and undertake routine general maintenance as required in accordance with the obligations contained in the respective legal agreements.