

Present: Councillor Ric Metcalfe (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Donald Nannestad, Councillor Sue Burke,
Councillor Bob Bushell, Councillor Rebecca Longbottom
and Councillor Naomi Tweddle

Apologies for Absence: None.

36. Confirmation of Minutes - 21 August 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 August 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a true record.

37. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

38. Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25

Purpose of Report

To propose options for consultation on a 2024/25 Council Tax Support scheme, and an accompanying Exceptional Hardship Payments scheme.

Decision

- (1) That the following options for a 2024/25 Council Tax Support scheme be moved forward for public consultation and scrutiny:
 - 'No change' scheme, and/or
 - Banded scheme for all working age customers
- (2) That an Exceptional Hardship Fund of £25,000 or £35,000 in 2024/25 be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

As set out in Section 5 of the report to the Executive, two options for a Council Tax Support Scheme would be subject to public consultation and scrutiny:

- Option 1: No change to the current scheme.
- Option 2: Introduction of a 'banded scheme' for all working age customers.

Reasons for the Decision

The Council Tax Support Scheme (CTS), which replaced the national council tax benefit system on 1 April 2014, may be determined by each billing authority, after consultation with precepting authorities, key stakeholders and residents.

As at 30 June 2023, there were 8,458 residents claiming CTS in Lincoln, of whom 2,591 were pensioners protected under the CTS. There was discretion to determine the level of support to the remaining 5,867 working age claimants

(including those classified as 'vulnerable' for CTS purposes) in a local scheme which could change the level of support provided.

Unless a decision by the Council was made to apply scheme changes to vulnerable working-age customers, the localised CTS scheme would historically only be applied to non-vulnerable working age customers. The definition of vulnerable working-age customers was clarified within the officer's report.

The current, 2023/24 scheme contained the following restrictions for working age customers:

- Capital limit £6,000;
- Minimum entitlement of £2 per week;
- Property banding capped at Band B, so that a customer residing in a Band C and above property, would only have their CTS calculated on Band B liability;
- Backdating restricted to one month; and
- Temporary absence from home in line with Housing Benefit regulations.

Based on the current core elements of the existing scheme, caseload increases of 0% and 5% had been modelled, along with Council Tax increases of 1.9% and 2.9%. These were summarised at **Appendix 1** of the officer's report, giving an indication of the potential cost and savings to City of Lincoln Council. Also included was the potential value for non-collection, based on the collection figure currently included in the MTFS (98.75%).

As a billing authority the Council could decide whether or not to amend core elements of its scheme each year. Proposed options for consultation were included in Appendix 1 of the officers report.

For 2024/25, an option was put forward for consideration to make a fundamental change to the way CTS was calculated for working age customers, as detailed at paragraph 5.6 of the officers report

This could be a more streamlined, efficient, and easier to understand scheme based on specified income bands and percentage awards.

Exceptional Hardship Payments (EHP) assisted persons who had applied for CTS and faced 'exceptional hardship' – it was similar to the Discretionary Housing Payment scheme (DHP) for Housing Benefit shortfalls. EHP provided a further financial contribution where an applicant was in receipt of CTS but the level of support being paid by the Council did not meet their full Council Tax liability. The Council was required to provide financial assistance to the most vulnerable residents, who had been disproportionately affected by the changes made in 2023 to the CTS Scheme.

Since April 2013, the Council had agreed to introduce an EHP scheme each year, in order to provide a safety net for customers, in receipt of Council Tax Support who were experiencing difficulty paying their Council Tax. Exceptional Hardship fell within Section 13A(1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and formed part of the CTS Scheme.

The cost of EHP awards was borne solely by City of Lincoln. As at the end of June 2023, a total of £7, 251.29EHP had been awarded for 2023/24. It was proposed that an EHP budget of £25,000 or £35,000 be in place for 2024/25–

the increase being to try and help assist in mitigating the transition to reduced levels of award under a banded scheme, in appropriate cases. If a 'no change' scheme was implemented, it was proposed the EHP provision for 2024/25 remained as 2024/25 – i.e. £25,000.

39. Proposals for the Extension of Existing Public Space Protection Order at Lucy Tower, Broadgate, and Lincoln Central Multi-Storey Carparks

Purpose of Report

To brief the Executive in the process and consideration given to date, to extend an existing Public Space Protection Order at Lucy Tower Multi-Storey Carpark, Broadgate Multi-Storey Carpark and Lincoln Central Multi-Storey Carpark.

To seek the views of the Executive on proposals regarding the extension of the existing Public Space Protection Order (PSPO).

Decision

That the proposal to extend the current PSPO without any variations to the prohibitions or location be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

To extend and vary the PSPO to reword the prohibitions and/or change the geographical area.

To not extend the existing PSPO.

Reason for Decision

In October 2014 the Secretary of State enacted new powers from the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act, relevant to tackling Anti-Social Behaviour. These powers also made changes to some of the relevant existing legislation and the Council was required, within the period of three years, to reconsider its Designated Public Place Orders (DPPOs) and either withdraw or replace them with new Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs).

PSPO's were flexible and could be applied to a much broader range of issues, with local authorities having the ability to design and implement their own prohibitions or requirements where certain conditions were met. These conditions centred on the impact to the quality of life in the locality, persistence, and whether the impact made the behaviour unreasonable.

In September 2020 Executive approved the implementation of a PSPO covering Lucy Tower, Broadgate and Lincoln Central Multi-Storey Carparks.

A PSPO had a maximum duration of 3 years. It was therefore time to review the order to determine whether it should be subject to extension or variation. As part of the review, the views of both the public and relevant partner agencies had been sought, by way of a public and partner consultation, this consultation had also been published on social media for greater reach.

Feedback from partners including Lincolnshire Police, the CCTV team and from the Car Parking team was that the PSPO remained a useful tool.

It was important to recognise that this PSPO was an effective deterrent, and the feedback suggested that colleagues and partners found it a very useful tool for engaging with individuals and moving individuals on.

Data extracted from CCTV records showed that during the three years prior to the implementation of the PSPO there were 107 reported incidents of drug related ASB in the three car parks. Since the PSPO had been in effect, there has 35 reported incidents of drug related ASB in the three car parks. The data showed a drop in public order incidents but still showed one hundred and fifty incidents across the three car parks during the past three years.

The PSPO gave Police and Council staff the ability to move individuals away from the car parks if they were engaging in any of the prohibited activity noted on the PSPO. The fact that there had still been one hundred and fifty noted public order incident demonstrated that the PSPO was still needed as a useful tool to tackle ongoing issues at the three locations.

40. Repairs Policy Update

RESOLVED that this item be deferred to the next meeting of Executive scheduled for 16 October 2023.

41. Management of Communal Areas Policy

Purpose of Report

To propose the introduction of a Management of Communal Area's Policy.

Decision

That the introduction of the Management of Communal Area's Policy be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reasons for the Decision

At present the Council did not have a Management of Communal Area's Policy.

The Management of Communal Areas Policy as detailed at Appendix 1 to the officer's report, set out the approach that the City of Lincoln Council (CoLC) would take to manage enclosed communal areas and the areas that immediately surrounded blocks of flats. The policy applied to both tenants of the Council, also leaseholders and anyone that visited or lived with a tenant or leaseholder. The policy also applied to tenants in General Housing properties as well as those in Sheltered Accommodation.

It was noted that the Communal Areas Policy, also included an additional subsection on service delivery and complaints at pages 9/10, not included as part of Appendix 1.

The reasons why a Communal Area's Policy was required were outlined at paragraph 4.1 of the officer's report as follows, to:

- ensure the health and safety of all persons lawfully using communal areas
- ensure that all repairs and maintenance, including cleaning, was carried out on communal areas
- allow communal areas to be used in the best possible way for the benefit of all tenants, leaseholders, staff, and visitors
- explain what measures the Council took to monitor or control communal areas
- ensure all communal areas could be used safely where required in the event of an emergency or evacuation
- give clear advice to residents to maintain safety in across access routes in the event of an emergency

The Council would ask residents to keep internal/enclosed communal areas and the areas immediately surrounding entrances and exits clear of obstruction and/or items that may cause fire to be accelerated. The list of non-permissible items included:

- Potential ignition sources such as storage of cardboard
- Combustible materials such as garden furniture, artificial plants, plastic ornaments
- Electrical items, including battery operated lights
- Prams, buggies and bicycles
- Washing lines, wall mounted or strung wall to wall
- Items which may result in escape routes being narrowed such as, items of furniture, ornaments
- Any items on windowsills including plants
- Mobility Scooters, where a designated storage facility does not exist
- Items left within the communal area for disposal
- Storage of personal items within the communal area

It was considered that a policy would have a number of benefits for all stakeholders including residents, council staff and members of the public. as outlined within the officer's report.