

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

REPORT BY COUNCILLOR R METCALFE – PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ‘OUR PEOPLE AND RESOURCES’

Contents

1 - Introduction	1
2 - The Council's priorities	2
Our people	2
Our services	2
Vision 2025	3
3 - Key achievements in 2022/23 – Our People & Resources	5
Financial Sustainability	5
Revenues and Benefits Shared Service	6
Procurement	7
Property Services	7
Emergency Planning	8
Business Continuity	9
Risk Management	9
Corporate Health & Safety	10
Human Resources	11
Work Based Learning (WBL)	12
Craft Apprenticeship Scheme	13
Corporate Communications and Media Relations	14
Civic and International Partnerships	15
Legal Services	16
4 - Key performance summary	16
Sickness levels	16
Quarterly performance measures – Our People and Resources	17
5 - Looking ahead	21

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.

Over the past year it has been reassuring to see the city has continued to recover from the impacts of the pandemic. However, whilst this is extremely encouraging after a difficult time for all, we must not lose sight of the current challenges the city is now facing, such as those linked to the

cost of living crisis, and ensure these challenges remain a key focus for the Council. This will ensure our residents continue to receive the support they need and the best possible service from us.

These challenges and the need to provide additional support for our residents come at a time when the financial sustainability of the Council also continues to be challenging - the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-2028 sets out a need to deliver total annual revenue savings of £1.75m by 2026/27.

2 - The Council's priorities

In this section I have outlined the key activities the Council has undertaken to support our staff and Lincoln's residents during the past twelve months. Also provided is an update on the Council's strategic plan, Vision 2025.

Our people

Throughout the past year both Council staff and elected members have continued to go the extra mile to support Lincoln's residents. This has been at a time when demands on the Council have continued to rise, driven largely by the current cost of living challenges and the ongoing recovery of the city following the Covid-19 pandemic.

We have seen staff return to the office on a more routine basis, however, many continue to have the option to work in a hybrid style being based both at home and in the office, which has demonstrated the Council's flexibility towards meeting the needs of the business and our employees and has helped to further improve staff morale.

The key to effective service delivery has always been and will continue to be a highly committed and motivated workforce. It has also therefore been paramount that our staff have been well supported during this time. To ensure this has been the case a wide range of training & support measures have been implemented over the past 12 months. Details of these measures are provided in the Human Resources update of my report commencing on page 11.

Our services

In direct response to the challenges our residents have faced over the past year and continue to face, we have worked hard to ensure our services and the support we can offer has reached those in need. Some examples of this work are provided below:

- Our Revenues and Benefits Team has continued to experience significant levels of demand, which has further continued to be impacted through the delivery of several additional schemes to assist residents and businesses through Covid-19 and then into the cost of living challenges. However, the team has continued to provide a significant level of proactive and holistic support to our service users. Details of these additional schemes have been included in the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service update on pages 6 & 7 of my report.
- The hard work of our Welfare Support teams has ensured our residents have continued to receive prompt, essential welfare and benefits advice
- Across the Directorate for Housing and Investment, our housing teams have worked extremely hard maintaining Council homes to ensure they meet the decent homes standard, returning void properties back into use and collecting rent
- The Housing Solutions Team has continued to provide invaluable support to our residents who are homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless

- Our Housing and Planning teams have worked to deliver much needed new affordable homes in the city on Rookery Lane
- The Customer Services Team has managed an increasing number of telephone calls and e-mail enquiries as residents seek advice and support from the Council
- The Council's Communication Team has provided clear guidance to residents and businesses on how they can access help and support. This communication has primarily been via our website and social media channels and has included the use of videos and a range of other media types to help effectively engage with our customers.
- The Council has continued to be a provider of apprenticeships. These apprenticeships have been across the areas of Business Administration, Customer Service, Team Leading and Management delivered by the Work Based Learning Team, together with Craft apprenticeships delivered by the Housing Repairs Service.

Vision 2025

The Council's Vision 2025 strategic plan was adopted by Executive on 24th February 2020. Due to the pandemic the delivery of this plan was put on hold as the duties of many of our employees were reprioritised to provide emergency support to our residents and businesses. Work on the delivery of this plan recommenced in 2022 in line with the recommencement of services and the return to more normal working conditions.

Whilst delivery of this plan has continued to be challenging as a result of the financial and resource pressures being faced by the Council, listed below are some of the key Vision 2025 projects progressed over the past 12 months -

- Plans for the development of the Western Growth Corridor in the west of the city have continued to be progressed following receiving formal planning approval in 2022. The development will supply the city with 3,200 much needed new homes, a leisure village, industrial park, and transport infrastructure. Development work is expected to commence on site in 2023.
- The renovation and repurposing of Lincoln Central Market has continued. When complete this facility will provide a strong, sustainable indoor and outdoor market offer in Lincoln.
- Development of a residential scheme on land off Rookery Lane has been completed. The successful completion of the development has delivered a mix of affordable two, three, and four-bedroom houses, two-bedroom bungalows and one-bedroom flats.
- The Heritage Action Zone regeneration work has continued. The programme aims to maintain, protect and restore city centre shop fronts, historical buildings and heritage sites at risk, together with a public engagement strand based around cultural activity
- Delivered the Lincoln Good Design awards, celebrating great architectural design in planning applications received over the last two years
- Significant progress has been made with the re-imaging of Greyfriars, which was successful in securing its round two funding bid from the National Heritage Lottery Fund of £1.952m in October 2022
- Working in partnership with the Council, Heritage Trust Lincolnshire has secured funding for the Harlequin Project from the Architectural Heritage Fund, which will bring the Michaelgate properties, as the first part of this project back into use, with works anticipated to start later in 2023.
- Progress has continued on the Digital City agenda, which aims to see Lincoln becoming a smart place that is truly digitally enabled - having smart digital networks will support business innovation as well as access to transport, healthcare and a range of other services.
- Development of our workspaces and business premises offer has progressed helping to ensure businesses of all sizes and types can make Lincoln their home.

- Projects being delivered under the Town Deals work programme have continued to be progressed, such as improved transport schemes in the Sincil Bank area of the city.
- We have continued to deliver the Sincil Bank revitalisation project with the aim of making the area a better place for people to live and work.
- A review of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan has been undertaken, which sets out where and how the city is going to develop over the next 20 years
- Work to promote our green spaces and leisure areas has continued with the aim of inspiring residents to lead a healthy lifestyle.
- The Council has commenced work on the creation of Hope Wood on Council-owned land. The aim of the project is to enhance the existing biodiversity of the area through thoughtful planting of thousands of trees and shrubs. Upon completion of the works, the area will be an accessible space for residents and visitors to enjoy for years to come.
- Completed works on the regeneration of Boultham Park lake followed by an extensive community involvement scheme to encourage local people to become actively involved in the park
- Completed major construction work to the dam wall in Hartsholme Country park
- Undertaken further work to develop a cultural partnership for the city, which will lead to a new events and festivals strategy for Lincoln
- Supported work to create Bio havens on the Brayford, and have since commenced a project assessing how more greenery can be introduced into the city centre
- Work has commenced on the development of a District Health and Wellbeing Strategy focused on improving the health of residents across the district.
- Grant funding has been made available to address issues of poor insulation and heating within the private sector.
- Following securing Safer Street funding the Council has upgraded its CCTV server room and installed a total of 34 CCTV cameras in Abbey, Carholme, Castle and Park wards. This has help provide safer routes for visitors, residents and students who choose to walk home after a night out in the city centre.
- Following completion of the De Wint Court supported housing development, a review of our other supported housing stock within the city has commenced. The review aims to assess the ongoing needs of our tenants alongside our Council housing stock
- We have continued to deliver a campaign which encourages Private Sector landlords in the city to sign up to the Trusted Landlord Scheme
- We have worked with partners on the Lincoln Climate Commission to develop a Climate Action Plan. This follows City of Lincoln Council being the second council in Lincolnshire to declare a climate emergency
- The Council has achieved 'Green' level Environmental Management Accreditation by 'Investors in the Environment'.

In addition to the key achievements above, details of other service specific achievements contributing to Vision 2025 and linked to my portfolio are provided in the next section of my report titled Key achievements in 2022/23 – Our People & Resources.

With the Council continuing to face increasing demands and pressures to mitigate the challenges our residents, businesses and the Council itself is facing, our staff and elected members should be extremely proud of the progress that has been made on Vision 2025 to date and the high standard of services and support which has continued to be provided to our residents during such a challenging time.

3 - Key achievements in 2022/23 – Our People & Resources

Financial Sustainability

Much has changed over the last twelve months, with spiralling inflation pushing up the cost of delivering services, soaring energy prices and the rising costs of pay for our own staff, adding significant cost pressures to the Council's budgets. These are in the main caused by national issues, which are beyond our control and that are impacting all councils.

In addition, we are facing growing demands for some of our key services as those more vulnerable in the city look to the Council for support as the cost of living crisis makes it harder for local people to make ends meet.

These new financial challenges come at a time when the Council is still recovering from the lasting impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and after facing a decade of reductions in central government funding.

These unforeseen and unavoidable new financial pressures are not temporary spikes that will fall away as the economy improves, they represent ongoing increases in Council's net cost base and will only widen the gap between our income and expenditure.

There also remains continued uncertainty around future levels of government funding, with some key changes to how the overall pot of funding for local government is apportioned to each council still to be implemented, and with no clear date of when this will happen. It is anticipated that these changes will have a damaging impact on our resources reducing the amount of business rates we keep and the levels of government grants we receive.

We also know that there is a large national budget deficit that has arisen as a result of the financial measures the Government implemented during the pandemic and more recently in response to the cost-of-living crisis. This deficit will need to be addressed and will likely further impact on the funding available to councils in future years.

In response to the financial challenges that all councils are facing, the government has provided some short-term increases in funding to help deal with inflationary and other cost pressures they face. This comes along with an expectation that council tax will also need to increase in order to help fund the pressures. This leaves councils with a difficult choice between increasing council tax on hard-pressed households during a cost-of-living crisis and potentially having to reduce vital front-line services.

As a result of this time-limited increase in funding and due to a delay in the implementation of key changes in the distribution of funding to councils, we were able to approve a budget for 2023/24 without needing to increase the existing level of savings. However, there still remains underlying and existing financial pressures, with the Council continuing to face significant challenges in balancing future years budgets. The Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-2028 sets out a need to deliver total annual revenue savings of £1.75m by 2026/27.

In this current difficult financial situation, our financial strategy has been, and will continue to be, to ensure we maintain a sound and sustainable financial position. The key way to do this is by bringing our service costs in line with available funding, through changing the way in which we deliver services, and ultimately the range and scale of services we can continue to deliver. Alongside this, we will continue to use our influence and direct investment to create the right

conditions for Lincoln's economy to recover and grow, leading to increased revenue streams in the longer term.

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 prioritising resources for investment in the City, and its economy, and driving forward Vision 2025.

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 twelve years, having formed in June 2011.

The last twelve months have presented a number of resource-intensive 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, which has then been compounded by the well-documented national and local cost of living challenges. Work undertaken by the Revenues and Benefits Service has included:

- Collection and recovery of monies due to the Council
- High levels of Benefit and Council Tax Support claims and correspondence
- Household Support Fund (several rounds of this fund)
- Discretionary Housing Payments
- Council Tax energy Rebate scheme
- Covid Additional Relief Fund (to businesses)
- Expanded Retail Discount (to businesses)

Service performance

For the financial year 2022/23, the in-year collection was up by 0.15% compared to 2021/22. Although performance has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels of collection, to increase both in-year collection rates is a positive achievement in light of the significant impacts of the cost of living challenges. Collection of Council Tax is a fine balance of collecting vital monies due promptly whilst making repayment arrangements as appropriate, so that undue financial hardship to taxpayers is avoided.

In terms of Business Rates, for the financial year 2022/23 the in-year collection for Lincoln is up by 0.74%. It should be noted that performance in financial years since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic is not wholly comparable 'like for like' due to differing levels of discounts / reliefs available, however, the high level of in-year collection is positive particularly in light of the economic climate and significant challenges for businesses over the last three years.

As at the end of the financial year 2022/23, outstanding Revenues documents stood at a total of 637. This figure is significantly lower than at the end of 2021/22 (total 2,045), with progress being made in the latter half of 2022/23 due to a number of reasons, including recruiting to vacant positions and the reallocation of resources to 'core' Revenues work following delivery of the Council Tax energy Rebate scheme. However, there are again currently vacant positions on this team – it is hoped these are recruited to as soon as possible to help curb the rising level of outstanding work in 2023/24 so far. To give some context as to the workload of the Revenues Team, for the Council Tax Administration Team alone (covering Lincoln and North Kesteven); in 2022/23 21,473 items of Council Tax post were received, as well as 44,846 telephone calls taken.

In-year collection for the Lincoln BID Levy for the year ended 30th June 2022 was 97.37%, which was 5.68% higher than for the year ended 30th June 2021. This signifies another positive collection, particularly bearing in mind 2021/22 was another tough year for businesses due to the national economic climate and impacts of Covid-19.

Welfare

Both the Welfare Reform Support Team and Welfare Teams within the shared service continued to receive extremely high levels of demand in 2022/23, with residents understandably needing support and advice more than ever – particularly in light of increased living costs. 7,637 (2021/22 was 6,848) Lincoln residents were given welfare / benefits advice and 127 (2021/22 was 134) money advice referrals were dealt with. Advice provided enabled £28,257 additional benefits entitlement per week, and lump sum awards totalling £299,598. Discretionary Housing Payments of £140,608 were awarded, over £6 million in Council Tax energy Rebate, as well as £619,820 to residents through the Household Support Fund.

The shared service continues to deliver significant savings across the partnership, whilst continuing to provide vital, tailored customer-focussed services to our residents and businesses, working closely with partners, such as foodbanks, Community Grocery, Department for Work and Pensions, Citizens Advice and Age UK.

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 Housing IT provision and procurement of the Grounds Maintenance, Street Cleaning & Waste Collection provision, 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.

Property Services

The Property Services Team comprise of the Facilities Management Team and the Estates and Surveying Team, which cover all of the Council's corporate assets.

In terms of the maintenance of the Council's corporate assets, the Facilities Management Team has continued to deliver a programme of responsive and cyclical repairs and maintenance to the Council's assets of over £550k. In addition to this, capital investment works have also been undertaken during the year, the most significant of which was the refurbishment of the Yarborough Leisure Centre pool hall ceiling and associated mechanical and electrical installations, allowing the pool to be reopened to the public in January 2023. Other capital works have also taken place

in completing the refurbishment of the crematorium, repairs to multi-storey car parks, internal redecoration of the Guildhall and terracing works at the Grandstand.

The Estates and Surveying Team have continued to provide a strategic and operational property and land management service, including lettings of investment properties, property reviews, valuations and disposals.

The team is also leading on two Vision 2025 schemes: the Re-Imaging Greyfriars project, which was successful in securing its round two funding bid from the National Heritage Lottery Fund of £1.952m in October 2022. This funding forms part of the overall project to invest £3m to bring this unique heritage asset back into use. Work is now underway in procuring a contractor with an anticipated start on site in early 2024. The second scheme is in relation to developing 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, with works anticipated to start later in 2023.

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, 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.

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. Refresher training is under way for all of those staff on those rotas.

During the last year officers have been involved in two large emergency planning exercises – FloodEX and Exercise Mighty Oak. FloodEX was an exercise for 20 Local Resilience Forums along the East Coast and the River Trent focussed on a significant flooding event. Mighty oak was a Lincolnshire event based around a national power outage. Learning from both of these will feed into our emergency and business continuity plans.

Over the last year the LRF have rebranded and have commenced a number of projects that we are involved with to make their work more visible and accessible to the general public and businesses in the county.

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 on annual basis, with the last significant refresh undertaken in 2021 to reflect the new operating arrangements post Covid-19. The annual review in 2022 was not undertaken, however, this is scheduled for 2023. We also have 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. The services which form this critical service list have been reviewed during 2022/23, with the removal of some services from the list and the addition of others.

Now that the Council's IT Disaster Recovery Plan has been drafted, the focus of the review of critical service area plans in 2023/24 will be to ensure that these align with the IT Disaster Recovery Plan and to develop a programme for desktop exercises to test the plans. In addition the reviews will take into consideration any learning from the recent national exercise, Operation Mighty Oak, which focussed on power outages.

Risk Management

The Council continues to develop and monitor key risks, which are 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 City of Lincoln Council through the Corporate Management Team and Directorate Management Teams.

The Strategic Risk Register for 2022/23 was initially formulated by the Corporate Leadership Team in April 2022, 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 2022/23 contained 12 strategic risks. Since then, risks have been mitigated against with adequate controls put in place resulting in some positive movements in the risk scores. In addition there has been 1 new risk that has emerged during the year, and as at the end of quarter 4 there are now 13 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. A review of the Risk Management strategy and toolkit is scheduled for 2023/24 followed by a training programme for both officers and members.

Corporate Health & Safety

A comprehensive two year rolling Health & Safety Development Plan is in place and is prioritised according to risk. It is fully resourced and is approved and monitored by the Health & Safety Champions Group.

The main focus for the Corporate Health & Safety Team over the last year has been on launching the online risk assessment system, which has been rolled out across all Departments and now holds over 300 risk assessments on a central register with automatic reminders to the risk owners to manage the risk assessments relevant to the work activities of each service area. This is a significant improvement to the council's health and safety management system and provides increased assurance that that health and safety risks are being managed.

The Health & Safety Hub is now fully functional on the intranet and provides health, safety and welfare information to managers and employees. Health & Safety E Learning courses have also been developed and there are more than 20 different topics available for staff to be trained inhouse.

Personal safety continues to be an ongoing priority and the Council has a responsibility to protect lone workers who are potentially exposed to conflicting situations such as unacceptable behaviour during their work. In 2022 around 280 employees were issued with new up to date technology Reliance personal safety devices and were trained in the use and management of the devices.

Safety Assurance Team

There have been several staffing changes to the Safety Assurance Team in the last 12 months, with a couple of vacancies at present.

The management of asbestos in the Housing stock continues to be managed through the team. The asbestos management software 'Asbestos Pro' is being used to store data relating to asbestos and is accessible to operatives and contractors to interrogate prior to undertaking works.

Re-inspections of Asbestos Insulating Board (AIB) across the Housing stock and Asbestos Containing Materials (ACM) within communal areas, including tower blocks, are being undertaken in house with external contractors being utilised for further surveying and any removals.

A dedicated Fire Risk Assessor has been engaged to undertake the Fire Risk Assessments to the communal areas in low rise purpose-built blocks of flats with good progress being made.

With the implementation of the Building Safety Act and the requirement for the high rise tower blocks to be registered with the building safety regulator and have a building safety case produced, work continues to ensure the deadlines are met.

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue have conducted fire safety audits at the three high rise tower blocks and undertaken an exercise at Jarvis House. This is designed to test readiness and procedures in the event of any threat to the building and our tenants.

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

Human Resources

Health and Wellbeing

The Human Resources Team has continued to focus on employee mental and physical health & wellbeing over the past 12 months. To support this area of work, the team is a member of the Lincolnshire Wellbeing Network where representatives from the different local authorities in Lincolnshire can share ideas and best practice.

Several health and wellbeing topics have been shared over the past 12 months to raise awareness to employees of support available. These include:-

- Financial wellbeing
- Menopause awareness month
- Men's health month / Movember
- Knowing your numbers
- Stress awareness
- Looking after your mental health in Winter
- Time to talk day
- World sleep day
- HAY Lincolnshire website
- Mental Health Awareness weeks

The Council's Mindful Employer Charter status has been successfully renewed this year. This process reviewed the Council's commitment to the Charter for Employers who are Positive about Mental Health. Of particular note during the review was the Council's commitment, training and work in supporting employee wellbeing, with some positive examples including -

- the Council's promotion of the Mindful Employer initiative to employees and job applicants by way of our website, staff intranet pages (the Hub), recruitment page and e-mail signatories
- the Council's training on mental health awareness specific to line managers
- good practice in supporting employee wellbeing including the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), Mental Health First Aiders, mental health awareness resources and a wellbeing strategy

Between June and October 2022, 166 employees took part in the Virgin Pulse Go Challenge, which is a holistic wellbeing platform aimed at driving improved health and wellbeing behaviours and habits. Outcomes aimed for are greater health awareness, behaviour changes for sustained health / wellbeing habits and improved overall health. Participation saw incremental improvements in participants daily behaviours to promote better health with overall positive results.

Leadership Development

The leadership development three day programme has continued over the past year with aspiring Team Leaders being the next cohort to attend. The feedback has been very positive from participants.

Staff Engagement

A staff survey was carried out between 16th May 2022 and 15th June 2022. All employees were eligible to complete the survey through an online form, with 55% of employees taking part.

The themes included in the survey were –

- Job effectiveness
- Employee contribution, performance and reward
- Council culture
- Services provided by the Council
- Equality and diversity
- Health and wellbeing
- Communication

Following the survey an action plan has been developed, which is monitored through the Organisational Development Board.

Policies and Procedures

The Human Resources Team continue to review Human Resources owned policies to ensure clarity, best practice, and compliance with legislation. The reviews are incorporated within a timetable to ensure that all policies are checked at least every three years. 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.

Fostering Friendly Employer

The Council has been approved as a Fostering Friendly Employer meaning the Council supports and recognises the roles of our employees who foster. The Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave policy has been updated to include a section which offers additional leave of up to five days for those applying to become foster carers or those who have a foster child in placement.

Work Based Learning (WBL)

Over the past 12 months 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 the support of learners and continually receives positive feedback and good success rates.

In December 2022 confirmation was received that the team successfully continue to meet the criteria in relation to the Matrix Standard. This standard was also demonstrated through the challenges of the pandemic. The standard is the Department for Education's standard for ensuring the delivery of high-quality information, advice, and guidance (IAG). Feedback received was extremely positive with many of our strengths observed including:-

- the strong value of communication at all levels

- professionalism, training, and delivery
- enrichment activities
- the involvement of workplace supervisors from recruitment through to the celebration of achievement and success
- review processes
- career support
- our holistic approach
- the ability to adapt and support and how we consistently reinforce our objectives, outcomes, and values.

The Council continues to display the matrix quality mark as an accredited organisation to demonstrate that we offer high quality IAG services.

During February / March 2023 the team were subject to an Ofsted inspection as a subcontractor for First College. The inspection was conducted under the new Education Inspection Framework and was a 'Full Inspection'.

The team is extremely proud that First College has sustained its status as a 'Good' provider. This is an excellent result which clearly underpins the commitment of the Work Based Learning Team in the delivery of high-quality learning and in the care and support of our learners; none of which would be achieved without the commitment and support of all our learners and First College.

The Work Based Learning Team continue to deliver to all learners on programme across Business Administration, Customer Service, Team Leading 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.

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.

Craft Apprenticeship Scheme

The Housing Repairs Service currently has two craft apprentices who are approaching the end of their first year. The apprentices are working in the areas of electrical and plumbing. Positive feedback has been received from both of these apprentices with the regard to the scheme. This is really encouraging and helps to demonstrate the value of these opportunities being made available by the Council.

Due to the uncertainty during the pandemic, the Housing Repairs Service looked at developing internal staff members along with working with the unions to create trainee opportunities, particularly around difficult-to-employ trades. These opportunities have enabled one staff member to train as a plasterer and also enabled the team to take on a full-time college trained plasterer with limited site experience. Both have been successful, with the college trained plasterer specifically being able to improve his confidence to carry out work independently.

Unfortunately, the Housing Repairs Service has struggled to recruit an electrician onto the craft apprenticeship scheme, with there being very little interest in the position despite advertising three times. However, the service has been approached by a part-qualified electrician and it is hoped to move this individual onto a trainee program in the near future. Work is ongoing with a local college to develop a suitable program for the individual.

Looking ahead the Housing Repairs Service will continue to focus on the workforce, identify areas of future pressure points regarding labour, and establish apprenticeship programs around expected trades.

In addition, the service will continue to work with local groups that come forward and identify where we could offer support and opportunities for those looking to develop their skills in specific trades.

Corporate Communications and Media Relations

Our Communications Team continues to ensure our reputation is maintained and enhanced wherever possible.

Some of the successful work the team has been involved with this year has included:

- On Facebook, the number of people following the Council has been increased to around 11,000 accounts now following the corporate account. And, on Twitter, there are almost 16,700 followers to the corporate account.
- Promotion of greening the city with drone footage of Lincoln, which will continue to be pushed over the coming year
- Creation of Cost of Living Leaflet (three editions to date), with more than 10,000 printed and distributed to residents, alongside digital copies sent via stakeholders
- Positive promotion of the High Street Heritage Action Zone programme of works, including St Mary's Guildhall, works at St Mary le Wigford, Lincoln Central Market and Barbican
- Ahead of works to Greyfriars, an interactive video was created using drones to create a virtual tour of this fantastic building, reaching almost 10,000 people on Facebook alone
- A renewed focus on the promotion of Lincoln Community Lottery and our Social Responsibility Charter, using a variety of communications tools and methods
- Successful promotion of the 40th, and final, Lincoln Christmas Market – once again reaching more than 2.5m on social media in the week before and during the event
- Production of two videos highlighting the benefits of the warm spaces available to residents in the city during winter, which were circulated for use across the county
- A successful video and photoshoot announcing the completion of the social housing development at Rookery Close, where the Council delivered 44 new council homes
- The 2023 city elections, and the introduction of voter ID, were very well supported – with large posters on the sides of our bin lorries, messages in Council Tax leaflets and 10k runners packs, videos and graphics on social media and a joint campaign with other district councils in the county covering radio and print advertising
- The team has expanded with the appointment of a new Senior Communications Officer on a two-year fixed contract covering the Town Deal and Western Growth Corridor projects
- Two members of the team were appointed joint-chairs of the county-wide cost of living challenge communications group, whose work continues
- The team has re-launched the video 'In Brief' bulletin for staff, which is issued fortnightly to all staff to keep them up to date with Council matters
- Western Growth Corridor news pushed and promoted, with communication to residents and the general public, including a resident's event in March 2023. This includes a new e-newsletter, which will allow residents to have up-to-date information sent straight to their inboxes, with printed newsletters available for those who request it

- Ongoing communications for the Be Lincoln Town Deal brand, regular updates to the social media channels and website and quarterly communications reports to Town Deal board
- Lincoln Central Market video series promoting the new plans, sustainability, history and new features of the project

Civic and International Partnerships

Lincoln Guildhall

The Guildhall has, again, been recognised at the number one “Thing to Do” in Lincoln based on Traveller Reviews on TripAdvisor. This has been the situation for almost a full 12 month period and tourists from around the country and indeed the world continue to visit the Guildhall based on these reviews and recommendations.

Combined tours of the Guildhall and Posterngate will continue following a short break over the winter. The Civic Team anticipate that they will be as popular as ever.

A lot of media interest has been shown more recently regarding the Guildhall, with a feature on the Guildhall recently being published by the Lincolnite. Visit England have visited for their “secret shopper” assessment and the Guildhall scored extremely highly again, which has led to two nominations by the assessors for special Visit England Awards, Best Told Story and the Welcome award. The outcome of this has not yet been published.

Collaborations with Bishop Grosseteste University (BGU) and the University of Lincoln continue to evolve. The archaeology students from BGU have been using the Guildhall for their studies, and recently new equipment purchased from a substantial funding award to BGU was used for the first time at the Guildhall to begin a digital record of the building in 3D. The Lincoln Charters Project continues into its fifth year, with exciting digital work being undertaken with the collection. This work has resulted in several students volunteering with us working on our deposit in the Lincolnshire Archives, and two Masters students using the Richard II sword and the Charles I mace respectively for their research and subsequent dissertations.

Mayoralty

For 2023, the traditional Mayor Making Ceremony returned to the Guildhall in May. The Mayoral Year for 2022 was extremely busy, with the Mayor and Sheriff attending many events throughout the year including the Jubilee, Mourning and Coronation events across the City.

Civic Events

Civic events organised by the Civic Office continued to take place throughout 2022 and into 2023. Some of these events will include the visit of the Lord Mayor of Bradford, Remembrance Service at the War Memorial and Christmas Lights Switch on. Having been responsible over the last few years for the planning of the Council’s response under Operation London Bridge, our planning was successfully implemented in September 2022 following the death of Her late Majesty. The 11 day mourning period went well, and positive feedback was received on the council’s response.

Other events to be organised by the Civic Team are fund-raising events for the Mayor’s chosen charities, the Dogs Trust and the Hartsholme Community Trust, which will take place throughout the Mayor’s Year of Office.

International Partnerships

The Oberburgermeister and a delegation from Neustadt an der Weinstrasse visited Lincoln in December 2022. Good relationships with our other twin towns are on-going.

Legal Services

The Legal Services Team has continued to support the Council's Vision 2025 and its strategic priorities over the past 12 months, with the team providing advice and representation to all service areas as well as members.

The team's role in enforcement is ongoing and has increased this year. It is noticeable that individuals are exhibiting some very challenging behaviors. This has resulted in enforcement action being taken and the team working closely with third parties.

The conveyancing work on vital projects has continued and the team is involved in the provision of temporary accommodation and providing private housing advice. The team contribute improvements to housing generally and on homelessness issues.

The team has also continued to provide support for procurement exercises to ensure the Council can deliver both services and works / projects. In addition, the team has continued works on the regeneration of the city through major projects and planning work, including the Western Growth Corridor and in the city centre, and has supported other areas helping the city's residents, including the planning / licensing regimes, assets of community value and the provision of financial benefits.

4 - Key performance summary

Sickness levels

Following a rise in sickness levels at the Council in 2021/22, which was partly due to a rise in Covid-19 related illness, the cumulative sickness per FTE at the end of 2022/23 was 0.79 days lower recording at 13.01 days. With the current health and wellbeing initiatives aimed at supporting staff remaining available, we are hopeful we will see a continued decrease in the level of sickness throughout 2023/24.

Cumulative sickness per FTE trends (excluding apprentices)

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2012/13	1.71	3.63	6.46	9.70
2013/14	2.68	5.18	7.69	10.78
2014/15	2.99	6.68	9.93	13.43
2015/16	3.01	5.70	8.60	11.63
2016/17	2.43	5.1	8.27	11.52
2017/18	3.11	6.34	9.84	13.62
2018/19	2.90	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
2022/23	2.70	6.38	10.29	13.01

Quarterly performance measures – Our People and Resources

The table provided below on pages 19 and 20 is taken from the Performance Information Management System (PIMS) and shows performance up to the end of Quarter 4 2022/23 for those performance measures linked to my portfolio.

Within the latest data provided there are three performance measures showing as below target, seven measures showing as above target and two measures falling within their target boundaries showing acceptable performance. An overview of these measures has been provided below.

Measures performing below target

R

Work Based Learning

The cumulative number of new starters on the Council's apprenticeship scheme at the end of quarter 4 2022/23 was 9 (measure WBL 2). This year end outturn for 2022/23 was below the low target of 18. One of the key reasons for the lower number of new starters is the change in duration of apprenticeships, which has moved from 12 months to 18 months. This has an impact on the number of apprentices which can start on the scheme within a 12 month period. The Council does operate a roll on roll off system so if a corporate apprentice was to be offered a permanent role then a further apprentice would be recruited onto the scheme

Revenues

The Council Tax in-year collection rate for Lincoln at the end of quarter 4 2022/23 was 94.15% (measure REV 1). This outturn was 0.85% below the low target for the quarter of 95%. Post Covid-19 the Council Tax collection rate has been impacted by the cost of living challenges. The Revenues Team has also been required to administer a number of new schemes from the government during the year, such as the Covid-19 Hardship Scheme and three Energy Rebate Schemes, which have all required a large amount of resource from the team. To support the delivery of these schemes the Council has received New Burdens monies, however, acquiring additional resources (outside officer overtime) has proved to be challenging.

At the end of quarter 4 2022/23 the number of outstanding customers changes in the Revenues Team was 1,476 (measure REV 3). This outturn was greater than the low target for the quarter of 1,200 (low is good). Whilst the outturn was below target, the Revenues Team has reported that this is a positive position to be in at year-end as the team generally see a significant amount of customer contact linked to annual billing during the final quarter of the year. In terms of staff resource, unfortunately two staff members resigned during the quarter and one staff member retired which has had an impact on the resource available in the team. Focusing on the full 2022/23 period, the Revenues Team completed over 51,000 documents and dealt with over 43,000 phone calls (including dealing with Energy Rebates).

Measures performing above target

G

Work Based Learning

During the final quarter of 2022/23, two apprentices were due to complete their qualification. Both successfully complete on time resulting in performance measure WBL 1 achieving the high target for the quarter of 100%.

Of the 2 apprentices which completed their qualification within the final quarter of the year, both also moved into further education, employment or training (100%), which also outperformed the high target of 95% (measure WBL 3).

Accountancy

The average return on investment portfolio during quarter 4 2022/23 was 3.72% (measure ACC 1). This outturn was above the high target for the quarter of 0.25%. This latest outturn was an increase on the previous quarter outturn, which reported at 2.62% and also a significant increase when compared to the quarter 4 2021/22 outturn, which reported at 0.30%. Rises in the return throughout the year have been as a result of further increases in the Bank of England base rate.

During the final quarter of 2022/23 the average interest rate on external borrowing was 3.08% (measure ACC 2). This was lower than the high target for the quarter of 3.75% (low is good). This latest outturn was a slight increase when compared to the previous outturn and was due to Bank of England rate increases.

Debtors & Creditors

The percentage of invoices paid within 30 days during the final quarter of 2022/23 was 98.45% (measure DCT 1). This outturn was above the high target for the quarter of 97% and an increase of 1.92% on the previous quarters outturn of 96.53%.

During quarter 4 2022/23 the percentage of invoices that had a purchase order completed was 61% (measure DCT 2). This outturn was greater than the high target for the quarter of 55%. In number terms this equated to 2,173 invoices out of 3,564 invoices during the quarter having an associated purchase order.

Revenues

The business rates in year collection rate for Lincoln at the end of quarter 4 2022/23 was 99.19% (measure REV 2). This latest outturn was above the high target of 98.00%. In some cases this improvement in performance has been helped by customers receiving the Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund.

Measures performing within target boundary (acceptable performance)

A

Communications and Debtors & Creditors

Two performance measures performed within their target boundaries during the final quarter of 2022/23. One of these measures was the percentage of media enquiries responded to within four working hours (measure COM 1). This measure achieved an outturn of 84%, which was above the low target for the measure of 75%, but below the high target of 90%. In addition the performance measure which monitors the average number of days to pay invoices also performed within the target boundary with an outturn of 19 days (measure DCT 3). This was below the low target of 30 days (low is good), but above the high target for the measure of 15 days.

Our People and Resources – quarterly performance measures as of Quarter 4 2022/23

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

Service Area	Measure ID	Measure	High or Low is good	Unit	Low Target	High Target	Previous Data Period	Previous Value	Current Quarter	Current Value	Status	
Work Based Learning	WBL 1	Percentage of apprentices completing their qualification on time	High is good	%	95.00	100.00	Q3 – 22/23	50.00	Q4 – 22/23	100.00	G	▲
Work Based Learning	WBL 2	Number of new starters on the apprenticeship scheme (cumulative)	High is good	Number	18	20	Q4 – 21/22	14	Q4 – 22/23	9	R	▼
Work Based Learning	WBL 3	Percentage of apprentices moving into Education, Employment or Training	High is good	%	90.00	95.00	Q3 – 22/23	100.00	Q4 – 22/23	100.00	G	▬
Communications	COM 1	Percentage of media enquiries responded to within four working hours	High is good	%	75.00	90.00	Q3 – 22/23	83.00	Q4 – 22/23	84.00	A	▲
Accountancy	ACC 1	Average return on investment portfolio	High is good	%	0.15	0.25	Q3 – 22/23	2.62	Q4 – 22/23	3.72	G	▲
Accountancy	ACC 2	Average interest rate on external borrowing	Low is good	%	4.75	3.75	Q3 – 22/23	2.98	Q4 – 22/23	3.08	G	▼
Debtors & Creditors	DCT 1	Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days	High is good	%	95.00	97.00	Q3 – 22/23	96.53	Q4 – 22/23	98.45	G	▲
Debtors & Creditors	DCT 2	Percentage of invoices that have a Purchase Order completed	High is good	%	45.00	55.00	Q3 – 22/23	62.00	Q4 – 22/23	61.00	G	▼
Debtors & Creditors	DCT 3	Average number of days to pay invoices	Low is good	Days	30	15	Q3 – 22/23	16	Q4 – 22/23	19	A	▼

Service Area	Measure ID	Measure	High or Low is good	Unit	Low Target	High Target	Previous Data Period	Previous Value	Current Quarter	Current Value	Status	
Revenues Administration	REV 1	Council Tax – in year collection rate for Lincoln (cumulative)	High is good	%	95.00	96.00	Q4 – 21/22	94.00	Q4 – 22/23	94.15	R	▲
Revenues Administration	REV 2	Business Rates – in year collection rate for Lincoln (cumulative)	High is good	%	97.00	98.00	Q4 – 21/22	98.45	Q4 – 22/23	99.19	G	▲
Revenues Administration	REV 3	Number of outstanding customer changes in the Revenues Team	Low is good	Number	1,200	1,100	Q4 – 21/22	2,413	Q4 – 22/23	1,476	R	▲

5 - Looking ahead

Over the year ahead I again look forward to working with elected members and staff to help continue to make a real difference within our communities and ensure our customers are provided with the support they may need during an ongoing time of uncertainty.

I also look forward to continuing to build on the success of Vision 2025 through the completion of a range of current projects, whilst also commencing the delivery of range of new projects all focused on meeting our five key strategic priorities and collectively helping to deliver Lincoln's ambitious future.

I would like to express my appreciation of the officers who support myself 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:

Jaclyn Gibson, Martin Walmsley, Heather Carmichael, Simon Colburn, Lara Trickett, Sara Boothright, Claire Burroughs, Daryl Wright, Martin Kerrigan, Matt Hillman, Steve Welsby, Kate Fenn, Richard Storey, Becky Scott, Simon Walters & Graham Rose.

Councillor Ric Metcalfe (Leader of the Council)
Portfolio Holder for People and Resources