

**ECONOMIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
18 OCTOBER 2016**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR A BRIDGES (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors C Pain (Vice-Chairman), Mrs J Brockway, Mrs E J Sneath, P Wood, L Wootten, R Wootten, C E D Mair, Mrs J M Renshaw and R A Renshaw

Councillors C J T H Brewis, W S Webb and C N Worth attended the meeting as observers.

Officers in attendance:-

Andrea Brown (Democratic Services Officer), Justin Brown (Commissioner for Economic Growth), Thea Croxall (Principal Commissioning Officer (Learning)), Paul Jackson (Place Manager - South Holland District Council), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Michelle Simpson (Senior Employer & Partnership Leader/Universal Single Credit Point of Contact (SPOC) Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire & Rutland - Department of Work & Pensions (DWP)) and Simon Wright (Principal Officer (Regeneration))

31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Adams, G J Ellis, N I Jackson and D McNally.

The Chief Executive reported that, under Local Government (Committee and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, Councillors R A Renshaw, C E D Mair and Mrs J M Renshaw had been appointed to the Economic Scrutiny Committee to replace Councillors N I Jackson, D McNally and G J Ellis respectively, for this meeting only.

Councillor C J Davie, Executive Councillor for Development, also submitted apologies.

32 DECLARATIONS OF COUNCILLORS' INTERESTS

No declarations of Councillors' interests were received at this stage of the proceedings.

However, Councillor W S Webb, Executive Support Councillor for Development, asked the Committee to note that, although recently retired from the post, he was a Governor of the University Academy Holbeach which may be discussed under item 5 – South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone (FEZ) – consideration of delivery options and update on land assembly negotiations.

33 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 13 SEPTEMBER 2016**RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the Economic Scrutiny Committee held on 13 September 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

34 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR FOR DEVELOPMENT

Councillor W S Webb, Executive Support Councillor for Development, was invited to update the Committee on recent events within the County:-

- a. Some of the most important and intensively farmed agricultural land was in south Lincolnshire. In addition to this the area was also home to a number of packing stations and facilities for producing food and adding value to food in the Spalding and Boston areas. It was therefore deemed appropriate to hold the meeting at the National Centre for Food Manufacturing due to its' huge impact on food production machinery;
- b. Select Lincolnshire held its awards evening at the National Centre for Food Manufacturing on 11 October 2016. The event identified and celebrated companies who had produced high quality goods for the agricultural industry and who had become flagships of the agricultural industry in the county;
- c. On Friday 7 October 2016, Simon King, TV wildlife presenter, photographer and cameraman, performed the official opening of the new Gibraltar Point Visitors Centre. The £1m new building replaced the former visitor centre after it suffered extensive flood damage during the storm surge in December 2013. The new building was raised on stilts to protect it from any further flooding. It was reported that Simon King was a wonderful ambassador for his profession;
- d. The Committee was reminded of the LEP Business Live event scheduled for Friday 21 October 2016 at Lincolnshire Showground. This event marked the end of Lincolnshire Business Week and was an opportunity for businesses to celebrate Greater Lincolnshire's achievements and potential as well as providing an update on the progress made by the LEP over the past 12 months;
- e. Representatives from Lincolnshire County Council and Bishops Grosseteste University had travelled to the Hunan Province in China to further strengthen links with businesses. Several businesses within the Lincoln area had developed links with China and were now actively exporting to China as a result;
- f. An extraordinary meeting of Full Council had been arranged for Thursday 20 October 2016 to consider Devolution and it was thought that Brexit would be an underlying consideration for most members during that debate. It would also be vitally important for the economic development of the county that the discussions on devolved powers to the county be considered in detail.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Webb for the update and asked the Committee to email Councillor Davie or Councillor Webb directly should there be any questions in relation to the announcements.

35 SOUTH LINCOLNSHIRE FOOD ENTERPRISE ZONE (FEZ) -
 CONSIDERATION OF DELIVERY OPTIONS AND UPDATE ON LAND
 ASSEMBLY NEGOTIATIONS

Consideration was given to a report by the Executive Director for Environment and Economy which provided a detailed update on plans to bring forward the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone (FEZ) in Holbeach.

Simon Wright (Principal Officer (Regeneration)) introduced the report and provided some background information about food enterprise zones. The FEZ was being developed as a full programme works and officers were mindful in creating ideal growth space for new businesses and to enable existing businesses to expand and take advantage of the developing A17 corridor.

To enable the Committee to discuss Appendix A to the report, it was proposed by the Chairman that the meeting move in to an exempt session.

RESOLVED

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the remainder of this item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Prior to the meeting, the Committee undertook a site visit to Peppermint Junction to ensure they were fully aware of the location and proposals being considered.

RESOLVED

1. That the proposal, in principle, to dispose of up to three and a half acres of Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) owned land to the University of Lincoln on the terms summarised in Exempt Appendix A be supported;
2. That the recommendation to continue detailed negotiations with the current landowner and other stakeholders, including South Holland District Council (SHDC) regarding the purchase of land required for the FEZ be agreed;
3. That a phased delivery approach to the FEZ, in parallel with the agreed negotiations, as described in Exempt Appendix A, be supported.

RESOLVED

That the exempt session be closed and the meeting move back in to a public session.

36 LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL AND DEPARTMENT OF WORK & PENSIONS JOINT WORKING

Consideration was given to a report from the Executive Director for Environment and Economy which focussed on the strategic priorities and current business plan of the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) Work Services, the directorate responsible for delivering face to face services through the national network of Job Centres.

Michelle Simpson (Senior Employer & Partnership Leader/Universal Credit Single Point of Contact (SPOC), Lincolnshire Nottinghamshire & Rutland – Department of Work & Pensions (DWP)) introduced the report and provided a background of the DWP priorities, the 2020 Vision, Universal Credits, Employers and Partnerships and the DWP's intention to build capability and professionalism.

An example of the work undertaken by the DWP Coaches was given. A young man diagnosed with ADHD and anxiety who, as a result, struggled with social interaction and confidence was given assistance by a DWP Coach who brokered an interview with a local company after the young man indicated he was interested in becoming a 'yard person'. With support from the DWP Coach during the placement, his interaction and confidence improved and he was offered full-time employment.

During discussion, the following points were noted:-

- It was intended for the DWP to engage with schools to undertake careers advice and link potential employers during those discussions in schools;
- There was a move to make job centres friendly places and where people would be encouraged to learn more about the labour market although this would take time as it was a major cultural change;
- Members raised concern in relation to the proposed Universal Credit system and the potential for disabled people who were genuinely unable to work being forced in to training for a job they would be unable to undertake. These concerns were acknowledged and it was explained that Universal Credits would include groups of people who had been assessed to ascertain their work capabilities. There was no intention to force people in to work who were physically unable to do so. It was noted, however, that some physical disabilities did not deter people from wanting to work and for those individuals, support would be provided to locate suitable employment;
- Limited public transport was raised as a potential issue for people undergoing training programmes especially as they would be in receipt of less money than if they were on benefits. Although the rules stated that some people should be prepared to travel up to 90 minutes on public transport, individual cases would be considered if this was highlighted as a potential issue;
- It was agreed that the greatest influence on children was their parents and it was noted that South Holland District Council was looking to invite interested children and their parents to businesses within the area. This was in order to give reassurance to parents about the prospects for their children within local companies and to change preconceptions of certain industries, especially the agri-food sector;

- The DWP was also working to change the "estate" culture in some areas. This was where housing estates had become a "benefit" culture with few residents in paid employment. Different methods were to be used to encourage children and young adults in those areas into further education/training and employment;
- The Committee was advised that the University of Lincoln had produced a booklet targeted at 7-9 year olds to help with the choices for further education and employment. A copy would be circulated to the Committee;
- It was agreed that some 1:1 carers had the relevant experience to fill gaps as part of the care agenda and more work would be done to attract people in to that industry;
- It was clarified that the term "single non-householders" described adults living with parents;
- The DWP was aware that internet access may be a problem for some people therefore traditional methods of access to services would continue. However this would be reduced as the amount of people who preferred to use online services increased. The Committee was assured that the traditional method would not cease;
- The local number provided was confirmed to be a Freephone number.

RESOLVED

1. That further consideration be given to communications with residents of rural areas and that the rights of disabled people and their ability to work be further explored; and
2. That the Commissioner for Economic Growth prepare a letter, on behalf of the Committee, to Government highlighting the concerns of the Committee.

At 12.35pm, Councillor C N Worth left the meeting and did not return.

37 ADULT LEARNING PROGRAMME AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Consideration was given to a report from the Executive Director for Environment and Economy which provided an outline of Adult Learning activity over the past 12 months and its contributions to Economic Development.

Thea Croxall (Principal Commissioning Officer (Learning)) introduced the report and confirmed that the Community Learning Programme had performed well and continued to deliver high numbers of learners and good quality learning opportunities. Satisfaction levels and feedback reported from learners and partners was also good and the impact of the provision which improved employment prospects was extremely encouraging.

The Committee was assured that upskilling learners to meet local employment needs, via the Community Learning Programme, remained a priority of the County Council.

During discussion, the following points were noted:-

- It was confirmed that the Community Learning Programme was intended to assist people to move along the spectrum towards employment and this could include building of life skills and confidence;
- Some work was ongoing to improve access to children in an attempt to stop the cycle of poor education in families in order to support future prospects;
- In relation to the arts and the provision for adult learning, it was explained that there was a small drama provision in Stamford although providers were expected to collect fees from those able to pay. Those fees would then be used to subsidise those unable to afford these courses;
- The Committee felt that arts and music improved language, communication skills and confidence and had been well researched and documented. It was explained that this was not an area of priority but that the comments of the Committee, especially in regard to music provision, would be reconsidered;
- The table on page 37 of the report referred to engagement of targeted groups. It was explained that where the table referred to "ethnic minorities" this was in relation to parents' desire to improve their English in order to assist their children through school;
- Those adults undergoing training for basic maths and English were required to reach Level 2 for consideration of employment. This brought them to the same level as school leavers with GCSEs but were taught in a different way to the methods used in schools;
- Details of the provisions available in the Grantham area were requested, including their success. It was agreed to circulate this to the Committee following the meeting.

RESOLVED

1. That the current progress be noted;
2. That the Community Learning Service be supported and all Councillors made aware of the services to enable further promotion to constituents in all areas of the County; and
3. That the inclusion of "sole trader" businesses, for example electricians/plumbers, in the Apprenticeship programme be considered.

38 ECONOMIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report from the Director Responsible for Democratic Services which provided the Committee with an opportunity to consider its work programme for the coming year.

Tracy Johnson, Senior Scrutiny Officer, introduced the report and advised that there had been no amendments to the Work Programme since the report had been published.

Members were reminded that the Economic Scrutiny Committee Budget Workshop had been confirmed for Tuesday 29 November 2016 from 2.00pm – 4.00pm and was open to all members of the Council should they wish to attend.

RESOLVED

That the Economic Scrutiny Committee Work Programme, as presented at Appendix A, be approved.

The meeting closed at 1.00 pm