

**REPORT UNDER RULE 2(vi) OF THE COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES****REPORT BY COUNCILLOR SUE BURKE, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR REDUCING INEQUALITY****1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Since my previous report in November 2023, the challenges driven by the cost of living pressures have continued to impact on our residents and businesses, with our services seeing a high volume of customers seeking advice and guidance from the council to help them through this difficult time.

In my role as the Portfolio Holder for Reducing Inequality, I have seen first-hand the level of support services provided and the positive impact of this. Providing such a high level of support to our residents would not have been possible without the continued commitment and dedication of our staff and members. I would like to thank all for continually going the extra mile during such challenging times.

I would also like to thank the council's partners, especially within the third sector, who play a fundamental role in ensuring our residents receive the support they require. This partner support has been provided at a time when they are facing many challenges themselves as a result of the current economic climate.

In the following pages of my report I have provided an update on each of the service areas, which fall under the responsibility of my portfolio. These updates focus on the period following my previous report to committee (November 2023 to June 2024).

Where available performance information has been included within the service area updates I have provided. Appendix B also includes the latest performance measure outturns and supporting service area commentary for those strategic performance measures under my portfolio. I presented this report to Performance Scrutiny Committee on 26<sup>th</sup> September and this report has been updated in light of their comments and feedback.

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

**2 Welfare and Benefits Advice**

- 2.1 The Welfare Team perform a vital role and are part of our LINK shared service, working across both Lincoln and North Kesteven, providing advice and assistance in claiming benefits, 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.
- 2.2 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.

As per the 2023 report, the January 2024 report was also 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. Some of the policies and procedures that have been developed by the team have been shared across the organisation as best practice.

- 2.3 Since my last portfolio report, the team have completed recruitment to their vacant roles and are now fully staffed and able to support residents with their benefit and money issues. In the last financial year, the team advised 7,000 individual customers and helped them to secure £31,246 of additional weekly benefit payments.

In most cases these payments continue to be paid throughout the year and assuming that these all continue in payment, the annual income of the people helped has increased by £1,624,800. I look forward to reporting an even greater level of success at the end of this year.

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

- 3.1 Our Welfare Reform Support Team has continued to provide vital support to residents of Lincoln. The small but dedicated team working on cost of living support has been bolstered by a Cost of Living Co-Ordinator on a 1-year fixed term role, funded through strategic plan monies, to help deliver vital initiatives to assist with emergency needs and longer term cost of living initiatives. Provided below is an update on elements of support provided by the Cost of Living Support Team (previously known as Welfare Reform Support Team).

#### **3.2 Household Support Fund**

A significant initiative which has continued to be delivered by the Cost of Living Support Team has been the Household Support Fund. The initiative is a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) funded scheme, which is being delivered throughout Lincolnshire. The scheme has been delivered working closely with Lincolnshire County Council and other district councils.

Household Support Fund wave 4 was delivered in Lincoln in the second half of 2023/24. 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, vouchers were issued (via the Post Office) to these households in three waves / amounts; £301, £300 and £299.

Officers worked with partner organisations to deliver these monies promptly to those identified / referred as being most in need, with nearly £800,000 being delivered. The table below outlines the allocation of these payments:

## City of Lincoln

Household Composition	Households with a Disabled Person	Households with Children	Households with Pensioner a	Other	
Number of Households Helped	270	556	1,660	1,582	
Amount of Award	£51,578	£78,949	£478,596	£185,339	<b>Total Paid £794,462</b>

In the Spring 2024 budget, the Government confirmed that a further £421 million would be made available to county councils and unitary authorities in England via the Household Support Fund (HSF) for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024. This fund includes an allocation of £5,464,685.20 for Lincolnshire - the element of City of Lincoln being in the region of £300,000 (final amount to be confirmed, as at the time of writing). These funds are already being delivered to residents of Lincoln, again working with partner organisations to reach as many cohorts as possible.

### 3.3 Council Tax Support Fund 2023/24

In 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 was then delivered by a local discretionary scheme in 2023/24 to those identified in need of assistance through this fund.

## 4 **Housing Benefit / Council Tax Support**

4.1 The council's Benefits Team continues to administer a significant number of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support claims – the caseloads currently being 3,803 and 8,299 respectively. Following a sharp rise in the council's Council Tax Support caseload following the initial Covid-19 lockdown, caseloads have returned back to pre-pandemic levels. However, there is the potential that the number of Council Tax Support recipients may begin to increase again as a result of the ongoing cost of living pressures.

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 for Housing Benefit continue to be processed promptly, with positive average processing times being achieved.

In 2023/24 New Claims were processed within an average of 14.32 days and Changes of Circumstance in 3.42 days. These rates of performance compare favourably ahead of national average processing times. The latest available national figures (in respect of quarter 3 2023/24) are New Claims average 18 days and Changes of Circumstance average 8 days.

- 4.3 The council's Benefits Team also process Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) applications. These payments 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 15<sup>th</sup> March 2024, DWP announced Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) government grants for 2024/25. For City of Lincoln this is exactly the same amount as for 2022/23 and 2023/24.
- 4.6 The table below includes the confirmed allocations for the years 2012/13 to 2024/25.

	<b>City of Lincoln Council central government DHP grant</b>
<b>2024/25</b>	<b>£132,330</b>
2023/24	£132,330
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 £9,872, a total of £142,202.

## **5 Discretionary Rate Relief Policy**

- 5.1 The council's Business Rates Growth Policy, approved by Executive in July 2023, 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. The impacts of Covid-19 meant applications under this policy reduced.
- 5.2 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 relief was awarded to seven businesses and this totalled £55,566. Currently for 2024/25, £29,894 has been awarded to six businesses.

## **6 Financial Inclusion**

- 6.1 Financial inclusion continues to be a key objective and factor in many areas of our Revenues and Benefits Service's work. The Lincolnshire Financial Inclusion Partnership (LFIP) brings together organisations and partners to promote and raise the profile of financial inclusion across the county. The partnership is currently chaired by the Assistant Director Shared Revenues and Benefits for City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council.
- 6.2 Two key areas of high-profile engagement by LFIP in 2024/25, will be:
- Co-ordination of 'Talk Money Week' activities in Lincolnshire during November 2024 - <https://maps.org.uk/en/our-work/talk-money-week>
  - A conference to be held in February 2025, date and venue to be confirmed, to follow-up from the highly successful conferences held at the Jakemans Community Stadium in Boston in February 2023, and Jubilee Church Life Centre in Grantham in February 2024.
- 6.3 In terms of the well-documented ongoing national cost of living pressures, our council continues to review and update web pages dedicated to initiatives to try and assist our residents with cost of living support:
- <https://www.lincoln.gov.uk/benefits/cost-living-support>
- 6.4 A proportion of UK Shared Prosperity Funding has been allocated to help deliver cost of living initiatives, a total of £128,334, covering 2022/23 through to 2024/25 (inclusive). Projects have already been delivered, including;
- Lincoln Community Grocery vouchers for new tenants of City of Lincoln Council or placed in accommodation by the local authority
  - Christmas food initiatives through Acts Trust and Bridge Church
  - Emergency fuel vouchers
  - A nursery school breakfast snacks shortfall.

A range of extended and new initiatives are currently being progressed by officers, working with key partner organisations in the city.

6.5 Officers have continued to work with the Greater Lincolnshire Food Partnership (<https://lincolnshirefoodpartnership.org>), regarding how City of Lincoln Council may support the aspiration of 'Food as a public good'. So far, progress has been made in this area through:

- Household Support Fund projects with Abbey Access Training and GoGro - cooking classes, provision of funded slow cookers / air fryers
- Support for Lincoln Community Grocery through funded vouchers and promotion / communications
- Working with DWP and Lincoln College to identify joint-working opportunities to achieve moving into work / in-work progression
- Promotion of Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) scheme (<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/school-pupil-support/holiday-activities-food-programme>) through Lincolnshire Financial Inclusion Partnership
- Ongoing action on Food for the Planet (<https://www.foodfortheplanet.org.uk/>) and Planning for the Planet (<https://www.foodfortheplanet.org.uk/planning/>).

## 7 Safeguarding

7.1 Progress continues to be made with embedding safeguarding across the council. The number of internal referrals from officers has increased which reflects the improved knowledge and awareness of safeguarding across the authority. For safeguarding adult referrals there was a 55% increase in the last 12 months and for children, 70% and overall increase of 58%.

Safeguarding referrals	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Adults	93	69	154	240
Children	10	4	27	46
Total	103	73	181	286

7.2 Safeguarding training is a mandatory requirement for all employees and forms part of the corporate induction process. A full training needs review was conducted in 2023/24. This matches every job role in the Council to available training courses so that all staff have the knowledge and skills necessary to identify and report safeguarding concerns. For most staff this training comprises a suite of mandatory training courses agreed with the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP), Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB) and the Domestic Abuse Partnership (DAP).

Two safeguarding Member training sessions were delivered in 2023 and further training and briefing sessions will take place this year.

7.3 A refreshed internal process has been introduced for complex cases that cross services which means that these can be screened internally and referred into the correct multi-agency meeting for support and further action.

A Lincoln Vulnerable Adults Panel has also been established by the council for a multi-agency panel for the most vulnerable adults in the city so that they can be offered the right support.

7.4 Lincolnshire County Council's Section 11 Children Audit was undertaken and the authority demonstrated it met all aspects of the audit and a high level of assurance

has been achieved. The Council recently received confirmation that the audit had been passed with 100% of the criteria being rated as green.

- 7.5 The authority continues to participate in multi-agency working, including child exploitation and domestic abuse.

## **8 Rough Sleeping**

- 8.1 The rough sleeping numbers in the city have increased in recent weeks, which is generally anticipated as the weather improves and tourist footfall in the city increases. The Housing Solutions Team continue to work closely with our partners to identify and connect with rough sleepers in an attempt to ensure their time on the street is as short as possible and that we support them into suitable accommodation and appropriate services.
- 8.2 The team has worked with a specialist consultant to develop a new Homelessness Strategy for the city. This is now complete and will go through our Member approval processes over the summer.

## **9 Asylum Seekers and Refugees**

- 9.1 The council has been actively involved in the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme during the past couple of years, having provided accommodation for two families from Syria and three families from Afghanistan. Although we have not as yet welcomed any further families into the area, the council has continued to work closely with the Strategic Migration Partnership, our partner councils and the Home Office to implement the various Refugee Resettlement Schemes where possible.
- 9.2 Additionally, the council has also been heavily involved in the response to the conflict in Ukraine, working 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. In recent months the council has seen a significant drop in the number of applications received although we continue to help to support those Ukrainian citizens who are already in the city.

## **10 Neighbourhood Working**

### **10.1 Sincil Bank Revitalisation Programme**

Since my previous report work has continued on the key projects agreed as part of the Sincil Bank Revitalisation Programme.

The Neighbourhood Team has had slightly reduced capacity this year as the Neighbourhood Manager has been seconded for two days each week to support the Communities and Place element of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) programme.

Included below is an update on the progress of this work.

### **10.2 Highways Infrastructure**

Funded by the Towns Fund, Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) has received £3.1m to make changes to the highway's infrastructure in the area.

LCC is leading on the improvements to Sincil Bank and the City of Lincoln Council is leading on the improvements to four key gateways into the area. Following a consultation event in November 2023, the gateways that have been prioritised are:

- Portland Street / High Street
- Portland Street / Canwick Road
- Sincil Bank / LNER Stadium
- Sincil Bank / Tentercroft Street

Work is likely to commence on these projects towards the end of the summer.

### 10.3 Hermit Street

The Hermit Street element of the revitalisation programme will see the creation of eleven family homes in the Sincil Bank area.

Works started in October 2023 and the scheme is expected to be completed in early October 2024.

### 10.4 Cleaner Safer Streets

Work has continued within the Sincil Bank area to reduce incidents of fly tipping.

Alongside regularly reporting incidents of fly tipping, the team has funded an additional CCTV camera to cover one of the fly tipping hot spots in the area. This project has been supported by National Grid who have allowed the council to use the power from the nearby substation and funded the removal of graffiti from this area.

Further engagement is planned with the community in July 2024 aimed at increasing awareness of how to dispose of unwanted items and also to raise awareness of the enforcement powers that the council has if people are found to fly tip in the area.

### 10.5 **Other key updates linked to the Sincil Bank Revitalisation Programme**

Alongside these physical interventions, the Neighbourhood Team has continued to work hard to engage with the community and build trusted relationships.

An update on some of the engagement activity continuing in the area is provided below.

### 10.6 Sincil Bank Community Hub

The Sincil Bank Community Hub, which is located on Portland Street, has continued to build relationships with residents and is established as a well-known location to seek advice. 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.

Between the period January 2019 and January 2024 the Hub welcomed 4,906 visitors. While the visits covered a wide range of issues, common themes include visiting –

- for general information and advice
- to meet with other residents / organisations
- to report fly tipping / litter
- to apply for resident parking permits.

Approximately three quarters of visitors are advised directly by the council team on site.

#### 10.7 Lincoln Embracing All Nations (LEAN)

To help ensure support is available for our culturally diverse communities, the Neighbourhood Team has been instrumental in creating an organisation called Lincoln Embracing All Nations (LEAN).

Alongside supporting residents and groups within Sincil Bank, LEAN is also a city-wide service supporting residents and groups outside of the Sincil Bank area including the Islamic Association and Arabic School.

LEAN has received external funding and appointed three members of staff to advance the organisation and assist the various groups that support our communities in the city.

Following my previous report, monthly immigration surgeries have continued to be delivered, which remain at capacity. LEAN has also continued to support groups to host events.

Additionally, work has continued towards the longer term aspiration of LEAN, which is to have a city wide location that will act as a focal point for our diverse communities. Current options for this space include St Botolph's and St Peter at Gowts Church Hall.

#### 10.8 Community events and activities

The Neighbourhood Team supported three main events in the area over the past twelve months. Following on from a successful event organised by the team in February 2020 to recognise the hard work of volunteers and the acts of kindness that make Sincil Bank a great place to live, support was given to Lincoln City Foundation to host a similar event in March of this year.

The team also supported the Foundation to organise a Community World Cup in May 2024. The team helped to attract funding from the Dawber Trust and also from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Community Grants Scheme. The tournament attracted eighteen different teams representing countries from all over the world.

An event titled “Festival of Lights” was held at the end of last year to assist in bringing our diverse community together. This event was supported by the team and it was pleasing that this was the second time that the event has taken place in the area. The first event was funded by the Neighbourhood Team and it is hoped that these events will become regular events in the community for many years to come.

Collectively this highlights the relationships that the team has built up with communities over many years.

Alongside these larger events, the team have supported Lincolnshire County Council who held a consultation event to gain people views on improvements to the Highway in the area and a second event was organised by the Neighbourhood Team to gain people’s views on designs to enhance the key gateways into the Sincil Bank area.

## 10.9 Neighbourhood Working Evaluation

As we start to think about our exit strategy from Sincil Bank (currently March 2025), Rose Regeneration has been commissioned to measure the impact of the interventions in the area, provide advice on the legacy of the work in the area, advise on the phased exit from the area and document any lessons learnt that could inform the next phase of Neighbourhood Working.

This report is due for completion later in the year and therefore findings included in this report are only draft. So far, Rose Regeneration have conducted surveys with groups / organisations who have received funding from the team. 80% of respondents rated that the support provided to individual residents as being very strong or strong, and 77% rated the impact on building the capacity of local residents to run activities and events as being very strong or strong.

Below is an example of feedback received –

*“There has been a definite change in perception about the Portland Street area and that things can be achieved here.”*

- 10.10 Rose Regeneration have also conducted more in depth interviews with projects that the team have supported. Below are two examples of notable quotes from these interviews:

*“LEAN wouldn’t have happened without the Neighbourhood Working Team – they get it, they see the need and they invest in looking at good practice outside of Lincoln and how to make it happen in Sincil Bank... they play the long game.”*

*“Residents are willing to help with maintenance and ongoing works and that community ownership will bring sustainability.”*

- 10.11 The report also highlights the work that the team has played in connecting with external organisations and bringing together organisations in ways that have harnessed resources and investment for the local area that would not have happened without this intervention.

As part of this evaluation, Rose Regeneration has looked at capturing the less tangible outcomes delivered through the work in the area. The current analysis shows

for every £1.00 invested in Neighbourhood Working, over £3.00 of social value has been generated.

#### **10.12 UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Community Grants Programme**

The overall UKSPF programme reports directly to the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, however many of the workstreams are cross cutting. A Community Grants Scheme was introduced last year to ensure that funding was directed across the whole city. The programme was based on the Community Chest that has been used in areas supported by Neighbourhood Working for many years.

10.13 Alongside a contribution of £150k from the UKSPF programme, match funding was received from Investors in Lincoln. This has resulted in ensuring that up to £25k is available to fund projects in each of our eleven wards.

10.14 Panels of up to eight people were established that were made up of ward councillors, local residents and representatives of agencies working in those areas.

10.15 So far, panels have funded a variety of projects totalling an amount of £194,399.19. This leaves an amount of £80,600.81 (29.3% of the budget) left to allocate to community projects. This will be done at a final round of panel meetings set to take place at the end of the summer.

### **11 Equality and Diversity**

#### **11.1 Employer perspective and service user perspective**

The Equality and Diversity Group is an internal advisory working group formed of officers and councillors focused on overseeing all aspects of equality and diversity at the council.

A review of our portfolio responsibilities proposes moving the areas of Equality and Diversity employer perspective to the Leader's portfolio and the service user perspective to the Customer Experience and Review portfolio.

Working with and encouraging equality and diversity within our communities remains integral to the Reducing Inequalities portfolio.

As my report is retrospective, I include the employer and service user perspective below.

11.2 The council's workforce as of 31st March 2024 stood at 625 staff members, of which 280 were males and 345 were females\*.

31 members of the workforce declared a disability and 22 were from all other ethnic groups combined. The largest age group was 50 to 59 years of age, with 171 staff members in this age group.

\*Please note for formal HMRC purposes employees can only be recognised as male or female, and non-binary genders are not recognised in the UK, however, should an employee wish to be recognised as non-binary we take a supportive approach. For example, allow gender neutral pro-nouns in emails and gender neutral language in policies etc.

- 11.3 The Human Resources Team has continued to offer support, advice and guidance on equality, diversity and inclusion at the council, and there has continued to be focus on employees health and wellbeing whereby:

The council's Health and Wellbeing pages on the Hub have been redesigned and updated to provide a digital version of the previous 'Our Health Matters' booklet.

There are subsequently now dedicated Hub pages for Women's Health, Men's Health, Financial Wellbeing, Mental Health, Being Active and Resilience.

Examples of specific events and / or support recently delivered include:

- Andy's Man Club, a men's suicide prevention charity, has delivered a presentation to employees at Hamilton House.
- The Health and Wellbeing Café (women through the ages) has continued, with plans to re-promote / refocus the group.
- Financial Wellbeing (start of career to mid-career) courses along with Planning for Retirement Courses have been promoted and delivered to employees.
- Human Resources work closely with managers and corporate health and safety to support and advise on Occupational Health recommendations for reasonable adjustments to support disability or health conditions that may be covered by the Equality Act.

- 11.4 Recruitment training for managers is currently being progressed. This training provides support and guidance to our managers on recruitment processes and ensures good recruitment practices are in place.

The training has dedicated sections relating to equality and diversity including information on Neurodiversity, the Equality Act 2010, the types of discrimination, unconscious bias, and also covers information on our accreditations as a Mindful Employer, Disability Confident Employer, and Carers Quality Award.

In addition to the accreditations above, the council has also received Foster Friendly Employer accreditation.

To support the activities above, the Human Resources Team has also recently updated the council's Leave Policy to include provisions to support employees undergoing fertility treatment.

- 11.5 The council's Gender pay gap is published on an annual basis and based upon a snapshot date of 31.03.2023 the Mean gap was at 0.6% and the Median gap at 3.6%.
- 11.6 The Human Resources Team has continued to provide advice and guidance, monitor recruitment and workforce data and review HR policies and procedures.
- 11.7 The Equality & Diversity Advisory panel plays a key role in monitoring the council's progress towards meeting its five equality objectives, whilst also helps to ensure the council continues to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. This collective activity assists in ensuring the services we provide remain accessible to all our customers.

11.8 The council's current equality objectives were introduced in 2020 in line with the council's refreshed strategic plan, Vision 2025. The current objectives will remain in place until the end of 2024. An exercise will take place during 2024 to review the objectives to ensure they remain suitable and are in line with the council's new Vision 2030 strategic plan. As a reminder, the council's equality objectives currently in place are:

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

11.9 On an annual basis the council produces an Equality Journal. The Journal provides an overview of the equality and diversity focused activity undertaken by the council over the previous year towards meeting the above objectives and towards meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty. Additionally, the Journal includes the latest demographic data for Lincoln, together with the council's workforce data as at the end of the year the Journal is reporting upon.

The latest Journal covering the period April 2023 to March 2024 is currently being produced and is scheduled to be presented to the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel in October 2024 and to Council in November 2024. The Journal will then be published on the council's staff intranet and website.

## **12 Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour**

12.1 The Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Team (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 covered by the service include:

- Accumulations of waste
- Animals
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Bins on streets
- Fly-tipping investigations
- Licensing consultations
- Littering Fixed Penalty Notices
- Management of the Safety Warden Service
- Noise
- Pests / conditions of gardens

I would encourage members to report any incidents to officers so that action can be taken.

## 12.2 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.

For the period November 2023 to May 2024, the PPASB Team served a total of 200 Community Protection Warnings (CPW's). These warning are the first stage of formal enforcement action in most cases. 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 period November 2023 to May 2024.

Over the period covered in this report improving communication and joint working opportunities between the Housing and PPASB Teams has continued to be a focus. This has allowed for effective problem solving using the tenancy agreement alongside the tools and powers available to the PPASB Team.

The majority of the council's high risk ASB cases that are referred into the Anti-Social Behaviour Risk Assessment Conference (ASBRAC), originate from Housing. Weekly PPASB and Housing tasking meetings are now in place, where resources are shared and problems are solved at an operational level.

A referral process has been set up to ensure that we can monitor the amount of cases that are referred into PPASB by Housing. This system went live in April 2024, so there is a lack of any useful data to present at this time.

## 12.3 Safer Streets Funding

During the period of the report, a successful bid was submitted to the Safer Streets 5 fund. This project includes:

- The City Centre Safety Warden Service
- 2x City Centre PPASB Officers
- 1x City Centre Licensing Officer
- Additional CCTV staffing
- £50,000 to improve CCTV infrastructure
- 1x Part time funding for a Trading Standards Officer

All the above resources have been in place since early 2024. The resources have been allocated specifically to the City Centre with a focus around community safety and engagement. Feedback from the community, businesses and partners has all been positive around the project. The extra resources have allowed for proactive work in the City Centre, such as joint operations with the Police in the night time economy. The Safety Wardens, PPASB Officers and Licensing Officer are receiving training from the Children's Society to help to spot signs and to assist in the tackling of child sexual exploitation. They also form part of the day time and evening city centre management groups.

The PPASB Officers have made connections with the Scampton Police and site management teams. They have completed Asylum seeker / refugee training, which

covered safeguarding elements such as measures to tackle trafficking and exploitation.

A steering group was set up to help effectively utilise the Safety Warden service. This group has representation from the University, Police, Lincoln BIG, PPASB, Licensing, the Safety Wardens and the Student Unions. This has allowed us to set priorities, identify hotspots and respond to trends in the nighttime economy. The Wardens have partnered up with the Police and Transport Police to help to safeguard individuals in both the day time and night time economy.

#### **12.4 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.

During the period of this report (November 2023 to June 2024), the following enforcement action has taken place in the City Centre:

- Community Protection Warnings – 17
- Community Protection Notices – 4
- Fixed Penalty Notices – 2
- Youth ASB warnings – 40

The PPASB Team will always offer support to individuals prior to commencing enforcement action. There have been recent changes to prison release policies, which is suspected to be the driver behind a rise in rough sleeping and associated ASB in the City Centre. The PPASB Team work with partners to patrol the City Centre to ensure that support is provided where possible and enforcement action is taken where needed. Conversations have begun with Lincolnshire Recovery Partnership to improve joint working and to build processes for supporting individuals who display alcohol or drug misuse issues. The team is also engaging with homeless support partners in the hope of providing a place for homeless individuals to go during evening hours.

The City Centre team pick up work across the whole city. Examples of this work are 131 Youth warning letters / visits, 8 Youth acceptable behaviour contracts, 24 Housing related CPW's and 8 Housing related CPN's between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 and 26<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

#### **12.5 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 has been renewed for a further 3 years.

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 and the process for the renewal of this PSPO is underway.

The new PPASB Officers have taken on work across the whole city regarding ASB alongside their City Centre work. The PSPO requires Officers to ask for individuals to surrender their alcohol prior to any enforcement action being taken. Police Officers also enforce the PSPO.

The PSPO is not the only tool available to tackle issues in the City Centre.

City Centre enforcement data for the period 01/01/24 - 26/09/24:

- Community Protection Warnings (CPW's) for moving on rough sleepers who are engaging in ASB when support and advice isn't accepted – 16
- Community Protection Notices (CPN's) for moving on rough sleepers who are engaging in ASB when support and advice isn't accepted – 5
- CPW's for aggressive begging – 7
- CPN's for aggressive begging – 1
- CPW's for nuisance busking – 1
- Surrenders of alcohol under PSPO – 12 (police data not included)

## **12.6 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 period of this report, 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. These processes were put into place prior to the period of this report but have been used effectively during the period.

## **12.7 PPASB Service Forward Look**

Over the next 12 months the focus will be on continuing to improve working relationships with Housing to tackle ASB within the council's Housing stock. There will also be a focus on continuing to improve on an already effective relationship with the partners of the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership.

PPASB will continue work with the Lincolnshire Recovery Partnership, the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership and homelessness support organisations to improve our referral and support mechanisms.

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 was a previously noted risk to the service. This risk has now reduced due to the effectiveness of the staff that have been acquired through the Safer Streets funding.

The Police and Crime Commissioners Office has received funding to provide a visible presence in identified hot spots of the city. PPASB and the Police are working to feed in data and operational awareness for where those resources would be best allocated.

### **13 CCTV Service**

13.1 From November 2023 to June 2024 the council's CCTV service monitored over 7,000 incidents, a 20% increase on the 2023 figures for this period. This can be accounted for by the return to double staffing of the CCTV control room. During this period the service also processed 328 reviews, a slight increase on the previous period. Significantly, 518 Police evidence disks have been produced for criminal prosecutions as part of the council's ongoing support for the police and commitment to public safety, which is an increase of 17%. It should also be noted that 118 internal and external reviews were completed indicating an increase in support for other council services and a growing demand for freedom of information requests.

13.2 The CCTV service continues to engage with multi-agency working to support the day and night time economy in the city and the service has continued to develop closer working relationships and present a transparent service as part of this work.

13.3 Lay Visitors have continued to visit the Control Room on a monthly basis. 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 remain popular and have continued to increase.

13.4 As included within the PPASB service update above, the CCTV service has benefitted from additional Safer Street funding, which has enabled an extensive recruitment process attracting a record number of applicants for vacant positions in the service.

As a result, the service has been able to successfully fill these positions with high quality individuals. The new recruits have completed the SIA course and are now working alongside experienced operators as they continue to develop into the role.

13.5 Safer Street funding has also allowed the service to install 9 new cameras to the system. The camera locations were decided in consultation with the Police and Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Team with the aim to cover further areas of the city.

A server room upgrade to support the addition of extra cameras to the system has also been completed and cameras have been installed internally and externally at the refurbished Central Market.

Plans are underway to upgrade and adopt the CCTV system at the council run managed workspace on Limekiln Way.

13.6 Alongside the city centre, the service has continued to monitor various council sites including

- Arboretum
- Birchwood Leisure Centre
- Boultham Park
- City Hall
- Derek Miller Court
- Hamilton House
- Hartsholme Park
- Jarvis House
- St Botolph's Court
- Trent View
- Yarborough Leisure Centre

13.7 Events hosted in the city have also been supported by the CCTV service, including football matches, the Lincoln 10k, cycling events, Lincoln Pride, Christmas lights switch on and any marches or protests.

Footfall data for key events in the city including Steampunk and the Lincoln History weekend continues to be requested. This data enables officials to make informed decisions to ensure that these and any future events can take place with minimal issues.

13.8 The figures below provide a reminder of the incident numbers for the last 3 years recorded by the CCTV service, which are relatively consistent -

- 2021 - 9,637
- 2022 – 9,566
- 2023 – 9,905

13.9 Fly tipping incidents have remained high, and the service continues to produce evidence disks for prosecution. 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.

## **14 Lincoln Community Lottery**

14.1 Lincoln Community Lottery is an effective tool to help local good causes raise additional funds to support their work locally. So far the lottery has raised over £210k for local good causes. There is no cost to a cause to sign up to the use the lottery. 75 local causes are currently using the lottery to support their fundraising.

14.2 50 pence of every £1 lottery ticket purchased directly goes to the supporters chosen good cause. A further 10 pence also supports the Lincoln Lottery Community Fund. Supporters of the lottery also have the option of selecting the Lincoln Lottery Community Fund as their good cause and in these cases the full 60 pence supports this fund.

14.3 The Lincoln Lottery Community Fund is allocated in the autumn each year. For the 2023 fund, an application and selection process took place during October and November 2023.

The funding is being used by three causes to support projects focused on the topics 'green spaces' and 'homelessness'. These topics were chosen by supporters of the lottery and residents through a consultation exercise in autumn 2023.

- 14.4 One further good cause also received a share of the 2023 fund, however, due to a change of circumstance, the cause is unfortunately unable to deliver their proposed project. The funds initially allocated to this cause will be reallocated as part of the Lincoln Lottery Community Fund 2024 allocation process taking place in the coming autumn.
- 14.5 The council continues to consider the impacts of gambling and ensure where the lottery is promoted, that this is done so responsibly and in line with the Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice set by the Gambling Commission.

Promotion of the lottery by the council focuses on attracting new good causes to use the lottery as a fund raising tool rather than promoting the prizes on offer to attract supporters. Whilst this can have an impact on the number of supporters purchasing tickets for the lottery, this approach helps to support responsible gambling and ensure the council is not actively encouraging residents to take part to win prizes.

- 14.6 To ensure the lottery remains fair for all causes and supporters, all good causes are required to meet set criteria to join the lottery. All good causes are also asked to formally declare each year that they continue to meet this criteria to remain on the lottery as a good cause.

More information on Lincoln Community Lottery, including the terms all causes must meet to be a lottery good cause, is available via the lottery website - <https://www.lincolnlottery.co.uk/>

## **15 Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter**

- 15.1 Following on from the success of the Lincoln Living Wage Campaign, in 2018 the council launched the Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter. The charter gives recognition to local organisations going beyond the statutory minimum to support their employees and the local community.
- 15.2 To gain accreditation to the charter, organisations must meet set criteria, which differs depending on the size of the organisation. All organisations must have a base in the city and / or employ staff who live within the city boundary.

At the time of writing this report 107 local organisations had gained accreditation to the charter, with each demonstrating their commitment towards corporate social responsibility and going beyond the statutory minimum to support their employees and the local community. Organisations accredited range from small to large and cover a wide range of sectors.

- 15.3 Following accreditation, the council continues to be in contact with organisations accredited to the charter, and on an annual basis all organisations are required to complete a reaccreditation questionnaire. This questionnaire helps to ensure the charter remains fair for all organisations, whilst also helps the council to keep up to date with the great socially responsible activities taking place locally.

- 15.4 All accredited organisations to the charter are actively promoted by the council via a number of routes, with the primary routes being via the council's social media channels and via a dedicated area on the council's website.

Promotion includes sharing case studies and videos giving an insight into why some organisations chose to undertake socially responsible activities and gain accreditation to the charter. All new signees to the charter also receive a welcome post on the council's social media channels.

- 15.5 A directory of all charter signees is also available on the council's website - <https://www.lincoln.gov.uk/people-community/lincoln-social-responsibility-charter-1/6>. Included within the directory are the web addresses of charter signees, a location map and signee case studies providing information on why local organisations choose to undertake socially responsible activities and the positive impact of these.

All organisations are presented in the directory under the sector they operate within. The aim of the directory is to provide a central list of organisations committed to corporate social responsibility locally and accredited to the charter, which can be used by the council and other organisations when procuring services.

- 15.6 Alongside the promotion undertaken by the council, all accredited organisations receive an accreditation certificate endorsed by the Mayor of Lincoln, which is reissued every three years, together with a promotional window sticker for the organisation to display within their premises. All accredited organisations are also provided with promotional logos for use on e-mail and letter footers to raise awareness of their accreditation and commitment to the charter.

- 15.7 As highlighted in my previous report, City of Lincoln Council continues to be proud to undertake a range of socially responsible activities itself, above the statutory minimum, to support our employees and the local community.

Further information on the charter is available on the council's website – [www.lincoln.gov.uk/socialresponsibility](http://www.lincoln.gov.uk/socialresponsibility).

## **16 Looking ahead**

- 16.1 With the cost of living challenges remaining, the council will need to ensure residents and businesses continue to receive the support they require to help them navigate these challenging times. This must remain a top priority.

Providing this support will unfortunately be at a time when resources continue to be stretched. However, from directly working with service areas and seeing the outstanding work they undertake, I am confident we will be able to overcome the challenges ahead and ensure our residents and businesses continue to receive such a high level of support.

**APPENDIX A – Enforcement Action**

	1 <sup>st</sup> Nov 2022 to 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2023	1 <sup>st</sup> Nov 2023 to 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2024
<b>WARNINGS</b>		
Community Protection Warnings	81	78
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES</b>		
Fly tipping Community Protection Warnings	4	10
Fly tipping Community Protection Notices	1	1
Fly tipping Fixed Penalty Notices	4	15
Bins on streets Community Protection Warnings	46	112
Bins on streets Community Protection Notices	22	42
Bins on streets Fixed Penalty Notices	13	21
<b>NOISE ISSUES</b>		
Noise Abatement Notices	4	1
<b>GENERAL ASB ISSUES</b>		
ASB Community Protection Notices	4	10
<b>CONDITION OF PROPERTY RELATED ISSUES</b>		
Prevention of Damage by Pests Notices	1	2
Community Protection Notices	0	1
<b>OTHER ENFORCEMENTS</b>		
Microchipping notice	1	2

## APPENDIX B – Performance Monitoring

Below provides the latest performance measure outturns and supporting service area commentary for those performance measures linked to my portfolio. The data presented is for Quarter 4 2023/24.

### Status Key



Service Area	Measure ID	Measure	Unit	High or low is good	Low target	High target	Previous data period	Previous outturn	Quarter 4 2023/24 outturn	Status		Service area supporting commentary
Housing Benefit Administration	BE 1	Average days to process new housing benefit claims from date received (cumulative)	Days	Low is good	18.00	16.00	Q4 - 22/23	15.85	14.32	G	▲	In the final quarter there has been a further decrease in the number of days to process new housing benefit claims from date received. During the year, with the extra pressure residents are feeling due to cost of living challenges we have been careful to monitor and prioritise new claims. Overtime has been offered to staff to ensure the level of outstanding work has been managed. Despite the number of customers awaiting assessment increasing during this quarter due to annual rent and income changes, new claims have been targeted to ensure they are assessed promptly.
Housing Benefit Administration	BE 2	Average days to process housing benefit claim changes of circumstances from date received (cumulative)	Days	Low is good	6.00	4.50	Q4 - 22/23	3.08	3.42	G	▼	In final quarter performance has improved due to the number of changes made in advance of the quarter end (these count as 1 day), as customers report increases in rent and income due to the new financial year.

Service Area	Measure ID	Measure	Unit	High or low is good	Low target	High target	Previous data period	Previous outturn	Quarter 4 2023/24 outturn	Status		Service area supporting commentary
Housing Benefit Administration	BE 3	Number of Housing Benefits / Council Tax support customers awaiting assessment	Number	Low is good	1400.00	1300.00	Q4 - 22/23	1,792	2,274	R	▼	At the end of quarter 4, 2,274 customers were awaiting assessment. Of these customers 1,944 were awaiting a first contact. The final quarter of the year always sees an increase in work being received. This is due to reports of annual changes in rent and income.
Housing Benefit Administration	BE 4	Percentage of risk-based quality checks made where benefit entitlement is correct (cumulative)	%	High is good	91.00	94.00	Q4 - 22/23	95.26	93.05	A	▼	Throughout quarter 4, the Benefit and Subsidy Team have carried out over 800 checks on Benefit Assessments. This is a larger figure than usual due to the end of the financial year. There has been more checks carried out on Homeless cases due to the Final Subsidy claim being carried out at the end of March. There have been more checks carried out this quarter and the percentage rate has increased. Performance has improved throughout the year.
Housing Benefit Administration	BE 5	The number of new benefit claims year to date (Housing Benefits/Council Tax Support)	Number	N/A	Volumetric	Volumetric	Q3 - 23/24	3,255	4,189	V		The total number of Housing Benefit new claims processed this year is 1,072. The total number of new Council Tax Reduction claims processed this year is 3,117.
Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Team	PPASB 1	Number of cases received in the quarter (ASB cases only)	Number	N/A	Volumetric	Volumetric	Q3 - 23/24	111	131	V		This is a 13% increase when compared with Q4 of 22/23. It is an increase of 18% when compared with Q3 23/24.
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	Q3 - 23/24	1,006	1,014	V		This outturn is stable when compared to Q3 23/24. It is a 22% increase when compared with Q4 of 22/23.

Service Area	Measure ID	Measure	Unit	High or low is good	Low target	High target	Previous data period	Previous outturn	Quarter 4 2023/24 outturn	Status		Service area supporting commentary
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	Q3 - 23/24	226	279	R	▼	This is a 23% increase when compared to Q3 23/24. The team has increased in size by two officers during this quarter. The two new officers are dealing with complex cases within the City Centre, which in turn has increased the amount of cases left open at the end of the quarter.
CCTV	CCTV 1	Total number of incidents handled by CCTV operators	Number	N/A	Volumetric	Volumetric	Q3 - 23/24	2,887	2,852	V		Incidents numbers are at the same level as the previous quarter. Arrests rose 10%, there was a 33% increase in Mental Health incidents, and Burglary/Theft increased by 43%. January and February were slow as is the usual case, but the number of incidents rose by 36% between February and March. There was also a 24% rise in evidence discs produced for the Police over the quarter. We now have four new members of staff, all progressing well. This is reflected in that proactive arrests were up 39%.

Source – COLC Performance Information Management System (PIMS)