

Present: Councillor Calum Watt (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Debbie Armiger, Councillor Liz Bushell,
Councillor Natasha Chapman, Councillor Callum Roper,
Councillor Rachel Storer and Councillor Pat Vaughan

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Chris Burke

1. Confirmation of Minutes - 12 March 2024

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a true record.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

3. City of Lincoln Homelessness Strategy

Daren Turner, Strategic Director of Housing and Investment:

- a. presented the Lincoln Homelessness Strategy and supporting action plan for consideration and comments prior to referral to Executive for approval
- b. explained that the Lincoln Homelessness Strategy 2024-2029 sat within a framework of documents which aimed to improve the housing situation in the City including the Lincoln Housing Strategy 2020-2025 and the Lincolnshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027
- c. gave an overview of the background of the strategy as detailed at paragraph 3 of the report
- d. advised that during development of the strategy consultation took place with a number of staff from the Council and with agencies who worked with households who were homeless or threatened with homelessness
- e. further explained that although the responsibility for producing the strategy was with the Council, it was produced in partnership with various agencies within the City and was the City's strategy for homelessness rather than the Council's strategy for homelessness
- f. referred to appendix 3 of the report and outlined the objectives of the strategy:
 1. *Make homeless a rare occurrence by early intervention and timely homeless prevention.*
 2. *Make homelessness as brief as possible by providing high quality temporary and supported accommodation at points of crisis.*
 3. *Make the experience of homelessness a one-off occurrence by increasing access to secure and settled homes in Lincoln.*

g. invited members questions and comments.

Question: The Government fee provided for temporary accommodation was only £91 per week and the Council had to pay the difference out of its own budget to cover the cost of Bed and Breakfast. Was the Council considering acquiring buildings for temporary accommodation to address this issue?

Response: The Local Housing Allowance was £91 per week to spend on Bed and Breakfast. The average cost of a Bed and Breakfast could be in the region of £90 per night, therefore the Council had to pay the difference from the General Fund. Officers were always actively looking to bring additional temporary accommodation into the housing stock and had recently acquired 20 properties. The Council not only needed temporary accommodation but also move on accommodation and long term affordable housing to address the issue.

Question: What duty did the Council have under the Homelessness Act 2002?

Response: The Council had 56 days to determine if a person was homeless. During the 56 day period it was the Councils duty to provide them with housing and support.

Question: Would the funding for Homelessness change due to the new Government?

Response: Historically funding had been built into core budgets, this was removed as part of the austerity measures. The funding was now provided by annual grants which were initially for one year and were predominantly used for staffing, however, this caused issues with staff retention. Councils then lobbied the Government on this issue and the grant allocation was now provided on three year cycles. It was expected that the funding would continue given the increase in the number of homeless individuals.

Question: How did the Council address the disruptions to children's education and the effect on their mental health due to homelessness?

Response: The Council did all that it could as a landlord to support families. Officers worked with Lincolnshire County Council to provide support and wrap around care to families and children.

Question: Was the child's current school taken into consideration when families were placed in temporary accommodation?

Response: Yes, access to school was considered when placing families in temporary accommodation and transport to school was provided if necessary.

Question: How would the strategy be monitored?

Response: The departmental performance monitoring system would assess the action plan on a regular basis to monitor the progress.

Question: How would the increase in the number of homeless people and the early release of prisoners affect the strategy and would the strategy remain relevant?

Response: The activities within the strategy would remain relevant. The strategy was flexible which would allow the Council to adapt and respond to challenges. Changes were needed to national policy to address the increased homelessness.

RESOLVED that the City of Lincoln Homelessness Strategy be supported and referred to Executive for approval.

4. **Parking Strategy Review**

Simon Walters, Director for Communities and Environment provided a brief introduction to the Parking Strategy and Delivery Plan and circulated a set of notes from the recent all member workshop for information.

Toby Forbes-Turner, Planning Policy Manager:

- a. presented a summary of the Parking Strategy and Delivery Plan to seek views from Policy Scrutiny Committee prior to consideration by Executive
- b. advised that the delivery plan set out parking service priorities and policies to be delivered by the Council over the next 5 years
- c. explained that the Strategy focussed on off-street parking provision in the Council car parks, but also covered the City Council's role with on-street residents parking
- d. gave an overview of the parking strategy review process which included the measures delivered from the previous car parking strategy agreed in 2015, factors that had changed since 2015 and how these factors had helped to scope the review of the Strategy. The agreed key issues were set out at paragraph 5.4 of the report
- e. referred to paragraph 6 of the report and advised on the future mobility work shop that had taken place, which had helped to identify how space could be repurposed or optimised to cater to changing use needs and respond to pressures brought on by the climate emergency
- f. summarised the stakeholders' engagement, public consultation and member engagement that had been undertaken during development of the strategy and delivery plan
- g. outlined the key implications on the parking strategy moving forward as detailed at paragraph 10 of the report
- h. highlighted the aims and strategic objectives of the strategy as detailed at paragraph 11 of the report
- i. explained that it was proposed to review the action plan annually together with a light touch review of the overall strategy every three years
- j. invited members questions and comments.

The Chair requested that the work shop notes that had been circulated to members be included with the agenda on the website.

Question: Had any progress been made to address the difficulties with the payment machine at Tentercroft Street car park?

Response: This would be addressed by the relevant Officer in due course. The issue was that the Wi-Fi for the payment machine was sometimes intermittent during busy periods.

Question: Would automated number plate recognition be introduced at car parks with the ability to pre-book parking spaces?

Response: This was an aspiration that would be looked at as part of the strategy over the next 5 years. The technology at the car parks would need updating. The first step would be to move to an automated number plate recognition system at the Central Car Park which would photograph number plates on entry and then once the parking had been paid a barrier would be used to exit the car park.

Question: Would signage to advise when the Central Car Park was full be installed?

Response: Talks were ongoing with Lincolnshire County Council Highways to establish where signs could be installed.

Question: Had consideration been given to install electric vehicle charging points in disability bays? Perhaps they could be lower for wheelchair users.

Response: A strategic approach had been taken to installing electric vehicle charging points across the City over the last few years. Consideration would be given to installing electric vehicle charging points in disabled bays.

Question: Would the number of disabled bays in car parks be reviewed? Some car parks did not have any disabled bays.

Response: Yes, Officers continually monitored and reviewed how disabled bays were being used across the car parks. Where there were not any disabled bays provided at car parks there was provision of disabled on-street parking nearby.

Question: What percentage of car park users used the pay by phone app?

Response: The figure for the percentage of people using the pay by phone app would be circulated following the meeting. The Council did encourage people to use the app, however, the option to pay by cash would always be available.

Question: Could clarification be provided as to which authority was responsible for residents parking?

Response: Lincolnshire County Council was responsible for authorising applications for residents parking. The running of the scheme was delegated to City of Lincoln Council. However, it was Lincolnshire County Councils responsibility to enforce the scheme.

RESOLVED that the Parking Strategy and Delivery Plan be supported.

5. A Policy for the Maintenance of City Council Owned Trees in Public Open Spaces

Steve Bird, Assistant Director Communities and Street Scene:

- a. presented a policy for the maintenance of Council owned trees in public open spaces for comments prior to consideration by Executive
- b. explained that the proposed policy related only to trees growing on land owned by the City Council, or for which it had responsibility such as parks, gardens, amenity grass areas and common land
- c. outlined the aim of the policy which was to have in place a system that cared for City Council owned trees so as to:
 - prioritise public safety
 - protect property appropriately

- ensure that all trees were looked after appropriately, having reference to their species, age, condition and setting
- d. explained that the policy made clear the value of trees, the intention to work to recognised industry standard as default, to abide by legally required practices, to replant where there were tree losses, the need to educate people that they were an organic asset that had a life cycle and to promote the importance of trees in the City
- e. invited members questions and comments:

Question: Councillors were often contacted by residents asking why trees had been removed. Could a note setting out the reasons for removal of the tree be displayed on the stump for information?

Response: This suggestion would be considered by Officers.

Question: How did the Council ensure that proper care was provided to maintain new trees that had been planted?

Response: Every new tree that was planted had a watering package attached to it to advise the contractor how the tree should be looked after. The number of trees planted and the number of trees that had survived was tracked each year. If a tree died the contractor was required to plant a new tree to replace it.

Question: Was there a map or chart available that explained how many trees there were across the City and where they were located?

Response: The Council did have a database that mapped and provided information on the trees in the City. The database was still being updated but would eventually contain information on all of the trees in the City.

Question: Would the database be shared with the public?

Response: At the moment the database was only available to Officers. Consideration would be given as to whether it was possible to make the information available to the public.

Question: How was biodiversity being addressed?

Response: The Council planted as many trees as possible each year. Consideration was given to the resilience of the tree species that were planted to plan for the future.

Question: Was there a strategy in place to grow new saplings in areas that were densely populated?

Response: There were areas within the City that were not designed with trees in mind. The Council did plant as many trees as possible in as many areas as possible. Biodiversity net gain was now a mandatory requirement for new developments to provide a 10% improvement on green areas.

Question: Councillors were often contacted by residents requesting to remove trees. How should Councillors respond in these instances?

Response: The resident should contact the Arboricultural Officer who would consider each case on its own merit.

RESOLVED that the policy for the maintenance of Council owned tree in public open spaces be supported.

6. Grounds Maintenance Specification (for new contract from 1/9/2026)

Caroline Bird, Community Services Manager (Programme):

- a. presented an update on the specification for the Grounds Maintenance contract prior to commencing procurement, with specific reference to comments received in the all member workshops
- b. explained that the Council had two contracts for street scene services, street cleansing and grounds maintenance, and waste collection. Both contracts would end on 31 August 2026. Work had commenced on procuring new contracts which would commence on 1 September 2026. They were being realigned and packaged as two separate contracts: waste and street cleaning, and a separate grounds maintenance contract
- c. advised that reviewing and updating of the specification involved consultation with all members, as well as reviewing the specifications against changes in law, changes in best practice and environment awareness and 'lessons learned' as well as trying to avoid significant increases in costs and maximising cost control
- d. further advised that the changes to the waste/cleansing specification were reported to Members in autumn 2023. The waste/ cleansing procurement process was underway
- e. referred to the grounds maintenance specification at appendix A of the report which summarised the material changes that would be noticeable to service users or were significant in other ways. There were many other changes that had been made in the interests of cost control, clarity, ease of navigation, and ease of operational and understanding
- f. stated that the Council would require its contractors to pay their staff in accordance with the Real Living Wage as a minimum
- g. invited members questions and comments.

Question: How would the Council ensure that there was transparency during the tendering process so that it was open to public scrutiny?

Response: Officers were confident that the procurement process would be undertaken in a clear, fair and transparent way. Support would be provided from both Legal and the Procurement Officer to ensure that all requirements were met.

Question: Would the Council check that Contractors were paying their staff the real living wage?

Response: Yes, it was a requirement that had been included in the specification and would be monitored by the Council.

Question: How would the Council ensure that the same standards were being met by a sub-contractor?

Response: The requirements of the contract would also apply to sub-contractors. At the outset the Council would ask the contractor how they would manage sub-contractors if any elements of the contract were sub-contracted. The terms and conditions of the contract would be the same for a sub-contractor and would be enforceable.

Question: How would the costs be managed and stress tested?

Response: Officers had a duty to minimise risk to the Council as much as possible. The type of contract ensured that a schedule of prices was included to reflect the scope of the contract. A flexibility clause had been included in the contract via the open book method. Also, monthly monitoring of prices would take place.

Question: What would be the length of the Grounds Maintenance Contract?

Response: The duration of the Grounds Maintenance contract would mirror the waste contract, in that the initial contract period would be 8 years and seven months.

Question: Would in-cab technology be included in the contract?

Response: The Grounds Maintenance contract specification would require the supplier to provide in-cab technology.

Question: Why had decarbonisation of the fleet not been included in the contract specification?

Response: It was an aspiration but it was expected to be too expensive and the right technology was not available yet. There was a clause included in the contract which requested that the contractor considered introducing more environment friendly vehicles whenever vehicles were being replaced, and to include the Council in the business case and decision.

RESOLVED that the Grounds Maintenance Specification (for new contract from 01/09/2026) be supported.

7. Health Scrutiny Update

This item was deferred due to the Chair of Policy Scrutiny Committee being absent from the meeting.

RESOLVED that the update be deferred.

8. Policy Scrutiny Work Programme 2024/25 and Executive Work Programme Update

The Democratic Services Officer:

- a. presented the report 'Policy Scrutiny Work Programme 2024-25 and Executive Work Programme Update'
- b. presented the Executive Work Programme July 2024 – June 2025
- c. requested councillors to submit items they wished to scrutinise from the Executive Work Programme and policies of interest
- d. invited members questions and comments.

The Vice-Chair referred to the Executive Work Programme and requested that the "Lincoln Business Improvement Group Ballot" be scheduled into the work programme for the next Policy Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that:

1. the Policy Scrutiny work programme be noted.

2. the Executive work programme be noted.
3. the Lincoln Business Improvement Group Ballet be scheduled for Policy Scrutiny Committee due to be held on 1 October 2024.