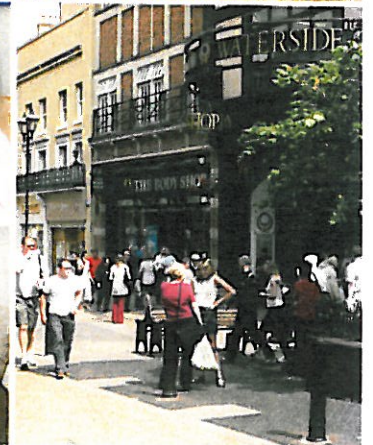


# Better lives

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*“There are many  
uncertainties ahead.  
And while none of us can  
second-guess the future,  
we can help to shape it.”*

**Cllr Martin Hill, OBE**

*Leader*

*Lincolnshire County Council*

## Foreword

During the past year, we have worked hard to help people in the county enjoy better lives. It is not the role of the county council to determine how people should live their lives. Rather the council's focus must be on supporting people to make their own choices and to provide services that meet their needs and those of their communities.



The council has settled well into the new structures it set up last year and taken the opportunity to consolidate its position and get into good shape to manage the challenges which will face it in the future.

The coalition Government is now in place and this council will shortly find out what savings are required and also what opportunities will be available to it. The authority will have to fundamentally change both the way it does business and how services are provided. The council is fully preparing to do that.

Members and officers are working hard on the change agenda. I would like to thank them for all their efforts over the past year. The success of the council has also been recognised by my Leader of the Year award from the Local Government Information Unit. I am only too aware that this was made possible by the tremendous support given by all concerned.

In all, this gives me great confidence that we will emerge from this challenging time as both a stronger and better council.

*Martin Hill*

**Cllr Martin Hill, OBE**

*Leader*

*Lincolnshire County Council*

## Better lives for young people



The way in which the council enables children to thrive is a mark of our commitment to a better, brighter future for all Lincolnshire communities. Services for children were judged as "performing well" by Ofsted in what has been an excellent year.

Lincolnshire's schools are improving strongly and even more of our secondary schools have been judged

by Ofsted as having good or outstanding standards of behaviour. This follows a concentrated effort on the management of behaviour in schools.

The GCSE results published in January show, yet again, that secondary schools in Lincolnshire provide an excellent education. The 5A\*-C results, a key benchmark for this service, increased to 75.6 per cent, 5.6 per cent above the national average. Lincolnshire is now one of the top 20 local authorities in the country.

This council was also one of five local authorities from 44 to be awarded £1.4m to pilot community service in Boston and Spalding. It will test out whether very high levels of 14 to 16-year-olds can be engaged in community service.

In September our birth to five service won the Local Authority Early Years Team of the Year Award at the Nursery World Awards.

Our music service has, for the second year running, won the National Jazz Service's Will Michael Diploma awarded by the National Music Council LEA 2009 Awards Scheme.

In October, following a £2.3m refurbishment, we opened Ermine Primary School. This followed the successful merger of the Ermine Infant and Junior schools.

Just one month later, Chad Varah Primary School was opened, replacing St Giles Infant and Myle Cross Junior. Our investment in this project was £2.2m.

The Lincolnshire Transition Partnership is the East Midlands pilot site for the national Getting a Life programme. It enables young people with learning disabilities to leave school, get paid employment and enjoy full adult lives. Since the programme launched in January, 30 participants have taken the route towards paid employment.

Some families face enormous challenges. One indicator of the health of families in the county is the number of children looked after by the local authority. The number of children finding themselves in these circumstances remains low while the figures support efforts to minimise disruption to the lives of these children, with only 5.4 per cent of children having experienced three or more home moves this year.

Ofsted has rated Lincolnshire Children's Services as "performing well", with efficient safeguarding and child protection procedures in place.

Provision for looked-after children is good. An unannounced inspection on arrangements for children in need identified strength in frontline services, effective leadership and management.



## Better lives for elderly people



The way elderly people are cared for is one hallmark of a civilised society. This is all the more important when we consider that people are generally living longer. More and more people are choosing to spend those years here, in Lincolnshire.

The task the council now faces is how to welcome elderly people into our county whilst maintaining high standards of care.

At the same time, the tough financial climate means the whole public sector is braced for cuts in funding from the new Government.

These are the challenges this council faces. They are emotive issues, as existing care homes and their dedicated staff are very close to people's hearts – something recent consultation has revealed very clearly.

Part of the answer lies in helping people live independently at home for longer, helped by support targeted to meet their needs. Research by this council shows that elderly people agree with that aim and are keen to stay independent for as long as possible.

When that becomes too difficult, improved breaks for carers and day care could give them the facilities they need, allowing them to live life to the full throughout their old age – not just until old age.

Residents also tell us they want more choice in how services are provided.

We already have a range of care options, putting people in control of their own assessments and support. People want to be able to choose – and they want, wherever possible, services to meet their needs.

A key part of the Putting People First programme for adults is Personal Budgets, which enable them to work alongside social care professionals to choose how to spend money on support services.

## Safe and secure lives



During the past year the council has strengthened its relationship with Lincolnshire Police. This authority has invested a further £1.5m into Police Community Support Officers and neighbourhood policing teams. They now work closely with both our staff and councillors. From April, the council changed the way neighbourhood policing works.

PCSOs now hold community surgeries in council-run venues, such as libraries and children's centres, so residents can raise any concerns they have. The officers co-ordinate council and third sector services, meaning that any issues that local residents have can be dealt with quickly and effectively.

This innovative partnership, which is the first of its kind in the country, will ensure that the county benefits from high-quality, seamless policing.

In a rural county, being able to get around safely and quickly is important. Safe roads matter. And keeping roads open during the winter can be a major challenge, one that the council rose to this year.

When the county faced the coldest winter in recent memory, it kept main roads open throughout. Not only did this council not run out of salt, but it was also able to help other authorities with back-up supplies when they had run out.

We have established a new Highways Alliance which is already improving services and saving money. By this summer we will have completed the £80m A1073 Spalding to Eye road scheme on time and within budget.

Preliminary work on the Lincoln East West Link Road is progressing well and the council is also spending £1.2m on restoring Bailgate in Lincoln.

It is important that people understand this council's plans for better transport. Along with the Commission for Rural Communities, this authority has produced a short film promoting integrated and sustainable rural transport schemes featuring CallConnect, InterConnect and the community rail partnership (the Poacher Line).

The number of people dying on Lincolnshire's roads as a result of accidents continues to be a challenge. Tragically, 52 people lost their lives in 2009. Although this number is much lower than a few years ago, it is still 52 people too many. Reducing road casualties therefore remains a key priority for the council through the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership.



## A better, stronger economy



There has been a worldwide recession and whilst some areas of the county have not escaped its effects, Lincolnshire's economy has been far less affected than other areas of the country. Lincolnshire has a relatively robust economy that the county council is pleased to support.

The council will aim to keep on top of economic trends, understanding how they may affect it and what it needs to

do to take advantage of any opportunities that arise whilst reducing any negative impacts. For example, last October, in partnership with West Lindsey District Council, this authority held a seminar on the prospects for the UK public sector at the Epic Centre.

Lincolnshire businesses are regularly surveyed and asked to rate out of 10 their resilience to the current economic situation. In the council's latest survey, 20 per cent of businesses said that they expect to expand their workforce in the next three months. Whilst some of that expansion is, of course, due to the seasonal nature of the county's economy, it is encouraging to see that sectors like manufacturing are preparing to increase their workforces.

Despite Lincolnshire's fairly robust economy, there have been some large scale redundancies. Examples include 400 engineering job losses in Skegness and Alford, and 600 food sector job losses in Grantham. Job losses have a significant impact on people and on the communities where they live. This council has helped to organise the job fairs that have been held to support people following these redundancies. The council has, for example, arranged extra courses to help people who have been made redundant to think about starting up their own businesses.

Moving on to the work this council does to directly support businesses, the manufacturing sector is recognised as especially important, partly because of the historical contribution manufacturing has made to the county and partly because of the higher skilled jobs within this sector. There are some market-leading businesses in the county, including BGB Engineering in Grantham, which recently won a Queen's Award for Enterprise, and, of course, Siemens in Lincoln.

The council is working to create Teal Park on the outskirts of Lincoln which could still have Siemens as its blue chip tenant, but which will also provide premises for other engineering businesses – either Lincolnshire-based firms that are seeking to grow into new premises or other businesses that the council attracts into the county.

The food production and tourism sectors are also very important to the county. The council's Select Lincolnshire team supported getting local products onto supermarket shelves by hosting a Meet the Buyer event with ASDA. It has also held a series of events to put quality local food producers in touch with potential buyers.

There is a clear link between promoting the quality of the county's food and promoting the county as an excellent place for tourists to visit. The council brings these two issues together in its Tastes of Lincolnshire programme. The programme's flagship event is the Christmas Food and Drink Fair, which attracted 6,000 visitors this year.

The council is keen to ensure that local businesses benefit from money that it spends. For example, the council is supporting businesses by signing up to the Prompt Payment Code to ensure suppliers are paid on time.

The council also recognises the importance of creating the conditions needed for investment in Lincolnshire. Lincolnshire's network of market towns, the availability of digital services and the strength of higher education in the county all contribute to these conditions.



Market towns are the life-blood of our county and the council is investigating what can be done to further improve them, based on what currently exists in each area, what residents use and what extra activities could be supported.

Digital services are important for residents, businesses and schools, so the council needs to ensure that rural areas are not disadvantaged by a lack of quality broadband. The council is helping communities to develop this kind of improvement.

The university is an important partner in fostering the growth of highly skilled jobs in the county. Holbeach Technology Park mixes higher education and business support to create a centre of excellence in food technology, giving food businesses the confidence that Lincolnshire is the right place to continue investing.

This council is also helping the university's Lincoln campus to establish an engineering school and has part-funded the business school so that it can work with 35 major local businesses and help them establish plans to overcome the recession.

The economy is going through difficult times, and will continue to do so. The council is therefore doing everything it can to support it.

## A better environment

Protecting communities from environmental risk is essential. Lincolnshire faces significant flood risks and is a Lead Local Flood Authority under the Flood and Water Management Bill, which received Royal Assent in April. Development of the Lincolnshire Flood Risk and Drainage Management Framework required by the Bill has also been recognised as national good practice by both the IDeA and LGA.



At a projected 52 per cent for 2009/10, our household refuse recycling rate, achieved in partnership with Lincolnshire's district councils, is set to be one of the top rates across the country.

The council has received £800,000 of Defra funding under the Coastal Pathfinder project to further explore aspects of the Lincolnshire Coastal Study, designed to help these communities to become more resilient.

Having signed the Nottingham declaration, the council is progressing plans to reduce our energy consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 20 per cent over the next few years. We support green or alternative energy instead of burning fossil fuels but we also need to protect our visual landscape, amenities and tourist industry.

The executive therefore recently agreed planning guidelines, discouraging excessive concentrations of large wind farms across Lincolnshire's countryside. This will also be adopted by local planning authorities.

Elsewhere, the Energy from Waste plant to be built at Whisby Road, North Hykeham, is set to be up and running by 2013.



## Better communities



Our focus has been to do all we can to enable communities to shape their own futures.

Public services are changing in recognition of the way that people live their lives. Increasingly citizens want to determine how they should receive services and to exert control over the delivery of their support. In January, the council began the roll-out of Personal Budgets to all new recipients of Adult Social Care services, joining the 2,000 carers who already receive them.

Enabling people to be involved in service delivery is crucial. Successful services work with people. The Lincolnshire Carers Partnership and Lincolnshire Young Carers Partnership have given carers a strong degree of involvement with more than 150 carers at the heart of planning through nine working groups. Young carers designed and developed the first Lincolnshire Young Carers Week in 2009.

Support for this approach has come in the annual performance review by the Care Quality Commission, which judged Adult Social Care to be “performing well.”

Libraries continue to be a cornerstone in many communities and 11 district libraries have had major improvements in interior design and technology, giving them a contemporary look and feel.

In May we removed the need for people to bring personal identification with them to join a library. This led to a nine per cent increase in new members as well as cutting waiting times and freeing up librarians to help customers.

Changes included improved Internet access and new carpets, signage and self-service technology. More than half of the annual three million transactions with the council now take place through these terminals, ensuring that libraries remain relevant to people.

However, not everyone can get to a library building so the council put three replacement mobile libraries on the road in October last year. Another way we can know that our communities are thriving is to look at the number of people who are actively involved. There has been a significant increase in the number of young people in Lincolnshire who are engaged in volunteering, due to the success of a range of programmes including The Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue continues to offer search and rescue expertise. Notably, 10 members of staff along with a rescue dog from our county took part in the successful deployment to Haiti as part of the UK International Search and Rescue (UK ISAR) effort, saving many lives in dangerous conditions.

The number of people participating in sport has increased by three per cent, supported by the Lincolnshire Sports Partnership. This makes the county the second most improved authority in England.

Our services to adult learners have also been inspected. Inspectors judged that we had good capacity to improve further, something that we will be turning our attention to in the coming year. Some strengths highlighted by Ofsted included very good support for learners, clear direction and partnership working, and good operational management.

In December, Swallow Lodge on Fen Lane, Lincoln, a newly built respite centre for adults with a learning disability, was opened.



## A shared sense of identity



The trend to understand our shared and personal histories continues. The council launched a new website in September 2009 to make researching the county's history easier. The Cultural Collections website allows people to search more than half a million items from probate records, parish registers, documents dating from the 11th Century, newspaper articles, the Tennyson Research Centre and a database of Lincolnshire's deported convicts. There are now more than 50,000 interactions each month.

Since introducing free admission in April 2009 61,636 visitors have visited the Museum of Lincolnshire Life, an amazing increase of 159 per cent on the previous year. Exclusive attractions such as "Flirt", the World War One tank, and the interactive galleries of the Royal Lincolnshire Regiment are attracting local people and tourists alike.

The council celebrated the bi-centenary of the birth of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, with groups and venues all over Lincolnshire taking part. The Collection played host to several of these events. And in September, Gainsborough Old Hall received the Sandford Award for its continued excellence in heritage education.

## A better organisation

Whatever challenges the council faces, it will be better able to meet them head on if the council itself is performing well. The Audit Commission, the Government's inspection watchdog, regularly tests local authorities. Under the new, tougher inspection regime – the Comprehensive Area Assessment framework – the council has been assessed as "performing well".



The council's communications with residents and customers remain strong and its website has retained the Internet Crystal Mark, recognising dedication to plain English.

Relationships with customers are becoming stronger. Many customers rely upon their phone to access services. In February 2010, the Customer Service Centre was independently judged to be meeting high standards, with a clear customer focus, good complaint handling, and extensive and effective employee training. Overall customer satisfaction in this service remains high, at 97 per cent.

The council has continued to develop its relationships with district councils by providing an out-of-hours telephone call handling service for three districts, as well as providing customer service training and business continuity options.

In the past year the Customer Service Centre received just under a million phone calls, made more than 140,000 calls and received more than 25,000 emails from customers. More on-line application forms are now being provided for customers, saving them both time and money.



The council continues to expand its participation in the Institute of Customer Services professional development programme. A total of 195 members of staff have now completed the qualification with a further 138 staff working through the process, supported by 72 colleagues who are trained as ICS coaches.

Registration and Celebratory Services have gained the "Customer Service Excellence" standard while the Legal Services department was a finalist in the "Legal Achievement of the Year" category in the Municipal Journal awards. The department was also highly commended in the "Excellence in Innovation" category at the Law Society Excellence Awards.

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue was assessed as "performing well" and rated as "good" by the Audit Commission.

In June last year, the council was praised in the local and national media for the way it ran the county council election and for its coverage and excellent communication of events and results. It has been a successful first year for the newly elected council, based on a commended induction process and the continuing development of councillors.

There are many uncertainties ahead. And while none of us can second-guess the future, we can help to shape it. Where the organisation is stronger it will be better able to support the county during the change to come. The key to making the most of the future is to be ready and willing to tackle head on the forthcoming challenges.

We are not daunted by what is ahead. And whilst we will not savour the need to adjust our finances and re-shape services, we will not flinch from making difficult decisions. We will be constantly guided by the needs of our residents, seeking to create and take every opportunity to make life better in Lincolnshire.

*"In all, this gives me great confidence that we will emerge from this challenging time as both a stronger and better council."*

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