

SUBJECT: STATE OF THE CITY DEBATE

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

LEAD OFFICER: CAROLYN WHEATER – ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (LEGAL AND CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 At the meeting of 17 March 2014 members considered a report on the promotion of constructive debate within Council meetings. As an outcome of that meeting members requested an update on the possible development of a centrepiece debate on the overall state and direction of Lincoln
- 1.2 Committee members were minded to investigate the possibility of holding a State of the City debate which would encourage input from both elected members and from a wider audience. This report is intended to provide members with the information necessary to make any recommendations that the Leader may wish to consider if choosing to hold a State of the City debate.

2. Background to the Debate

- 2.1 Under Council Procedure Rule 28, the Leader has the power to call a 'State of the Area/City' debate in consultation with the Mayor. The form of the debate is considerably more flexible than an ordinary Council meeting, allowing the Leader to set the format with a view to enabling the widest possible public involvement and publicity.
- 2.2 The results of any debate must then be:
1. disseminated as widely as possible within the community, and to agencies and organisations in the city
 2. considered by the Leader in proposing the budget and policy framework to the Council for the coming year.

- 2.3 Council may also decide to refer the outcome of the debate or part of it to a committee of the Council for further development and/or research.

3. Options

- 3.1 Having considered the overall objectives for the State of the City debate, members may wish to offer guidance to the Leader on the form which would be most appropriate to encourage a useful outcome and an engaging process for the public and partners.
- 3.2 In order to ensure that clear and understandable messages are formed from the debate, it would be necessary to set clear terms of reference. This could be limited

to a discussion around the delivery of the Council's existing strategic priorities. However, this would potentially limit the public's scope to discuss matters of broad concern which are not specifically addressed within the strategic priorities. It would therefore perhaps be more suitable to use another document to set guidelines for debate.

- 3.3 In this regard, the annual Lincoln Drivers Report would be of particular relevance. The Drivers Report provides a broad range of statistical information on a wide range of topics with a direct bearing upon the lives of Lincoln's citizens. By using the Drivers Report, participants would also be better able to contribute towards an evidence-based discussion of Lincoln's priorities and the challenges facing the city.
- 3.4 In order to accommodate the debate, the following provisional framework has been developed for members' consideration.
- An introduction to the principal themes and topic for the debate by the Leader focusing on the challenges for the city in meeting its potential.
 - Questions and statements from members of the public and any key partners in attendance.
 - Responses from portfolio holders or directors if required
 - Councillor debate with a suggested 4-minute limit per speaker for a maximum of 75 minutes.
 - Closing summary from the Leader.
- 3.5 The chair of the meeting will need to be empowered to keep the meeting as focussed as possible, with an explicit power to interrupt or curtail any contributions which are too far removed from the general discussion, repeating points already made, or which would otherwise limit the chances for others to contribute.
- 3.6 Depending upon the topics broached during the debate, it may be possible for emerging priorities or themes to form the subject of further scrutiny by the relevant committees. The scheduling of further items within existing scrutiny work programmes would then be a matter for further discussion with the relevant committees and chairs.
- 3.7 It would also be possible for questions and comments to be submitted via the internet in order to ensure the debate was as widely accessible as possible. These could potentially be fed into the room via display screens.
- 3.8 As proposed at the previous meeting, there would be the opportunity for a State of the City debate to coincide with and contribute towards Local Democracy Week. Local Democracy Week is scheduled to take place from 13-17 October 2014. It would also be possible to encourage schools each to nominate a pupil as a representative who would be able either to put a question or make a statement on a relevant topic.

4. Organisational Impacts

4.1 Finance

There are no financial implications from this report. If the event were to be held in another venue in order to allow a larger audience, this would potentially incur a cost to the authority. However, this can be contained within existing budgets.

4.2 Legal Implications
There are no legal implications from this report.

5. Recommendation

5.1 That the Leader be requested to make arrangements to hold a State of the City debate in a suitable form.