

**Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills, Executive Director for Environment and Economy**

Report to:	<b>Economic Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date:	<b>21 February 2017</b>
Subject:	<b>Economic Scrutiny Committee – Review of Work from 2013 to 2017</b>

**Summary:**

This report summarises the work of the Economic Scrutiny Committee during this electoral term.

The report shows that the Scrutiny Committee has had a wide and varied work programme involving prior scrutiny of decisions, performance scrutiny, and policy formation – translating important economic trends into specific actions.

**Actions Required:**

It is recommended that members of the Economic Scrutiny Committee

1. note the breadth of work that they have considered during the 2013-2017 period.
2. discuss and identify any subjects that they have considered during 2013-2017 which would benefit from further consideration in the future.

**1. Background**

The Economic Scrutiny Committee has considered a wide range of topics. Over the 2013-2017 period there has been a clear flow between the items considered by the Committee, the schemes that have been led and approved by the Executive Councillor, and subsequently delivered by the team.

**Policy Formation – from analysis to activity**

A large amount of the Committee's work has been the formation of policy.

The most important of these has been the work to shape the Local Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plan and the European Structural and Investment Funds strategy. These documents have set the framework for economic development activity, identifying the major priorities for growing our economy and describing how £120m of EU grant should be spent.

The Strategic Economic Plan is a high level document. It sets out a framework which then requires more detailed action plans. Often these are sector based, and members have provided advice on the formulation of sector plans for the agriculture/food, manufacturing, and tourism sectors. These sector plans are now being translated into activity, especially regarding the implementation of innovation services for agriculture/food and for manufacturing. Plans regarding business advice and finance for business have also been scrutinised, leading to a very broad range of services in the Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub and to the area's involvement in the Midlands Engine £250m financial instrument.

Members have regularly identified the importance of skills and employment to our economic growth. In addition to strengthening the Council's links with the Department for Work and Pensions (and writing to the minister to outline the importance of delivering Job Centre programmes with local flexibility in order to address Lincolnshire's aims), members have helped the team to shape a major programme of skills training. As reported at a recent Economic Scrutiny Committee meeting, Lincolnshire's businesses and individuals can now take advantage of a £13m programme of training and advice.

### **Performance Scrutiny**

The Executive Councillor for Development and/or his Executive Support Councillor have attended every Scrutiny Committee meeting and made announcements about wide economic trends as well as the progress of individual schemes.

Members receive quarterly progress reports against the Council Business Plan performance indicators, and these reports are supplemented by an analysis of wider economic factors through the Quarterly Economic Survey. The period from 2013 to 2017 has seen slow growth and shifting levels of confidence amongst the local business community – due no doubt to the general election, Brexit referendum, and US presidential election considerations. Although confidence levels have shifted, occupation levels in the Council's economic property estate have remained high, and members have reviewed these levels regularly during the period.

Members have also played an important role in the ongoing management of the Council's role as accountable body for the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (GL LEP). The reports on financial progress, and on tactics around ensuring that the government funding is fully spent, contributed to a reassuring audit report.

### **Prior Scrutiny of Project Decisions**

During 2013-2017 Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) has invested significantly in projects which have unlocked opportunities for growth. The projects have attracted grant funding and have often been delivered in partnership with the private sector. Each decision has been scrutinised by the Economic Scrutiny Committee before consideration by the Executive Councillor for Development.

The projects have included economic growth on Lincoln East West Link Road, Sutton Bridge Marina, Unlocking Rural Housing, and Holbeach Food Enterprise Zone. Progress on each project has been good, with benefits being felt locally.

### **Historic Lincoln**

Perhaps the most important action during the 2013-2017 period has been the opening of Lincoln Castle Revealed, the £20m investment which has transformed Lincoln Castle into a 21<sup>st</sup> century tourist attraction. The capital build has been scrutinised by the Economic Scrutiny Committee who have also advised on a major events programme which has attracted substantial numbers of visitors. Analysis has shown that the benefits of this investment have not been solely in Lincoln – tourism businesses across the county have reported an increase in business as a result of the investment.

Historic Lincoln is about much more than just Lincoln Castle. Members received a briefing on the Lincoln Cathedral Heritage Lottery Fund bid and the Chairman provided a letter of support to the bid.

### **In Depth Analysis**

In addition to work at the Committee meetings, members have also undertaken in-depth analysis of certain issues.

A formal Task and Finish Group was established under the chairmanship of Councillor William Webb to consider the Impact of Transportation on Maximising Economic Growth. The Group made a series of recommendations about how the relationship and focus between economic growth and transport can be strengthened. This approach has led to strong bids for funding, and to a greater focus on economic issues in the rail strategy that was also debated by the Committee. The impact in rural areas of increased tax on fuel was also identified, and the Chairman of the Economic Scrutiny Committee has written to the Secretary of State for Transport on the issue.

Committee members have held a Working Group into caravan occupation and its impact on year-round services, and have also received a presentation from community groups in Mablethorpe on how to tackle the seasonal nature of their economy.

A Working Group on tourism was established, and the Working Group drew up several recommendations which are now being addressed. These recommendations reinforced the role of LCC in commissioning Public Relations support (this is the way that stories about the county as a tourism attraction are featured in the media), proposed that our web presence is improved, and promoted the benefits of spectacular events.

### **Commissioning Strategies**

LCC has moved to being a commissioning council.

The Economic Scrutiny Committee has considered and commented on the three main commissioning strategies which encourage growth – enterprise, environment, and infrastructure. The new scrutiny committee structure after the County Council elections will bring these disciplines more closely together.

## **Looking ahead**

Several activities have been considered by the Economic Scrutiny Committee during 2013-2017 but will continue into the future.

It is likely that the government's industrial strategy will place further emphasis on the Midlands Engine, and it is important that Lincolnshire continues to articulate a strong narrative about its place within the Midlands. It will also be beneficial for Lincolnshire's profile to be raised more widely, relating to issues such as our water management plan which was supported by the Economic Scrutiny Committee.

The LEP and LCC have jointly commissioned some analysis into the most powerful messages to promote Lincolnshire ("Place marketing"). This is necessary to promote investment, but it also provides the messages which will improve the web presence to tourists, one of the main recommendations from the Tourism Working Group.

The level of medical training in Lincolnshire is significant, but more is required to encourage people to take up positions in Lincolnshire's health sector. Whilst LCC will have a partnership rather than leading role, it is likely that the subject will continue to be considered both from a health and an economic perspective in coming years.

Finally, the outcome of the referendum on the UK's membership of the EU and the likely changes to trade relationships which will arise from Brexit and from the change in the US presidency provides an opportunity for Lincolnshire businesses. The Economic Scrutiny Committee has considered export initiatives, and it is likely that the Council will need to ensure that there continues to be a service that helps Lincolnshire's businesses take advantage of new opportunities.

## **2. Conclusion**

In summary, then, the work of the Economic Scrutiny Committee has been varied and has ranged from policy formation to prior scrutiny of decisions. The advice of the Committee has directly led to the shaping of schemes which are now being delivered to the benefit of Lincolnshire's businesses and residents.

The staff of the Economic Development team would like to thank members for their help and support during this period.

## **3. Consultation**

### **a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?**

No

## **b) Risks and Impact Analysis**

Not Applicable

## **4. Background Papers**

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Justin Brown, who can be contacted on 01522 550630 or [Justin.Brown@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Justin.Brown@lincolnshire.gov.uk).

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