

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

**Also in Attendance:** Charlotte Brooks, Director - Local Motion, Tinashe Chipawe, Community Commissioner - Local Motion, Vicky Henderson, Community Commissioner - Local Motion, Graham Metcalfe, Partnership Manager - Department for Work and Pensions, Victoria Poulson, Democratic Services Officer - City of Lincoln Council, Martin Walmsley, Assistant Director Shared Revenues and Benefits - City of Lincoln Council and Simon Walters, Strategic Director Communities and Environment - City of Lincoln Council

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillor Hilton Spratt, Councillor Rachel Storer and Councillor Aiden Wells

**51. Welcome & Apologies**

Councillor Calum Watt, Chair of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee, opened the meeting with a brief round of introductions and offered a warm welcome to external guest speakers. Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hilton Spratt, Councillor Rachel Storer and Councillor Aiden Wells. Councillor Mark Storer was in attendance as substitute.

**52. Confirmation of Minutes - 26 September 2023**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as an accurate record. Councillor Matthew Fido wished his abstention be recorded as he was not present for the meeting to which the minutes related.

**53. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were received.

**54. Poverty Truth Commission Update**

**(a) Charlotte Brooks, Director for Local Change - Local Motion**

The Committee received a collaborative presentation from guest speakers, Charlotte Brooks, (Director, Local Motion), Vicky Henderson, (Community Commissioner, Local Motion), Tinashe Chipawe, (Community Commissioner, Local Motion), Graham Metcalfe (Partnership Manager, Department for Work and Pensions) and Martin Walmsley (Assistant Director, Shared Revenues and Benefits, City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council). During consideration of the presentation, the following points were noted:

## Charlotte Brooks – Local Motion

- LocalMotion was a national network, comprised of six national funders
- LocalMotion worked around post-industrial locations and was part of a ten-year journey which would run to 2031
- A decision was awaited for the funding allocation for phase three to support the programme to 2031
- Within phase two, called Building Momentum and Development, approximately £350,000 was issued to Lincoln which enabled exploration of what held people back, how residents felt about living in Lincoln and what their aspirations and visions were for a flourishing future
- Themes that emerged and under continuous development were around community-led prosperity, aspirations and sustainability
- Community led evaluation included investigators on the ground. 180 people applied for the role and work had occurred with every applicant to ensure their voice was heard during the movement.
- Under Prosperity was the Lincoln Poverty Truth Commission where commissioners met on a regular basis and had commenced in January 2023.
- There had been a story telling event in March 2023 whereby five brave commissioners shared their personal experiences of poverty and struggle.
- Consideration had been given to what poverty looked like post pandemic in Lincoln in 2023

Vicky Henderson and Tinashe Chipawe, Community Commissions, shared their personal stories with Members of the Committee. Within the presentation, the following points were noted:

- There was a desire to be part of a change for future generations
- If organisations had worked together and had joined up more effectively, negative outcomes could have been avoided

## Martin Walmsley, Assistant Director, Shared Revenues and Benefits - City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council

- Confirmed attendance to the first meeting of the Poverty Truth Commission and was surprised by the lack of formality – however this was a positive
- Within the revenues department, money was paid and collected but consideration needed to be given to what had changed for people. The service was not merely transactional and could have a significant positive impact on people's lives
- The pandemic happened and from that, cost-of-living challenges ensued. Work with the voluntary sector increased significantly and it was important to take ownership of an individual circumstances and to make a difference
- The sessions encouraged perceived decision makers not to signpost individuals elsewhere but to facilitate help and follow it up
- There was an internal cost of living team comprised of three people that delivered for North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) also and there were no targets on calls as a focus on outcomes was of more importance
- The Commission was in the business planning stage which included performance indicators however the focus was predominantly on outcomes
- Current changes that had been delivered included:
  - the same day delivery of emergency provision

- consideration given to longer term provision to ensure a legacy was left from the funding
  - the City Council had UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) funding dedicated for cost-of-living support
  - ambitions included a reduction in dependency on foodbanks and the encouragement to get individuals used to mainstream, low-cost food shopping – and the wraparound support provided by Lincoln Community Grocery
- It was hoped that process had broken down barriers and dispelled the ideology that the department were ‘officers sat in suits’

Graham Metcalfe (Partnership Manager, Department for Work and Pensions)

- The service had operated within the area for a long time and was well established around the community
- The Commission had established active realisation, individuals acknowledgement and a personal element to services that were delivered
- Part of local operation was an escalation service for LiNK partners and a review when things went wrong to establish to how it could be prevented in the future and outcomes were shared with members of the poverty truth commission group
- Attendance to the forums was useful as there was significant overlap between statutory services and the opportunity to connect with other organisations was helpful

The Chair offered thanks for the informative presentation from all guest speakers. 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: -

**Comment:** Change happened in organisations but often began with one person, followed by policy change and then a change within the system.

**Question to Martin Walmsley:** How had the process changed views?

**Response:** The ethos that surround performance statistics had changed. There was an appreciation of system failure and in a modern world, it was not acceptable. Geography was a strength for Lincoln and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) was located within the City of Lincoln Council building. Lincoln had fabulous organisations that wanted to make a difference.

**Question:** What was the benefit of DWP within the Commission?

**Response:** The DWP had a renewed position of reliability, explanation and trust. The DWP reviewed circumstances and outcomes and offered and support and guidance to lead better outcomes.

**Question:** Could a copy of the full Commission Local Plan be shared with Committee Members?

**Response:** A succinct local version was being worked upon and was likely to be released ahead of Christmas. A copy would be circulated further to the meeting.

**Comment:** The development of LocalMotion was very positive; it had been a long journey. The Poverty Truth Commission was fantastic. It was important for

individuals to have their voice heard in terms of service delivery. Additional themes were awaited in anticipation.

**Question:** Was it fair to characterise the commission as an information sharing exercise? Was the focus the creation of cohesion between organisations?

**Response:** Yes. The commission offered recognition to people that helped individuals with their circumstances. It was not the case that individuals always wanted to contact DWP and the city Council to complain. It was important to understand what had gone wrong in a person's life for intervention to be necessary. The commission should not be tokenistic or considered a story telling event. Facilitators had questioned the long-term ambition for when the commission had ended. Vicky Henderson was to become a community researcher and the commission did not need to end.

**Comment:** A Member of the Committee shared their own journey of ill health and experience of the DWP. It had been a positive process and staff had been polite and helpful. The Member had felt listened to and not merely a number.

**Response:** People were the centre of the process and institutions had employees that genuinely cared. Systems appeared to have been designed in a complex way and that was the reason individuals became vulnerable to the system. Lack of intervention in early childhood trauma had been identified and considerable discrimination was felt by members of the LGBTQ+ community and individuals with mental and physical health disabilities. There was a fear of prejudice and persecution that held people in a state of distress and anxiety which was important to be explored. Consideration of how to alleviate anxiety was essential.

**Comment:** It was positive to have the opportunity, once a fortnight, to take a step back and give consideration to the actions of organisations. The focus was on how stories that hadn't worked out so well, could be changed. Consideration had been given to the creation of a group of individuals in receipt of Universal Credit in order to examine what worked well and what required improvement. National laws and protocols were in place, but it was important to consider how they could be made to work locally. It was beneficial to be responsive and challenge processes.

**Question:** There had been an application for further investment made to LocalMotion funders. What was the money going to be spent on?

**Response:** The funding would be spent in a variety of ways and included community changemakers and a capacity building. It was important that the lasting effects and impacts were assessed. There were opportunities presented to participate in national policy change through the commission. For example, a Community Commissioner had recently been appointed trustee which enabled a richness of experience that influenced future work. Letters received through a door were cold and system generated and often contained no advice. The Brown Letter Charter was in development so that organisations across the UK realised the impact of a brown envelope to the recipient. It was hoped that national policy would be influenced.

**Comment:** The Housing Appeals Panel considered eviction. The language used was aggressive on occasion and used bold lettering. It would be positive for Members and the city Council to be a part of the process. Affected individuals were in incredibly difficult and vulnerable situations and it was positive from organisations to learn from that.

**Comment:** The Revenues and Benefits team was relatively small and as such, if an individuals requested to speak to a particular member of staff, that was usually

possible and offered a personalised service. There was value in trust being built in the system, through individuals.

**Comment:** The tenancy sustainment officer was fantastic.

**Comment:** As a core group of individuals that had worked for two years intensively, a worst-case scenario planning session had occurred a number of months ago. There were 14 individuals that had supported the design of the Local Plan and it was hoped that funding would be devolved further to individuals forming groups locally around the local plan themes. It was important to consider how the Local Plan could be proceeded in the event that funding was unsuccessful. The Local Plan was positive and represented the local people. The ambition was long term, sustainable change.

The Chair offered his thanks to guest speakers and officers for all the information provided to Committee and for the remarkable work carried out.

RESOLVED that:

1. the content of presentations be noted with thanks.
2. the Democratic Services Officer be tasked with the circulation of the Local Plan to Members, once received, further to the meeting.

## **55. Work Programme 2023/24**

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 beginning of the new calendar year would include an update on Youth Engagement which would be brought before the Committee in January 2024. The Democratic Services Officer advised that confirmation of attendance had been received from Toby Ealden, Artistic Director & CEO - Zest Theatre and Sukhy Johal MBE, Director of the Centre for Culture and Creativity - University of Lincoln.

It was agreed 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.

It was agreed, at the Chair's request, that Development Plus and a representative from Lincolnshire County Council be invited to attend Committee in relation to Sheltering Our Citizens. It was agreed that the item would be brought before the Committee in March 2024.