

Present: Councillor Chris Burke (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Calum Watt, Councillor Debbie Armiger,
Councillor Natasha Chapman, Councillor Callum Roper
and Councillor Rachel Storer

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Liz Bushell

23. Confirmation of Minutes - 19 November 2024

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2024 be confirmed.

24. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

25. Procurement Act 2023 & Contract Procedure Rules

Carolyn Wheeler, City Solicitor presented a report which sought comments from the Committee on the new Procurement Act 2023 and the subsequent revision of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

The new Act was due to come into force on 24th February 2025 and would only apply to new procurements commencing from that date. This meant that contracts let prior to that would continue under the previous legislation

An aspect of the new legislation was to simplify the procurement process and increase transparency, however this had also made it more labour intensive. The requirement for public authorities to publish various notices had been introduced which would apply from before the contract had been identified and continue throughout the contract period until expiry. This increased transparency also meant there was opportunity for the Council to be challenged at every step.

With the introduction of the Act, the Council had taken the opportunity to update the Contract Procedure Rules. These were also considered by the Committee along with the Procurement Flow Chart.

Officer training on the new Act would be rolled out in due course for contract managers. The recent online Member training had been recorded, and the link could be made available to Councillors wishing to familiarise themselves with the changes. It was noted those in attendance at the training were grateful to Officers for their time and expertise.

The Committee discussed the report and procedure rules in detail and was provided with the following responses by Officers to questions:

- Notices would be published on specialist platforms online rather than in physical form. Local companies, relevant to a particular contract, would be informed of the notices and where they could be found, but no further assistance would be provided to them.

- The staff training would emphasise the need for procurement and the procedure rules to always be a topic of discussion on departmental teams' agendas.
- There would need to be consideration given to the Council's key performance indicators during procurement and looking towards the end of the process to ensure performance indicators had been taken into account.
- A monitoring matrix was being developed which would help identify social value within the procurement process, and the opportunity for community legacy needed to be considered at all stages to help boost reducing inequality. The Council was not mandated to consider social value, but did strive to attain 5-10% impact from each contract.
- Considering the recent change of government and any guidance that might still be forthcoming, Officers assured the Committee they were as prepared as they could be for the introduction of the new Act.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Policy Scrutiny Committee note the new Procurement Act and revision to the contract procedure rules
2. Any comments be referred to Executive.

26. Renewal of Public Spaces Protection Order Allowing for the Gating of St Peters Passage

Ben Jackson, Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour (PPASB) and Licensing Manager presented a report that sought approval from Executive to renew the existing Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) which allowed for the gating of St Peter's Passage. The passage ran from the High Street, next to House of Fraser, through to Mint Lane in the upper High Street area of Lincoln city centre.

Following an increasing number of complaints of drug use, drug paraphernalia, urination, defecation and criminal activity, the original PSPO was approved in 2018, and the passage was gated in July 2019 which restricted access to the public.

PSPOs, enforced under the Crime and Policing Act 2014, could be in place for a maximum of three years, and the PSPO was renewed in 2021 following a review. The report proposed that the passage be gated for a further three years and details of the public and partner consultation carried out from 13th September to 11th October 2024 were considered.

It was noted that Appendix B in the report was incorrect and should have been a copy of the current St Peters Passage PSPO. This would be rectified before the report was submitted to Executive.

In response to questions from Members, it was confirmed that:

- The consultation had received 180 responses with 87.8% in favour of continuing the PSPO to gate the passage.
- Following recent repairs to the gate, a request had been submitted for more intensive cleaning to the passage area which had been subjected to litter and other waste being left around the gate.
- The PSPO could not be extended to include the passageway down to Lincoln Snooker Club on the opposite side of the High Street due to health and safety reasons, but more CCTV cameras had been installed to help improve the area.
- In addition to CCTV, some of the Council's anti-social behaviour officers were involved with Hot Spot Policing patrols in the area with Lincolnshire Police.
- Due to the Government's Safer Streets funding coming to an end at the close of the financial year, it was important that deterrents and preventative measures were in place beforehand to ensure the funding was maximised.
- It had previously been highlighted that some of the individuals presenting as rough sleepers or engaging in anti-social behaviour in the area were City of Lincoln Council tenants. The Housing Team was working with PPASB Officers to support individuals out of the area or enforce against anti-social behaviour.
- Some of the issues surrounding the passage resulted from the active night-time economy in that area of Lincoln.

RESOLVED that:

1. the Policy Scrutiny Committee note the Renewal of Public Spaces Protection Order Allowing for the Gating of St Peter's Passage report and appendices
2. Any comments be referred to Executive.

27. Health Scrutiny Update

The Chair of the Policy Scrutiny Committee updated members on the business that had been discussed at the Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire held on 4 December 2024. The following points were noted:

- There were shortages of certain prescription medicines in Lincolnshire, and it had been reported that drugs such as Ozempic, usually used to treat type 2 diabetes were in short supply as it was being marketed as a weight-loss drug.
- The UK's departure from the European Union had been considered as an impact on medicine shortages as the UK did not have access to European markets.

- There had been reports of patients in Lincolnshire travelling between pharmacies to find their prescribed medication.
- Cllr Burke had proposed that the Health Scrutiny Committee write to Wes Streeting, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, to outline concerns with community pharmacy closures and medicine shortages within Lincolnshire and to explore if closer relationships with the European pharmaceutical market were possible. The committee had agreed his proposal.

In response to questions from Committee members, the Chair confirmed the following:

- Pharmacies generated income through GP referrals and also charged for some of their services, however some pharmacies were dispensing at their own costs and were barely breaking even financially.
- There had also been a reduction of funding for smoking cessation services over the last five years.
- Although there had not been any recent scrutiny of mental health programmes, the Chair could suggest that be included in the work programme at the next meeting of Health Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Health Scrutiny Committee be asked to write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, to outline concerns with community pharmacy closures and medicine shortages within Lincolnshire and to explore if closer relationships with the European pharmaceutical market were possible
2. The verbal report be received and noted with thanks.

28. Policy Scrutiny Work Programme 2024-25 and Executive Work Programme Update

The Democratic Services Officer:

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

Members made no further comments or suggestions regarding the Policy Scrutiny work programme.

RESOLVED that:

1. The work Policy Scrutiny work programme be noted
2. The Executive work programme be noted.