

REPORT UNDER RULE 2(VI) OF THE COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

Report to Council by Councillor Calum Watt, Chair of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee 2023-24

Introduction

I commenced the role of Chair of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee in June 2022, taking over the role from former Councillor, Jane Loffhagen.

The current elected members of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee are:

- Councillor Calum Watt (Chair)
- Councillor Chris Burke (Vice-Chair)
- Councillor Debbie Armiger
- Councillor Biff Bean
- Councillor James Brown
- Councillor Laura Danese
- Councillor Bill Mara
- Councillor Rachel Storer
- Councillor Dylan Stothard
- Councillor Aiden Wells
- Councillor Emily Wood

Democratic Services Officer: Victoria Poulson

In addition to the Council's Executive and its senior and front-line Officers, external contributors included:

- Rob Johnson, Policy and Campaigns Officer - Trades Union Congress Midlands)
- Simon Beardsley, Managing Director - Lincoln Business Improvement Group (BIG) & Chief Executive Officer - Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce
- Caroline Killeavy, Chief Executive Officer - YMCA
- Heidi Walton, Chief Executive - LEAP Housing
- Claire McGonigle, Deputy Chief Executive - Framework Lincolnshire
- Sandra Blow, Operations Manager - Framework Lincolnshire
- Charlotte Brooks, Director for Local Change - Local Motion
- Vicky Henderson, Community Commissioner - Local Motion
- Tinashe Chipawe, Community Commissioner - Local Motion
- Graham Metcalfe, Partnership Manager - Department for Work and Pensions
- Sarah Connery, Chief Executive Officer - LPFT
- Christopher Higgins, Director of Operations - LPFT
- Frank Barrett MBE - Royal Air Forces Association
- Evelyn Moorland - Royal Air Forces Association

- Ian O'Conner - Royal Naval Association & Royal British Legion

The Committee recorded its thanks to all its contributors and Council staff who stayed for long and sometimes late meetings during the year, and whose contributions were so helpful and enlightening.

The Committee's recommendations concerned a variety of topics such as the consideration of the rate of pay growth within Lincolnshire, the Cultural Consortium - a significant number of events had been held over the last six to eight months to drive culture within the City, the provision of emergency accommodation in the City of Lincoln, an update on the Poverty Truth Commission and Crisis and Acute Mental Health Provision in Lincolnshire.

The Committee scrutinised the Care of Veterans in Lincoln and noted the progress that had been made with youth engagement.

Discussions also took place around emergency accommodation within the City of Lincoln and the need for a collaborative and holistic approach to this issue.

Within this report, I have outlined the key activity undertaken by the Committee over the past year. I would like to thank each member of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee, Council Officers and external contributors for their ongoing support towards effective scrutiny over the last year.

Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee Agenda Items from the Past 12 Months

During the past year, the Committee has met on five occasions, as planned to discuss a range of topics. Detailed minutes of these meetings are available to Members and to the public should they wish for more information. Meetings were held on:

- 27 June 2023
- 26 September 2023
- 14 November 2023
- 23 January 2024
- 26 March 2024

Below includes the agenda items discussed at each meeting.

Tuesday 27 June 2023 Agenda Items

1. Low Wages in the City of Lincoln
2. Cultural Consortium Update
3. Work Programme 2023

Tuesday 26 September 2023 Agenda Items

1. Sheltering Our Citizens
2. Work Programme 2023/24

Tuesday 14 November 2023 Agenda Items

1. Poverty Truth Commission Update
2. Work Programme 2023/24

Tuesday 23 January 2024 Agenda Items

1. Crisis and Acute Mental Health Provision in Lincolnshire
2. Work Programme 2024

Tuesday 26 March 2024 Agenda Items

1. Care of Veterans in Lincoln
2. Youth Engagement Update
3. Work Programme 2024

Low Wages in the City of Lincoln

The Committee received presentations and/or undertook face to face discussions with the following individuals:

- Rob Johnson, Policy and Campaigns Officer - Trades Union Congress Midlands
- Simon Beardsley, Managing Director - Lincoln Business Improvement Group (BIG) & Chief Executive Officer - Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce

The Committee was advised that the information provided during the presentation was correct and accurate at the time of the meeting.

It was confirmed that the Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce Quarterly Economic Survey, Quarter 2 2023 showed domestic sale had improved however 30% had reported a worse level and overseas sales were in the worst state in fifteen years.

Businesses closed for a variety of reasons which included the end of a family business or a national chain that closed locally due to decisions made at senior level. It may be that a business was in the wrong place with the wrong product. Lincoln had done well with start-up businesses and were ahead of the national curve. The challenge was the retention of businesses within the city centre to ensure a vibrant city centre that people wanted to visit. Figures on the number of business closures would be circulated further to the meeting.

In addition, the total number of advertisements for job roles were at peak levels and further to concerns of rising inflation, businesses indicated 43% worsened cash flow. The median rates of pay in Lincoln were 10% lower than the UK average with 1 in 4 individuals within the city paid below the National Living Wage. The median annual wage increased by 8.1% in Greater Lincolnshire between 2021 and 2022, compared to 6.8% nationally.

Inflation as of May 2023 was 8.7% and the year-on-year increase in fuel and electricity was 88.5%. Vulnerability figures showed that 16.8% of people in Lincoln were in fuel poverty, 8.8% lived with food insecurity and 16.8% received low pay.

East Midlands was a low pay region with a low wage trap that needed to be broken. Lincoln was notoriously difficult to access with limited public transport and an absence of a motorway. It was important to recognise the historical challenges and devise a strategic plan in order to see a rise in living standards and better opportunities within the next eighteen years.

Recommendations

It was noted that the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Services (ACAS) had led on a Good Work Charter and there had been a Fair Work Commission in Scotland. A Midlands Charter had been put into place to support fair contracts.

The median annual earnings for full-time employment in Lincoln in 2022 was £31,011. Gross weekly pay was £618. The gross weekly pay for part time employees in 2022 was £230 weekly. All figures had seen an increase on the previous year and some industries had paid more.

It was recognised that it was not always the case that pay was the main incentive for employees. Incentives included continued professional development, progression, and work culture. It was important to consider the wider non-monetary benefits. The Midlands Good Work Charter explored the principles of good work which included genuine flexibility, employee voice, ownership, and the ability to shape workloads. Businesses that adopted the approach experienced lower levels of sickness absence and higher productivity. The University of Lincoln was vital in the retention of local talent. Adequately funded public services were important for growth.

The City of Lincoln Council's strategic plan, Vision 2025, detailed economic development and regeneration. Partners would be involved in the creation of Vision 2030 and there was already a good understanding of the key industries within the city. Vitality of the area depended on the vitality of the city centre. Consideration needed to be given to whether individuals could afford to live in the city and if there was available housing within the city to rent. Securing a rental property within the city was very hard. The Council had a corporate vision in place and would work to develop Vision 2030 to grow the local economy for everyone.

Cultural Consortium Update

The Committee received presentations and/or undertook face to face discussions with the following individual:

- Simon Walters, Director for Communities and Environment - City of Lincoln Council

The Committee were advised that collaborative work with the University of Lincoln and key cultural delivery partner, Zest Theatre, had started over a year ago and there had been a significant number of events over the last six to eight months to drive culture within the city. Further to the engagement of 1,094 young people by Zest Theatre between January and March 2022, a framework of six maxims became the steer for a new cultural compact for Lincoln.

The cultural programme had been funded by Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) and had enabled the build of cultural talent at grass-root level. The grant received was for a total of £102,000 and the ambition was for creative commissioning, working with young people to invigorate the High Street with a contemporary interpretation of its history and future.

The Committee were informed that Frequency Festival, the International Festival of Digital Culture had been very successful and had enabled connection with the public through interaction with key heritage sites and engagement with historic stories and materials. HAZ funding enabled expansion and visibility of the festival programme within the city which welcomed over 15,000 visitors over the four day period. In July 2022, 12,000 visitors attended Lincoln's 1940's weekend which featured a 1940's inspired shop window advert trail, curated by a local artist, Emma Taylor.

An event entitled 'South of the Tracks' showcased a diverse line-up of live music from talented Lincolnshire acts to celebrate Lincoln's High Street post Covid-19. The City of Lincoln Council (CoLC) grant funded Pride which attracted more than 6,500 people over the course of the day.

Lincoln Christmas Market 2022 experienced the largest attendance on record with over 320,000 visitors to the four-day event. Social media engagement included a reach of 882,236 people in the two week lead up to the event. Funding had been provided for a Christmas light trail which would also feature in Christmas 2023 plans for the city. In addition, Lincoln Business Improvement Group (BIG) funded the installation of a large, illuminated reindeer on the waterfront.

Other cultural events included 'Trailtale' which incorporated the use of an app that helped direct visitors across the city to experience walking through Lincoln's hidden high street histories. The total app downloads/users exceeded 3,000 for the city. Significant investment had helped create a local art consortium entitled, 'A Mash Up!!'.

Recommendations

It was acknowledged that the UKSPF fund was significantly oversubscribed and the bid for funding for a bespoke outdoor space for young people had not been successful within the first wave of funding. It was hoped that the bid would be considered within future waves of funding.

Local artists involvement had been secured through Mash Up!! which was extending its reach regularly. In addition, though Toby Ealden, Zest Theatre who

had connections within local culture. It was noted that partnerships played a key role in increasing reach as part of a cultural compact.

It was noted that a bid for 'City of Culture' could be further considered within the Council's new strategic plan, Vision 2030. However, the level of investment required to secure the status of 'City of Culture' was estimated to be approximately £20M, which was currently beyond the Council's resources and it was added that it may be useful to consider a countywide approach that focussed on a collective area. It appeared, from previous conversations that whilst there was an appetite to work collaboratively on arts and culture, a bid for UK City of culture was not a key focus for many neighbouring areas at present.

There were plans for Christmas lights to be installed between Tentercroft Street and the Railway line. The use of the space for pop up events became difficult as there was no power and nothing to feed off of within the area. The mechanics of it for events were difficult. The Cornhill area had pop up power points. The contract awarded for the Christmas lights had been to a local supplier – a new Christmas lights provider that would install and take down the lights. We have been provided with a design for the lower high street however the caveat was that power needed to be sourced. Lincoln County Council had been amenable with helping.

Sheltering Our Citizens

The Committee received presentations and/or undertook face to face discussions with the following individuals:

- Joanne Smith, Safeguarding Lead - City of Lincoln Council
- Caroline Killeavy, Chief Executive Officer - YMCA
- Heidi Walton, Chief Executive - LEAP Housing
- Claire McGonigle, Deputy Chief Executive - Framework, Lincolnshire
- Sandra Blow, Operations Manager - Framework, Lincolnshire

The Committee was advised the Local Authority Statutory Duties were contained within relevant legislation, Housing Act 1996 – Part 6 and Part 7 (as amended by Homelessness Reduction Act 2017). It was added that Part 6 of the legislation related to allocations and included the requirement to hold a housing register and have a suitable policy to set out allocation of accommodation. Part 7 of legislation related to the provision for advice to be accessed free of charge, assistance to applicants to solve their housing situation and the provision of temporary accommodation for those believed to be in priority need. In 2018/19, the authority dealt with a total of 854 applications. Comparatively, in 2022/23, the number of applications received was 1331.

The total number within the prevention band was 273 and were individuals that were threatened with homelessness. The authority participated in negotiations in an attempt to keep individuals living within the property or to undertake a planned move elsewhere. Individuals could be within the prevention band for a total of 56 days. If an individual became homeless sooner, they would be moved into relief duty and once the time limit of 56 days had been reached, a decision with regard to the potential for priority need would be made. At this stage, consideration would

be given to whether an individual had made themselves intentionally homeless and if they had a local connection to the city. The numbers of homeless cases had increased but the reasons for homelessness had remained the same.

Approximately 75% of the cost of temporary accommodation was recovered through housing benefit claims. The City of Lincoln Council resources included an allocations team, a homelessness team and a rough sleeping team.

Supported accommodation included hostels, night shelters, dispersed housing, family homes, self-contained accommodation and flats. Core funding for supported housing came from housing benefit claims and other sources of funding came from public contracts, grant funding, fundraising and charitable donations and self-generated income streams and public support. Supported accommodation support was offered to all individuals that were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, some of which included victims of domestic abuse, victims of crimes, care leavers and single and young parents.

LEAP Housing were a non-commissioned service further to the termination of contract with Lincolnshire County Council in 2020 and the organisation no longer supported only young people and instead, offered to support to individuals of any age which included pregnant teenagers and families. The ambition was to move individuals on and to prevent a dependency on the service. Once placed in safe accommodation, individuals struggled to move on as they did not meet Band 1 or 2 criteria unless a service user was a care leaver or suffered serious mental health illness.

Framework, Lincolnshire had been present in Lincoln since 2011. The organisation offered the provision of 15 emergency self-contained flats and 44 single/shared occupancy house as part of the Lincolnshire Housing Related Support Partnership (LHRSP), commissioned by Lincoln County Council (LCC) Public Health. These were adult services and as such, there was a requirement for individuals to be aged 18+ to use the service. Additionally, individuals were required to be triaged in by the Local Authority, direct referrals were not accepted.

YMCA was a non-commissioned supported accommodation service of which had been within the City of Lincoln for 156 years and housed approximately 170 people with a multiple range of needs. Nomad Centre benefitted from significant refurbishment in 2019. The centre contained en-suite rooms with lockable doors. The organisation aimed to move people on within 56 days and started from basics - 3 meals a day, new clothing, toiletries, sanitary products etc. Often service users of the centre were very vulnerable and not ready to move on. YMCA's ambition was to move individuals through the accommodation pathway, be fit for the future and to provide good quality homes.

It was noted that it was important to understand what support meant. Some of the individuals housed, suffered with significant mental health conditions and organisations shared an ethos of a holistic person-centred approach that considered the wholeness of a person. Partnerships and collaborations were essential and included work with the NHS, Lincolnshire Police, Shine Lincolnshire etc.

In order to access Council accommodation, a person needed a local connection and were also required to be a priority need. Often, service users did not meet the criteria as they were safely accommodated within emergency provisions.

Recommendations

It was noted that the homelessness registration criteria derived from homelessness legislation.

The Council placed those in need in the best possible accommodation. The provision of accommodation needed to be of a reasonable standard it may the case that one room for a family was better than a Travel Lodge which offered no cooking facilities. If certain items were required, they would be bought for example, toasters and air fryers would be gifted. Larger items such as beds would be purchased and the money loaned. Licensed properties would be furnished in any instance.

It was noted that the Council was innovative in use of Government funding. The issue did not affect Lincoln alone, it was a country-wide problem. Homelessness was often the result of a situation in a person's life in which they did not receive support. There had been a reduction in housing budget support from Lincoln County Council (LCC) of 25%.

Within the last five years, the City of Lincoln Council (CoLC) provided approximately 400 additional affordable housing into their stock. A number were purchased off plan however Council land was also used. Lindum Group had been contracted to build 11 homes at Hermit Street and specific Government grants provided 40-50% of the cost before entering the open market. A great number of Right to Buy properties were being repurchased by the Council. Over 70% of the properties that were purchased under Right to Buy, were under private rental, not to the families that originally purchased them. There was not enough move on accommodation to move forward. Costs had risen significantly within the private sector rental area. There was a threshold of what costs could be covered from Housing Benefit as the local housing areas included Gainsborough. The rent level in Gainsborough had no correlation to Lincoln levels and therefore, the local housing allowance was artificially low due to the inclusion of lower priced rental areas. The CoLC often used grant funding to top up private rental costs.

It was noted that Right to Buy had distorted housing stocks and as a result, approximately 80% of stock was 1-2 bed properties. Prior to Help to Buy, the spread of properties had been more even.

Further to the introduction of new Government regulation, private landlords would be required, by 2028, to ensure their properties had an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of C or above. This would not be financially viable for many landlords and the removal of a Section.21 Eviction was likely to have a significant impact also.

The Committee were pleased to hear of the positive work of County Lines and the Police. Rough sleeping was the most harmful thing to happen to an individual. A

success criterion was ultimately the removal of an individual/s from the street. As a city, collaboratively, work had been very successful. However, funding had gradually been reduced and in order to effectively support an individual, funding was required. It was important to recognise that large amounts of funding used for support came from outside of the city. There had been groundbreaking NHS projects that should be championed nationally, and more work could be done to facilitate those collaborations.

It was noted that emergency housing cost the CoLC £975,000 per year. Approximately £390,000 would be reclaimed through Housing Benefit and therefore, there would be a £580,000 General Fund cost to the Council. The figure was not a Housing Revenue cost. The Local Housing Allowance was a cost not seen in relation to Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation. The Local Housing Allowance for B&B accommodation was £91.00 per week in Lincoln. The cost in real terms could be as much as £600. The Council could only claim in Housing Benefit subsidy.

The solution appeared to be the need for a considerable programme of social housing building however with planning permissions, a large-scale build programme could take over 2 years to take effect.

YMCA staff welcomed a visit from Members to be provided with the opportunity to witness the services and support the charity offered to vulnerable people.

Consideration be given in the future to a housing and homeless conference.

Poverty Truth Commission Update

The Committee received presentations and/or undertook face to face discussions with the following individuals:

- Charlotte Brooks, Director for Local Change - Local Motion
- Vicky Henderson, Community Commissioner - Local Motion
- Tinashe Chipawe, Community Commissioner - Local Motion
- Graham Metcalfe, Partnership Manager - Department for Work and Pensions
- Martin Walmsley, Assistant Director, Shared Revenues and Benefits - City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council

The Committee were advised that LocalMotion was founded on building a social, economic, and environmental justice movement of six communities across the UK; created by six established funders in the UK who shared a desire to find new and better ways to tackle the common social, economic and environmental issues communities faced.

LocalMotion worked around post-industrial locations and was part of a ten-year journey which would run to 2031. A decision was awaited for the funding allocation for phase three to support the programme to 2031.

The Committee we advised that within phase two, called Building Momentum and Development, approximately £350,000 was issued to Lincoln which enabled exploration of what held people back, how residents felt about living in Lincoln and what their aspirations and visions were for a flourishing future. Themes that emerged and under continuous development were around community-led prosperity, aspirations and sustainability.

Community led evaluation included investigators on the ground. 180 people applied for the role and work had occurred with every applicant to ensure their voice was heard during the movement. Under Prosperity was the Lincoln Poverty Truth Commission where commissioners met on a regular basis and had commenced in January 2023.

There had been a story telling event in March 2023 whereby five brave commissioners shared their personal experiences of poverty and struggle. Consideration had been given to what poverty looked like post pandemic in Lincoln in 2023.

Within the revenues department, money was paid and collected but consideration needed to be given to what had changed for people. The service was not merely transactional and could have a significant positive impact on people's lives. The pandemic happened and from that, cost-of-living challenges ensued. Work with the voluntary sector increased significantly and it was important to take ownership of an individual circumstances and to make a difference. The sessions encouraged perceived decision makers not to signpost individuals elsewhere but to facilitate help and follow it up.

There was an internal cost of living team comprised of three people that delivered for North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) also and there were no targets on calls as a focus on outcomes was of more importance. The Commission was in the business planning stage which included performance indicators however the focus was predominantly on outcomes. It was hoped that process had broken down barriers and dispelled the ideology that the department were 'officers sat in suits'

The Department for Work and Pensions had operated within the area for a long time and was well established around the community. The Commission had established active realisation, individual's acknowledgement and a personal element to services that were delivered. Part of local operation was an escalation service for LiNK partners and a review when things went wrong to establish to how it could be prevented in the future and outcomes were shared with members of the poverty truth commission group. Attendance to the forums was useful as there was significant overlap between statutory services and the opportunity to connect with other organisations was helpful.

Recommendations

It was noted that the ethos that surrounded performance statistics had changed. There was an appreciation of system failure and in a modern world, it was not acceptable. Geography was a strength for Lincoln and the Department for Work

and Pensions (DWP) was located within the City of Lincoln Council building. Lincoln had fabulous organisations that wanted to make a difference.

It was positive to have the opportunity, once a fortnight, to take a step back and give consideration to the actions of organisations. The focus was on how stories that hadn't worked out so well, could be changed. Consideration had been given to the creation of a group of individuals in receipt of Universal Credit in order to examine what worked well and what required improvement. National laws and protocols were in place, but it was important to consider how they could be made to work locally. It was beneficial to be responsive and challenge processes.

As a core group of individuals that had worked for two years intensively, a worst-case scenario planning session had occurred. There were 14 individuals that had supported the design of the Local Plan and it was hoped that funding would be devolved further to individuals forming groups locally around the local plan themes. It was important to consider how the Local Plan could be proceeded in the event that funding was unsuccessful. The Local Plan was positive and represented the local people. The ambition was long term, sustainable change.

A succinct local version of the full Commission Local Plan would be circulated to Members of the Committee.

Crisis and Acute Mental Health Provision in Lincolnshire

The Committee received presentations and/or undertook face to face discussions with the following individuals:

- Sarah Connery, Chief Executive Officer - Lincolnshire Partnership Foundation Trust (LPFT)
- Christopher Higgins, Director of Operations - Lincolnshire Partnership Foundation Trust (LPFT)
- Simon Colburn, Assistant Director, Health and Environmental Services - City of Lincoln Council

LPFT worked in services connected with autism and dementia and the Trust offered services countywide. Mental Health Helplines were available for both adults and children and young people which offered intervention. If further support was needed, a referral would be made.

Night Light cafes were provided by a partnership organisation and was an important part of the local support that was available for residents. Health Based Places of Safety were available as part of provisions under the Mental Health Act. Specialist facilities were available for individuals detained by the Police.

Services included Crisis Resolution & Home Treatment Teams for all ages. The largest of four teams was based at Lincoln County Hospital and offered a team of trained professionals that responded to individuals in a crisis situation.

Teams worked within Accident & Emergency (A&E) at Lincoln County Hospital (LCH), supported individuals on hospital wards and offered advice on the

management of a person's care, treatment and medication. The Mental Health Liaison Service assessed individuals who presented in A&E with a mental health condition.

The Mental Health Urgent Assessment Centre housed the Peter Hodgkinson Centre, a mental health A&E for individual with complex mental health issues, whose physical health was met. LCH had acute mental health inpatient wards; Castle and Ellis Ward for adults and Brant Ward for older people.

Crisis and Acute Mental Health Care future plans included:

- Reopening of Hartsholme Centre, a male Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU). The centre was closed last year due to complex staffing issues that had been resolved. The reopening was planned for Quarter 4 2023/24 and would take place after the water system had been treated
- LPFT planned to assist in the National Campaign for NHS 111 to provide an option 2 for Mental Health
- A Crisis Services Review, planned for the summer. It was hoped that a review would offer understanding of the impact of the NHS 111 Option 2 and the 'Right Care, Right Person' agenda
- A review, in collaboration with Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) on the Approved Mental Health Provision (AMPH) Service for Lincolnshire's residents
- An additional health-based place of safety in Boston in the form of a Mental Health Urgent Assessment Centre & 136 Suite

Crisis Accommodation for Mental Health was a significant issue as it became difficult to find long-term secure housing that met the needs of individuals with complex needs and offending behaviours. Demand for support had increased, particularly in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. Public awareness had increased.

Out of area admissions were low and only occasionally had there been insufficient bed space within the County to support everyone who required services.

The 2020-2022 Office for National Statistics (ONS) Suicide in Lincoln City data showed that the Lincolnshire rate was 13.3 per 100,000 population; significantly higher than England's average of 10.3. The highest suicide rate in Lincolnshire was in Lincoln which had reduced from 2018-2020 data but remained the third highest rate in England.

Work that improved prevention, intervention and postvention continued and included:

- Amparo, a suicide bereavement service which offered support for anyone affected by suicide in Lincolnshire
- Suicide prevention funds acquired from voluntary and third sector organisations enabled the provision of services such as Men's Shed. The effectiveness would be evaluated in the future

- A website entitled 'How Are You, Lincolnshire?' helped individuals locate local resources to boost their mental health
- Suicide prevention courses were available to all and ran through a recovery college within a Lincolnshire partnership

The Lincolnshire Suicide Prevention Strategy 2024-2028 made eight commitments, and a soft launch was planned later in the month. For anyone aged 16 and older, there was a 20-minute free online course called Zero Suicide Alliance Training.

The City of Lincoln Council (CoLC) engaged in the new suicide prevention strategy, due to be launched in April by Lincolnshire County Council (LCC). Staff were trained across a range of training courses which included suicide prevention training. Human Resources (HR) colleagues met with officers and developed the Assist Safe Talk Course which was useful as an employed but also offered support to staff that experienced frontline interactions.

Interactions with LPFT and additional mental health providers remained a positive step in effective safeguarding. Other colleagues remained available and community safety partnerships included various conferences such as Anti-Social Behaviour Risk Assessment Conference (ASBRAC) for complex cases and Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

Structured mechanisms and positive partnership working with organisations such as LPFT, the Police and the criminal justice system, offered positive engagement with frontline staff and the processes of escalation. Systems were in place which enabled appropriate referrals to be made, and safeguarding and suicide awareness training was provided.

Recommendations

It was noted that previously, Lincoln experienced the highest suicide rate in the country. Information was available through the Office for National Statistics (ONS) which showed a higher suicide rate in males and the biggest cause of death in the 45-60 year age bracket. In addition, there was a higher prevalence within the LGBTQ+ community. It was important that resources that were available, made an important impact; anecdotal evidence suggested that it had. In consultation with the Police, Public Health and GP's, live data had been requested. Statistically, 56% of suicide deaths had been in contact with mental health services prior to their death.

The Committee were advised that workforce remained the biggest risk on risk registers. Workforce statistics had gone in the right direction. Vacancy rates had dropped and retention had improved. The recruitment campaign had been pushed and LPFT wanted to ensure staff that their first 100 days was a positive experience. Staff survey results had been considered and LPFT had recently been rated top out of NHS providers.

Specific funding for a female PICU unit had not been secured. Currently, female PICU support was accessed outside of the County. At the time of the meeting, there

was one female that required PICU care. Therefore, it made it difficult to present a viable business case. The issue of accommodation was complex and there had been patients that stayed in hospital for longer than necessary due to a lack of suitable accommodation. Future plans included a potential scope for a mental health housing officer.

There had been new investment into mental health. The Levelling Up Agenda recognised that the area had been underfunded for too long. Consideration would be given to repurposing what was already used. Funding was not necessarily a barrier and if there was a need for it, it was anticipated that it would come from central Government.

In collaboration with HR, Zero Suicide Alliance training would be rolled out to elected Members and staff. Officers had met with Dr Lucy Gavens, Consultant in Public Health, Lincolnshire County Council and considered both the correct training and the approach in the emergency strategy, to ensure cohesion.

It was noted that The Recovery College offered mental health guidance, provided by specialist professionals, and offered support in an educational setting rather than a clinical setting. There was a range of different educational support that was not linked to the formal education system and it remained open to the public.

It was agreed that Lincolnshire County Council Health and Wellbeing Board and Health Scrutiny Committee and its constituent members be asked how the issues in the city and wider hotspots across the county were being addressed.

Consideration would be given to the possibility of a visit to the male PICU unit, prior to reopening. The water safety and environment needed to be checked in the first instance.

Specific questions raised during discussions would be fed back to Dr Lucy Gavens, Consultant in Public Health, Lincolnshire County Council.

Care of Veterans in Lincoln

The Committee received presentations and/or undertook face to face discussions with the following individuals:

- Frank Barrett MBE - Royal Air Forces Association (RAFA)
- Evelyn Moorland - Royal Air Forces Association (RAFA)
- Ian O'Conner - Royal Naval Association & Royal British Legion

The Committee were advised that RAFA was established in 1925 and had previously been named 'Comrades of the Royal Air Force'. During the war years, the Association name was changed to 'RAFA'. King Charles III had previously been a President of the Association, and it was endorsed by the Duke of Edinburgh.

During 2020, the Association quickly mobilised and launched the new Covid-19 emergency welfare services. This involved contacting 30,000 potentially vulnerable

members of the RAF community to arrange telephone friendship calls, emergency bag drops, and broadcast an interactive entertainment and education service.

The rising cost-of-living caused significant demand and in the period January - September 2022 and over 2,481 individuals contacted the Association in need of emergency financial support, home fuel grants, debt, bills and daily living costs. For many years, mobility issues had remained the primary reason that individuals sought assistance from the Association. However, today, more individuals contacted the Association regarding home fuel grants.

The causes for the change in the type of help sought from the Association became clear; the UK State Pension increased by 3.1% per cent this year, yet inflation was likely to reach 10% and energy bills had increased by over 50%. Age UK predicted that 2 million older households would soon, not have sufficient income to cover their essential spending. Colder temperatures in autumn and winter gave rise to increased fuel bills and in conjunction with inflation increases, the Association anticipated the need to mount a large-scale crisis response similar to the level required during the 2020 pandemic emergency. In the absence of support offered from the Association, many RAF veterans and their loved ones would be faced with impossible choices to make ends meet which included staying at home alone to save money, going hungry or turning their heating off. 36% of RAF veterans lived alone; higher than the national average of 21% Social isolation damaged both physical and mental health and could be more harmful to health than smoking 15 cigarettes per day. In addition, the risk of developing clinical dementia rose by 64%.

Eating inadequately lead to malnutrition which affected every system within the body. In addition, caused increased vulnerability to illness, increased complications and in very extreme cases, even death. Public Health England (PHE) warned there was a damaging overlap between living in a cold home and poor health.

In 2018, a survey was undertaken to further understand the demographics of the Association's membership. It was hoped that the results would inform the development of evidence-based welfare services to offer information on financial assistance, war pensions, retirement and accommodation.

RAF KIDZ had been set up on certain stations and offered childcare while parents went to work. An initiative called 'Staying in Touch' offered storybooks for children that provided a means of communication whilst their loved ones served abroad. The Association continued to build on foundations with further research and insight into specific issues and the relationships between variables.

Collaborative working was necessary to ensure that charities worked more effectively together to spread information and signpost the support and assistance that was available to veterans. Consideration could be given to the inclusion of support information within a 'Hub' service and the printing and publication of brochures. Younger veterans and their life post service needed to be considered with care.

Recommendations

It was noted that charities had recently worked more collaboratively across Lincolnshire. This included representation from the voluntary sector, public authorities and the military sector. There was a wide range of representation from all parts of the military, veterans advisory and pensions Committee. Consideration had been given to work streams and how partnerships assisted veterans.

Lincoln RAFA branch had a total of approximately 900 members however it was only possible to engage digitally with 350 of the total members. It was important to reduce the reliance on digital information sharing.

Exploration of the Veterans Charter in collaboration with officers offered consideration of how it could be developed further; it was an exciting time in Lincolnshire. Further to the consideration of the new statutory duty under the Charter, the fantastic work that had already happened within the County had been explored further and included the sharing of best practice. Jacqui Bunce, Programme Director of Strategic Estates, NHS had brought together information on access to health provision. We were committed as districts to implement support via the introduction of a dedicated officer. Work would continue to increase over the coming months; the focus of such remained the views of the residents.

It would be valuable for the City of Lincoln Council (CoLC) to inform RAFA Head Quarters (HQ) of the support available and the work carried out on behalf of the ex-service community. Contact information for RAFA HQ, based in Leicester, would be circulated.

The CoLC had a Councillor that acted as a champion for veterans. When a replacement for the role was considered, it would be useful to raise the profile of the position.

Consultation work would be advertised appropriately.

Youth Engagement Update

The Committee received presentations and/or undertook face to face discussions with the following individual:

- Simon Walters, Director for Communities and Environment - City of Lincoln Council

The Committee received an update on the development of Zest Theatre's work across Lincoln to gather young people's voices and the delivery of a new youth space for 11–18 year-olds across the city, by way of briefing note submitted prior to the meeting by Toby Ealden, Artistic Director & Chief Executive Officer - Zest Theatre.

Zest Theatre was an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and Associate Artists at Lincoln Arts Centre. Based in Lincoln, Zest Theatre worked closely with local partners to support the development of Lincolnshire's Arts and Culture sector.

In 2022, Zest facilitated an ambitious new research project with approximately 1,500 young people across Lincoln; nearly 10% of the city's age 10-19 population. In every setting, space was made for young people to share their vision for Lincoln's future and the process concluded in the creation of six maxims that summed up young people's needs, ideas, and requests.

Zest successfully secured £93K funding from The National Lottery Community Fund / DCMS' Million Hours Fund and another £8K from Lincolnshire Co-Op to enable the development of 'The Common Room'.

The Common Room would be set up in public spaces such as town squares, playing fields, and community centres and provided a stunning and purpose-built space for young people that was fully staffed and programmed by the Zest Theatre and local artists. Zest supported a co-design process with young people across the city and built upon previous research in the design of the brand-new facility.

Designs would be completed by the end of March and aspirations were for 'The Common Room' to be opened for two weeks in the city centre at the start of the summer holidays in 2024 before touring communities across the city for the remainder of the summer and the October half term of 2024. There would be 8 weeks of delivery in 2024/25 and 10 weeks in 2025/26 – all focussed on 'fair weather' school holidays. Aspirations were for The Common Room to tour across all wards over the 2 years of funding. The exploration of funding had resulted in Zest Theatre becoming a national portfolio organisation with three years of core funding.

Recommendations

The Common Room would be designed in collaboration with Nick Crosbie - Product Designer and Architect of the incredible temporary structures called AirClad. Young people would work with Nick Crosbie to design 'The Common Room'.

An update would be received from Zest Theatre at a later date, further to the opening of the 'The Common Room'.

Councillor Calum Watt

Chair of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee 2023-24