

Present: Councillor Jackie Kirk (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Biff Bean, Councillor Bill Bilton,
Councillor Alan Briggs, Councillor Chris Burke,
Councillor Sue Burke, Councillor Bob Bushell,
Councillor Liz Bushell, Councillor David Clarkson,
Councillor Thomas Dyer, Councillor Gary Hewson,
Councillor Rosanne Kirk, Councillor Jane Loffhagen,
Councillor Rebecca Longbottom, Councillor Helena Mair,
Councillor Bill Mara, Councillor Adrianna McNulty,
Councillor Ric Metcalfe, Councillor Neil Murray,
Councillor Donald Nannestad,
Councillor Lucinda Preston, Councillor Clare Smalley,
Councillor Hilton Spratt, Councillor Mark Storer,
Councillor Edmund Strengiel, Councillor Pat Vaughan,
Councillor Calum Watt and Councillor Loraine Woolley

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Matthew Fido, Councillor Andy Kerry,
Councillor Laura McWilliams, Councillor Christopher Reid
and Councillor Naomi Tweddle

8. Mayoral Announcements

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Deferral of Agenda Items

The Mayor announced that in the light of increasing Covid-19 infection rates, it had been agreed with the respective group leaders, that the following items be deferred to later meetings of the Council:

- 6(a) Report by Councillor Chris Burke, Portfolio Holder for Customer Experience and Review;
- 6(b) Report by Councillor Bob Bushell (Portfolio Holder for Remarkable Place); and
- 6(d) Report by Councillor Jane Loffhagen (Chair of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee).

Mayor's Engagements

The Mayor referred to her engagements since taking up office, which had included:

- the Theatre Royal in Lincoln;
- the raising of the flag on Armed Forces Day;
- the opening of the St John's Ambulance Service Training Centre, by HRH the Princess Royal;
- the opening of the Lincoln Crematorium; and
- RAF Coningsby.

9. Confirmation of Minutes - 18 May 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2021 be confirmed.

10. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

11. Petition: Public Conveniences at Westgate, Lincoln

A petition had been received in the following terms:

"We demand that the Public Toilets on Westgate are re-opened with immediate effect, local residents and visitors to the City of Lincoln need them back and their extended closure is unacceptable. Using covid to close them temporarily and now making that closure permanent is unacceptable."

As the number of signatures in support of the petition had exceeded 900, the lead petitioner, Fiona Purkiss, had been invited to present the petition in accordance with the Council's petition scheme. The Mayor welcomed Fiona Purkiss to the meeting and invited her to present her petition to the Council.

Presentation by the Lead Petitioner

The lead petitioner called on the Council to ignore party politics and to consider this item as a free vote. Other points in the presentation included:

- Local businesses had not been consulted on the proposal and had not been approached regarding sponsorship.
- The facilities were in good, award winning, condition and their state of repair could not be used as an argument for closure.
- Individuals should not be told by the City Council to use the facilities of local cafeterias and restaurants as an alternative.
- Whilst the provision for people with disabilities would remain open via the use of a radar key, this was of no use to the elderly, tourists and children.
- The annual costs of retaining the facilities would be £9,000, which was not a significant sum in the overall context of the City of Lincoln's budget, and there had been unnecessary examples of Council expenditure in excess of this sum.
- The facilities at Westgate were of benefit to all members of the community, whereas at the facilities at Castle Square tended to be used only by tourists.

It was also stated that the petition had remained open and to date 1,460 signatures had been received.

Debate

It was moved, seconded and resolved that Council Procedure Rule 17.4 [the content and length of speeches] be suspended to allow the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition unlimited time to speak on this item.

Councillor Bob Bushell stated that the Westgate facilities had been closed from March 2020, the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, at that time on a temporary basis. However, all council services had to be reviewed in the light of the Council's overall financial position and at times difficult decisions had to be made. The facilities at Westgate would continue to be open to people with disabilities by means of a radar key; and all facilities would continue to be open when significant

events were taking place. Members of the public had not been encouraged to use facilities in cafeterias and restaurants. Facilities would continue to remain open in Castle Square, at a short distance. It was highlighted that a request to call in the decision by the Executive on the Public Conveniences Services Review would be considered by the Select Scrutiny Committee on 28 July 2021.

Councillor Tom Dyer, the Leader of the Opposition, recorded his thanks to the petition organiser for her efforts in seeking significant support for the petition, which was focused on the Westgate facilities, whereas the Select Scrutiny Committee would be considering overall provision across the City. Councillor Dyer stated that a decision on the petition should be made at this meeting.

Councillor Dyer recorded his support for the petition and argued that the consultation on the proposal had not been adequate and that the annual costs of retaining the facilities at Westgate at an approximate cost of £10,000 per annum could be accommodated within the Council's overall finances. He acknowledged the challenges to the Council's overall budgetary position, but stated that no information had been put forward by the Council on how it intended to meet its savings target. Councillor Dyer referred to a report to the Audit Committee on 22 July 2021, which had suggested that the Council's financial position was less challenging than expected.

Councillor Dyer also referred to the importance of the City's tourist offer, through its heritage, history and independent shops, and stressed the role of the Council in supporting that offer and local businesses, which in turn would influence business rate tax base.

It was moved by Councillor Dyer and seconded by Councillor Mark Storer that the Council take the action requested by the petition.

The Mayor ruled that the motion set out above was in order. The Mayor also advised that it was open to each member of the Select Scrutiny Committee to decide how they would participate in this item, provided that they would be able to consider the matter at the meeting on 28 July 2021 with an open mind. Further to this, Councillors Bill Bilton, Jane Loffhagen, Hilton Spratt, Eddie Strengiel and Calum Watt all stated that they would neither participate in the discussion of this item nor vote.

Councillor Lucinda Preston referred to the reductions in central government funding to local government since 2010, including the funding to the City of Lincoln Council, and the impact this was having on the ability to provide services.

On being put to the meeting, a recorded vote was held on the motion set out above, with members of the Council voting as follows:

For the Motion (6) – Councillors Alan Briggs, David Clarkson, Tom Dyer, Bill Mara, Clare Smalley and Mark Storer.

Against the Motion (17) – The Mayor, Councillor Jackie Kirk, and Councillors Biff Bean, Chris Burke, Sue Burke, Bob Bushell, Liz Bushell, Gary Hewson, Rosanne Kirk, Rebecca Longbottom, Helena Mair, Adrianna McNulty, Ric Metcalfe, Neil Murray, Donald Nannestad, Lucinda Preston, Pat Vaughan and Lorraine Woolley.

Abstaining from Voting (5) – Councillors Bill Bilton, Jane Loffhagen, Hilton Spratt, Eddie Strengiel and Calum Watt.

The motion was declared lost.

Councillor Ric Metcalfe, recorded his sympathy for the terms of the petition and supported good quality public conveniences, and most of these facilities provided by the City of Lincoln Council would remain open, including those at Castle Square, the City bus station, and at Tentercroft Street.

Councillor Metcalfe referred to the legal duty on the Council to balance its budget and committed to keeping the level of public conveniences provided under review. If the Council's financial position were to improve, the Council would consider the re-opening of the full facilities at Westgate. There was a gap in the current provision in the City centre between the facilities at Castle Square and the bus station and ideally facilities could be located between these two, if premises were to become available and there was adequate financial provision for the revenue costs.

Councillor Metcalfe stated that the Council's financial position was a result of the policies of central government since 2010, with reductions on public spending. Since 2010, the budget for the City of Lincoln Council had been reduced by £8 million, which represented a significant sum for a district council. Furthermore, the Council was required to identify further budget reductions of £1.75 million over the next two years. The Covid-19 pandemic had led to a significant loss of income, which had put the Council in serious financial circumstances. Councillor Metcalfe referred to argument that the facilities at Westgate could be funded by savings from elsewhere, and stated that following eleven years of budget reductions every area of council expenditure had been scrutinised. Painful decisions had been made, for example the closure of the Drill Hall and the Council's reductions in staffing, and further painful decisions would need to be made again.

It was moved by Councillor Ric Metcalfe and seconded by Councillor Donald Nannestad that the petition be considered by the Select Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 28 July 2021. Councillor Metcalfe added that the Committee was due to consider a request for call in of a decision by the Executive on 24 June 2021 on overall public convenience provision. Councillor Metcalfe referred to the report considered by the Executive, which included details on consultation and alternative options.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Donald Nannestad referred to members of the public understanding the financial position of the Council and reiterated that if the Council's financial situation were to improve, consideration would be given to the full reopening of the Westgate facilities.

Councillor Mark Storer referred to the need to encourage people to come into to the City of which access to public conveniences was an important consideration for tourists.

On being put to the meeting, the motion set out above was declared carried.

RESOLVED that the petition be considered by the Select Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 28 July 2021, as part of the agenda item on request to Call-In the Public Conveniences Services Review.

12. Receive Any Questions under Council Procedure Rule 11 from Members of the Public and Provide Answers thereon

No questions had been received.

13. Receive Any Questions under Council Procedure Rule 12 from Members and Provide Answers thereon

Councillor Eddie Strengiel to Councillor Neil Murray, the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth

Question

Does the portfolio holder agree with me that all future developments should adhere to the ambitious environmental standards, as set out in the draft Central Lincolnshire Local Plan?

Reply

All planning applications were assessed against the national planning policy framework and the current development plan requirements, which for Lincoln was the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, which had been adopted in 2016. The plan was in the process of being renewed, and as it progressed further through the system, the draft policies within it could be used as a reference point by applicants. However, the key document remained the adopted plan until such time as a new local plan was formally adopted. Once the next iteration of the plan had been adopted, which would follow further public consultation and examination by the Planning Inspector; and formal adoption by the Central Lincolnshire Joint Planning Committee, this would become the benchmark for any future applications.

Supplementary

What was the expected date for the adoption of the new local plan? If approved, the Western Growth Corridor would not be required to adhere to the ambitious standards in the draft Local Plan. Therefore, what additional steps would the City Council take to ensure that this development, if approved, was as environmentally friendly as possible; and that the development as a whole would achieve net zero, as the Council had previously claimed to be targeting?

Reply

Councillor Neil Murray stated that the new local plan would be adopted in September 2022. As regards the Western Growth Corridor, it was not appropriate to discuss it, given the advice within the report not to enter into a discussion, as it was a live planning application, and any discussion could adversely affect the planning committee process.

Councillor David Clarkson to Councillor Ric Metcalfe, the Leader of the Council

Question

Following the Prime Minister's recent speech regarding devolution, ahead of the government white paper, can you outline your vision of devolution in Lincoln and in Lincolnshire?

Reply

Councillor Ric Metcalfe stated that it was encouraging to read the Prime Minister's and the Secretary of State's re-affirmation of their commitment to supporting strong local leadership and in turn the devolution of responsibilities to a local level.

Some members would recall that the City Council had voted in favour of a set of devolutionary powers from central government for Greater Lincolnshire in 2016/17. This would have included an annual dowry of £15 million over thirty years, along with other benefits. Unfortunately that devolution deal was not supported by the county council and one of the district councils, so after much grief and all work put into it, it came to nothing. However, the government appeared now to be in agreement that districts had a key role to play in devolution, so that it was not just about county councils and unitaries. This was welcomed.

The Council had always agreed with the notion of increasing local accountability, as there had been too much top-down form of government for many years across governments of various political control.

If there was an opportunity to have more influence to raise the aspirations of local communities, then the Council would certainly support moves on devolution.

Supplementary

Would the Leader of the Council ensure members were kept updated on progress with this matter, including any details of conversations with fellow council leaders across Lincolnshire?

Reply

Councillor Ric Metcalfe confirmed he would be happy to do so.

Councillor Tom Dyer to Councillor Ric Metcalfe, the Leader of the Council

Question

As part of Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee next year, there will be the creation of new lord mayoralties. As one of the three oldest mayoralties in the country, I believe we have a very strong case to advance and continue our proud tradition. Does the Leader believe that Lincoln has a strong case to become a lord mayoralty?

Reply

Councillor Ric Metcalfe confirmed this was something all could agree on. Lord mayor status was an exceptional status and was conferred on the mayoralty of cities, which were usually long established and had a long history. There were some specific guidelines that strongly advised against paying for lobbyists in order to make the case to government for lord mayor status.

Any application would require information in particular categories: distinct identity; civic pride; cultural infrastructure; interesting heritage; history and tradition;

vibrant and welcoming communities; a record of innovation; sound administration; some association with royalty; and any other distinctive features.

The initial assessment was that actually Lincoln excelled in every one of those categories. Based on what the government was seeking, this would form the basis of the case. Councillor Ric Metcalfe stated that there was an exceptional chance of success and he was given to understand that more than one award could be made on this occasion.

The Council would be liaising with partners across the city, various service areas, and various other stakeholders, to obtain widespread support. There had been discussions with the Lord Lieutenant and the Member of Parliament on this application.

Councillor Tom Dyer put on record the full support of the Conservative group to the making of an application.

14. Receive Reports under Council Procedure Rule 2 (vi) from Members

(a) Report by Councillor Chris Burke, Portfolio Holder for Customer Experience and Review

This item had been deferred to a later meeting of the Council.

(b) Report by Councillor Bob Bushell, Portfolio Holder for Remarkable Place

This item had been deferred to a later meeting of the Council.

(c) Report by Councillor Neil Murray, Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth

Councillor Neil Murray, Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, presented his report to the Council which summarised the work of his portfolio. Councillor Neil Murray thanked all employees of the City of Lincoln Council for their work during what had been a difficult year.

The Council was provided with an opportunity to ask questions, where the following points were noted:

- The Welcome Back Fund – It was confirmed the Council had bid for £180,000 to help the High Street and uphill area recover from the effects of Covid-19. As soon as it was clear what level of funding would be received by the Council, details would be shared on how this would be used.
- The Towns Fund and Levelling Up Fund – It was confirmed that the Planning Committee had granted permission for the transformation of the Lincoln Central Market and the adjacent city square area. The business case for the Lincoln Central Market was awaiting approval by the Investment Sub-Committee of the Lincoln Town Deal Board, which was expected in August 2021. It was anticipated that subject to this approval being granted, work could commence in early 2022.
- Western Growth Corridor and the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan – It was reiterated that this was a live planning application and the Council should avoid any discussions on the matter. However, it was commented that the City Council remained committed to implementing net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

- Lincoln Christmas Market 2021 – The plans for the Lincoln Christmas Market were in hand and it was hoped it would take place in 2021. Plans for the Lincoln Christmas Market would be continually reviewed in light of the changing Covid-19 pandemic; national guidance; local infection rates and in consultation with local emergency services.
- Total Business Grants during Covid-19 – It was confirmed that in total £64,000 had been paid to 64 wet led pubs at £1,000 per pub, under the Christmas support scheme. It was agreed that details of all of the grants paid between November 2020 and June 2021 and the total of the Government Business Support Grants paid so far would be emailed to Councillor David Clarkson, as this information was not clear in the report.
- Economic Growth – It was anticipated that the town deal funding would stimulate the local economy.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(d) Report by Councillor Jane Loffhagen, Chair of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee

This item had been deferred to a later meeting of the Council.

15. Amendment to Representatives on Outside Bodies

It was moved by Councillor Ric Metcalfe and seconded by Councillor Donald Nannestad that Simon Walters (Strategic Director, Communities and Environment) be appointed as the Council's representative on the Lincoln Cathedral Fabric Advisory Council for the current municipal year.

Councillor Eddie Strengiel highlighted that the opposition group had not been appointed to any of the outside bodies to which the Council made appointments, whereas other councils offered some of these appointments to opposition groups.

On being put to the meeting, the motion set out above was declared carried.

RESOLVED

That Simon Walters (Strategic Director, Communities and Environment) be appointed as the Council's representative on the Lincoln Cathedral Fabric Advisory Council for the current municipal year.