

REPORT UNDER RULE 2(vi) OF THE COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

Report by Councillor R Metcalfe – Portfolio Holder for ‘Our People and Resources’

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report provides an update on the Council's current progress towards our Vision 2025 strategic plan, together with updates on each of the service areas under my portfolio focusing on the past twelve months.

It is reassuring to see the city continue to recover from the impacts of the pandemic, and we are once again starting to see Lincoln thrive following a difficult period. However, we must not lose sight of the challenges which lie ahead and ensure these remain a key focus for the Council to ensure our residents continue to receive the best service possible.

Financial sustainability also continues to be challenging and there remains a current savings target of £1.5m on the General Fund, which the Council must deliver to ensure its sustainability.

2. THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

In this section I have outlined the key activities the Council has undertaken to support our people and our services during the past twelve months. Also provided is an update on the Council's strategic plan Vision 2025 and our progress so far towards meeting the Council's priorities.

2.1 Our People

Both Council staff and elected members have continued to rise to the challenges that have come along. The key to effective service delivery is a committed highly motivated workforce so ensuring our staff are well supported remains a key priority.

Throughout the past year Council staff have spent a large amount of time working from home. This approach has ensured our staff have been kept safe and has helped ensure service continuity. Following all restrictions being removed in early 2022, the council is now working on an integrated return to the office for staff.

A wide range of training & support measures have been implemented and these are detailed in paragraph 3.9 of this report.

Good customer care depends on good staff care

2.2 Our Services

We have seen our services continue to be delivered and the council have worked extremely hard to minimise the impact on our residents and businesses. Some key points to note include:

- Clear communication on how residents and businesses could access help and support has continued to be delivered on our website and social media. We have also continued to use video messaging to keep the information being communicated fresh and interesting
- Our Revenues and Benefits Team has continued to experience unprecedented levels of demand, which has been further impacted through the delivery of several additional schemes to assist residents and businesses through Covid-19 and beyond. However, the

team has continued to provide a significant level of support to our service users. Details of these additional schemes has been included in section 3.2 below.

- The hard work of our Welfare Support teams has ensured our residents have continued to receive essential welfare and benefits advice
- Our housing teams have continued to work hard throughout the year repairing void properties, dealing with maintenance issues, and collecting rent
- Customer Services has continued to maintain a safe way of working with those in most need of face-to-face help, whilst managing even more telephone calls than usual
- Following securing EU Welcome Back Funding, the Council and partners successfully delivered a programme of activity aimed at encouraging visitors and residents back into the city centre. Activities have included environmental improvements, initiatives to improve safety and the delivery of city centre events.
- To assist and support Lincoln's businesses in their recovery following the impacts of the pandemic, the Council's Corporate Health & Safety Team has continued to assist businesses to ensure they provide a safe environment for their employees and service users. This work has included providing advice on producing risk assessments, safe working practices and the determination of suitable Personal Protective Equipment
- The Council has continued to be a provider of apprenticeships in the city across the areas of Business Administration, Customer Service and Management. In addition, the Council continues to provide a successful craft apprenticeship scheme within HRS based at Hamilton House
- Events organised by the Civic Office have continued to take place throughout 2021/22.

2.3 Vision 2025

The Council's Vision 2025 strategic plan was adopted by Executive on 24th February 2020 just before the start of the pandemic. This new strategic plan built on the Council's Vision 2020 strategic plan and included a range of new projects, together the addition of one new priority focused on addressing the challenge of climate change.

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic many Vision 2025 projects had to be put on hold as we changed our focus to addressing the direct impacts of the pandemic and ensuring our residents and businesses received the support they needed during such a difficult time.

Within the past twelve months we have started to see services resume once again as we began to learn to live with the ongoing impacts of the pandemic. With the recommencement of services and the return to more normal working conditions, this provided us with the opportunity to turn our attention to restarting the process of delivering our strategic priorities.

Whilst delivery has been challenging, listed below are some of our key achievements under the Vision 2025 work programme delivered during the past 12 months -

- The Boultham Park and Boultham Park lake restoration projects have been completed, revitalising this great open space facility for all to enjoy, and importantly promoting and encourage our residents to get active and live healthy.
- Work to develop a new extra facility at De Wint Court has been completed, providing a great new facility to meet the changing care needs of individuals through the provision of on-site care support.

- Completed a range refurbishment work to Lincoln's Crematorium, including the construction of a new car park, road resurfacing outside the chapel and associated drainage works, together with the installation of two new cremators. In addition, a second chapel has now been built, which doubles the crematorium's capacity, enabling more tailored services of varying sizes to be offered on site. Improvement work to the roof of the Crematorium will commence shortly.
- Plans for the development of the Western Growth Corridor in the west of the city have been approved. The development will supply the city with 3,200 much needed new homes, a leisure village, industrial park and transport infrastructure.
- Working with partners we have made excellent progress in the Sincil Bank / Cornhill area with much improved public realm.
- We have commenced work on the renovation and repurposing of Lincoln Central Market, which will further support the public realm improvements already delivered in the Cornhill area.
- We have continued to raise awareness of Lincoln Community Lottery as a fund-raising tool and have so far raised over £150k for good causes located in and around the city.
- We now have over 100 local organisations signed up and accredited to the Council's Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter, each going above and beyond to support their employees and the local community.
- The Council has celebrated its successful second year of the High Street Heritage Action Zones programme, which has so far seen several key projects delivered aimed at preserving the heritage of the city centre and the surrounding area. Activity being delivered as part of this programme includes:
 - An ambitious cultural programme aimed at bringing culture to the high street and celebrating the unique and rich history and diversity of the area through vibrant and engaging open-air activities and events
 - Grants to repair and convert key historic buildings in the area
 - A community programme of events and activities for people to get involved in their local heritage, work together and learn new skills
 - Property improvement grants to restore and reinstate historic shopfronts and other architectural elements to enhance the unique character and appearance of the area
- Development of a residential scheme on land off Rookery Lane, which will deliver a mix of affordable two, three, and four-bedroom houses, two-bedroom bungalows and one-bedroom flats has now commenced.

In addition, details of service specific achievements contributing to Vision 2025 have been provided in section three of my report commencing on page 5.

The Council should be rightly proud with what we have collectively delivered under Vision 2025 to date, however, due to the financial and resource impacts of the pandemic, in early 2022 it was clear we would need to review our strategic plan to ensure the priorities and supporting projects continued to meet the needs, aims and ambitions for our great city.

As part of this process the Council launched a public consultation in January 2022 to understand which activities resident and businesses felt were of the greatest priority to them. 229 responses were received to the consultation.

Following this review, it was agreed there were no changes required to the Vision, the five priorities or the aspirations under each priority. However, the programmes have been reviewed to include more activity around residents' health.

The Vision 2025 Interim Review document can be accessed using the following link - <https://www.lincoln.gov.uk/downloads/file/1213/vision-2025-3-year-addendum>.

As a reminder the Council's five strategic priorities in Vision 2025 remain:

- Let's drive inclusive economic growth
- Let's reduce all kinds of inequality
- Let's deliver quality housing
- Let's enhance our remarkable place
- Let's address the challenge of climate change

I have provided further details on the projects we will look to commence in 2022/23 within the Future Challenges section of my report starting on page 19.

3. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2021/22 – Our People & Resources

3.1 Financial Sustainability

The financial landscape for local government continues to pose an unprecedented challenge to the Council.

This is set in the context of significant, inherent uncertainty with the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on income and expenditure assumptions and a lack of any form of clarity on future funding settlements from Government.

It is a long time since the Council had any medium-term certainty during budget setting, which makes financial planning in this climate extremely challenging.

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to cast a shadow on the Council's finances with budget pressures arising from demand for services, the availability of goods and services, escalating costs and ongoing, permanent, reductions in income. Coupled with the state of flux in the economy with soaring inflation, labour shortages, and supply chain issues the level of uncertainty has never been so high.

Alongside these service pressures, there continues to be a lack of clarity over whether and when each of the planned local government finance reforms will be implemented. These reforms, together, have the ability to fundamentally alter the course of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. Providing certainty on these issues would make a significant difference to the Council's financial planning and therefore the services it delivers.

In this current exceptionally difficult financial situation, faced with volatility, complexity and uncertainty, the Council's overriding financial strategy has been, and will continue to be, to drive down its net cost base to ensure it maintains a sound and sustainable financial position. The key mechanism for carrying out this strategy is through the Towards Financial Sustainability (TFS) Programme, which seeks to bring service costs in line with available funding.

Although there is a significant level of uncertainty about future funding, based on what is currently known, or can be reasonably assumed, there still remains a current savings target of £1.5m on the General Fund, which the Council must deliver to ensure its financial sustainability. Whilst this is a significant target for the Council to achieve, particularly in light of the annual revenue reductions of nearly £10m that have already been delivered over the last decade, considerable

progress has already been made with over 50% of the target already achieved. In the longer term the Council is seeking to deliver transformational changes as well as using its influence and direct investment, through Vision 2025, to create the right conditions for the City's economy to recover and once again grow, thus increasing tax bases and ensuring its financial sustainability. However, due to the short term need to close the budget gap the Council is left with little option but to revert to more traditional cost cutting measures in order to deliver the reductions required, this is an approach that will continue through 2022/23.

The Council will continue to build on its successful financial planning to date and will seek to protect the core services for the people of Lincoln, whilst at the same time allowing for significant investment in the City, and its economy, and driving forward Vision 2025. Adopting this approach will ensure that it carefully balances the allocation of resources to its vision and strategic priorities, whilst ensuring it maintains a sustainable financial position.

3.2 Revenues and Benefits Shared Service

Our Revenues and Benefits shared service with North Kesteven District Council continues to perform successfully and has now been in operation for over a decade, having formed in June 2011.

The last twelve months have presented several notable challenges to this service, which are outlined in more detail below.

As with many other Council services, the impacts of Covid-19 have been significant. Work undertaken by the Revenues Service has included:

- Collection and recovery of monies due to the Council
- Increased levels of Benefit and Council Tax Support claims
- Delivery of Test and Trace Support Payments
- Winter Grants Scheme payments
- Household Support Fund
- Discretionary Housing Payments
- Council Tax energy scheme

The above is in addition to being central to the assessment and delivery of grants and reliefs to qualifying businesses.

Service Performance

For the financial year 2021/22, the in-year collection was down by 0.78% compared to 2020/21. The impacts of Covid-19 on residents' income have continued, making collection of Council Tax a balance of the importance of collecting monies due in promptly whilst making repayment arrangement appropriate, so that undue financial hardship to taxpayers is avoided.

In terms of Business Rates, for the financial year 2021/22 the in-year collection for Lincoln was down by 0.52%. 2021/22 is not wholly comparable to 2020/21 due to a reduction in Expanded Retail Discount available to qualifying business - this relief reducing from £28m in 2020/21 to £9.5m in 2021/22, leaving more rates to be collected by the service.

As at the end of the financial year 2021/22, outstanding revenues documents stood at a total of 2,046. Although this figure is higher than the total figure at the end of 2020/21 (1,650), this is

because of significant demand on the Council Tax Team, with house moves increasing sharply, the ongoing impacts from Covid-19 during 2021/22 and unforeseen reductions in staffing resources at points during the year. At the end of October 2021, there were 3,367 outstanding Revenues documents awaiting to be processed, which demonstrates progress made in the second half of 2021/22.

The BID Levy year does not end until 30th June 2022 – an update can be provided after this date, although all indications are another extremely positive year of collection performance in this area.

Fraud

The team continues to deliver initiatives aimed at reducing fraud and error in the system through new and existing cross-departmental and national data-match exercises, and initiatives through the Lincolnshire Counter Fraud Partnership. Discussions are ongoing in respect of the possibility of a Council Tax Single Person Discount 'rolling review.'

A review of empty domestic properties has taken place in 2021/22, with 199 properties being identified as occupied through this review. The team is also part of the national Housing Benefit Award Accuracy Scheme, as well as the Verify Earnings and Pension Scheme, both of which result in correcting amendments to incomes used in assessment of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support. Identifying and remedying Business Rates potential 'avoidance' also continues to be a key aim for our shared service.

The team also continues to be actively involved in the national 'Friends Against Scams' scheme.

Welfare

Both the Welfare Reform Support Team and Welfare Teams within the shared service continued to receive extremely high levels of demand in 2021/22, with residents understandably needing support and advice more than ever. 6,848 (2020/21 was 5,806) Lincoln residents were given welfare/benefits advice and 134 (2020/21 was 102) money advice referrals were dealt with. Advice provided enabled £22,752 additional benefits entitlement per week, and lump sum awards totalling £299,193. Discretionary Housing Payments of £195,454 were awarded, also £1,045,500 was paid in Test and Trace Support Payments and through the Winter Grant Scheme, as well as £427,542 to residents through the Household Support Fund.

The shared service continues to deliver significant savings across the partnership, whilst continuing to provide vital and customer-focussed services to our residents and businesses.

3.3 Procurement

Whilst in previous years the financial situation meant that procurement was one of the areas where there is potential to generate savings, the impact of the pandemic, war in eastern Europe and Brexit have meant that we are now being faced with significant inflation increases which we cannot control. However, the Procurement Manager in conjunction with operational leads and finance colleagues will endeavour to help mitigate some of these increases by looking at various options in relation to procurement.

Significant procurement support has been provided within the last year to a number of the key strategic priorities including the regeneration of De Wint Court Extra Care facility, the Western Growth Corridor scheme, the Grey Friars Regeneration project, as well as a number of the priorities of Vision 2025.

The Procurement Manager as part of her duties continually reviews whether there are any potential spend areas and/or contracts, which could be renegotiated or procured in order to generate savings. At present there are no significant areas to report but when they do arise, these will be reviewed in more detail with the Operational Lead.

3.4 Property Services

The Facilities Management team, which includes the maintenance of City Hall, have continued throughout the last year to ensure that the building has been managed and operated in accordance with Covid-19 secure guidelines. This has of course lessened in recent months, however, there still remains some measures in place. Moving forward work is now commencing on how we can best utilise City Hall, with our changing working patterns reducing the demand for space. Part of this work will involve the co-location of other public services in City Hall. We already have a number of partner organisations in the City Hall, which was further boosted in March 2022 when the Citizens Advice Bureau relocated from Beaumont Manor.

The Facilities Management Team also cover the maintenance of the Council's corporate assets. This has now returned to pre Covid-19 levels with operational buildings back in use and repairs and maintenance requirements re-emerging. Some specific works undertaken in the last 12 months include: Lucy Tower multi-storey car park works, Hartsholme County Park Visitor Centre improvements, roof works at the Guildhall and rebuilding of the wall at St Nicholas Church. Work is now focussing on Yarborough Leisure Centre, the completion of works at the crematorium and High Bridge shops roof repairs.

The Estates and Surveying team's work continues to be impacted by the economic impact of Covid-19 with some leases not renewed, rent reductions sought and lease terms being re-negotiated. In addition, the team continues to provide professional and technical advice / support to many of the Council's key projects / developments including, Western Growth Corridor, housing sites (Rookery Lane, Queen Elizabeth Road) and Towns Fund schemes.

The team is also leading on two Vision 2025 schemes, the Re-Imaging Greyfriars project, which has just submitted its round two funding bid to the National Heritage Lottery Fund, and the options for 20/21 High Street and 404/42 Michaelgate (known as the Harlequin Project). Both of these schemes are being progressed in partnership with Heritage Trust Lincolnshire. Whilst significant progress has been made with Greyfriars, the Harlequin Project is still in its initial development phase, although Heritage Trust Lincolnshire has secured funding from the Architectural Heritage Fund to undertake improvement works to the Michaelgate properties to bring these back into use.

3.5 Emergency Planning

The Emergency Plan provides a framework for the control and co-ordination of a response to an emergency affecting the council and is usually refreshed annually. Our plan supports our duty under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to be prepared and work in partnership in the event of an emergency.

We work on an ongoing basis with the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum (LRF). The LRF is a multi-agency partnership made up of representatives from local public services, including the emergency services, local authorities, the NHS, and others. These agencies are known as Category 1 Responders.

Whilst the LRF is not a statutory body, but it is a statutory process made up of many different statutory bodies. This partnership is supported by Category 2 responders. They have a responsibility to co-operate and to share relevant information with the LRF. These responders include the Highways Agency, Public Utilities, British Red Cross, the MoD and the two Drainage Boards.

In an incident, everyone comes together to help the people of wherever the incident is by responding in a way that minimises the impact on the public, property, and environment of Lincolnshire.

For much of 2020 and 2021 we were in 'emergency response' mode due to the Covid 19 pandemic and officers have been part of the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum response to the pandemic. Response mode effectively means regular (daily or two or three times a week) multi-agency calls with the LRF at least at strategic and tactical level to respond to the emergency.

After coming out of the Covid 19 response in the middle of 2021 we then entered response mode again at the end of 2021 and over winter with the overlapping issues of the Omicron spike and the NHS winter pressures. Like many hospital trusts, United Lincolnshire Hospitals Trust was in its highest state of alert for an extended period of time in December 2021.

We have a full out of hours rota for strategic (gold) and tactical (silver) commanders for emergency planning purposes. Gold is staffed by the Chief Executive, Directors and Assistant Directors and silver predominantly by Service Managers. Training is ongoing for all new members of that rota.

During the last year, the City Centre Evacuation Plan has had a significant review. As the 2018 evacuation of the central bus station demonstrated, the complexities of having the bus and rail stations adjacent to a main arterial route and significant parking provision in a busy city centre with large retail, business, public sector and educational establishments, presented particular problems.

This plan is not prescriptive but provides a common framework for responders and relevant organisations to facilitate a co-ordinated and flexible multi-agency response in the event of any incident that requires the partial or full evacuation of Lincoln City Centre.

3.6 Business Continuity

Business Continuity Management is a framework that assists in the management of risks, which might impact the smooth running of the Council or the delivery of key services. These risks could be from the external environment (e.g., power outages, severe weather etc.) or from within an organisation (e.g., systems failure, loss of key staff). Well organised Business Continuity plans will facilitate the recovery of key business systems within agreed timescales whilst maintaining the Council's critical activities and the delivery of vital services to the public.

Business Continuity Management complements and interrelates with other corporate activities, notably risk management and emergency planning.

The Council's overarching business continuity plan is reviewed each year, although due to the Covid-19 pandemic this was not undertaken during 2020/21, however has been refreshed early in 2021/22. We also have 21 critical service area plans all of which undergo an annual review, led by the service area and supported by the Council's Emergency Planning Officer who is from the Joint Emergency Management Service at Lincolnshire County Council.

Again, due to the impact of the pandemic these annual reviews have not been undertaken during 2021/22. A full, comprehensive review of the overarching business continuity plan and all service plans will be undertaken later in 2022/23 to fully reflect any changes in how Council services operate, e.g., the additional resilience provided by the ability for staff to now work from home more easily.

The linkages between the Council's IT Disaster Recovery Plan and critical service area plans has resulted in this area being raised as an area of significant concern in the Annual Governance Statement. An action plan is however in place to address this with investment in the secondary ICT location at Hamilton House nearing completion, following which a new IT Disaster Recovery Plan will be developed and reflected in the critical service area plans.

The Council's Business Continuity Co-ordinator is the Chief Finance Officer who meets regularly with the Council's Emergency Planning Officer who sits on relevant internal meetings such as Safety Advisory Group and the Christmas Market Safety Advisory Group to provide necessary support and guidance.

3.7 Risk Management

The Council continues to develop and monitor key risks, those which could affect the Council's ability to achieve its priorities during the year. Elements of Risk Management are commissioned from Lincolnshire County Council's Assurance Lincolnshire service in order to provide the level of expertise that we require. The development and monitoring of the Council's strategic, operational and project risk registers, however, remains a role that is undertaken by the Council through the Corporate Management Team and Directorate Management Teams.

The Strategic Risk Register for 2021/22 was initially formulated by the Corporate Leadership Team in May 2021, and as part of the reporting protocol within the current Risk Management Strategy, both the Executive Committee and Performance Scrutiny Committee receive reports on the Strategic Risk Register to consider the status and movement of all strategic risks at that particular point in time. The initial Strategic Risk Register for 2021/22 contained 15 strategic risks. Since then, risks have been mitigated against with adequate controls put in place resulting in the current risk register now having 12 strategic risks.

Each Directorate identifies key risks within their service areas creating a Directorate Risk Register. These registers contain risks that are mainly of an operational nature.

An Internal Audit was undertaken during 2020/21 of the Council's risk management arrangements. The purpose of the audit was to determine how all aspects of the risk management framework were operating. It was concluded that there was substantial assurance that the Council had effective risk management arrangements in place.

3.8 Corporate Health & Safety

An ongoing Health & Safety Development Plan is in place and is prioritised according to risk. It is fully resourced and is approved and monitored by Health & Safety Champions Group.

Once again, the main focus last year has been to assist and support services during the pandemic, producing risk assessments, safe working practices and the determination of suitable PPE.

The review and improvement of the health and safety risk assessment register has been completed and a programme of rolling this new process out across all Directorates has already commenced and should be fully in place and internally audited by the end of Quarter 3.

Safety Assurance Team

The management of asbestos continues. Communal areas including tower blocks are being undertaken in house with external contractors being utilised for removals and surveys. All data relating to asbestos is uploaded to Asbestos Pro where it is securely stored. There have been no reported asbestos incidents.

The Building Safety Bill received Royal Assent on 28th April 22 and is likely to come into force this year. This will have an impact across City of Lincoln Council in areas such as resident engagement, increased check / inspections and producing a building safety case for each of the tower blocks.

All three high rise buildings have had intrusive fire risk assessments conducted to provide assurance and support further work relating to the Building Safety Act. Fire risk assessments continue across all communal areas in low rise purpose-built blocks of flats with reviews being undertaken annually.

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue asked us to conduct an exercise at Trent View. This is designed to test readiness in the event of any threat to the building & our tenants.

The Safety Advisory Team continue to work jointly with Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue to provide and produce updated information on high rise and sheltered schemes.

3.9 Human Resources (HR)

The Human Resources team continue to focus on employee mental and physical health and wellbeing.

“Looking after your teams mental health” training has been delivered to line managers. The training explores the concept of mental health and provides practical guidance to managers who are dealing with an employee who may be struggling with mental health issues.

Between July and September 2021, 129 employees participated in the Virgin Pulse Go Challenge, which focused on a range of health and wellbeing initiatives beyond physical activity including – weight management, reducing stress, mindfulness, improving sleep, managing finances and acting sustainably. The 2022 Virgin Pulse Go challenge is currently taking place.

In December 2021, the Council was successfully re-assessed by Employers for Carers for the Carers Charter Quality Award. The focus is that as an employer we are well placed to support and manage employees with (unpaid) caring responsibilities. The feedback was positive and particularly referenced that the policies and practices we had in place before the pandemic had been sufficiently robust to ensure that we were able to continue and adapt as an organisation to:

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- support unpaid carers in our workplace during lockdowns, restrictions and migrating to new ways of working (hybrid/agile)

- signpost and raise awareness to service users in our communities who have caring responsibilities of the various avenues of support they can access

Employee benefits have been reviewed, with a focus on a way to help with household expenses/cost of living crisis. This is ongoing with awareness/online seminar sessions set up as part of 'Our Financial Health Matters.' Pension awareness and Budget Management sessions are also being scoped for the rest of the year as part of 'Our Financial Health Matters.'

The Council has signed the national Workplace Menopause Pledge, which gives us access to a range of resources to raise awareness. This recognises and complements existing initiatives such as the successful Menopause Café.

The Council has recently commenced the roll out of a three-day leadership development programme, which has been tailored to support Team Leader development in leading and managing people as individuals and teams. The tailored workshops will help Team Leaders understand, apply, and embed relevant leadership and management skills. This will help increase self-awareness in relation to leadership attitudes, mind-sets and beliefs to enhance their leadership capabilities.

The sessions have been built around our new ways of working, managing remote teams and to support our delivery of Vision 2025. The course objectives include: -

- Performance management and feedback (including talent management)
- Increased confidence in people management
- Difficult conversations
- Building resilience
- Brilliant leadership (personal responsibility)
- Leading change
- Effective delegation
- Motivation and how to motivate and inspire others
- Positive team atmospheres
- Leadership styles and remote working

The Human Resources team continue to review the Human Resources policies to ensure clarity, harmonisation, and compliance with legislation. The reviews are incorporated within a timetable to ensure that all policies are checked at least every three years. The Trade Unions have been actively involved in these reviews. As part of each review, training continues to be provided for all staff who have supervisory duties.

The Human Resources team also continue to review and monitor all workforce data in accordance with the Equality and Diversity Action Plan.

3.10 Work Based Learning (WBL) - Apprenticeships

During October 2021, the Council was invited to re-apply on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers. The Work Based Learning team submitted a new application and during March 22 received confirmation that our application had been successful. This enables the Council to continue to support the delivery of apprenticeships.

The Work Based Learning team has continued to deliver apprenticeships as a supporting provider in partnership alongside main providers First College and LAGAT College. The team is proactive in support of the learners and is continually developing new ways of working to align with the post Covid-19 working landscape.

Our contribution to First College' Self-Assessment and Performance report was extremely positive in relation to supporting success rates.

The Work Based Learning team continue to deliver to all learners on programme across Business Administration, Customer Service and Management apprenticeships. The new apprenticeship standards continue to be delivered and our apprentices on the new final tests on End Point Assessment were successful and all achieved a distinction.

In December 2021 confirmation was received that we successfully continue to meet the criteria in relation to the Matrix Standard. This standard is the Department for Education's standard for ensuring the quality of the delivery of high-quality information, advice, and guidance (IAG). We continue to display the matrix quality mark as an accredited organisation to demonstrate that we offer high quality IAG services.

Our ethos remains to 'grow our own' and despite a decline in numbers on programme for the past academic year, several of our apprentices have secured permanent positions at the Council.

3.11 Craft Apprenticeship Scheme

Recently we have conditionally offered two apprenticeships, one in plumbing and one in electrical. They are due to start in late August 2022.

Working with the Unions we have also agreed a traineeship where once the apprentice has finished their apprenticeship, they can potentially move on to a 12-month traineeship, which aims to give the apprentice the experience of a full trades' person with the safety net of having supportive people around. For example, they could start doing jobs by themselves, have their own van, complete van checks and managing workload.

We will have three people on the trainee program and those trades are electrical, plumbing and plastering.

In addition, we have accepted several work experience requests which is a positive sign, with individuals hopefully feeding into the apprenticeship program.

3.12 Corporate Communications and Media Relations

Our communications team continues working hard to ensure our reputation is maintained and enhanced wherever possible. The past year has been spent working with partners to ensure community testing and vaccination communications are supported, key council projects and events are celebrated, and that the council's priorities are promoted.

Some of the major successes this year include:

- On Facebook, the number of people following the Council has risen by 27 per cent from mid-2021 with more than 9,800 people now following our corporate account.

- On twitter, there are almost 16,500 followers to our corporate account. A figure which puts us at seventh in the UK for councils with the greatest number of twitter followers per head of population.
- The reach of all our social media posts during the week of the Christmas Market was more than 2.5million. Twenty-three media interviews were arranged and conducted during the four-day market.
- The team led on communications in the De Wint Court development and ensured considerable coverage throughout its development through to completion.
- Positive promotion of the launch of the second chapel and significant investment into Lincoln crematorium was delivered by the team
- Helping form the Town Deal communications working group to give ongoing support for the city's Town Deal Board and its projects
- The recent appointment of two new members of staff to add significant skillset to the team, which includes event management, videography and broadcasting
- Supporting the Western Growth Corridor Planning application decision to ensure residents had a full understanding of why it was approved and the benefits the scheme will bring to the city
- Our two videos on Freedom of the City parades were shared around the country, reaching more than 40,000 people
- The team played a significant part in the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum's Warning and Informing group throughout the pandemic and beyond
- A selection of very well-received posters for City Hall, thanking staff for playing their part in helping the city through the pandemic have been produced
- The 2022 city elections, ensuring polling station changes were communicated well and the use of a large projection screen in the counting hall to provide live updates to count attendees
- The team played a major part in helping agree where the Welcome Back Fund is best used and promoting all events taking place in the city
- The team has launched a video In Brief bulletin for staff, to be issued fortnightly to all staff to keep them up to date with Council matters

3.13 Civic and International Partnerships

Guildhall:

The Council continues to work closely with Heritage Lincolnshire to develop tourism in the lower part of the city. As part of this work is progressing regarding the Posterngate and the possibility of combined tours with the Guildhall taking place.

Recently the Guildhall was recognised as the 'the best place to visit in Lincoln' by Travellers' ranking on Facebook. This is a great achievement and a further boost towards developing tourism in the lower part of the city.

The project with the University regarding the Charters is still on-going, and the first set of treated parchments have been returned to the Guildhall and put into a display.

Mayoralty:

2021 saw a 'unique' Mayor Making Ceremony in the Chapter House at the Cathedral in May. The Mayor and Civic party then successfully attended many events throughout their Mayoral Year following a period of attending very few events due to the pandemic. For 2022, the traditional Mayor Making Ceremony returned to the Guildhall in May.

Civic Events:

Civic events organised by the Civic Office continued to take place throughout 2021/22. Some of these events included the visit of the Lord Mayor of Bradford, Remembrance Service at the War Memorial and Christmas Lights Switch on.

International Partnerships:

Owing to the ongoing pandemic situation no visits have taken place, but the link with our five twin towns is still continuing.

3.14 Legal Services

The Legal Services team has continued to support the Council's Vision 2025 and strategic priorities by providing advice and representation to all service areas as well as members. The team's role in enforcement is ongoing, with some individuals exhibiting some very challenging behaviors necessitating liaising with the police and other third parties to try to find solutions, as well as instigating legal proceedings. The conveyancing work on the Rough Sleepers project, involvement in the provision of temporary accommodation and providing private housing advice means the team has been able to contribute further to the alleviation of homelessness in the city and improvements to housing generally.

There have been numerous cross department procurement exercises recently to ensure we can deliver both services and works / projects. The team continues to work on the regeneration of the city through the major projects and planning work, including the Western Growth Corridor and in the city centre, and supporting other areas helping the city's residents to recover after the pandemic, including the licensing regime and the provision of financial benefits.

4. KEY PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

4.1 Sickness Levels

Following decreasing levels of sickness in the Council during 2020/21, sickness levels throughout 2021/22 unfortunately saw an increase. This was primarily due high levels of Council staff being off work during the year due to Covid-19 related illnesses. With the majority of staff members continuing to work a mix of at home and in the office, with health and wellbeing initiatives aimed at supporting staff remaining available, and with the national Covid-19 picture improving, we are hopeful we will see a decreased level of sickness during 2022/23.

Cumulative sickness per FTE trends (excluding apprentices)

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2012/13	1.71	3.63	6.46	9.7
2013/14	2.68	5.18	7.69	10.78
2014/15	2.99	6.68	9.93	13.43
2015/16	3.01	5.7	8.6	11.63
2016/17	2.43	5.1	8.27	11.52
2017/18	3.11	6.34	9.84	13.62
2018/19	2.9	4.83	7.28	10.35
2019/20	2.42	5.07	7.75	10.49
2020/21	1.13	2.83	5.82	9.10
2021/22	2.92	6.32	10.51	13.80

The table below provides a breakdown of the top three reasons for sickness absence in the final quarter of 2021/22:

Directorate	Top Reasons Short Term absence	Top Reasons Long Term absence
CX	Covid-19 Operation Headache/Migraine. Stress / Depression (Personal)	Musculo Skeletal Nausea Cancer
DCE	Covid-19 Cold Eye; Ear; Nose; Mouth; Dental	Stress; Depression (Personal) Stomach; Liver; Kidney; Digestion Musculo Skeletal
DHI	Covid-19 Stress; Depression (Work Related) Stomach; Liver; Kidney; Digestion	Stress; Depression (Work Related) Chest Infection / Heart * Respiratory issue Heart; Blood Pressure; Circulation
DMD	None	None

4.2 Quarterly Performance Measures – Our People and Resources

The tables below are taken from the Performance Information Management System (PIMS) and show performance up to the end of Q4 2021/22 for my portfolio.

Within the latest data provided there are four performance statuses showing as below target. In all cases this is due to the ongoing impacts of the pandemic, and the impact this has had on our ability to maintain performance in these areas. An overview of these below target outturns, together with those outturns performing above target at year end have been provided below.

Below Target –

Work Based Learning – It has proven very difficult to maintain the same number of apprentices as a result of many services continuing to work from home or adopting a hybrid working approach. As a result, the number of apprentices due to complete their apprenticeships in 2021/22 was just six. Subsequently, just one delayed completion has had a much larger impact on the overall completion rate as can be seen in the latest performance outturn for measure WBL1. Looking ahead the focus within the team is on recruitment into the apprenticeship, and the team continues to work with service areas to identify opportunities. The cumulative number of apprentices year to date is 14.

Revenues and Benefits Shared Service – performance of this service has continued to be impacted significantly largely due to the volume of support schemes introduced, which have been administered by this service. A further insight into the work of this service and the ongoing impact of the pandemic has been provided above under the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service section of my report (page 6).

Above Target –

Accountancy – The average return rate on investment has seen three consecutive quarters of improvement, with the yearend 2021/22 outturn reaching 0.3%. The Bank of England base rate has increased driving this performance and we expect this trend to continue in future quarters. In addition, we also continue to outperform on measure ACC 2 – Average Interest rate on external borrowing for the 9th consecutive period.

Debtors and Creditors – At yearend, the average number of days taken by the Council to pay invoices was just 13 days, significantly outperforming the target of 30 days.

In addition to the key outturns above, we have also seen both Communications performance measures (COM 1 & 2) and Debtor and Creditor measures (DCT 1 & 2) perform with the target boundaries at year end, presenting acceptable performance.

For all measures the key is: Green = At or above target; Blue = Acceptable performance – results are within target boundaries; Red = Below target

Our People and Resources – quarterly performance measures as of Q4 2020/21

Service Area	Measure ID	Measure	High Or Low	Low Target	High Target	Previous Data Period	Previous Value	Current Quarter	Current Value	Unit	Status
Communications	COM 1	Percentage of media enquiries responded to within four working hours	High is good	70.00	85.00	Q3 - 21/22	76.00	Q4 - 21/22	73.00	%	A
Communications	COM 2	Number of proactive communications issued that help maintain or enhance our reputation	High is good	25	40	Q3 - 21/22	27	Q4 - 21/22	27	Number	A
Work Based Learning	WBL 1	Percentage of apprentices completing their qualification on time	High is good	92.00	95.00	Q3 - 21/22	0.00	Q4 - 21/22	83.00	%	R
Work Based Learning	WBL 2	Number of new starters on the apprenticeship scheme	N/A	Volumetric	Volumetric	Q3 - 21/22	3	Q4 - 21/22	5	Number	V
Work Based Learning	WBL 3	Percentage of apprentices moving into Education, Employment or Training	N/A	Volumetric	Volumetric	Q3 - 21/22	0.00	Q4 - 21/22	83.00	%	V
Accountancy	ACC 1	Average return on investment portfolio	High is good	0.12	0.18	Q3 - 21/22	0.14	Q4 - 21/22	0.30	%	G
Accountancy	ACC 2	Average interest rate on external borrowing	Low is good	4.75	3.75	Q3 - 21/22	3.10	Q4 - 21/22	3.02	%	G
Revenues Administration	REV 1	Council Tax - in year collection rate for Lincoln	High is good	95.00	96.75	Q3 - 21/22	75.82	Q4 - 21/22	94.00	%	R
Revenues Administration	REV 2	Business Rates - in year collection rate for Lincoln	High is good	98.50	98.89	Q3 - 21/22	84.11	Q4 - 21/22	98.45	%	R
Revenues Administration	REV 3	Number of outstanding customer changes in the Revenues team	Low is good	650	450	Q3 - 21/22	1,738	Q4 - 21/22	2,046	Number	R

Our people and resources – annual measures

Service Area	Measure ID	Measure	High Or Low	Low Target	High Target	Previous Data Period	Previous Value	Current Year	Current Value	Unit	Status
Debtors & Creditors	DCT 1	Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days	High is good	95.00	97.00	2020/21	98.92	2021/22	95.84	%	A
Debtors & Creditors	DCT 2	Percentage of invoices that have a Purchase Order completed	High is good	55.00	65.00	2020/21	45.40	2021/22	55.00	%	A
Debtors & Creditors	DCT 3	Average number of days to pay invoices	Low is good	27.00	30.00	2020/21	8.00	2021/22	13.00	Days	G

5. FUTURE CHALLENGES

Following the refresh of our Vision 2025 strategic plan, we will focus on progressing a wide range of projects over the year ahead. The key projects will include:

- Continuing to lead on the Western Growth Corridor site to provide 3,200 homes, with a range of neighbourhood service provision including a new primary school and a new Leisure Village with a range of commercial opportunities.
- We will seek to deliver key schemes identified within the Lincoln Transport Strategy. In addition, the Transport Taskforce will review all forms of movement in and around the city seeking to improve rail connectivity, increase rail passenger numbers, increase bus service frequency, and improve the cycle and walking paths across the city.
- We will develop an inclusive Growth Strategy to set out how we will address the economic inequalities within the city (e.g., low household income) as part of tackling the wider determinants of health.
- We will deliver a comprehensive parking strategy for Council operated car parks in the city, addressing numerous objectives for the work.
- Through the restoration of the grade II Lincoln Central Market and City Square, we will create a strong, sustainable indoor and outdoor market offer in Lincoln. This will create an anchor destination within the Cornhill Quarter, which will support high quality independent trading, promoting local produce and start-up retail and creative businesses.
- We will look to install further changing places toilets in the city.
- We will seek to progress the proposed development of Tentercroft Street, with the aim of connecting the emerging green corridor in Sincil Bank, along Tentercroft Street and right into the heart of the city.
- We will strive to become a Digital City through work with partners to implement smart digital networks, which will support business innovation as well as access to transport, healthcare and a range of other services.
- Building upon the support we already provide to start up and small businesses, we will continue to develop our workspaces and business premises offer so that businesses of all sizes and types can make Lincoln their home. Lincoln Science and Innovation Park, alongside BG Futures, Mosaic and Spark house will continue to drive partner collaboration in support of small businesses.
- We will develop a masterplan that will regenerate the Waterside East area of the city by maximising the waterside location and the easy cycle and walking routes.
- We will progress the Be Lincoln marketing campaign that promotes Lincoln as a visitor, business and educational destination.
- Work will continue to progress those projects we will undertake under the Towns Deal umbrella.
- We will finish a review of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan and ensure the guidance is updated so that ambitions of the city can be delivered.
- We will continue to deliver the Heritage Asset Programme which aims to maintain, protect and restore city centre shop fronts, historical buildings and heritage sites at risk.
- We will further promote our green spaces and leisure areas, the facilities available and the events taking place, with the aim of inspiring residents to lead a healthy lifestyle.

- We will endeavour to improve health outcomes for our residents through building strong partnerships with health, third sector and others with shared goals and ambitions.
- Working in partnership with our health colleagues we will seek to explore different models of health delivery relevant to our diverse population and demographics.
- We will promote the District Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the District contribution to improve health outcomes.
- We will look to reduce anti-social behaviour incidents in the city centre and thus improve the presentation of the city centre for residents and visitors alike.
- Following completion of our new extra care accommodation at De Wint Court, we will review our other supported housing stock to assess the ongoing needs of our tenants.
- To ensure the Council maximises the availability of affordable housing across the city and to meet our customers housing needs, we will work closely with the private sector to maximise the opportunities for access to private rented accommodation for those who have previously been unable to access this.
- Grant funding to be made available to address issues of poor insulation and heating within the private sector.
- We will introduce a new tier of licensing scheme to capture those properties falling below the HMO threshold.
- We are committed to plant even more trees than we had before in a range of suitable environments across the city over the next five years – not just to help tackle climate change but also to enhance our natural environment.
- Within Sincil Bank we will seek to:
 - create green spaces in the area,
 - create green corridors through the area,
 - introduce resident's parking (where supported by residents)
 - implement traffic re-modelling
- Working with partners, we will maximise the impact of current green spaces in the city centre through creative thinking. We will develop new ideas e.g., Green Walls, vertical gardens, re design of current spaces.
- Working with the Lincolnshire River Trust we will seek to create new wildlife sites in the city.
- We will work with our contracted partner to improve cleanliness and action innovative solutions whenever possible to improve effectiveness and efficiency. To achieve this we will:
 - seek to improve recycling rates
 - respond to government legislation affecting recycling waste, food waste, green waste
 - deliver the Lincoln element of the county waste management strategy in partnership with Lincolnshire County Council
- Produce in conjunction with Sport England and Active Lincolnshire an all-encompassing Leisure Strategy for the City.
- Implement the ten-year vision for Lincoln Christmas Market, which will involve introducing live cultural performances as we enhance the event to create a new ambience and atmosphere.
- We will develop a new model for supporting our cultural assets.
- We will develop a programme that builds creative talent in the city that underpins the economic vitality of the city centre and prepares the way for a cultural bid. This will ensure the city becomes recognised for a variety of high-quality festivals throughout the year, bringing trade to the local economy for residents and tourists alike.

- The Central Lincolnshire Sport and Leisure Strategy identifies a need for more leisure provision in the city. Working with partners we will identify how we can deliver a new Leisure Village of regional significance over the next five to ten years.
- We will work with partners on the Lincoln Climate Commission and deliver our Climate Action Plan.
- We will work with single use plastic free community leaders to ensure the Council stops using single-use plastics and will encourage our partners to do the same.
- We will run a strong communications campaign that seeks to better inform residents, visitors and businesses on how they can reduce their own carbon footprint.
- We will work to achieve 'Green' level Environmental Management Accreditation by 'Investors in the Environment.'
- We will work towards an Electric Vehicle fleet as part of the Council's contractor and asset programmes, which will include exploring options for the refuse fleet as part of the next contract renewal.
- We will identify key transformational projects and programmes which will include initiatives that directly and indirectly contribute to the climate change agenda.

I would like to express my appreciation of the officers who support me with the work of the Portfolio and to specifically say thank you to the following officers for their assistance in the preparation of this report:

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Portfolio Holder for People and Resources