

COUNCILLOR MARTIN HILL OBE

LEADER'S STATEMENT TO THE ANNUAL MEETING OF LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL – 20 MAY 2011

Introduction

It is now just over 12 months since the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Government – the first national coalition for many decades – took office.

The new Government hit the ground running, introducing tough measures at the very outset to cut the massive budget deficit it inherited and balance the financial books.

Inevitably, local government has been asked to play a full part in that process of economic renewal – something we at Lincolnshire County Council fully accept.

In practical terms, the reduction in our central government grants requires us to find savings of £125 million over the next four years. That is no easy task, even though we have been preparing for this situation for three years.

Despite the challenges, we set a prudent budget for 2011-12. We froze council tax and protected the services our most vulnerable residents rely on. Funding has also been found for public safety – things like road maintenance and winter gritting, the safeguarding of children, fire and rescue and emergency planning.

Of course, there have been – and will be – painful decisions to make. Given the scale of the reduction in our grants, we are having to look again at every service we provide. Should it still be provided – and if so, how and by whom? Could it be provided differently? Should it even be stopped altogether?

These choices are hugely difficult – but they are absolutely necessary. They are also being taken in a spirit of co-operation and realism by members of every political group on this authority, and I thank each one of you for that.

I also want to pay tribute to all Lincolnshire County Council's dedicated staff for continuing to work so hard at a time of great difficulty throughout local government and the public sector. Few of our staff are exempt from changes to their jobs or to the way they provide services. Some will be leaving the authority through redundancy – thankfully, voluntary in the majority of cases rather than compulsory.

Against that background, I would like to thank all those staff for continuing to provide the very best services we can to the people of Lincolnshire. I would also like to assure them that we *will* come through these painful times. And we

will come through them a fitter, stronger council, better equipped to face the challenges of the future.

In the years ahead, as never before, we must get total value for every single pound we spend. That will often mean doing things differently, particularly in adult social care, where we have a rising population of older people and will therefore have to get more for less from the budget available.

But having to do things differently is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it can be just the opposite. It can and should be an opportunity – and one that we must seize with both hands – to innovate, to progress, to grow, to move forward confidently rather than standing still.

That process of growth is being helped by the Government's commitment to "localism", which will free this council and others across the country from many of the restraints that have held us back in the past. Localism will enable us to find Lincolnshire solutions to Lincolnshire problems, and to establish local arrangements uniquely suited to our county's needs and aspirations.

To ensure maximum effectiveness, those arrangements will of course centre ever more strongly on partnership working – with the NHS, the district councils and many other public sector organisations, with business and the private sector, with the voluntary and third sector.

In the spirit of partnership, Lincolnshire County Council is also 100% committed to supporting the development of a truly Big Society. People sometimes ask: "What exactly does that mean?" Personally, I like to think of the Big Society as one where everyone has a part to play and is happy to play a part.

It means encouraging and supporting people to give freely of their time and skills to their local communities. The possibilities here are almost limitless. For example, many of our rural communities need drivers for voluntary car schemes, taking vulnerable people to hospital or other important appointments. This council is helping to make that possible by providing training and CRB checks.

As highlighted on the front page of the most recent County News, we are also keen to attract First Contact volunteers to advise older people on how to access services. Encouragingly, dozens of potential new recruits came forward in response to that article, showing that the Big Society theme is really striking a chord with local people.

Another encouraging example is provided by the new Caistor arts, heritage and library centre. Thanks to the input of volunteers, it is able to open seven days a week, providing greatly improved services to residents at no cost to the public purse.

As we look to the future – and as we recognise the very real challenges that still lie ahead – it may help to remind ourselves of the equally real

achievements that we can call our own. Let us therefore look back at some of the most notable successes of the past 12 months and at how they provide a springboard for our future successes.

Financial Management

Sound financial management underpins the provision of quality services. It was therefore vital that the council should set a realistic and sustainable 2011-12 budget, despite significant reductions in direct government grants.

In preparing for the budget, a fundamental analysis of the services provided by the council – the core offer review – was conducted. It successfully provided the framework for a realignment of the council's financial strategy in line with current constraints on public spending.

A considerable amount of work has also taken place to prepare the council to implement the new International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). This has been demanding both technically and in resource terms. However, reports on progress by our external auditors have been very encouraging, particularly in comparison to other local authorities.

Overall, the council's national reputation for strong financial management continues to grow. This was demonstrated by our selection for the first phase of the national Community Budgets programme. This pilot scheme enables us to work more closely with our partners through a shared multi-million budget for specific areas of work, including flood risk management and families with complex social care needs.

Performance and Governance

Despite the financial challenges we are facing, improvements in service performance over recent years are being sustained, with 60% of our most important performance indicators in the Business Plan getting better last year.

Efficiency also continues to improve, despite the council having at least 300 fewer staff than two years ago. That growth in efficiency is helping to soften the impact of the £125 million budget savings we must make.

In one area alone – Business Support – efficiencies during 2010-11 have saved just over £1m (11% of budget) by re-engineering workloads, reducing the demand for support and increasing generic working practices.

In terms of staffing, we are on track to meet our target this year. Our efficiency work, vacancy management and voluntary redundancies mean that more than 75% of staff reductions confirmed so far will avoid compulsory redundancies.

The Economy

The impact of the recession and its after-effects on the national and local economy has been very considerable.

Thankfully, Lincolnshire has fared better than many other places, and our strong manufacturing base in engineering and food is proving more resilient than sectors elsewhere like finance.

As we emerge from recession, the council continues to take a leading role in encouraging the growth of the county's economy. In particular:

- We played a crucial part in the formation of the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership – the first in the country to meet and a vital ingredient in our future prosperity.
- We have been very active in supporting Teal Park in North Hykeham as a future base for Siemens and other companies. During the last 12 months, we have gained planning permission for the development and made progress on the major highway infrastructure improvement works. We now expect to be on site with the main works in June or July.
- To encourage tourism, we have worked productively with the Heritage Lottery Fund over our Lincoln Castle bid to create a permanent home for Magna Carta. We also ensured the successful continuation of the Visit Lincolnshire.com website as an effective promotional tool for the county.
- We have attracted almost £5.3 million of external funding, including money for a major broadband initiative to be launched shortly.
- As well as strategic schemes, we have provided help at a grass-roots level to more than 750 businesses, promoting jobs and prosperity across the county.
- Procurement Lincolnshire is working with the Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses to provide joint support to the local business economy. This has increased by 16% the amount of money being spent by local authorities that remains within the county.
- Legal Services Lincolnshire successfully negotiated its first year as a fully trading unit and has continued to achieve high levels of client satisfaction. The service has been recognised externally, having won a Legal Week British Legal Award in 2010 and been shortlisted as a finalist in the Municipal Journal Awards for 2011.

Highways and Transport

Good highways and transport links are not just vital for our economy. They are also crucial for the safety of our citizens. For both reasons, and despite having to make unprecedented reductions in our overall budget, the council has again given them high priority in the allocation of funding.

Last year we had the lowest number of people killed on our roads for over a decade, but we can never be complacent. That is why we will continue to invest in road safety and work in partnership with the police and other organisations. It is also why we welcome the fact that our Highways Alliance partners completed all their programmes of work without any notifiable incidents.

We must also thank our highways department for ensuring we had our maximum capacity of salt ahead of last year's very severe winter. As a result, Lincolnshire did not run out – unlike some areas. We are now looking to increase our salt storage capacity to 35,000 tonnes. That will enable us to buy all our stock for next winter over the summer months, taking advantage of full availability of supplies and significantly lower costs.

Out on the roads, the performance of our gritting teams last winter was also exceptional. We kept open 34% of our very large road network, exceeding the government guideline figure. That is 1,869 miles out of 5,567 across the county that we successfully treated – all the main routes – despite the harshest winter conditions for decades.

Unfortunately, the very cold weather caused significant damage to roads and footpaths across the county. With support from the Department for Transport, we are therefore undertaking an extensive programme of repairs, which is progressing well. We have also protected our budgets for winter maintenance and, as mentioned, are increasing our investment in salt storage to take advantage of the best availability and prices.

Turning now to capital projects:

- At the start of February, the Department for Transport announced that the council had been successful in its bid to have the Lincoln Eastern Bypass accepted for possible future financial support. However, the bypass remains in competition for funds with other schemes around the country and contributions from central government are not yet assured. We will therefore be working with stakeholder partners to ensure the best possible outcome for Lincoln and Lincolnshire.
- A direct rail link from Lincoln to London would also make Lincolnshire significantly more attractive for investors. That is why I have taken a personal interest in lobbying the rail industry and will continue to do so.
- On the subject of rail, enhancements at Metheringham station, involving joint working and funding by Lincolnshire County Council,

Network Rail and East Midlands Trains, have created an accessible, modern passenger interchange. Work is also ongoing at Skegness interchange on a £750,000 re-development which will have a long-term strategic impact on the town, the Lincolnshire coast and the East Midlands. Completion is expected by November.

- The Boston Online Widening and Level Crossing Improvements have been delivered on time and within budget. Since May last year, the A16 and A52 have been widened to three lanes between the London Road roundabout and the West Street level crossing. Six junctions along the route have been improved and two level crossings widened and modernised. Early indications suggest the widening has had a positive effect on traffic flows and journey times within Boston. Surveys are now planned to measure its impact.
- The Boston scheme forms the major part of the Boston Transport Strategy, funded by both Lincolnshire County Council and Boston Borough Council. The strategy has already seen bus improvements, with the introduction of the Into Town services. Work to improve the quality of road signs throughout the town is nearly complete, and a junction improvement at Spilsby Road and Freiston Road has now started. Further junction, bus stop, cycle and pedestrian improvements will follow.

The Environment and Waste Management

Besides developing Lincolnshire's transport highways and infrastructure, this council is absolutely committed to protecting its environment. Significant recent developments in this area include the following:

- We continue to set new standards of best practice, being nationally recognised for partnership working, the Coastal Study, Coastal Pathfinder and surface water flood risk assessment. In 2010 we also took on new flood risk management duties as the Lead Local Flood Authority under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.
- The council continues to tackle the causes and effects of climate change. Automatic metering is being installed in all our buildings and schools as part of our Carbon Management Plan, enabling us to better report on consumption and to target investment in the worst-performing buildings. To date, we have invested over £900,000 in energy efficiency and reduced our bills by £300,000 per year.
- The natural environment of Lincolnshire makes it an attractive place to live, work and visit. The council supports it by working in partnership with others in the public sector, businesses, specialist groups and communities. Our input has made a significant difference to the production of a draft Green Infrastructure Plan for The Wash and in supporting the Coastal Grazing Marshes Project, the Limewoods and the "Life on the Verge" roadside biodiversity project.

- This year has also seen the establishment of the Lincolnshire Coastal Country Park between Chapel St Leonards and Sandilands, providing high-quality facilities and improved protection for wildlife.

In terms of waste management, Lincolnshire and this council have also recorded some notable successes:

- Work has started on the Energy from Waste Facility at North Hykeham. Once it is in operation in 2013, the facility will burn waste as an alternative to increasingly costly landfill, as well as generating electricity for sale to the National Grid. It will also have the potential to heat local homes and businesses.
- The £1.6m Rasens Household Waste Recycling Centre has now opened, bringing our network of recycling facilities up to 13. It will help this council and the district authorities maintain Lincolnshire's enviable recycling record. Lincolnshire currently recycles 52% of all household waste, against a national target of 50% by 2015.
- We continue to support Lincolnshire's district councils by working with them to achieve shared outcomes through the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership.

Children's Services

Lincolnshire is known for aspiring to academic excellence for all our children and young people. That deserved reputation has been sustained again this year, with improvements in both educational attainment and school absence rates:

- The number of pupils achieving 5 good GCSEs or the equivalent increased to 80% in 2010 – higher than any other East Midlands or similar rural authority.
- A higher proportion of pupils achieved the new "English Baccalaureate" than anywhere else in England.
- There has been a significant increase – from 46.8% to 58.2% – in the number of children who achieved a good level of development at the end of the reception year.
- Final results for key stage 2 showed a significant improvement, with 81% of pupils achieving level 4 in English and the same figure in maths – both above the national average.
- Lincolnshire had the highest proportion of A* or A graded A-levels in the region – almost one quarter of entries.

- There was a welcome fall in secondary school absence rates and the proportion of pupils classed as persistent absentees.
- Five children's centres received positive Ofsted inspections. Spilsby was "outstanding" while Wainfleet, Gainsborough Early Years, Belton Lane, Grantham and Boston all received "good" ratings.
- As well as winning a national award, the Music Service was assessed as "outstanding", with more than 14,000 young people accessing it.

Just as important as academic achievement is to ensure our children and young people lead safe, secure and fulfilled lives, which is why the following are so important:

- Lincolnshire has continued to increase the support provided to children, young people and their families through our "Team Around the Child" approach, which identifies additional needs at an early stage and prevents issues escalating.
- In December 2010, Children's Services were commended in an unannounced Ofsted inspection of its safeguarding services. This followed an "outstanding" rating in May 2010.
- Staff were praised by Ofsted inspectors for their "proactive and imaginative" support for Traveller families and children with disabilities.
- Lincolnshire leads the way nationally after being selected by the Government as one of just 16 areas to take part in the Community Budget project, known as Families Working Together, to help families find solutions to their own complex needs.
- Lincolnshire has kept the number of young people not in education, employment and training at 4.7%, compared to 5.4% in the East Midlands and 6.0% in England.
- The Birth to Five service was graded as "outstanding", particularly for the work it is doing with schools on the "Every Child A Talker" project.
- Looked-after children celebrated their achievements in style at this year's 5th annual V4C Awards at the Lincoln Drill Hall. A record-breaking 174 nominations were received.

Adult Social Care

Lincolnshire has a growing population of older people – partly because of increased life expectancy and partly because of the county's popularity as a retirement destination.

At the same time, the money available to spend on adult social care has

reduced, meaning that new, imaginative solutions to the provision of care have to be found.

Older people also say that they want to be helped to live independently at home for as long as possible. Again, this calls for new approaches to the provision of care, including the greater use of technology.

Against that background, Lincolnshire's Excellent Ageing programme to improve outcomes for older people is gaining momentum. More than 40 local, regional and national agencies are now working together on at least 50 potential solutions.

Examples include streamlining debt and benefit advice across the county, integrating health and social care, and increasing joint working between young and old.

Significantly, Excellent Ageing is the highest performing programme of its type in the region. It is also gaining increased prominence nationally, with support across the board from the Government.

Besides Excellent Ageing, important developments in adult social care this year include:

- A new extra-care housing scheme – Boston Mayflower's Mayfield facility – has added to the range of housing options available to local people, with care and support on site.
- The National Clinical Director for Dementia, Professor Alistair Burns, has praised Lincolnshire's approach in using Telecare technology to improve the lives of people with dementia.
- Significant work has been undertaken to broaden service-user choice through direct payments and personal budgets. These will ensure a more flexible and client-centred range of support is available to people on the basis of need, including those who wish to remain in their own accommodation.
- Performance information shows that over 6,000 people are now having their needs met through self-directed support, compared to 569 in 2007/08.
- The target of 30% of clients receiving self-directed support (either through a personal budget or a direct payment) has been met for 2010/11.
- Adult social care in Lincolnshire has met or exceeded the targets for self-directed support for the last three years and performed well above both the comparator group and the all-England average.

- Adult social care received an “excellent” rating for its “Improved Quality of Life” outcome as part of its inspection by the Care Quality Commission.
- Older people who experience hearing loss and visual impairments can now have all their sensory needs addressed in just one expert assessment with the new Sensory Impairment Lincolnshire County Service (SILCS). This helps prevent social isolation and loss of confidence among older people. The service is also available for children and disabled adults.

Cultural Services

Investment in technology has featured strongly in a significant year for Cultural Services. Significant milestones included the following:

- 11 libraries in the second phase of our improvement programme have benefited from self-service technology, refreshed internet access computers and refurbishment works.
- Library members are now able to download e-audio and e-books from an improved library catalogue via the council website.
- As mentioned earlier, a community asset transfer has enabled an unused building in Caistor to be transformed into a stunning new arts, heritage and library centre, where volunteers are ensuring much enhanced opening times.
- Lincolnshire Archives have met the national Standard for Record Repositories and been approved as a place of deposit for the care of public records. Particular note was made of Lincolnshire’s work with volunteers and the widening of access through digitisation.
- The Lincs to the Past website has gone live with over 500,000 high quality images from our library, museum and archive collections.
- The Enhancing Engagement with Volunteers Project increased the number of volunteers within Culture and Adult Education to over 520 by April 2011.
- Major improvements were made to The Usher Gallery, which now boasts a fully accessible entrance visually linking it to The Collection. The improvements have led to an increase in visitors.

Customer Services

The following impressive Customer Services achievements reflect our commitment to excellence in this field:

- In the past year the Customer Service Centre (CSC) handled nearly 900,000 phone calls and contacted more than 157,000 customers directly. It also received and actioned more than 34,000 emails.
- In March 2011 our CSC was independently judged to be meeting high standards under the CCA Global Standards V4 accreditation with a clear customer focus, good complaint handling and extensive and effective employee training.
- Overall customer satisfaction in this service remains high, at 97%. This is confirmed by the CSC being the only local authority awarded the CCA's Innovation in Customer Excellence recognition award in November 2010.
- The council continues to expand its participation in the Institute of Customer Services professional development programme. A total of 242 staff have now completed the qualification with a further 119 working through the process.
- The CSC is expanding its support to our partner district councils by providing an out-of-hours call handling service for three districts, as well as customer service training and business continuity options.

Registration and Celebratory Services

From birth to death, our Registration and Celebratory Services are there to give support at key moments in residents' lives. Once again, we have maintained our customary high standards, as confirmed by a targeted inspection by the General Register Office in February 2011.

It described our services as excellent, professional and well-organised, with high customer satisfaction ratings. They are also 100% compliant with the Government's standard for excellence in customer service.

Emergency Planning / Search and Rescue

A major coastal flooding simulation – part of the national Exercise Watermark – tested Lincolnshire's readiness for an emergency on the coast similar to the 1953 disaster. The multi-agency exercise, which attracted widespread national and local media coverage, also raised public awareness of the potential risk, encouraging residents and businesses to prepare their own flood plans.

In the aftermath of the tsunami in Japan, Lincolnshire search and rescue personnel and dogs took part in the international operation to locate and bring survivors to safety. As with previous events such as Haiti, our prompt and effective participation attracted widespread interest and acclaim.

Conclusion

Looking back over the last 12 months, Lincolnshire County Council's record of achievement is impressive. That is particularly true in the light of the major reductions in spending we are facing, which have necessitated a wholesale review of the council's service priorities and structure.

Those changes to services and the implementation of that restructure are not finished yet – and they will present us with significant challenges in the months ahead. However, I firmly believe we have set the right course for success.

On a national level, we are playing a full part in restoring the country's finances to health. Locally, we are finding new, innovative ways to get the most out of every pound of public money we spend on services.

Difficult though it is, we are also creating a leaner, stronger council, where every single member of staff is both needed and valued for their contribution.

Later this summer – probably by late August or early September – the major changes we are making to our staffing levels, structure and services will be starting to bed down.

That will be an ideal moment for us to assess the progress we have made, refocus on and reaffirm our priorities, and make any minor adjustments to our course that may be needed.

However, the destination for this council is not in doubt. We intend to make Lincolnshire a byword for very good services and value for money throughout the country.

That is the target we have set ourselves. It is one that we – elected members and officers, all pulling in the same direction – are fully capable of meeting.



Councillor Martin Hill OBE
Leader of Lincolnshire County Council

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Older people also say that they want to be helped to live independently at home for as long as possible. Again, this calls for new approaches to the provision of care, including the greater use of technology.

Against that background, Lincolnshire's Excellent Ageing programme to improve outcomes for older people is gaining momentum. More than 40 local, regional and national agencies are now working together on at least 50 potential solutions.

Examples include streamlining debt and benefit advice across the county, integrating health and social care, and increasing joint working between young and old.

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In the aftermath of the tsunami in Japan, Lincolnshire search and rescue personnel and dogs took part in the international operation to locate and bring survivors to safety. As with previous events such as Haiti, our prompt and effective participation attracted widespread interest and acclaim.

Conclusion

Looking back over the last 12 months, Lincolnshire County Council's record of achievement is impressive. That is particularly true in the light of the major reductions in spending we are facing, which have necessitated a wholesale review of the council's service priorities and structure.

Those changes to services and the implementation of that restructure are not finished yet – and they will present us with significant challenges in the months ahead. However, I firmly believe we have set the right course for success.

On a national level, we are playing a full part in restoring the country's finances to health. Locally, we are finding new, innovative ways to get the most out of every pound of public money we spend on services.

Difficult though it is, we are also creating a leaner, stronger council, where every single member of staff is both needed and valued for their contribution.

Later this summer – probably by late August or early September – the major changes we are making to our staffing levels, structure and services will be starting to bed down.

That will be an ideal moment for us to assess the progress we have made, refocus on and reaffirm our priorities, and make any minor adjustments to our course that may be needed.

However, the destination for this council is not in doubt. We intend to make Lincolnshire a byword for very good services and value for money throughout the country.

That is the target we have set ourselves. It is one that we – elected members and officers, all pulling in the same direction – are fully capable of meeting.



Councillor Martin Hill OBE
Leader of Lincolnshire County Council

COUNCILLOR MARTIN HILL OBE

LEADER'S STATEMENT TO THE ANNUAL MEETING OF LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL – 20 MAY 2011

Introduction

It is now just over 12 months since the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Government – the first national coalition for many decades – took office.

The new Government hit the ground running, introducing tough measures at the very outset to cut the massive budget deficit it inherited and balance the financial books.

Inevitably, local government has been asked to play a full part in that process of economic renewal – something we at Lincolnshire County Council fully accept.

In practical terms, the reduction in our central government grants requires us to find savings of £125 million over the next four years. That is no easy task, even though we have been preparing for this situation for three years.

Despite the challenges, we set a prudent budget for 2011-12. We froze council tax and protected the services our most vulnerable residents rely on. Funding has also been found for public safety – things like road maintenance and winter gritting, the safeguarding of children, fire and rescue and emergency planning.

Of course, there have been – and will be – painful decisions to make. Given the scale of the reduction in our grants, we are having to look again at every service we provide. Should it still be provided – and if so, how and by whom? Could it be provided differently? Should it even be stopped altogether?

These choices are hugely difficult – but they are absolutely necessary. They are also being taken in a spirit of co-operation and realism by members of every political group on this authority, and I thank each one of you for that.

I also want to pay tribute to all Lincolnshire County Council's dedicated staff for continuing to work so hard at a time of great difficulty throughout local government and the public sector. Few of our staff are exempt from changes to their jobs or to the way they provide services. Some will be leaving the authority through redundancy – thankfully, voluntary in the majority of cases rather than compulsory.

Against that background, I would like to thank all those staff for continuing to provide the very best services we can to the people of Lincolnshire. I would also like to assure them that we *will* come through these painful times. And we

will come through them a fitter, stronger council, better equipped to face the challenges of the future.

In the years ahead, as never before, we must get total value for every single pound we spend. That will often mean doing things differently, particularly in adult social care, where we have a rising population of older people and will therefore have to get more for less from the budget available.

But having to do things differently is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it can be just the opposite. It can and should be an opportunity – and one that we must seize with both hands – to innovate, to progress, to grow, to move forward confidently rather than standing still.

That process of growth is being helped by the Government's commitment to "localism", which will free this council and others across the country from many of the restraints that have held us back in the past. Localism will enable us to find Lincolnshire solutions to Lincolnshire problems, and to establish local arrangements uniquely suited to our county's needs and aspirations.

To ensure maximum effectiveness, those arrangements will of course centre ever more strongly on partnership working – with the NHS, the district councils and many other public sector organisations, with business and the private sector, with the voluntary and third sector.

In the spirit of partnership, Lincolnshire County Council is also 100% committed to supporting the development of a truly Big Society. People sometimes ask: "What exactly does that mean?" Personally, I like to think of the Big Society as one where everyone has a part to play and is happy to play a part.

It means encouraging and supporting people to give freely of their time and skills to their local communities. The possibilities here are almost limitless. For example, many of our rural communities need drivers for voluntary car schemes, taking vulnerable people to hospital or other important appointments. This council is helping to make that possible by providing training and CRB checks.

As highlighted on the front page of the most recent County News, we are also keen to attract First Contact volunteers to advise older people on how to access services. Encouragingly, dozens of potential new recruits came forward in response to that article, showing that the Big Society theme is really striking a chord with local people.

Another encouraging example is provided by the new Caistor arts, heritage and library centre. Thanks to the input of volunteers, it is able to open seven days a week, providing greatly improved services to residents at no cost to the public purse.

As we look to the future – and as we recognise the very real challenges that still lie ahead – it may help to remind ourselves of the equally real

achievements that we can call our own. Let us therefore look back at some of the most notable successes of the past 12 months and at how they provide a springboard for our future successes.

Financial Management

Sound financial management underpins the provision of quality services. It was therefore vital that the council should set a realistic and sustainable 2011-12 budget, despite significant reductions in direct government grants.

In preparing for the budget, a fundamental analysis of the services provided by the council – the core offer review – was conducted. It successfully provided the framework for a realignment of the council's financial strategy in line with current constraints on public spending.

A considerable amount of work has also taken place to prepare the council to implement the new International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). This has been demanding both technically and in resource terms. However, reports on progress by our external auditors have been very encouraging, particularly in comparison to other local authorities.

Overall, the council's national reputation for strong financial management continues to grow. This was demonstrated by our selection for the first phase of the national Community Budgets programme. This pilot scheme enables us to work more closely with our partners through a shared multi-million budget for specific areas of work, including flood risk management and families with complex social care needs.

Performance and Governance

Despite the financial challenges we are facing, improvements in service performance over recent years are being sustained, with 60% of our most important performance indicators in the Business Plan getting better last year.

Efficiency also continues to improve, despite the council having at least 300 fewer staff than two years ago. That growth in efficiency is helping to soften the impact of the £125 million budget savings we must make.

In one area alone – Business Support – efficiencies during 2010-11 have saved just over £1m (11% of budget) by re-engineering workloads, reducing the demand for support and increasing generic working practices.

In terms of staffing, we are on track to meet our target this year. Our efficiency work, vacancy management and voluntary redundancies mean that more than 75% of staff reductions confirmed so far will avoid compulsory redundancies.

The Economy

The impact of the recession and its after-effects on the national and local economy has been very considerable.

Thankfully, Lincolnshire has fared better than many other places, and our strong manufacturing base in engineering and food is proving more resilient than sectors elsewhere like finance.

As we emerge from recession, the council continues to take a leading role in encouraging the growth of the county's economy. In particular:

- We played a crucial part in the formation of the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership – the first in the country to meet and a vital ingredient in our future prosperity.
- We have been very active in supporting Teal Park in North Hykeham as a future base for Siemens and other companies. During the last 12 months, we have gained planning permission for the development and made progress on the major highway infrastructure improvement works. We now expect to be on site with the main works in June or July.
- To encourage tourism, we have worked productively with the Heritage Lottery Fund over our Lincoln Castle bid to create a permanent home for Magna Carta. We also ensured the successful continuation of the Visit Lincolnshire.com website as an effective promotional tool for the county.
- We have attracted almost £5.3 million of external funding, including money for a major broadband initiative to be launched shortly.
- As well as strategic schemes, we have provided help at a grass-roots level to more than 750 businesses, promoting jobs and prosperity across the county.
- Procurement Lincolnshire is working with the Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses to provide joint support to the local business economy. This has increased by 16% the amount of money being spent by local authorities that remains within the county.
- Legal Services Lincolnshire successfully negotiated its first year as a fully trading unit and has continued to achieve high levels of client satisfaction. The service has been recognised externally, having won a Legal Week British Legal Award in 2010 and been shortlisted as a finalist in the Municipal Journal Awards for 2011.

Highways and Transport

Good highways and transport links are not just vital for our economy. They are also crucial for the safety of our citizens. For both reasons, and despite having to make unprecedented reductions in our overall budget, the council has again given them high priority in the allocation of funding.

Last year we had the lowest number of people killed on our roads for over a decade, but we can never be complacent. That is why we will continue to invest in road safety and work in partnership with the police and other organisations. It is also why we welcome the fact that our Highways Alliance partners completed all their programmes of work without any notifiable incidents.

We must also thank our highways department for ensuring we had our maximum capacity of salt ahead of last year's very severe winter. As a result, Lincolnshire did not run out – unlike some areas. We are now looking to increase our salt storage capacity to 35,000 tonnes. That will enable us to buy all our stock for next winter over the summer months, taking advantage of full availability of supplies and significantly lower costs.

Out on the roads, the performance of our gritting teams last winter was also exceptional. We kept open 34% of our very large road network, exceeding the government guideline figure. That is 1,869 miles out of 5,567 across the county that we successfully treated – all the main routes – despite the harshest winter conditions for decades.

Unfortunately, the very cold weather caused significant damage to roads and footpaths across the county. With support from the Department for Transport, we are therefore undertaking an extensive programme of repairs, which is progressing well. We have also protected our budgets for winter maintenance and, as mentioned, are increasing our investment in salt storage to take advantage of the best availability and prices.

Turning now to capital projects:

- At the start of February, the Department for Transport announced that the council had been successful in its bid to have the Lincoln Eastern Bypass accepted for possible future financial support. However, the bypass remains in competition for funds with other schemes around the country and contributions from central government are not yet assured. We will therefore be working with stakeholder partners to ensure the best possible outcome for Lincoln and Lincolnshire.
- A direct rail link from Lincoln to London would also make Lincolnshire significantly more attractive for investors. That is why I have taken a personal interest in lobbying the rail industry and will continue to do so.
- On the subject of rail, enhancements at Metheringham station, involving joint working and funding by Lincolnshire County Council,

Network Rail and East Midlands Trains, have created an accessible, modern passenger interchange. Work is also ongoing at Skegness interchange on a £750,000 re-development which will have a long-term strategic impact on the town, the Lincolnshire coast and the East Midlands. Completion is expected by November.

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In the aftermath of the tsunami in Japan, Lincolnshire search and rescue personnel and dogs took part in the international operation to locate and bring survivors to safety. As with previous events such as Haiti, our prompt and effective participation attracted widespread interest and acclaim.

Conclusion

Looking back over the last 12 months, Lincolnshire County Council's record of achievement is impressive. That is particularly true in the light of the major reductions in spending we are facing, which have necessitated a wholesale review of the council's service priorities and structure.

Those changes to services and the implementation of that restructure are not finished yet – and they will present us with significant challenges in the months ahead. However, I firmly believe we have set the right course for success.

On a national level, we are playing a full part in restoring the country's finances to health. Locally, we are finding new, innovative ways to get the most out of every pound of public money we spend on services.

Difficult though it is, we are also creating a leaner, stronger council, where every single member of staff is both needed and valued for their contribution.

Later this summer – probably by late August or early September – the major changes we are making to our staffing levels, structure and services will be starting to bed down.

That will be an ideal moment for us to assess the progress we have made, refocus on and reaffirm our priorities, and make any minor adjustments to our course that may be needed.

However, the destination for this council is not in doubt. We intend to make Lincolnshire a byword for very good services and value for money throughout the country.

That is the target we have set ourselves. It is one that we – elected members and officers, all pulling in the same direction – are fully capable of meeting.



Councillor Martin Hill OBE
Leader of Lincolnshire County Council

COUNCILLOR MARTIN HILL OBE

LEADER'S STATEMENT TO THE ANNUAL MEETING OF LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL – 20 MAY 2011

Introduction

It is now just over 12 months since the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Government – the first national coalition for many decades – took office.

The new Government hit the ground running, introducing tough measures at the very outset to cut the massive budget deficit it inherited and balance the financial books.

Inevitably, local government has been asked to play a full part in that process of economic renewal – something we at Lincolnshire County Council fully accept.

In practical terms, the reduction in our central government grants requires us to find savings of £125 million over the next four years. That is no easy task, even though we have been preparing for this situation for three years.

Despite the challenges, we set a prudent budget for 2011-12. We froze council tax and protected the services our most vulnerable residents rely on. Funding has also been found for public safety – things like road maintenance and winter gritting, the safeguarding of children, fire and rescue and emergency planning.

Of course, there have been – and will be – painful decisions to make. Given the scale of the reduction in our grants, we are having to look again at every service we provide. Should it still be provided – and if so, how and by whom? Could it be provided differently? Should it even be stopped altogether?

These choices are hugely difficult – but they are absolutely necessary. They are also being taken in a spirit of co-operation and realism by members of every political group on this authority, and I thank each one of you for that.

I also want to pay tribute to all Lincolnshire County Council's dedicated staff for continuing to work so hard at a time of great difficulty throughout local government and the public sector. Few of our staff are exempt from changes to their jobs or to the way they provide services. Some will be leaving the authority through redundancy – thankfully, voluntary in the majority of cases rather than compulsory.

Against that background, I would like to thank all those staff for continuing to provide the very best services we can to the people of Lincolnshire. I would also like to assure them that we *will* come through these painful times. And we

will come through them a fitter, stronger council, better equipped to face the challenges of the future.

In the years ahead, as never before, we must get total value for every single pound we spend. That will often mean doing things differently, particularly in adult social care, where we have a rising population of older people and will therefore have to get more for less from the budget available.

But having to do things differently is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it can be just the opposite. It can and should be an opportunity – and one that we must seize with both hands – to innovate, to progress, to grow, to move forward confidently rather than standing still.

That process of growth is being helped by the Government's commitment to "localism", which will free this council and others across the country from many of the restraints that have held us back in the past. Localism will enable us to find Lincolnshire solutions to Lincolnshire problems, and to establish local arrangements uniquely suited to our county's needs and aspirations.

To ensure maximum effectiveness, those arrangements will of course centre ever more strongly on partnership working – with the NHS, the district councils and many other public sector organisations, with business and the private sector, with the voluntary and third sector.

In the spirit of partnership, Lincolnshire County Council is also 100% committed to supporting the development of a truly Big Society. People sometimes ask: "What exactly does that mean?" Personally, I like to think of the Big Society as one where everyone has a part to play and is happy to play a part.

It means encouraging and supporting people to give freely of their time and skills to their local communities. The possibilities here are almost limitless. For example, many of our rural communities need drivers for voluntary car schemes, taking vulnerable people to hospital or other important appointments. This council is helping to make that possible by providing training and CRB checks.

As highlighted on the front page of the most recent County News, we are also keen to attract First Contact volunteers to advise older people on how to access services. Encouragingly, dozens of potential new recruits came forward in response to that article, showing that the Big Society theme is really striking a chord with local people.

Another encouraging example is provided by the new Caistor arts, heritage and library centre. Thanks to the input of volunteers, it is able to open seven days a week, providing greatly improved services to residents at no cost to the public purse.

As we look to the future – and as we recognise the very real challenges that still lie ahead – it may help to remind ourselves of the equally real

achievements that we can call our own. Let us therefore look back at some of the most notable successes of the past 12 months and at how they provide a springboard for our future successes.

Financial Management

Sound financial management underpins the provision of quality services. It was therefore vital that the council should set a realistic and sustainable 2011-12 budget, despite significant reductions in direct government grants.

In preparing for the budget, a fundamental analysis of the services provided by the council – the core offer review – was conducted. It successfully provided the framework for a realignment of the council's financial strategy in line with current constraints on public spending.

A considerable amount of work has also taken place to prepare the council to implement the new International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). This has been demanding both technically and in resource terms. However, reports on progress by our external auditors have been very encouraging, particularly in comparison to other local authorities.

Overall, the council's national reputation for strong financial management continues to grow. This was demonstrated by our selection for the first phase of the national Community Budgets programme. This pilot scheme enables us to work more closely with our partners through a shared multi-million budget for specific areas of work, including flood risk management and families with complex social care needs.

Performance and Governance

Despite the financial challenges we are facing, improvements in service performance over recent years are being sustained, with 60% of our most important performance indicators in the Business Plan getting better last year.

Efficiency also continues to improve, despite the council having at least 300 fewer staff than two years ago. That growth in efficiency is helping to soften the impact of the £125 million budget savings we must make.

In one area alone – Business Support – efficiencies during 2010-11 have saved just over £1m (11% of budget) by re-engineering workloads, reducing the demand for support and increasing generic working practices.

In terms of staffing, we are on track to meet our target this year. Our efficiency work, vacancy management and voluntary redundancies mean that more than 75% of staff reductions confirmed so far will avoid compulsory redundancies.

The Economy

The impact of the recession and its after-effects on the national and local economy has been very considerable.

Thankfully, Lincolnshire has fared better than many other places, and our strong manufacturing base in engineering and food is proving more resilient than sectors elsewhere like finance.

As we emerge from recession, the council continues to take a leading role in encouraging the growth of the county's economy. In particular:

- We played a crucial part in the formation of the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership – the first in the country to meet and a vital ingredient in our future prosperity.
- We have been very active in supporting Teal Park in North Hykeham as a future base for Siemens and other companies. During the last 12 months, we have gained planning permission for the development and made progress on the major highway infrastructure improvement works. We now expect to be on site with the main works in June or July.
- To encourage tourism, we have worked productively with the Heritage Lottery Fund over our Lincoln Castle bid to create a permanent home for Magna Carta. We also ensured the successful continuation of the Visit Lincolnshire.com website as an effective promotional tool for the county.
- We have attracted almost £5.3 million of external funding, including money for a major broadband initiative to be launched shortly.
- As well as strategic schemes, we have provided help at a grass-roots level to more than 750 businesses, promoting jobs and prosperity across the county.
- Procurement Lincolnshire is working with the Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses to provide joint support to the local business economy. This has increased by 16% the amount of money being spent by local authorities that remains within the county.
- Legal Services Lincolnshire successfully negotiated its first year as a fully trading unit and has continued to achieve high levels of client satisfaction. The service has been recognised externally, having won a Legal Week British Legal Award in 2010 and been shortlisted as a finalist in the Municipal Journal Awards for 2011.

Highways and Transport

Good highways and transport links are not just vital for our economy. They are also crucial for the safety of our citizens. For both reasons, and despite having to make unprecedented reductions in our overall budget, the council has again given them high priority in the allocation of funding.

Last year we had the lowest number of people killed on our roads for over a decade, but we can never be complacent. That is why we will continue to invest in road safety and work in partnership with the police and other organisations. It is also why we welcome the fact that our Highways Alliance partners completed all their programmes of work without any notifiable incidents.

We must also thank our highways department for ensuring we had our maximum capacity of salt ahead of last year's very severe winter. As a result, Lincolnshire did not run out – unlike some areas. We are now looking to increase our salt storage capacity to 35,000 tonnes. That will enable us to buy all our stock for next winter over the summer months, taking advantage of full availability of supplies and significantly lower costs.

Out on the roads, the performance of our gritting teams last winter was also exceptional. We kept open 34% of our very large road network, exceeding the government guideline figure. That is 1,869 miles out of 5,567 across the county that we successfully treated – all the main routes – despite the harshest winter conditions for decades.

Unfortunately, the very cold weather caused significant damage to roads and footpaths across the county. With support from the Department for Transport, we are therefore undertaking an extensive programme of repairs, which is progressing well. We have also protected our budgets for winter maintenance and, as mentioned, are increasing our investment in salt storage to take advantage of the best availability and prices.

Turning now to capital projects:

- At the start of February, the Department for Transport announced that the council had been successful in its bid to have the Lincoln Eastern Bypass accepted for possible future financial support. However, the bypass remains in competition for funds with other schemes around the country and contributions from central government are not yet assured. We will therefore be working with stakeholder partners to ensure the best possible outcome for Lincoln and Lincolnshire.
- A direct rail link from Lincoln to London would also make Lincolnshire significantly more attractive for investors. That is why I have taken a personal interest in lobbying the rail industry and will continue to do so.
- On the subject of rail, enhancements at Metheringham station, involving joint working and funding by Lincolnshire County Council,

Network Rail and East Midlands Trains, have created an accessible, modern passenger interchange. Work is also ongoing at Skegness interchange on a £750,000 re-development which will have a long-term strategic impact on the town, the Lincolnshire coast and the East Midlands. Completion is expected by November.

- The Boston Online Widening and Level Crossing Improvements have been delivered on time and within budget. Since May last year, the A16 and A52 have been widened to three lanes between the London Road roundabout and the West Street level crossing. Six junctions along the route have been improved and two level crossings widened and modernised. Early indications suggest the widening has had a positive effect on traffic flows and journey times within Boston. Surveys are now planned to measure its impact.
- The Boston scheme forms the major part of the Boston Transport Strategy, funded by both Lincolnshire County Council and Boston Borough Council. The strategy has already seen bus improvements, with the introduction of the Into Town services. Work to improve the quality of road signs throughout the town is nearly complete, and a junction improvement at Spilsby Road and Freiston Road has now started. Further junction, bus stop, cycle and pedestrian improvements will follow.

The Environment and Waste Management

Besides developing Lincolnshire's transport highways and infrastructure, this council is absolutely committed to protecting its environment. Significant recent developments in this area include the following:

- We continue to set new standards of best practice, being nationally recognised for partnership working, the Coastal Study, Coastal Pathfinder and surface water flood risk assessment. In 2010 we also took on new flood risk management duties as the Lead Local Flood Authority under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.
- The council continues to tackle the causes and effects of climate change. Automatic metering is being installed in all our buildings and schools as part of our Carbon Management Plan, enabling us to better report on consumption and to target investment in the worst-performing buildings. To date, we have invested over £900,000 in energy efficiency and reduced our bills by £300,000 per year.
- The natural environment of Lincolnshire makes it an attractive place to live, work and visit. The council supports it by working in partnership with others in the public sector, businesses, specialist groups and communities. Our input has made a significant difference to the production of a draft Green Infrastructure Plan for The Wash and in supporting the Coastal Grazing Marshes Project, the Limewoods and the "Life on the Verge" roadside biodiversity project.

- This year has also seen the establishment of the Lincolnshire Coastal Country Park between Chapel St Leonards and Sandilands, providing high-quality facilities and improved protection for wildlife.

In terms of waste management, Lincolnshire and this council have also recorded some notable successes:

- Work has started on the Energy from Waste Facility at North Hykeham. Once it is in operation in 2013, the facility will burn waste as an alternative to increasingly costly landfill, as well as generating electricity for sale to the National Grid. It will also have the potential to heat local homes and businesses.
- The £1.6m Rasens Household Waste Recycling Centre has now opened, bringing our network of recycling facilities up to 13. It will help this council and the district authorities maintain Lincolnshire's enviable recycling record. Lincolnshire currently recycles 52% of all household waste, against a national target of 50% by 2015.
- We continue to support Lincolnshire's district councils by working with them to achieve shared outcomes through the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership.

Children's Services

Lincolnshire is known for aspiring to academic excellence for all our children and young people. That deserved reputation has been sustained again this year, with improvements in both educational attainment and school absence rates:

- The number of pupils achieving 5 good GCSEs or the equivalent increased to 80% in 2010 – higher than any other East Midlands or similar rural authority.
- A higher proportion of pupils achieved the new "English Baccalaureate" than anywhere else in England.
- There has been a significant increase – from 46.8% to 58.2% – in the number of children who achieved a good level of development at the end of the reception year.
- Final results for key stage 2 showed a significant improvement, with 81% of pupils achieving level 4 in English and the same figure in maths – both above the national average.
- Lincolnshire had the highest proportion of A* or A graded A-levels in the region – almost one quarter of entries.

- There was a welcome fall in secondary school absence rates and the proportion of pupils classed as persistent absentees.
- Five children's centres received positive Ofsted inspections. Spilsby was "outstanding" while Wainfleet, Gainsborough Early Years, Belton Lane, Grantham and Boston all received "good" ratings.
- As well as winning a national award, the Music Service was assessed as "outstanding", with more than 14,000 young people accessing it.

Just as important as academic achievement is to ensure our children and young people lead safe, secure and fulfilled lives, which is why the following are so important:

- Lincolnshire has continued to increase the support provided to children, young people and their families through our "Team Around the Child" approach, which identifies additional needs at an early stage and prevents issues escalating.
- In December 2010, Children's Services were commended in an unannounced Ofsted inspection of its safeguarding services. This followed an "outstanding" rating in May 2010.
- Staff were praised by Ofsted inspectors for their "proactive and imaginative" support for Traveller families and children with disabilities.
- Lincolnshire leads the way nationally after being selected by the Government as one of just 16 areas to take part in the Community Budget project, known as Families Working Together, to help families find solutions to their own complex needs.
- Lincolnshire has kept the number of young people not in education, employment and training at 4.7%, compared to 5.4% in the East Midlands and 6.0% in England.
- The Birth to Five service was graded as "outstanding", particularly for the work it is doing with schools on the "Every Child A Talker" project.
- Looked-after children celebrated their achievements in style at this year's 5th annual V4C Awards at the Lincoln Drill Hall. A record-breaking 174 nominations were received.

Adult Social Care

Lincolnshire has a growing population of older people – partly because of increased life expectancy and partly because of the county's popularity as a retirement destination.

At the same time, the money available to spend on adult social care has

reduced, meaning that new, imaginative solutions to the provision of care have to be found.

Older people also say that they want to be helped to live independently at home for as long as possible. Again, this calls for new approaches to the provision of care, including the greater use of technology.

Against that background, Lincolnshire's Excellent Ageing programme to improve outcomes for older people is gaining momentum. More than 40 local, regional and national agencies are now working together on at least 50 potential solutions.

Examples include streamlining debt and benefit advice across the county, integrating health and social care, and increasing joint working between young and old.

Significantly, Excellent Ageing is the highest performing programme of its type in the region. It is also gaining increased prominence nationally, with support across the board from the Government.

Besides Excellent Ageing, important developments in adult social care this year include:

- A new extra-care housing scheme – Boston Mayflower's Mayfield facility – has added to the range of housing options available to local people, with care and support on site.
- The National Clinical Director for Dementia, Professor Alistair Burns, has praised Lincolnshire's approach in using Telecare technology to improve the lives of people with dementia.
- Significant work has been undertaken to broaden service-user choice through direct payments and personal budgets. These will ensure a more flexible and client-centred range of support is available to people on the basis of need, including those who wish to remain in their own accommodation.
- Performance information shows that over 6,000 people are now having their needs met through self-directed support, compared to 569 in 2007/08.
- The target of 30% of clients receiving self-directed support (either through a personal budget or a direct payment) has been met for 2010/11.
- Adult social care in Lincolnshire has met or exceeded the targets for self-directed support for the last three years and performed well above both the comparator group and the all-England average.

- Adult social care received an “excellent” rating for its “Improved Quality of Life” outcome as part of its inspection by the Care Quality Commission.
- Older people who experience hearing loss and visual impairments can now have all their sensory needs addressed in just one expert assessment with the new Sensory Impairment Lincolnshire County Service (SILCS). This helps prevent social isolation and loss of confidence among older people. The service is also available for children and disabled adults.

Cultural Services

Investment in technology has featured strongly in a significant year for Cultural Services. Significant milestones included the following:

- 11 libraries in the second phase of our improvement programme have benefited from self-service technology, refreshed internet access computers and refurbishment works.
- Library members are now able to download e-audio and e-books from an improved library catalogue via the council website.
- As mentioned earlier, a community asset transfer has enabled an unused building in Caistor to be transformed into a stunning new arts, heritage and library centre, where volunteers are ensuring much enhanced opening times.
- Lincolnshire Archives have met the national Standard for Record Repositories and been approved as a place of deposit for the care of public records. Particular note was made of Lincolnshire’s work with volunteers and the widening of access through digitisation.
- The Lincs to the Past website has gone live with over 500,000 high quality images from our library, museum and archive collections.
- The Enhancing Engagement with Volunteers Project increased the number of volunteers within Culture and Adult Education to over 520 by April 2011.
- Major improvements were made to The Usher Gallery, which now boasts a fully accessible entrance visually linking it to The Collection. The improvements have led to an increase in visitors.

Customer Services

The following impressive Customer Services achievements reflect our commitment to excellence in this field:

- In the past year the Customer Service Centre (CSC) handled nearly 900,000 phone calls and contacted more than 157,000 customers directly. It also received and actioned more than 34,000 emails.
- In March 2011 our CSC was independently judged to be meeting high standards under the CCA Global Standards V4 accreditation with a clear customer focus, good complaint handling and extensive and effective employee training.
- Overall customer satisfaction in this service remains high, at 97%. This is confirmed by the CSC being the only local authority awarded the CCA's Innovation in Customer Excellence recognition award in November 2010.
- The council continues to expand its participation in the Institute of Customer Services professional development programme. A total of 242 staff have now completed the qualification with a further 119 working through the process.
- The CSC is expanding its support to our partner district councils by providing an out-of-hours call handling service for three districts, as well as customer service training and business continuity options.

Registration and Celebratory Services

From birth to death, our Registration and Celebratory Services are there to give support at key moments in residents' lives. Once again, we have maintained our customary high standards, as confirmed by a targeted inspection by the General Register Office in February 2011.

It described our services as excellent, professional and well-organised, with high customer satisfaction ratings. They are also 100% compliant with the Government's standard for excellence in customer service.

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Out on the roads, the performance of our gritting teams last winter was also exceptional. We kept open 34% of our very large road network, exceeding the government guideline figure. That is 1,869 miles out of 5,567 across the county that we successfully treated – all the main routes – despite the harshest winter conditions for decades.

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Turning now to capital projects:

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- As well as winning a national award, the Music Service was assessed as "outstanding", with more than 14,000 young people accessing it.

Just as important as academic achievement is to ensure our children and young people lead safe, secure and fulfilled lives, which is why the following are so important:

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At the same time, the money available to spend on adult social care has

reduced, meaning that new, imaginative solutions to the provision of care have to be found.

Older people also say that they want to be helped to live independently at home for as long as possible. Again, this calls for new approaches to the provision of care, including the greater use of technology.

Against that background, Lincolnshire's Excellent Ageing programme to improve outcomes for older people is gaining momentum. More than 40 local, regional and national agencies are now working together on at least 50 potential solutions.

Examples include streamlining debt and benefit advice across the county, integrating health and social care, and increasing joint working between young and old.

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- Lincolnshire Archives have met the national Standard for Record Repositories and been approved as a place of deposit for the care of public records. Particular note was made of Lincolnshire’s work with volunteers and the widening of access through digitisation.
- The Lincs to the Past website has gone live with over 500,000 high quality images from our library, museum and archive collections.
- The Enhancing Engagement with Volunteers Project increased the number of volunteers within Culture and Adult Education to over 520 by April 2011.
- Major improvements were made to The Usher Gallery, which now boasts a fully accessible entrance visually linking it to The Collection. The improvements have led to an increase in visitors.

Customer Services

The following impressive Customer Services achievements reflect our commitment to excellence in this field:

- In the past year the Customer Service Centre (CSC) handled nearly 900,000 phone calls and contacted more than 157,000 customers directly. It also received and actioned more than 34,000 emails.
- In March 2011 our CSC was independently judged to be meeting high standards under the CCA Global Standards V4 accreditation with a clear customer focus, good complaint handling and extensive and effective employee training.
- Overall customer satisfaction in this service remains high, at 97%. This is confirmed by the CSC being the only local authority awarded the CCA's Innovation in Customer Excellence recognition award in November 2010.
- The council continues to expand its participation in the Institute of Customer Services professional development programme. A total of 242 staff have now completed the qualification with a further 119 working through the process.
- The CSC is expanding its support to our partner district councils by providing an out-of-hours call handling service for three districts, as well as customer service training and business continuity options.

Registration and Celebratory Services

From birth to death, our Registration and Celebratory Services are there to give support at key moments in residents' lives. Once again, we have maintained our customary high standards, as confirmed by a targeted inspection by the General Register Office in February 2011.

It described our services as excellent, professional and well-organised, with high customer satisfaction ratings. They are also 100% compliant with the Government's standard for excellence in customer service.

Emergency Planning / Search and Rescue

A major coastal flooding simulation – part of the national Exercise Watermark – tested Lincolnshire's readiness for an emergency on the coast similar to the 1953 disaster. The multi-agency exercise, which attracted widespread national and local media coverage, also raised public awareness of the potential risk, encouraging residents and businesses to prepare their own flood plans.

In the aftermath of the tsunami in Japan, Lincolnshire search and rescue personnel and dogs took part in the international operation to locate and bring survivors to safety. As with previous events such as Haiti, our prompt and effective participation attracted widespread interest and acclaim.

Conclusion

Looking back over the last 12 months, Lincolnshire County Council's record of achievement is impressive. That is particularly true in the light of the major reductions in spending we are facing, which have necessitated a wholesale review of the council's service priorities and structure.

Those changes to services and the implementation of that restructure are not finished yet – and they will present us with significant challenges in the months ahead. However, I firmly believe we have set the right course for success.

On a national level, we are playing a full part in restoring the country's finances to health. Locally, we are finding new, innovative ways to get the most out of every pound of public money we spend on services.

Difficult though it is, we are also creating a leaner, stronger council, where every single member of staff is both needed and valued for their contribution.

Later this summer – probably by late August or early September – the major changes we are making to our staffing levels, structure and services will be starting to bed down.

That will be an ideal moment for us to assess the progress we have made, refocus on and reaffirm our priorities, and make any minor adjustments to our course that may be needed.

However, the destination for this council is not in doubt. We intend to make Lincolnshire a byword for very good services and value for money throughout the country.

That is the target we have set ourselves. It is one that we – elected members and officers, all pulling in the same direction – are fully capable of meeting.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark G Hill". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

Councillor Martin Hill OBE
Leader of Lincolnshire County Council

COUNCILLOR MARTIN HILL OBE

LEADER'S STATEMENT TO THE ANNUAL MEETING OF LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL – 20 MAY 2011

Introduction

It is now just over 12 months since the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Government – the first national coalition for many decades – took office.

The new Government hit the ground running, introducing tough measures at the very outset to cut the massive budget deficit it inherited and balance the financial books.

Inevitably, local government has been asked to play a full part in that process of economic renewal – something we at Lincolnshire County Council fully accept.

In practical terms, the reduction in our central government grants requires us to find savings of £125 million over the next four years. That is no easy task, even though we have been preparing for this situation for three years.

Despite the challenges, we set a prudent budget for 2011-12. We froze council tax and protected the services our most vulnerable residents rely on. Funding has also been found for public safety – things like road maintenance and winter gritting, the safeguarding of children, fire and rescue and emergency planning.

Of course, there have been – and will be – painful decisions to make. Given the scale of the reduction in our grants, we are having to look again at every service we provide. Should it still be provided – and if so, how and by whom? Could it be provided differently? Should it even be stopped altogether?

These choices are hugely difficult – but they are absolutely necessary. They are also being taken in a spirit of co-operation and realism by members of every political group on this authority, and I thank each one of you for that.

I also want to pay tribute to all Lincolnshire County Council's dedicated staff for continuing to work so hard at a time of great difficulty throughout local government and the public sector. Few of our staff are exempt from changes to their jobs or to the way they provide services. Some will be leaving the authority through redundancy – thankfully, voluntary in the majority of cases rather than compulsory.

Against that background, I would like to thank all those staff for continuing to provide the very best services we can to the people of Lincolnshire. I would also like to assure them that we *will* come through these painful times. And we

will come through them a fitter, stronger council, better equipped to face the challenges of the future.

In the years ahead, as never before, we must get total value for every single pound we spend. That will often mean doing things differently, particularly in adult social care, where we have a rising population of older people and will therefore have to get more for less from the budget available.

But having to do things differently is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it can be just the opposite. It can and should be an opportunity – and one that we must seize with both hands – to innovate, to progress, to grow, to move forward confidently rather than standing still.

That process of growth is being helped by the Government's commitment to "localism", which will free this council and others across the country from many of the restraints that have held us back in the past. Localism will enable us to find Lincolnshire solutions to Lincolnshire problems, and to establish local arrangements uniquely suited to our county's needs and aspirations.

To ensure maximum effectiveness, those arrangements will of course centre ever more strongly on partnership working – with the NHS, the district councils and many other public sector organisations, with business and the private sector, with the voluntary and third sector.

In the spirit of partnership, Lincolnshire County Council is also 100% committed to supporting the development of a truly Big Society. People sometimes ask: "What exactly does that mean?" Personally, I like to think of the Big Society as one where everyone has a part to play and is happy to play a part.

It means encouraging and supporting people to give freely of their time and skills to their local communities. The possibilities here are almost limitless. For example, many of our rural communities need drivers for voluntary car schemes, taking vulnerable people to hospital or other important appointments. This council is helping to make that possible by providing training and CRB checks.

As highlighted on the front page of the most recent County News, we are also keen to attract First Contact volunteers to advise older people on how to access services. Encouragingly, dozens of potential new recruits came forward in response to that article, showing that the Big Society theme is really striking a chord with local people.

Another encouraging example is provided by the new Caistor arts, heritage and library centre. Thanks to the input of volunteers, it is able to open seven days a week, providing greatly improved services to residents at no cost to the public purse.

As we look to the future – and as we recognise the very real challenges that still lie ahead – it may help to remind ourselves of the equally real

achievements that we can call our own. Let us therefore look back at some of the most notable successes of the past 12 months and at how they provide a springboard for our future successes.

Financial Management

Sound financial management underpins the provision of quality services. It was therefore vital that the council should set a realistic and sustainable 2011-12 budget, despite significant reductions in direct government grants.

In preparing for the budget, a fundamental analysis of the services provided by the council – the core offer review – was conducted. It successfully provided the framework for a realignment of the council's financial strategy in line with current constraints on public spending.

A considerable amount of work has also taken place to prepare the council to implement the new International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). This has been demanding both technically and in resource terms. However, reports on progress by our external auditors have been very encouraging, particularly in comparison to other local authorities.

Overall, the council's national reputation for strong financial management continues to grow. This was demonstrated by our selection for the first phase of the national Community Budgets programme. This pilot scheme enables us to work more closely with our partners through a shared multi-million budget for specific areas of work, including flood risk management and families with complex social care needs.

Performance and Governance

Despite the financial challenges we are facing, improvements in service performance over recent years are being sustained, with 60% of our most important performance indicators in the Business Plan getting better last year.

Efficiency also continues to improve, despite the council having at least 300 fewer staff than two years ago. That growth in efficiency is helping to soften the impact of the £125 million budget savings we must make.

In one area alone – Business Support – efficiencies during 2010-11 have saved just over £1m (11% of budget) by re-engineering workloads, reducing the demand for support and increasing generic working practices.

In terms of staffing, we are on track to meet our target this year. Our efficiency work, vacancy management and voluntary redundancies mean that more than 75% of staff reductions confirmed so far will avoid compulsory redundancies.

The Economy

The impact of the recession and its after-effects on the national and local economy has been very considerable.

Thankfully, Lincolnshire has fared better than many other places, and our strong manufacturing base in engineering and food is proving more resilient than sectors elsewhere like finance.

As we emerge from recession, the council continues to take a leading role in encouraging the growth of the county's economy. In particular:

- We played a crucial part in the formation of the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership – the first in the country to meet and a vital ingredient in our future prosperity.
- We have been very active in supporting Teal Park in North Hykeham as a future base for Siemens and other companies. During the last 12 months, we have gained planning permission for the development and made progress on the major highway infrastructure improvement works. We now expect to be on site with the main works in June or July.
- To encourage tourism, we have worked productively with the Heritage Lottery Fund over our Lincoln Castle bid to create a permanent home for Magna Carta. We also ensured the successful continuation of the Visit Lincolnshire.com website as an effective promotional tool for the county.
- We have attracted almost £5.3 million of external funding, including money for a major broadband initiative to be launched shortly.
- As well as strategic schemes, we have provided help at a grass-roots level to more than 750 businesses, promoting jobs and prosperity across the county.
- Procurement Lincolnshire is working with the Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses to provide joint support to the local business economy. This has increased by 16% the amount of money being spent by local authorities that remains within the county.
- Legal Services Lincolnshire successfully negotiated its first year as a fully trading unit and has continued to achieve high levels of client satisfaction. The service has been recognised externally, having won a Legal Week British Legal Award in 2010 and been shortlisted as a finalist in the Municipal Journal Awards for 2011.

Highways and Transport

Good highways and transport links are not just vital for our economy. They are also crucial for the safety of our citizens. For both reasons, and despite having to make unprecedented reductions in our overall budget, the council has again given them high priority in the allocation of funding.

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- As mentioned earlier, a community asset transfer has enabled an unused building in Caistor to be transformed into a stunning new arts, heritage and library centre, where volunteers are ensuring much enhanced opening times.
- Lincolnshire Archives have met the national Standard for Record Repositories and been approved as a place of deposit for the care of public records. Particular note was made of Lincolnshire’s work with volunteers and the widening of access through digitisation.
- The Lincs to the Past website has gone live with over 500,000 high quality images from our library, museum and archive collections.
- The Enhancing Engagement with Volunteers Project increased the number of volunteers within Culture and Adult Education to over 520 by April 2011.
- Major improvements were made to The Usher Gallery, which now boasts a fully accessible entrance visually linking it to The Collection. The improvements have led to an increase in visitors.

Customer Services

The following impressive Customer Services achievements reflect our commitment to excellence in this field:

- In the past year the Customer Service Centre (CSC) handled nearly 900,000 phone calls and contacted more than 157,000 customers directly. It also received and actioned more than 34,000 emails.
- In March 2011 our CSC was independently judged to be meeting high standards under the CCA Global Standards V4 accreditation with a clear customer focus, good complaint handling and extensive and effective employee training.
- Overall customer satisfaction in this service remains high, at 97%. This is confirmed by the CSC being the only local authority awarded the CCA's Innovation in Customer Excellence recognition award in November 2010.
- The council continues to expand its participation in the Institute of Customer Services professional development programme. A total of 242 staff have now completed the qualification with a further 119 working through the process.
- The CSC is expanding its support to our partner district councils by providing an out-of-hours call handling service for three districts, as well as customer service training and business continuity options.

Registration and Celebratory Services

From birth to death, our Registration and Celebratory Services are there to give support at key moments in residents' lives. Once again, we have maintained our customary high standards, as confirmed by a targeted inspection by the General Register Office in February 2011.

It described our services as excellent, professional and well-organised, with high customer satisfaction ratings. They are also 100% compliant with the Government's standard for excellence in customer service.

Emergency Planning / Search and Rescue

A major coastal flooding simulation – part of the national Exercise Watermark – tested Lincolnshire's readiness for an emergency on the coast similar to the 1953 disaster. The multi-agency exercise, which attracted widespread national and local media coverage, also raised public awareness of the potential risk, encouraging residents and businesses to prepare their own flood plans.

In the aftermath of the tsunami in Japan, Lincolnshire search and rescue personnel and dogs took part in the international operation to locate and bring survivors to safety. As with previous events such as Haiti, our prompt and effective participation attracted widespread interest and acclaim.

Conclusion

Looking back over the last 12 months, Lincolnshire County Council's record of achievement is impressive. That is particularly true in the light of the major reductions in spending we are facing, which have necessitated a wholesale review of the council's service priorities and structure.

Those changes to services and the implementation of that restructure are not finished yet – and they will present us with significant challenges in the months ahead. However, I firmly believe we have set the right course for success.

On a national level, we are playing a full part in restoring the country's finances to health. Locally, we are finding new, innovative ways to get the most out of every pound of public money we spend on services.

Difficult though it is, we are also creating a leaner, stronger council, where every single member of staff is both needed and valued for their contribution.

Later this summer – probably by late August or early September – the major changes we are making to our staffing levels, structure and services will be starting to bed down.

That will be an ideal moment for us to assess the progress we have made, refocus on and reaffirm our priorities, and make any minor adjustments to our course that may be needed.

However, the destination for this council is not in doubt. We intend to make Lincolnshire a byword for very good services and value for money throughout the country.

That is the target we have set ourselves. It is one that we – elected members and officers, all pulling in the same direction – are fully capable of meeting.



Councillor Martin Hill OBE
Leader of Lincolnshire County Council