

Present: Councillor Biff Bean (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Alan Briggs, Councillor Chris Burke,
Councillor Sue Burke, Councillor Bob Bushell,
Councillor Liz Bushell, Natasha Chapman,
Councillor Martin Christopher, Councillor David Clarkson,
Councillor Thomas Dyer, Councillor Matthew Fido,
Councillor Gary Hewson, Councillor
Rebecca Longbottom, Councillor Adrianna McNulty,
Councillor Ric Metcalfe, Councillor Neil Murray,
Councillor Donald Nannestad,
Councillor Lucinda Preston, Councillor Clare Smalley,
Councillor Mark Storer, Councillor Rachel Storer,
Councillor Dylan Stothard, Councillor Edmund Strengiel,
Councillor Naomi Twedde, Councillor Calum Watt,
Councillor Aiden Wells, Councillor Joshua Wells,
Councillor Emily Wood and Councillor Loraine Woolley

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Debbie Armiger, Councillor Bill Mara,
Councillor Hilton Spratt and Councillor Pat Vaughan

7. Confirmation of Minutes - 28 February 2023

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as an accurate record.

8. Confirmation of Minutes - 16 May 2023

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as an accurate record.

9. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

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

No questions had been submitted by members of the public.

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

Councillor Natasha Chapman to Councillor Bob Bushell

Question

Like many other colleagues, Councillor Chapman was delighted by the recent Green Flag awards to three of Lincoln's parks, including the Arboretum. Councillor Chapman also stated that it was great to see much-needed work

commencing to fix the footbridge in the Arboretum, after the need for repair was queried back in February 2023. Could Councillor Bushell please explain why the corroded metalwork of the footbridge structure was not highlighted during routine safety and maintenance checks?

Answer

Thank you to Councillor Chapman for giving me the opportunity to highlight again publicly the excellent work done by both staff and volunteers in our parks and open spaces. It is their commitment and dedication that has helped this Council to not only continue the long-term improvement plans that we have for our open spaces, but also to make sure that what is improved is well maintained. This is of course demonstrated by the awards of the independently assessed Green Flag scheme.

Moving to a response to the underlying question, the safety of our public spaces is of course vital. For this reason, we have a structured approach to safety inspections, which meets the requirements of the Council's official Health and Safety policy. It is appropriately called, for a parks enquiry, The Tree of Responsibility, and it means that our open spaces are routinely checked by experienced staff, with the results referred for action if required.

There are however some aspects of infrastructure that are not so easily assessed in detail, such as the bridge in the Arboretum, where some aspects of its very structure are hidden. In such cases assessment is more difficult, and expert assessment is required as soon as potential issues begin to make themselves known. This bridge was a good example, where nobody was put at risk, but on the report of a potential issue the bridge was closed pending a detailed assessment. I am pleased to say that the bridge is now subject to repair.

Councillor Clare Smalley to Councillor Ric Metcalfe

Question

I was very impressed recently, when I attended the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee meeting, as we were all told that the meeting was being recorded. Unfortunately, after the meeting I was advised that the video quality was not good enough to be posted online, which was disappointing. Recorded or live streamed meetings have become the norm now for many Councils across the country, including our neighbours at West Lindsay District Council. We also did manage to stream our own planning meeting in January 2022, which was held for the Western Growth Corridor.

Can the Portfolio Holder therefore please give us all the assurance that live streaming or the recording of meetings (to be posted online afterwards) will continue to be a priority for the Council, until this is finally achieved. I am sure we would all agree that providing easier public access to our meetings will improve transparency, our openness and accountability.

Answer

I too share your enthusiasm to live stream committee meetings, as will of course improve open and transparency, and the example you have given has shown how well this can be done. I can confirm that the live streaming of meetings of the Council continues to be an aspiration of the Council, which we are aiming to

implement within the next twelve months. As part of the preparatory work, an assessment of the current IT infrastructure in the Committee Rooms and Guildhall has shown that significant investment and additional resources are required to enable the Council to live stream any of its committee meetings. If we are to introduce live streaming, this should be done well to ensure viewers have a good experience. With this obviously comes the need to set aside funding within the budget and a full procurement exercise required, which will take time. These options will be considered within the context of the Council's wider ICT Strategy which is currently being reviewed.

Councillor Martin Christopher to Councillor Naomi Tweddle

Question

If Labour councillors truly believe that dismantling this 40-year-old tradition is the right approach, then I would like to know if you as Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth would support a motion to have this Council decide on the fate of our Christmas Market by means of recorded vote, that the electorate might then be better informed on how well they are represented at next year's election?

Answer

The decision has already been debated and decided some months ago and the decision recorded has been implemented by officers. For the reasons highlighted in the report to the Executive on 20 February 2023, the Christmas offer for the City needed to evolve into a year-long series of events that better spreads the City's capacity across both a longer period and wider area to prevent a recurrence of the issues related to large crowds we saw at last year's market. The decision was scrutinised under the Call-In provision by the Select Scrutiny Committee on 14 March 2023, where the Call-In motion was refused by the Committee. A further vote therefore serves no value in the Council's decision-making process.

Councillor Thomas Dyer to Councillor Naomi Tweddle

Question

Now that the City Council has launched its events programme, which in my opinion is not half as good as our once great Christmas Market, how many visitors are expected to come to our City as a result of the newly announced events?

Answer

We have already acknowledged that it is unlikely that we will be able to immediately replace the footfall from the Christmas Market in our new events programme. However, the Council has put together a great programme for this year that will undoubtedly attract an increased footfall and encourage increased spend in the local businesses as we are not putting on any food, drink or market stalls that will compete with our local businesses. Where similar events to the Monster Invasion, Ice Sculpture Trail and the Christmas Lights installations have been delivered in other towns and cities we know they have generated a good footfall and an enhanced social media presence, both of which are important elements in promoting and supporting the local economy. To ensure that we maximise the events, the Council has a funded marketing plan with our partners,

Visit Lincoln. Thank you to all officers involved in arranging the new events programme, which I am sure all councillors wish for it to be a success.

The supplementary question posed by Councillor Thomas Dyer was deemed by the Mayor not to be valid.

Councillor Rachel Storer to Councillor Naomi Tweddle

Question

Residents, tourists and bus operators continue to complain about the neglected state of our bus station, despite repeated complaints, this Council continues to allow its relatively new asset to be neglected. When will the council ensure this facility is properly cleaned and maintained?

Answer

As the transport interchange for the City, it is an extremely busy bus station servicing a huge volume of travellers every year. Keeping the station clean in a cost effective way is hugely challenging, necessitating a mix of daytime light cleaning, while members of the public are present, together with more fundamental out of hours deep cleaning. Currently a deep clean is carried out 3-4 times per year but this is being reviewed in light of operational experience and a new contract will be procured as quickly as is possible this year with an updated specification for cleaning the bus station.

Supplementary question

With the bus station being the first place in Lincoln visitors may see, could a review by the relevant scrutiny committee be conducted to support the process?

Answer

A review would be carried out a year into the project and the relevant scrutiny committee will be consulted.

Councillor Alan Briggs to Councillor Sue Burke

Question

What assessment has the Portfolio Holder made of the impact in Lincoln should the plans for an asylum centre at Scampton go ahead?

Answer

As Council will be aware the proposed Large Asylum Site at Scampton is a Home Office Project and our officers have been working very closely with West Lindsey District Council, Lincolnshire County Council and Health and Police colleagues to try and receive assurance from the Home Office that the site at Scampton will be safe, legal and compliant and the community impacts are understood and appropriately mitigated.

Our officers are continuing to try and understand proposals and support the Home Office Design Team to critically assess the risks and jointly develop suitable mitigation strategies before the site is mobilised. This is taking significant

hours of Officer time and is challenging as we are still yet to see any Home Office operational plans. The complexity and breadth of identified risks is leading to slow progress.

The Home Office proposals appear to constantly change and the communications with the community by the Home Office has been very poor
At this point we do not have clarity on

- When Scampton will be mobilised
- Where the Cohort moving into Scampton will be coming from
- How many asylum seekers will arrive over what timeframe
- Where Asylum decisions will be taken
- When and what the Home Office will be communicating with the local community

Weekly meetings are taken place with Home Office officials and we have provided the Home Office with a list of asks based on our assessments and assumptions and we are still awaiting a response.

The Home office are treating the large sites as 'Pathfinders' and we are regularly meeting with other 'pathfinders' and sharing learning/impacts etc.

Supplementary question

Are you in support of the plans to house at the Scampton site?

Answer

I do not believe the placing of 2,000 people is not a good idea and it could potentially put pressure on our already stretched budgets. However I support our obligation to support refugees and these people should be treated fairly and with dignity.

Councillor Dave Clarkson to Councillor Rebecca Longbottom

Question

What is the current customer service wait time for a customer to speak to an operator?

Answer

The overall average wait time for a customer to speak to an advisor was 3 minutes 11 seconds in June 2023. This continues to be an improvement in our call wait times.

Supplementary question

Customers should reasonably expect to receive a full and comprehensive answer at the time of asking a question. However, I appreciate this will impact on the wait time for other customers. Therefore, please can you share the impact of staff reductions from 24 to 20 on call wait times.

Answer

This information is not currently available to hand but I will get back to you on this.

Councillor Mark Storer to Councillor Donald Nannestad

Question

Council tenants who are abusive to their neighbours, openly take drugs and behave anti-socially are causing misery to their neighbours. This particularly impacts vulnerable residents and families. What are you doing to address this unsatisfactory situation?

Answer

The authority has a range of powers under the Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 that can be used to tackle antisocial behaviour (ASB). Whilst most of our customers cause no nuisance to their neighbours, there are a small number that do. Tenancy Services works closely with the Public Protection and Antisocial Behaviour Team (PPASB), Legal, the Police and several other agencies to tackle this behaviour and to ensure we are supporting local residents.

The action taken by the authority depends on the anti-social behaviour being committed and it is essential that proportionality is applied with the evidence to support our actions. Diary books will be collected to inform our decisions and can be used in evidence for any court proceedings. The type of behaviour you are referring to, would be considered as high risk and would be immediately reported to the police and PPASB Team. At present, PPASB and Tenancy Services hold a weekly ASB tasking meeting to discuss cases of concern and you can be assured that any cases with the concerns you are raising would be discussed at this meeting. A referral to the ASB Risk Assessment Conference would also be made, which is a monthly multi-agency meeting chaired by PPASB. This meeting discusses high risk cases and agrees a range of actions that can tackle the behaviour and support residents.

Whilst the police will tackle the drug taking, PPASB can assist with the service of Community Protection Warnings, Community Protection Notices, and breach of these may result in a Notice of Seeking Possession being served to end their tenancy. We also have civil injunctions that are available, Closure Notices and Orders can also be used to close a property down. We can also use Partial Closure Orders that could exclude visitors to the property. The police also have the Our robust ASB policies and procedures are in place to support the actions being taken. Any enforcement actions that we take are with full consideration of the Equality Act 2010 and a Public Sector Equality Duty Assessment is always carried out to ensure the vulnerabilities of the perpetrators have also been considered in our decision making and the necessary support has been put into place. Tenancy Services manage the breaches of the tenancy agreement. Under the Housing Act 1988, Tenancy Services have power to serve Notice to end a tenancy. Notices can be served on mandatory or discretionary grounds, but we still must apply to court for a date to present our evidence and following success at court, await an eviction date.

We fully acknowledge that this can be a lengthy process and it can be difficult time for neighbours. Should anyone be considered at risk due to this behaviour, the resident would be immediately offered temporary accommodation. The police provide a supporting letter that an individual may be at risk, and we work with police to ensure any individuals at risk of harm are moved to a place of safety. Staff ensure that complainants are regularly updated on action taken and support with witness statements that can be used in court. Residents can also be referred to victim support and we will ensure that we work with any support workers currently in place or refer to our sustainment team to assist during this difficult time. The level of the vulnerability of the complainants and their household is assessed and decision on support required are made based on this assessment and through talking to the resident.

Supplementary question

There have been a number of issues within my Ward and the affected tenants do not always receive the relevant support. Should a tenant wish to move to another part of the City, is this an option available to them?

Answer

We can always look at this as an option but there are a limited number of properties available across the City.

Councillor Eddie Strengiel to Councillor Donald Nannestad

Question

How many Council houses in Lincoln contain asbestos?

Answer

Asbestos is a common material found in both commercial and domestic properties and was extensively used in premises built or refurbished prior to 2000. Of the 7,814 properties that we own and manage, 7,460 properties were built prior to 2000. The Council manage and monitor asbestos within our stock and if the asbestos cannot be managed, it would be removed or encapsulated, which is accepted practice within the sector.

City of Lincoln Council takes all necessary steps to fulfil its statutory duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and in particular the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 with regards to approved codes of practices and HSE guidance. In addition to this, we have an Asbestos Management plan in place. We have currently surveyed 86% of the 7,814 that we own and manage and remove, encapsulated or manage the asbestos accordingly.

Supplementary question

The Council has previously received a fine regarding the removal of asbestos. Is the Council taking all steps necessary to avoid this happening again?

Answer

As stated in my previous answer, regular surveys are carried out of our council properties. There is information available on the council's website regarding

asbestos and information is provided to our tenants and tenants should get in touch should they have any concerns.

Councillor Matthew Fido to Councillor Naomi Tweddle

Question

How much has the Council spent on cleaning the new Lincoln Central Car Park since it was opened?

Answer

There was no external contractor cleaning of Central Car Park until June 2021. From that point until today the total contractor cleaning cost is £78,309 which includes three deep cleans (not all deep cleans cover the whole car park so the cost of each clean varies). This is the premier car park in the city, attracting a huge number of customers and generating in excess of £2m in revenue per annum. Therefore, a high specification cleansing regime is an essential investment in the asset.

Supplementary question

I second your comments. The lifts are not necessarily always working at all times, what is being done to address this?

Answer

I agree, this is not ideal and it is a priority of the Council to address this issue.

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

(a) Councillor R Metcalfe - Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Our People and Resources

Councillor Ric Metcalfe, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Our People and Resources, provided Council with an update on the work of his portfolio.

Councillor Metcalfe advised that the report provided an update on the Council's current progress towards Vision 2025 strategic plan, together with updates on each of the service areas under his portfolio focusing on the last twelve months.

Over the past year, it had been reassuring to see the City had continued to recover from the impacts of the pandemic. However, whilst it was extremely encouraging after a difficult time for all, sight must not be lost on the current challenges the City was now facing, such as those linked to the cost of living crisis, and ensure those challenges remained a key focus for the Council. This would ensure residents continued to receive the support they needed and the best possible service from the Council.

Those challenges, and the need to provide additional support for residents, came at a time when the financial sustainability of the Council also continued to be challenging. The Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-2028 set out a need to deliver total annual revenue savings of £1.75m by 2026/27.

The report set out some key achievements that had been accomplished throughout the year and provided details in respect of the following:

- Financial sustainability
- Revenues and benefits shared service
- Procurement
- Property services
- Emergency planning
- Business continuity
- Risk assessment
- Corporate health and safety
- Human resources
- Work based learning
- Craft Apprenticeship Scheme
- Corporate communications and media relations
- Civic and international partnerships
- Legal services

RESOLVED

That the report be received.

13. Calendar of Meetings 2023/24

RESOLVED

That the Calendar of Meetings for 2023/24 be confirmed.