

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 14 DECEMBER 2018

Statement from: Councillor C J Davie, Executive Councillor for Economy and Place

Skills and employment

Fellow councillors will be aware that this is a critical part of my portfolio, and that Cllr Patricia Bradwell OBE and I work closely on this matter.

Telling young people and their families about the excellent careers that are available in Lincolnshire, and enthusing them to train in the skills that our employers need, is an important part of that work. I have briefed members before about the LEP's World of Work website; it continues to be very popular and used by teachers in particular to help them to plan careers lessons. I am very pleased to inform you that, working with the LEP and the national Careers and Enterprise Company, we now host an officer whose job it is to be a bridge between employers and schools so that careers lessons can be even more effective. The primary aim of this officer's work is to secure a pipeline of good quality staff for Lincolnshire's businesses, providing great opportunities for our young people at the same time.

One of the challenges of delivering training in a place like Lincolnshire is the seasonal nature of some sectors in our economy, notably, tourism. We are, of course, making efforts to extend the tourism season significantly but in the meantime, we do need to take action to help seasonal businesses to be able to access training during their shoulder season. We have now established a coastal training partnership of businesses and training providers to tackle this issue.

Investment

I have already briefed members on the North Sea Observatory and how its iconic design and quality of service is helping us to make very positive statements about our coastal economy. I am delighted to inform members that the North Sea Observatory has been shortlisted for a design award through the prestigious Architects Journal and I will update Members on the outcome. I hope that this is the first of many more.

Members will be aware that we are using the 400th anniversary of the Pilgrim Fathers setting sail from Lincolnshire as a way of raising the county as a tourism destination for the American market. We had a very successful visit from one of the USA's top travel bloggers with excellent coverage of Lincoln and the rest of the county. In addition, at the time of writing this statement, our tourism manager will have represented Lincolnshire on the Mayflower 400 stand at the annual World Travel Market exhibition in London.

Team Lincolnshire continues to grow; we are close to 80 paying members now, and we recently held a promotional event as part of the MIPIM UK exhibition in London. Our Team Lincolnshire members use these events to introduce their clients to investment opportunities in our county, and I am pleased to say that the feedback I have received is that several deals moved forward at pace during the evening. We will be holding another Team Lincolnshire event, focused on investment

opportunities from the West Midlands, in late November – a market that I think offers us some new opportunities.

The Autumn Budget Statement included welcome news of additional funding for Adult Social Care which my colleagues Councillor Martin Hill OBE and Councillor Mrs Patricia Bradwell OBE have commented upon. From an economy perspective, I was pleased to see that the Chancellor recognised the challenges that are faced by our high streets and has made a significant financial package available to them; this is something that the Council's High Street Working Group may wish to explore in depth. The working group's advice on the type of bids we should make will be most welcome.

Supporting businesses

I signed a formal sister region agreement with Hunan in China in early October. Hunan was represented by a very senior set of officials and our afternoon meeting covered a number of very practical steps that we will now be taken both to support Lincolnshire businesses who are trading significantly in the region – such as Dynex and Siemens – and to promote new opportunities. We believe that Hunan's major businesses are keen to invest in the expertise of our food production technology sector, and they are keen to collaborate in the field of automation which is so critical to our economy as new trading patterns emerge. Officers will hold monthly video conference meetings with officials in Hunan to progress these issues. We delivered a 'Trading with China' seminar recently, and a local student will be spending six months on an internship in Changsha to help to give us a presence in that region.

We continue to work with businesses who are considering expanding their business operation, either in Lincolnshire or elsewhere. Clearly, our job is to persuade them to grow here in Lincolnshire and I am very pleased that we have helped a major food business in the south of the county to retain and indeed grow its footprint here. Our role was to help that business to be able to negotiate the planning system, to unblock some communication problems that they had with utility companies, and to help them to access the innovation support that our universities offer to business.

Whilst that is positive news, I was very sad to hear that Fogarty had ceased trading. They were an iconic Boston area business and their closure could have a serious impact on the local economy. We have offered support to the task force which has been set up to help individuals who will lose their job, and I was heartened to hear that other local employers have directly approached employees of Fogarty about opportunities within their own businesses.

In terms of utilities, which is a major challenge to our economic growth, we have now collaborated with Midlands Engine and are hosting a utility and energy specialist officer who will help us to tackle this challenge.

In terms of innovation, the LEP's manufacturing board recently held its meeting at the Motion Capture Centre in Lincoln, where slow motion cameras can help businesses to identify any problems with the finest movements within their processes. This then helps them to reduce costs, making those businesses more competitive. We were instrumental in helping the University of Lincoln gain funding for this facility.

I have recently met with a number of businesses, and I used the Council's business centre in Skegness for one of those meetings. Members might not be aware, but we have a portfolio of four business centres and eighty business units which are currently 84% occupied.

Local Enterprise Partnership

I previously briefed councillors about the LEP Review and in particular about the request from government to do away with overlaps between LEP areas. We continue to make the case for a Greater Lincolnshire LEP – potentially with Rutland as a further partner because that will strengthen our economic coherence. Ministers appear to be determined that overlaps should be avoided no matter what the local economic case is, and of course we are very clear that the south bank of the Humber looks to Lincolnshire for food production and for visitor economy, but it looks to the north bank of the Humber for energy production.

Despite the LEP Review, LEP business has not stopped. In mid-October the LEP held its Annual Conference and the feedback has been that this was the best conference that the LEP has held. Sir John Peace, Chairman of Midlands Engine, was very complimentary about the growth of our county. The speakers on issues like skills, technology, and transport for growth inspired many of the attendees.

The LEP continues to work on Lincolnshire's Local Industrial Strategy, and both the Council's Executive and our Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee have made contributions to the LEP's thinking.

Finally, a few weeks ago, I was happy to meet a House of Lords sub-committee into coastal regeneration. Their visit to Lincolnshire had been arranged by the Bishop of Lincoln to explain to them some of the challenges and opportunities that our coastal communities face. I pointed out that coastal communities often face similar challenges like seasonality but what is specific to Lincolnshire's coast is our vulnerability to flooding and our highly dispersed population. Hopefully, this visit will lead to Government policy on coastal regeneration being adapted to meet our needs.

Planning for Growth (PfG)

Over the past few years the Lincolnshire local authorities have worked together on a range of projects including a devolution deal. Whilst this deal was not taken forward, it did give the local authority partners experience of working together, starting to develop a shared narrative and county-wide objectives. This work, along with other projects – such as the successful Housing Infrastructure Funding bid – provides a strong starting point. It is clearly acknowledged that a successful bid will need to extend further this approach to shared-working, decision-making and delivery.

Acknowledging that there is no single or perfect geography covering housing markets or economic areas, Greater Lincolnshire is felt to be appropriate as a Planning for Growth geography. It is likely to be of the appropriate scale in terms of housing numbers, job creation and ability to improve productivity and it also covers an area and group of local organisations that are likely to be able to develop a shared vision and shared housing and economic objectives.

Local Partnerships (public sector consultants) have been appointed by LCC on behalf of the Greater Lincolnshire authorities for three distinct but related pieces of work: Planning for Growth, SIDP2 economic analysis and Grantham HIF business case. While there are inter-relationships and cross-benefits between these strands of work, there will be specific budgets and oversight for each work stream. LCC will manage the day-to-day Planning for Growth agenda.

Work has been completed on devising criteria that could be used to test the success and outputs of the 'Planning for Growth' work. It reflects Local Partnership's understanding of what external partners (particularly central Government) would require to support the more strategic allocation of resources, along with the devolution of additional powers and flexibilities. Currently the criteria are very broad. However, it is intended that they form the starting point for developing an outline business case.

Grantham Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)

HIF funding is critical to secure an up-front, transformational investment to unlock 11,750 homes on three sustainable urban extensions (SUEs) in Grantham, a high demand area. HIF will support a Garden Village and MOD land release by delivering Grantham Southern Relief Road (GSRR) from the A1 to the A52; and education, health & utilities infrastructure. This LCC proposal, supported by SKDC & GLLEP, will realise economic benefits for the town and district, support 15,000 construction job years, 9,900 gross jobs and £594m in Gross Value Added.

The bid is jointly owned by the County Council and South Kesteven District Council, who will be leading the preparation of the business case. We are preparing economic and commercial cases, including market analysis and 'market making' analysis. A co-development bid to Homes England has recently been approved to provide funding of £99k to support the business case work, which will be submitted in March 2019.

Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Plan (SIDP)

Work is underway to refresh the 2016 Greater Lincolnshire Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Plan (SIDP). The SIDP seeks to prioritise projects within the following key strategic infrastructure sectors supporting the economic, social and environmental needs of Greater Lincolnshire:

- Roads
- Rail
- Flood defence and waterways
- Employment lands enabling infrastructure
- Electricity and gas distribution
- Water and waste water
- Communications infrastructure
- Education
- Healthcare

In order to ensure that focus is kept on strategic infrastructure needs, only individual major projects with a capital value totalling over £5 million were included in this first SIDP. However, exceptionally, projects valued at a lower amount will be considered where they can demonstrate delivery of significant amounts of growth. In addition,

the study focuses on 'growth' infrastructure projects over 'business-as-usual' infrastructure projects (for example, renewal and upgrades that do not substantially increase system capacity). Growth infrastructure projects are defined as those investments that will step-change the productive capacity of Greater Lincolnshire and/or unblock major housing or employment schemes that require external funding to progress.

Economic analysis will provide headline, quantifiable outputs regarding housing unlocked directly by infrastructure, economic benefits and impact on Gross Value Added, productivity and skills. This work overlaps with elements of the Greater Lincolnshire Planning for Growth bid. The deadline for completing the revised document is 31 March 2019.

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