

**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY
 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
 15 JANUARY 2019**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR B M DOBSON (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors Mrs W Bowkett (Vice-Chairman), B Adams, Mrs A M Austin, G E Cullen, M A Griggs, C Matthews, R P H Reid, Mrs E J Sneath, C L Strange and Dr M E Thompson

Councillors: M J Hill OBE attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Justin Brown (Enterprise Commissioner), Ian George (Places Manager), Michelle Grady (Head of Finance (Communities)), David Hickman (Growth & Environment Commissioner), Clare Hughes (Principal Commissioning Officer (LEP)), Daniel Steel (Scrutiny Officer), Vanessa Strange (Accessibility and Growth Manager), Simon Wright (Principal Officer (Regeneration)) and Rachel Wilson (Democratic Services Officer)

52 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C J Davie, Executive Councillor for Economy and Place.

53 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

Councillor Mrs W Bowkett wished it to be noted that she had an interest in relation to the County Farms, which would be covered by agenda item 7, The Agriculture Bill.

54 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 NOVEMBER 2018

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2018 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

55 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS

Justin Brown, Enterprise Commissioner, updated the Committee on a number of items, on behalf of the Executive Councillor for Economy and Place.

It was reported that Councillor Davie had had a number of meetings with people in Florida, particularly around strengthening relationships with the arts and cultural institutions.

It was also highlighted that there were a large number of flood resilient properties in Florida, and there could be some interesting learning for Lincolnshire house builders.

Members were also updated in relation to the Future High Street fund which would provide around £650m of funding for improving the vitality of high streets, and a further £50m for heritage schemes on high streets. It was highlighted that the government guidelines indicated that in two tier areas, it should be district councils who made the bids. Members should be aware that it was expected that everywhere in the country would be bidding for this funding, and so it was important for areas such as Lincolnshire to have a joined up approach. It was estimated that there would be between 50 and 60 successful bids.

It was also reported that there had been an announcement the previous week that the LEP had attracted £155,000 of Midlands Engine funding for its three food enterprise zones, two of which were in Lincolnshire at Holbeach and Hemswell Cliff. The Council was pleased that Midlands Engine had recognised that Lincolnshire's food production sector was an important part of the regional manufacturing sector and were looking to invest in it.

It was clarified that the partnerships with cultural institutions and museums would be mainly with those in Pinellas County rather than the wider USA. It was noted that there were several museums similar to The Collection in Lincoln.

56 COUNCIL BUDGET 2019/20

Consideration was given to a report which described the budget proposals for the next financial year 2019/20, based on the four year funding deal announced by the Government as part of the 2016/17 Local Government Finance Settlement. The report specifically looked at the budget implications for the Environment & Economy activities within the following commissioning strategies:

- Protecting and Sustaining the Environment
- Sustaining and Growing Business and the Economy and
- Sustaining and Developing Prosperity Through Infrastructure (Economic Infrastructure and Regeneration)

Members were advised that the budget proposals were now open to consultation and the Committee have the opportunity to scrutinise them and make comment prior to the Executive meeting on 5 February 2019 when it would make its final budget proposals for 2019/20.

It was noted that the Council had set a budget for 2019/20 the previous year and so this just to provide an update. It was noted that there was a lot of uncertainty nationally regarding finance at this time.

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
15 JANUARY 2019

Members were advised that this year, the Secretary of State had announced and increase to the threshold above which a local authority would be required to hold a referendum for council tax increases. The threshold for general council tax would be 3.00% for 2019/20. Together with a 2% increase for Adult Social Care allowed for a final year in 2019/20, this meant that Lincolnshire County Council was able to increase council tax in 2019/20 by up to 5%. The Executive was currently consulting on a proposed council tax increase of 4.95%.

Members were guided through the report and the following was highlighted:

- The Lead Local Flood Authority grant had been confirmed at £0.125m for 2019/20
- As the leases expired on the JCB's used in the waste transfer stations, it was proposed to move to a capital purchase to replace them. This had generated savings in 2018/19 and would generate further savings in 2019/20
- The cost pressures related wholly to waste disposal costs in the increase in volumes of waste being collected for disposal and the inflationary increases of the waste management contract.
- Some of the capital programme had been re-phased, but there was still £11m allocated for the Boston Barrier project.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- It was queried why there was a drop in the capital programme budget for Protecting and Sustaining the Environment from £3.6m to £1.1m. Members were advised that this would be due to one off schemes being completed, such as the Horncastle and Louth flood schemes. For 2019/20 it was noted that the budget was predominantly for match funding for Environment Agency schemes. There was just under £19m allocated to the future schemes programme, and the main block of that would be for the Boston Barrier.
- In relation to the budget for the development of business units, it was queried whether locations had been identified. It was noted that some research had been carried out on where there was demand for small business units. There was information by district of where demand was not being met by supply. In terms of office and business units, there were particular pressures in South Kesteven and the north of North Kesteven. For small manufacturing units there were pressures in East Lindsey and West Lindsey. It was commented that the council saw no value in spending money where the private sector would be spending money and instead would look for those areas where the market was not yet as mature.
- Some of the units were designed for people running their own business who were making the first move from home to a business unit, which had easy in and easy out contracts. A quick turnover of these units was encouraged to ensure that there would be space for new businesses, and that businesses could quickly move into bigger premises once they were established. The aim was to keep these units at around 85% occupancy.
- There was unanimous support for the proposed council tax increase of 4.95%

**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
15 JANUARY 2019**

- It was queried whether there could be some feedback on the high street, for example as there was plenty of sufficiency of fast food outlets. It was suggested there was a need for some imaginative thinking about turning high streets back into residential areas. However, this needed to be done as a county and would be really helpful if all the districts could be brought together.
- It was highlighted that the high street had to compete against online stores.
- It was noted that the current mechanism was to look at business premises requirements in terms of additional space, but it was queried whether there was a need to think about regeneration of business premises. There was a need to look at ways of keeping towns and retail areas sustained and used, so people were going into towns as a visitor experience. It was also important to look at improving the vibrancy and wellbeing of towns.
- Findings from the High Street Working Group would be brought to this Committee at its meeting on 9 April 2019.
- It was believed that the budget proposed was sufficient, however, it was highlighted that there were three main risk areas: - the high street, skills, and the gap between leaving the EU and the shared prosperity fund which could mean that there could a delay in grants.

RESOLVED

That the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee support the budget proposals for 2019/20.

57 CHANGE OF SHORELINE MANAGEMENT PLAN POLICY FOR PERIOD UP TO 2025 AT BULLDOG BANK

The Committee received a report which invited members to consider a change to the Shoreline Management Plan Policy for the period up to 2025 at Bulldog Bank. It was noted that this report was due to be considered by the Executive Councillor for Economy and Place between 1 and 15 February 2019.

The Shoreline Management Plan was a long term look at how the coast of Lincolnshire would be managed for the next 100 years. It had been agreed in its current form by the Executive, and therefore any changes would also need to be approved by the Executive, or as in this case, by the appropriate Executive Councillor.

It was reported that Bulldog Bank was a legacy coastal defence structure and was significantly breached in 2013. It did not protect any properties and was very unlikely to attract capital funding to support its reinstatement. An alternative proposal which could be funded had been proposed for delivery by the Environment Agency of replacing Bulldog Bank with a new defence on a different alignment.

It was commented that it was known that sea levels were rising around the coast and that this would need to be dealt with at some point in the future. The proposal set out

in the report required a variation in the existing 'Hold the Line' policy to allow for this localised readjustment as a pragmatic means of maintaining the overall standard of protection.

Members were supportive of the scheme and commented that managed realignment was a sensible option for this location.

It was noted that in relation to rising sea levels, there were three main aspects leading to this including the physical expansion of water as the sea warmed, a level of rise caused by the melting ice caps, as well as the effects of isostatic rebound following the end of the last ice age, having the effect of downwards tilt in the south-east of the country balanced by uplift in the north-west.

RESOLVED

That the Committee support the recommendations to the Executive Councillor for Economy and Place in relation to the Change of Shoreline Management Plan Policy for period up to 2025 at Bulldog Bank.

58 THE AGRICULTURE BILL

It was reported that in October 2018 the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee considered a paper that provided an overview of the Agriculture Bill. Members subsequently requested that a further report be brought back to scrutiny to create an action plan, identifying positive actions that the county council could undertake to support the food and farming sectors through a period of dramatic change.

The report for consideration provided an update on the position of the Agriculture Bill as it progressed through parliament, and highlighted the major issues being raised by the sector nationally and locally in the short and medium term. Members also received a presentation which provided an overview of the council's responsibility for County Farms, as the Committee had previously requested further information on the authority's role as a landlord.

The presentation provided members with further information in relation to the following areas:

- The Background
- The Policy
- Strategy
- Day to day management
- Budgets
- Example of a capital scheme
- Succession
- Development sites
- Agriculture Bill

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and presentation and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- It was queried whether if 4% of the county council owned land was of a low grade whether environmental schemes should be looked at and it was acknowledged that these suggestions would need to be considered.
- It was highlighted that the County Farms were established as a way of creating jobs for men coming back from war after the First World War, 100 years ago. Part of this Act was also that the tenancies would be protected for three generations.
- The value of land was less with a sitting tenant, and when the land was vacated there would be a view on whether to sell it. A lot of holdings were 50 – 100 acres and were no longer a viable unit.
- It was noted that the County Council managed its county farms portfolio more cost effectively than other areas. It was also reported that it was working well at the moment.
- It was queried whether the authority tried to keep some of the smaller areas.
- In terms of consolidating land, it was noted that there would be some people who wanted a small acreage and it was hoped that there would always be a place for people who required 50 acres, for example, for a specialist crop or niche product. Members were advised that this was included within the policy and was encouraged.
- Members were impressed that the spend on the entire estate was so little at £300,000. It was noted that capital money had been helpful in keeping the spend low. It was noted that the revenue budget was well managed.
- It was queried whether the authority would buy land, and members were advised that this would definitely be considered. Savills, who managed the portfolio, were very good at keeping the authority informed of what was available.
- It was commented that a small holding of 300 acres was possibly the worst amount of land to manage in terms of financial viability. It was acknowledged that 500 acres was probably the ideal amount of land.
- It was also considered important to factor in that if the land was eventually sold on, it would not be sold to one of the large farming companies.
- Concerns were raised regarding the amalgamating of lands as the farmhouses were being sold off, and a lot of the land in some parts of the county did not have any housing attached to it and this could deter some people who wanted to enter the farming industry. It was important that new people came into farming. Members were advised that the aim was to have a house with each holding.
- It was noted that tenants were getting older, and it was queried what was being done about re-renting this land, and if they were not farming the land themselves should amalgamating it be considered. It was noted that the authority had a housing obligation to these tenants and on some occasions would allow them stay in their home and extra year or so while the land was sub-let until they were able to collect their pensions.
- Members commented that they would like to see new housing being built in order to encourage young people into the industry. If it was determined that

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
15 JANUARY 2019

there was a need for new housing, this was something that the authority would look at.

- It was queried whether there had been any influence on land prices from the bigger companies buying up land. It was noted that in terms of tenancies nothing specific had been identified, but land prices were increasing, and the authority would struggle to meet some of the rates that were being paid.
- In relation to the new barns which had been built and paid for by the Council, it was noted that it would be up to the tenants to decide how they would be used or fitted out with particular equipment at the tenant's expense. It was also noted that a higher rent would be expected to reflect the improvements which had been made. The tenants would also need to be able to make a business case for the improvement.

Members were guided through the report and were advised that the Agriculture Bill had completed the committee stage in November 2018, and timescales for the third reading were now awaited. It was expected that there would be a transition phase until 2027. Environmental schemes coming forward would still be able to access funding.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- It was commented that one of the most worrying things was that there were many things produced in this region which could not be produced in other parts of the country, and the sustainability of these products was something which needed to be considered, as well as the potential impacts on the food chain.
- Micro farms were something that the authority needed to support and actively promote in the future.
- In terms of smaller farms and those that produce more niche products, it was highlighted that these were something that the authority could see a role for.
- It was noted that there was now more of a move towards healthy eating and reducing food miles. It was queried whether there was an opportunity for a Lincolnshire market for local food.
- It was noted that there was a Lincolnshire Farmers Conference taking place shortly which was organised by the Lincolnshire Agricultural Society, and it was suggested that Vanessa Strange, Accessibility and Growth Manager should attend and report back to the Committee.
- Members were asked to consider whether there was enough support for farmers and if there was something more that the Council could do. It was suggested that specific grants for specific activities/products could be helpful, for those products which can only be produced in Lincolnshire, as this may help their production to be retained.
- It was queried whether any support was offered to the Lincolnshire Rural Support Network. It was not known whether this was happening, but it was suggested that the Community Engagement Team may have had some involvement with them.

- It was commented that mental health issues amongst farmers were increasing and it was suggested that there should be something on the website signposting to available help. There was a need to help farmers thinking about leaving the industry to make these decisions earlier on, as there was a concern that there were a lot who would keep on going longer than was beneficial for their health.

RESOLVED

That the Committee note the progress with the action plan and would continue to monitor the document.

59 DFE/GLLEP CAREER LEARNING PILOT: COST AND OUTREACH PILOTS

Consideration was given to a report which provided an update on the Career Learning Pilot that Lincolnshire was invited to participate in by the Department for Education. It was reported that in preparation for the introduction of a National Retraining Scheme the Department for Education was testing what worked in getting more adults into learning that would enhance their careers.

Members were advised that national research showed that raising skills levels was an important way to increase productivity, and people with a level 3 qualification could earn 10% more than those without. However, not all skills provision would inevitably result in higher earnings, and furthermore participation by adults in the workforce (at all education levels) had been declining in the UK since around 2002.

The Greater Lincolnshire LEP was one of five LEPs invited to participate in the Career Learning Cost and Outreach pilot. All five areas were testing ways to reach working adults, how the National careers Service offer could be flexed, and the effect of making courses cheaper by offering subsidies to motivate adults into taking up training.

It was recognised that it was important to help young adults to achieve their potential, and this was not necessarily about those people who were out of work, but engaging with adults who were already in work.

The pilot focused on three different areas – local outreach, face to face advice on careers and subsidies for learning.

LEP's were asked to choose a number of qualifications to be subsidised, and 25 were chosen. It was noted that the pilot could only include those courses that ran for one year, as this was the length of the pilot study. During the preparation stage it was found that the most common qualification that adults were currently paying for was accounting, with the second being hair dressing. Greater Lincolnshire wanted to choose a number of qualifications for subsidy that would help adults to further their careers. Due to the pilot only running for 12 months meant that complex training such as engineering courses could not be included as they usually ran for two years.

One challenge which was encountered was how to reach out to adults already in work, as LEP's were not able to approach employers as part of the pilot.

The Greater Lincolnshire LEP was helping the DfE to understand the difficulties with transport and accessing work or training in rural areas. It was highlighted that this could be one of the biggest benefits to come out of this.

It was highlighted that the National Careers Website included all training which was available to adults over the age of 16, as well as a list of job profiles. The government were asking for feedback on this website and so officers would be grateful if members could test the website and look to see if there were other jobs that were not listed that should be. It was noted that the website was nationalcareers.service.gov.uk.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- One member expressed surprise that officers were not able to talk to employers as part of the pilot as well as not involving schools. Members were advised that officers were able to talk to employers in advance of the pilot, but this was not permitted once it had started.
- It was also stated that the message needed to be got across that a degree was not essential. The pilot was not about A levels or the academic route and A level qualifications had not been included within the pilot.
- Someone had been appointed whose job it was to build connections between schools and businesses, and it was thought that another 3-4 people carrying out this role would be needed. It was noted that officers had been asked to find some money to set up something similar to this for a county-wide service.
- It was commented that it would be interesting to see how many over 30 year olds would be aware of this as the biggest issues for those in this group looking to retrain were either that they could not afford it or were unable to take the time of work to attend training. It was noted that evening courses and distance learning options would be looked at.
- It was noted that there was due to be another pilot which would involve speaking with providers about running appropriate evening courses, as it could be very difficult for an adult to access courses if they wanted to retrain.
- It was also highlighted that specialist careers advice was no longer offered in schools.
- It was suggested whether a couple of head teachers from schools and colleges should be invited to attend a future meeting to discuss this in more detail.
- It was highlighted that companies such as Siemens, took on apprentices and retrained people, and it was suggested that the Committee should also speak to them.
- Concerns were raised regarding access to nursing now being by degree and that this may discourage some people from pursuing this career.

RESOLVED

That the comments raised in relation to the Career Learning Pilot: Cost and Outreach Pilot in Lincolnshire be noted.

60 PEPPERMINT PARK FOOD ENTERPRISE ZONE

Consideration was given to a report which provided a detailed update on the Council's work to bring forward the Peppermint Park Food Enterprise Zone (FEZ) in Holbeach.

It was reported that phase 1 of the FEZ would be built on approximately six hectares (15 acres) of LCC owned land adjacent to the A17 and A151, to the north west of Holbeach. LCC funding would be used alongside a suite of other funding which had either been secured or been offered in principle to meet the cost of providing utility infrastructure and site service roads to Phase 1 of the FEZ.

Members were advised that the food enterprise zone would cover around 40 acres of land in total and would be promoted as a high quality business park with a focus on food technology and production. It was expected that design work would be completed by March 2019; utility works would be carried out in May 2019; with road construction planned for May to August (this would be the first 60m of road and would provide access to the Food Centre of Excellence. These timescales would also tie in with when the University of Lincoln wanted to be on site.

It was noted that the LEP funding was time constrained until 2021, and South Holland District Council was very keen for phase two of the scheme to progress.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- It was commented that it was thought that this was the right location for the FEZ and it would create a lot of benefits for the area. It was also highlighted that it was likely that there could be hundreds of people coming to the area over the next few years during the construction phase, and this would also be positive for the local area, but it was queried whether there would be enough accommodation provision available. Members were advised that this would be taken into account.
- There was support from the members for this project and commented that it was what the area needed, and it was queried what sort of jobs this development could bring forward, and whether there was any detailed information on this available.
- It was also commented that this project would provide benefits and jobs for residents of the wider area including Boston which was good news.
- It was suggested that this scheme emphasised the importance of food produced in Lincolnshire.

RESOLVED

1. That the update on implementation of Phase 1 of the Peppermint Park Food Enterprise Zone as set out in the report be noted; and
2. That the Committee endorse the delivery of the Peppermint Park FEZ as a key priority for Lincolnshire County Council.

61 PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SERVICE AND HERITAGE CRIME
ENFORCEMENT

Consideration was given to a report which explained some of the current initiatives in tackling Heritage Crime and the work the Places Team was doing to liaise with Lincolnshire Police, Historic England and HM Coroner in an attempt to reduce the risk to the county's heritage. In particular, the report looked at the threat of metal theft to rural churches and the illicit trade in portable antiquities.

The Committee received a presentation which provided further detail in relation to heritage crime as well as examples of heritage crime which had taken place in Lincolnshire. It was also reported that a number of meetings had taken place with the Police and Crime Commissioner and the new Coroner.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- It was confirmed that the Protecting the Past app was available on the App Store, and work was underway to determine whether this was something Lincolnshire could be included in.
- It was noted that the cost to villages of lead theft was huge.
- There was a need to encourage people to report any finds from metal detecting, and also land owners did not always know if they should report activity on their land. It was noted that there was guidance for landowners in relation to allowing metal detectors on their land and work was underway to get the messages across to landowners, as if they allowed metal detecting there were things which they needed to be aware of. It was suggested that this guidance should be made available online as well as being distributed to local farming groups.
- The impact of lead theft was horrendous and could have an effect on the viability of the church.
- It was noted that victims of crime could make statements in court on the impact of the crime and heritage crime was now included within this.
- It was acknowledged that church lead roofs were a target and drones were now being used to see what was on the roof.
- It was queried whether it would be worth some churches removing and selling the lead themselves and then replacing with the lead assimilated material.

RESOLVED

1. That the comments made in relation to the various initiatives being undertaken to prevent criminals benefitting from mistreating the county's heritage be noted; and

2. That the work of LCC's Places Team in addressing the risk of criminal activity threatening the county's heritage be endorsed.

62 ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report which enabled the Committee to comment on the content of its work programme for the coming year to ensure that scrutiny activity was focused where it could be of greatest benefit.

It was reported that there would be an additional item to the meeting on 26 February 2019 which was the Waste Strategy for Lincolnshire.

It was confirmed that the County Council was involved in work concerning the closure of RAF Scampton and was part of a working group with the MoD, RAF and other partners. It was noted that the working group was looking at five streams of work and the Council was doing everything it could to help make the case for the Red Arrows to stay in Lincolnshire.

RESOLVED

That the work programme, subject to the above inclusion, be agreed by the Committee.

The meeting closed at 12.50 pm