

**Present:** Councillor Calum Watt (*in the Chair*),  
Councillor Debbie Armiger, Councillor Chris Burke,  
Councillor Liz Bushell, Councillor Matthew Fido,  
Councillor Hilton Spratt, Councillor Clare Smalley,  
Councillor Rachel Storer, Councillor Dylan Stothard,  
Councillor Joshua Wells and Councillor Emily Wood

**Also in Attendance:** Simon Beardsley, CEO - Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce and Managing Director - Lincoln Business Improvement Group (Lincoln BIG), Rob Johnston, Policy and Campaigns Officer - Trades Union Congress Midlands, Victoria Poulson, Democratic Services Officer and Simon Walters, Strategic Director for Communities and Environment

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillor Aiden Wells

**38. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Aiden Wells. Councillor Clare Smalley was in attendance as substitute.

**39. Confirmation of Minutes - 8 March 2023**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as an accurate record.

**40. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were received.

**41. Change to Order of Business**

RESOLVED that the order of business be amended to allow the agenda item entitled 'Low Wages in the City of Lincoln' to be considered as the next agenda item.

**42. Low Wages in the City of Lincoln**

Councillor Calum Watt, Chair of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee, opened the meeting with a brief introduction to guest speakers and the topics of discussion which were Low Wages in the City of Lincoln and an update on the Cultural Consortium.

The Committee received a presentation from Simon Beardsley, (CEO, Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce and Managing Director, Lincoln BIG) and Rob Johnston, (Policy and Campaigns Officer, Trades Union Congress Midlands). During consideration of the presentation, the following points were noted: -

- The Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce Quarterly Economic Survey, Quarter 2 2023 showed domestic sale had improved however 30% had reported a worse level
- Overseas sales were in the worst state in fifteen years
- Half of employers had tried to increase their employee numbers with 25% being successful. 86% however had experienced difficulty
- 30% of businesses had increased investment in training
- The total number of advertisements for job roles were at peak levels and further to concerns of rising inflation, businesses indicated 43% worsened cash flow
- Confidence has risen slightly and there were positive indicators that inflation would begin to come down
- Inflation, utility bills and labour costs remained the primary concern for respondents of the survey
- Median rates of pay in Lincoln were 10% lower than the UK average with 1 in 4 individuals within the City paid below the National Living Wage
- The median annual wage increased by 8.1% in Greater Lincolnshire between 2021 and 2022, compared to 6.8% nationally.
- There had been a number of high profile cases within the media that exposed organisations such as Argos, M&S and WH Smith, that paid a low wage
- Inflation as of May 2023 was 8.7% and the year on year increased in fuel and electricity was 88.5%
- The rate of pay had increased but the rise in inflation resulted in the pay gap widening
- Predictions showed a decrease in the rate of inflation approximately 2% over the coming year
- Vulnerability figures showed that 16.8% of people in Lincoln were in fuel poverty, 8.8% lived with food insecurity and 16.8% received low pay
- The economy was challenging, and cost pressures were likely to continue with businesses likely to remain uncertain of growth prospects
- Automation had become more prevalent and recruitment difficulties had resulted in business' that had changed to secure retention of staff.

The Chair thanked Simon Beardsley for the informative presentation.

The Committee received a presentation from Rob Johnston, (Policy and Campaigns Officer, Trades Union Congress Midlands). During consideration of the presentation, the following points were noted: -

- There was an ongoing historical crisis in rates of pay and the average weekly wage was £497.00, the same as in November 2005
- East Midlands was a low pay region with a low wage trap that needed to be broken
- Lincoln was notoriously difficult to access with limited public transport and an absence of a motorway
- Lincolnshire suffered with hidden rural poverty with 1 in 4 paid below the National Living Wage
- The jobs that were available within Lincoln were difficult for young people to access which resulted in blockages to economic growth

- Social Care was a vital public service however had historically been a low paid position. There was an ongoing campaign to raise social care wages to a minimum of £15.00 per hour.
- If successful, the £15.00 per hour wage for social care staff in Lincolnshire would result in a £136M uplift in the local economy.
- Instead of an increase in pay and opportunities, there appeared to be a decrease in workers terms and conditions and a rise in insecurity
- There was a generational divide between renting and homeowners
- The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Services (ACAS) had led on a Good Work Charter and there had been a Fair Work Commission in Scotland.
- A Midlands Charter had been put into place to support fair contracts
- The Devolution agenda raised concerns for areas outside of combined authorities
- Procurement was vastly underused with not enough focus placed on the potential of 'social value' within public sector procurement
- If the procurement of the public sector across Lincolnshire were to be coordinated, the result would be significant resource behind a shared agenda to 'move the dial' on social deprivation and life chances
- The Agricultural Wages Board was dispersed in 2014 which removed the floor for fair wages for farmers
- It was important to recognise the historical challenges and devise a strategic plan in order to see a rise in living standards and better opportunities within the next eighteen years.

The Chair thanked Rob Johnston for the informative presentation. Further to both presentations, the Chair welcomed comments and questions from Members of the Committee. As a result of discussions between Members and speakers, the following points were made: -

**Question:** What was the total number of businesses in Lincoln that were empty and what was the reason for closure?

**Response:** Businesses closed for a variety of reasons which included the end of a family business or a national chain that closed locally due to decisions made at senior level. It may be that a business was in the wrong place with the wrong product. Lincoln had done well with start-up businesses and were ahead of the national curve. The challenge was the retention of businesses within the City centre to ensure a vibrant City centre that people wanted to visit. Figures on the number of business closures would be circulated further to the meeting.

**Question:** How many people in Lincoln worked under a zero hour contract and thus, not in receipt of a regular wage?

**Response:** There was no known metric for the calculation of individuals who worked under a zero hour contract.

**Question:** What was the average median wage for a worker in Lincoln?

**Response:** The median annual earnings for full-time employment in Lincoln in 2022 was £31,011. Gross weekly pay was £618. The gross weekly pay for part

time employees in 2022 was £230 weekly. All figures had seen an increase on the previous year and some industries had paid more.

**Question:** Retention of staff was important. There was a cost benefit in the retention of experienced staff. There had been increased competition between firms in an attempt to offer attractive packages to incentivise staff. The cost and the time to train someone new was significant. How had businesses adapted to those challenges?

**Response:** It depended on which sector and where in the county it was. There was a point that businesses had provided all the benefits and an increased wage but the staff member had made their mind up and wanted to leave. Many companies had looked at benefits packages. A business might not be in a position to afford an 8% pay rise but some had offered incentives such as loyalty bonuses, healthcare etc or an increase of year bonuses. Businesses had found it difficult to retain staff and had to use a number of methods to increase salary. Some had been innovative in terms of other packages e.g. training. Recruitment was a large expense.

**Comment:** It was not always the case that pay was the main incentive for employees. Incentives included continued professional development, progression, and work culture. It was important to consider the wider non-monetary benefits.

**Response:** The Midlands Good Work Charter explored the principles of good work which included genuine flexibility, employee voice, ownership, and the ability to shape workloads. Businesses that adopted the approach experienced lower levels of sickness absence and higher productivity. The University of Lincoln was vital in the retention of local talent. Adequately funded public services were important for growth.

**Comment:** A survey entitled 'Low Pay Britain 2023 – Improving Low paid-work through Higher Minimum Standards' suggested that as many as 10% of employees would turn down a rise in pay for improved conditions and dignity.

**Comment:** Management was very important. The culture of management had changed, and it was important for employees to be enabled to carry out their job roles and not simply instructed.

**Question:** The Lincoln City Profile for the City of Lincoln Council (CoLC) stated in 2021, Lincoln's median earnings were more than those from the East Midlands. Was the average wage in Lincoln higher than the East Midlands?

**Response:** The National average was £33,000. The Greater Lincoln average previously had been £29,442 but most recently was £31,111.

**Response:** Work was underway to refresh the Lincoln City Profile. Extracted from the Nomis 2023 database, Lincoln median wage was £31,011. The East Midlands average for 2022 was £30,900 and therefore we were approximately £100 above East Midlands. Nationally, the average wage was £33,208.

**Question:** Which sectors had experienced difficulty in staff recruitment?

**Response:** Staff recruitment was problematic within the hospitality sector, retail, higher skilled engineering and general administration. Lincoln BIG had attempted to recruit three town centre wardens of which had been unsuccessful.

**Comment:** Healthy life expectancies varied between areas. It was useful to plot how things had changed. Some issues were entrenched over a very long time e.g transport to attend work.

**Question:** There were a number of issues with energy, inflation and labour costs, at the same time. The East Midlands Development Agency benefitted Lincoln tremendously. The Preston Model was a modern model for authorities to come together with Unions. Social deprivation was akin to industrial revolution scales. What would be a good model for adoption in the future?

**Response:** It was important to identify the position you wanted to reach and to be honest about identified challenges and strengths. Consideration should be given to issues that leaders had autonomy and power over. Civic leadership was an important role. Organising campaigns made a positive difference. There was a strong network within Lincoln to create great partnerships with the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders to form a coalition.

**Response:** The country was living through a period of change. To aspire to be a forward looking City within the UK, it was important to act, react, and plan quickly. It would be useful to consider if Lincoln wanted to be a top ten City. The CoLC had a real role to play, to be the conveners and the platform to enable people to invest in their ideas of what Lincoln could be. The coming together of partners and collaborative work was essential.

**Response:** The CoLC strategic plan, Vision 2025, detailed economic development and regeneration. Partners would be involved in the creation of Vision 2030 and there was already a good understanding of the key industries within the City. Vitality of the area depended on the vitality of the City Centre. Consideration needed to be given to whether individuals could afford to live in the City and was there available housing within the City to rent? Securing a rental property within the City was very hard. The Council had a corporate vision in place and would work to develop Vision 2030 to grow the local economy for everyone.

**Comment:** Small businesses had found the current economy difficult. Wages within the City were slightly lower however most workers did not live in Lincoln. Transport offerings were inadequate, often late and very expensive. East Midlands appeared to be formed of Derby, Leicester and Nottingham. Lincoln needed to consider if it wanted to be a part of that or if Lincoln wanted to stand on its own. It would be positive for Lincoln to have its own unique selling point. The City was surrounded by agriculture and the economy was very mixed with the issue of connectivity. It was the most difficult climate for the public sector for a number of years.

**Question:** How could the dynamics of automation factor into low wages in Lincoln and the wider East Midlands?

**Response:** Automation would not be the initial solution as there was a time lag. There was an increase in automation which would remove some lower level jobs.

Consideration needed to be given to the oversight of automation and the equipment. There was the potential for a shift in the labour market.

**Response:** There had been a technological revolution over the last twenty years and there had been a large impact on blue collar work. Automation was beginning to challenge middle skilled jobs such as conveyancing. It was important to shape the technology to enable empowerment.

Members expressed their gratitude to guest speakers for the information provided within discussions and for their work.

The Chair echoed comments from Members and thanked guest speakers for their attendance and contributions to discussions.

RESOLVED that: -

- 1) The Democratic Services Officer be tasked with circulating the following to Members, further to the meeting:
  - a. The Midlands Good Work Charter
  - b. Statistics from guest speaker, Simon Beardsley
  - c. Statistics regarding the rate of pay growth within Lincolnshire

The content of the presentations be noted with thanks.

#### **43. Cultural Consortium Update**

Simon Walters (Director for Communities and Environment) introduced the item with an overview and background on the purpose of the discussion which was to receive an update on the creation of a cultural consortium following a successful award of funding to the University of Lincoln.

During consideration of the presentation, the following points were noted:

- Collaborative work with the University of Lincoln and key cultural delivery partner, Zest Theatre, had started over a year ago
- There had been a significant number of events over the last six to eight months to drive culture within the City
- Further to the engagement of 1,094 young people by Zest Theatre between January and March 2022, a framework of six maxims became the steer for a new cultural compact for Lincoln
- The cultural programme had been funded by Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) and had enabled the build of cultural talent at grass-root level
- The grant received was for a total of £102,000
- The ambition was for creative commissioning, working with young people to invigorate the High Street with a contemporary interpretation of its history and future
- Frequency Festival, the International Festival of Digital Culture had been very successful and had enabled connection with the public through interaction with key heritage sites and engagement with historic stories and materials
- HAZ funding enabled expansion and visibility of the festival programme within the City which welcomed over 15,000 visitors over the four day period

- In July 2022, 12,000 visitors attended Lincoln's 1940's weekend which featured a 1940's inspired shop window advert trail, curated by a local artist, Emma Taylor
- An event entitled 'South of the Tracks' showcased a diverse line-up of live music from talented Lincolnshire acts to celebrate Lincoln's High Street post Covid-19
- The event recorded 14,740 engagements during a six hour period. It was anticipated that the event would return next year
- The City of Lincoln Council (CoLC) grant funded Pride which attracted more than 6,500 people over the course of the day
- In addition to increased footfall within HAZ areas, online interaction with the HAZ logo branded posts on social media reached a combined exposure level of over 2,400 accounts
- An event entitled 'Festival of Street Theatre' was enjoyed by over 500 people, right in the heart of the City Centre in April 2023
- Lincoln Christmas Market 2022 experienced the largest attendance on record with over 320,000 visitors to the four day event. Social media engagement included a reach of 882,236 people in the two week lead up to the event
- Funding had been provided for a Christmas light trail which would also feature in Christmas 2023 plans for the City. In addition, Lincoln Business Improvement Group (BIG) funded the installation of a large, illuminated reindeer on the waterfront
- 'Trailtale' incorporated the use of an app that helped direct visitors across the City to experience walking through Lincoln's hidden high street histories. The total app downloads/users exceeded 3,000 for the City
- Significant investment had helped create a local art consortium entitled, 'A Mash Up!!' to build capacity
- Legacy work included:
  - £1.4M project within the Lincoln Town Deal Board Programme, to digitally enable the City centre using cultural activity as the driver
  - £250,000 events programme per annum legacy from the Christmas Market
  - ACE Cultural Commission for the City, in progress
  - NPO status for key partners – building capacity with infrastructure bodies for the cultural sector

The Chair thanked Simon for his hard work, informative presentation and welcomed comments and questions from the Committee. As a result of the discussions between Members, the following points were made:

**Question:** Had the UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) bid for funding for the Barbican been successful?

**Response:** The UKSPF fund was significantly oversubscribed and the bid for funding for a bespoke outdoor space for young people had not been successful within the first wave of funding. It was hoped that the bid would be considered within future waves of funding.

**Question:** How was involvement from local artists secured?

**Response:** Local artists involvement was secured through Mash Up!! Which was extending its reach regularly. In addition, though Toby Ealden, Zest Theatre who had connections within local culture. Partnerships played a key role in increasing reach as part of a cultural compact.

**Question:** Was a bid for 'City of Culture' still a consideration?

**Response:** A bid for 'City of Culture' could be further considered within the Council's new strategic plan, Vision 2030. However, the level of investment required to secure the status of 'City of Culture' was estimated to be approximately £20M, which was currently beyond the Council's resources. It may be useful to consider a countywide approach that focussed on a collective area. It appeared, from previous conversations that whilst there was an appetite to work collaboratively on arts and culture, a bid for UK City of culture was not a key focus for many neighbouring areas at present.

**Comment:** Members were pleased to learn of events south of the railway line and the consideration that had been given to the historic heritage of the City further to the Guildhall and the Cathedral.

**Question:** Lincoln's famous Christmas Market was cancelled due to safety concerns. Within the budget, was there plans for Christmas events?

**Response:** The budget agreed by the Executive mandated consideration of events spread across the whole year to enable everybody to benefit. Information and further details would emerge in the near future with regard to a sizable offering for Christmas 2023 and for the full year. The engagement exercise was extensive and events that would fall within 2023 had been arranged. Work would soon begin on events for 2024.

**Comment:** Other areas around the country such as Sheffield and Manchester were very good at nurturing and retaining their own talent.

**Response:** Lincoln missed a forum to bring cultural offerings together. The cultural compact would come in later in the year to bring together local talent.

**Question:** Would Christmas Lights be installed between Tentercroft Street and the Railway line? There was an opportunity to make the area a cultural space for pop up events.

**Response:** There would be Christmas lights installed in the area. The use of the space for pop up events became difficult as there was no power and nothing to feed off of within the area. The mechanics of it for events were difficult. The Cornhill area had pop up power points. The contract awarded for the Christmas lights had been to a local supplier – a new Christmas lights provider that would install and take down the lights. We have been provided with a design for the lower high street however the caveat was that power needed to be sourced. Lincoln County Council had been amenable with helping.

The Chair gave thanks to Simon Walters for the information provided and for the work carried out for residents within the City.

RESOLVED that: -

1. The Democratic Services Officer be tasked with circulating information regarding Frequency Festival to Members, further to the meeting

2. The content of the presentation be noted with thanks.

**44. Work Programme 2023**

Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Programme. Further to scoping discussions, the Democratic Services Officer confirmed that the focus of the Committee's work for the remainder of the calendar year would include an update on the Poverty Truth Commission and Long Term and Emergency Housing.

It was agreed that the Poverty Truth Commission update would be brought before the Committee in July 2023. The Democratic Services Officer advised that confirmation of attendance had been received from Charlotte Brooks, Director, LocalMotion.

It was agreed that consideration of Emergency Housing would be brought before the Committee in September 2023. The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that further to scoping discussions, attendance would be requested from YMCA and LEAP Housing.

The Chair added that discussions would take place further to the meeting, regarding an invitation for Sukhy Johal MBE, Director of the Centre for Culture and Creativity, University of Lincoln, to attend later in the calendar year.

Further to the recent Health Scrutiny meeting held on 17 May 2023, the Chair requested that Lincolnshire Partnership Foundation Trust (LPFT) be invited back before the Committee for an update on the temporary Closure of Lincolnshire's Male Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) - The Hartsholme Centre. The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that the item would be brought before the Committee during the first meeting of the new calendar year, 2024.

**Date of Next Meeting:** Tuesday 11 July 2023.