

**REPORT UNDER RULE 2(VI) OF THE COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES****Annual report by Cllr Sue Burke  
- Portfolio Holder for Reducing Inequality****1 Introduction**

Over the past year our residents have continued to face many challenges due to the ongoing cost of living pressures. As a direct result of this we have seen an increased number of residents turning to the City of Lincoln Council and our key partners locally for support to help them through this challenging time.

Subsequently, the necessity for the council to provide this support has had a direct impact on our services, some of which have been required to deliver additional support schemes and services alongside the business as usual support they already provide.

I would like to say a huge thank you to our staff, elected members and our partners for continuing to provide this vital additional support at a time when resources are already under significant pressure. This dedication makes me feel proud to be an elected member and the Portfolio Holder for Reducing Inequalities.

In my report below I have provided an update on each of the council services, which fall under the responsibility of my portfolio. These updates focus on the key developments and success stories over the past 12 months.

Performance information has been included where available within the service updates I have provided. Additionally, Appendix C at the end of my report includes the latest performance measure outturns for those strategic performance measures linked to my portfolio.

I would like to thank officers for their support in helping to produce this report.

**2 Welfare and Benefits Advice**

- 2.1 During the past year, the Welfare Team has had two very experienced advisers leave their roles, for retirement and opportunities elsewhere in the county. This reduction in staffing has had an impact on the ability of the team to deliver debt casework, but happily recruitment has been successfully completed and the team will soon be back up to full strength.
- 2.2 The team works across both Lincoln and North Kesteven, providing advice and assistance in claiming benefit, with a focus on helping residents to navigate the complex rules and entitlement conditions of the full range of welfare benefits. Additionally, the team provides advice on pensions, grants, charitable payments and tax credits. In the past 12 months the team has had conversations, appointments, or home visits with a total of 6,949 Lincoln customers.
- 2.3 The debt casework undertaken by the team is managed within the regulations set out by the Financial Conduct Authority and the council is a member of the Community Money Advice organisation who provide training for the debt advisers and who monitor our quality by undertaking regular visits and an annual report. The 2023 report was

positive and congratulated the advisers on their work. A file audit was undertaken with a 100% rating for quality of advice given and outcome achieved.

### **3 Welfare Reform and Cost of Living Support**

3.1 Our Welfare Reform Support Team has continued to provide vital support to the residents of Lincoln over the last 18 months. This support has been delivered during a challenging time due to the rising cost of living and the significant financial challenges this presents. Provided below is an update on each element of support provided by the Welfare Reform Support Team and our partners focusing on the past 12 months.

#### **3.2 Household Support Fund –**

A significant initiative delivered by the Welfare Reform Support Team has been the Household Support Fund. This is a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) funded scheme, delivered throughout the county. The scheme has been delivered working closely with Lincolnshire County Council and other district councils.

3.3 Household Support Fund wave 3 was delivered in Lincoln in the latter part of 2022/23. Applications for support were taken from our referral partners and vouchers / payments allocated accordingly.

Additionally, for those in receipt of Housing Benefit and not entitled to the national Cost of Living payment, a £250 voucher was issued (via the Post Office) to these households. Officers worked with partner organisations to deliver these monies promptly, effectively and to those identified / referred as being most in need, with over £300,000 being delivered. The table below outlines the allocation of these payments:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Allocation</b>
Number of families without children	609
Number of families with children	590
Households on Housing Benefit only	623
Total amount of award	£301,250
<b>Total paid</b>	<b>£301,250</b>

3.4 In his Autumn Statement 2022, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced an extension to the Household Support Fund, running from 1st April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. Guidance was issued to local authorities on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023, along with the allocations for this round of funding. For Lincolnshire, Household Support Fund 2023/24 funding is £10,929,370, which is to cover the whole financial year.

3.5 In Quarter 1 2023/24, Lincolnshire County Council confirmed plans in respect of Household Support Fund wave 4 2023/24 (HSF4), and updated its HSF website page ([Household Support Fund – Lincolnshire County Council](#)), which included the following:

- *Approximately 43% of the funding will be delegated to schools and early years providers to support children eligible for benefit-related free school meals, early years pupil premium and families with a 2-year-old eligible for early years entitlement.*
- *Approximately 44% will be directed through Lincolnshire's district councils to provide financial support to housing benefit only claimants not in receipt of other support provided via the national scheme.*

- 1% of the grant funding will be used to provide financial support to eligible care leavers in supported living accommodation.
- The remaining grant funding will be directed towards other vulnerable households via local schemes, with approximately 11% of the local grant made available to district councils on a proportionate basis. District councils and other third sector / voluntary organisations will work to provide an application-based process to ensure this funding is distributed through local channels in line with the grant conditions. Further details on this process will be published on district council websites once agreed.

3.6 For Housing Benefit recipients in Lincolnshire who were not entitled to the national Cost of Living Payment 2023/24 ([Cost of Living Payments 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cost-of-living-payment-2023-24)), the intention is that this payment (subject to available funding) will be replicated in three phases. The first payment (£301) was made to Lincoln residents in August / September 2023 via Post Office vouchers, and the second payment (£300) in December 2023.

3.7 In terms of district councils' separate allocations of HSF4 to be utilised to work with partners to provide payments, including through an application-based process in part (a requirement of the national HSF4 guidance), these have been communicated to district councils' HSF4 lead officers - for City of Lincoln £202,676 has been allocated – this does not include the Cost of Living Payments being made to Housing Benefit recipients (see paragraph 3.6).

3.8 Officers have been in discussions with an established range of referral partners, as well as some new partners / routes, to ensure these HSF4 monies (through vouchers, food parcels, energy top-ups etc.) are delivered to those identified as in need. A key focus is again to reduce foodbank dependency wherever possible, working with partners to help signpost residents to other means of support (e.g., money advice), as well as supporting a drive to further increase usage of Lincoln Community Grocery. In monetary terms from August 2023 to the end of November 2023 a total of £247,488 was delivered through HSF4 in the City of Lincoln.

A strategic aim of HSF4 is also to try and leave a 'legacy' of impact, as there is no guarantee of HSF5 (or of another form of local welfare provision) from 2024/25 onwards. No announcement was made within the Chancellor's Autumn Statement 2023 with regard to extension of Household Support Fund into 2024/25. However, this does mean there could now be a further announcement in advance of April 2024.

In terms of an 'open application' scheme, the first wave was delivered in October/November 2023, with a further 'wave' to be considered for early 2024.

### 3.9 **Energy Bill Support Scheme Alternative Funding (EBSS AF) / Alternative Fuel Payment (AFP) -**

In October 2022, central government announced an Energy Bill Support Scheme Alternative Funding (EBSS AF) scheme intended to provide the £400 of support for households across the UK that would otherwise miss out on the Energy Bills Support Scheme, which the vast majority of households were already receiving as they did not have a domestic electricity contract.

- 3.10 The government also announced a further £200 Alternative Fuel Payment (AFP) to help those households in Great Britain using alternative fuels such as biomass or heating oil to meet energy costs.

Households who may benefit from these schemes could include those such as:

- Care home residents
- Residents of park homes
- Tenants in certain private and social rented homes
- Homes supplied via private wires
- Residents of caravans and houseboats on registered sites
- Farmers living in domestic farmhouses
- Off-grid households

These payments were made by our Revenues and Benefits Shared Service. For Lincoln the following allocations / payments were made:

Energy Scheme	Applications Approved	Total Paid
Energy Bills Support Scheme – Alternative Fund	253	£101,200
Alternative Fuel Payment – Alternative Fund	13	£2,600

#### 3.11 Council Tax Support Fund 2023/24 –

On 23rd December 2022, central government provided guidance to local authorities regarding a £100 million Council Tax Support Fund for 2023/24, whereby awards of up to £25 are to be made to Council Taxpayers in receipt of Council Tax Support, with an element of funding also to be made for discretionary local funds in 2023/24. The funding allocation for City of Lincoln, being £222,303.

Payments of up to £50.00 (the prescribed maximum was £25.00) were made to City of Lincoln and taxpayers as part of the 2023/24 Council Tax annual billing process. Remaining funding is being delivered by a local discretionary scheme in 2023/24.

## 4 Housing Benefit / Council Tax Support

- 4.1 Our Benefits Team continues to administer a significant number of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support claims – the caseloads currently being 3,919 and 8,330 respectively. Our Council Tax Support caseload rose sharply as a result of the initial Covid-19 lockdown, then plateaued somewhat before falling and returning back to pre-pandemic levels. However, with the ongoing cost of living pressures on residents there is the potential that the number of Council Tax Support recipients may begin to increase again.
- 4.2 Despite the challenges, pressures and demands on the Benefits Team, including significant numbers of Universal Credit related documents requiring action, New Claims and Changes of Circumstance continue to be processed promptly, with positive average processing times being achieved – New Claims are currently being processed within an average of 15.65 days and Changes of Circumstance in 5.81 days (as at the end of

November 2023). These rates of performance compare favourably ahead of national average processing times.

- 4.3 Our Benefits Team also process Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) applications – essentially to assist customers requiring additional help with housing costs, usually on a short-term basis only. Payments are limited to a fund provided by central government each year. Any payments above this figure are a direct cost to the council.
- 4.4 Despite rising rents in the city as well as a national ‘freeze’ on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates (used to assess Housing Benefit and Universal Credit housing costs entitlement), funding has decreased in recent years, meaning officers regularly need to review guidance regarding making awards. LHA rates have been unfrozen for 2024/25, as announced in the Autumn Statement 2023.
- 4.5 On 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023, DWP announced DHP government grants for 2023/24. For City of Lincoln this is exactly the same amount as for 2022/23, and the announcement also stated that the national DHP allocation for 2024/25 will be the same as for 2023/24. Therefore, individual local authorities may well receive the same figures for 2024/25. Confirmation of the DHP allocation for 2024/25 is likely to be received in December 2023 or January 2024.
- 4.6 The table below includes the confirmed 2023/24 allocations, alongside previous years’ grants.

	<b>City of Lincoln Council central government DHP grant</b>
<b>2023/24</b>	<b>£132,330</b>
2022/23	£132,330
2021/22	£186,707
2020/21	£250,113
2019/20	£178,674
2018/19	£208,624
2017/18	£242,505
2016/17	£173,675
2015/16	£139,678
2014/15	£194,308
2013/14	£199,741
2012/13	£98,865

- 4.7 In 2023/24 all of the £132,330 government allocation was spent, plus a further £8,278, a total of £140,608.

## **5 Discretionary Rate Relief Policy**

- 5.1 A ‘Business Rates Growth Policy’ was approved by Executive on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2018. The policy provides a time-limited rate relief discount to new and extended business premises within the city, in the interest of building the Business Rates base, supporting economic growth and job creation. Eligibility for this scheme is dependent on the extent of the business premises creation or extension, location and the impact of the new business or expansion plans on the local economy.

- 5.2 The impacts of Covid-19 meant applications under this policy understandably reduced. In 2021/22, a total of £19,338 was awarded under this policy. However, in 2022/23 eight businesses received this relief, totalling £42,345. In 2023/24 so far, six businesses have received a total of £42,924.

## **6 Financial Inclusion**

- 6.1 Financial inclusion continues to be a key objective and factor in many areas of our Revenues and Benefits Shared Services work. The Lincolnshire Financial Inclusion Partnership (LFIP) is currently chaired by our Assistant Director for Shared Revenues and Benefits, which brings together organisations and partners to promote and raise the profile of financial inclusion across the county. LFIP aims to ensure that everyone has the capability and opportunity to access appropriate financial services and products needed to participate fully in society, as well as developing, implementing and, when available, gain funding for positive solutions to improve financial inclusion for all people within Lincolnshire. LFIP also provides a forum for sharing good practice and information.
- 6.2 Two key areas of high-profile engagement by LFIP in 2023/24 include:
- Co-ordination of 'Talk Money Week' activities in Lincolnshire during the week-commencing 6<sup>th</sup> November 2023: <https://maps.org.uk/talk-money-week/>
  - A conference to be held on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024 (in Grantham), to follow-up from the highly successful conference held at the Jakemans Community Stadium in Boston in February 2023.
- 6.3 Also, officers are currently working with the Greater Lincolnshire Food Partnership (<https://lincolnshirefoodpartnership.org>), regarding how City of Lincoln Council may potentially be able to support the aspiration of 'Food as a public good'.

## **7 Safeguarding**

- 7.1 During the past year many safeguarding issues have continued to be reported across the council. This is very positive and demonstrates both our officers' awareness of the importance of safeguarding and their confidence identifying and reporting safeguarding concerns.
- 7.2 Safeguarding continues to be embedded, with regular training updates for all staff tailored to their roles and responsibilities. This approach helps the council to ensure our positive approach to safeguarding is maintained, and that our staff have the knowledge and skills to protect the city's most vulnerable people from harm.
- 7.3 The authority also continues to be represented on a number of multi-agency meetings across the county, working closely with colleagues at a range of partner organisations including Lincolnshire County Council, Lincolnshire Police and the NHS.

## **8 Skills and Training**

### **8.1 The Network**

During the past 12 months the council has continued to support The Network. The Network provides career and related advice to young individuals in the Not in Education

or Employment (NEET) group. The Network office is located on the ground floor at City Hall.

- 8.2 The Network has provided the key statistics in the table below for this service for the period September 2022 to September 2023. During this period The Network supported 233 clients. In comparison between October 2021 and October 2022, The Network supported 185 clients.

<b>The Network – September 2022 to September 2023</b>	
Clients total (all projects)	233
Initial assessments	128

<b>Outcomes</b>	
Job outcomes	21
Apprenticeships	4
Training	18
Volunteering / work experience	15
Traineeships	9

- 8.3 The Network has reported that usually during the summer holidays the service sees a decrease in referrals as individuals have plans for college or are on holiday. However, during summer 2023 The Network saw a continuing increase in referrals to them for help and support.
- 8.4 Additionally, The Network has also reported that the level of complexity, with the compounding issues of the cost of living crisis and the after effects of the pandemic, can't be understated with The Network also seeing more housing issues and mental health concerns with increased severity.
- 8.5 To help ensure support is reaching The Network's service users, during the past year The Network has launched some group peer-peer support sessions at the Link Up in St Marks. These sessions have been focused on helping to tackle social isolation amongst 18-24 year old NEETs with social anxiety, and/or who belong to marginalised groups e.g. transgender, neurodiverse. These sessions are reportedly going really well.
- 8.6 The Network has also highlighted the progress of the young individuals using the service is really amazing, which is especially encouraging to hear. During the past year some of The Network's young individuals are taking up volunteer roles locally to help and support other individuals to become comfortable and confident in themselves. Volunteering sessions include crafting, together with a session where attendees play table top role play games, which are great for social confidence.
- 8.7 In terms of funding for this valuable service, like other support providers The Network has reported that it is feeling the pressure and strain of the current financial landscape. The removal of European Social Fund for charities has been hugely and negatively impactful. In The Network's case, this is further compounded by challenges around long term funding for increasing their capacity – this is especially important as The Network has reported that they feel that this is only the beginning of a wave of problems for young individuals post-pandemic.

## **9 Allocations, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping**

- 9.1 The volume of work in the Allocations, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping services has continued to be very challenging over the past year.

To ensure the customers' needs are accommodated as best as possible, the services have continued to connect with customers remotely and in person at City Hall during the year. The Allocations, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping services have also reintroduced home visits where this is the most appropriate course of action.

- 9.2 Additionally, the services have also been working with a specialist consultant to develop a new Homelessness Strategy for the city. This has been a challenging process but has already resulted in the implementation of some useful actions, which have yielded benefits in relation to our prevention work, our use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation and access to the private rented sector.
- 9.3 The new Homelessness Strategy is currently out for consultation and will progress through the Policy Scrutiny and Executive approval process in early 2024.

## **10 Asylum Seekers and Refugees**

- 10.1 Members will recall that the council has been actively involved in the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme during the past year, having provided accommodation for two families from Syria and three families from Afghanistan.
- 10.2 Additionally, the council has also been heavily involved in the response to the conflict in Ukraine, having worked closely with Lincolnshire County Council and the other Districts to undertake property checks and safeguarding processes to ensure Ukrainian Refugees are coming to safe and suitable accommodation in the area.
- 10.3 Over recent months, much officer time has been devoted to liaison with the Home Office, East Midlands Councils and Serco with regard to the National Asylum Dispersal Scheme and the proposed large site at RAF Scampton.

## **11 Neighbourhood Working**

### **11.1 Sincil Bank Revitalisation Programme**

Work continues to develop the key projects agreed as part of the Sincil Bank Revitalisation Programme. Included below is an update on the progress of this work.

- 11.2 **Highways Infrastructure** – Funded by the Towns Fund, Lincolnshire County Council has received £3.1m to make changes to the highways infrastructure in the area. Consultation events within the community have taken place that will inform a number of public realm improvements including the development of a Green Corridor along Sincil Bank. The Neighbourhood Team will continue to support this engagement and the delivery of a number of the improvements.
- 11.3 **Residents Parking** – Lincolnshire County Council's Planning and Regulation Committee approved a residents parking scheme in Sincil Bank on the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022 and the scheme was successfully implemented in the area on the 1<sup>st</sup> September



2023. The Neighbourhood Team has supported residents to apply for permits and also helped to communicate the scheme to residents in the area.

- 11.4 The images below show one area of Sincil Bank prior and post the implementation of the Residents Parking Scheme.



Before



After

- 11.5 **Open Spaces** – A partnership including the University of Lincoln, Sincil Community Land Trust and Bridge Church continue to explore ways to develop the areas of land under Pelham Bridge. A meeting with the National Lottery took place in August 2023 and the partnership submitted an application in mid-November to their 'Awards for All' programme to fund a feasibility study.
- 11.6 Sincil Community Land Trust also remain open to leasing the open space on Chelmsford Street. Before doing so, the council will need to resolve land ownership issues with a local developer. A report from Community Services will be submitted to the Executive later in the year.
- 11.7 **Hermit Street** – This will see the creation of eleven much need family homes in the area. Works started in October 2023 and the scheme will be completed by September 2024.
- 11.8 **Other key updates linked to the Sincil Bank Revitalisation Programme –**
- Alongside these physical interventions, the Neighbourhood Team continue to work hard to engage with the community and build trusted relationships.
- 11.9 **Sincil Bank Community Hub** - Located on Portland Street, the Sincil Bank Community Hub continues to build relationships with residents and is established as a well-known location to seek advice. Although the data is not captured, the team estimate over 75% of customers they support through the Hub do not speak English as their first language. Whilst at the Hub customers receive help and guidance on a wide range of topics, and are also supported to understand local information, such as initiatives taking place to improve the local area.
- 11.10 For the period September 2021 to September 2022, Sincil Bank Community Hub welcomed 495 visitors. In comparison, between April & September 2023 the Hub has welcomed 1,263 visitors, highlighting the importance of the Hub in providing support at the heart of the community. It is important to note the figures recorded are not unique

individuals and the team do have some people that attend on more than one occasion due to the support that they require. Additionally, the figures also include visitors who attend outreach surgeries delivered by Citizens Advice. This occurs each Thursday morning between the hours of 9am and 12pm.

- 11.11 Between 2019 and 2022 a postal survey was conducted to help understand local priorities and measure the impact of the support provided to communities in the Sincil Bank area. Some of the key findings from this survey are provided below:
- An 18.85% increase in respondents who state that they know which organisations to contact if they have a problem.
  - A 9.6% increase in respondents who state that they know what to do if they have a problem with fly tipping.
  - A 10.9% increase in respondents who state that they know where to get help if they have a problem with housing.
  - Over 4% increase in respondents who feel very strongly / strongly that they belong to their community.
  - An increase of 4.4% of respondents who believe that their neighbourhood is improving as a place to live.
  - An increase of 5.6% of respondents who are very satisfied with their neighbourhood and 2.1% decrease in those that are very dissatisfied.
- 11.12 **Sincil Community Land Trust** - The Place Shaping Framework introduced the idea of a local organisation capable of owning assets in the area. Initially Sincil Community Land Trust leased the council owned land on St Andrews Close. The Sincil Bank Community Land Trust have now successfully purchased their first property on St Andrews Close. This acquisition will hopefully be the first of many that will see an increase in good quality family accommodation in the area.
- 11.13 **Lincoln Embracing All Nations (LEAN)** - The need to support our culturally diverse communities is demonstrated to the team on a daily basis. The Neighbourhood Team has been instrumental in creating an organisation called Lincoln Embracing All Nations (LEAN), which is a long term solution to support the needs of our culturally diverse communities. LEAN has appointed two members of staff to advance the organisation and support the various groups that support our communities in the city. LEAN is a city-wide service and also supports residents and groups outside of the Sincil Bank area including the Islamic Association and Arabic School.
- 11.14 Monthly immigration surgeries continue to be delivered, which are constantly at capacity. Groups have been supported to host events and work continues to deliver the longer term aspiration of LEAN having a city wide location that will act as a focal point for our diverse communities.
- 11.15 **Community Chest Funding** - During the past twelve months, the remaining Community Chest funds have been allocated to community projects. One of the last organisations to receive funding was Green Synergy. Green Synergy delivered a consultation exercise with residents to identify how they would like to utilise the open space on Chelmsford Street. Projects funded during the previous year have gone from strength to strength. Most notably the Portland Street Project where Sage Gardener worked with local residents to improve the appearance of the flats on Portland Street. This project was supported by donations from local businesses. The lead resident for the project has recently received recognition from BBC Radio Lincolnshire.

The Community Chest schemes operated in Sincil Bank have influenced a city-wide Community Chest that has been jointly funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Investors in Lincoln.

- 11.16 **Community events and activities** - The team has supported a number of events in the area and funded Lincoln City Foundation to deliver activities at St Andrews Gardens. To further improve the physical activities available to young people within the Sincil Bank area, the Neighbourhood Team has also helped to establish the Sincil Bank Football Club, with under 7 and under 8 teams participating in the mid-Lincs football league.

## **12 Equality and Diversity**

### **12.1 Employer Perspective**

Over the past twelve months the Human Resources team has continued to offer support, advice and guidance on equality, diversity and inclusion at the council.

During this time there has been focus on men and women's health. Andy's Man Club, a men's suicide prevention charity, has delivered presentations to City Hall and Hamilton House and the successful Menopause Café has been relaunched as the Health and Wellbeing Café (women through the ages) to widen scope for discussions.

- 12.2 Training continues to be reviewed and the "looking after your teams mental health" training has now been developed into an e-learning package and is available for all staff. The training explores the concept of mental health and provides practical guidance for those who may be struggling with mental health issues.
- 12.3 A LGBTQ+ community group has been launched to provide a safe space for members of the LGBTQ+ community (or those questioning) to come together to support each other, discuss a range of topics and potentially arrange events and socials.
- 12.4 The Human Resources team has been involved with the co-creation of a set of contemporary STRIDE EDI Standards to evidence progress towards being more inclusive, more diverse, and operating in a way that ensures employees are treated fairly and with respect for the UK business / public sector.
- 12.5 The council successfully retained accreditations as a Mindful Employer, Disability Confident Employer, Foster Friendly Employer and has retained the Carers Quality Award.
- 12.6 The council's workforce as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 stood at 600 staff members, of which 269 were males and 331 were females. 31 members of the workforce declared a disability and 20 were from all other ethnic groups combined. The largest age group was 50 to 59 years of age, with 170 staff members in this age group.
- 12.7 The Human Resources team has continued to provide advice and guidance, monitor recruitment and workforce data and review HR policies and procedures during the past 12 months.

## 12.8 Service User Perspective

Alongside my role as the Portfolio Holder for Reducing Inequalities, I am also the vice chair of the council's Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel. One of the key roles of this panel is to monitor the council's progress towards meeting its five Equality Objectives on a rolling basis, together with meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a reminder the council's Equality Objectives are as follows:

1. Our services are accessible and do not discriminate on any unjustifiable grounds.
2. Local communities, partners and stakeholders are empowered to influence the way our services are provided to them.
3. Equality and Diversity is at the heart of decision making at all levels within the city council.
4. Our workforce at all levels reflects the makeup of the local community.
5. Equalities, Social Inclusion and Community Cohesion have all improved within our communities.

12.9 Each year the council develops an Equality & Diversity Action Plan, which contains the key actions the council is delivering during the current year towards meeting these objectives. The plan is a 'live' document with new actions added throughout the year as they arise.

12.10 At the time of writing this report, out of the 26 actions included within the current Equality & Diversity Action Plan 2023/24, which runs from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 –

- 16 actions are currently being progressed
- 2 actions are complete
- 8 actions are yet to be started but are scheduled to start in the near future as planned

12.11 Following each plan coming to an end, the activity progressed by the council towards meeting its Equality Objectives is reviewed within an annual Equality Journal, which is published on the council's website. The latest 2022/23 Equality Journal was published in December 2023 following review and approval by Council in November 2023. This details the equality & diversity activity progressed by the council during the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

12.12 During the past year across the council managers have continued to use the Equality Analysis Toolkit, which ensures all equality and diversity impacts are considered when making changes to existing services or introducing new services. During June 2023 Equality Impact Assessment Awareness Training was delivered to key officers across each directorate. This training was a success and helped to reaffirm the importance of undertaking Equality Impact Assessments and the consequences of completing these assessments incorrectly or not at all.

## 13 Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour (PPASB Team)

13.1 The PPASB Team operates to protect individuals, the community, and the amenity of the city. The team operates over a broad range of areas, with the core services providing a combination of both proactive and reactive activities.

These areas include:

- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Noise
- Animals
- Pests / conditions of gardens
- Accumulations of waste
- Fly-tipping investigations
- Licencing consultations
- Bins on streets
- Littering Fixed Penalty Notices

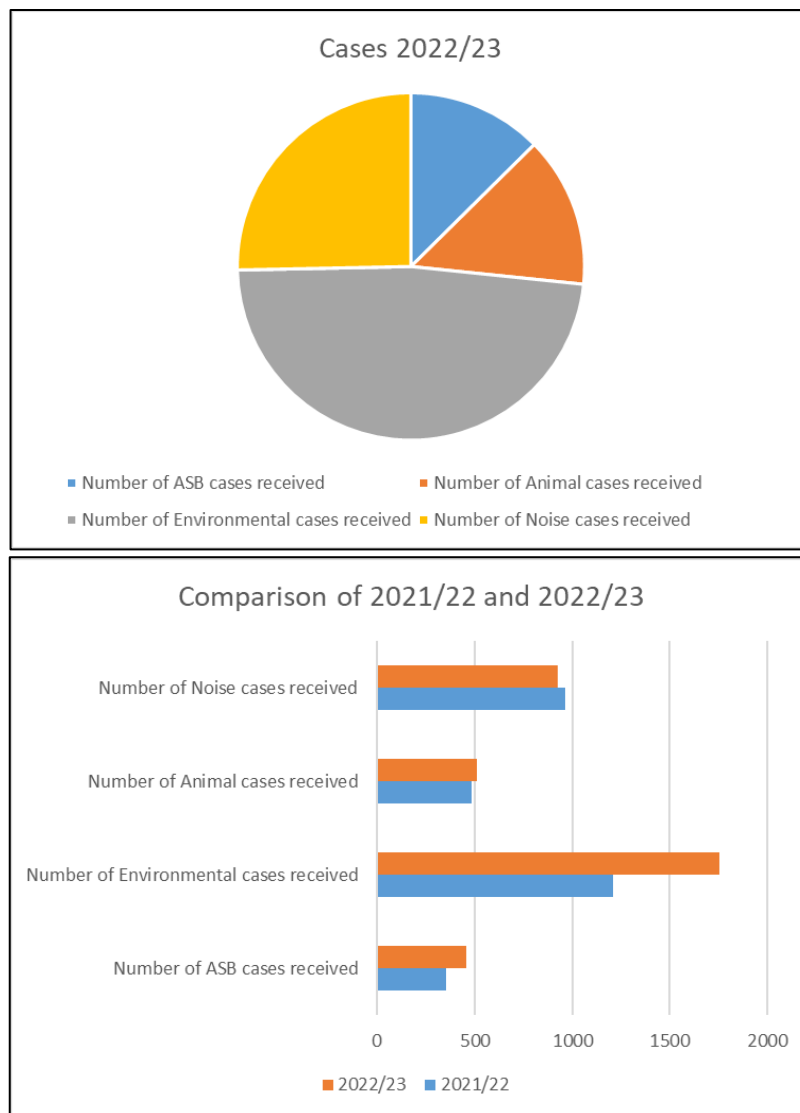
## 13.2 Service Demand

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 the PPASB Team received 4,049 requests for service across all their service areas including Anti-Social Behaviour, noise nuisance, animal related concerns, environmental issues such as fly tipping, and pests. Below shows the number of requests for service each year between 2017/18 and 2022/23 for comparison –

Year	PPASB Team service requests
2017/18	3,205
2018/19	3,183
2019/20	2,781
2020/21	2,523
2021/22	3,815
2022/23	4,049

The figures above show that during Covid, service requests reduced, however, service demand has now exceeded pre-Covid levels. When comparing the pre-Covid demand of 3,205 (year 2017/18) with the last financial years demand of 4,049 (year 2022/23), service demand has increased by 26.3%.

- 13.3 Focusing on the current year, service demand for Quarter 1 of 2023/24 also remained high with 966 service requests during this quarter. This suggests demand will also be high for the remainder of the year 2023/24.
- 13.4 The charts below provide an indication of the service demand by category for the year 2022/23 -



### 13.5 Enforcement Action

In most cases it is possible for the team to resolve complaints without taking formal enforcement action. This is done through advice and guidance, through letters, visits, informal mediation, agreeing parameters and seeking support from partners.

In 2022/23 the PPASB Team served a total of 228 Community Protection Warnings (CPW's), which is an example of how early warnings and intervention can resolve issues. In a few cases it is necessary to undertake formal enforcement. This could be the service of a legal notice requiring action, the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice, seeking an injunction, seeking a closure order, or working with Housing to seek possession or a prosecution. Appendix A provides a breakdown of the enforcement action undertaken during the full year 2022/23.

Over the past year improving communication and joint working opportunities between the Housing and PPASB Teams has been a focus. This has allowed for effective problem solving using the tenancy agreement alongside the tools and powers available to the PPASB Team.

Appendix B shows the enforcement action undertaken between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

### 13.6 Management of Change (MOC)

Post Covid a decision was taken to review the way the team operates. This was necessary to increase resilience, provide succession planning and to enable the team to respond to the rising case levels.

The MOC has facilitated all Technical Officers working to the same job description and a focus on updating their skills across the full range of PPASB functions. The implementation of this is likely to be phased and so the full benefit will not be realised until 2024/25.

The past year has seen the team undergo training across a variety of the team's functions. This included Statutory Nuisance, Anti-Social Behaviour tools & powers and the Police and Criminal Evidence act. ASB Case Management training is currently being arranged for the coming months.

### 13.7 Staffing

The PPASB Team has been subject to several staffing changes during 2022/23. This has impacted the capacity of the team during the year as recruitment and training has been the focus of attention.

The current Team Leader came into post in October 2022, alongside the following recruitment that took place during the year 2022/23;

- Two Technical Officers (following resignations)
- One Support Assistant Post (following a promotion of previous post holder)
- One part time Technical Assistant (following a reduction in hours from the full-time post holder)
- One Apprentice (vacant post filled)

### 13.8 City Centre Management

City Centre Tasking Meetings enable information sharing, priorities to be decided, resources to be coordinated and understood, and emerging issues to be identified and fed into the City Centre and Uphill Management Meeting.

CCTV, Police, Car Parking Services, Lincoln BIG, Project Compass and the Rough Sleeper Team meet on a fortnightly basis to discuss ongoing and emerging issues within the city centre and our Multi-Story Car Parks. This group share intelligence and formulate an operational response to issues, alongside setting and reviewing priorities for the two weeks ahead at each meeting.

The group has tackled some serious Youth ASB issues in the Multi-Story Car Parks. This resulted in approximately 50 Youth ASB warning letters being served following the Safer Lincolnshire Partnerships Youth ASB protocol.

### 13.9 Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO)

There are currently three active PSPOs:

1. A PSPO that covers the City Centre (and wider) that prohibits the consumption of intoxicating substances or having an open container of alcohol. This PSPO is

due for renewal and work has started in relation to the review, which includes a public and stakeholder consultation, which considers the prohibitions and geographical coverage of the PSPO. The consultation commenced on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2023. All members were invited to take part in this consultation.

2. A PSPO that covers three Multi-Storey Car parks. This PSPO has been extended for a further three years, with no changes to the prohibitions or location, as of October 2023.
3. A PSPO, which prevents access to St Peters Passage. This PSPO is in force until October 2024.

### **13.10 Safer Lincolnshire Partnership**

The Safer Lincolnshire Partnership has continued to have strategic overview of three key areas. These areas are Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), Serious and Organised Crime and Reducing Offending, with cross cutting themes of Mental Health and substance misuse. During the past year, City of Lincoln Council has continued to have representation on the Strategic Group and the ASB Core Priority Group (ASB CPG). The ASB CPG has produced a Youth ASB protocol, a Noxious Odour Policy and is working on improving the county wide response to noise nuisance complaints.

### **13.11 PPASB Service Forward Look**

Over the next 12 months there will be a focus on the upskilling of the already established and newly appointed team members. This will allow the team to become more responsive to issues and could see the implementation of more proactive enforcement in areas such as the City Centre.

Demand across all services provided by the team is expected to remain high. This puts pressure on the team to respond, investigate and enforce against 4,000 plus service request per year.

The removal of the ASB Co-Ordinator role by Lincolnshire Police is a risk to the service. Work is underway to improve joint working, training and communication between the Police and council teams. Joint training sessions are being organised.

## **14 CCTV Service**

- 14.1 Over the past 12 months the CCTV service has monitored over 9,900 incidents, processed 680 reviews and produced 780 evidence discs for criminal prosecutions as part of the council's ongoing support for the police and commitment to public safety. This is broadly consistent with previous years.
- 14.2 The CCTV service has also continued multi-agency working to support the day and night-time economy in the city, and as part of this, the service has continued to nurture closer working relationships and present a transparent service.
- 14.3 Lay Visitors have visited the Control Room once a month during the past year. This has helped to ensure the service has been working to the required standard and has remained transparent in the work they undertake. Visits to the Control Room from stakeholders, community groups and recently elected councillors have continued to increase.



- 14.4 The CCTV service has continued to benefit from the previously successful round of the Safer Street Fund. This has given the service extended coverage in the Abbey, Carholme, Castle and Park wards. Additionally, a new camera has also been installed on Newland enabling the service to fill a gap in the coverage from City Centre to Carholme. Following a successful bid to the Safer Streets 5 funding round, from January the unit will be double staffed. In addition to this there is also funding available for infrastructure.
- 14.5 Following the installation of new CCTV software, the service has also been able to provide valuable footfall data for key events in the city during the past year, including Steampunk, Lincoln Live and 1940's Weekend, together with provide footfall data for any other events in the City Centre. This enables officials to make informed decisions to ensure that these and any future events can take place with minimal issues.
- 14.6 Alongside the city centre, the service has continued to monitor various council sites including;
- City Hall
  - Hartsholme Park
  - Boultham Park
  - Arboretum
  - St Botolph's Court
  - Derek Miller Court
  - Yarborough Leisure Centre
  - Birchwood Leisure Centre
  - Trent View
  - Jarvis House
  - Hamilton House
- 14.7 Additionally, the service has also continued to support events hosted in the city such as football matches, the Lincoln 10k, cycling events, Lincoln Pride, Christmas lights and any marches or protests.
- 14.8 The figures below show the relatively consistent incident numbers for the last 3 years recorded by the service –
- 2021 - 9,637
  - 2022 – 9,566
  - 2023 – 9,905
- 14.9 Since April 2022 after the new Safer Streets cameras were installed, fly tipping incidents were high, but then dropped off. Unfortunately, the service has reported that this trend has not continued and the service has had to produce 42 evidence discs this year for fly tipping.

The Public Protection & Anti-Social Behaviour Team have issued penalty notices to individuals who have been identified and so it is envisaged this robust enforcement approach to fly tipping will dissuade offenders moving forward.

## **15 Lincoln Community Lottery**

- 15.1 Lincoln Community Lottery is now in its fifth year, originally being launched in August 2018. The lottery provides a useful tool for local good causes to use at no cost to raise additional funds to support their work locally. To date the lottery has raised just under £200k for local good causes, with 85 causes currently using the lottery as a fund raising tool.
- 15.2 For every £1 ticket sold, 50 pence directly goes to the supporters chosen good cause with an additional 10 pence supporting the Lincoln Lottery Community Fund. Each supporter of the lottery also has the option of selecting the Lincoln Lottery Community Fund as their good cause and in these cases the full 60 pence supports this fund.
- 15.3 The Lincoln Lottery Community Fund is allocated on an annual basis. Following an application and selection process commencing in October 2023, the 2023 fund of £10,000 was awarded at the end of November 2023. The successful applicants for a share of the 2023 fund were The Centre for Reconciliation, Mint Lane Café, LEAP and Adi's Legacy Non-Profit CIC. The funding will be used to support projects over the coming year focused on the topic's green spaces and homelessness. All projects delivered using the fund must support the residents of the City of Lincoln.
- 15.4 Due to the lottery being a type of gambling, the council continues to consider the impacts of gambling and ensure where the lottery is promoted, that this is done so responsibly. In August 2023 as part of this proactive approach, a joint decision was made between the City of Lincoln Council and the council's external lottery manager to change the minimum age limit for Lincoln Community Lottery from 16 to 18. Currently this change is not a statutory requirement of local authority lotteries. The change was formally implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023.

## **16 Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter**

- 16.1 The Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter is also in its fifth year, with the charter originally being launched in September 2018. At the time of writing this report 104 local organisations had gained accreditation to the charter, with each demonstrating their commitment towards corporate social responsibility and going above and beyond the statutory minimum to support their employees and the local community. The number of accredited organisations continues to fluctuate.
- 16.2 All organisations from across all sectors are welcome to join the charter. The criteria which organisations must meet to gain accreditation differs depending on the number of employees the organisation has. All organisations gaining accreditation must either have a base in the city and/or staff which live within the city boundary.
- 16.3 Annual contact continues to be made with all accredited organisations to ensure they continue to meet the required criteria to retain accreditation. This contact also allows the council to keep up to date with the range of socially responsible activities taking place locally.
- 16.4 Following an organisation gaining accreditation, the council actively promotes charter signees via a range of routes. This promotion includes sharing case studies and videos giving an insight into why some organisations chose to undertake socially responsible activities and join the charter. A directory of all charter signees is available on the

council's website. Included within the directory are the web addresses of charter signees, a location map and signee case studies (where provided).

- 16.5 City of Lincoln Council is proud to continue to undertake a range of socially responsible activities itself. Some examples of the socially responsible activities the council has continued to deliver over the previous 12 months are provided below –

Activities benefitting our employees	Activities benefitting our local community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Employers for Carers Charter signee</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides a food bank collection point for staff to donate to</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dying to Work Charter signee</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Undertakes local recruitment where possible</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides an employee benefits scheme</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Offers work experience placements</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Foster Friendly Employer</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Deliver our own apprenticeship scheme</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognised as a real Living Wage employer by the Living Wage Foundation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use services of local businesses / local products</li></ul>

- 16.6 Further information on the charter and the charter directory can be viewed by visiting [www.lincoln.gov.uk/socialresponsibility](http://www.lincoln.gov.uk/socialresponsibility).

## 17 Looking ahead

- 17.1 The cost of living challenges we are facing will unfortunately continue over the coming year and further into the future. This will unavoidably result in our residents continuing to rely on the City of Lincoln Council and our partners to provide further help and support during these difficult times.

As the Portfolio Holder for Reducing Inequalities, working alongside council officers, elected members and partners, I will continue to drive forward the Reducing Inequalities agenda and ensure this help and support reaches those in need. I look forward to undertaking this work and seeing the positive outcomes from this over the year ahead.

**Cllr Sue Burke**  
**Portfolio Holder for Reducing Inequality**

## APPENDIX A – Enforcement Action - 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

WARNINGS	
Community Protection Warnings	228
ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	
Littering Fixed Penalty Notices	1
Fly tipping Community Protection Notices	1
Fly tipping Fixed Penalty Notices	5
Bins on streets Community Protection Notices	20
Bins on streets Fixed Penalty Notices	13
Dog Fouling Fixed Penalty Notice	0
NOISE ISSUES	
Noise Abatement Notices	8
Noise Community Protection Notices	1
GENERAL ASB ISSUES	
ASB Community Protection Notices	5
Injunctions	2
Criminal Behaviour Orders	13
Closures	1
CONDITION OF PROPERTY RELATED ISSUES	
Prevention of Damage by Pests Notices	5
Condition of Garden or Property Notices, Inc Filthy & Verminous	6
Subsequent Fixed Penalty Notices	1
Community Protection Notices	2
OTHER ENFORCEMENTS	
Prosecution for microchipping of dogs	1
Community Protection Notices for dog attack on person	1
Microchipping notice	1
Statutory Nuisance Notice (Light Nuisance)	2

## APPENDIX B – Enforcement Action – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023

WARNINGS	
Community Protection Warnings	40
ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	
Littering Fixed Penalty Notices	0
Fly tipping Community Protection Notices	5
Fly tipping Fixed Penalty Notices	15
Bins on streets Community Protection Notices	9
Bins on streets Fixed Penalty Notices	3
Dog Fouling Fixed Penalty Notice	0
NOISE ISSUES	
Noise Abatement Notices	3
Noise Community Protection Notices	14
GENERAL ASB ISSUES	
ASB Community Protection Notices	3
Injunctions	0
Criminal Behaviour Orders	0
Closures	0
CONDITION OF PROPERTY RELATED ISSUES	
Prevention of Damage by Pests Notices	11
Condition of Garden or Property Notices, Inc Filthy & Verminous	0
Subsequent Fixed Penalty Notices	0
Community Protection Notices	2
OTHER ENFORCEMENTS	
Prosecution for microchipping of dogs	0
Community Protection Notices for dog attack on person	0
Microchipping notice	5
Statutory Nuisance Notice (Light Nuisance)	0


## APPENDIX C – Performance Monitoring

Below provides the latest performance measure outturns linked to those services under my portfolio.

### Status Key



Service Area	Measure ID	Measure	Unit	High or low is good	Low target	High target	Previous data period	Previous value	Quarter 2 2023/24 outturn	Status		Commentary
Housing Benefit Administration	BE 1	Average days to process new housing benefit claims from date received (cumulative)	Days	Low is good	19.00	17.50	Q2 - 22/23	16.41	16.61	G	▼	Quarter 2 shows a small increase in processing times. This was due to increased workload being received during quarter 1, which impacted on processing times. Now the outstanding work levels have reduced, processing times should be maintained or improved.
Housing Benefit Administration	BE 2	Average days to process housing benefit claim changes of circumstances from date received (cumulative)	Days	Low is good	8.50	6.50	Q2 - 22/23	6.44	6.25	G	▲	At the end of quarter 2 there was a slight increase in processing times. This was due to the team clearing the high levels of work received during quarter 1. As the outstanding work has now decreased it is expected that processing times should be maintained or decrease over the coming quarter.
Housing Benefit Administration	BE 3	Number of Housing Benefits / Council Tax support customers awaiting assessment	Number	Low is good	1,900	1,700	Q2 - 22/23	1,502	1,156	G	▲	At the end of quarter 2 there were 1,156 customers awaiting assessment. Of these 812 were waiting for a first contact from the Benefits team. Outstanding work has decreased in the team as the level of work being received has decreased. This follows the annual up ratings of income and rent having been dealt with.
Housing Benefit Administration	BE 4	Percentage of risk-based quality checks made where benefit entitlement	%	High is good	89.00	92.00	Q2 - 22/23	95.56	89.87	A	▼	The team carried out over 100 quality checks in the last quarter. This was a smaller amount than normal. The lower number was due to the workload in the Subsidy Team and also the

Service Area	Measure ID	Measure	Unit	High or low is good	Low target	High target	Previous data period	Previous value	Quarter 2 2023/24 outturn	Status	Commentary
		is correct (cumulative)									holiday period. However, there was a small increase in the percentage overall, which was due to less errors being made. Also, due to less experienced officers being part of the team, 100% of the assessors' claims have been checked and this has resulted in a small error rate, which has decreased in quarter 2. It is also important to note the Subsidy Team have completed audit work, so have been unable to complete as many quality checks compared to other quarters.
Housing Benefit Administration	BE 5	The number of new benefit claims year to date (Housing Benefits/Council Tax Support)	Number	N/A	Volumetric	Volumetric	Q1 - 23/24	1,130	2,371	V	So far this year the team has processed 552 Housing Benefit claims and 1,819 claims for Council Tax Reduction.
Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Team	PPASB 1	Number of cases received in the quarter (ASB cases only)	Number	N/A	Volumetric	Volumetric	Q1 - 23/24	115	120	V	This is a 9.8% decrease compared to the amount of ASB cases received in Q2 of 22/23. It is an increase of 4.3% when compared with Q1 of 23/24. This latest outturn indicates that the number of ASB cases being received by the team is stable.
Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Team	PPASB 2	Number of cases closed in the quarter (across full PPASB service)	Number	N/A	Volumetric	Volumetric	Q1 - 23/24	1,003	964	V	This latest outturn is a 3.9% decrease when compared with the outturn from Q1 of 23/24 and a 6.9% decrease when compared with Q2 of 22/23. This latest outturn is relatively stable and shows that the team are effectively managing and closing cases.
Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Team	PPASB 3	Number of live cases open at the end of the quarter (across full PPASB service)	Number	Low is good	240.00	200.00	Q1 - 23/24	211	240	A	 This latest outturn is a 15.4% increase when compared with Q2 of 22/23 and 13.7% increase when compared with the outturn from Q1 of 23/24. This increase could be due to having two new PPASB Officers, so the investigations and

Service Area	Measure ID	Measure	Unit	High or low is good	Low target	High target	Previous data period	Previous value	Quarter 2 2023/24 outturn	Status	Commentary
											closing of cases could be taking longer due to ongoing training.
Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Team	PPASB 4	Satisfaction of complainants relating to how the complaint was handled (across full PPASB service)	%	High is good	75.00	85.00	Q1 - 23/24	100.00	100.00	G	In Quarter 2, 45 satisfaction surveys were sent out. 8 responses were received back. 6 customers answered, 'Very Satisfied' and 2 customers were 'fairly satisfied'.
CCTV	CCTV 1	Total number of incidents handled by CCTV operators	Number	N/A	Volumetric	Volumetric	Q1 - 23/24	2,661	2,396	V	Incidents are down slightly on the previous quarter but are comparable with Q2 of the previous year. PPAAB and Shoplifting are at the same levels, but Public Order is down 19% and Drug Incidents is down 31%. Incident Reviews for the police are up 11% and Evidence Discs produced for police are up 12%. In September, we produced 87 Evidence Discs - one of the highest monthly totals ever.

Source – COLC Performance Information Management System (PIMS)