

**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
27 FEBRUARY 2024**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR I D CARRINGTON (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors M A Griggs (Vice-Chairman), A J Baxter, K H Cooke, I G Fleetwood, A G Hagues, H Spratt, G J Taylor and L Wootten.

Councillor D McNally was also in attendance.

Councillors C J Davie and R G Davies attended the meeting remotely.

Officers in attendance:-

Justin Brown (Assistant Director - Growth), Dan Charlesworth (Commercial and Procurement Manager), Kiara Chatzioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Angela Driver (Senior Enterprise Growth Officer), Samantha L Harrison (Head of Economic Development), Nicole Hilton (Assistant Director - Communities), Marianne Marshall (Strategic Communications Lead), Chris Miller (Head of Environment), Mary Powell (Place & Investment Manager), Tony Reynolds (Inward Investment Manager), Tim Smith (Business Change Manager - Transport Services), Vanessa Strange (Head of Infrastructure Investment), Jeannine Thornley (Senior Project Officer - Enterprise), Hayley Toyne (Visitor Economy Growth Manager) Tanya Vaughan (Senior Commissioning Officer), Chris Yorston (Head of Waste), and Jess Wosser-Yates (Democratic Services Officer)

53 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs. A Austin.

54 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No interests were declared at this point in proceedings.

55 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2024

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 January 2024 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

56 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS

The Chairman welcomed the Executive's proposals on the final budget which were approved by Council on Friday 23 February 2024. Additionally, he congratulated Chris Yorston on his new role as Head of Waste, and thanked Mike Reed on behalf of the Committee for his support as the previous Head of Service.

The Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning informed the Committee of the passing of Lord Cormack and reflected on his work in Lincoln, particularly at Lincoln Castle and his successful campaign to prevent wind farm installation to preserve the views of the county. He also announced that the Manufacturing Conference was due to be held on Friday 8 March at the Lawns in Lincoln. The event was open to manufacturers across Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland and would explore a range of topics such as workforce pressures, artificial intelligence and sustainability. Finally, Members were informed that the Environment Agency had published its report on flooding from Storm Babet in Horncastle and was available via the Horncastle Town Council website.

Members noted the announcements, and raised the following matter:

- The Executive Councillor highlighted the importance of an increased labour market, and Members sought clarity on the number of residents in receipt of welfare. He subsequently noted that approximately, £5 million received state benefits nationwide and posited this could be reduced through working with those fit for employment given the Council's innovation within the employment sector.

57 VISITOR ECONOMY UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report from the Place and Investment Manager which provided an update on the performance of the Visitor Economy in Lincolnshire. The Growth Manager – Visitor Economy was also in attendance for this item.

The Committee was informed that nationally, the visitor economy had experienced several challenges this financial year due to factors such as bad weather. Additionally, inflation and price increases caused uneven economic effects on the tourism sector in Lincolnshire; for example, accommodation bookings had fared moderately well however there was less secondary spending in shops and restaurants as visitors were cautious to spend. To relieve these pressures, it was noted the Council provided one-to-one support to tourism businesses and had also invested via the Tourism Commission.

The Visit Lincolnshire (VL) website continued to improve and attract visitors and investment into the county; a 19.3% clicking-to-booking ratio was reported.

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

- Local government continued to maintain an integral role in facilitating private sector growth.
- The Committee praised the VL website and the achievements of the visitor economy outlined in the report.
- Members agreed that increased costs and inflation were negatively impacting Lincolnshire's tourism industry, although welcomed mitigating provisions such as the £2 bus fare cap.
- The Place and Investment Manager raised that the VL Team consistently utilised free publicity where possible and prioritised attracting journalists into Lincolnshire which had been considerably successful.
- The VL Team was currently diversifying its approach by segmenting its audience by demographic; this enabled adverts to be more targeted in the way it promoted Lincolnshire to different audiences.
- The Head of Environment agreed to contact the relevant Officer regarding the repair of the Lincoln to Boston Water Rail Way
- The Committee was informed that many Lincolnshire residents utilised the VL website, however 30% of users were located in London.
- The website was used to plan visits, and work was ongoing to encourage people to continue using the VL website whilst in Lincolnshire to find events and attractions during their visit.
- It was clarified that the comments made by the Committee regarding the visitor economy would inform the Destination Management Plan currently being drafted by the Lincolnshire Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP). The Plan would be considered by the Committee once completed.
- '*Nature Tourism*' was an umbrella term used to refer to activities in nature, as well as environmental business approaches.
- Members sought detail on the dynamic between Destination Lincolnshire, the County Council and District Councils. They were informed that all maintained a close working relationship particularly during and following the Covid-19 pandemic and relied on each other for information sharing. Assurance was provided that work was not duplicated.
- The Council maintained control and ownership over the Visit Lincolnshire website for quality assurance purposes; attractions and businesses were able to be featured if they liaised with the Team. Additionally, the Growth Manager – Visitor Economy highlighted that a content schedule informed the VL website through social media data and vice versa.
- Members requested that further statistics on clicking data, demographic information and analysis be included in future reports.
- The Committee raised questions regarding the governance structure of the LVEP and were subsequently informed that the partnership adopted a cautious approach to mitigate potential financial risks. Additionally, it had established a task and finish group with political and business representation and was comprised of a

representative from an upper tier authority (Rutland County Council) and three District Councils (North Kesteven, City of Lincoln and East Lindsey). The LVEP had now received accreditation and were formally establishing its governance model.

- Previously, a joint ticket was available that granted access to both Lincoln Cathedral and Castle but had ceased due to difficulties regarding the handling of VAT due to the Castle being maintained by the Local Authority, and the Cathedral receiving charitable status. The Assistant Director – Communities informed that a Castle family pass was available, and the introduction of a ‘Lincolnshire Pass’ was currently being explored which would offer access to multiple locations in the county.
- It was noted that the Council rented out Lincoln Castle for events regularly, although the Crown Court had limited accessibility as the building prioritised its administrative functions rather than tourism.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the Committee endorses the achievements of the visitlincolnshire.com website
- 2) That the Committee records its support for the Local Visitor Economy Partnership
- 3) That the comments made by the Committee on how to encourage the local population to engage with the website, be shared with relevant Officers for their consideration and further action.

58 GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2022-2024 UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report from the Enterprise Growth Manager which updated the Committee on the progress of activity highlighted within the International Strategy Action Plan and the broader Lincolnshire International Strategy.

Members were guided through the report and were informed that international trade was currently affected by multiple and successive economic challenges, which had reduced businesses’ reliance on foreign suppliers. Despite challenges, export trade had returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Members were also guided through the 18-point action plan as part of the International Strategy and were informed that a range of events had been held such as the Going Global Trade Conference 2023. Furthermore, a round table event was being held with eight large businesses to facilitate information sharing between established exporters and newer businesses. The Enterprise Growth Manager emphasised the importance of market research to ensure business costs and market goods were set at the correct price for different markets.

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

- The Enterprise Growth Manager accepted that Brexit had changed administrative requirements for exporting into EU countries which had taken time for businesses to

adapt. Additionally, it was highlighted that Brexit was a catalyst to motivate businesses to diversify their markets.

- Members were informed that the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) did not provide granular data on Lincolnshire's exports and imports; the Committee expressed concern and posited that significant changes such as Brexit required sufficient DBT data to mitigate harms and to support businesses in identifying potential markets and opportunities. The Enterprise Growth Manager explained that historically, there was commercial sensitivity around data from DBT and His Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC); DBT could provide data on East Midlands, and the Council had lobbied to be provided with data pertaining to Lincolnshire.
- It was noted that the Action Plan would help the coordination of activity in a more economically sustainable manner.
- Members shared personal knowledge of local businesses supported or owned by foreign entities and questioned their relationship with the Council. The Committee was informed that the Council worked as a connector between support and businesses and had established multiple strategies with DBT to ensure all partners were connected; the Council also worked with the Chamber of Commerce to prevent and identify gaps in the Council's support.
- Internationalisation was included in the Greater Lincolnshire Devolution proposals and some Members expressed optimism about the potential future economic development.
- Local Government maintained a significant role in facilitating private sector activities.
- The work of TL fed into the work on international trade through international trade strategy and inward investment.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the Committee records its satisfaction with the International Strategy Action Plan as reported
- 2) That the Committee will continue to showcase its support for the Growth Hub by highlighting services to business contacts and providing input to assist Officers to plan future International Trade support.

59 INWARD INVESTMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

Consideration was given to a report from the Inward Investment Manager on the Inward Investment Strategic Plan for Team Lincolnshire (TL). It was noted that as of January 2024, progress was observed on the KPI's outlined in the report, particularly regarding advanced engineering and manufacturing sectors.

Since May 2023, the TL and Inward Investment Team had made several strategic advancements to align the Inward Investment Service, the support for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) businesses and the TL ambassadorial programme. The *Invest Lincolnshire* brand was also being established to supplement TL and its activities to ensure investors could easily identify and engage with relevant officers for support. Assurance was provided

that sector-based opportunities and collaborations under the Inward Investment Strategic Plan would be accessible moving forward.

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

- The Strategic Plan extended support to Greater Lincolnshire, and the Economic Development teams worked well across all authorities.
- Members requested additional detail on the TL ambassadorial programme and were subsequently informed that ambassadors were typically reflective of the various sectors in Lincolnshire. Previously, the construction sector was over-represented in the programme.
- The Committee questioned whether TL had experienced any challenges since the launch of the Inward Investment Strategic Plan. Some businesses supported by the Plan were challenging in regard to access, skills and employment. Additionally, TL received enquiries from Europe, North and Central America and it was explained that these businesses were typically multinational and inevitably experienced different challenges than small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and local businesses.
- Members indicated that TL had satisfied the KPI's summarised on page 74 of the report; the Inward Investment Manager informed that TL's success was partly attributed connectivity due to collaboration with the TL ambassadors. More enhanced support was now available for businesses, and the modernisation of social media helped facilitate bespoke connections between support and businesses.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the Committee notes the progress of the Inward Investment Strategic Plan
- 2) That the Committee endorses the proposed investment alignment of the Inward Investment Service, the support for Foreign Direct Investment businesses and the Team Lincolnshire ambassadorial programme to secure strategic supply chain investment within priority sectors.

60 SERVICE LEVEL PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK - QUARTER 3 2023-2024

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Economic Development, Head of Environment and the Head of Waste which enabled the Committee to comment on 2023-24 Quarter 3 Performance for Economy, Flooding and Waste. The following matters were reported:

Economic Development

PI 69 Businesses Supported by the Council

- 1529 businesses were supported this quarter which exceeded the target of 1,154. This was attributed to a myriad of extensive programmes offered through the

Lincolnshire Growth Hub, as well as low carbon supported digitalisation and scale up programmes.

- The Made Smarter industrial digitalisation programme had extended its support to micro businesses.
- The *Multiply* adult education programme had contributed to success in this Performance Indicator (PI), and a grant was now available for Multiply Champions.

PI 70 Qualifications received by adults

- 1376 qualifications were achieved by adults this quarter which exceeded the target of 900; this was partly attributed to multiple qualifications attached within a single course.

PI 71 Amount of external funding attracted to Lincolnshire

- This measure achieved £9,878,598 which exceeded the target of £7,643,791.
- Funding from DBT had contributed towards the performance of this measure, and it was assured that the Council continued to work alongside District Councils to deliver business support via UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF).

Flooding

PI 72 Flooding Incidents Investigated

- There was no target set for this PI.
- The Head of Environment informed the Committee that the current cohort included October 2023 where Storm Babet had led to 723 properties to be internally flooded, and 504 suffered external flooding. 185 Section 19 Investigations (S19s) were commenced in Quarter 3 on the 723 properties that reported internal flooding.
- The statistics pertaining to Storm Henk would be included in the Quarter 4 report.
- Three external consultants had been commissioned to support the Flood and Water Team with the outstanding S19s, and aimed for them to be concluded by the end of August 2024.

Members noted the performance report for Flooding, and raised the following matters:

- Many of the historic S19s included in the report were almost completed, however the severity of Storm Babet had prevented them from sign-off.
- Members highlighted that near-misses negatively impacted residents and businesses; the Head of Waste echoed these sentiments and highlighted that a S19 could be actioned for a near-miss.
- S19s could include, and were not limited to, residential buildings, businesses, schools, and large masses of land.
- Once S19s had been completed, the information was circulated to other risk management authorities, the Environment Agency, Internal Drainage Boards and Highways colleagues where necessary. This helped determine patterns and ascertain clusters of flooding before maintenance work was initiated.

- The Committee expressed its gratitude towards the Flood and Water Team for their hard work following recent storm events.

Waste

PI 161 Household waste collected (kilograms per household)

- This measure achieved 39% which fell below the target of 50%; this was welcomed as waste minimisation was the highest objective of the waste hierarchy.
- Members considered the extent to which economic hardship exacerbated throwaway culture.

PI 76 Recycling at County Council owned Household Waste Recycling Centres

- This measure achieved 72.9% which fell slightly below the target of 75% for this quarter. This was attributed to seasonal factors which led to less green waste in winter months.
- Members raised questions in regard to the new recycling contract and its impact on performance. The Head of Waste informed the Committee that the Council was working well with the new contractors and were exploring ideas about reusing good quality waste presented at certain waste sites.

PI 162 Household waste to landfill

- This measure achieved 0.31% which fell well below the annual target of 5%; resultantly the Head of Waste expressed his thanks to officers for their work in diverting waste from landfill where possible.
- Members questioned whether this target could be reduced and were subsequently informed that national recycling rates plateaued at 40-42%. There were multiple government schemes currently in consultation as there was a national recognition that progress in this area had stalled.
- The Council was the Waste Disposal Authority, and it was noted that the Waste Collection Authorities may be better placed to influence consumers to dispose of less.
- It would be necessary to liaise with manufacturers to manage consumer expectations regarding waste.
- This measure was complex to benchmark as other authorities varied on how they disposed of their waste which rendered meaningful comparisons difficult.
- Members explored whether they maintained a role to inform the public on disposal.
- The Committee agreed in principle to a site visit to the Lincolnshire Energy from Waste Plant.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the Committee receives the report and its satisfaction be recorded in relation to performance achieved and assurances provided by Officers.
- 2) That the comments from the discussion of the performance indicators presented be forwarded to relevant officers and portfolio holders for their information and consideration.

61 ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

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

From the proceedings of the meeting, an item on proposed objectives for the strategic plan would be added to the Work Programme, as well as an item on the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership. The Committee's request for a site visit to the Lincolnshire Energy from Waste Plant had also been noted.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be agreed subject to the above additions.

The meeting adjourned at 12.36pm and re-convened at 12:51pm

Note: Councillor A Hagues left the meeting at 12:37pm

Note: Councillor A Baxter left the meeting at 12:50pm

62 CONSIDERATION OF EXEMPT INFORMATION**RESOLVED**

That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it is considered to contain exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended.

**63 LOCAL ELECTRIC VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE (LEVI) PILOT - CONTRACT
PROCUREMENT**

Consideration was given to the exempt report, and the Committee raised a number of questions which were answered by the Officers present.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the Committee supports the recommendations to the Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT as set out in the report.
- 2) That the Committee's comments be passed on to the Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT in relation to this item.

The meeting closed at 1.11 pm