

**REPORT UNDER RULE 2(vi) OF THE COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES REPORT BY COUNCILLOR BOB BUSHELL, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR REMARKABLE PLACE**

This has been a most testing year for public services, not least those covered by this Portfolio. Despite this, I am pleased to say that the vast majority of these services have continued working throughout.

For context I would also remind members that the combined waste, recycling, street cleansing and grounds maintenance contracts of the council have now been extended until Sept 2026. The decision to consider this route was taken just as covid hit us. As a result, we have been fortunate that we have not been faced with any significant changes in service provisions during the covid/lock down periods, as this would undoubtedly have impacted people's quality of service.

It is also worth noting in this introduction that as a key part of the Council's drive around developing Lincoln as a 'remarkable place' I have been keen to push forward realistic improvements. The contracts are thus now reviewed quarterly for overall output performance, as they always have been, but there are also now focused partnership meetings that specifically consider short and longer terms goals for each service area. As resources get ever tighter, it is vital that there remains a constant and clear focus of resources on the issues that are most important to make the biggest difference to our communities. Whilst each work area has some specific issues to work on, there are also three guiding principles established for all three strands. These are: 1. As a client/contractor partnership we should always strive to be proactive in seeking to address what the future holds. 2. That whatever is changed to meet emerging demands the contracts must always be able to show value for money. 3. The background specification/the 'base' as it were, must always reflect the actual work being undertaken.

More of this approach later in the report but suffice to say that there are three focus meetings: waste/recycling, street cleansing and grounds maintenance.

Below I set out a description of service delivery for the last year or so, based on key service areas, where there has been impacts of note.

**Open Spaces**

**Allotments**

Members will recall that last year I reported on the successful implementation of a bold investment strategy for Lincoln's allotments, and how significant sums had been spent on improving access, security and water supplies.

Members may also recall that key within this investment was the desire to open a new allotment site in the south of the city. For historic reasons the south of the city has not been well catered for in terms of allotments, and so a key element of the

investment was to establish a new site central to the Birchwood estate. I am pleased to be able to inform members that this work was completed in April 2020, and that take-up has been popular and the site warmly welcomed. The site has 38 plots and all the plots are tenanted.

In the wider picture, across all our sites occupancy has remained high, with the occupancy level of lettable allotment plots hovering consistently around 97% (out of a possible 1081 plots, 1051 are classed as tenanted). Those not tenanted are simply due to the plots not being lettable because of their location- the main cause being seasonal flooding. Due to the prevailing high demand the majority of allotment sites across the city now have waiting lists.

As plot availability is very limited at the moment, and in a bid to try and get people off the waiting lists, when a large full-sized plot becomes available the Council now gives consideration to the viability of splitting plots into 2 (sometimes 3) smaller plots to let people get a start.

Whilst the allotments have been under demand, due to the demographics of our tenants there have also been a number who have been 'shielding'. The effect of this is that there are a number of plots that currently look unkempt. We are being lenient on this issue, giving tenants time to address this, mindful of individuals circumstances. We are hopeful that once the vaccination programme is complete this might make more people feel at ease with using their plots again.

Although not strictly a performance issue, members will be aware that the Council has found it necessary to increase rents. All tenants have been notified and a year's notice has been given. Based on the feedback received, it is **not** anticipated that there will be a drop in demand.

## **Equipped Play Areas**

The Council continues to maintain 28 equipped play areas across the city, ensuring that British Standards are maintained at all times for installation, inspections and maintenance.

High levels of responsibility and care unfortunately means relatively high costs, and this does impact on the council's ability to expand the service and expedite repairs at times. Working closely with the Property Services section, which orders the repairs, safety is always the number one concern for this service. Although it is necessary to close play areas off at times, officers are under clear instruction not to bow to public pressure to re-open sites unless the necessary safety requirements are in place.

This year has been an especially difficult year for play areas under covid restrictions. Guidance from government has changed at times throughout the various lockdown periods, with all sites initially closing, but later being allowed to open.

Each play area has had signs giving advice on hygiene and indicating maximum numbers of users at any one time. It has been difficult to maintain the signs, but staff have persevered.

A major refurbishment is being planned for Whitton's Park this year, making good use of some S106 monies. The scheme will be the single biggest investment in play for the city for some time and see a full and total overhaul of the site. The result will be an exciting new site of a size suitable to address the needs of a wider area.

A citizen panel survey in summer 2020 showed that 90.5% of respondents who gave an opinion were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with the standard of outdoor play provision.

The Council's budgets for play remain under significant pressure and so a review of all equipped play provision in the city will be needed in due course. This has not been scheduled with officers yet due to ongoing resource pressures, but I expect to be able to report a clear plan on this to members by this time next year.

### **Parks and open spaces- general**

This year has been yet another good year for Lincoln's parks, with three Green Flag Awards achieved in 2020.

The Arboretum continues to be known for its high quality historic setting, and regularly receives positive public comment for the quality of its maintenance; Boultham Park continues to develop on the back of successive capital investment programmes, not least due to this year's lake restoration project, and Hartsholme Country Park, the city's premier site for nature-lovers, has received another year of excellent feedback from visitors, despite seeing unprecedented demand. In fact, all of our parks and open spaces have seen massive demand during the successive lockdowns, leading to increased wear and tear at all sites.

Although always well-loved and much cherished, there has also been a renewed appreciation of all our parks and open spaces, of which the council should be justly proud in my view. We sometimes forget that public parks were a British invention, intended to provide recreational space for the workforce, to allow them access to fresh air and exercise, recognising the benefits to wider health. This year has seen an unexpected localised need for just those self-same needs, and as a result the council has received numerous positive comments, showing how much the public really value the parks and open spaces of the city.

I think members should be aware of some other wider improvements that are being fostered currently. In the opening paragraphs of this report I described how partnership meetings were being used to develop paths to improvement. For the ground's maintenance elements of the contract this has been manifest in three priorities.

Firstly, it was to make sure that this year's annual tree planting work took place in a timely way. In recent years there have been concerns over late plantings and losses in the subsequent summers.

Secondly a work stream has been set up to look at what we could do to deter unauthorised and illegal traveller encampments.

Finally, work is taking place to look at how wildflowers might be encouraged.

In brief these work streams are in early stages, but I can advise members that:

All trees were planted in good time this year, and that watering regimes are in place. 115 were planted in total. Work is also ongoing to recover all tree guards from trees that no longer need them, to see if they can be refurbished and reused.

A list of potentially vulnerable open spaces has been developed, and these are being put into priority order. Officers are now looking at the most cost effective options to deter unlawful encampments, accepting that it will never be possible to prevent break-ins, and that no additional funding is available for this work.

A list of locations has been developed to encourage wildflowers this year. These comprise two types of areas. Firstly, those that have traditionally had summer bedding- where trials were successful last year these have been switched to an annual wildflower mix. Secondly some areas of grass have been identified as having potential for targeted maintenance as wildflower meadow, with perennial wildflowers. This will take time to develop but includes around 9Ha this year embracing some common land and some roadside verges, with plans for at least another 11ha progressing in the pipeline for next year. The grass will not be cut regularly on those areas, as has been the case in past years, but instead they will be cut just one a year.

Sites with areas specifically having maintenance regimes adjusted to encourage perennial wildflowers include:

Cowpaddle Common  
West Common racecourse  
o/s Grandstand West Common  
Doddington Road open space  
Woodfield Avenue  
King George Field

## **Boultham Park**

The main restoration of Boultham Park was completed in 2019 but there are one or two outstanding tasks to finish before the project can be officially declared as closed. These were planned for 2020 and have been delayed by Covid-19 and the specialist nature of the works meaning there are fewer contractors able to do the work. I hope that these works will be completed during 2021. However, whilst this does mark the end of that first phase, as members will know, the Council has been heavily engaged in the delivery of the second phase, the restoration of the lake.

Although originally part of the original restoration project, it became necessary to remove the restoration of the lake so as to ensure the work came in within budget. At that time the council committed to finding a way to restore the lake if at all possible, and I am delighted to be able to record here that thanks to another

generous grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, it has been possible to undertake this work this year. The £1.17 million pound scheme has a three year duration (ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023), with all capital works being completed this spring. The full three years of the project have an engagement focus, to demonstrate the value of the restored park and its impact on the community. As a requirement of the lottery funding for the project significant work is undertaken to evaluate the outcomes. The outcomes will be available to members when published, but for now I am pleased to report that the consultants undertaking this work advise that this project is currently expected to show clear delivery of some excellent outcomes.

This project has been made possible not just because of the grant, but also because of the support we have had from the Park Advisory Group, who have remained staunchly supportive throughout, and the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, who are increasingly a key partner for the council on an exciting range of wildlife enhancing projects. I am immensely grateful to both groups for their sustained input.

Members should note that the lake restoration project has a very different focus to the wider restoration, with the focus being about enhancing wildlife and natural heritage. As a less invasive alternative to dredging, new technologies are now being deployed to aerate the water and reduce silt in a more sustainable way. The lake edges have a variety of different treatments, with parts having had their old stone edges reinstated, whilst others are benefiting from wildlife friendly naturally planted fascines.

A new boating platform has been built, to permit boating to return very shortly (for events). A further 'viewing platform' has also been built at the other end of the lake, to let people get out over the water and engage with the surroundings better. It will also permit organised 'pond dipping' and other related activities.

One very new element has been the provision of interpretative art installations. Art in parks is popular, and via a trail of installations around the lake, the story of the lake, the natural habitat, and its modern importance is being told in a simple yet thought provoking style. The interpretation strategy and design of the art panels and interpretation boards were led by a volunteer, which shows how volunteers can make a huge difference in our parks and open spaces.

Planned project related activities had to be significantly reviewed due to Covid. Despite this, there have been many activities – often 'self-led' and social media based, but also some in the park itself. Volunteering has continued, sometimes just one on one with the Volunteer Coordinator. The Community Engagement Officer started a Social Prescribing programme in December, and this is proving very successful. The project really focuses on health and wellbeing, as well as wildlife and nature.

### **Hartsholme Country Park and camp site**

Covid impacts have taken a toll on Hartsholme in a way that has not been seen at other parks. Not only have visitor number risen so high that significant additional damage has been seen to pathways and general infrastructure, but of course it has

been necessary to close the visitor centre and caravan/camp site in line with government guidance.

I am pleased to report that visitors have generally been understanding of these restrictions and although administratively burdensome, having to keep changing details depending on guidance changes, it has been possible to navigate a path to reopening this spring. 12<sup>th</sup> April saw the camp site reopen for self-contained units, such as motor homes. Further ongoing lifting of restrictions is planned, in line with government guidance, as I write this.

Last year I was able to report increasing use of the camp site, but I have refrained from including detailed data this year, as clearly it would be meaningless for comparison year-on-year in the current climate. Suffice to say that, due to closures, bookings were well down, and when it was possible to open, those booking were cautious, despite our full refund policy. In the end, despite refunds running at about 3 times that of previous years, it was possible to achieve some income and I can advise that due to the hard work of camp site staff and management 2020 did mean that the camp site still received 63% of the previous year's income (£32,559). More than might have been expected.

I would also like to report that the new on-line booking system, developed for last year, has worked well when required, and the council's decision last year to set camp site prices more than one year in advance, will doubtless be beneficial now as staff endeavour to maximise bookings.

I remain mindful of the impact on the camp site and park from past visits by members of the traveller community. Staff are looking at additional elements to enhance security at the site, which I hope to be able to report positively on in the near future.

In terms of the park overall, the Senior Ranger has again submitted the annual full and detailed Management Plan for the site, copies of which are available to members on request. This has shown that despite covid restrictions most work that was required by the management plan has been delivered, with just a few tasks carried over (mainly due to the limitations placed on volunteer works and finances).

As a part of that report the Senior Ranger has also submitted an annual events report. As members will be aware, due to covid events/organised activities were curtailed in March 2020, meaning that it was not possible to match the number of park staff led events of previous years. Data on events has however been fully recorded, and is tabled as a part of the historic record going back to 2009, which shows how park staff have, over time increased the number of events/activities year on year, with just last year being an exception. Again, full details are available on request to those members who would like a copy.

The need to do something with the buildings that are falling derelict is not forgotten, but initial estimates for refurbishment have proven to be prohibitive in the current challenging economic climate. This will receive further attention as a part of Master Planning work, which although currently un-resourced, does remain as an objective of the council within its strategic plan.

## **Commons**

This year has seen significant work take place on the commons; all of this being reported to the Commons Advisory Panel, as is normal practice. The commons have not been able to benefit in the same way as previous years, from additional income derived from an agreement with LCFC for car parking on match days, but some of the income received from previous years has and is being used on some key projects. These include:

Pond clearance work commenced West Common

Installation of benches, West Common and South Common

New horse feeding areas

Opening views on to the Viking Way

And this year we hope to start work to the frequently flooded West Common entrance off Roseberry Avenue.

This year I hope to see further and ongoing work to refresh the Commons Management Plan, and associated work programme, but this will be subject to progress on other work streams and the availability of suitable staff

One area that has come to the attention of the Commons Advisory Committee Chair has been the work of the Carholme Golf Club, operating as they do on West Common land. He has been concerned that their operations may not be wholly compatible with the council's environmental aspirations for the commons and so we have sought closer engagement with the golf club. It is hoped that they will develop an Environmental Management Plan that will enhance biodiversity on the area occupied by the golf club, making the area better for the public, and affording the golf club a new/unique environmentally focused marketing opportunity.

## **Volunteering**

In more recent years all volunteering for open spaces has been co-ordinated through a single post, ensuring consistency of approach in line with Council policies, and co-ordination of resources.

The Volunteer coordinator submits an annual update on progress (copy available to members on request) and I have been pleased to note that in the calendar year 2020 there have been some 2,068 hours of volunteer work take place, despite the covid restrictions. This is, as would be expected, well down on the previous year's 6,784hours for the obvious reasons.

As lockdown restrictions are gradually lifted this year, I anticipate increasing demand for this service, not least as people have come to attach greater value to the open spaces in the city, where most volunteering takes place.

Two volunteer related projects are of special note here. Hobbler's Hole is now subject to a formal Management Agreement with Long Leys Road Resident's Association, and work is taking place with Liquorice Park Trust to set up a new John Dawber Garden Trust to enhance the care for the Council's John Dawber Garden at

the Lawns.

## **Arboriculture**

Tree care is always a priority for the Council as it strives to protect trees against the ever-present demands of the urban environment.

In 2020 the council dealt with 1094 tree 'cases', some of which were small, but many were larger complex cases in relation to planning issues.

We planted 115 trees in early 2021, to replace any that had to be removed, underpinning the Council's 'one for one' replanting policy. This is well down on last year (324 trees removed and planted 337 trees) due to covid restrictions on interactions, but we are anticipating a back-log of work now that will place additional pressures, on an already pressured service. The impact of this workload has been noted, alongside pressures from insurers for greater proactive surveying, and so this resourcing issue is being considered now by senior managers.

## **Park Advisory Groups**

Despite some joint meetings of Chairs taking place pre-covid, it has not been possible to resume these yet. It is hoped that these will be possible again later this year so that I can report positive liaison in my next annual report.

## **Travellers**

Last year saw four unauthorised encampments on parks (2 South common. 1 Lawn. 1 Skellingthorpe field). Whilst the number was half that of the previous year, the time stayed was much longer in some cases due to lockdown.

As usual these caused disruption to services, diversion of resources and unwanted extra costs for the council taxpayers in the city. In response steps are being taken to try and deter future encampments, and work continues with legal services and the Police to ensure clear processes and prompt robust responses are ready to meet any future incursions. Some new government legislation is being enacted currently which should hopefully enhance powers, and these are being discussed with the Police, via legal services, currently.

It will never be possible to stop all incursions, but I know members will always be supportive of any actions we can take to deter this disruptive behaviour.

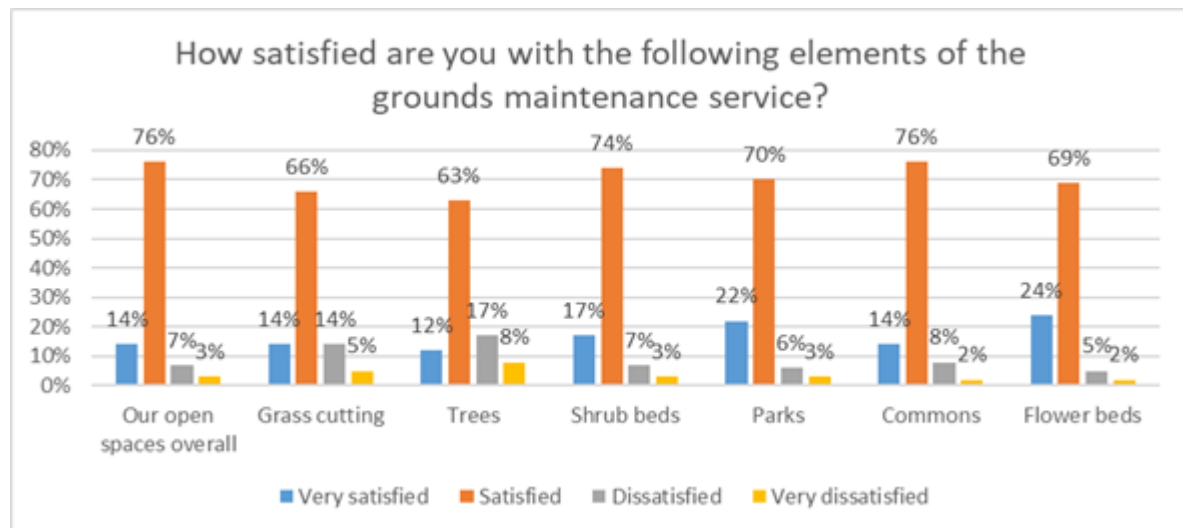
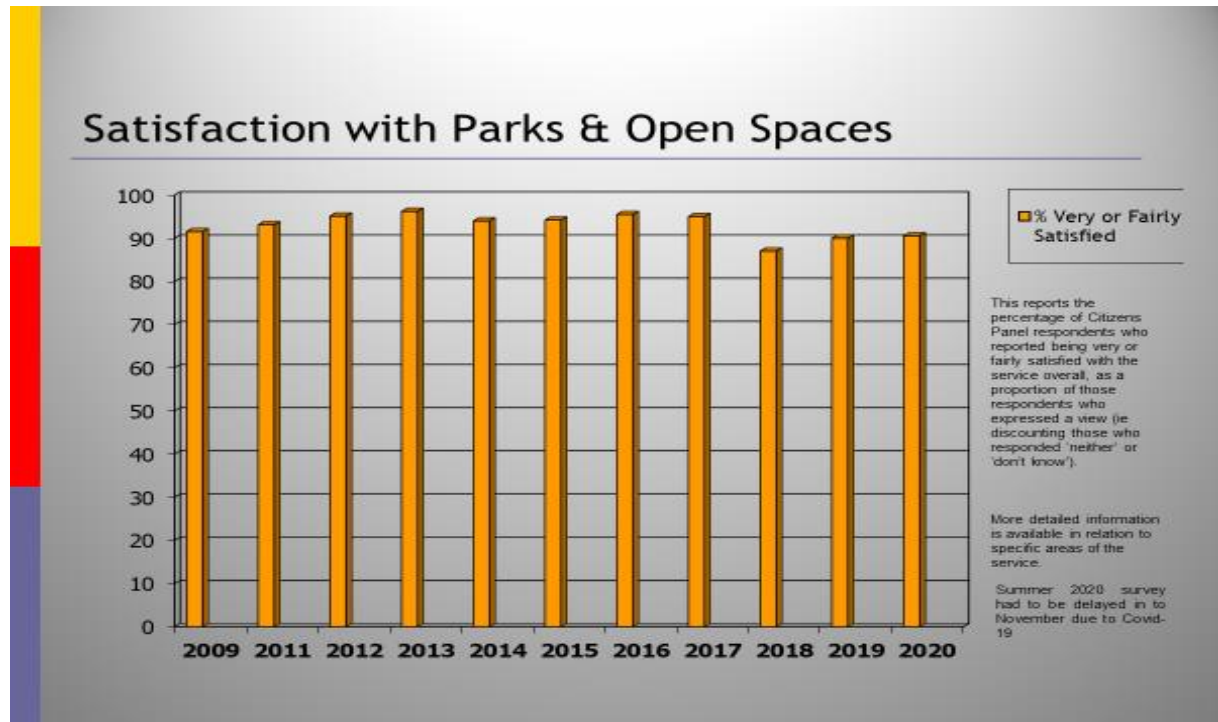
## **Contractor H&S**

All aspects of the contracts are scrupulously checked for high health and safety standards, and reports on key issues brought before the contract Performance Management Board.



Continental Landscapes have notified us that they have achieved the RoSPA Gold Medal Award, which is given to companies that have achieved gold standard for more than 5 years running.

In addition, they have attained RoSPA Gold Fleet Award standard and FORS Gold Accreditation for vehicle fleet management.



For clarity, whilst numerous indicators are collected and reviewed for the service, the departmental KPIs are:

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>20/21 target</b>	<b>Average of latest recorded outturns (may not be full year)</b>
Contractor performance points score	15 to 501 points	30 (to end December)
Satisfaction parks and open spaces	85% to 90%	90.52%
Allotment occupancy	84% to 92%	93.5%

## **Street Scene**

This includes the provision and maintenance of street name plates, bus shelters and art installations. The city currently has 111 bus shelters (66 Adshell/ 45 city council), and 16 art installations of varying sizes (and five soon to come online in Boultham Park).

The number of art installations has grown by one this year following work by Lindum Rotary, who have worked to provide a celebration of the water supply for Lincoln at the Water Tower. It is hoped we will see the installation of the sculpture to commemorate the work of George Boole at the railway station, later this year.

Historically there are two tiers of provision. A contract for free provision of those where the advertising pays for the shelter, and those which the council has to pay for. The budget for council-provided bus shelters was removed a number of years ago, when members took a decision that it could no longer afford to maintain bus shelters. Of course we have no option but to continue to maintain and keep safe those which remain in the street scene. We continue to seek imaginative way to maintain and protect what we can, but ultimately the second tier of bus shelters will be removed over time unless other funding sources can be found.

## **Waste/Recycling**

The Lincolnshire Waste Partnership has been active this last year in the delivery of the action plan underpinning the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Lincolnshire (JMWMS). This document prioritises the work which drives change for our waste services across the county, and ensures a joined-up approach is taken, so reducing any risks of confusion.

Members may be aware that we had expected a clear steer from government this year on a few key areas of waste/recycling policy. Covid has delayed this, but the initial national consultation has concluded, leading to further follow-up work on related consultations taking place now (costs to the packaging industry and deposit return schemes). I am anticipating the clear guidance/legislation will emerge shortly. As an aide memoir for members the headline issues for the council are the

possibilities of mandating i) free green waste collections ii) food waste collections iii) separate recycling collection waste streams.

The partnership has also led on trial areas for collecting food wastes, and paper and card separately. These trials have been important to gauge likely tonnages that might be collected if scaled up at some time, operational transitional difficulties, operational and disposal costs, and public opinion.

Whilst the food waste collections have not been scaled up due to costs, the information obtained has been fed back to government to inform its decision making.

With regards to separate paper and card collections, these have proven successful and so there is now a provisional programme of roll out for the entire county. Lincoln, as perhaps the most complex area, is not scheduled until 2024. With the support of officers I am preparing a report for member consideration currently, as whilst it is written into the County programme this has not been signed off by Lincoln's members yet. For this reason 2024 remains provisional.

Councils across Lincolnshire continue to have a 'contamination' issue in the recycling stream, reflecting a national problem. It will be interesting to see what impact the roll-out of separate paper and card collections have on these figures in other districts as the changes come in and services settle down.

In terms of statistical performance please note that data is always lagged, so at this stage it reflects information from April to December 2020. I have also included the same period for the previous year for comparison. The full results for 2020/21 will be available shortly and will be reported in the usual way.

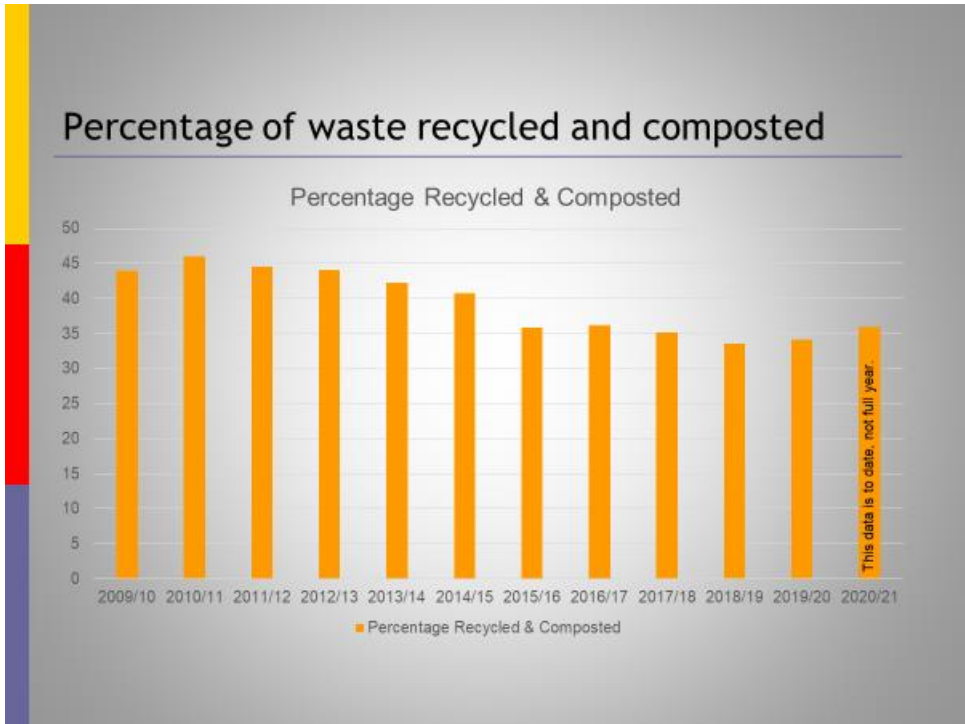
Domestic general (residual) waste disposed of has increased by around 9.9% (this increase includes new properties), with the average household disposing of an average 137kg per quarter, compared with 125kg in the previous year.

The number of residents using the garden waste service was 15,415 at the end of March 2020, compared with 15,841 the previous year, suggesting the resistance to charging has now just about stabilised (16,355 at 15th January 2018).

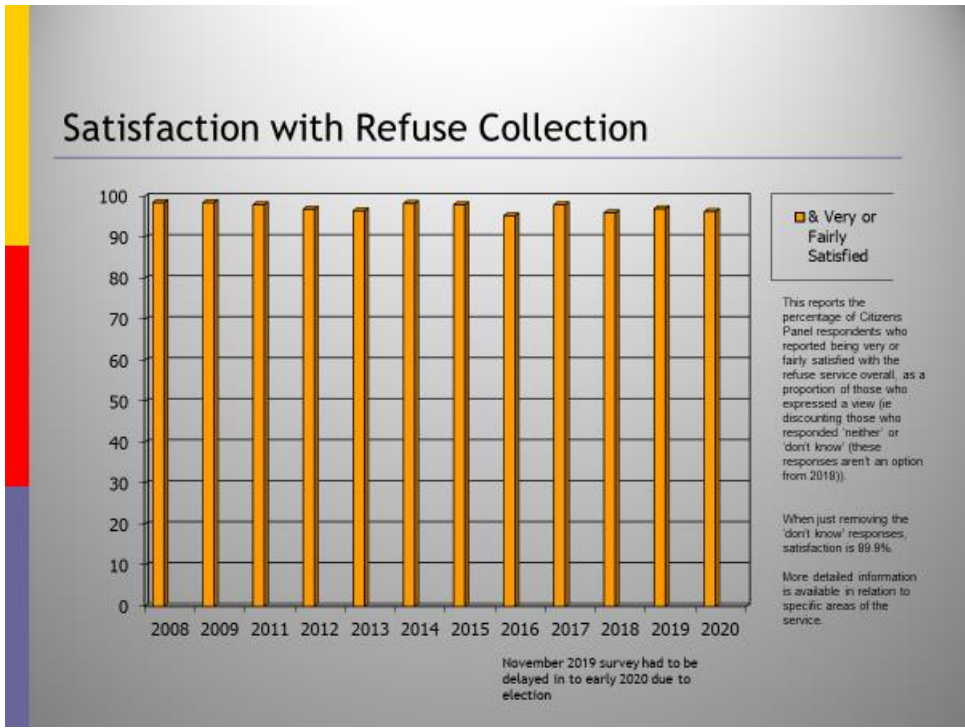
Composting tonnages for the first three quarters were 7.3% up on the previous same period (5,354 Tonnes compared with 4,988 Tonnes).

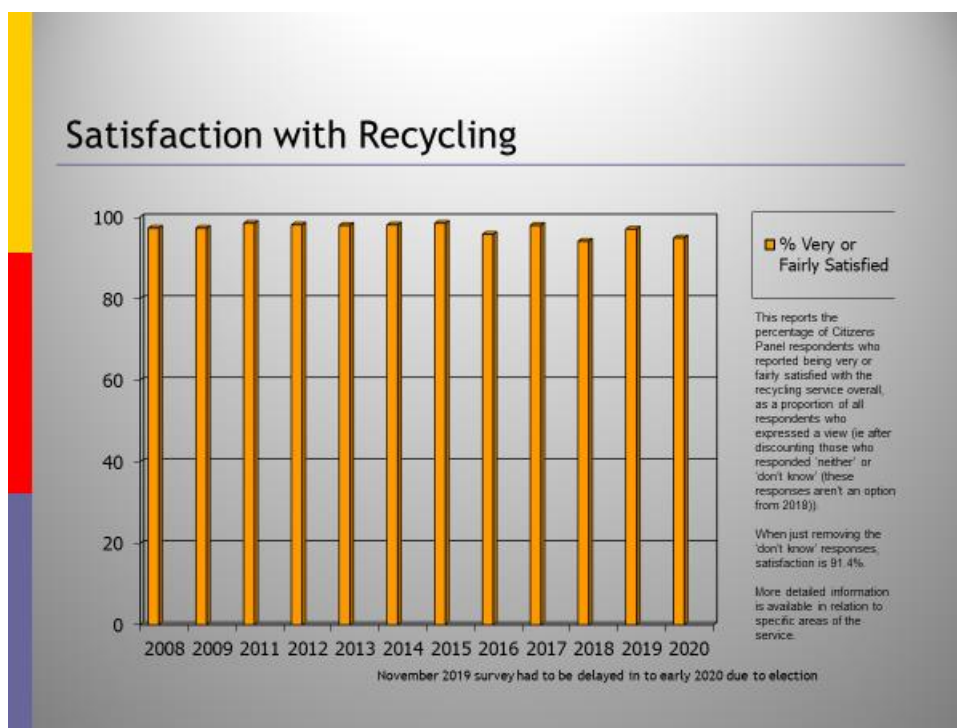
Recycling tonnages were 14% up (5,327 Tonnes compared with 4,672 Tonnes).

The graph below shows combined performance and suggests that there was a marginal upward trend showing by the end of December 2020 with recycling and composting making up 36% of the waste stream. The final bar representing 2020/21 is not indicative of actual outturn as it does not include quarter 4.



The following graphs show the updated satisfaction scores for waste /recycling services, as taken from the Council’s annual Citizen Panel survey. Allowing for small margins within the calculations these show that satisfaction overall remains consistently extremely high.





For clarity, whilst numerous indicators are collected and reviewed for the service as a part of day to day operations, the departmental KPIs are:

Indicator	20/21 target	Latest recorded outturns (may not be full year)
Percentage of Waste Recycled	33.5% to 41%	36%
Contractor performance points score	50 to 501 points	320 (to end December)
Satisfaction with waste services	90% to 96%	96.3%
Satisfaction with recycling services	90% to 96%	94.8%

### **Street Cleansing**

This section covers all areas of street cleansing, including street sweeping, litter picking, litter bin emptying, fly tipping, and the removal of graffiti and abandoned vehicles.

Fly tipping continued to be an issue for us this year in certain areas of the city. The Sincil Bank area has been the area of highest demand yet again, although fly tipping has become an increasingly significant problem nationally under lockdown.

Although a range of initiatives have been tried in the Sincil Bank area in the past without achieving the improvement desired, staff have not given up. Biffa have produced a 'heat map' of locations to confirm the hot spots for dumping, these having changed in recent years influenced by other initiatives such as the installation of CCTV. Cross referencing this with an assessment of the types of materials dumped, the staff working on this have now developed some specific anti-fly tipping signage for the area, which is in seven different languages, and this is being displayed now. Options for more CCTV is also being explored. Only a review of the heat map data in a few months' time will indicate if there is any improvement.

## **Graffiti**

Under lockdown we have seen a drop in graffiti, and at the same time, as a part of a purge to clean up the city, staff have focused on clearing as much graffiti away as possible. Getting graffiti cleared is not easy, as much of it is on private property, and as such it is the landowner's responsibility to clear it or at least to give permission for us to do so. Some chose not to, and others won't respond to offers of help from the council.

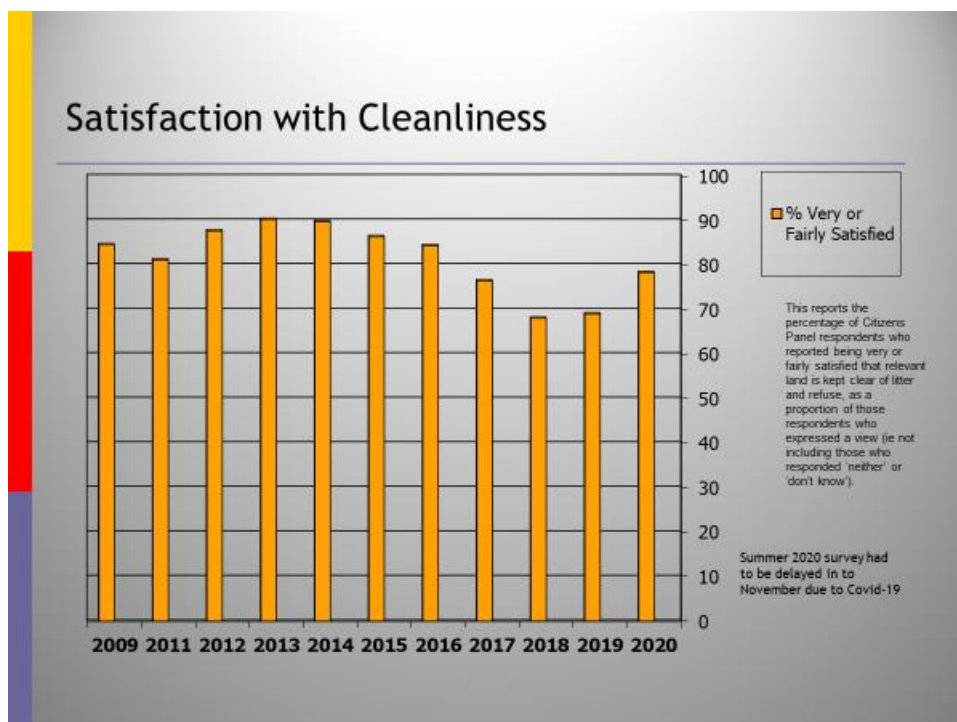
That said, this year the city is as clean of graffiti as it has been for many years, predominantly as a result of constant chasing and proactive work by staff. In 2020 the council removed 28 instances of graffiti.

## **Litter Policy**

This year, presumably due to people having had more time, but also perhaps because they have become more appreciative of the open spaces in the city, we have seen a rise in the numbers of people wanting to volunteer to litter pick.

These requests come in many forms, from those who want to engage with the Council's Volunteer Co-ordinator and work in an organised group, through to individuals or groups that do not want to be 'governed' in any way. The Council's continued enthusiasm for volunteer action has to be tempered a little by its responsibilities to make sure that such voluntary activities only work on authorised areas and of course that they do this safely.

To ensure that these aims are met unambiguously I have asked officers to draft a brief policy statement setting out the council's position, which is now under consideration for adoption across all districts county-wide



In the summer Citizens Panel survey, 78.2% of respondents who expressed a view reported being very or fairly satisfied with the cleanliness of the city. A higher performance than has been seen in the last few years. This is always a challenging issue to achieve a good satisfaction score on, and this is a welcome improvement. I will be working closely with the staff and contractor to seek out further incremental improvements this next year. The focus will be on fly tipping and graffiti.

For clarity, whilst numerous indicators are collected and reviewed for the service the departmental KPIs are:

Indicator	20/21 target	Latest recorded outturns (may not be full year)
Contractor performance points score	25 to 501 points	180(to end December)
Satisfaction with cleansing services	68% to 80%	78.2%

### Public Toilets

This service has again achieved high standards for those facilities entered into the Loo of the Year awards, with both the Bus Station and Castle Square facilities being awarded Gold standard.

Members will be aware that a review of the service is concluding currently. This review is an assessment of provision, seeking opportunities to deliver savings as required by the corporate Medium-Term Financial plan. Relevant data on utilisation

at charged facilities is recorded, and this will be monitored for changes ongoing, regardless of what changes, if any, are finally agreed.

Charges of 20p per use have been in operation at the Bus station, Castle Square and Tentercroft street since January 2017, and remain unchanged for 2021. However, due to covid income has clearly been severely disrupted this year, as can be seen below.

	<b>Castle</b>	<b>Lucy Tower</b>	<b>Tentercroft Street</b>	<b>Bus Station</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>2016/17</b>	£1,731.93	£988.20			£2720.13
<b>2017/18</b>	£10,029.31	£4,588.02	£917.65	£3,115.35	£18,650.33
<b>2018/19</b>	£8,354.97	£2,278.05	£9,176.03	£17,843.46	£37,652.51
<b>2019/20</b>	£8,380.77	£172*	£9,207.88	£18,179.43	£35,940.08
<b>2020/21</b>	£6,134.30	£0	£77	£12,806.74	£19,018.04

Satisfaction is usually the subject of a summertime Citizen Panel survey. There was no survey for toilets in 2020 due to the impact of covid on the service. A Citizen Panel survey of July 2018 showed that 56% of respondents were very or fairly satisfied with public toilet provision, and in 2019 this dropped to 48%. Although we do not have any new data, this consistently low score is probably due to a number of factors, not least the charges imposed. Given adverse publicity about potential service changes this year, and the long periods of closure necessitated by covid, it is not expected that a survey now, or in the near future, would reveal a positive result, or be a far reflection of the work of the staff involved.

However, it remains a serious concern for the portfolio, and means that the provision of accessible, strategically located, good quality public toilets remains a key issue for the Council.

### **The wider environment**

As a footnote to my report I think it is worth stressing that as Portfolio Holder for Remarkable Place I recognise my wider role. Many of the place enhancing projects of the Council are of course reported to me from the Council's Remarkable Place theme group, but alongside this however I recognise the portfolio role in relation to wider environmental issues. This is not just by way of such as the wildflower initiative related earlier, but also through things like the measurement of carbon footprint through our operations. Whilst the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership is now looking at this countywide, we also consider it internally. I hope Biffa will have an electric waste collection vehicle on trial in the city later in the year and expect further expansion of contractor's electric vehicles/tools in the near future. This year alone Continental Landscapes have transferred more than 34 items of equipment from petrol to electric rechargeable, at a cost to them of over £10k.



## **Licensing**

The licensing team have:

- 338 vehicle licences issued
- 496 test certificates issued
- 5 private hire operator licences issued
- 2 vehicle licences determined at committee
- 237 PH driver licences issued
- 20 PH driver licence ready to issue.
- 20 HC driver licences issued
- 4 drivers referred to PH/HC Sub Committee

we've issued 107 Premises Licences and 44 Personal Licences

Licensing have continued to provide services to our customers throughout the pandemic, adapting to how we respond to enquiries and how we deliver our service, this has involved remote working, where some checks would normally be done in person we have moved to posting out applications and forms which adds in time but has allowed the service to continue.

Unfortunately, some areas of the service, namely new driver applications have been affected more than others due to the level of checks requiring close contact with us or partners. The changing circumstances have required careful navigation to ensure that we keep businesses operating as best we can but without compromising on public safety. New applications are now being processed and knowledge test have resumed under careful management of Covid-19 secure measures.

The team have also had to respond to new and changing legislation and have been on the front line working with a range of partners to support licence holders and the city centre with the reopening of retail and hospitality.

The team have also designed and implemented a new application process for pavement licence applications. This was a completely new area of work for the team and has been implemented quickly and efficiently to ensure businesses can benefit from pavement licences.

We will be looking to implement the best bits of how we deliver our service going forwards.

The year ahead will see the licencing team adapting to the 'new normal' as well as undertaking policy reviews such as the Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Policy which is already underway.

## **Food, Health and Safety Team Report Jan – Dec 2020**

The team consists of the Food, Health & Safety Team Leader, 2 Environmental Health Officers and 1 Food Safety Officer, since Autumn 2019 there has been 1 Food Safety Officer vacancy. This has necessitated the need to employ agency workers to help with the volume of work.

We also worked closely with other departments within the Council that we hadn't work with previously, which will improve the way we work going forward.

This report covers the work that the team have undertaken during 2020.

As well as continuing to protect public health by dealing with food and health and safety related matters, the Food, Health and Safety Team have been responsible for Covid-19 related matters in the following areas:

- giving advice and guidance to businesses to make sure that they are Covid secure
- enforcing non compliance
- management and deployment, including training, of Covid ambassadors
- working with Public Health England (PHE) and Public Health Lincolnshire (PHL) on outbreak management
- supporting community testing
- supporting and advising colleagues in other departments within the Council

### **Volume of Work During 2020**

2356 service requests – this is double the number of service requests dealt with in 2019. Approximately half of the service requests were Covid-19 related request for advice or complaints. The other service requests included complaints, food hazard warnings, dangerous equipment notifications and requests for advice.

255 food hygiene inspections – although this is approximately half the number of inspections carried out in 2019, many businesses were closed during lockdown periods. In addition, the Food Standards Agency suspended the normal inspection programme and LAs were advised to prioritise inspecting those businesses which were trading and were of most risk to public health.

33 food and environmental samples taken.

23 food related infectious disease notifications.

74 RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases, Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013) reports received – the majority of notifications did not require a mandatory investigation, however 5 accidents were investigated.

39 Skin piercing applications processed.

### **Examples of Complex Cases**

During 2020, the team dealt with a number of complex cases. Examples include the following:

## **Accumulations of waste and associated rodents at convenience store**

Multi agency work, initially a report of an accumulation of waste at rear of premises attracting vermin, resulted in service of prevention of damage by pests act 1949 notice to clear the land. In addition, Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue and Trading Standards became involved due to allegations of other issues made to the Officer, this resulted in the Landlord taking possession of the property to arrange clearance of the land and to stop the other illegal activities from occurring.

## **Restaurant/takeaway with unfit food**

A request by the Police to visit an unhygienic premises that they had attended. Unfit food was found and removed from the premises. Whilst at the premises the officer could smell gas, Cadent was called out and found pipework and equipment to be dangerous and disconnected the gas supply. Officer then served a Prohibition Notice on the premises requiring works, a gas check and certificate before the notice could be lifted allowing the business to reopen.

## **Food retailer selling unfit food**

Routine unannounced food hygiene inspection resulted in the voluntary surrender of illegal food imports – duck blood, unfit food and food not produced in accordance with the food hygiene regulations. The food business required major improvements in food hygiene practices and procedures.

## **Takeaway with poor structural and hygiene standards**

A routine unannounced food hygiene inspection found the premises to be generally dirty, with poor hygiene practices and structural disrepair. Unsafe food was voluntarily disposed of. The business was rated as 1 and a schedule of works issued. At the time of the revisit, no significant improvement had been made and so Hygiene Improvement Notices were issued and were subsequently complied with.

## **Covid-19 related cases**

### **Enforcement**

In all aspects of our work we operate a stepped approach, working with businesses to help them comply with legal requirements. This has also been the case during the pandemic and generally that has been successful, with only one Prohibition Notice being served on a business where there was a flagrant breach of the law. A barber shop, that was required to be closed had created a false wall in the premises so that it did not appear, when looking through the window, that they were operating. Customers were entering through a rear door to have their hair cut.

## **Outbreaks**

The team were involved in investigations into numerous outbreaks of Covid-19, that were linked to businesses or the workplace. An example of an outbreak that we investigated along with Public Health Lincolnshire (PHL) was when numerous members of a football team, who had tested positive, had been out as a group at several public houses in the City, causing an outbreak to occur. The case was complex due to the numbers of cases and that several venues were involved. Our close working partnership with PHL meant that when we received local intelligence from our businesses, we were able to ensure early interventions to contain and reduce the community spread of Covid-19.

We also worked closely with PHE, PHL and neighbouring LAs to assist them where Lincoln residents were working in large food factories in other parts of Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire. This partnership working helped to ensure that those required to self-isolate were doing so, whilst also offering support to them to do so.

## **Challenge by businesses that were required to close**

During the pandemic, there were numerous challenges by businesses who believed that they were permitted to open. In these cases, the Council's Legal Services team provided vital support to our decision making and actions.

## **Businesses adapting to new ways of working**

There was an increase in on-line food business activity, with many of the businesses operating whilst being unregistered. There were challenges with investigating these types of businesses.

## **Bereavement Services**

The crematorium has had a very busy year carrying out over 2000 cremation services, the staff have worked very hard to cover the extra demand on the service while working in bubbles to reduce the possibility of all staff needing to isolate and leaving us unable to carry out services.

During the pandemic we have been offering webcasts free of charge to help with the reduced numbers that have been allowed to attend services at the crematorium, visual tributes have continued to be popular.

Memorial sales have slowed since the introduction of GDPR as we no longer send information to all cremation applicants and only send this to applicants that have requested the information. We are working with a design company looking at the branding of the crematorium and production of leaflets to help make people aware of the services that we offer.

Burial numbers are slightly higher than last year and following a grave audit a number of graves were identified as not being used and these have now been made available to the public. With this said we no longer have new full burial grave spaces in Canwick Road Old, Canwick Road New, St Swithin's and Newport Cemetery, but we are still doing reopen graves in all the cemeteries. Long Leys Road burials are increasing, and we are hoping to offer memorial options within this site in the near future.

Following the delay of the works at the crematorium due to the pandemic we have now started this work and it is running on target with the new chapel being available for use from Monday 5th July. The improvement works at the crematorium will improve the service that is offered to the public and also replace the aging cremators with ones that have all the latest energy efficient systems to reduce the amount of gas and electricity used and also with the DeNox filtration reduce the amount of nitrous oxide that is emitted from the cremation process.

## **Recreation Services**

### **Central Market**

The Central Market has operated every day throughout the pandemic and adapted to the various operational challenges. As you will be aware, we are now looking towards an exciting reinvention of the market to enhance the retail and visitor experience. The Market Superintendent, as well as recently celebrating 30 years' service with the council has kindly agreed to put off his planned retirement until the market closes for the required works. Our thanks go to Andy Bradley for his commitment in this regard.

### **Community Centres**

The pandemic and the associated legal and guidance have made it unviable to open the centres. The Recreation Officers have busied themselves during the downtime to redecorate public areas and enhance the centres. Contact has been maintained with hirers and we look forward to welcoming them back once social distancing protocols makes this viable.

The centres have been utilised for blood doning and other priority use including Sudbrooke Drive being used at a Test Centre and Moorland Community Centre being used by the NHS Test and Trace Mobile Testing Unit.

### **Pitches**

I'm pleased to say that we have managed to navigate various challenges to allow league play on football, bowls and cricket pitches this year.

## **Fixed Play Strategy**

Work continues to produce a revised fixed play strategy which will prioritise fixed play sites within the city.

## **Leisure Services**

The Councils two Leisure Centres, Birchwood LC and Yarborough LC have continued to provide the most comprehensive service they have been able to provide in the current everchanging Covid-19 environment. We are hopeful that this situation will be greatly improved after the (potential) relaxation of Covid-19 related regulations from July 19th.

Over recent months the City Council in partnership with our Leisure provider Active Nation have agreed the development of an exciting new physical Activity Action Plan. This plan has been developed to supplement the Physical Activity Strategy adopted by Executive last year. Its prime focus will be to help drive and support our Health agenda aspirations by encouraging and enabling residents to become more active through a varied package of new initiatives.

We are hopeful that this Action Plan will be further supplemented in the near future by wider strategic work to promote a more comprehensive joined up approach to our Cities growing health and activity problems, problems that have been more recently amplified by issues related to lock down. This future work will only be achieved with the support and participation of various potential partners from the City and the County, and will include key involvement from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

## **Climate Change:**

Since the Council agreed a motion declaring a Climate and Environmental Emergency in 2019, we have been working with the Lincoln Climate Commission and have published the Lincoln Roadmap to net zero carbon. The roadmap sets out Lincoln's current Green House Gas emissions and projections for 2030 and is available on the Council and Commission websites, along with a quarterly newsletter and sustainability toolkit. The Sustainability Toolkit provides a one stop guide to help people adopt a sustainable lifestyle. The Council are currently working with the commission to provide a Lincoln 2030: A Climate Action Plan and a Local Climate Impacts profile so we can understand and adapt to the challenges of climate change now and in the future.

In addition to working with our partners on the Commission the City Council has prepared a draft Decarbonisation Strategy and Action Plan, setting out how the Council intends to achieve net zero carbon for its own operations and services. An important part of this work has been to set up an Environmental Management System, which provides a structured framework for managing and reducing the Council's environmental impacts. Since our baseline year of 2018/19 the Council have reduced its own carbon footprint by 24%, making considerable reductions in

emissions from energy and transport. In September 2020 Investors in the Environment carried out an audit of the council's environmental performance and in October we were presented with the Silver award. We are now working towards our 2021 submission and are aiming for a Green award.

Since the Council approved the motion to be a single use, plastic free council we have carried out an audit and published an action plan which is available on the Council's website. The action plan includes replacing plastic for biodegradable materials in council buildings and at council events such as the Lincoln 10k and Christmas Market. The Council continue to work with the Plastic Free Lincoln steering group to submit out application for plastic free community status for Lincoln in Autumn 2021.

In January this year the Council received a grant and match funding from the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles to increase the provision of electric vehicle charge points (EVCP) at Chaplin St and Orchard St car parks, through the On Street Electric Vehicle Charge Point Scheme. Four EVCPs have now been installed at Chaplin St and an additional four EVCPs will be commissioned at Orchard St car park in August 2021. This will take the total number of publicly available EVCPs in Lincoln to 57, the UK average per 100 00 population is 34.2 and 26 for Lincolnshire.

In April 2021 the Council were awarded £479,600 from the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme (LAD) and are working with E.ON to roll out the scheme, due to be launched in July 2021 to support up to 40 households improve the energy efficiency of their homes. The Council are working with the Greater Lincolnshire Energy Efficiency Network to prepare an application for the next phase of the LAD scheme in 2022.

In conclusion, I would like to sincerely thank all those who have contributed to the work and activities outlined in this report. Many staff have had to adjust their working practices and have done so with good will and enthusiasm.