

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

Apologies for Absence: None.

97. Confirmation of Minutes - 19 February 2024

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a true record.

98. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Rebecca Longbottom declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'UKSPF Project Funding Update'.

Reason: She was employed by one of the stakeholders identified in the project. She left the room during the consideration of this item and took no part in the vote on the matter to be determined.

99. Contract of Employment

Purpose of Report

That Executive be provided with an overview of the proposed changes to the City of Lincoln Council contract of employment and be requested to consider the content of the report and the approval of the revised contract of employment.

Decision

That the proposed changes to the contract of employment be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reasons for the Decision

The proposed changes to the contract of employment as detailed within the officers report/Appendix A, had been discussed with Unions during local HR and Trade Union meetings, and Unions were supportive of the changes.

The proposed changes to the contract of employment were also taken to City of Lincoln Council and Employee Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) in January 2024, where it was agreed that the proposed changes should progress to Executive for consideration/formal approval.

100. Recruitment Policy Changes

Purpose of Report

That Executive be provided with an overview of the proposed changes to the City of Lincoln Council's Recruitment Policy and be requested to consider the content of the report and the approval of the revised policy.

Decision

1. That the proposed changes to the City of Lincoln Council's Recruitment Policy be approved for a 12 month period.
2. That the outcomes from the scheme during the 12 month period be monitored by HR, prior to review at the end of its term.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reasons for the Decision

Following a review of recruitment processes, in November 2022, the Council commenced a recruitment trial whereby managers had the opportunity to advertise roles internally and externally at the same time without the need to seek approval (once the roles had been advertised to redeployment).

It was envisaged that this would enable the Council to reach out to a wider market for a larger pool of applicants to ensure we were getting the best candidate for the role.

Following this trial, a proposal was put to unions for a permanent change to the policy to allow managers the opportunity and autonomy to continue to advertise posts internally and externally at the same time (where they felt this was necessary).

Concerns raised by Trade Unions regarding the proposal were detailed within paragraph 5.4 of the officer's report, also taken to JCC in January 2024 (Appendix B referred). These concerns were included for Executive consideration.

When looking back over information prior to the trial (approximately 2 years) 50% of vacancies were found to be filled internally with an average timescale for the small number of roles which went through the full advertising process being 82.4 days.

Following the initial trial period, figures showed that there had been 21 successful internal candidates and 32 successful external candidates. This suggested that around 60% of vacancies which were advertised and appointed to were filled externally and in terms of timescales the average time it took between advert to the offer stage was 56.4 days.

Having continued to offer managers the opportunity to advertise internally and externally at the same time since the trial, further figures had been gathered from August – December 2023, and figures showed that where an appointment had been made, around 65% of vacancies which were advertised and appointed to were filled externally and in terms of timescales the average time from advert to offer stage was 47 days.

It was felt that the opportunity to advertise roles internally and externally at the same time enabled vacant posts to be filled more quickly and relieved pressure on existing staff members.

It was agreed that the use of a review period in 12 months' time for advertisement of roles internally and externally at the same time at managers' discretion, would allow sufficient opportunity to measure the outcomes from this process to allay concerns raised by the Trade Unions.

101. Strategic Performance Measures and Targets 2024/25

Purpose of Report

To present to Executive the strategic performance measure targets for 2024/25 for final approval.

Decision

That the strategic performance measures and their targets for 2024/25, as set out in the officer's report, be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reasons for the Decision

Performance measure targets were reviewed on an annual basis. This ensured the measures being reported to senior management and members on a quarterly basis continued to provide a clear picture of the council's service area performance. Additionally, all performance measure targets were reviewed annually to ensure the targets remained achievable but suitably challenging.

Target setting for 2024/25 had focused largely on the analysis of the council's performance outturn trend over recent quarters/years, alongside the expected impacts over the coming year. Benchmarking data had been used by service areas in this process, however, the availability of this data was limited due to local authorities reporting on the measures most relevant to their own authority and services, rather than there currently being a requirement for all local authorities to report on all measures in the same way.

As with previous years, some measures had seen their targets relaxed due to increasing financial pressures on the council, resource impacts, recruitment pressures and the cost-of-living crisis, all of which would inevitably continue to impact on performance. However, in some cases the targets had been increased where some improvement in performance was expected.

Those measures performing above or below target were highlighted within a quarterly Operational Performance Report as success stories or measures of concern requiring monitoring / action.

Between December 2023 and February 2024, Directors, Assistant Directors and Service Managers, working with Portfolio Holders, were asked to review the existing strategic performance measures and their targets to ensure they remained suitable for monitoring service performance during 2024/25.

The performance measures, their high and low targets and details of the removed/new measures for 2024/25 were provided at Appendix A of the officer's report. Justifications for changes to measures and targets had been provided by the service area within this appendix.

It was noted that the Office for Local Government (Oflog) was developing a new tool named the Local Authority Data Explorer, which would bring together a selection of existing performance measures to enable improved benchmarking to take place for different levels of local authorities in the future. At this stage there were a limited number of measures included within the trial system. All measures which were relevant to district councils were already included within the existing performance measures set for City of Lincoln Council and would therefore continue to be monitored during 2024/25. An ongoing review of the performance measures available within the new Local Authority Data Explorer system would take place throughout 2024/25 to ensure the measures being monitored by the council continued to be the most appropriate measures to monitor performance.

102. Aids and Adaptations Policy

Purpose of Report

To seek approval from Executive for the implementation of a new Aids and Adaptations Policy and to advise on the key areas within the policy.

Decision

1. That the policy for Aids and Adaptations be approved and implemented.
2. That clarity be provided on the Aids and Adaptations service provision and processes for officers and service users, and that the policy be communicated as identified within section 4.9 of the officer's report.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reasons for the Decision

The Aids and Adaptations Policy identified regulatory requirements, who was eligible to use the service, and types of adaptations that could be provided through the service. It identified the approvals process and timescales for approved works.

The key aims of the policy enabled the provision of a high quality and cost-effective adaptations service. It would assist those in need of adaptations to make informed choices about their housing options, raise awareness of the service and identify our approach in handling requests for adaptations.

The City of Lincoln Council offered tenants permanent and temporary adaptations to their homes to ensure their homes remained suitable for their individual needs. We worked with partners and agencies, including Lincolnshire County Council to provide adaptations to our housing stock.

Within the last financial year 2022/2023, we received 221 referrals for adaptation to properties. 95 of those referrals were for major adaptations to our properties including wet room installations.

We were committed to ensuring council tenants and their immediate family who had a disability could as far as possible continue to live safely and independently and be able to carry out day to day activities.

Briefings of the policy would take place within Maintenance and Investment teams as well as customer services and tenancy services to ensure all officers were aware of the policy and its contents. The policy would be available on our website for customers, and we would also look to produce further information videos to be available online and accessed through QR codes on business cards, highlighting the process for customers wishing to use the service.

103. Tenancy Policy

Purpose of Report

For Executive to consider the contents of the City of Lincoln Council's Tenancy Policy and approve its implementation and publication.

Decision

That the implementation and publication of the City of Lincoln Council's Tenancy Policy be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

No introduction of a Tenancy Policy

The City of Lincoln Council would not meet the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

Reasons for the Decision

It was a requirement under the Localism Act 2011 for each local authority to produce a Tenancy Strategy, and all Registered Providers must publish a Tenancy Policy that aligned with the Tenancy Strategy. As the Housing Revenue Account was a Registered Provider the Council was required to produce and publish a Tenancy Policy.

The Tenancy Policy specified the different types of tenancies, licences and non-secure tenancies to be granted to new and existing Council tenants. The policy provided a framework of which tenancies the Council would grant and the exceptions to granting the most secure form of tenure.

The policy ensured that the tenancy granted was compatible with the purpose of the accommodation provided, considering the housing needs of individuals and households, sustainability of the community and making best use of housing stock.

104. Tenancy Strategy

Purpose of Report

For Executive to consider the contents of the City of Lincoln Council's Tenancy Strategy and approve its publication.

Decision

That publication of City of Lincoln Councils Tenancy Strategy be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Revised Tenancy Strategy not introduced.

The Central Lincolnshire Tenancy Strategy was no longer updated centrally and therefore should not be relied upon. Failure to introduce a revised strategy could result in City of Lincoln Council (CoLC) not meeting all the terms of the Localism Act 2011.

Reasons for the Decision

The Localism Act 2011 introduced a number of changes for social housing, including the requirement for local authorities to produce and publish a Tenancy Strategy for their area.

The main purpose of a Tenancy Strategy was to make best use of existing housing stock with mechanisms such as flexible tenancies, succession rights and affordable rented tenures.

The strategy set out City of Lincoln Council's preferred approach to managing existing registered providers housing stock. The legislation clearly stated that Registered Providers should "have regard" to the Local Authority Strategies when developing their own Tenancy Policies. The Strategy had no statutory weight but could help to guide Registered Providers to achieve a consistent approach across the sector to ensure best use of housing tenures.

The Tenancy Strategy specified the different registered providers operating within the City and the types of tenures which were being used by housing tenants. The strategy provided a framework of which tenancies Registered Providers would grant and the exceptions to granting, for example a licence to occupy.

The strategy ensured that Registered Providers were issuing tenancies compatible with the purpose of the accommodation provided, considering the housing needs of individuals and households, sustainability of the community and making best use of housing stock.

105. Renewal of Regulation 7 Direction on Letting Boards

Purpose of Report

1. To provide an update on the Regulation 7 Direction on lettings boards in certain areas of the City which removed deemed consent for lettings boards on residential properties.
2. To decide whether to apply to the Secretary of State for a renewal of the Regulation 7 Direction which expired in April 2024.

Decision

That the recommendation that the City Council apply to the Secretary of State for a renewal of the Regulation 7 Direction to remove deemed consent for the display of lettings boards in the Monks Road area, West End area, Sincil Bank area, Union Road and Waterloo Street, Lincoln be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reasons for the Decision

Approval was given by the Secretary of State on 8 April 2019 to implement a restriction under Regulation 7 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007. This removed deemed consent for lettings boards usually given under Class 3(A) of the regulations and meant that express advertisement consent would be required for lettings boards in the specific areas covered by the Regulation 7. This restriction required renewal after a period of five years.

The areas covered by the Direction were the Monks Road area, West End area, Sincil Bank area, Union Road and Waterloo Street (Appendix A). These areas were identified, through enforcement complaints from residents and Councillors and by officers of the Council as being the areas where the most lettings boards were being displayed.

Since the implementation of the Direction in 2019, 55 complaints had been made to Planning Enforcement regarding the display of unauthorised lettings boards. Of these 55, 100% of them were removed upon request by the Planning Enforcement Officers once the offender was made aware of the Regulation 7 Direction in place. To date, no further action had been necessary.

Five years had now passed since the implementation of the Regulation 7 Direction and it was necessary to decide whether to begin the process for renewal of the current Direction which would expire on 8 April 2024. Following the success of the current Direction, agreement for a ten-year Direction was now sought.

106. Safeguarding and Protecting Vulnerable People Policy 2024

Purpose of Report

To present the revised Safeguarding & Protecting Vulnerable People Policy to Executive for approval.

Decision

That the content of the report, and the updated policy and procedures be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Alternative options considered were that the policy was not updated or that the council had 8 separate policies and procedures for Safeguarding Children,

Safeguarding Adults at Risk, Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Hate Crime & Mate Crime, Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking, County Lines & Cuckooing and Preventing Violent Extremism. This was not recommended.

Reasons for the Decision

Safeguarding was a statutory duty for the council. It encompassed a range of legal duties and responsibilities designed to protect people's health, wellbeing, and human rights, and supported them in preventing problems from escalating and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse, and neglect. This report provided an overview of the policy to support the council to fulfil its statutory responsibilities and to demonstrate safeguarding competence and compliance.

City of Lincoln's existing safeguarding policy was already aligned to the agreed county multi-agency policy and practices. Safeguarding compliance was audited and checked through a process of self-assessment and external audit by the respective safeguarding boards.

This report presented the updated safeguarding policy and procedures which had been amended as part of the full review required every three years. The key changes were summarised in the report.

107. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business because it was likely that if members of the public were present there would be a disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

108. Western Growth Corridor Scheme Delivery - Eastern Access

Purpose of Report

As detailed in the exempt report to the Executive.

Decision

That the recommendation to the Executive, as set out in the exempt report, be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

As detailed in the exempt report to the Executive.

Reasons for the Decision

As detailed in the exempt report to the Executive.

109. Change to Order of Business

RESOLVED that the order of business be amended to allow the report entitled 'Leasing of 53 Belmont Street' to be considered as the next agenda item.

110. Leasing of 53 Belmont Street

Purpose of Report

As detailed in the exempt report to the Executive.

Decision

That the recommendation to the Executive, as set out in the exempt report, be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

As detailed in the exempt report to the Executive.

Reasons for the Decision

As detailed in the exempt report to the Executive.

111. UKSPF Project Funding Update

Purpose of Report

As detailed in the exempt report to the Executive.

Decision

That the recommendation to the Executive, as set out in the exempt report, be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

As detailed in the exempt report to the Executive.

Reasons for the Decision

As detailed in the exempt report to the Executive.