

Present: Councillor Jackie Kirk (*in the Chair*), Councillor Biff Bean, Councillor Bill Bilton, Councillor Alan Briggs, Councillor Bob Bushell, Councillor Liz Bushell, Councillor David Clarkson, Councillor Thomas Dyer, Councillor Matthew Fido, Councillor Gary Hewson, Councillor Rosanne Kirk, Councillor Jane Loffhagen, Councillor Rebecca Longbottom, Councillor Helena Mair, Councillor Bill Mara, Councillor Adrianna McNulty, Councillor Laura McWilliams, Councillor Ric Metcalfe, Councillor Neil Murray, Councillor Lucinda Preston, Councillor Christopher Reid, 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 Chris Burke, Councillor Sue Burke, Councillor Andy Kerry, Councillor Donald Nannestad and Councillor Naomi Twedde

23. Confirmation of Minutes - 21 September 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2021 be confirmed.

24. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

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

No questions had been submitted by members of the public.

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

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

Question

Has the City Council undertaken an analysis of what financial savings can be made if the Council were to follow the steps taken by East Lindsey District Council, Boston Borough Council and South Holland District Council and share officers and further services with our neighbouring districts?

Reply

Councillor Ric Metcalfe stated that the Council had not undertaken any analysis.

Supplementary

Councillor Tom Dyer stated that he was pleased with the response and expressed the hope that such conversations would not take place.

Reply

Councillor Ric Metcalfe stated that he was pleased that both he and Councillor Dyer were in agreement. Councillor Metcalfe continued by stating that since 2010 the Council had saved £10 million with minimal effect on front line services and there was more to do. The Council was already extremely efficient, delivering good value for money to its council tax payers.

Councillor Metcalfe stated that he would not comment on the merits of the particular partnership referred to in the question, except that running smaller rural authorities was very different from running a city of the size and the significance of Lincoln, where sharing senior management would not be effective.

Councillor Metcalfe added that the Council had some very long-standing and successful partnerships with its neighbours, for example the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee, which had produced and overseen the implementation of the Local Plan; and the joint revenues and benefits service with North Kesteven District Council and West Lindsey District Council, which had delivered savings of approximately £2.5 million over the past ten years.

Councillor Metcalfe confirmed that the Council would continue to consider any proposals for joint services on their merits.

Councillor Chris Reid to Councillor Bob Bushell, Portfolio Holder for Place

Question

As we approach the Christmas period and thankfully the uphill area has started to get busy again with visitors and people out doing their Christmas shopping, will the Council consider re-opening the Westgate toilets temporarily until after Christmas?

Reply

Councillor Bob Bushell stated in reply that owing to the financial restrictions on the Council, it had been necessary to close the Westgate facilities for general use, but they had remained open for people with disabilities.

Councillor Bushell added that when the city had events, which would create demand, such as the forthcoming Christmas market, the facilities would be open. Because of the Council's financial position, there was no plan to open them for an extended period.

Supplementary

Councillor Reid asked what the cost would be to the Council of opening the Westgate toilets for the period of December.

Reply

Councillor Bushell stated that he did not have the estimated costs of opening the toilets for the period of December. He reiterated that that they been closed because of financial constraints.

Councillor Mark Storer to Councillor Bob Bushell, Portfolio Holder for Place

Question

I was delighted to see uphill Lincoln so busy during the recent cycling event and despite the terrible weather, during the Lincoln 10k. Could Cllr Bushell tell me if the Westgate toilets were fully open to the public for both events?

Reply

Councillor Bushell replied that these two events had been organised by other organisations, not the City Council. In each case, the organisers had been offered to have the toilets open, and in each case they did not accept the offer.

The supplementary question was not permitted as it did not relate to the original question or answer provided.

Councillor Eddie Strenziel to Councillor Bob Bushell, Portfolio Holder for Place

Question

Does the portfolio holder agree with me, that given that the Birchwood / Hartsholme area has a population of a good-sized town, the area desperately needs more play parks and activities for young people?

Reply

Councillor Bob Bushell stated that the Council recognised the value of the provision of facilities for children and young people, but the Council was constrained financially, and most of what was being provided had resulted from section 106 funding, for example Whitton Park. Councillor Bushell confirmed that he would like to see more play areas across the city, in addition to the excellent ones already in place. However, these facilities required maintenance and at present this equated to £250k per annum. If the financial position of the Council were to improve, it might be possible to provide additional play area facilities in the future.

Councillor Bushell also stated that the return of youth workers to provide activities for young people in the evenings would be welcomed.

Supplementary

Councillor Strenziel referred to a play area, which had been developed by a certain organisation in the Staffordshire Crescent area, which had led to a reduction in anti-social behaviour, and asked whether the portfolio holder would agree that the provision of play areas and activities for young people would benefit the community in reducing anti-social behaviour.

Reply

Councillor Bushell replied that play areas were important in keeping young people active and diverting them from other activities, but this was not the whole answer. Councillor Bushell referred to Councillor Strengeil's role as a county councillor and asked whether in that role he could look into the increased provision of youth workers and youth clubs as a diversion for young people.

Councillor Dave Clarkson to Councillor Ric Metcalfe on behalf Councillor Donald Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Question

Can the portfolio holder provide a breakdown of how many buy-backs the Council has procured by each of the eleven electoral wards?

Reply

Councillor Metcalfe replied that by ward the number of buy-backs were: Park 10; Minster 15; Abbey 4; Carholme 0; Moorland 8; Boutham 1; Witham 2; Hartsholme 4; Birchwood 10; Castle 13; and Glebe 6. This made a total of 73 purchases.

Supplementary

Councillor Clarkson asked what the average cost was of restoring properties to the Council's standards following buy-back.

Reply

Councillor Metcalfe stated that the information on the average cost of restoration would be provided in a written answer and stressed the importance of bringing these properties to an appropriate standard, as they had often been neglected by the private rented sector. The purchase of these properties by the Council represented a good news story.

Councillor Matthew Fido to Councillor Ric Metcalfe, the Leader of the Council

Question

Following a previous Council question, can the Leader provide any further update regarding the City's bid for a Lord Mayoralty?

Reply

Councillor Metcalfe stated that the detailed application, which was nearing completion by a group of officers working through all the questions on the form, would be submitted before the deadline of 8 December 2021. The Council would be expecting a decision in February 2022, hopefully in the Council's favour.

Supplementary

Councillor Fido asked whether there was anything the Conservative Group on the Council could do to support the application.

Reply

Councillor Metcalfe welcomed the support of the Conservative Group.

Councillor Bill Mara to Councillor Bob Bushell, Portfolio Holder for Place

Question

Can the portfolio holder update the council regarding the recent disruption to waste collection services?

Reply

Councillor Bob Bushell stated in reply that there were some serious pressures on the Council's waste services currently. He referred to driver recruitment, which was a result of the national shortage of HGV drivers; Covid-19; and inconsiderate parking in some streets in Lincoln were all playing a part. The Council's contractors were taking mitigation measures to ensure a suitably skilled workforce remained available, but Covid-19 was, by its nature, less predictable, and the new variant was an example of this. Councillor Bushell advised that in the week prior to the meeting, a full crew had been made unavailable for green waste collections owing to a Covid-19 infection.

Councillor Bushell asked colleagues to support all residents, particularly during the Christmas period, by advising them that contractors were trying to maintain a service and catch up; for example, if a bin was not collected on its allocated day, it would likely be collected on the following day.

Supplementary

Councillor Mara queried what measures the Council was going to take pro-actively to ensure that residents were advised of the causes for the disruption, particularly as the increased number of phone calls to customer services was not a solution.

Reply

Councillor Bushell replied that all councillors needed to be better informed so that when they were contacted by residents about a missed bin collection they could advise residents to leave their bin out for collection on the following day, as crews were working to catch up. A great effort was being made to provide an excellent service in challenging circumstances. Councillor Bushell added the Council issued communication messages via social media and standard media.

Councillor Hilton Spratt to Councillor Bob Bushell, Portfolio Holder for Place

Question

What steps can the licensing department take to ensure venues take appropriate measures to protect against drink spiking?

Reply

Councillor Bob Bushell stated that this issue had been debated by the Performance Scrutiny Committee on 18 November 2021 and confirmed that drink spiking was a crime, and there was a multi-agency response, which was led by Lincolnshire Police.

Councillor Bushell referred to the Licensing Act 2003, which had public safety as one of its core objectives. If the Police were to identify that premises either had been negligent in its approach or where the premises had not been compliant with a licensing condition, the Police would work with the licensing team and, where appropriate, a licence review could be initiated.

Councillor Bushell added that the licensing team worked with venues more broadly through the *pub-watch* scheme and also directly with venues. The Council also took a co-ordinated and proactive approach by working with partners such as the Police, the licensing team, and Lincoln BIG to ensure that best practice was shared. The Council was aware of reports on social media on specific venues and the police continued to adopt a proactive approach with them.

Supplementary

Councillor Spratt asked whether the Police, or any other organisation within the multi-agency partnership, had raised any concerns on this issue within the community; and if so, whether the number of concerns recorded could be reported.

Reply

Councillor Bushell advised that it was likely the Police had been concerned about issues, for example as a result of postings on social media. Councillor Bushell stated that he would provide detail on the number of concerns raised and reiterated that the Police, the licensing team and other organisations worked directly with venues and through the monitoring of social media, to identify intelligence on this matter.

Councillor Alan Briggs to Councillor Bob Bushell, Portfolio Holder for Place

Question

A report to the County Council's Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee details that Lincolnshire's recycling rate is at 44.6%. Can the portfolio holder indicate what this figure is for the City of Lincoln?

Reply

Councillor Bushell advised that Lincolnshire's figure of 44.6% included dry waste recycling and materials recycled at household waste recycling centres. Lincoln's combined figure for the year to date, was 35.1%, a slight increase compared to last year. Councillor Bushell added that the figure of 35.1% could be improved, and the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership would recognise that. The Waste Partnership was making efforts to increase recycling for example by collecting the same type of materials in each bin in all Lincolnshire district councils, and trying to educate residents on what can be put in each bin.

Councillor Bushell also referred to a section 51 notice, which was likely to be received before 2024, enabling a separate paper and card collection, and possibly after that, separate collections of food waste. Currently these were voluntary initiatives, but it was likely that the Government might make these mandatory requirements.

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

(a) 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 had been set out on pages 19 – 25 of the agenda. Councillor Murray highlighted two schemes; firstly, the central market and city square transformation, with work expected to begin on site in January 2022; and secondly, the High Street historic action zone, which included St Mary's Guildhall and the Barbican / Albion Hotel.

Councillor Murray added that he had restarted visits to various organisations, which had included a visit to James Dawson UK, into which its parent company, Michelin, had recently invested £6 million, which represented great news. Councillor Murray had also visited Tom Blount, Executive Director of the Lincoln Science and Innovation Park, which had developed as the centre of Lincoln's hi-tech industry, on a site associated with Lincoln's engineering history. Finally, Councillor Murray referred to his visit to Bifranghi UK Lincoln, located on Spa Road, and highlighted the 32,000-tonne percussion screw press, which provided high specification metal forging.

Councillor Murray also reported that the Local Plan was currently subject to its consultation, with the next version of the plan due to be submitted to the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee in February 2022. The county council had not supported some of the ambitious proposals to address climate change in the plan and had remained committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2050. This contrasted with the City of Lincoln Council's ambition for carbon neutrality by 2030.

Councillor Murray also referred to the preparations for the Lincoln Christmas Market, which were set out on page 24 of his report.

The Council was provided with an opportunity to make comments and ask questions, where the following points were confirmed:

- Wage levels in the Social Care Sector – Wage levels were a key factor in recruiting and retaining adult social care staff, whether these levels were just above the level of the national minimum wage or set at around £12.50 per hour, this issue had not been completely addressed by the government's proposals.
- Labour Market – it was commented by a councillor that nationally recent reports had indicated that the long-term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the end of the job retention scheme had not led to a spike in unemployment and that many businesses were now struggling to recruit and retain staff.
- The Drill (formerly the Drill Hall) – a councillor was pleased to highlight that The Drill had recently opened, which was operated by Lincoln College.

- Fibre Broadband – it was highlighted that it had recently been reported that Lincoln was set to receive a full fibre boost as CityFibre had announced an investment of £21 million in a new city-wide network, which was welcome news for those areas of the City with less than adequate coverage.
- Lincoln Central Market – Compensation to Existing Stallholders – Existing stallholders had been offered both a reasonable level of compensation and advice on seeking alternative interim or long-term locations for their businesses. There was a proposal under consideration to charge stallholders in the refurbished market according to their turnover to provide a genuine mix of stalls.
- Lincoln Central Market - Overall Scheme - The plans for the Central Market demonstrated what the Council could achieve with a moderate level of government funding provided and this funding could not have been provided from the Council's own resources, given the constraints on its budget over the previous ten years. The plans included the transformation of City Square, and opening up the bricked up windows.
- Lincoln Central Market - Location of Market Stalls – Proposals were being explored for market stalls to be offered outside the Central Market, and interest in this would be generated by a successful Central Market.
- Lincoln Central Market - Unisex Public Toilets – It would be confirmed whether the plans for unisex toilets had been included in the consultation.
- Controlled Parking Zone – Vernon Street, Mill Lane, Princess Street and Foster Street – Implementation of the controlled parking zone by the county council had been delayed, although the residents had been balloted and were in support of its introduction. Implementation of the controlled parking zone was expected by Easter 2022 by the county council.
- Guildhall Winners – The Council commended the work of the Civic Team, with particular mention being given to the Mayor's Officer, for being recognised by Visit England as an organisation whose staff go the extra mile to welcome visitors.
- St Mary's Guildhall – Works would begin in December 2021.
- Parking Income Data – It was not possible to provide a reason for the increased rates of parking in September and October 2021, compared to the budget projections. It was requested that car parking data in future also included percentages to enable the reader to understand capacity.
- Lincoln Christmas Market 2021 – Expectations for a successful in-person Christmas Market for 2021 were reiterated, which would include a substantial improvement on the online Christmas Market which had taken place in 2020. The importance of people wearing face coverings and taking a lateral flow in advance of attending the Christmas Market were stressed, as infection control measures. It was confirmed that an analysis of the direct economic benefits of the Lincoln Christmas Market for Lincoln could be carried out. It was advised that the Council was not currently considering introducing a sponsor for the market.
- Anti-Social Behaviour on Lincoln High Street – A councillor raised concerns about anti-social behaviour on Lincoln High Street near the Guildhall and Stonebow, which was negatively affecting local businesses and visitors. Many of the people displaying anti-social behaviour on the High Street suffered from mental health issues, but primarily this was a matter for the Police and Councillor Murray undertook to raise the matter with the Police.
- Carbon Neutrality by 2030 – This remained the hope of the City of Lincoln Council and all councillors were asked to support this ambition.

- Levelling Up Fund Initiatives for Park Ward - It was not possible to explain the lack of support from the MP for Lincoln for the Levelling Up initiatives in Park Ward, including a railway bridge, which would connect the north end of Park Ward with the city centre.
- Council Car Parks – An explanation of the pricing policy for the Council's car parks included reference to the costs of the Council's car parks being significantly lower than the Council's main competitor. It was also highlighted that Lincoln Central Car Park had recently won an award. It was also recognised that income from parking services was essential contributor to the Council's budget.

The report was noted.

28. To Consider the Following Recommendations of the Executive and Committees of the Council

(a) Gambling Act 2005 Triennial Review of Statement of Licensing Policy

The Council considered a request from the Licensing Committee, which had met on 17 November 2021, following its triennial review of the statement of licensing policy.

It was moved by Councillor Loraine Woolley and seconded by Councillor Bill Bilton that the Statement of Principles Policy 2022-2025 under the Gambling Act 2005 be approved.

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

RESOLVED that the Statement of Principles Policy 2022-2025 under the Gaming Act 2005, as set out on pages 33 – 75 of the Council agenda, be approved.

(Note: Following consideration of this item, Councillor Gary Hewson left for the remainder of the meeting.)

(b) Members' Code of Conduct Update

The Council noted a report from the Monitoring Officer on a decision by the Hearing Sub-Committee on 10 October 2021 on a complaint in relation to the Members' Code of Conduct.

(c) Appointments of Chairs and Vice-Chairs and Committee Membership

A report on the appointment of chairs and vice-chairs to and on membership of certain committees had been submitted as page 83 of the agenda. A supplement to the report had been circulated.

It was moved by Councillor Ric Metcalfe and seconded by Councillor Neil Murray that:

- (1) Councillor Patrick Vaughan be appointed as the Vice-Chair of the Licensing Committee.
- (2) Councillor Patrick Vaughan be appointed as the Chair of the Performance Scrutiny Committee.
- (3) Councillor Lorraine Woolley be appointed as the Vice-Chair of the Performance Scrutiny Committee.

- (4) The appointment of Councillor Helena Mair to a vacancy on the Performance Scrutiny Committee be noted.
- (5) Councillor Patrick Vaughan be appointed as the Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee.
- (6) Councillor Lorraine Woolley be appointed as the Vice-Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee.
- (7) The appointment of Councillor Jane Loffhagen to a vacancy on the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee be noted.

An amendment was moved by Councillor Tom Dyer and seconded by Councillor Hilton Spratt, the effect of which was to delete "Councillor Patrick Vaughan" from (2) and (5) above and replace with "Councillor Christopher Reid".

Arguments in support of the amendment included:

- Opposition councillors were given roles chairing overview and scrutiny committees in other local authorities, such as the county council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.
- National reports and government guidance supported the practice of some of the overview and scrutiny chairing roles being held by opposition councillors, as a means of constructively holding the executive to account.

Arguments against the amendment included:

- The overview and scrutiny process at the City Council was apolitical and these committees were conducted in a constructive way by all members of overview and scrutiny committees. There have never been any questions raised over the independence of the Council's overview and scrutiny function, which was fully supported by all members of the Executive.
- Previous City Council administrations, when controlled by the current opposition, had not taken an approach of offering chairing roles to the opposition group.

On being put to the meeting, the amendment set out above was declared lost.

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

RESOLVED

- (1) That Councillor Patrick Vaughan be appointed as the Vice-Chair of the Licensing Committee.
- (2) That Councillor Patrick Vaughan be appointed as the Chair of the Performance Scrutiny Committee.
- (3) That Councillor Lorraine Woolley be appointed as the Vice-Chair of the Performance Scrutiny Committee.
- (4) That the appointment of Councillor Helena Mair to a vacancy on the Performance Scrutiny Committee be noted.
- (5) That Councillor Patrick Vaughan be appointed as the Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

- (6) That Councillor Lorraine Woolley be appointed as the Vice-Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee.
- (7) That the appointment of Councillor Jane Loffhagen to a vacancy on the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee be noted.