

- Present:** Councillor Calum Watt (*in the Chair*)
- Councillors:** Chris Burke, Debbie Armiger, Biff Bean, James Brown, Laura Danese, Bill Mara, Clare Smalley, Rachel Storer, Dylan Stothard, Aiden Wells and Emily Wood
- Also in Attendance:** Matthew Clayton (Lincolnshire County Council), Amy Colley (Acts Trust), Richard Hanson (Lincoln Castle Academy), Councillor Donald Nannestad, Councillor Anita Prichard, Councillor Joshua Wells, Emily Holmes (Assistant Director Strategic Development, City of Lincoln Council), Victoria Poulson (Democratic Services Officer, City of Lincoln Council), Sian Wade (Transform Lincoln), and Martin Walmsley (Assistant Director Shared Revenues and Benefits, City of Lincoln Council)
- Apologies for Absence:** None.

79. Welcome and Apologies

Councillor Calum Watt, Chair of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee, opened the meeting with a warm welcome to all attendees.

No apologies for absence had been received.

Councillor(s) Donald Nannestad, Anita Prichard, Clare Smalley and Joshua Wells were in attendance as Panel Members to respond to Item 4 entitled 'Consultation to close Sixth Form Provision at Lincoln Castle Academy'.

80. Confirmation of Minutes - 17 September 2024

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as an accurate record.

81. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

82. Consultation to close Sixth Form Provision at Lincoln Castle Academy

Councillor Calum Watt, Chair of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee, introduced the topic of discussion which was the Consultation to close Sixth Form Provision at Lincoln Castle Academy.

The Committee received a presentation from Richard Hanson, Principal of Lincoln Castle Academy. During consideration of the presentation, the following points were noted:

- The consultation document summarised the rationale for the proposal to close Sixth Form Provision at Lincoln Castle Academy (LCA)
- The proposal was based on a decline of numbers over the years. The Year 12 intake in 2022 resulted in zero applications

- There had been a great deal of change of leadership and management at the Academy
- T Levels were a two-year qualification designed to give 16- to 19-year-olds a head start towards their desired career. LCA decided not to invest in T Levels but other providers had. The subjects taught in sixth form had not been adapted
- It had previously been the case that there was only 1 student studying A Level Maths and some classes were comprised of only 2/3 students
- The Academy had attempted to offer specialist subjects, such as criminology, in the absence of the provision of a qualified teacher. Furthermore, results had declined and students started to consider alternative providers that had performed to a higher standard
- The recommended class size was approximately 15 students however for some subjects, such as music, it could be smaller. Business Studies however, was a subject with a much larger number of students. Therefore, there were not enough numbers for classes to be filled
- The school had not invested in infrastructure and as such, IT facilities were outdated, furniture was broken and many classrooms did not have the provision of an interactive whiteboard. The school had previously attempted to retain a very small sixth form that was losing money

(Note: Councillor Rachel Storer joined the meeting at this point in proceedings)

- The Department of Education (DfE) recommended a sixth form comprised of approximately 600 students
- Alternative provision was in close proximity within the area and included Lincoln Christ's Hospital School and The Priory Lincoln Academy; both had an improved offer. Lincoln Castle Academy was graded 'inadequate'
- Extensive consideration of possible solutions had taken place. LCA had not had a sixth form last year or within the current year
- Since the school moved to Delta Trust, the budget was good and investment had increased significantly. The IT provision worked well and the school was fully staffed with specialist teachers
- The offer provided by LCA was of a high standard. The results of the Year 11 in Summer 2024 were the best within the school's 53-year history. The Academy was set to become one of the top schools in Lincoln for Year 11 performance; the success of which had been attributed to work with both the community and parents, which had rebuilt the culture and trust
- Data analysis had been carried out on figures that dated back to 2007. The data suggested that many in the Ermine opted for LCA and numbers had increased over the last 2 years. The number of mid-year admissions had also increased
- The Academy's Open Evening recently took place, in September 2024 which had been a very successful event in which approximately 500 parents attended

(Note: Martin Walmsley, Assistant Director - Shared Revenues & Benefits joined the meeting at this point in proceedings)

- LCA had independent careers providers and worked closely with other schools and universities in order that Year 11 students gained relevant experience
- Consultation had taken place with a wide range of individuals, alternative post 16 providers, Councillors, MP's and parents. The consultation had recently

been extended however it was the view of LCA that it was in the best interests of the community and students that the closure of the sixth form provision was proceeded.

The Chair offered his thanks to Richard Hanson and welcomed comments and questions from Members of the Committee. As a result of discussions between Members, the following points were made: -

Question: The economics appeared to suggest that sixth form provision would not be possible from 2025. Longer term, and further to satisfaction with academic levels, was rejuvenation of the sixth form a possibility?

Response: The provision of a sixth form was not desired however it would be possible if required, in the circumstance of an increase in population. A broad curriculum would be offered with a school size of 900 students aged 11-16.

Question: Had the Trust decided if it hoped for a future sixth form?

Response: For a sixth form to be successful, the recruitment of additional staff would be necessary. LCA was fully staffed and did not have capacity for any staff not teaching. The top floor of the school would need to be made safe as it was currently sealed off. There were plans for the build of a new school with a scheduled completion date of November 2027 and therefore, temporary classrooms would need to be a consideration. Staffing was the main issue.

Question: Qualitatively, how easy was it for prospective students to gain a sixth form education?

Response: The Academy ran a full programme and worked with other schools such as Lincoln University Technical College (UTC). Other colleges visited the Academy and talked about their offers. LCA held regular events and had a careers advisor.

Question: How many students were there in Year 11?

Response: There were 107 students in Year 11.

Supplementary Question: Was the figure of 107 students usual?

Response: The figure was low and had reduced when LCA received an OFSTED rating of 'inadequate' as many students (35) left LCA and attended UTC. During the current year, only six students had left.

Comment: It was disappointing that the school had ended up in the position that it had. LCA was the only purpose-built place in Lincoln. In terms of the viability and the future, Lincoln did not have many people going on to sixth form college.

Question: LCA was built in the 1970's. How feasible was it that the school was a viable proposition?

Response: The school's future looked healthy and Year 7 admissions had increased; Year 8 was full and things looking strong for next year. Many parents stated that LCA was their first choice; there was an increasing number of people joining the Academy.

Question: There was a mix of schools in Lincoln. What was the provision for having a sixth form?

Response: There were some schools with sixth forms, some church schools and some schools for the 11-16 age range. Schools with over 1500 students within the age range of 11-16 often had a viable sixth form and therefore, offered a wide range of subjects.

Question: What were the plans for the new build school due to be completed by 2027?

Response: With the Department of Education (DfE), plans included a new build within the LCA site with a planned completion date of the end of 2027/beginning of 2028. The build would be a single, three storey building, carbon neutral with a solar panelled roof. The vision was for an Academy for 900 students. The top floor of the West Block was sealed off. Damp had affected some of the buildings on the outer periphery. Initial plans considered a partial rebuild and refurbishment, but a refurbishment would not have been guaranteed for 40 years due to the flat roof.

Question: How far along were the plans in the planning process? Had planning permission been obtained?

Response: The plans were at feasibility stage, prior to procurement.

Supplementary Question: Was a timescale known?

Response: Information would be sought and circulated to members, further to the meeting.

Question: Families preferred continuity. Would prospective students feel discouraged from joining LCA in the absence of a sixth form provision?

Response: Individuals continued to be interested in what the school offered e.g. careers offers and guidance and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The Academy offered 42 after school clubs and employed 1-2-1 tutors in order for gaps to be worked on. Many parents were interested in what was going to be done to support their child and their development. Since LCA had moved to Delta, the school had been much busier.

Comment: The potential removal of sixth form provision from LCA was sad as it had been very successful in the past. It had deteriorated due to equipment that had not been fixed and it was a shame that parents in the local area were not offered sixth form as a service within the school.

Response: The school had previously run a staffing led curriculum however it needed to be about the number of pupils. In order to ensure that staff were remunerated, the infrastructure and resources had suffered. Consideration had not been given to things that had changed and adaptations had not been made. Attempts had been made to offer courses without investment in training and resources. In order for the sixth form provision to be continued, other class sizes within the school were large, behaviour suffered, and outcomes had been poor.

Question: Would any sixth form provision, such as a common room, be incorporated into the plans for the new building?

Response: The DfE agreed a 900 placed school for ages 11-16. The site was large enough for another building in order that an exponential increase in population could be accommodated. LCA had proceeded with a traditional route in place of an academic or vocational route which included dance, drama, performance, technology and bakery equipment.

Question: Historically, what had the student figures been?

Response: Figures had not exceeded 800; the reason it had not worked for a long time.

Question: The Academy's progress score was approximately -0.5 last year. What would it be for the current year?

Response: LCA was the second highest turn around school within the Delta Trust this year. For the current year, the predicted figure was +0.15 to +0.18. The key

focus was reading which had received significant investment and support from Delta whereby the barriers to reading had been considered and appropriate interventions put in place.

Comment: The situation was not a positive one and the City of Lincoln Council (CoLC) sat as a nexus point of several different communities.

Question: The schools results this year were to be applauded. The public appeared to be unaware of the proposal to withdraw sixth form provision; they had to seek the information out. Was this fair?

Response: The consultation had been handled by the Trust. All parents of the school had received the information. In addition, other secondary schools, local schools, local councillors and the MP had all been informed. The consultation had also been published on the academy's website. The consultation was widely publicised.

Question: When would the results of the consultation be available?

Response: Delta Trust had agreed to an extension of the consultation. The results had not yet been viewed.

Question: Could some work have been done previously when it became clear years ago that things were struggling?

Response: Consideration could have been given to numbers but it was unlikely that there would have been a case for a viable sixth form. Over 40 members of staff had left, and the academy did not need to recruit anymore staff as it would have been to the detriment of the rest of the school.

Question: Could other sixth forms have been considered?

Response: An increased number of pupils moved to Lincoln College for the vocational offers of which LCA hadn't kept up with. Other sixth form Ofsted ratings were positive.

Comment: It was a shame that an opportunity has been missed.

Response: Consideration could have taken place previously, but the majority of Year 11 pupils would have been required to remain at the school to ensure its viability.

Question: Lessons had been learnt. What was the date of the closure of the consultation?

Response: The closure date of the consultation would be circulated further to the meeting.

Comment: Members remained welcome to visit the Academy.

RESOLVED that:

1. The closure date of the consultation be circulated to members further to the meeting.
2. Officers be tasked with the composition of a response to the consultation, to be submitted ahead of the closure deadline.

(Note: Richard Hanson, Donald Nannestad and Joshua Wells left proceedings at this stage)

(Note: Proceedings adjourned at 18:09)

83. Education and the Cost of Living

(Note: Proceedings resumed at 18:18)

Councillor Calum Watt, Chair of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee, introduced the topic of discussion which was Education and the Cost of Living.

(Note: In the interests of transparency, Councillor Rachel Storer wished it be noted that she volunteered for Night Light Cafes)

The Committee received a collaborative presentation from guest speakers, Matthew Clayton (Head of Education Support, Children's Services, Lincolnshire County Council), Sian Wade, (Active Faith Lead, Transform Lincoln) and Amy Colley, (Relationships Manager, Acts Trust).

Matthew Clayton - Head of Education Support, Children's Services, Lincolnshire County Council

- Free School Meals eligibility checking was within the remit of Head of Education Support. In addition, the remit covered support with the household support fund and vouchers issued to schools
- The core function of a school was to be an education provider within a safe and warm environment however schools went above and beyond every day
- It was important to differentiate between universal free school meals of which all Reception to Year 2 pupils were eligible and income based free school meals
- Phase 6 of the Household Support Fund had been rolled out recently and it was hoped that details would be received in the coming weeks. Vouchers for families to spend in supermarkets would be continued
- Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) administered many central Government initiatives. LCC did not have its own funding streams to support the cost of living through schools. Schools had very limited funding
- Schools worked with families to signpost to foodbanks and assisted with the completion of documentation to apply for services. Where possible, there was the holiday food programme and schools worked with third parties
- Other central Government initiatives included the proposed provision of a free breakfast club and wrap around care in order that parents could have their child in school from 08:00-18:00. It was hoped that the initiative enabled parents to work longer hours if they wished. LCC worked within the sector and attempted to administer initiatives
- LCC operated across a fragmented education system however worked well in Lincolnshire to ensure families were supported.

Sian Wade - Active Faith Lead, Transform Lincoln

- FiSH (Food in School Holidays) was launched with CoLC in 2016
- The vision was to upscale the project of which the CoLC almost underwrote. Up until the Covid-19 pandemic, it was a great opportunity for eligible children to be issued vouchers to ensure food could be purchased in supermarkets. When the pandemic began, within 2 days the scheme was offered across the city

- It was recognised that there was a gap with JAM families, those 'just about managing'. It was possible that school holidays would just about push them into debt
- In the summer of 2024, 6 different projects were ran across Lincoln City and some of the villages. The generosity of the CoLC enabled the scheme to be opened up across the whole city. FiSH worked closely with Co-Op and Tesco
- Issues had been experienced with communicating the scheme with schools. Not everyone who received a pack of vouchers used them
- It appeared the case that when people were managing, they did not use supermarket vouchers. Similarly, foodbank numbers reduced when the Household Support Fund was available
- Schools advised that the scheme was incredibly helpful for families who were 'just about managing'. North Kesteven District Council funded part of the project
- Lincoln Against Poverty group sent questions to 20+ primary schools of which 7 had responded. The issues that emerged centralised around food, housing, childcare, mental health (both adult and child) and strained resources
- There was a sense that families had struggled, which had been recognised by schools
- There were other aid projects available to families and included Baby Basket and the Christmas Sack project. All schemes were very helpful but it was important that the real issue was identified
- Lincoln Against Poverty was exciting as strategic thinking was positive

Amy Colley - Relationships Manager, Acts Trust

- Acts Trust was a local Lincoln based charity whose mission was for people to be empowered and to end poverty. Consideration was given to the full person
- A number of projects were facilitated by Acts Trust and included:
 - Night Light Cafés - a place which was open every day of the week with a support network
 - Lincoln Foodbank - 3-day emergency food parcels were issued and the Community Grocery; an alternative for food to be secured at significantly reduced prices which empowered individuals
 - Restore Programme - courses included: Job Club, Life Ready Course, Money Management Course and Wellbeing Course, designed to help people holistically
 - Engagement with young people took place through 'Energise' - a project that mentored students at school, provided youth clubs at some estates in Lincoln and ran the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme during school holidays
- Acts Trust had considered existing external partnerships and how they could be connected
- Individuals arrived at Lincoln Foodbank in need of food but often there was much more support needed. Acts Trust aimed to make the foodbank a place where support could be received in one place. Foodbanks were great places of community and places that friendships and relationships could be built
- Restore courses were ran alongside foodbank sessions. A citizen's advisor also visited foodbanks as it was important to meet people and for individuals to be considered holistically
- 'No Wrong Door' was a UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) funded project which attempted to strategically consider the root cause of problems

- Upon referral to Lincoln Foodbank, individuals were issued a triage questionnaire that asked further questions, and a personalised support plan would be created
- Any strategies considered needed to be collaborative and empower individuals.
- Greater Lincolnshire Food Partnership Strategy was an effective and comprehensive service. It was important that gaps and the demographics of missed individuals were considered
- Work with young people within estates in the city had been positive and it was important that young people were invested into

The Chair thanked guest speakers for the informative presentations and welcomed comments and questions from Members of the Committee. As a result of discussions between Members and speakers, the following points were made: -

Comment: Communication was important and ensured that overlaps were effectively identified.

Question: Referred to a visit during summer holidays to 2 HAF projects of which both been well attended and the children very happy. Had funding been secured for the next term?

Response: There had always been a question as to what happened in the future. HAF was a well-established scheme right across Lincolnshire which had been well embedded within communities. It would be a great shame if it was ended however there had been no information received that suggested it might be.

Comment: Thanks were offered for the incredible work carried out. The enthusiasm was incredible.

Question: There was a significant number of vouchers issues to families of St. Giles Academy. Further to this, was there anything of focus in light of that?

Response: Schools were asked to send JAM figures. The figure received from St. Giles Academy appeared high in comparison to other schools. It was important to ensure that the percentage uptake wasn't for other reasons. Language translation issues with service users had been experienced and improvements were continually sought.

Question: Was there any policy in terms of the kind of food schools offered? Obesity rates in Lincoln were terrible. Was there anything that could be done at a County Council level?

Response: The DfE ran and administered school food standards, and the expectation was that all schools adhered however it was not policed and there was no implication for not adhering. It was difficult to balance what a child wanted to eat and the preference for children to eat nutritious food. LCC had a food education team and attempted to educate schools. Lincolnshire as a whole had a very fragmented food offer as a lot of schools did not have a kitchen so it became necessary for food to be brought in and all for approximately £2.60 per day.

Question: Referred to the higher redemption rate in areas perceived as more affluent. Was there any data or theory in lieu of that?

Response: An area may be perceived as affluent however there was often considerable poverty that was not seen. If redeemed, it would be assumed that the need was present. The NHS commissioned a number of community connectors, and the considerable amount of poverty discovered was surprising.

Question: Was there a better way to engage with schools?

Response: Lincolnshire County covered a large area. There were over 360 schools, and all worked in different ways based on geographical locations. They often already had their own established networks.

Question: Thanks were given for all the work on the FiSH project. What issues prevented uptake of the vouchers?

Response: Some schools in more affluent areas within the city were not able to advise of their JAM families. Money within pastoral support appeared higher in more disadvantaged areas. Communication with parents whereby there were informed of the support available would be positive. In terms of families that had not used the vouchers, it may be for personal or pride reasons. Communications had taken place about struggles in an attempt that issues be broken down.

Comment: Schools that experienced the higher levels of poverty were least likely to respond as they may be busy dealing with the poverty. It may be the case that the poverty in Lincoln ran so deep that it was unseen. It was possible that after a decade of neglect, the depth of poverty was immense, and systems may not have measured it.

Comment: There were pockets within geographical areas that were masked as things were looked at over a bigger area. Indices of poverty were an average and the figures of the very small areas were not seen.

Response: Decisions were taken based on data. Analysis of data was carried out by LORIC.

Comment: Thanks were given for all the hard work. As a collective, it may be possible that individuals who struggled to feed themselves were unaware how to look after their homes. As a housing provider, there was a piece of work to be considered. It could be the case that a family spent money heating their homes because of damp which resulted in them being unable to feed themselves sufficiently.

Response: There was a Good Homes Alliance due to be launched which included a team of housing advisor professionals for this exact issue to be dealt with. It was hoped that The Good Homes Alliance would narrow the gaps.

Comment: Old houses that had not been heated, such as those in Monks Road and Sincil Bank, resulted in excessive growing mould and deterioration in health.

Response: Public health and poverty were intrinsically linked.

Question: It was noted that there was anonymity in voucher uptake. Was the voucher obvious when used at a till?

Response: Vouchers had a brightly coloured fish on it so it was obvious that it was a voucher however work had been carried out in order that the stigma be reduced. There were lots of other vouchers within the system that the Government had issued.

Question: Had any schools applied to be included in the trial of the universal breakfast club roll out?

Response: It was too early to say. LCC had not received contact from schools in relation to Government proposals. Generally, breakfast club was a chargeable service. It was the ambition of the Government to offer free breakfast club in all primary schools. It was hoped that more information would be made available after October half term, prior to Christmas.

RESOLVED that the content of all presentations be noted with thanks.

84. Work Programme 2024/25

Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Programme. Further to scoping discussions, the Assistant Director - Strategic Development, confirmed that the focus of the Committee's upcoming work would include further attendance in relation to Anti-Poverty Strategy Development to include consideration of health inequalities, mental health, the links between finances and mental health and housing standards.

It was agreed that an invitation be offered to the Public Health and Inequality lead to attend Committee and the arrangement of further attendees be delegated to officers.

The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that scoping discussions would take place further to the meeting in relation to the Anti-Poverty Strategy Proposals project.

RESOLVED that:

1. That the Public Health and Inequality Lead be invited to the next meeting.
2. That the arrangement of further attendees be delegated to officers.
3. The content of discussions be noted with thanks.

Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 12 November 2024 (18:00)