

- Present:** Councillor Calum Watt (*in the Chair*)
- Councillors:** Chris Burke, Debbie Armiger, Biff Bean, James Brown, Laura Danese, Clare Smalley, Hilton Spratt, Rachel Storer and Dylan Stothard
- Also in Attendance:** Charlotte Brooks (Local Motion), Simon Hawking (Acts Trust), Victoria Poulson (Democratic Services Officer) and Martin Walmsley (Assistant Director - Shared Revenues & Benefits, City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council)
- Apologies for Absence:** Councillor Bill Mara, Councillor Aiden Wells, Karen Harvey MBE (Founder of Toiletries Amnesty) and Councillor Emily Wood

90. Welcome and Apologies

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

Apologies for absence were received from Karen Harvey MBE, Founder of Toiletries Amnesty and Councillor(s) Bill Mara and Aiden Wells.

Councillor(s) Clare Smalley and Hilton Spratt were in attendance as substitutes.

91. Confirmation of Minutes - 28 January 2025

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2025 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as an accurate record.

92. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Rachel Storer wished it be noted that she volunteered for one of the projects through the Acts Trust.

93. Lincoln Against Poverty

Councillor Calum Watt, Chair of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee, introduced the topic of discussion which was an update on the Lincoln Against Poverty Assembly.

The Committee received a collaborative presentation from guest speakers, Charlotte Brooks (Director of Change, LocalMotion Lincoln), Simon Hawking, (Chief Executive, Acts Trust) and Martin Walmsley (Assistant Director - Shared Revenues & Benefits, City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council). During consideration of the presentation, the following points were noted:

Charlotte Brooks, LocalMotion Lincoln

Charlotte Brooks commenced the presentation with background information on two videos that would be played to the Committee. During consideration of the presentation, the following points were noted:

- The first video was co-produced by Poverty Truth Commissioners. The aspiration was to ensure that Community Commissioners were the main focus of the video and as such, they designed the story that they wanted people to hear.
- The second video showed the story of the event. £6K of UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) was accessed through the City of Lincoln Council (CoLC) which contributed to the event.

(The Committee were played the first video which could be found using the following link: [Lincoln Poverty Truth Commission - This Work Starts Now - Subtitled](#))

- Martin Walmsley (Assistant Director - Shared Revenues & Benefits, City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council) was a Civic Commissioner in addition to nine others
- Consideration had been given to what lay under the surface and what the root cause was of how individuals found themselves in situations of poverty
- The purpose of the commission's work was not to present CoLC with a wish list to be delivered on a limited budget but a request to join the journey for individuals to be enabled to make changes themselves
- The event was designed by commissioners who decided the stories they wanted to tell, how they wanted to share them and focussed on how creativity was used to tell a story in order that real life experiences were used to drive change
- Thanks were offered to Martin Walmsley and the City of Lincoln Council for the support that had been offered which enabled the event to be different, not a stakeholder meeting or conference
- Consideration had been given to how groups of diverse individuals could be convened in order to work collaboratively and how power could be handed to the people with real life experience
- Table facilitators had carried out Lewis Deep Democracy training in order that an agreement could be reached
- The event was a chance for voices to be weaved together, especially young people in order that their voices be amplified

(The Committee were played the second video which could be found using the following link: [Lincoln Against Poverty - sharing, collaborating and celebrating event](#))

- Recognition was given to the community commissioners for their creative talents which made the event feel different
- As part of the event, a learning report had compiled interesting points that had been learnt along the way
- It was acknowledged that more than 50% of the organisational partners that attended in a professional capacity lived outside of the Lincoln ward boundaries
- Many individuals did not recognise their own electoral ward - it was acknowledged that communities found their sense of place in other ways
- Many community members and residents felt that community spaces weren't for them or felt they weren't ready to be in those spaces
- Individuals with real life experiences didn't fully understand the value that their experiences brought to the development of policy and strategy
- The terminology and acronyms used put people off and stifled innovation
- Where finances were a barrier to attendance, individuals were offered financial assistance of which was not fully utilised

- Performances and stories appeared an effective method of sharing experiences
- Through the Poverty Trust Commission, four themes were established that were considered to be holding communities back:
 - Welfare Transformation
 - Accessibility
 - Awareness
 - Central Contact Point
- Raising Lincoln's Young Voices 2024 highlighted key issues for young people which included:
 - Third Spaces - young people felt they weren't able to exist and had a lack of space to be themselves
 - Homes not Houses – young people didn't just want shelter, they wanted communities and a sense of belonging
 - Mental Health for young people and peer to peer support
 - Crime and Safety
 - Artificial Intelligence (AI)

(The Committee were advised that the report entitled 'Raising Lincoln's Young Voices 2024' could be found using the following link: [Local-motion-youth-report-24-SCREEN-1.pdf](#))

- There was work to be carried out on the responsibilities of different Councils
- The issues with welfare transformation had been highlighted in Poverty Commissions up and down the country. It was likely that a great deal of anxiety and worry would be caused when changes to the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) were announced
- The common theme was that people had a desire to work together and wanted to work with CoLC to make things happen. There seemed to be a shift from the Council being asked to do things to individual responsibility being taken
- Individuals wanted to rebuild the relationship between people and power; it was felt that relationships were a little fractured. Lincoln appeared desperate to be heard beyond its city boundary
- The aspiration was that the learning gained, and the relationships built were used to test something a little different. In the middle was a circle of critical friends that was being built. There was nine Lincoln Against Poverty stewards who would feed into the circle of critical friends
- There was also a wider network which included everyone that attended the events, people that read newsletters and elected members. It was important that networks created connected regularly which would ensure no one fell through the net unnecessarily

Simon Hawking, Chief Executive – Acts Trust

- The following principles shaped the creation of a strategy in the fight against poverty in Lincoln:
 - Human Connection
 - Empathy
 - Involvement
 - Authentic Spaces
 - Inclusive Design
 - Stewardship
 - Personal Approach
 - Long-term Solutions

- Sharing
- Any proposals made by stewards for inclusion within a strategy became accountable to the critical friends. Sense checking was carried out with people living with real life poverty experiences
- A Community Response Matrix had been constructed which covered temporal, short term projects, permanent, long-term changes and informed future work
- The Covid-19 pandemic and the Cost-of-Living Crisis were examples of temporal issues – things that fluctuated over time
- Permanent, long-term changes covered the desired changes to make Lincoln more prosperous for all
- The Community Response Matrix included challenge to decision makers; issues that individuals did not have the authority to change themselves
- All the learning had been taken and transposed into a matrix which looked at what people could change themselves and challenges needed to be made to central government to enable long term change

Martin Walmsley (Assistant Director - Shared Revenues & Benefits, City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council)

- Funding was time limited, and it was great to be aspirational and strategic. Individuals needed support such as food and heating more immediately; they couldn't wait for a strategy to be raised months into the future

(Note: Councillor Clare Smalley left the meeting at this point in proceedings)

- A great deal of work had been carried out so far and included:
 - More than £2.4M of Household Support Fund delivered since October 2021
 - UK Shared Prosperity Fund Projects:
 - Community Venues
 - Fuel Vouchers
 - Food Initiatives
 - Community Grocery 'Diversion' – Vouchers and International Food
 - School Uniform
 - Snacks for Young Children
- Lincoln foodbank dependency had lowered, and use of the Community Grocery had increased; it worked very well. An international food aisle was recently included in the Community Grocery
- The next steps and Lincoln Against Poverty strategy included:
 - Household Support Fund Wave 7 (2025/26)
 - UKSPF 2025/26
 - Current, emerging and future issues
 - Vision 2030
 - Strategy – consultative, collective and joined up, to be approved by members
- Plans were already in place for the next phase of the Household Support Fund for the funding to be distributed once received
- UKSPF would be used to extend current projects rather than new projects
- It was fantastic that reducing inequality and poverty was contained within the Council's future aspirations (Vision 2030)

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

Question: There had been many years of bidding wars rather than a focus on where support and intervention was needed. In terms of holding someone to account, what response should be given to people? As Officers of the Council, there was an awful lot of influence and decision making but it was the Councillors that were elected.

Response: Research was due to commence regarding Lincoln's voluntary sector, who was receiving the funding and where the gaps were - it would take approximately 6 months for a deep dive to be undertaken for those questions to be answered. In terms of accountability, if the relationship with people and communities could be rebuilt, a relationship built on trust, there would be less talk of people being held to account. It felt like a power dynamic.

Comment: It was really nice to receive feedback from residents that had been referred for support by Councillors. Thanks were offered to Martin Walmsley and his team.

Question: What root causes of poverty emerged from the work that had been carried out?

Response: Inequality and a lack of opportunities for people at a young age contributed to the root causes of poverty. Sometimes poverty was caused by childhood trauma, and it seemed difficult to get the early intervention right to stop people falling down a spiral.

Supplementary Response: There were many reasons that contributed to a person experiencing poverty. When a poverty tree was considered, there were roots, branches and the fruits of the tree. The branches demonstrated how the poverty manifested, for example low self-esteem and a withdrawn demeanour. There were many routes that lead to the same issue and the only way to learn, and listen was to have a positive relationship with the individual.

Comment: It was important to note that one life event could change everything for any person. Approximately 50% of the calls received with a request for support, came from individuals within the workplace. Many individuals had a resilience for short-, medium and longer-term poverty and resilience made a big difference.

Comment: As a society and a species, we lived beyond our means and it had a ripple effect much wider than potentially one issue.

Question: How many individuals involved in the event worked and how many did not work? A mechanism of getting out of poverty was to secure a well-paid job.

Response: The stewarding group were aware that many individuals who had jobs were requesting support. The Community Response Matrix looked at projects that supported people that were already in work.

Question: If Central Government planned to cut £6-7B of benefits and people were forced back to work, would that impoverish the aspirations and attitudes of individuals?

Response: Yes, it was a very worrying time. Proposed welfare reforms would push people further into debt and would force individuals to make difficult decisions.

Question: How could the City of Lincoln Council and the voluntary sector locally, balance the immediacy of the need for material support for those most affected?

Response: The Community Response Matrix assisted in the planning of material support for those most affected. The learning and work carried would hopefully create an understanding and awareness of what the needs were. The development of the matrix had been through statistics, talking to people and talking to charities.

Supplementary Response: The Matrix was key to both the decision making and challenging the decision made. Reporting on changing situations was possible.

Comment: It would be useful for Government Ministers to see the work of the Poverty Truth Commission and it was positive to see the work develop over time into a strategy and a matrix. The Council budget was limited however the matrix could be used to guide decision making. Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee was very important in the shaping of the Anti-Poverty strategy. When community centres were set up, it was important that they were welcoming spaces rather than a place for individuals to be triaged for support.

Question: What was next for the Commission?

Response: Many people signed up and were told it would be for 18-24 months. All of the Civic Commissioners in it were compelled and wanted to remain. For approximately 19 months, a participation payment was made for community commissioners for their contributions to be recognised. The official process ended in September, but nobody walked away. If a group of critical friends was to be established, funding would be available for them to be paid in recognition of their contributions.

Comment: An A5 story of poverty truth would be produced and would feel like a story book which would have purpose for some of the themes to be launched. It was hoped it would be ready by Spring.

Question: Could the concerns around Artificial Intelligence (AI) be expanded upon?

Response: Young people experienced a nervousness around AI and digital infrastructure due to an uncertainty of career opportunities in the future.

Comment: The Council were never a transactional service. Trust was built through speaking with customers and money was better spent helping people. The annual business plan which had been recently approved, stated that the Council was not a transactional service.

Response: The Council should offer a holistic service.

The Chair offered his thanks to guest speakers and officers for all the information provided to Committee and for the remarkable work carried out.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Democratic Services Officer be tasked with the circulation of the Learning Report to Members, once received further, further to the meeting.
2. The content of all presentations be noted with thanks.

(Note: Councillor Rebecca Longbottom, Councillor Anita Pritchard, Charlotte Brooks and Simon Hawking left the meeting at this point in proceedings)

94. Hygiene Poverty and Sustainability - Karen Harvey, MBE, Founder of Toiletries Amnesty

Councillor Calum Watt, Chair of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee advised members that due to ill health, Karen Harvey, MBE, Founder of Toiletries Amnesty was unable to attend the meeting.

RESOLVED that the agenda item titled 'Hygiene Poverty and Sustainability – Karen Harvey, MBE, Founder of Toiletries Amnesty' be deferred to a future meeting of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee, scheduled for 15 July 2025.

95. Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/24

Councillor Calum Watt, Chair of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee:

- a) presented the Scrutiny Annual Report for 2023/24 for comments, prior to being referred to Full Council for approval.
- b) advised that the Constitution stated that the scrutiny committees should produce an annual report to Council. Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees produced individual reports to Council during the municipal year, however, the attached Scrutiny Annual Report summarised the work of the scrutiny committees for the full year and highlighted the key achievements made under scrutiny in 2023/24.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

96. Draft Work Programme 2025/26

Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Programme. Further to scoping discussions, it was agreed that the focus of the Committee's upcoming work would include further attendance in relation to Anti-Poverty Strategy Development and an update on Youth Engagement.

It was agreed that an invitation be offered to Krishna Vyas, Health Inequalities Improvement Manager, NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board, to attend Committee in June to present Members with information on poverty and health inequalities – mental and physical health.

It was agreed that a further invitation be offered to Karen Harvey, MBE - Founder of Toiletries Amnesty, to attend Committee in July to present Members with information on hygiene poverty.

It was agreed that an update on Youth Engagement would be brought before the Committee in July 2024.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. Krishna Vyas – NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board be invited to the next meeting.
- 2. The content of discussions be noted with thanks.

Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 17 June 2025 (18:00)