

Present: Councillor Gary Hewson (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Pat Vaughan, Councillor David Clarkson,
Councillor Thomas Dyer, Councillor
Rebecca Longbottom, Councillor Lucinda Preston,
Councillor Christopher Reid, Councillor Loraine Woolley
and Councillor Rosanne Kirk

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Laura McWilliams

12. Confirmation of Minutes - 22 June 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2021 be confirmed.

13. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Thomas Dyer declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee/Local Plan Annual Report 2020/21'. Reason: He sits on the Central Lincs Joint Planning Committee

14. Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee/Local Plan Annual Report 2020/21

Toby Forbes Turner, Planning Policy Manager:

- a) presented members with an annual report detailing work undertaken by the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee (CLJSPC) over the period 1 April 2020 through to 31 March 2021
- b) explained that the Joint Planning Committee reached its eleventh year over the course of 2020/21. This year had been very challenging due to the Covid-19 pandemic which had significantly impacted on the local plan process, but more importantly on the planning and development sector, introducing uncertainty over what would be deliverable in the short term and what measures were necessary to address Covid-19 in local plans
- c) reported that substantial progress had been made with the development of the plan which had led to the Consultation Draft Local Plan being produced ready for public consultation starting the end of June 2021
- d) highlighted the following progress in 2020/21:
 - the Local Plans Team Annual Report
 - the Local Plan Progress Update; and
 - the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Budget Update
- e) explained that in the coming year, it was anticipated that the local plan would enter the final stages of the plan-making process. This included:
 - commencing the Regulation 18 Consultation on the Draft Local Plan in the summer, subject to approval by the Committee.

- consideration of the responses and amending the plan where needed.
 - finalising the plan and supporting evidence.
 - seeking approval from the Committee for the submission version of the plan before undertaking the final Regulation 19 public consultation; and
 - submission of the plan for examination.
- f) reported that the budget for 1020/21 was set out in Appendix 1 of the report which represented the second year of a three year budget approved by members of the Joint Planning Committee on the 13th January 2020, which was designed to ensure that the joint partnership was adequately supported to facilitate the Local Plan making process. Overall, the Local Plans budget was in a healthy position.
- g) invited members' comments and questions.

Question: Members asked what Lincolnshire County Council was contributing.

Response: Originally £30k-£40k was contributed but instead of a monetary contribution, Lincolnshire County Council offered officer time/contributions.

Question: Members asked whether the consultation process was easy to comment on and how many comments were received from the public.

Response: The Local Plan consultation process met the statutory guidelines for consultation. Members of the public were able to write in or call. Last time there was a consultation on the Local Plan there were circa 3500 comments from the public.

Question: Members asked if any face to face consultation would be taking place.

Response: Face to face consultation was not needed this time and there were not the resources to do so. If a member of the public had a specific query, they could request to speak to an officer.

Question: Members asked if the budget could be reduced.

Response: The budget was reviewed on a partnership basis. There were different aspects of the process that would cost more than others. The budget would look different in a years' time.

RESOLVED that the annual report be noted.

15. Portfolio Holder under Scrutiny - Customer Experience and Review

Councillor Chris Burke, Portfolio Holder for Customer Experience and Review:

- a) presented a report to Performance Scrutiny Committee covering the following main points:
- High Performing Services – the Council had been doing all it could to minimise the effects of the financial and Covid-19 pandemic related challenges that it faced for residents. Services were prioritised to ensure that effective and efficient services were delivered to all.

During 2019/21 the Council had been working on plans for the 'One Council' approach, which would replace the current 'High Performing Services' theme in the next phase of Vision 2025

- General Performance – this was to ensure that there was a process for producing good quality key operational data that was available to those who needed it on a regular basis
- Local Performance Management Framework – this was to ensure that appropriate measures were in place to monitor performance. The framework was due to be reviewed in 2021/22 and would incorporate a move towards a more performance driven culture
- The Performance and Information Management System – this system was successfully launched at the end of 2018/19. Performance targets were reviewed annually to reflect changes in the marketplace as well as current outturn achievements.
- Quarterly Performance Monitoring – the Council reported through a quarterly performance report which covered around 70 strategic measures, some quarterly and some annual. During the early stages of the pandemic in 2020 it was difficult for some services to provide numerical performance information as they were initially invoking emergency plans and then gradually completing recovery plans.
- Lincoln City Profile – the profile painted a unique picture of what it was like to live and work in Lincoln. It contained eight chapters containing statistical data on the following subjects:
 - Population
 - Education
 - Economy
 - Housing
 - Welfare
 - Crime
 - Health
 - Environment (including climate change)
- Audit Arrangements – the latest annual Internal Audit Report (2020/21) established that overall, the Council was performing well across areas of governance, risk and internal financial control and performing adequately on internal control.
- Democratic and Electoral Services – the Electoral Services Team successfully delivered a complex set of elections on 6 May 2021 whilst adhering to Covid-19 restrictions.

The temporary legislation which allowed formal meetings of the Council to be held virtually came to an end in early May 2021. The Democratic Services Team had made arrangements for a number of in-person committee meetings since the lifting of the temporary legislation.

- Business Development and IT – throughout the pandemic the focus of the Business Development and IT Team had been in sustaining

business as usual, but with extra support provided to the Authority's by the Covid-19 pandemic response. Within days of the first lockdown being announced, nearly all staff were able to work remotely and continue to deliver services.

- Customer Services - the team had maintained an accessible service for customers throughout the restrictions that had been in place and had ensured that residents had been able to access vital services such as tenancy repairs, benefit payments and advice and guidance on a range of council and external services. Many vulnerable people over the last 12 months had been supported with referrals for welfare or money advice, foodbank support and applications for grants and discounts.

b) invited members' questions and comments.

Question: Members asked when staff would return to the office.

Response: Staff would return to work in line with the new workstyles which were communicated to staff via Assistant Directors.

Question: Members asked what staff were currently working from home full time.

Response: This information was to be forwarded to the Committee.

Question: Members asked what staff were working part-time in City Hall and part-time at home.

Response: There were about 100 staff members that were signing into City Hall to work. The 'hybrid' way of work was to continue until at least the 16th August. Managers continue to co-ordinate who was in the office and who worked from home.

Question: Members asked how many staff were still on furlough.

Response: All staff had returned to work.

Question: Members asked how much money was saved when staff were furloughed.

Response: Income through furlough was around £493k. This money was used to support the authority through the financial impacts of the pandemic.

Question: Members asked how many staff had self-isolated.

Response: There had been 200+.

Question: Members asked if it was possible for some staff to work permanently from home.

Response: Yes. Businesses were looking at this as a new way of working. There were some staff that could not work from home due to mental health requirements and these staff were being supported. There were 10 principles that had been sent to staff that the Council were following.

Question: Members asked if there were reasons as to why customers preferred to call instead of use digital communications.

Response: Some of the reasoning was generational. The use of digital communication avenues was wanting to be maximised, but we were also conscious that the older generation want to talk to us on the phone.

Question: Members asked if the average length of calls increasing going up was owing to the pandemic.

Response: Some of this was owing to staffing issues, as some members of staff had left the authority. This was being looked at so the Council could understand the staffing implications.

Comment: Members commented that if a customer telephoned the Council, it was dealt with quicker. It was therefore suggested that if emails could be responded to in a timely manner then this could change the way customers communicated.

Question: Members asked what the cost was to hold meetings externally and when meetings would be returning to City Hall.

Response: Costings would be forwarded onto the Committee. External venues would continue be hired out until at least the 16th August when self-isolation rules were being reviewed.

Question: Members asked what was included in the improvements to the website.

Response: Some of this was around disabilities, such as, allowing customers to increase text size and activate voice for customers who were hard of seeing.

Question: Members asked why there was a drop in the amount of calls received and emails answered.

Response: This may be due to customers using more electronic forms of communication.

Question: Members asked what was included when letters were being simplified for customers.

Response: This project was to make sure that letters had simplified information so they were easier to understand. The new letters were going live for Housing Rents and Housing Repairs and were currently being reviewed by Revenues and Benefits.

Question: Members asked whether email correspondence was being currently being explored rather than post.

Response: Yes, this was being explored. There was some correspondence which had to be posted, owing to its statutory nature.

Question: Members asked if the Lincoln City Profile was to be updated as the version that was online was dated 2020.

Response: Yes, the update had been delayed due to staffing issues within the Policy Team.

Question: Members asked whether Creating Value Processes was part of BDIT.

Response: This was one of four themes running under the 'One Council' banner and it looked at supporting processes that we followed internally and externally. The push at the minute was to get customers to interact with ourselves in a digital way. Online forms were being made easier. Response times for digital correspondence needed to be increased in order for customers to have faith in using digital communication.

Question: Members asked whether the extra services that were put in place for BDIT were already in the Business Continuity Plan.

Response: There was some that was in the Business Continuity Plan and some had to be done quickly such as getting all staff access to work from home remotely. The Disaster Recovery Plan that was in place moved staff to a different building, but the pandemic did not allow for this to happen.

Question: Members asked what checks were carried out to ensure that staff who were working from home were doing so in the right environment and how was it being monitored.

Response: Home workers did need a home assessment and these were carried out by managers. Monitoring performance was easy in some areas due to the output of work. Some officers were working more hours than they should and this needed to be managed.

Question: Members asked what steps were being taken to ensure that audit requirements were adequate.

Response: Portfolio Holder meetings took place on a monthly basis where issues of concern were raised. Any Issues also got reported to Senior Managers.

Question: Members asked what the costs were to print and post agendas to Councillors as the current IT infrastructure was inadequate.

Response: Costs would be forwarded onto the Committee. It was important that members were able to work digitally. Any reported issues with IT equipment had been given to IT for investigation.

Question: Members asked for an update on the roll out of new devices for staff and whether staff were happy with these devices.

Response: There was around 100 staff that were waiting to be moved over to Office 365. The equipment was on order but there had been a delay. There were different pieces of equipment that were being handed out to staff that were tailored to their work needs.

16. Portfolio Holder Under Scrutiny - Remarkable Place

Councillor Bob Bushell, Portfolio Holder for Remarkable Place:

- a) presented a report to Performance Scrutiny Committee covering the following main points:

- Allotments – across all allotment sites, occupancy had remained high, with the occupancy level of lettable allotment plots hovering consistently around 97%.
- Equipped Play Areas – the Council continued to maintain 28 equipped play areas across the city, ensuring that British Standards were maintained at all times for installation, inspections and maintenance.
- Parks and Open Spaces – three Green Flag Awards had been achieved in 2020.
- Boutham Park – the main restoration of Boutham Park was completed in 2019 but there were one or two outstanding tasks to finish before the project could officially be declared at closed. These were planned for 2020 and were delayed due to Covid-19 and were planned to be completed during 2021.
- Hartsholme Country Park and Camp Site – Covid-19 impacts had taken a toll on Hartsholme in a way that had not been seen at other parks. Not only had visitor numbers risen so high that significant additional damage had been seen to pathways and general infrastructure, but it had been necessary to close the Visitor Centre and Caravan/Camp Site in line with government guidance.
- Commons – further and ongoing work was hoped to take place to refresh the Commons Management Plan and associated work programme, but this was subject to progress on other work streams and the availability of suitable staff.
- Arboriculture – 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
- Travellers – last year saw four unauthorised encampments on parks (2 on the South Common, 1 at the Lawn and 1 at Skellingthorpe Field). Whilst the number was half that of the previous year, the time stayed was much longer in some cases due to lockdown.
- Street Scene – this included the provision and maintenance of street name plates, bus shelters and art installations. The city currently had 111 bus shelters (66 Adshell/ 45 City Council) and 16 art installations of varying sizes.
- Waste/Recycling – the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership had been active this year in the delivery of the action plan underpinning the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Lincolnshire. This document prioritised the work which drove change for waste services across the country and ensured a joined-up approach was taken, so reducing any risks of confusion.

Domestic general (residual) waste disposed of had increased by around 9.9%, 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.

- Street Cleansing – Fly tipping continued to be an issue this year in certain areas of the city. The Sincil Bank area had been the area of highest demand, although fly tipping had become an increasingly significant problem nationally under lockdown
- Public Toilets – this service had 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.
- Licensing – the Licensing Team had continued to provide services to our customers throughout the pandemic, adapting to how we responded to enquiries and how the service was delivered.
- Food, Health and Safety Team – as well as continuing to protect Public Health by dealing with food and health and safety related matters, the team had been responsible for Covid-19 related matters in the following areas:
 - o giving advice and guidance to businesses to make sure that they were Covid-19 secure
 - o enforcing non-compliance
 - o management and deployment, including training of Covid-19 ambassadors
 - o working with Public Health England and Public Health Lincolnshire on outbreak management
 - o supporting community testing
 - o supporting and advising colleagues in other departments within the Council
- Climate Change – since the Council agreed a motion declaring a Climate and Environmental Emergency in 2019 work had taken place with the Lincoln Climate Commission and had published the Lincoln Roadmap to net zero carbon.

b) invited members' questions and comments.

Question: Members commented that it was nice to see more wildflowers and asked whether more publicity could be done on this.

Response: Some publicity had been done around this with an interview taking place on a breakfast show. It was commented that the public were more precious about nature due to the pandemic.

Question: Members were interested in the footfall for play areas.

Response: Play parks had been well used during the pandemic as some people do not have gardens. There was no data on actual footfall but the maintenance for the site had increased.

Question: Members wanted to raise that there were not enough baby changing facilities in the city and asked if the Council could encourage businesses to become more child friendly.

Response: Yes, there did need to be more changing facilities within the city. Officers were unsure at this stage whether there would be baby changing facilities at the Central Market as this was still going through the planning process.

Question: Members asked how much fly tipping had cost the Council.

Response: It was hard to give a definitive answer, but it was around £10k a year. However, it was commented that this figure could be misleading as there were other fly-tipping incidents that were dealt with as part of the contract and not charged for.

Question: Members asked whether the fly-tipping hotspots were able to be covered by CCTV.

Response: CCTV was being utilised where it could. It was hoped that when the Household Waste Recycling Centre reopened that the fly-tipping would reduce.

Question: Members asked how the derelict buildings at Hartsholme Country Park were being made secure.

Response: These building would be looked at in the future and we had a duty of care in the meantime.

Question: Members asked if it was easy to volunteer.

Response: Making it easier to volunteer was being looked at as there were a lot of people that offer up their services. A lot of volunteers come from people via community payback.

Question: Members asked whether trees were replaced like for like once one had been removed.

Response: The Council always plants more trees than what had been removed.

Question: Members asked why officers did not expect a drop in demand for allotment sites.

Response: There was currently a waiting list for allotments so as soon as one came available it could be let out.

Question: Members asked why Lincoln was the most complex in the county when it came to recycling cardboard and paper.

Response: The main complexity was storage of the bins in densely populated areas.

Question: Members asked why the percentage of waste that was composted had decreased significantly.

Response: Officers explained that this was a national picture and the government objective was to increase this to 60%. The reason for the decrease could be owing to contamination.

Question: Members asked whether the Council was working with stallholders at the Christmas Market regarding being plastic free.

Response: We are trying to reduce single use plastics and the Council continued to encourage businesses to steer away from single use plastics.

Question: Members asked whether there was a policy for the maintenance of bus shelters, as they felt that if they were well maintained it may encourage more people to use buses as their preferred mode of transport.

Response: There were financial issues regarding the maintenance of bus shelters.

Question: Members asked what education would be offered for recycling.

Response: The paper and cardboard recycling was not coming to Lincoln until 2024 so the Council would learn from other authorities. Lincolnshire County Council was to employ a team to educate and support residents.

Question: Members asked whether anything was taking place to educate students on recycling.

Response: People should be encouraged to take responsibility and to be accountable for their own recycling. Any communication that was released by the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership would also be released via the City Council's Communications Team.

Question: Members asked when the Carbonisation Policy would be released.

Response: Officers were to find out and let the Committee know.

Question: Members asked whether the zero-carbon emissions standard included contractors.

Response: We were working with contractors to try and get them to use electric cars/hedge trimmers.

Question: Members queried what the Council was doing to support organisations to achieve zero-carbon emissions.

Response: It was a collective responsibility and this was the work of the Climate Commission.

Question: Members asked in regard to arboriculture, what pressures insurance companies were applying.

Response: The Council was required to ensure trees were safe and were inspected within a five-years.

Question: Members commented that there were 57 electric charging points and queried where the Council scored among the population.

Response: This figure was above average and a consultation was underway on the installation of more charging points.

