

**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY
 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
 22 MAY 2018**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR B M DOBSON (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors B Adams, Mrs A M Austin, G E Cullen, R P H Reid, C Matthews, Mrs E J Sneath, C L Strange, Dr M E Thompson and R H Trollope-Bellew

Councillors C J Davie, R L Foulkes, D McNally and E J Poll, attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Paul Brookes (County Flood Risk Manager), Steve Brookes (Lincolnshire Broadband Programme Manager), Justin Brown (Commissioner for Economic Growth), Steve Blagg (Democratic Services Officer), David Hickman (Growth & Environment Commissioner), Charlotte Hughes (Project Leader (Client Team)), Jill McCarthy (Principal Officer Growth), Mary Powell (Commissioning Manager (Tourism)), Daniel Steel (Scrutiny Officer) and Ken Pratt (Principal Engineer)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT COUNCILLORS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs W Bowkett and S R Kirk.

The Chief Executive reported that under the Local Government (Committee and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, he had appointed Councillor R Trollope-Bellew and C Matthews to the Committee, in place of Councillors Mrs W Bowkett and S R Kirk, respectively, for this meeting only.

2 DECLARATIONS OF COUNCILLORS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were made at this stage of the meeting.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 10 APRIL 2018

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 10 April 2018, be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS

The Chairman paid tribute to Councillor A Bridges as the Chairman of the Economic Scrutiny Committee from 2013 to 2017 and the Environment and Economy Scrutiny from 2017 to 2018.

The Chairman stated that decisions made at the previous meeting of the Committee included letters from Councillor A Bridges sent to the following:-

- The Rt Hon Michael Gove – Brexit Strategy and Implementation – driving business innovation, creating growth and enabling sustainable rural communities in a Green Future.
- The Rt Hon James Brokenshire – Build Out Rate Concerns Within Housing in Lincolnshire and the importance of tackling the costs of utilities as part of housing and planning strategies.

Councillor C J Davie, Executive Councillor for Economy and Place made the following announcements:-

- Had attended the Belton Horse Trials and had taken the opportunity to meet investors of whom several were planning a commitment to Lincolnshire.
- Had follow up meetings with some of the regional contacts he had met at MIPIM, a major international annual property show and he had put one investor in touch with a landowner and was hopeful this would lead to additional housing investments in the county.
- Stated that economic opportunities continued to be encouraged with China. A Chinese delegation of business and economic leaders had visited Lincolnshire to explore specific investment opportunities. In the near future a further delegation would visit the University of Lincoln to pursue joint higher education opportunities. He hoped that there would be some good news to announce from the visits in the future.
- Had met the Federation of Small Businesses and had launched an initiative for local authorities to support small businesses. The Council had encouraged small businesses to bid for council contracts.
- Stated that the effects of changing shopping habits was having a serious impact on the High Street with more shoppers going on-line to purchase their shopping. He was attending the Local Government Association's (LGA) Environment, Economy, Transport and Housing Board and they would be examining the LGA's online toolkit for High Streets. He noted the Committee would examine this matter at their next meeting and encouraged Members to view the toolkit in advance of that meeting.

Executive Councillor C J Davie responded to comments by the Committee as follows:-

- In view of the changes taking place on the High Street there was a need for more variety on the High Street with opportunities to allow visitors to experience different things, for example, art galleries, etc.
- With regard to the issue of rents there were issues with absentee landlords in the retail sector.
- Agreed with the comments made about the changing retail scene on the High Street. The presence of eating and drinking places had led to High Streets becoming more vibrant. The additional residential accommodation being provided on the High Street and the business opportunities for young entrepreneurs were welcomed.
- In response to the closure of Banks he agreed that there was a need for the Government to take a stronger line with Banks following the support they had received during the financial crisis. He stated that the Government was moving to a cashless society but noted that many coastal resorts relied on cash for their survival.
- Noted that some local authorities had invested in hotels and similar businesses.
- Stated that the new North Sea Observatory in the Lincolnshire Coastal Country Park was due to be opened on 19 June 2018.

Tim Downing from Pygott and Crone stated that there was a renaissance taking place on the High Street with the presence of quality shops and good products on sale. He agreed that the visitor experience was important, agreed that Business Rates and parking were an issue and agreed that in some instances pedestrian schemes had taken away the vibrancy of High Streets.

5 MIDDLE RASEN FLOOD PREVENTION SCHEME

The Committee received a pre-decision scrutiny report in connection with the Middle Rasen Flood Prevention scheme which was due to be considered by the Executive Director for Environment and Economy to take a decision in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Economy and Place. Officers stated that the main issues were in connection with traffic management associated for the scheme which would involve consultation with the local community.

Comments by the Committee and the responses of officers where appropriate, included:-

- Residents welcomed the scheme.
- The views of residents should be sought on the proposed traffic management and it was noted that a public consultation meeting had been arranged for June.
- It was important to give warning of the traffic management arrangements to local people and to people travelling from outside the area especially HGV drivers. Officers stated that they had detailed traffic management plans in place to avoid "rat running" and that all Parish Councils in the area would be consulted about the traffic management planned.
- Should any work take place at the weekends then the contractor needed to provide a telephone number in case of an emergency.

- Officers stated that signage would be installed well in advance to warn motorists about the works and to warn them to avoid them not to rely on their sat-nav.
- Officers gave a brief explanation of the proposed project adding that it was proposed to double the capacity of the existing system to avoid future flooding.

RESOLVED

That it is recommended that the Executive Councillor for Economy and Place:-

1. approves in principle to proceed with the Middle Rasen flood prevention scheme;
2. receives the results of the public consultation on the traffic management plan and
3. delegates to the Executive Director for Environment and Economy, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Economy and Place, the taking of all decisions necessary to give effect to the scheme up to and including the award of a contract for the works.

6 BROADBAND PROGRAMME UPDATE AND RURAL BROADBAND PROVISION

The Committee received a report and a presentation on the latest situation in connection with the Lincolnshire Broadband Programme. Officers stated that coverage sat at approximately 93.5% superfast in the county in the second deployment and when the second one was completed the programme would have 97% coverage. Once the third deployment took place it was clear that consideration would have to be given to the use of alternative technologies to reach the most rural areas of the county. One of the main concerns was whether there would be sufficient funding available to achieve 100% coverage.

Officers stated in the future people and businesses would become more mobile and phones and tablets would be used more. The use of 5G would mean that fibre would become less used and the use of TV white space frequency would be used more as it was not impeded by buildings and worked well in a mobile society. The Council had got more funding from the additional take up of people using super broadband which could be used to fixed the problem of wireless access in rural areas.

Comments by the Committee and the responses of officers, where appropriate, included:-

- The increased use of fibre direct to the premises meant that connections to street cabinets and then on to premises had reduced in recent years.
- A letter should be sent to MPs who represented those areas where there was a poor broadband signal and to ask them to lobby Ministers to improve connectivity. Councillor R G Davies, Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT, should also be asked to lobby the Executive and MPs about this matter.

- Even when broadband existed connectivity the signal was still poor in some areas and BT were informing people that the take up of new services was not sufficient to provide an improved service. Officers stated that when BT installed new technology to the existing street cabinet the infrastructure was not good. Officers suggested that communities needed to come together to provide evidence to BT on the poor connectivity they received.

The Committee supported the suggestion that MPs and the Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT, should be asked to lobby Ministers and the Council's Executive, respectively, about connectivity in rural areas of Lincolnshire.

RESOLVED

(a) That the comments made by the Committee in connection with the progress of the Lincolnshire Broadband Programme, be noted.

(b) That a letter be sent to MPs representing those areas where there is poor connectivity to ask them to lobby Ministers to improve this situation and also that the support of Councillor R G Davies, Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT, be sought to lobby MPs and the Executive on this matter.

7 HOTEL INVESTMENT ACTION PLAN

The Committee received a report in connection with the outcomes of a report on demand and potential supply of new hotels in Greater Lincolnshire. The report explained that hotel developers wanted to achieve a significant commercial return and that the Council's role should be to build a strong relationship with potential developers while continuing to promote the growth of the tourism sector so that developers were confident in investing in the county.

Officers stated that there was a need to promote Lincolnshire for twelve months of the year, the need to invest in quality visitor attractions, the need to provide market evidence to show investors when they visited the county and that an electronic brochure was being produced to show the opportunities in the hotel and accommodation sector.

Comments by the Committee and the responses by officers, where appropriate, included:-

- Hotel investors were interested in refurbishing and converting old Coaching Inns into hotels.
- There was a shortage of hotel accommodation in Holbeach and Long Sutton areas. Was there an opportunity for District Councils to be more involved in identifying land for hotels? Officers stated that District Council Tourism Officers had been involved in the research and that there was an opportunity for the fact file from the report to be disseminated to a wider audience across District Councils.

- Tim Downing stated that he, like other developers, continued to examine the prospects for hotel development across the county including places like Holbeach and supported the use of older buildings for hotels.
- It was noted that the Council was in the process of divesting itself of property in Boston due to rationalisation and cost savings. With suitable encouragement these buildings could be converted to hotels.
- There was a need to encourage local developers to attract visitors from the USA. Officers supported more local development but added that there was a desperate shortage of branded hotels in Lincolnshire which were attractive to both UK and foreign visitors.
- Had any research been done to find out why people did not come to Lincolnshire? Officers stated that for the first time research had been commissioned into why those who had never visited the county did not come to Lincolnshire and that this had provided some fascinating and helpful insights.
- Was there any information available on the website about Bed and Breakfast accommodation? Officers stated that this information was available on the website.
- The report was generic and was it possible to provide specific information on different areas of Lincolnshire, e.g. the coast? Officers stated that information on specific areas was available but some of the information was commercially sensitive.
- 120 properties for accommodation had been booked. for the Wolds Walking Festival.
- Many people booked their own accommodation independently to meet their own requirements.

The Executive Councillor for Economy and Place referred to the development of the Lincolnshire Coastal Country Park and the need to examine how businesses could be involved in the future development of the Park.

The Executive Councillor for Economy and Place stated that visitors to Lincolnshire had certain requirements and that it was important that Lincolnshire met the needs. He agreed that there were challenges on the coast and that these needed to be planned for.

RESOLVED

(a) That the comments made by the Committee on the commercial realities of hotel development in areas like Greater Lincolnshire be noted.

(b) That the actions proposed to promote hotel investment detailed in the report be endorsed.

8 TEAM LINCOLNSHIRE

The Committee received a report which explained and reinforced the Team Lincolnshire Ambassador Programme's objectives and provided a Two Year Activity

plan for 2018/19 which outlined the benefits, events and activities available to Team Lincolnshire ambassadors.

Tim Downing gave his full support to Team Lincolnshire stating that the partnership had put Lincolnshire on the map and had provided sponsorship monies to support the Lincolnshire Enterprise Partnership's attendance at MIPIM, one of the world's leading property market events. He stated that 45% of interest in Lincolnshire came from outside the county and it was important that Councillors and officers gave their support in order to spread the word that Lincolnshire was an excellent place to invest.

Comments by the Committee and the responses by officers where appropriate, included:-

- Reference was made to the outcome of the Chinese delegation visit to Lincoln and the potential investment opportunities for Lincolnshire. Officers stated that Aberdeen Standard Life were due to meet another Chinese delegation when it visited Lincoln in the near future.
- Officers stated that the St Marks site in Lincoln was due to be redeveloped along with the old "Toys R Us" site.
- Was it possible to arrange a MIPIM event in the USA? Officers stated that there were currently no plans to attend property events arranged in the USA but this was being examined. Opportunities to attend an event in the Far East were also being investigated.
- The efforts made to ensure that all areas in Lincolnshire were aware of Team Lincolnshire were welcomed. Officers stated that they were going to do a road show to get the message across.

RESOLVED

(a) That the comments by the Committee on the purpose and scope of Team Lincolnshire be noted.

(b) That the proposed activity plan detailed at Appendix A be endorsed.

9 ANGLIAN WATER'S CONSULTATION DRAFT WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN

Further to the introductory report presented to the Committee on 10 April 2018, received a further report which outlined the key points proposed for the Council and its partners' response to the Water Resources Management Plan consultation and invited further discussion to ensure that Members continued to shape and guide the emerging response prior to submission on 1 June 2018.

Officers stated that a full response would be circulated to members of the Committee and appropriate members of the Executive after the meeting and they welcomed responses by the end of the month.

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ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 MAY 2018

RESOLVED

That Members be requested to let officers have their comments on the final consultation response by the end of the month.

10 ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received its Work Programme for consideration.

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme be received and updated accordingly following this meeting.

The meeting closed at 12.45 pm