

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Natasha Chapman, Councillor Rachel Storer,
Councillor Aiden Wells and Councillor Loraine Woolley

22. Confirmation of Minutes - 28 November 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

23. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Pat Vaughan declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Council Tax Base 2024/25'.

Reason: His daughter worked within the Benefits Section and his granddaughter worked within the Finance Section of the City of Lincoln Council.

Councillor Pat Vaughan declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25'.

Reason: His daughter worked within the Benefits Section and his granddaughter worked within the Finance Section of the City of Lincoln Council.

Councillor Pat Vaughan declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Council House and Garage Rents Increase 2024/25'.

Reason: His daughter worked within the Benefits Section and his granddaughter worked within the Finance Section of the City of Lincoln Council.

Councillors A Briggs, T Dyer, H Spratt and E Strengiel wished it be noted that in respect of the agenda item titled 'Devolution for Greater Lincolnshire' they were dual-hatted councillors, also elected to serve on Lincolnshire County Council.

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

No questions from the public had been received.

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

Councillor Martin Christopher to Councillor Donald Nannestad

Question

In response to a question last month on the Savilles contract Direct Award, as part of the housing 30-year plan, it was mentioned the use of a compliant framework agreement being acceptable. Given the complexity and bespoke nature of services offered by Savilles Ltd on this contract, and the framework provider's own guidance clearly stating a Direct Award was not suitable for this type of service, could explicit details be provided on how this met the agreed procurement policy?

Answer

I understand that you had already asked the same question to officers and so the answer was the same which was that the guidance referred to was general guidance issued by Crown Commercial Service, and as such, the Council had the authority to determine whether a direct approach was acceptable and the best use of resources. That was what happened.

Supplementary question

Why was this different to last time? This was not in-line with what has been said previously.

Answer

The answer given previously was to a different question.

Councillor Hilton Spratt to Councillor Donald Nannestad

Question

How many council houses does the council intend to build in the next financial year?

Answer

The Council was currently building eleven houses at Hermit Street which should be completed in 2024/25. The Hermit Street development included six, three-bed and five, two-bed houses.

Councillor Matthew Fido to Councillor Donald Nannestad

Question

After nearly 2 years of ongoing problems surrounding the issues of utility bills within the tenancy agreements of the residents at De Wint Court, could the portfolio holder give the Council an update on progress?

Answer

All tenants were now receiving quarterly Gas Water and Electric Bills. Q1 and Q2 had already been issued, Q3 was due by the end of January 2024 once the Council had received the utility bills. Part of the water bills were based on actual costs and the sewerage element was based on estimated billing costs, which was related to the water usage, in accordance with everyone's domestic bills.

Councillor Bill Mara to Councillor Bob Bushell

Question

When will the Council commit to developing decent play amenities for young children in Witham Ward?

Answer

The Council recognised the value communities placed on access to opportunities for children's play and tried to meet that need in two ways; by the provision of formal play areas with fixed equipment, and by providing access to general open spaces for more informal play. I assumed the question related to the former.

The provision of formal play areas brought with it many responsibilities and with those responsibilities came costs. In these difficult financial times, the Council's strategy had been to ensure that it had an adequate network of provision across the city and to protect the existing play area sites in such a way as to ensure that they remained of a good standard, and most critically, that they were safe for use. Expansion of the number of sites would mean either an increase in budget, which unfortunately was not currently an option or by reducing standards in existing sites and thereby compromising safety, which the Council was not prepared to do.

If the member would like to report any specific issues with any of the four play areas in Witham Ward, officers would be happy to investigate and respond in detail.

Councillor Eddie Strengiel to Councillor Sue Burke

Question

Could the executive member provide an update as to how many antisocial behaviour cases had been reported to the council in December 2023?

Answer

There had been 23 antisocial behaviour cases reported into PPASB and fifteen antisocial behaviour cases reported into Housing in December 2023.

Supplementary question

Please could a breakdown per ward of such cases and backdated to the beginning of 2024 be provided.

Answer

This would be provided to the councillor, as requested, by an officer outside the meeting.

Councillor Clare Smalley to Councillor Sue Burke

Question

Fly tipping continued to be an issue of which regular complaints were received. Only a very low number of Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued and therefore it would seem the idea of a possible fine was not a deterrent in Lincoln. Other councils had a zero tolerance policy on fly tipping. What additional action could we take to reduce this problem?

Answer

City of Lincoln Council had issued 27 Fixed Penalty Notices in response to Fly Tipping Offences during the financial year 22/23. All local authorities had a zero-tolerance policy on fly tipping. All incidents of reported fly tipping were investigated, and enforcement action was taken where there was evidence available.

However, if there was no clear evidence of who had fly tipped then unfortunately, no matter how bad the situation was, the Council could not take any legal action. The Council was a member of the Lincolnshire Environmental Crime Partnership (ECP), which allowed for a multi-agency approach to tackle fly tipping. This was a problem across the whole country. An operation arranged through the ECP to tackle fly tipping would take place in Lincoln during 2024.

Supplementary question

Fly tipping had increased by 23% so the message of zero tolerance was not getting across to residents.

Answer

Everyone needed to take personal responsibility and take pride in the areas they resided.

Councillor Alan Briggs to Councillor Naomi Tweddle

Question

Has the council secured the required funding for the proposed Western Growth Corridor link road?

Answer

The Council had not yet secured the funding required to complete all of the spine road that under the planning consent, must be in place before the completion of the 601st new home. The first part of the link road was on site from Skellingthorpe Road and the Executive would be making a decision in the next few months on starting on site with the new vehicular bridge over the railway into

the site at Tritton Road. Positive discussions with Homes England were continuing about the remaining funding for the final part of the link road.

Supplementary question

In light of the above answer, what would Plan B be going forward?

Answer

Plan A was to achieve the funding and as already mentioned, there was very positive discussions being had.

Councillor Mark Storer to Councillor Naomi Tweddle

Question

Can an update on the maintenance issues with the Lincoln Central Car Park be provided?

Answer

Central Car Park continued to be a very popular location for people to park their car. The Council was aware of some elements of the car park that required some remedial work and an officer working group was in place to look at these. It would be premature to comment any further until the investigation work was completed. On a positive note, all councillors would have seen that all lifts in the car park had worked without breakdown over the very busy Christmas period.

Supplementary question

When will investigation be complete?

Answer

An exact date was unknown but it was confirmed this would be soon.

Councillor David Clarkson to Councillor Naomi Tweddle

Question

In view of the horrendous flooding nationwide, was the Council confident it could protect or at least mitigate the flood risk during the development of the Western Growth Corridor?

Answer

Storm Babet and Storm Henk, and indeed previous flooding events before them, had shown the distressing impact of flooding on people's lives, homes, the environment, and the wider economy. The joint work completed with Lincolnshire County Council as the Lead Flood Authority, the Environment Agency and the technical officers at the Internal Drainage Board involved extensive flood modelling work using the Environment Agency flood model and the IDB model, had shown that the plan approved by those organisations and that formed part of the planning consent, would work. That plan included raising the ground level in

the area so that new homes would be built above the area of potential flooding, so they would be safe and insurable.

There would also be a significant new drainage scheme including new and wider drainage channels that would be able to deal with both predicted surface water flooding events and a breach of the existing watercourses for the area, not only to protect new homes but it would also give better protection to the existing homes in the area affected. By responsibly designing the flood and drainage systems the Council was confident that its experts had produced a plan that not only effectively dealt with the flood risk for new homes on the development but also improved the risk for the surrounding area.

Supplementary question

Was the current construction phase still on target?

Answer

It was confirmed it was still on target.

Councillor Thomas Dyer to Councillor Naomi Tweddle

Question

Could the Executive councillor provide an update on the Lincoln Central Market business occupancy levels?

Answer

The Lincoln Cornhill Market had received over 175 expressions of interest from small businesses looking to trade at the market. The current economic climate and uncertainty had meant that for a significant number of hopeful stall holders this was not the right time for them to make this investment, the Council would however continue to work with them to look at opportunities for pop-up stalls in the market and City Square to support the City's events programme. The portfolio holder was delighted that the hard work of the small market team meant that the Council had now received confirmation from 18 businesses (over half available stalls) that they would be moving into the market with 11 leases already sent out for formal signing. Once those leases had been signed, the Council would be bringing more of the potential stallholders through the process as it looked to ensure it had a broad and balanced market offer. The Council was now working on announcing an opening date shortly.

Supplementary question

Why only half of the available stalls had been taken up, were there any issues for the Council to be aware of, such as contractual concerns?

Answer

The delays in the work in the summer had resulted in a knock on effect. Turnover linked rent was considered to be a positive; it was less of a risk for stallholders, as it meant if turnover was lower, rent was lower. Rather than a flat rate for rent. If businesses did well, the Council would receive more rent which could be reinvested into the city.

26. Devolution for Greater Lincolnshire

Councillor Ric Metcalfe reminded Council that a devolution agreement had been agreed for Greater Lincolnshire as part of the autumn statement presented to Parliament by the UK Government on 22 November 2023.

Following approval of the agreement at Council meetings for Lincolnshire County Council and the two unitary council partners, North and North East Lincolnshire Councils, consultation would follow on the arrangements through to the end of January 2024. The report invited Council to engage with the consultation exercise and implementation process.

It was advised that the devolution agreement would allocate an additional £24million per year to Greater Lincolnshire for 30 years, a total of £720million. Additionally, £28.4million had been allocated to Greater Lincolnshire, prior to the Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) being established in 2025. The agreement would provide for devolution of strategy and budgets related to skills, providing local partners with the opportunity to focus on skills development for key local economic sectors. The agreement would also provide for devolution of multi-year transport budgets, with flexibility to allocate funds to local priorities.

In respect of the governance for devolution, the agreement would provide for the establishment of a MCCA, chaired by a directly elected mayor. The constituent authorities (Lincolnshire County, North and North East Lincolnshire Unitary Councils) would each have two seats on the MCCA. District Councils would be allocated four seats, via a joint committee of district council leaders. District Councils would have voting rights other than in relation to transport and the mayor's administrative budget and would have specific consenting rights in relation to some of the powers held by the MCCA. District Councils would also be allocated seats on a scrutiny panel and several advisory boards.

The consultation process would conclude on 29 January 2024; with a review of the proposals based on consultation responses being completed by the end of February 2024, leading to a submission to the UK Government in Spring 2024. It was then expected that the UK Government would put in place an Establishment Order for the new arrangements by summer 2024. The MCCA was due to be established in late 2024, with the election of a Greater Lincolnshire Mayor in May 2025.

During discussion of the report, the following points were noted:

- Local planning authorities could not be overridden by the Directly Elected Mayor or the MCCA.
- It was noted that within paragraph 132 of the Greater Lincolnshire Devolution Deal, that as the Local Transport Authority, the Greater Lincolnshire MCCA would be responsible for Bus Service Improvement Plans and that as part of paragraph 135, it stated that the MCCA would work with constituent Councils to deliver against the existing Bus Service Improvement Plans. 24% of households did not have access to a car and whilst focus would be given on rural connectivity, the issues in Lincoln should not be forgotten.
- It was unclear at this stage what the proportionality on the scrutiny panel and advisory boards would be. Further to this, it was confirmed that as this would be a new authority being established, it would require the

appointment of statutory posts, for example a Section 151 Officer, and to have certain committees in place, such as an Audit Committee.

- As an Urban Council it was felt that the City of Lincoln Council should have one of the four seats available, as its needs were different to the Rural Councils.
- It was suggested that residents would not want an additional level of bureaucracy with a directly elected mayor and this could add to confusion at the polls.
- All Council leaders were commended by several Councils for their work on the proposal.
- It was anticipated that the directly elected mayor would be elected by the 'first past the post' system.
- There were currently no proposals for the directly elected mayor to implement any powers to precept.
- One councillor commented that the level of funding on offer was a modest amount and more funding was required to make this a better deal.

It was requested that any other additional comments should be emailed to the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive and Town Clerk as soon as possible to enable a submission by the deadline of 29 January 2024.

RESOLVED

That the Chief Executive and Town Clerk, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be delegated authority to make a response to the consultation on behalf of the Council based on the comments made at the meeting and any further comments received.

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

(a) Report by Councillor Bob Bushell, Portfolio Holder for Remarkable Place

Councillor Bob Bushell, Portfolio Holder for Remarkable Place, presented his report to the Council, as detailed at pages 223 to 258 of the agenda reports pack.

The following comments and responses to questions were noted:

- Birchwood Nature Park would be included in the list of parks in future reports.
- It was confirmed the recent activities for children in some of Lincoln's parks would continue during school holiday periods. Further to this, it was requested that more events were put on in the north of the city.
- As some of the Council's allotments had been neglected for a variety of reasons, the Council was exploring innovative ways to resolve this neglect.
- It was confirmed that graffiti was removed from bus shelters. However, in response to a comment relating to the state of bus shelters, the Council was reminded that the provision of bus shelters was a highways authority responsibility and therefore it was suggested that Lincolnshire County Council was lobbied on this matter.

The content of the report was noted.

(b) Report by Councillor Sue Burke, Portfolio Holder for Reducing Inequality

Councillor Sue Burke, Portfolio Holder for Reducing Inequality, presented her report to the Council, as detailed at pages 259 to 282.

In response to questions and comments, the following points were noted:

- The cost of running the Sincil Bank Community Hub at circa £20k per annum was queried as to whether it was good value for money when it was in relatively close proximity to City Hall. In response, it was commented that the focus should be on the positive value the Hub was providing to the community in this area.
- It was confirmed that the number of incidences of dog fouling would be included in future performance reports.

The content of the report was noted.

(c) Report by Councillor Chris Burke, Chair of Audit Committee

Councillor Chris Burke, Chair of Audit Committee, presented his report to the Council, as detailed at pages 283 to 292 of the agenda reports pack.

The Chair advised that the report summarised the work of Committee during the period January to December 2023 and also confirmed the Committee's function was consistent with best practice, as well as demonstrating the positive impact of its work.

The Chair expressed thanks to all of the contributors to meetings; committee members; and also the former Chair, Councillor Rebecca Longbottom.

The content of the report was noted.

(d) Report by Councillor Calum Watt, Chair of Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Calum Watt, Chair of Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee, presented his report to the Council, as set out at pages 293 to 306 of the agenda reports pack.

The Chair thanked all of the contributors and Council staff who had attended meetings of the Committee. The Chair also took the opportunity to thank Victoria Poulson, Democratic Services Officer, for her work on the Committee.

It was noted that during the last year, the Committee had met on six occasions and had considered the following topics:

- Cultural Consortium
- Poverty Trust Commission
- Cost of Living Crisis
- Community Policing in Lincoln
- Suicide Rates in the City of Lincoln
- Assets of Community Value

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- It was suggested that the cost of living leaflets be taken into schools so schools were better able to be signposted to key information on help and support. The Chair agreed to look into this suggestion.
- The Chair agreed to discuss the points raised at the Committee on Assets of Community Value with members of the Executive.

The content of the report was noted.

28. To Consider the Following Recommendations of the Executive and Committees of the Council

(a) Council Tax Base 2024/25

It was moved by Councillor Ric Metcalfe and seconded by Councillor Donald Nannestad and

RESOLVED that

- (1) In line with the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023, with effect from 1st April 2024, a Council Tax premium of 100% for a property empty for 12 months, (changing from the current position of a property empty for 2 years) be approved.
- (2) It be noted that there were no special items as defined in Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) applicable to any part or parts of the City of Lincoln local authority area in respect of its Council Tax Base.
- (3) The Chief Finance Officers' calculation of the Council Tax Base for the financial year commencing 1st April 2024 and ending 31st March 2025 be approved.
- (4) Approval be given, in accordance with the Chief Finance Officers' calculation, and pursuant to the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as amended), that the Council Tax Base for the 2024/25 financial year was 25,669.23.

(b) Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25

It was moved by Councillor Ric Metcalfe and seconded by Councillor Donald Nannestad and

RESOLVED that

- (1) A 'no change' be approved to the core Council Tax Support Scheme for the financial year 2024/25.
- (2) Approval be given to an Exceptional Hardship Fund of £25,000 to be available for the financial year 2024/25.
- (3) Approval be given for further detailed modelling of a banded scheme for all working age customers with delivery to be assured from our ICT provider

at a timescale to allow for robust and accurate testing of such a potential scheme, with a view to consultation on such a scheme for 2025/26.

(c) Council House and Garage Rents Increase 2024/25

The report was moved by Councillor Ric Metcalfe and seconded by Councillor Donald Nannestad.

During discussion of the report, the following points were noted:

- The proposed inflation in the proposed rents seemed excessive. In response, it was advised that the proposed increases were in-line with guidelines on the level of inflation, which were set by the Government;
- Garage renters should be offered a discount owing to the state of repair of the garages, rather than an increase in rents.

RESOLVED

That Council garage rents for 2024/25 be increased by 3%.

29. Amendment to Representatives on Outside Bodies

It was moved, seconded and

RESOLVED that the amendment to replace Councillor S Burke with Councillor G Hewson on the outside body, Developmentplus, as detailed in paragraph 2.2 of the report, be approved.