

**ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY
 COMMITTEE
 29 JANUARY 2016**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR C L STRANGE (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors Mrs V C Ayling (Vice-Chairman), A M Austin, A Bridges, M Brookes, J R Marriott, C R Oxby, C Pain and R A Renshaw.

Councillors: M S Jones, S M Tweedale and C J Davie (Executive Support Councillor for Economic Development, Environment, Planning & Tourism) attended the meeting as observers.

Officers in attendance:-

Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Paul Dimbleby (Tactical Support Manager, Anglian Water), Michelle Grady (Head of Finance (Communities)), David Hickman (Environment Commissioner), Brian Kane (Anglian Water), Sean Kent (Group Manager, Environment Services), Daniel Steel (Scrutiny Officer) and Steve Willis (Chief Operating Officer, Development Services).

52 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N M Murray and C J T H Brewis.

53 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest declared at this point in the meeting.

54 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 DECEMBER 2015

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2015 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

55 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

The Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment, Planning and Tourism advised the Environmental Scrutiny Committee of the following items:-

- That during the following week he was meeting with the Chief Executive of the Environment Agency to discuss issues pertaining to Lincolnshire;

- That Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board were discussing the potential for taking on responsibility for the Black Sluice Pumping Station from the Environment Agency; and
- That a four year funding package had been secured for the Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which would need to be match-funded locally.

The Committee asked the Executive Councillor the following questions:-

- The Lincolnshire situation regarding anaerobic digesters. The Committee noted that there were a number in Lincolnshire, some were farm based; and some were industrial based. Some applications were dealt with by District Councils, some by the County Council. It was felt that this created grey areas, the ideal situation would be for the County to deal with applications under the Waste and Mineral Plan, with District's acting as a consultee. It was highlighted that if the proposed devolution bid was successful, better joint working would be happening;
- A member of the Committee asked the Executive Councillor if he could raise with the Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, the issue of the River Steeping. The Executive Councillor advised that the meeting was for more strategic matters such as the impact of the winter storms and long term planning.

56 WATER RECYCLING CENTRES UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report which provided the Committee with a summary of the situation regarding odours from Ingoldmells, Spalding and Fishtoft Water Recycling Centres (previously Sewage Treatment Works).

The Committee received a joint verbal update from Paul Dimpleby (Tactical Support Manager, Anglian Water) and Brian Kane (Anglian Water), which provided the Committee with an update with regard to odours at each of the three premises below:-

Ingoldmells Water Recycling Centre

The Committee were advised that they had received nine odour complaints relating to Ingoldmells, and that no complaints had been received since August 2015. The complaints received had been received from two properties, investigations had then identified that the source of the odours were localised issues in the sewer networks and not from the Water Recycling Centre. One of the properties was on a caravan site and the other was upstream from a section of sewer that had been prone to partial blockage with grease and fat discharge from local trade premises. As a result Anglian Water had increased the frequency of cleaning this particular length of sewer and as a result had not received and further complaints.

The report also highlighted that Anglian Water had invested almost £1,000,000 at the Ingoldmells Recycling Centre and the Ingoldmells Sewerage Network. Details relating to the works carried out were shown within the report presented.

It was also highlighted that community engagement had taken place and a resident's group odour meeting would be held later in the year.

Spalding Water Recycling Centre

It was reported that there had been six odour complaints relating to the Spalding Water Recycling Centre during 2015, (two in July, one in August, two in October and one in November). The complaints had been reported by two nearby commercial properties. The Committee were advised that the six complaints had been linked to Anglian Water having the temporary loss of one of their on-site chemical septicity treatments, or the increased sludge on-site as a result of high loads received from food traders which had increased production before Christmas. The problems had been rectified within 24/48 hours.

The Committee noted that the Spalding Recycling Centre had during 2015 been running on a trial, which had involved mixing iron rich sludge from other water recycling centres with sludge produced on site at Spalding. The trial had been successful in significantly reducing the amount of odorous sulphide gas released during sludge dewatering. It was reported that funding had now been obtained to install an iron dosing system on site.

In conclusion, the Committee was advised that Anglian water continued to review the location and volumes of chemical used in the light of samples results, of their odour monitoring and any customer complaints. The Committee was advised that works had identified a location where the discharges from two factories had combined to rapidly produce septic conditions in the downstream sewers and ultimately at Spalding Water Recycling Centre. It was hoped to address this issue by installing an additional nitrate dosing system at the Springfields pumping station. This works was at an early stage and would require the purchase of additional land on which to site the chemical storage tank.

Fishtoft Water Recycling Centre

The Committee was advised that during the last twelve months Anglian Water had received a number of odour complaints from one property located to the south of the Fishtoft Water Recycling Centre. As a result odour logging had taken place, but no odour was recorded or logged. Anglian Water was now odour logging on site around the Water Recycling Centre to try and identify if any odours were being generated. It was noted that regular communication was being maintained with the customer and the local Customer Liaison Manager.

During discussion, the Committee raised the following points:-

- Trade waste with particular reference being made to the discharging of fat down the sewer. It was noted that fat could be collected by a third party. If fat was discharged then it should be collected by a fat trap on the premises. Anglian Water did however work with trade premises with their 'Keeping Clear Programme'. Some reference was also made to enforcement procedures.

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The Committee were advised that Anglian Water did work alongside District Councils to sort issues out. Some of the Committee felt it was important to keep a watching brief on issues and comment on applications so that proper measures can be put in place through planning conditions;

- One member highlighted that as a resident of Spalding, the odour issue was not as obvious as it had been, and the purchase of the land for the chemical storage tank would help the issue further;
- Some members of the Committee welcomed the positive professional response made by Anglian Water to the complaints highlighted in the report;
- That Lincolnshire had the ability to work well with partner agencies. Going forward this would be a bonus for Lincolnshire, as partnership working would be an important factor that would bring money into Lincolnshire;
- The local member for Fishtoft highlighted to the Committee that there had been complaints made to the parish council relating to the storage of sewage cake. The Committee were advised that some confusion had arisen and the complaints had been in respect of Boston Water Recycling Centre, rather than Fishtoft. Another local Member informed the Committee that this had been an ongoing issue before 2013. As a result, the Committee requested that a report on the Boston Water Recycling Centre and any other centre where complaints had been received within the last 12 months being presented to a future meeting of the Committee;
- That consideration should be given to future residents meetings in Ingoldmells being held at appropriate times to fit in with the holiday season. The Tactical Support Manager, Anglian Water advised that historically a follow up meeting was usually held in October; and
- The committee were advised that sewage cake was a bi-product of sewage treatment works, which was used as a fertiliser, once it had been processed. The cake was temporarily stored on site until it could be processed further at either Kings Lyn or Grimsby. A request was made to the Anglian Water representative for a letter to be sent to Clerk of the Fishtoft Parish Council advising them that the issue was being investigated.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That a further report be received to a future meeting of the Committee relating to all Water Recycling Centres who had received complaints over the last twelve months. That an update also be received with regard to the position relating to the Boston Water Recycling Centre.

57 LINCOLNSHIRE ENERGY SWITCH SCHEME

The Committee received a verbal presentation from Steve Willis, Chief Operating Officer, which provided information in relation to the Lincolnshire Energy Switch Scheme.

The Committee were advised that collective energy switching was a way for communities to try and get cheaper gas and electricity tariffs from energy suppliers, rather than just switching energy provider as an individual.

All a resident needed to do was to register their interest in the scheme to look for a cheaper energy tariff. At the end of the registration period which was reported as being 1 February, an auction was held on the 2 February with energy suppliers to find out which one would provide the best price.

It was reported that in the most recent auction held in May 2015, the average saving per household to take up their offer was £220.85, and 3,000 householders had expressed an interest to date.

Members were advised that a further report would be presented to the next meeting advising the Committee of the outcome of the February auction.

During discussion, the Committee raised the following issues:-

- One member enquired with the IT problems were residents still able to register up to the deadline. Officers agreed to look in to this matter;
- Clarification was given that the County Council did not underwrite the arrangement; it only acted as a broker in this matter. One member suggested that residents would have more confidence in such a scheme with the County Council being involved;
- Some concern was expressed that signed up to the scheme involved using IT, which the elderly and more vulnerable people in the community did not always have access to;
- Clarification was given that once the auction had been completed, and an offer was made, it was up to the individual if they accepted, or not;
- Some members felt that the systems needed to be promoted more, particularly to those without access to IT. A suggestion was made that better promotion needed to be done by an article in County News.

RESOLVED

1. That the verbal update be noted.
2. That a update report on the Lincolnshire Energy Switch Scheme be presented to the next meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee.

58 REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2016/17

Consideration was given to a report from Richard Wills, Executive Director for Environment and Economy, which described the budget proposals arising from the Local Government Finance Settlement, issued on 17 December 2015; and its implications for the commissioning strategy Sustaining & Developing Prosperity through Infrastructure, which included the following activities:-

- Waste;

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- Flood & water Risk Management;
- Natural Environment;
- Sustainability; and
- Planning

Member received an introduction to the budget proposal from Michelle Grady (Head of Finance – Communities). Background details relating to the budget were shown on page 11 of the report presented. It was highlighted that the budget proposals reflected the level of government funding available to the Council and the proposal to increase Council Tax in 2016/17 by 3.95%. For the second year running, the Council was only able to set a one year budget. This was as a result of the continued reductions in government funding, growing cost pressures from demand led services and the Council's responsibility from 2016/17 to pay staff and contractors the National Living Wage.

The budget proposals made by the Executive therefore had taken a mixed approach to meeting the current challenges of reduced levels of local government funding. It was highlighted that during the next twelve months the Council would have to explore further opportunities to bridge the gap between the funding available and levels of expenditure.

Information relating to the Proposed Revenue Budget for 2016/17 for Protecting & Sustaining the Environment was circulated to members at the meeting.

Councillor Marc Jones the Executive Councillor with responsibility for Finance and Property advised that a series of seven budget consultation meetings had been held around the County in January 2016, to get feedback on the proposed budget. It was also reported that the Council had consulted with representatives of businesses, District Councils, Police and other partner organisations; and that the budget proposals had been published on the Council's website and members of the public had been invited to comment on the proposals accordingly.

It was noted that the collectable amount of Business Rates collected by the seven District Council's in Lincolnshire; and a top up grant from Central Government would still not be enough to cover local authority spending in the area. It was noted further that only 10% of the business rates collected locally was passed on to the Council.

Steve Willis (Chief Operating Officer) presented to the Committee the Proposed Revenue Budget for 2016/17, for Protecting and Sustaining the Environment. It was reported that currently the Council spent £22.467m revenue and £6.65m of capital expenditure delivering waste management services, planning, flood and water risk management, the natural and built environment and carbon emissions.

Waste Management

The Committee were advised that Waste Management was a statutory provision, and therefore the function had to be undertaken. The disposal cost and the cost for provision of waste treatment amounted to £15m. It was noted that there was an expectation that a saving could be made in 2016/17 from dry recycling, however, a

change in market prices for materials had resulted in the activity creating a cost pressure of £1.100m. The options for savings within the service were the cessation of voluntary recycling credits; stopping the Saturday supplementary services at Long Sutton; Stamford and Mablethorpe; Cessation of residents using North Lincs Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) at Kirton Lindsey and Barnetby top; the proposed closing of Leadenham and Whisby (HWRC's); looking at the countywide long term position; and looking to 'Invest to Save' opportunities for non-Lincolnshire County Council owned HWRcs at Boston and Kirby-on-Bain. The proposed budget for Waste Management for 2016/17 was £20,539,000.

Carbon Management

The Committee was advised that the original budget for 2015/16 was £206,000 and that options were being looked at reducing the budget by £48,000. The options were to withdraw the service or look reducing the service. This would obviously have an impact and officers highlighted the areas that could be affected. These were:-

- The Councils inability to fulfil its agreed commitment to the Carbon Management Plan to reduce carbon emissions by 22% by March 2018;
- Loss of the statutory function on reporting Greenhouse Gas Emissions;
- Reputational damage for Lincolnshire County Council failing to take a lead on carbon reduction;
- Not able to find sustainable technologies savings;
- The inability to manage the £1m Salix Revolving Fund;
- Limited capacity to generate funding for investment; and
- Little, or no supervision of the SCoRE graduates.

The proposed budget for 2016/17 was £163,000.

Protecting & enhancing the natural & built environment

The Committee was advised that the original budget for 2015/16 was £336,000 and the proposed savings for 2016/17 was £67,000.

It was reported that the options with regard to Public Rights of Way and Picnic & Coastal Access Sites and Natural Environment were:

- To stop the Improvement Plan for Rights of Way this would then have an impact on the delivering of effective network realignments or improvements;
- To stop the Parish Paths Partnership; This would impact on the network of volunteers currently used to help inspect rights of way
- Reduce the number of full time staff; and
- A reduction in service standards for statutory rights of ways maintenance, volunteers and enforcement. The impact of a reduction to standards could result in increased risks and liabilities from reduced maintenance; more enforcement and the likelihood of increased legal action against the Council;
- The potential options relating to Picnic and Coastal Access Sites were to lease/close all picnic sites at Legbourne, Stickney, Long Sutton, Tattershall

and Willingham Woods and lease/sell off land; and the possibility also of withdrawing from maintaining Coastal Access Sites. The impact highlighted there would be a loss of income from concessions; decommissioning costs associated with the more popular sites; the inability to contribute to the wider environmental access programmes; and the increased liability and reputational damage due to unmaintained sites;

- The options highlighted for Natural Environment were reported as being to withdraw the service; maintain the service but with limited staff and budget, but withdraw from standing commitments such as the Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Council owned sites; or maintain Wolds (AONB) with only a single officer and a very limited budget. The impacts highlighted from the options were: limited local policy input; and no national input or influence and support for Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (GLLEP) economic growth and targets; loss of £5.00 for every £1.00 not spent by the Council on environmental projects; loss of partnership contributions and reduced support for the visitor economy and for generating external funding.

The proposed budget for 2016/17 was £280,000.

Flood Risk Management

The Committee was advised that the proposed budget for 2016/17 was £1,283,000, and that savings for 2016/17 had been identified as being £90,000 as the only way that this could be achieved was to reduce service levels. The impact from the savings could result in an increase in the risk of flooding; a decrease in Section 19 investigations; a reduction in policy influence locally and nationally; reduced investments in local works; slower and fewer responses to planning applications; loss of leading national reputation and reduced capacity to generate external funding.

Sustainable Planning

The Committee was advised that the proposed budget for 2016/17 for Sustainable Planning was £1,044,000; and that the savings identified for 2016/17 were £144,000.

The savings options highlighted were a reduction in planning enforcement; reduced capacity to process planning applications; reduced policy input into the Local Plan making process; reduced transport policy planning and reduced service standards. Some of the impacts from the options could result in the failure to meet government targets and the loss of decision making powers; the potential for more unauthorised activities; more environmental impact; no pro-active monitoring of sites; and delay on the Waste and Mineral Local Plan preparation, and limited input in to the District Local Plans.

Also, the Committee was advised that with regard to Heritage and Archaeology, the options for reduction would result in a reduced level of service; reduced support for the Historic Environment Record; and the potential to increase charging to District for services on planning applications. The reductions would then impact policy input;

responses to planning applications; reduced community engagement and involvement; loss of existing externally funding arrangements and little capacity to generate external funding.

The Committee were advised that the budget proposals would be considered by the Executive at their meeting on 2 February 2015.

During discussion, the Committee raised the following issues:-

- Concern was expressed in relation to the proposed cuts to Flood & Water Risk Management, as it was felt that this was a high priority area, which would have a big impact on local residents. The Committee were advised that there would be an impact, but each area had to look for savings and the professional recommendations presented were what was achievable;
- The Committee expressed concern that the proposed reductions would reduce the national reputation of Lincolnshire as an area of excellence with regard to Flood & Water Risk Management and Planning;
- One member highlighted North Kesteven District Council had considered the issue of the Leadenham Household Waste Recycling Centre and advised that that the Council's Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Waste would be receiving representation in respect of this matter. (Note: Councillor R Oxby wished his interest to be noted, as a member of North Kesteven District Council). A further member enquired whether there was a possibility of retaining either site. Officers advised that with the closures there were still two sites available within the radius of 12 miles at Lincoln and Sleaford for residents to use. It was also noted that the improvement costs necessary for Environmental Agency permits did not make the sites viable. Reference was also made to the potential for increased fly tipping or illegal waste dumping and the impact this would have on other areas of local government such as District Councils. Officers advised that there was no evidence of increased fly tipping in a situation where a HWRC had been closed;
- The Committee offered support to the need to review and consider delivering services in a different and innovative way such as through effective commissioning, the use of charitable trusts, or greater recharging for services;
- Lobbying with regard to Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) as Lincolnshire was underfunded with regard to this matter;
- Concern was expressed with regard to the need for transitional arrangements surrounding the proposed budget reductions and the impact on other Councils at District and Parish levels;
- Some concerns was also expressed with regard to the proposed reduction in staffing levels to sustainable planning, and the impact this would have on the Council's ability to have a strong effective voice in local planning matters, and making sure that the Council could continue to put forward effective bids to secure additional funding for major projects; and
- The Committee also raised their concern to proposed cuts to Planning and the risks this would result in should the Council be required to respond to high impact applications, for example fracking and highlighted the need for effective use of reduced resources.

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In conclusion, most members of the Committee supported the budget proposals put forward for 2016/17. However, Councillor Mrs V Ayling wished it to be recorded that she did not support the proposed budget for 2016/17, as a result of the proposed cuts to Flood and Risk Management.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That Environmental Scrutiny Committee supported the budget presented and that comments raised from the Environmental Scrutiny Committee be forwarded on to the Executive for consideration at its meeting on the 2 February 2016.

(Note: Councillor Mrs V Ayling wished it to be recorded that she did not support the proposed budget for 2016/17, as a result of the proposed cuts to Flood and Risk Management)

59 ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report from Richard Wills, Director responsible for Democratic Services, which invited the Committee to consider and comment on the content of its work programme for the coming year.

Daniel Steel, (Scrutiny Officer), presented the report to the Committee, highlighting to members that from today's meeting, two items would be added to the forward plan for 11 March 2016, these were:

- Water Recycling Centres Update (for centres who had received complaints during the last 12 months period – specific requested was made for the Boston Water Recycling Centre); and
- Update on the Lincolnshire Energy Switching Scheme for 11 March 2016 meeting.

The Scrutiny Officer also advised that since the last meeting, a further item had been added to the Committees work programme for 11 March 2016, which was a Capital Appraisal for Boston Household Waste Recycling Centre (A pre-decision scrutiny item for Executive Councillor Decision on 18 March 2016).

The Chairman explained to the Committee that as a result of the increased items on the Flood and Drainage Management Scrutiny Committee, whether members of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee would support increases to the number of Flood and Drainage Management Scrutiny Committee meetings; and a reduction to the number of Environmental Scrutiny meetings.

The Committee agreed for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman in association with officers to re-adjust the scheduled meeting dates; and report back to the next meeting of the Committee (11 March 2016) their proposals.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted and that the Appendix A as presented be agreed subject to the inclusion of the two items detailed above.
2. That a report be presented to the 11 March 2016 meeting detailing the way forward with regard to Flood and Drainage and Environmental Scrutiny Committee meeting dates.

The meeting closed at 12.26 pm.