

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.

50. Confirmation of Minutes - 23 November 2020

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2020 be confirmed.

51. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

52. Staff Recognition - Covid-19

Purpose of Report

To recognise the Council's staff and seek approval to award all employees an additional annual leave day.

Decision

That an additional day of annual leave for all City of Lincoln Council employees be approved, subject to this being calculated on a pro-rata basis dependent on the hours they were contracted to work and it being taken within the next two years.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

During the Covid-19 pandemic the Council's priority had been to support its residents and businesses to help keep the city safe and ensure it continued to deliver essential services.

The Chief Executive, in presenting the report, highlighted the unprecedented nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, adding that she had never been as proud as she had been over the last few months in terms of the resilience of the Council's staff who had risen to the significant challenges faced as a result of the pandemic. She reported that the Council had dealt with the crisis as a 'One Council' team in a very proactive and innovative way, with the manner in which the Council's employees had worked together and responded to work differently and flexibility having been incredible.

It was therefore proposed, in recognition of these challenging times, to implement one day's additional annual leave to be awarded to all employees. This would be on a pro-rata basis dependent upon how many hours the employee was

contracted to work and could be taken within the next two years. It was recognised that many staff had been unable to take this year's annual leave allocation as a result of the work they were undertaking and their dedication to keep services running.

Councillor Ric Metcalfe echoed the Chief Executive's sentiments entirely and said that since the beginning of the pandemic the Council's priority was to keep services going. The way in which staff had adapted had been magnificent and their efforts were greatly appreciated. Although possibly perceived as a small token, Councillor Metcalfe emphasised that it in no way underestimated the regard the Executive had for everything staff had done for the Council and the city's residents.

Councillor Chris Burke added that the proposed additional day of annual leave was well deserved and was something other local authorities and organisations were doing to acknowledge the commitment of their staff.

53. Allocations Policy

Purpose of Report

To seek approval for minor amendments to the Council's Allocations Policy which was approved in March 2020.

Decision

That the minor amendments to the Council's Allocations Policy, as set out in the report, be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

Since approval of the Council's Housing Allocations Policy in March 2020, it had been noted that one section of the policy relating to Armed Forces did not fully reflect the latest legislation and guidance. The Policy had therefore been updated accordingly, with an additional appendix being included entitled 'Bypass Reasons' to ensure that the Council was completely transparent in all of its dealings with the allocation of accommodation.

Councillor Donald Nannestad welcomed the amendments to the document in relation to those serving in the Armed Forces. In addition, he highlighted some issues that had occurred in the implementation of the Allocations Policy since its approval in March from a systematic perspective. It was reported that the bidding process associated with allocating accommodation was solely undertaken online and significant changes to the software used to facilitate this as a result of the new Policy had been required. Unfortunately, as part of the first lockdown in relation to Covid-19 earlier in the year, the third party operator of the software had furloughed the majority of its staff and had only just returned to a full complement. It was therefore hoped that the system, including the new policy and subsequent amendments considered at this meeting, would be up and running by the end of December or the beginning of January.

Councillor Chris Burke took the opportunity to highlight the significance of recognising those who served in the Armed Forces.

54. Facilities Strategy

Purpose of Report

To present a final draft of the City Council's Facilities Strategy for approval.

Decision

That the Council's Facilities Strategy be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reasons for Decision

In light of recent changes to the future growth plans of the City of Lincoln, a comprehensive Facilities Strategy was required to better understand the need for sporting facilities.

The Strategy, attached as Appendix A to the report, provided the Council with a holistic review of the existing provision of grass pitches, artificial pitches and ancillary facilities across the city. It also provided a detailed, evidence-based, document for pitch provision across Lincoln and its boundaries having reviewed existing provision, current usage from sports clubs, predicted population growth and the demographics of the catchment areas that surrounded the facilities.

The Strategy set out a tiered system to ensure equity across the city in terms of the provision of pitch-based sports, as follows:

- Tier 1 – large multi-sport venues with indoor and outdoor sports;
- Tier 2 – single site and single sport venues with multiple pitches and facilities;
- Tier 3 – small sites with two separate sport or activity offerings, such as a cricket pitch alongside a football pitch;
- Tier 4 – small single sites with only one sport or activity offering.

Each tier would have a discreet strategy to either invest, maintain or dispose in these assets, which would be reviewed on a periodic basis.

It was recommended that tier one facilities should be strategically located across the city to provide a geographical split, based on demand, population density and available associated facilities. The remaining tiered facilities would then be chosen to support the principal site in that sub-region. This approach would enable the Council to retain control of the budget for sports and leisure facilities and strategically provide venues for sports teams and clubs based on a prescribed priority list. Over the longer term it was envisaged that this would bring about efficiency savings for the Council and a more organised approach to the provision of playing pitches in the city.

Councillor Donald Nannestad explained that this Strategy represented one element of a range of things the Council needed to do and that a key aspect was

to find ways of getting more people to become active. Lincoln compared favourably to other districts in the county, but not from a national perspective. In respect of the Covid-19 pandemic, Councillor Nannestad made the point that for some people this had led to them doing more than they usually would, however, some people as a consequence were doing much less.

It was noted that the proposed Strategy had been considered by the Council's Policy Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Bob Bushell welcomed the Strategy which provided a good indication of what facilities were available in the city and surrounding areas. He said that encouragement was a significant factor in getting people more active and that the Facilities Strategy should be read in conjunction with the Physical Activity Strategy also scheduled for consideration at this meeting. Councillor Bushell added that it was amazing to see what facilities there already were in the city and how many incredible organisations there were supporting physical activity at all ages, citing his grandson's youth football club at grassroots level as an example. He added that the health of the city's residents was not a new issue but was something the City Council should take a lead on.

Councillor Chris Burke highlighted comments made at the Policy Scrutiny Committee in that there was an insufficient number of football pitches in the city and that the Strategy had not necessarily reflected the increased popularity of women's football. Questions had also been raised as to consultation with members of the public and users of facilities. It was noted that further consultation with the public would be undertaken in due course and that, in developing this Strategy, consultation at this stage had only taken place with partners, operators and individual clubs, as opposed to users of facilities.

Councillor Neil Murray questioned whether the provision of football pitches on the West Common would continue as they had not been reflected in the Strategy, asking whether it was the intention to keep them allocated as reserve pitches. The Strategic Director of Environment and Communities agreed to investigate this matter further and provide a response to the Executive outside of the meeting. Councillor Bushell highlighted that teams should be encouraged to play on the two new 3G pitches in the city, which had significantly less maintenance associated with them. Councillor Nannestad added that such encouragement occurred in other areas due to the fact that games could still be played in all weathers on 3G pitches, resulting in less fixtures being postponed.

Councillor Ric Metcalfe, on behalf of the Executive, conveyed his thanks to Steve Lockwood, Sports, Leisure and City Services Manager, for his work in developing the Strategy.

55. Physical Activity Strategy

Purpose of Report

To present the final version of the Council's Physical Activity Strategy for approval.

Decision

That the Council's Physical Activity Strategy be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

Historically, and in line with national trends, Lincoln had experienced generational improvements to the life expectancy of its residents. Over this same period, the quality of these life indices had also improved, which it was understood were closely linked to medical advances and an improved understanding of wider health issues.

Over the last ten years many of the more deprived areas of Lincoln had seen life expectancy measurements, along with various other quality of life indices, beginning to stall or, in some cases, decline. Although the reason for this decline could not be put down to a single cause, health experts agreed that this disappointing trend was closely related to the decline in the number of people taking part in regular physical exercise.

The Council's Physical Activity Strategy, attached to the report at Appendix A, included a five year action plan designed to improve the numbers taking part in physical activity, especially those from specifically targeted hard to reach groups. Interventions and programmes would also target specific deprived regions of Lincoln with challenging health and socio economic indices.

As part of implementing the Strategy, the City Council would work with various other organisations including its own leisure provider, Active Nation, to deliver a number of programmes and interventions to improve these activity levels.

In the longer term, the Physical Activity Strategy had the aspiration to develop and imbed a longer term 'Active City' Plan for the City Council. Work leading to this award would include at its core the establishment of a city wide management group to further develop the Council's approach to becoming an 'Active City'.

It was reported that the Strategy had been considered by the Council's Policy Scrutiny Committee, which had commended the document as inspirational.

Councillor Bob Bushell fully supported this document and reflected that lots of people were taking part in a range of activities, the vast majority of which were free and easy access. It was mental health as well as physical health that could be improved as a result of becoming more active, with the implications of Covid-19 resulting in people meeting up with friends or family for walks or other activities that they perhaps may not have done previously. In addition, there were lots of volunteering opportunities available, particularly in respect of the city's open spaces. Councillor Bushell acknowledged that there were still challenges, with some people still feeling effects of austerity and Lincoln sitting amongst the 20% of the most deprived authorities in the country. Average life expectancy in some areas of the city continued to be alarmingly low, with high levels of obesity also apparent. From the perspective of individual, social and economic benefits, Councillor Bushell made the point that all of these factors played a part in benefitting society, highlighting the importance of people becoming more active as a key contributor. Making reference to page 33 of the Strategy document, Councillor Bushell said that the flow chart outlining the stages of behavioural change influencing a person's decision making process was key in terms of helping people understand how they could change their circumstances. He was

also pleased to see that the Strategy sought to make better use of the Council's Community Centres.

Councillor Donald Nannestad agreed that it was not necessarily about what facilities were available but about change, stating that if people could change their behaviour and become more active it would improve their lives, with even a small change making a huge difference. He commended the Strategy, which he said was part of a series of such documents designed to help people become more active and take advantage of what was on offer in Lincoln.

Councillor Rosie Kirk supported that Strategy but was keen for more emphasis to be placed on walking, particularly linked to the city's heritage and history, suggesting heritage trails as an example of how this could be achieved. She advocated walking and cycling in the city, given its relatively small boundary, and was keen to make these activities safer in Lincoln.

Councillor Ric Metcalfe, on behalf of the Executive, conveyed his thanks to Steve Lockwood, Sports, Leisure and City Services Manager, for his work in developing the Strategy.

56. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business because it was likely that if members of the public were present there would be a disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

These items were considered in private as they were likely to disclose exempt information, as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. No representations had been received in relation to the proposal to consider these items in private.

57. Write-outs of Irrecoverable Non Domestic Rates, and Overpayment of Housing Benefit

Purpose of Report

To seek approval to write out debts deemed irrecoverable.

Decision

That the recommendations contained within the report be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

The reasons for the decision were set out in the report.

58. Delivery of Housing Planned Maintenance

Purpose of Report

To consider the future delivery of the housing planned maintenance service.

Decision

That the recommendation contained within the report be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Alternative options considered were set out in the report.

Reason for Decision

The reasons for the decision were set out in the report.