

**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY  
 COMMITTEE  
 11 JULY 2023**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR I D CARRINGTON (CHAIRMAN)**

Councillors M A Griggs (Vice-Chairman), Mrs A M Austin, M D Boles, I G Fleetwood, A G Hagues, G J Taylor, L Wootten, R Wootten and P A Skinner

Councillor T Dyer was in attendance, and Councillors C Davie and D McNally attended remotely.

Officers in attendance:-

Stephen Brookes (Broadband Programme Manager), Justin Brown (Assistant Director - Growth), Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Thea Croxhall (Adult Learning and Skills Manager), Geoff Daley (Senior Commissioning Officer - Economic Development) Angela Driver (Enterprise Growth Officer), Samantha L Harrison (Head of Economic Development), Marianne Marshall (Strategic Communications Lead), Chris Miller (Head of Environment), Andrew Pickwell (Senior Definitive Map Officer – Environment), Mike Reed (Head of Waste), Jenny Riordan (Principal Officer for Learning and Skills – Economic Development), Vanessa Strange (Head of Infrastructure Investment), and Jess Wosser-Yates (Democratic Services Officer).

**8 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS**

It was reported that under Regulation 13 of the Local Government Committee and Political Groups Regulation 1990, Councillor P Skinner was replacing Councillor H Spratt for this meeting only.

**9 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillor M Brookes declared an interest in relation to Item 5 as he was a Trustee of the Gainsborough Trinity Foundation which was noted in the report as an Adult Education Provider.

**10 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 30 MAY 2023**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 May 2023 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**11 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS**

Councillor C Davie, Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning, made the following announcements:

- Recent data indicated positive signs for Lincolnshire's economy; 72% of businesses supported by the Growth Hub reported that they felt confident in their current financial forecast.
- The effects of Lincolnshire's visitor economy were highly anticipated this summer, and new evidence showed that its impact on the Greater Lincolnshire economy increased by 28.9% compared to 2021.
- Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) received positive feedback from the Lincolnshire Show from local businesses, notably the work of Scrutiny Panel B on the challenges faced by the agricultural sector.
- LCC was currently supporting six tenants through the 'The Hub' innovation centre.
- The Boston Road Industrial Estate expansion scheme in Horncastle was at the outline design stage and was due to be considered by the Committee in Autumn.
- The reconfiguration of the Eventus Business Centre in Market Deeping was complete and offered lettable space for local businesses, with a 're-launch' event for the centre being held on 19th July.
- The introduction of new business support delivery under the Business Lincolnshire UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) shared service programme was anticipated; assurance was provided that the service would utilise old contracts and personnel.
- Six Local Authorities had opted into UKSPF and had committed funding from their UKSPF allocations, which included City of Lincoln, North Kesteven, South Kesteven, West Lindsey, Rutland and North East Lincolnshire. It was noted that East Lindsey and South Holland had opted-out and were delivering a local business support solution, and a decision from North Lincolnshire was pending.

12      ADULT LEARNING PROVISION 2022-23 AND PLANS FOR THE 2023-24 ACADEMIC YEAR

The Committee received a report from Thea Croxall, Adult Learning and Skills Manager, which provided an overview of the activity delivered by the Adult Skills & Family Learning Service 2022-23. The following matters were reported:

- The flexible and accommodating approach of the subcontracted learning providers was demonstrated by a 99% satisfaction rate.
- LCC's Adult Skills and Family Learning Service provided high quality learning to a wide range of learners; it was reported that 6245 learners had been engaged with since August 2022 and the Adult Learning and Skills Manager praised the strong partnership working with learning subcontractors.

- The targets for male learners and learners with no/low qualifications were not met, although it was assured that these demographics were a key focus of both LCC and providers moving forward.
- The Adult Skills and Family Learning Performance Dashboard outlined the plan for delivery for 2023-2024 which primarily intended to support areas unable to be met by other funding provision.

During consideration of the report, the following points were highlighted:

- Members questioned why the number of available learning places and courses was significantly lower in North Kesteven and South Holland. It was expressed that this was to avoid funding duplication as many residents travelled out of these districts to education providers in Lincoln and Boston. Assurance was provided that dialogues remained consistent with these providers to ensure individuals in these areas had sufficient provision.
- It was noted that learner feedback methods could be improved upon to increase respondents to provide a more accurate evaluation of the service.
- Members praised the wide variety of courses available.
- The Committee praised the clarity of the report in demonstrating how specific categories of learners were analysed and had met targets.
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses were available and adhered to the eligibility rules set by the Educational Skills and Funding Agency. Additional ESOL provision was now available in Boston and Lincoln, and LCC worked with partners to ensure a place was guaranteed on the course for everyone who enquired regarding enrolment.
- The Learner Support Fund was available to remove barriers to participation in education, such as travel, childcare and learning resources.
- Members raised questions regarding the relationship between the employability, skills and wellbeing programmes. The Adult Learning and Skills Manager clarified that the employability and skills programmes helped people enter employment or progress within their role; alternatively, wellbeing programs provided engagement activities for those requiring additional support to progress onto another course following completion. Several courses focused on improving outcomes for families, which involved learning programs, targeting parents with little/no qualifications and supporting adults to learn alongside their children.

#### RESOLVED

1. That the Committee records its thanks to the Adult Learning and Skills Manager and the Adult Skills and Family Learning Service Team in delivering the programme.
2. That the report be endorsed, and that the Committee's satisfaction be recorded on activity undertaken and reported for the 2022/2023 academic year.
3. That any additional comments in relation to areas for consideration in meeting the needs of businesses and constituents at District County level, as captured, are used to inform the 2023/2024 programme planning activities.

13 BUSINESS LINCOLNSHIRE GROWTH HUB ANNUAL PERFORMANCE AND FUTURE BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

The Committee received a report from Angela Driver, Enterprise Growth Manager – Economic Development, which provided an update on the Annual Performance of the Growth Hub in 2022, and the future for business support initiatives. The following matters were reported:

- The end of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in June had facilitated a new era in business support.
- A new support programme was developed under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) which was commissioned until March 2025.
- The existing model of business support was replaced by a universal shared service; six out of ten Authorities in the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) had opted into this new service. Boston Borough, East Lindsey and South Holland had decided to deliver a local advisory service. It was assured the Growth Hub would continue to support all Local Authorities to ensure the overall future prosperity of Lincolnshire businesses.
- It was highlighted that the ERDF had facilitated significant access to grant funding for businesses. Moving forward, generic grants would reduce under UKSPF therefore authorities were considering small, specific, and geographically focused grant schemes.
- Members were assured that additional financial support for businesses was available due to the successful bidding of the Business Lincolnshire (BL) Team such as the ‘East Midlands Made Smarter’ and the ‘Create Growth’ programmes. It was noted that the Team would continue to bid on possible funding streams in the future.

During consideration of the item, the following points were noted:

- Members questioned how information sharing between LCC and District Councils (DCs) that opted out of UKSPF would continue. The Enterprise Growth Manager assured that the Council planned to work with colleagues in the South East Lincolnshire Partnership to exchange information, and it was highlighted that the BL website offered support to all businesses, regardless of location.
- Officers expressed that the DCs that opted out of UKSPF prioritised a more local solution to funding. Further information was anticipated, however it was known these Districts would be commissioning additional services for international trade.
- The breadth of support offered by BL was contracted by the government; The Growth Hub Service was required to support businesses through start up, growth and scale.
- It was suggested whether business engagement could increase, particularly through social media. The Enterprise Growth Manager informed Members that many tools were utilised to attract businesses, and provided assurance that UKSPF would bring further engagement. Additionally, the Head of Economic Development informed that the LCC

and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) social media accounts were used to promote BL and increase traction.

- The Committee requested that future reports included engagement data on social media such as Retweets, shares and views on social media.
- It was requested that reports on the performance of the three DCs that opted out of UKSPF, and the six districts supported by the programme were regularly brought to the Committee for consideration.
- The Enterprise Growth Manager assured the Economic Development (ED) Team was heavily involved in planning UKPSF application through regular meetings with fellow ED Officers in DCs, especially West Lindsey.
- UKSPF had a broader programme of support than the ERDF as it included community-based funding schemes which were not directly involved with economic development; The Enterprise Growth Manager accepted that UKSPF had a wider remit whereas the ERDF had more guidance and limitations.
- The Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning highlighted the importance of having an embedded, long-term business support plan as UKSPF only was commissioned until 2025, and the General Election could see a change in government policy.
- BL had to propose a significant business plan for UKSPF which was considered by all ten Local Authorities in Lincolnshire.
- The South East Lincolnshire Partnership would support 25% businesses that BL was currently supporting.
- An application for BL had been submitted as per the UKSPF process however no feedback was received.

#### RESOLVED

1. That the Committee thanks Officers and that their satisfaction with the Growth Hub's consistent performance be recorded.
2. That the report be endorsed, and that the Committee notes the impact of support offered to businesses.
3. That the Committee Members continue to exhibit their support through their business networks.

#### 14 BROADBAND PROGRAMME - INTERIM UPDATE

The Committee received a report from Stephen Brookes, Broadband Programme Manager, which provided an interim update on the Broadband Programme in Lincolnshire, the following matters were reported:

- The contract between LCC, Building Digital UK (BDUK) and Quickline would deliver Ultrafast broadband to 4,900 premises in rural areas between December 2023 and 31 March 2024.
- Project Gigabit was a government BDUK project that delivered broadband in rural areas that were non-commercially viable to existing providers; in Lincolnshire this concerned two 'Lots' – Lots 10 and 23. It was assured the Broadband Team would work in partnership with BDUK to deliver both contracts.
  - Lot 10 concerned 13,600 eligible premises and went to tender in May 2023
  - Lot 23 was being finalised, and details of interest suppliers from BDUK was anticipated. Currently, there were 75,3000 eligible premises in Lincolnshire for Lot 23.
- Additional funding was available under an agreed contractual Change Control to provide broadband to areas that Project Gigabit could not cover.
- 220,000 premises were expected to be upgraded by the end of 2025.
- Project GigaHub was a BDUK-funded project which delivered full fibre connectivity to publicly owned rural buildings such as schools, doctor's surgeries and emergency services stations.
- The Team had identified 185 potential sites for Project GigaHub and their Tender documents were approved by BDUK for procurement, although it was noted BDUK would only offer provision to 62 sites as those sites removed were likely to be covered by Project Gigabit. The team had highlighted that project GigaHub would provide guaranteed connectivity more quickly than Project Gigabit.
- Quickline was engaged in activities across Lincolnshire and would deploy full fibre to over 7000 sites this year.
- Netomnia was also supporting broadband provision in the county.
- Openreach were working with BDUK on a rural gigabit voucher scheme.
- The Broadband Team were liaising with BDUK to consider any areas not covered by Project Gigabit through utilising BDUK vouchers, and a voucher top up scheme was anticipated to offer upgrades to more remote areas in Lincolnshire.

During consideration of the report, the following matters were noted:

- Members highlighted locations Lincolnshire with no internet access; the Broadband Programme Manager acknowledged comments and assured the county benchmarked well in terms of connectivity and noted that Project Gigabit should address concerns.
- Members were encouraged to contact the Broadband Programme Manager regarding areas with no access to internet.
- It was questioned whether the various broadband programmes would cover areas that were previously addressed by the 100Mb project. It was noted the commercial sector ran where 100Mb existed meaning rural areas were not addressed previously.
- The programmes attempted to stop the prioritisation of the commercial sector in securing internet access.

- Members noted that the east of Lincolnshire was particularly struggling to access broadband; the Broadband Programme Manager informed the Committee that 42% of the total expenditure for the first broadband contract was deployed to East Lindsey. The Team was very active in this area of the county and assurance was provided that East Lincolnshire was a considerable focus of broadband programmes.
- Concern was raised regarding 5g technology, and the broadband programme manager assured that this technology was in the non-ionizing radiation band meaning it was not dangerous.
- The Assistant Director of Growth highlighted issues that affected the broadband strategy; the government's broadband policy was highly regulated meaning LCC could only intervene in areas where the government knew the private sector would not provide provision, and noted that if projects were delayed, he would appreciate the support of the Committee to appeal against this to accelerate projects. The scale of broadband service and the rurality of Lincolnshire also impacted the strategy.
- It was noted that Members had received complimentary feedback on the Broadband Manager and his team from commercial investment operators.
- Members raised issues surrounding commercial operators leaving roads in an unfit state following utility works; the Broadband Programme Manager acknowledged this was a re-occurring issue. He noted there could be value in senior staff from various organisations to address this issue before works began on Project Gigabit.
- It was noted that phone signal was sub-optimal in some areas in Lincolnshire. The Broadband Programme Manager informed the Committee that a shared rural network was facilitating providers to build additional telecom masts in rural areas, however signal was analysed by population, not area, which meant that there was a gap in signal provision in rural areas.

#### RESOLVED

1. That the Member's thanks to the Broadband Programme Manager for his swift response to the request made by the Committee for interim information on this topic be noted.
2. That the report be received and that comments from the discussion in relation to this item, as captured, be shared with Leading Officers and Portfolio Holders for their consideration.

#### 15 SERVICE LEVEL PERFORMANCE REPORTING AGAINST THE CORPORATE PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 2022-2023 - QUARTER 4

Samantha Harrison, Head of Economic Development, Chris Miller, Head of Environment, and Mike Reed, Head of Waste presented reports on the performance of the Service Level Performance measures for 2022-23 Quarter 4 for Economy, Flooding and Waste which are

within remit of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee. The following matters were reported:

### **Economy**

- 2527 businesses were supported by the Council which exceeded the target of 1,353. This was attributed to the ERDF closing, multiple successful flagship events, and the securing of Create Growth and Make Smarter national funding.
- 1523 qualifications were received by adults which exceeded the target of 1,400.
- £13,522,460 of external funding was attracted to Lincolnshire, which fell below the target of £17,525,673. This was due to the conclusion of the ERDF and changes to government funding, consequently the Head of Economic Development and the Executive Councillor for Economic Development and Planning agreed to reduce this target to £14,000,000.

### **Flood:**

- 19 properties were protected from flooding which fell below the target of 60; these properties were high-risk, and it was assured that various proposed schemes were in development and would offer protection to over 60 properties – specifically in Long Bennington and Cherry Willingham.
- A range of schemes were being developed which focused on reflecting vulnerability and risk to flooding.
- 3 Section 19 investigations had been initiated this quarter due to a dry period in weather.

### **Waste**

- Household waste collected was low which was welcomed given that waste minimization was the highest focus of the waste hierarchy.
- Recycling waste across all waste streams was around 40% and had increased by around 3% from last quarter; analysis was ongoing regarding the trends observed.
- Recycling at County Council owned Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) had increased from 69% to 73%.
- Household waste to landfill was 3.1%, which fell below the target of 5% which was welcomed as waste in landfill was avoided.
- Members were reminded that the KPIs did not reflect the performance of LCC Waste colleagues, but rather helped to identify trends and patterns in public behaviour.
- The finalised detail of the Environment Act was anticipated from the Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) as it could involve drastic changes to implement alongside Waste Collection partners.

During consideration of the reports, the following was noted:

### **Economy**

- Members welcomed the inclusion of the locations of businesses supported by LCC in the report.



- It was questioned why only 1.1% of businesses in Boston were supported by LCC, and the Head of Economic Development expressed that these businesses accessed support from Cambridge and Peterborough. This was similar for businesses in North and North East Lincolnshire who received support from Hull and Humber. Members subsequently requested information on these businesses in Boston supported by Cambridge and Peterborough.
- The significance of switching from ERDF to other portfolio funding was noted.
- The reduction of the external funding attracted in Lincolnshire target was accepted by Members.

### **Flood**

- Members requested an update on LCC's work to protect properties from groundwater flooding, specifically information regarding anticipated government funding; the Head of Environment highlighted that LCC had secured significant funding for a groundwater project for Lincolnshire and an update would be provided for the Committee for their consideration.
- Upon request, the Head of Environment agreed to circulate information regarding properties who had been protected and where flooding has re-occurred, although he assured he was not aware of any instances of this taking place.

### **Waste:**

- Members welcomed the inclusion of the waste hierarchy in the report.
- The Committee praised that only 3.1% of waste went to landfill.
- Residents had informed Members that they were being turned away from waste centres; the Head of Waste clarified that there were performance difficulties with the haulage contractor which led the Waste Team to work with local haulage providers. Furthermore, it was noted that there would always be isolated, unavoidable issues but it was assured public engagement would continue.
- Clarity was sought regarding the separate agreement for accepting residual waste when the Energy from Waste Plant was not operational. Members were informed that the Plant closed for 2 weeks annually, and other emergencies caused unexpected closures. In these instances, LCC relied on landfill once the energy bunker was full. Alternatively, waste could be diverted to a different Energy from Waste facilities to prevent these materials from going to landfill.
- Concern was raised regarding the introduction of twin stream collection of paper and card in South Kesteven as some residents had limited capacity for an additional bin. Engagement was ongoing with DCs and residents effected, and in these cases bags were issued to collect the paper and card. Additionally, Officers had surveyed premises where it would not be feasible to have another bin, but this figure was low.
- Members who lived in areas that had implemented the twin stream paper and card collection assured colleagues heavily engaged with residents during the process.
- It was considered whether HWRCs could alternate the days they are closed would reduce fly-tipping. The Head of Waste noted that staggering closure dates was

considered, but there was a concern that this would cause further confusion long-term. There was no link identified between fly-tipping and access to HWRCs and it was noted it would not be economically viable for HWRCs to remain open all week.

RESOLVED

1. That the Member's thanks to Officers for their detailed presentation and clarifications offered in relation to each area's respective performance be noted.
2. That the report be received, and the Committee's satisfaction is recorded on the assurances provided around measures that did not meet their targets.
3. That the comments from the discussion in relation to this item, as captured, be shared with Leading Officers and Portfolio Holders for their consideration.

16 ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report by Kiara Chatziioannou, Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Committee to consider and comment on the content of its own work programme for the year to ensure that scrutiny activity was focused where it could be of greatest benefit.

RESOLVED

That the proposed work programme approved.

The meeting closed at 12.37 pm