

REPORT TO PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 30 SEPTEMBER 2021.

**REPORT UNDER RULE 2(vi) OF THE COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES REPORT
BY COUNCILLOR NEIL MURRAY, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ECONOMIC
GROWTH**

RESPONDING TO THE PANDEMIC

As we emerge from the covid pandemic we need to consider what we have done to sustain the local economy and what our plans are to play our part in the recovery as we go forward. Given that I reported to council a few weeks ago this report will be a brief update as I do not intend to repeat myself.

RECOVERY PLAN

The city council stepped up to the plate in many areas through the crisis. For example our officers made sure government assistance got to local businesses quickly and efficiently to make sure Lincoln businesses were still standing as restrictions were lifted. Our staff showed the value of truly local government in society because they are Lincoln people who know our city best. Our recovery plan is based around a number of projects. We will do some of these on our own and some with partners and through the Towns Fund.

MAJOR PROJECTS

Our flagship major project is the transformation of the Central Market and the area adjacent to the market and the Witham. We are in the process of consultation and negotiation with stallholders with the aim of starting on site in the New Year.

This project is sorely needed as our market looks increasingly scruffy whilst the other buildings on Sincil Street look much more attractive. It is one of four projects which have been approved by the Town Deal board. The others are the Drill Hall, Lincoln City FC community hub and a feasibility study for development of land at Tentercroft Street. There are another nine projects which are being worked on and full business cases should be completed between October and January 2022.

Our officers are working with the county council on their Park ward project which will improve the area for residents through the introduction of the Residents Parking Scheme and measures to cut out rat runs through the area.

The football club project is at the heart of Park ward and it is good to see the club working with the football foundation to upgrade the club in general and to upgrade their education and community facilities as part of the project to improve the Stacey West stand.

Outside of the Towns Fund we have commissioned a feasibility study for the reconfiguring of the Hermit Street flats and building of new houses in the area. The project will transform the area and have a positive knock on effect on Portland Street.

I proposed at the recent Investors in Lincoln board meeting that we utilise unused sites off the East West link on Kesteven Street and Tentercroft Street for employment and residential uses. The sites have been left vacant since the completion of the road and would be a useful boost to employment and housing in the area, connecting the city centre with the north end of Park ward.

CULTURE .

The County council have finally agreed a way forward for the Usher Art Gallery and our collection of artefacts. So much time and effort wasted. Well done to the Save Lincoln Usher Gallery campaign in holding the county council to account.

PLANNING POLICY.

The Local Plan continues its steady progress and currently consultation responses are being collated and analysed. Over 1,000 representations have been made. A summary findings report will be taken to the next meeting of the Central Lincolnshire committee on 18th October.

The final draft plan should be ready between January and February next year for the final round of consultation before submission to the Planning Inspectorate for public examination.

After the cabinet reshuffle last week it now appears that the Mr Gove the new minister responsible for planning has decided to abandon the anti democratic planning policy proposals which would undermine local democracy in the planning process. This is an extremely important principle and is a welcome change from Mr Jenrick's notorious bias towards uncontrolled and unsustainable development.

CAR PARKING

Car parking is a key service in our city and an important source of vital revenue income in the ongoing Austerity era for local government. Our car parks have been filling up in the last few weeks but we are of course a long way from the pre pandemic numbers.

In the coming weeks we will see how the new world of mixing home working with days in the office or other workplace develops. This will of course impact on parking services and we will review the way it works.

Residents in the Sincil Bank part of Park ward voted for the introduction of the Residents Parking Scheme in their area some time ago. Covid has delayed work on the scheme but, hopefully, the scheme will finally be introduced early in 2022. Similarly residents in the Bailgate area are keen on the introduction of RPS in their part of the city. Consultation is under way and I am hoping the scheme finally be implemented early in 2022.

OUR VISITOR ECONOMY

We are looking forward to the 2021 Christmas Market and officers are working hard to make the event a success. People living in the area around the site will be invited to briefings with officers beforehand and the return of the market will signal a return to something more like normal just before Christmas.

The visitor economy has received a boost in recent months with the staycation phenomenon. The Christmas Market will be another shot in the arm after a difficult period. We are utilising ARG grant to support the Visit Lincoln team and to promote Lincoln and Lincolnshire as a visitor destination.

HERITAGE

Good progress has been made in the High Street Heritage Action Zone scheme (HSHAZ). The scheme is intended to improve buildings in the High Street area and is regeneration based and in our case links in with our regeneration agenda in Park ward.

St Mary's Guildhall. A very sensitive grade 1 listed building and Scheduled Ancient Monument. The building has now been fully surveyed and comprehensive repairs are scheduled to begin in December this year to bring the building back into public use and to protect it from the elements in future. This is a gem of a building which many people do not notice perhaps because of its location outside the historic core of the city.

Shop front scheme. Part of the HSHAZ project is the shop front scheme which offers grants to businesses to restore historic shop fronts in the High Street area. The first shop fronts to be improved are Lincolnshire Co-operative owned shops at 8 – 10 St Mary Street. We are talking to other shop owners in the central area and further down the lower High Street.

St Mary Le Wigford church. The Civic Trust carried out award winning works to the exterior of St Mary Le Wigford church around 50 years ago. Unsurprisingly this now looks pretty tired. To address this the outside area is going to be softened and greened with a grassed area and the existing trees checked to ensure they do not damage the fabric of the ancient building. The works will improve the whole of the outside area and there will be some boundary works to enclose the church property.

Barbican hotel. The Barbican was recently awarded Grade II listed building status. It has been neglected for some years but is well worth retaining and refurbishing. The listing enables various grant funding to be accessed recognising the heritage and aesthetic value of the building. Works on protecting the fabric of the building and refurbishing the various architectural features will start shortly.

Central market. The Central Market project is being part funded through the HSHAZ scheme as a vital part of the historic High Street area. The HSHAZ enabled us to get the project moving and the approval of the business plan was made recently by the Towns Fund board. The importance of this project cannot be overemphasised given the improvements made in the neighbouring part of Sincil Street.

Community Engagement. The final part of the HSHAZ project relates to community engagement. This is aimed primarily at the Lower High Street and proposals for activities are being worked up with the help of the Groundlab organisation.

Councillor Neil Murray

Executive member for Inclusive Economic Growth.