

REPORT UNDER RULE 2(VI) OF THE COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES**Report by Councillor Rosanne Kirk, Portfolio Holder for Reducing Inequalities**

COVID 19 has had a significant impact on the city and our communities during the past year. This report focuses on the services under my portfolio, which the council has delivered to support residents during this difficult time.

I would like to thank council employees and elected members for their ongoing commitment towards reducing inequality in the city throughout the COVID 19 pandemic. Collectively the support and services provided by the council to our residents during this time are a great achievement and an achievement the council should be extremely proud of.

Key achievements

Below list some of the key achievements under my portfolio during the past year

- Development and launch of a brand-new befriending service to provide direct support to vulnerable and isolated residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Launch and delivery of a Community Support Helpline to assist those most in need during the pandemic to access vital supplies.
- Over £100k has been raised by Lincoln Community Lottery for good causes since its launch in August 2018.
- Continued success of the Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter, which has seen local businesses encouraged go above and beyond to support their employees and the local community during this difficult time
- Under the governments 'Everyone In' initiative the council successfully offered a place of safety to every person sleeping rough, or at risk of sleeping rough, during the pandemic
- 267 successful awards of £500 have been made under the national Test and Trace Payments Scheme (as of 21st January 2021)
- The Business Rates Team has been instrumental in supporting businesses in 2020/21, awarding £27 million in Expanded Retail Discount.
- The council has been successful in securing in excess of £1 million to provide 15 units of accommodation with support for the rough sleeping cohort.
- In 2020 a PSPO was brought in covering Lucy Tower Street, Broadgate and Central Multi-Story Car Parks with the aim of further reducing ASB in these areas and enhancing the public image and safety of our city.

Below provides more detail on the achievements of each service under my portfolio during the past year.

Befriending Service (New service)

In March 2020 the council developed and launched a brand-new befriending service to support Lincoln's residents who were identified as being vulnerable or at risk of becoming vulnerable whilst in lockdown. The key outcomes and achievements of this service are provided below:

- Through cross service delivery and partnership working the befriending service was ready to launch to our residents in early April 2020 – the service was developed, setup and rolled out in just under two weeks!
- 49 members of staff delivered befriending calls to those requesting this support.
- Guidance was developed and provided to those delivering the service. In nearly all cases, staff members had no prior experience of delivering this type of service but stepped up to ensure the service was a success
- In addition to those making the calls, members of staff from Neighbourhood Working, Corporate Policy and the Housing Repairs Service were involved in coordinating the service
- To ensure as many residents were made aware of the service as possible, the council directly contacted over 18,000 residents - Contact was made via telephone and letter and was aimed at residents who were identified as vulnerable or at risk of becoming vulnerable.
- At the peak of the service just under 500 vulnerable residents were receiving befriending calls on a weekly basis from the council.
- Just over 200 residents continued to receive befriending calls up to service close on 31st July 2020.
- To ensure those continuing with the service had the option of receiving calls going forward, each individual was offered the choice of continuing calls with one of four new service providers. In total 79 individuals took up this service:
 - Assist - 47
 - Community Lincs YMCA - 23
 - Age UK - 6
 - Supported Housing (COLC) - 3
- All individuals continuing to require a service were transferred across to their preferred new provider ready for commencement of calls w/c 1st August 2020.
- Over 200 positive comments were received regarding the council's befriending service

As Lincoln was placed into Tier 3 lockdown in December 2020 a small group of council befrienders delivered check-in calls with those individuals receiving calls up to the end of July 2020, but at the time had decided not to continue with another service provider. These calls were to provide each individual with an opportunity to have a chat, together with ensure they had the support they required in place for the Christmas period. In total 77 individuals were contacted during mid-December. A follow up call was also undertaken in January 2021 to those who requested this.

Community Helpline (New service)

Working alongside the Befriending Service, the council also setup and launched a community helpline in March 2020. The purpose of this service was to provide Lincoln residents with a point of contact should they require support in obtaining essential items such as food and prescriptions.

The key outcomes and achievements of this service are provided below:

- Brand new service setup up and launched in under two weeks.
- Service was primarily delivered by members of staff in the Democratic Services and Neighbourhood Working Teams
- Staff delivering the service were provided with guidance on dealing with difficult calls

- The service was widely promoted to residents and partners across the city
- The Helpline ran for eleven weeks between the period 23rd March and the 5th June 2020 - during this period the team responded to 1,273 telephone calls and 301 emails

Food vouchers for vulnerable families in the school holidays

In the absence of Government funding to provide 'free school meals' in the school holidays during the pandemic, City of Lincoln Council wanted to do something to help vulnerable families put food on the table during October half term. Working with the city's foodbanks, it was arranged for a Co-op voucher to be added to food parcels enabling families to buy fresh food from their local store.

Not all of the allocated funds were spent and restrictions continued, so the council used the surplus money to help Bridge Church deliver the FiSH scheme over the Christmas Holidays, which focused on helping those families identified by schools as "just about managing", i.e. struggling financially, but not entitled to free school meals. As some external funding was obtained at the eleventh hour there is still a small amount of our funds leftover, and with lockdown continuing this remaining amount will now go towards supporting the FiSH scheme during the February half term and/or Easter holidays.

COVID 19 Crisis Fund

Working in partnership with the Lincolnshire Community Foundation, an emergency City of Lincoln COVID 19 Crisis Fund was launched during April 2020. The purpose of the fund was to provide local good causes with funding to assist them to deliver their vital services in the community during the pandemic.

To ensure the allocation of funds was fair, all good causes seeking support from this fund were required to go through an application process, with all applications being assessed by an evaluation panel. This panel was supported by myself as an elected member and portfolio holder, together with council officers.

The key outcomes and achievements of this emergency fund are provided below:

- Over £25k raised and allocated
- 14 organisations across the city received funding support to enable them to deliver their services
- A number of financial donations were received from signees of the Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter, demonstrating social responsibility during this difficult time
- In May 2020 an allocation of £5,000 was made to the fund from the Lincoln Lottery Community Fund.
- This was supported with a further allocation of £6,500 from the Lincoln Lottery Community Fund in August 2020

Lincoln Community Lottery

Throughout the COVID 19 pandemic, Lincoln Community Lottery has continued to operate and raise vital funds for local good causes in an around the City of Lincoln. The lottery, which is free for good causes to join, provides a range of resources to

support good causes with selling tickets and subsequently raising funds. Sixty pence in every one-pound ticket sold goes directly to good causes, with fifty pence going to the supporters chosen cause and ten pence going into the Lincoln Lottery Community Fund. As outlined above, for 2019/20 the funding raised in the community fund has been allocated to the City of Lincoln COVID 19 Crisis Fund. To date over £100,000 has been raised by the lottery for local good causes. Currently 84 good causes are receiving funding support from the lottery. I continue to chair the Lincoln Community Lottery member panel.

Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter

The number of signees to the charter has continued to rise throughout 2020 and now stands at 83. These signees include a mix of small, medium and large organisations from across a wide range of sectors. Each signee to the charter has demonstrated their commitment to social responsibility, with each delivering a range of activities which benefit their employees and the local community they are located in. Throughout the pandemic it has been really encouraging to see a number of charter signees have continued to go above and beyond to support the communities they are located in, through directly undertaking a range of activities which support the communities around them. As a thank you for their commitment to the charter and social responsibility, City of Lincoln Council actively promotes all signees to the Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter via a wide range of routes. To find out more about the charter and to view the online directory of signees, please visit www.lincoln.gov.uk/socialresponsibility.

Universal Credit and Welfare Reform

From 2019/20, the focus of our in-house Universal Credit (UC) Support Team changed due to central government contracting with Citizens Advice to provide the 'Help to Claim' service of UC support. The team now focuses on wider, proactive, immediately-responsive and holistic welfare reform support – this is working successfully with internal and external stakeholders.

From the end of January 2020 to October 2020, the Welfare Reform Support team received 802 referrals. The table below shows the first point of contact and from where these referrals were received:

Referral received from	Number
Benefits	110
Citizens Advice	29
Customer	135
Customer Services	116
Department for Work and Pensions	46
Hospital	12
Housing	234
Housing Solutions (Council)	3
Housing Solutions (Private)	55
Parking	6
Private landlord	9
Recovery	1
Support Workers	10

Voids	1
Welfare	32
(Blank)	3
Total	802

Universal Credit itself continues to have a significant impact on the workload of the Benefits Team, with a high volume of UC-related documents requiring processing by the team, including in relation to Council Tax Support claims.

As well as Universal Credit, our Benefits Team continues to administer a whole range of other welfare reforms – such as Localised Council Tax Support, Spare Room Subsidy ('bedroom tax'), Benefits Cap and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). The team fully utilised the 2019/20 central government DHP grant and supplemented this grant too, to help our residents with their housing costs. This proactive approach aims to help residents mitigate impacts of welfare reforms.

Test and Trace Payment Scheme and Winter Grants Scheme

Our Revenues and Benefits Service has played a crucial role in the COVID-19 response for our residents. The national Test and Trace Payments Scheme was successfully implemented in September 2020 and as at the time of writing this report (21st January 2021), the team has made 267 successful awards of £500. In addition to this, the team was instrumental in developing a countywide scheme for awarding equivalent payments for those not entitled to Test and Trace Payments but suffering financial hardship – being £500 awards under the Winter Grant Scheme from December 2020 – 16 such payments have been made so far.

Welfare and benefits advice

Additional benefits claimed by Lincoln customers who sought the advice and assistance of the Welfare Team in 2019/20 totalled a weekly value of £27,170. Over the full year these additional benefits amounted to £1,412,852. In addition to these benefits, in many cases customers had backdated awards or lump sum payments. In 2019/20 the total value of backdated and lump sum payments amounted to £210,366.

A crucial service also offered by the team is the FCA regulated debt advice, which is the Money Advice caseworker support. 60% of the team are trained in debt casework and they offer a full service, starting with the preparation of the Standard Financial Statement (SFS). Customers' income and expenditure levels are explored to establish whether there are options to claim additional benefits or increase income in some other way. In 2019-2020 the team assisted and advised 97 individuals with their debts. The total debt managed was £491,551 for 97 City of Lincoln residents. 67% of these Money Advice clients were City of Lincoln Council local authority tenants.

Housing Benefit/Council Tax Support

Although Universal Credit Full Service was rolled out for new claims in Lincoln Jobcentre Plus from March 2018, our Benefits Team still has significant Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support caseloads to administer – as at the end of Quarter 3 2019/20 these figures were 5,405 and 8,955 respectively. Our Council Tax Support

caseload has risen since the initial COVID-19 lockdown – i.e. this was 8,491 at the end of February 2020, meaning a 5.5% increase up to the end of December 2020. Despite the challenges, pressures and demands on the Benefits Team, New Claims and Changes of Circumstance continue to be processed promptly, with positive average processing times being achieved.

Discretionary Rate Relief Policy

A 'Business Rates Growth Policy' was approved by Executive on 23rd July 2018. The policy provides a time-limited rate relief discount to new and extended business premises within the City, in the interest of building the Business Rates base, supporting economic growth and job creation. Eligibility for this scheme is dependent on the extent of the business premises creation or extension, location and the impact of the new business or expansion plans has on the local economy. The impacts of COVID-19 have meant applications under this policy have reduced over the last nine months. However, in the first half of 2020/21, almost £39,000 has been awarded to businesses under this local policy.

The Business Rates Team has also been instrumental in supporting businesses in 2020/21, awarding £27 million in Expanded Retail Discount. Also, the team has worked closely with Major Developments colleagues to help administer the variety of business support grants throughout the year.

Financial Inclusion

Officers continue to be proactively involved in the Lincolnshire Financial Inclusion Partnership (FIP), with the Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits now being the chair of the Partnership. FIP aims to ensure that everyone has the capability and opportunity to access appropriate financial services and products needed to participate fully in society, and will play a key role in terms of financial-related aspects of COVID-19 recovery as residents may struggle with finances for some time.

Skills and Training (including Adult Learning and The Network)

Although the events of the last year have very much altered the skills and training landscape, officers remain in contact with a number of organisations to identify and promote skills and training opportunities to our residents. This year, City of Lincoln Council has registered as an organisation to help signpost residents to the government's Kickstart scheme, to try and find 6-month placements to young people seeking work.

The Network project, which aims to provide careers and related advice to the NEET group, proactively engages with young people to help them with a variety of issues and provide positive outcomes for them in trying to find work and development opportunities. The Network has continued to find innovative solutions to engage with young people during the pandemic. City of Lincoln Council continues to support this project, sitting on its Trustee and Management Board.

Asylum Seekers and Refugees

In 2018, Lincolnshire district councils and Lincolnshire County Council agreed that we would take part in the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, which settles refugee families from Syria into this country. As a result, a number of families have arrived into Lincolnshire since that time, including two families into City of Lincoln in March 2019.

The families have been supported by support workers from Upbeat Communities, a specialist provider jointly commissioned by the district councils and funded from the Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme. The support workers have enabled the families to settle into life in this country by helping them to enrol into health services, getting children into school or nursery places, ensuring the families attend their ESOL English language classes and more. It has obviously been a particularly challenging and in many ways traumatic time for the families, however the families have settled in very well and their support will reduce and will be withdrawn once the families are more self-sufficient.

The COVID pandemic has unfortunately affected the Resettlement Programme and at the present time there are no plans to accept any more Refugees into the city.

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

The past year has been extremely challenging for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Service. The Homelessness and Allocations Teams are working from home and only attending City Hall for exceptional circumstances, for example to undertake interviews that cannot be done by telephone or another form of technology.

The council has continued to receive high numbers of enquiries but the numbers of applications from families have reduced somewhat. We believe this is partly due to the ban on evictions introduced by government. The council has though seen increases in applications from single people where their non-secure living arrangements come to an end because of the increased pressures of living in lockdown and under the Tier restrictions. We have also seen an increase in very complex homelessness cases, for example Domestic Abuse, and dealing with these has taken significant amounts of staff time.

Our Rough Sleeping Team has continued to work from City Hall and face to face with clients, in a safe way. At the beginning of the pandemic the government launched the 'Everyone In' initiative, which required every local authority to offer a place of safety to every person sleeping rough, or at risk of sleeping rough. The council achieved this and went on to provide more permanent accommodation for some of those people. Others chose to move out of the accommodation provided and the council has continued to work with them to encourage them to engage and move away from the street. The council continues to see considerable success with this cohort although the work is extremely challenging at times.

The council has been successful in securing in excess of £1million to provide 15 units of accommodation with support for the rough sleeping cohort and we have also been

assured we will receive at least as much funding for 2021/2022 to continue our rough sleeping work.

Equality and Diversity

Employer perspective

The council is proud to remain accredited with the Disability Confident Scheme, building on the 22 years the council held the Two Ticks disability symbol. The council has continued to promote this status to residents and employees throughout the past year via the council's website and within our recruitment process.

New council employees continue to be required to complete Equality and Diversity training as part of their induction, and also periodically after. Throughout the year the council has also continued to actively promote Equality and Diversity training and events via the council's intranet 'City People' and 'In Brief' newsletters.

The council's workforce as at 31st March 2020 stood at 656 staff members, of which 314 were males and 342 were females. 34 members of the workforce declared a disability and 15 were from a black and ethnic minority group. The largest age group was 50 to 59 years of age, with 189 staff members in this age group.

The HR team continue to provide advice and guidance, monitor recruitment and workforce data and review HR policies and procedures.

Service user perspective

Equality and diversity is at the centre of everything we do as a council, and this is particularly the case in respect of my portfolio.

Since last year we have adopted new (slightly revised) Equality Objectives for a further four years. These are:

1. Our services are accessible and do not discriminate on any unjustifiable grounds.
2. Local communities, partners and stakeholders are empowered to influence the way our services are provided to them.
3. Equality and diversity is at the heart of decision making at all levels within the city council.
4. Our workforce at all levels reflects the makeup of the local community.
5. Equalities, Social Inclusion and Community Cohesion have all improved within our communities.

These objectives are supported by an action plan which is monitored by the Equality Advisory Panel of which I am Vice Chair. The Annual Equality Journal for 2019, published in October 2020, summarises the work of the group and other equality and diversity activity identified in the action plan. The action plan is usually developed as part of service planning, but because of the pandemic, was brought together separately and includes targeted projects which we undertook in response to COVID-19.

Managers continue to use the Equality Analysis Toolkit, which assists in assessing the impact on equality of proposed changes to policies, procedures and services. This helps us, as the decision makers, to consider any differential impact on those with

protected characteristics and ensures mitigating action is taken where it is appropriate to do so.

Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour (PPASB Team)

The PPASB service covers a broad range of areas. The core services provide a combination of both proactive and reactive actions designed to protect individuals, the community and the amenity of the city.

The core service areas are:

- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Noise
- Animals
- Pests/conditions of gardens
- Accumulations of waste
- Fly-tipping investigations
- Licencing consultations
- Bins on streets
- Littering Fixed Penalty Notices

The PPASB service consists of one Team Leader/Technical Officer, five Technical Officers, one Technical Assistant, one Admin Assistant, two Apprentices, one Littering Enforcement Officer and a Police Constable ASB Officer.

Service Demand

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
2019	688	748	866	616	2,918
2020	550	566	705	572	2,393

The table below shows the PPASB Enforcement Action undertaken during 2019 and 2020. It is important to note that prior to enforcement action being taken a number of informal actions or warnings will normally take place and so this table represents only the cases where we could not resolve informally or where an outright offence was evidenced.

Environmental issues	2019	2020
Littering Fixed Penalty Notices	424	167
Dog Fouling Fixed Penalty Notices	1	0
Dog Straying Fixed Penalty Notices	1	0
Fly Tipping Fixed Penalty Notices (Community protection notice warnings have been used through lockdown)	1	3 (8)
Bins on streets Community Protection Notice	9	6

Noise issues	2019	2020
Noise Abatement Notices	24	11
Noise Prosecutions	3	2
Noise Warrants	1	0
Noise Community Protection Notice	5	6

General ASB issues	2019	2020
ASB Community Protection Orders	9	8
Prosecutions	1	0
Injunctions	3	0
Criminal Behaviour Orders	11	0
Closures	1	0

Condition of property related issues	2019	2020
Prevention of Damage by Pests Notices	9	8
Condition of Garden or Property Notices, Inc. F&V EPA and ASBCP	7	8
Subsequent Fixed Penalty Notices	0	1

Other enforcement	2019	2020
Prosecution for microchipping of dogs	1	0
Community Protection Notice for dog attack on person	1	0
Microchipping notice	6	1

Intervention Team

The Intervention Team is tasked with reducing and addressing on street ASB across the city. The team is holistically addressing the root cause of the issues on a support first basis, however they also have at their disposal a number of enforcement tools and powers to use where appropriate and required.

The Intervention Team consists of one ASB Outreach Officer, one Mental Health Nurse and one Addaction Outreach Worker.

The team has continued to operate throughout the COVID-19 pandemic ensuring the most vulnerable still had access to them for support and signposting.

City Centre issues and partner collaboration

At the end of 2018 the PPASB service and Intervention Team have worked with Lincolnshire Police and Lincoln BIG to bring into effect a Public Spaces Protection Order to allow the gating of St Peters Passage to prevent further instances of serious ASB.

In 2020 a PSPO was brought in covering Lucy Tower Street, Broadgate and Central Multi-Story Car Parks with the aim of further reducing ASB in these areas and enhancing the public image and safety of our city.

The PSPO for the city centre prohibiting street drinking and substance use is currently being renewed.

I have provided a brief update below on further work undertaken with our key partners during the past year to help address city centre issues.

Lincolnshire Police

The PPASB service and the Intervention Team continue to work closely with both the Neighbourhood Policing Team and the Lincoln Central Policing Team within the City Centre. The colocation of the Carholme, City Centre and Abbey Neighbourhood Police Teams in the PPASB office at City Hall has further improved the working

relationships and allowed officers to work closer and support each other to tackle ASB across the city.

University

The PPASB service continues to have a good and productive working relationship with the university, particularly around tackling student issues across the city.

Health and Social Care

The Intervention Team and the PPASB team have continued to work with a range of partners including the ARC team, Neighbourhood Nursing Team, Critical Time Intervention Team based at HMP Lincoln and many more. The benefits of collaboration are delivering better, joined up and holistic care and support to the city's most vulnerable groups be these housed or homeless.

Safer Lincolnshire Partnership

The Safer Lincolnshire partnership has strategic overview of four key areas. These areas are Anti-Social Behaviour, Domestic Abuse, Serious and Organised Crime and Reducing Offending, with cross cutting themes of Mental Health and substance misuse. During the past year, City of Lincoln Council has continued to have representation at both the ASB Core Priority Group and the Domestic Abuse Core Priority Group.

Protecting Vulnerable People

Over the course of the last two years, City of Lincoln Council's internal safeguarding meeting has been rebranded as 'Protecting Vulnerable People' and has been expanded to encompass Hate Crime, PREVENT, Domestic Abuse and Modern Slavery. This approach ensures that we have a coordinated approach to a range of safeguarding issues and can ensure that training of staff and any materials that may be needed to protect vulnerable people are centrally stored. The group has initially worked on a number of priorities that focus around training of staff and ensuring that reports are centrally stored and auditable. I have provided a brief update on each of the areas that encompass the Protecting Vulnerable People agenda below.

PREVENT

Officers from the council continue to attend and contribute to the PREVENT Steering Group, in addition to delivering PREVENT actions arising from the Protecting Vulnerable People meeting. All council staff continue to be required to complete online PREVENT training at least every two years.

Domestic Abuse

City of Lincoln Council officers continue to attend and contribute to the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership Domestic Abuse Core Priority Group. Within the last year training has been provided for all Housing Officers to ensure they have the required skills and knowledge to assist them in being able to undertake DASH (Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment) risk assessments with victims disclosing domestic abuse. It is also the intention of the council to train Customer Service Team Leaders to increase the provision of trained staff further in the coming year.

Hate Crime

The council is currently reviewing Hate Crime Awareness training for all staff through the Protecting Vulnerable People Group. Council officers also continue to attend and support the Community Cohesion Steering Group.

Modern Slavery

The council has a Modern Slavery Statement and is signed up to a Modern Slavery Charter. Modern Slavery Awareness Training is also being reviewed by the Protecting Vulnerable People Group.

Response to COVID-19

Both the PPASB and Intervention Team have continued to provide high levels of service throughout the pandemic. Whilst the Intervention Team have had to find ways to continue to work safely on the front line throughout the pandemic, the PPASB team have had to find innovative ways to deliver a front-line service from home. You can see from the statistics provided that the service demand has remained high and that in spite of furloughed team members and new challenging working environments, the team has continued to deliver.

PPASB Service over the next 12 months

Over the next 12 months both the PPASB service and the Intervention Team will continue to work collaboratively to make positive changes within our communities.

It is anticipated that on street ASB will continue and that intervention in the form of both support and enforcement will continue to be required. The teams will continue to work with partners to look for sustainable opportunities to look to embed best practice, this is especially important with the Intervention Team funding currently ending in December 2021.

Demand across all services provided by the teams is expected to remain high.

CCTV Service

During the early phase of the pandemic the CCTV service was designated an essential service and has continued to operate on a 24-hour basis although shifts have been reduced to single operators in line with COVID-19 operational risk assessments.

As the strategic plan was being developed, social monitoring (checking adherence to COVID-19 rules) became a priority with operators logging over 1,300 incidents over 30 weeks with the data provided to the relevant steering groups.

The unit has continued to support services including Environmental Health, Licensing, PPASB, Homelessness and Parks as well as Lincolnshire Police. Government restrictions have affected the day and night-time economy and operators have refocused tasks to conduct comprehensive sweeps of the City safeguarding business premises and the vulnerable.

Statistics show that during the last year operators have logged over 12,500 incidents of which 2,300 were public order offences. The unit also recorded over 400 incidents looking for missing persons and over 600 dealing with mental health issues.

The last quarter has seen a reduction in recorded incidents by 30%, possibly as a result of ongoing Government restrictions, and this is expected to continue through the early months of 2021.

Operators continue to make a significant difference in our city particularly when supporting Police during serious incidents. One of the council's CCTV operators recently received a letter of commendation from Lincolnshire Police for their assistance in dealing with a serious incident in the city.

World Hello Day

In November 2020 the council supported World Hello Day 2020, which was the eighth time the day had been celebrated in the city. Due to the pandemic we were unfortunately unable to deliver a range of face to face events to mark the occasion. However, the Lincoln Interfaith Forum hosted a Zoom meeting on Saturday 21st November to celebrate World Hello Day. The event was well attended and provided a great opportunity to say hello and meet people from different faiths, cultures and backgrounds. Myself and the Mayor attended this online meeting. In addition, I also recorded a video outlining the importance of World Hello Day and bringing our communities together, especially during this difficult time. The video was promoted via the council's social media channels and was watched by over 500 people. We look forward to marking World Hello Day in 2021.

Holocaust Memorial Day

Whilst the focus during this past year has been on reducing the impacts of the pandemic, it was important that we continued to mark Holocaust Memorial Day, which takes place annually. For 2021 Holocaust Memorial Day took place on 27th January. Unfortunately we were unable to deliver an event internally this year, however, as an alternative, myself and the Leader, Cllr Ric Metcalfe, working with the Communications Team, produced a video raising awareness of the impacts of the holocaust and the importance of marking Holocaust Memorial Day each year. The video was communicated to staff and residents via the council's social media channels. The theme of Holocaust Memorial Day 2021 was 'Be the light in the darkness'.

Forward look

This past year has been exceptionally difficult for our communities, residents and council staff. I am extremely proud of the significant level of support the council has been able to provide, and it is clear this support has made a huge difference to the residents and communities of Lincoln. This work will continue moving forward as Lincoln experiences the ongoing difficulties caused by the pandemic during the months ahead.