

# **LEADER'S REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL 2009-13**

## **Introduction**

As members know, voters go to the polls in a Lincolnshire County Council election on 2 May, choosing the 77 representatives to serve them for the next four years.

As always, the election is a very important moment in the life of this council – an opportunity to look forward to new possibilities as well as new challenges.

This is also very much a moment to look back – hopefully, with satisfaction and pride – on what councillors from across the political spectrum, working with officers, have achieved together on our shared journey over the past four years.

At the time of the council's last election, in June 2009, the global financial system was deep in crisis, with shockwaves being felt around the world.

Despite international efforts, sustained recovery has proved elusive, and the Eurozone in particular faces ongoing uncertainty.

Inevitably, the turmoil has hit the UK economy, although the Coalition Government has battled since 2010 to get the national finances back on track.

As part of that process, local authorities across the country – including here in Lincolnshire – have been asked to provide services on substantially reduced grants.

For this council, that has meant finding massive savings of £125m over the four years to 2014/15, with the possibility of further cuts to come after that.

This has been, and will continue to be, a major challenge. However, I believe it is one that we are meeting successfully, thanks to the determined efforts of all our councillors and officers.

In this report, I aim to show how – working together – we have achieved our key objectives: keeping council tax low; protecting essential frontline services; finding efficiencies; and investing for the future.

What is more, all this has been done in possibly the most difficult period faced by local government in the UK for many decades – perhaps ever.

As we approach the election, I know that some councillors here today will not be returning after 2 May. On behalf of Lincolnshire County Council, thank you for all your hard work and best wishes for the future.

To those councillors who are elected next month – whether old hands or new arrivals – the challenge is to match and then surpass our record of achievement over the last four years. Given the strength of that record, it will not be an easy task.

## Balancing the books

This council has always been committed to setting a low rate of council tax, and we currently have the third lowest county rate.

For the first two years of this council, we had increases of 1.75% and 2.5%. Then, taking advantage of the Government's freeze grant, we pegged our council tax for two years – an approach we are continuing for an historic third year.

We know that this could create challenges in the future if the freeze grant is discontinued. However, in these difficult economic times, this council believes it is right to take advantage of the grant for the benefit of hard-pressed residents.

As well as keeping council tax down, we have been determined to play our full part in restoring the national finances and helping cut the deficit. We therefore worked extremely hard to find sensible ways to reduce our spending, both in the run-up to and following the Coalition Government's first Comprehensive Spending Review in 2010.

Central to that process was our initial "core offer" review, which identified the key frontline services we were determined to protect. Particular priority was given to those ensuring public safety, such as safeguarding children, fire and rescue, winter gritting and road maintenance, emergency planning and funding for PCSOs.

In other areas, we looked closely at whether services could be stopped, reduced or provided in different ways – perhaps in partnership with district councils or other public or voluntary sector organisations.

The challenge was enormous, amounting to almost a transformation in the way we provide services to the 715,000 people of Lincolnshire. However, our decisive and pragmatic approach paid dividends, enabling us to identify significant efficiencies without major cuts to frontline services or large-scale compulsory redundancies.

Of the £125m we need to save by 2014/15, at least £90m has already been secured, with plans in place for the remaining £35m over the next two years, partly through the sensible use of reserves.

Looking ahead, we plan to conduct a second review of our priorities and budgets in 2013/14, identifying the further savings we will have to make as the Government continues to restore the national finances.

Finally, I must put on record this council's success in lobbying for a fairer deal on Government funding for rural authorities – an issue known as sparsity. Having helped secure its introduction into grant calculations some years ago, we have been lobbying again recently for a better final deal.

In the event, we will only receive an extra £755,000 this financial year. However, I believe we have won the argument convincingly, and we will continue to press for improved sparsity funding in the future.

## Encouraging economic prosperity

As well as balancing the books and protecting frontline services, this council remains committed to infrastructure investment to underpin Lincolnshire's future prosperity.

By investing early in major projects, we have been able to draw down funds from other organisations, adding considerable value to every pound we spend – for example, in the all-important area of improved countywide broadband.

Led by the council, the “onlincolnshire” project aims to build on the existing telecoms infrastructure in the county so that at least 88% of all properties will have access to superfast broadband by April 2016.

We also aim to provide at least 2Mb/s basic broadband for everyone else as standard. For the first time ever, broadband should be available everywhere in Lincolnshire.

Work on the project will begin imminently, with the first communities set to benefit early next year. The improvements will be carried out by the council's private sector partner BT.

The project will see around £48m of public and private sector money invested, including £11.2m from the county council, £4m from the district authorities, £14.3m from national government and £18.8m from BT.

In addition, £300,000 from the European Regional Development Fund will be used to bring faster speeds sooner to east coast communities in and around Ingoldmells and Wrangle through wireless technology, with the improvements carried out by Lincoln firm AB Internet.

We also invested £22m in Teal Park in North Hykeham, creating one of the premier business parks in the East Midlands and securing local jobs at Siemens, a major player in Lincolnshire's successful engineering and manufacturing sector.

With Siemens now on site, it is expected other businesses will locate there, taking advantage of the improved A46 route to the motorway network. In total, Teal Park could attract £500m of business investment over the next 10 to 15 years – equivalent to about 4,000 jobs.

As well as investing in broadband and Teal Park, the council has acted to boost economic growth through support for business and commerce. In particular, we brought together the private and public sectors to form the influential Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

A business-led organisation of this kind, with this council as a significant partner, not only provides a vital economic forum; it also offers a model of how we may achieve some of our key aims in this area in the future.

We have also given more direct support to local businesses by:

- Ensuring our procurement policies offer firms a better chance of securing council contracts, keeping local money in the local area.
- Providing information and advice through our Business Lincolnshire website.
- Establishing a Finance Forum linking bankers and accountancy firms.
- Supporting the food sector through a membership organisation around Select Lincolnshire, as well as backing the Forum for Agriculture and Horticulture.
- Promoting opportunities for the London 2012 Olympics to Lincolnshire companies, leading to over £40m of direct contracts.
- Supporting Lincolnshire businesses at major food exhibitions – one company generated 50-60 new leads at a single event.

Overall, the council's investment of £37.7m in economic development projects attracted £110.8m of grants, and our support brought in £13.7m for our partners.

On local employment, we have created 578 jobs and safeguarded 510, helping 901 businesses along the way. For younger people, we have created apprenticeships and encouraged other employers, particularly smaller enterprises, to do the same.

All in all, it is an impressive record, supporting Lincolnshire's diverse economy as it looks to ensure both current and future prosperity.

## **Keeping Lincolnshire moving**

Economic development also depends on the county's highways and transport networks, which have remained a major priority for us.

Over the last four years, the council has continued its provision for road maintenance, setting aside extra cash to repair the worst potholes and cracks caused by bad weather and drought conditions.

We will also be investing an additional £6.5m of government funding in more preventative work, using the latest "hot-box" technology to repair potholes in a longer-lasting way.

During severe weather, we have routinely gritted 1,869 miles of roads – more than 34% of the network and above government guidelines. Treated routes include A and B roads, as well as those to hospitals and most schools.

In terms of capital investment, we have:

- Completed construction of the A1073 Improvement in the south of the county, improving accessibility for the important food manufacturing sector.

- Pressed on with plans to create the Lincoln Eastern Bypass, with the Department for Transport (DfT) putting aside £50m towards the £98m cost.
- Continued to develop the Greater Lincoln transport strategy and secured planning consent for Lincoln's East-West link.
- Committed funds for relief roads in Grantham and Spalding, intended to minimise congestion and encourage growth.
- Invested in town centre improvements in Boston, including an historic Grade II-listed townhouse, and Grantham.

The Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership also helped reduce road deaths in the county to 39 in 2012 – seven fewer than the previous year, or a fall of 18%. That welcome downward trend is due to a range of initiatives, including courses for drivers, highways improvements, speed cameras and targeted campaigns, and we continue to look for new ways to make our roads safer.

Sustainable transport schemes across the county have helped create better road layouts and improve public transport, protecting the environment, reducing congestion and boosting economic growth.

Projects include the Access LN6 project, funded by the DfT and managed by the council, in the busy North Hykeham and south Lincoln area. The three-year scheme will encourage the public to make “smarter” travel choices as they plan their journeys for work, school and leisure.

In our rural areas, too, we have:

- Expanded our award-winning CallConnect bus service, as well as giving it a new-look website, a Twitter account and longer booking office opening hours.
- Worked with bus companies to help maintain rural services by linking them to school transport.
- Encouraged stronger community car schemes, which provide a lifeline in isolated parts of the county.

More generally – and following widespread consultation – the council has produced its 4th Lincolnshire Local Transport Plan. Set to be adopted at today's meeting, it is a blueprint for travel around Lincolnshire for the next 10 to 15 years.

## **Promoting culture and tourism**

Our heritage attractions do not just offer cultural and leisure opportunities to local people – they are also increasingly important in encouraging tourism. For both those reasons, we were delighted when the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded £12m towards the £20m Lincoln Castle Revealed project.

The planned full-scale refurbishment could herald a period as exciting as any in the castle's 1,000-year history, in time for the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Magna Carta in 2015. Significantly, it could generate up to £68m for the local economy, as well as creating around 1,100 new jobs, with the benefits likely to be felt across the county.

Already, a new Heritage Skills Centre, the first new building at the castle for 150 years, has begun training the craftsmen and women of the future, as well as providing a popular attraction.

It will be followed by a new vault to showcase Magna Carta and the Charter of the Forest, the refurbishment of the old prison buildings, the opening of a complete circuit of the castle walls, and the creation of a green "oasis" in the grounds.

The aim is to make Lincoln Castle – which this June hosts the prestigious European Stone Festival – one of the country's top historic attractions.

In other heritage developments:

- The Collection and Usher Gallery have launched new multi-media guides, as well as continuing with their excellent record of events and exhibitions. Currently, The Collection is displaying the Witham Shield, a Lincolnshire Iron Age treasure, on loan from the British Museum.
- At the Museum of Lincolnshire Life, improvements include the refurbishment of the reception and gift shop. A new outdoor history-themed play area will also be created, and the storage area opened to the public for the first time.
- The historic Gainsborough Old Hall is now available as a venue for civil ceremonies, as well as offering a bespoke wedding service.

Turning now to our libraries, we know the service is valued by those who use it and, while it cannot be completely insulated from the financial pressures facing the council, feel there might be ways of saving money while retaining provision.

So, while the Library Needs Assessment is undertaken, we have tested alternative models of delivery and expect to be able to evaluate these before determining what to do across the whole service. Specifically:

- In Caistor, we have located our library in a building operated by a local community group, whose café is well worth a visit.
- In Saxilby, the parish council offered to run the service for us.
- We are working with the Lincolnshire Co-operative Society to run a library at one of its pharmacies at Waddington.
- We have also supported communities and volunteers wishing to offer their own library services, including Sutton Bridge, Ingoldmells, Winthorpe and Irby and Bratoft, with books and technical advice.

In another important development, Bourne Library has successfully completed its move to the Corn Exchange, and now offers improved opening hours, parking and stock. The building is also home to the new South Kesteven Access Point, providing a range of local council services, including registration, under one roof.

Under the arrangement – the first of its kind – the district and county councils are not only sharing premises, but also staffing and management, increasing the savings to the taxpayer.

## **Our children and young people**

Children and young people represent the future, and this council prides itself on helping them fulfil their potential, as well as supporting their families. Over the past four years, Children's Services – together with our partners – have built on previous achievements, and I can report a significant record of success.

Looking at the bigger picture, we achieved an “outstanding” Ofsted rating in 2010, with a subsequent assessment for 2011/12 confirming that we perform excellently. In more specific areas, there has also been cause for satisfaction:

- An announced safeguarding inspection in 2010 gave an outstanding assessment, with services for looked-after children judged good. An unannounced 2011 inspection found no priority areas needing urgent attention.
- Over the last two years, our fostering and adoption services have been judged outstanding, and the foster care team was highly commended by the LGA.
- All but one of our residential care homes were graded outstanding, and our leaving care provision won a Care Quality Award in 2012.
- There was praise, too, for our children's centres, with 14 of the 16 inspected in 2011-12 found by Ofsted to be good or outstanding.
- Every Child a Talker, the Lincolnshire Music Service and the Graduate Teacher Programme have all been judged outstanding, while the Birth to Five Service was named Early Years Team of the Year.
- Inspections of special schools and pupil referral units in 2011/12 found 79% to be good or outstanding, along with 71% of child care settings.
- Last month, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Service was highly commended by the LGC for giving early help to young people experiencing problems.

Let us turn now to educational development and achievement, an area in which Lincolnshire continues to excel:

- At Foundation stage, we have for the past two years performed higher than the national average, and are now in the top 10% of local authorities for achieving a good level of development and the top 15% for narrowing the gap.
- The proportion of pupils leaving primary school at the expected level for English and maths has once again risen to 1% above the national average. It also remains above the regional average.
- National league tables for 2012 show Lincolnshire schools continuing to outstrip national averages for GCSE performance. The pass rate for five A\* to C, including English and maths, was 62.1%, while the overall 5 A\* to C pass rate was 85.9% – above national averages by 3.3% and 2.9% respectively.
- 96% of all year 11 children achieved five or more A\* to G grades, and 20.6% achieved the English Baccalaureate – well above the national rate of 16.2%.

Significantly, our educational partner CfBT was named School Improvement Service of the Year 2012 at the Education Investor Awards, with the judges commenting on the year-on-year improvement made by Lincolnshire schools, plus the wide range of high-quality additional services CfBT provides.

The award is a tremendous achievement, reflecting well on this council's decision to entrust the management of our education services to CfBT, as well as on our excellent working relationship with them.

Also on the national stage, Lincolnshire's success in improving the lives of "troubled families" has been highlighted at an important conference, where delegates heard how our Families Working Together scheme has supported almost 100 families since it started 18 months ago – and saved the taxpayer an estimated £1.2m.

Finally, we now have in place a refreshed three-year participation strategy, enabling us to build on our track record of involving service users in our work.

## **Supporting vulnerable adults**

No area of the council's work has faced as great a challenge as Adult Social Care, where financial constraints are combined with a rise in the number of older residents.

However, we took the view as early as 2009 that older people should not simply be regarded as a financial issue, either for Government or local authorities. We felt there was too little acknowledgement of the contribution many make through volunteering, supporting childcare and looking after other people in their homes.

Against that background, we established the innovative Excellent Ageing programme to reinforce the good work already happening. By bringing together organisations across the county, we have created a more positive attitude towards older people and a better environment to support them in their choices for later life.

Given the impact of rising fuel costs, we have also secured funding for the second year running for our Responders to Warmth (R2W) scheme, providing new heating

systems, insulation and immediate relief for our most vulnerable – 2,700 R2W cases in just three months last winter.

More generally, as part of the national Putting People First agenda launched in 2007, Adult Social Care in Lincolnshire has increased the number of people with a personal budget from 2,500 at the end of 2008/09 to almost 11,000 now.

This is all about choice – a personal budget enables vulnerable adults either to ask Adult Social Care to arrange services on their behalf or to use the money to buy services themselves via a direct payment. In Lincolnshire, the number taking up this second option has risen from 2,500 in 2009 to 5,500 today.

In addition to increasing choices available to residents, this council has had to make important decisions itself. It has done so in an entirely pragmatic way, finding new ways to meet the needs of a growing older population in tough economic times.

Above all, we have looked to help vulnerable residents remain independently at home for as long as they can – something people consistently tell us they want – and I can report that:

- Our in-house re-ablement service is actively helping people recover the skills and confidence to return to their own homes, perhaps after a lengthy spell in hospital. Since 2009, almost 10,000 vulnerable people have benefited in this way, with over 2,300 needing no ongoing support.
- In the last four years, the number of carers we support has gone up from 3,000 to 4,000 – a rise of 30%. This is recognition of the vital role carers play in helping vulnerable adults stay at home, and forms part of our commitment to a lasting partnership with Lincolnshire residents.
- We have also targeted our limited Adult Social Care resources on those most requiring support. With this in mind, we changed our eligibility criteria to concentrate on substantial and critical needs, in line with 85% of all councils.
- Across the county, we have given our staff more flexibility to focus on the most vulnerable as part of a more efficient system of care management.
- Improved partnerships are also at the heart of our work, particularly with the NHS, and we will be working closely with the four Clinical Commissioning Groups as part of our new responsibility for key areas of public health.
- Advanced technology is making a big difference in keeping people safe at home, with the support of partner agencies. However, due to a change in reporting, this is no longer reflected in the figures for those we support.

As I have said, this approach is in line with what residents want, which is to continue living in their own homes for as long as they possibly can.

At the same time, it has enabled us to balance the books – a remarkable achievement given the increasing level of need in Lincolnshire, particularly for residents with a learning disability or those now living into their 90s.

This is partly the result of a reduction in the number of staff we employ – down from over 1,500 (FTE) in 2009 to about 750 now, with many of those who left having moved to the independent sector instead.

Following extensive consultation, we also closed eight council-provided residential homes in 2011/12, saving £5m, although we ensured all those affected were supported through new services.

The new focus of our work means that Adult Social Care now supports 4,400 people in residential care, compared to 4,800 four years ago, and 12,800 in the community, down from 18,600 in 2009.

Financially, that allowed us to make savings of more than £21m in both 2011/12 and 2012/13, without which services would have been severely affected. In 2012/13, we also produced a balanced end-of-year budget for the first time since 2007.

Had it not been for the far-sighted changes we have made, the figures would have looked very different – for example, our costs for 2013/14 would have increased from the current £138m to a massive £151m.

As you would expect at a time of growing demand combined with reduced funding, the future of Adult Social Care will continue to be challenging.

However, we remain committed to a pragmatic approach – working in partnership with others – to ensure the most vulnerable people in Lincolnshire are supported with good quality services.

## **Promoting public health**

This council has just taken on responsibility for some key areas of public health following the abolition of NHS Lincolnshire as part of government health reforms. Under the new arrangements, the council will:

- Provide guidance to the county's four new Clinical Commissioning Groups – made up of 102 GP practices – as they plan hospital and emergency care.
- Take responsibility for a range of local services such as NHS healthchecks, some vaccination programmes, and alcohol and drug treatment.
- Oversee these services, many of which are provided by charities, partnerships and private businesses and will continue to be.
- Look at bringing together wider aspects of public health such as emergency planning, health in schools, housing and transport.

The changes aim to reduce health inequalities and provide better value for money by avoiding duplication of work, and we have been preparing for them for two years through the Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board.

It successfully developed a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), providing a detailed picture of health and wellbeing needs. That will help partners work together to identify future priorities for Lincolnshire and achieve better outcomes.

The council has worked closely with the NHS and other partners to produce the JSNA, which is widely regarded as an excellent example of what can be achieved with the wider community.

Following the JSNA, the Board produced a Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS), ahead of the 2013 deadline and many other areas around the country. Key factors in our success included:

- Establishing a senior officer lead and Board sponsor for each strategy theme.
- Making information available in a range of formats to improve communication with people with a learning disability or limited literacy.
- Identifying particular groups of people with “protected characteristics” and positively targeting them in consultation.
- Road-testing new ideas such as a resource pack to help community groups run their own consultation events.
- Actively engaging with children and young people through work with external volunteer organisations.

In future, the Board will look at all commissioning intentions for health and social care for Lincolnshire to ensure they support the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

In other areas, the Getting A Life project has helped young people with severe learning disabilities to get jobs and lead full lives after education.

This has been achieved through a mixture of paid full-time and part-time employment, volunteering and work experience, as well as by creating a person-centred plan for every participant.

We have also improved the way we commission and manage services for people with substance misuse problems, developing a new model of support to:

- Provide treatment focused on outcomes, and pay providers accordingly.
- Introduce more choice for service users, along with an independent advocacy and governance service.
- Deliver a 34% year-on-year increase in the uptake of alcohol treatment, plus a 14% increase for drug treatment, without additional resources.

- Ensure 97% of service users wait less than three weeks from referral to first-treatment appointment.
- Identify far more mental health problems at an early stage, allowing the right interventions to be put in place.

## **Caring for the environment**

Lincolnshire is renowned for its environment, so protecting it is a primary concern. That can also be good for business, so the benefits are often two-fold. Here are just a few of our major achievements:

- Our Sustain Lincolnshire programme has supported innovation in local businesses to develop low-energy products and services. It also works with Lincolnshire's key sectors such as food and engineering to help them become more resource-efficient, reducing waste and boosting competitiveness.
- The council has a long-term commitment to leading by example on climate change, and signed both the Nottingham Declaration and Climate Local. Matching our actions to our words, we have used an invest-to-save fund to reduce energy consumption in our own buildings, including schools.
- Our first five-year Carbon Management Plan saw over £1m invested in energy-efficiency measures, reducing our annual energy bills by £330,000, and last year we reduced emissions by 9.4%. We are soon to agree our second plan, committing to cut emissions by 22%.
- On the issue of wind energy, we acknowledge the contribution it can make to national power generation. However, we also recognise that people concerned about the proliferation of wind turbines need a voice. Despite criticism in some quarters, we felt it was necessary to take a stand against potentially unsuitable developments. Our approach has been backed by the public, who responded to a recent survey in almost unprecedented numbers.
- In support of sustainable energy, we are investing £140m in a Combined Heat and Power Plant under construction in North Hykeham, plus associated transfer stations. Residual waste that is not recycled will be used to generate electricity, and the plant has the capacity to distribute heat locally.
- We have also used micro-generation from wind and photo-voltaic panels on our own properties, as well as encouraging the use of wood-chip burners and helping fund bio-diesel in buses.
- As well as being a benefit for local residents, the natural environment is an important component in the visitor economy. We have therefore continued promoting a Coastal Country Park, developing the Wolds as a living landscape, and supporting initiatives that enhance the rural economy.

- The council has also worked with district colleagues to increase their capacity to prepare Local Plans. We have come together with three district councils in Central Lincolnshire, and a further two in South-East Lincolnshire, to form joint committees that will influence development over the next 20 years.

## **Protecting against flooding**

In 2009 – given the national economic difficulties – it was an uncertain time for our coastal defences. However, we were determined that Lincolnshire would be defended from flooding as far as possible, and have actively participated in local, regional and national flood risk management issues. Specifically, we have:

- Argued successfully for maintaining the current level of coastal flood protection.
- Built partnerships with the Environment Agency, Internal Drainage Boards, Anglian Water and district councils.
- Become acknowledged as national leaders in flood risk management, sought out by others for comment and advice.
- Increased our contribution to the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee to £620,000 a year, and allocated £6m to flood relief schemes in Louth and Horncastle.
- Secured an award of £810,000 for our coastal pathfinder project, plus £500,000 of Environment Agency Flood Defence Grant in Aid for flood defence works.
- Engaged in many smaller drainage improvements, such as those in Saxilby, Sturton by Stow, Fiskerton and Waddingham.
- Taken on new responsibilities as Lead Local Flood Authority, undertaking over 50 flood investigations to date.

## **Keeping the county safe**

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue runs 38 fire stations, handling about 16,500 calls a year and attending 10,000 incidents.

It has also demonstrated continuous improvement over the last four years against its operational priorities, including:

- The number of people killed or injured in fires continues to be low, despite a slight increase in those killed in 2012 due to a single tragic incident claiming five lives.
- There has been a significant reduction in the number of deliberate fires in our communities, with 580 fewer in 2011/12 compared to 2007/08.

- Malicious false alarms also reduced over that five-year period, from 431 at the start to 186 at the end, a drop of 245 a year.
- The number of times we help at co-responder incidents is also going up, from 82 to 89 per annum over the five years.
- We have also taken delivery of 10 new DEFRA-funded rescue boats, giving the service one of the best capabilities in the country.
- The service is working to increase from two to nine the number of stations across the county staffed 24 hours a day by wholetime firefighters.
- We continue to conduct youth engagement schemes promoting fire safety and delivering wider community outcomes. Since 2008, the Prince's Trust alone has run 86 programmes involving 925 young people.

We also remain at the forefront of international search and rescue, both here in the UK and around the world, and in recent years have been deployed to Haiti and Japan. Last year, we hosted the UK Rescue Organisation Challenge, involving 87 teams from around the country.

## **Emergency planning**

This council continues to play a lead role in the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum, bringing together partners to ensure the county's preparedness for natural or other disasters. Recent highlights of our work include:

- Three national awards for Exercise Watermark, held in 2011 to test the county's multi-agency response to the threat of flooding.
- The development of the East Coast Flood Group, which has been recognised as best practice and led to successful funding bids to Government.
- The successful passage of the Torch Relay through the county in the run-up to the London 2012 Olympics.

## **Creating safer communities**

This council remains committed to helping make Lincolnshire's communities safer, reducing crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, and we continue to provide funding to keep PCSOs as a visible presence on our streets.

Within weeks of the election of the new Police and Crime Commissioner last November, we also agreed a joint commitment on community safety priorities, including problems associated with drugs and alcohol, education in schools and domestic abuse prevention.

In other areas, Trading Standards, in partnership with the police and HMRC, continue to tackle the sale of illicit tobacco and alcohol, seizing over 30,000 cigarettes and 190 litres of alcohol in the last 12 months alone.

They have also taken tough action on counterfeit goods, which undermine local businesses and put consumers at risk from potentially unsafe products.

Trading Standards also support the farming community in ensuring animal welfare standards. Along with detailed audits of feed producers, this helps our farming's strong reputation for quality.

Meanwhile, the Youth Offending Service (YOS) was praised by inspectors in 2012 for having "committed staff who engaged effectively with children and young people", as well as making good use of resources.

The service is also performing well against three national indicators – the reoffending rate, those getting involved in crime for the first time, and young people sentenced to custody.

In addition, Lincolnshire YOS has:

- Maintained its strong commitment to partnership work, including the troubled families initiative.
- Increased its support for victims of crime, allowing for greater restorative justice whereby young people learn how their actions impact upon others.
- Delivered more than 2,600 hours of reparation – both direct and indirect – in the last year alone.
- Engaged with Anti-Social Behaviour teams across the county, ensuring that orders or contacts given to young people are supported.

In all its work, the service will focus on priorities in the Police and Crime Plan and engage fully with the Police and Crime Commissioner.

## **For all life's big moments**

It was third year running for our Registration and Celebratory Services, which again achieved Customer Service Excellence and 100% compliance with the Government's standard.

We have also worked successfully with the UK Border Agency regarding potential sham marriages, introduced SMS text messages for birth/notice appointments, and taken on volunteers to help preserve historic birth and death registers.

## **Reducing property costs**

As members know, we are reviewing and rationalising the council's properties, and the programme is on target to achieve its £1m savings target by 2015, with the total potentially rising to £2m by 2017.

In all, seven projects have been completed, with savings on 14 properties returned to landlords. To achieve this, 800 employees have been relocated and 10,000 square metres of floor space released. In Boston, the co-location of county council staff with the borough council reduced the cost of accommodation per employee from £2,000 to £700.

As well as making savings on property costs, the council has also exceeded its four-year target for capital receipts from the sale of surplus properties and land by £1m, generating £15m to reinvest in capital projects.

## **Business support**

Business Support as a countywide service has now been in place for 15 months, successfully bringing together a wide range of functions.

In the three years to 2012/13, £1.4m of staff savings were achieved, with targets to 2015 now brought forward. In addition, Business Support is set to achieve another informal saving of 5% during 2013/14.

Key recent projects include the assessment of disabled parking badge applications, with 12,265 issued over the last year, as well as work with the parking enforcement team to ensure badges are not abused.

## **Keeping residents informed**

As members will know, the council's publication for residents and businesses, County News, was relaunched in March 2012 as a new quarterly magazine.

There have now been five editions in the new format, which has been widely welcomed by readers. However, to gauge reaction more accurately, we have included a readers' survey in the current edition. It is also available online.

Other key features of the new-look County News include:

- A special 32-page edition produced every three months in conjunction with West Lindsey District Council for circulation in that area.
- The availability of two pages of advertising space in each edition to public sector organisations. This can generate over £6,000 each time – income offset against our costs. We also make space freely available for county council public notices.
- The reduced frequency of County News means it is now costing about £240,000 a year less than in 2010 when we produced 10 editions. Each copy costs just 15p to produce and distribute.

In other developments, the Communications department continues to expand our social media presence – a cost-effective and immediate way to reach residents keen on communicating with us in this way.

Our corporate Twitter account is now approaching 6,000 Followers, while the popular Gritter Twitter, after two winters of keeping the public up to date with winter road conditions, safety advice and gritting activities, attracts around 2,400.

In all, we have 22 Twitter and 13 Facebook accounts, and are also communicating with residents through YouTube, Pinterest, AudioBoo, Vine and LinkedIn.

## **Other highlights**

In a report of this kind spanning four years, it is not possible to list every single achievement of each department. However, given their hard work and success, it would be unfair to close without mentioning the following:

- The Customer Service Centre continues to provide an excellent service to the people of Lincolnshire. The change in service standards was successfully introduced in April 2102, and gold, silver and bronze levels are now fully integrated across all service areas. We have also retained our CCA accreditation and introduced a Citizens' Panel.
- Legal Services Lincolnshire goes from strength to strength, delivering above-target efficiency savings and increased external client income, for example from extensive project working with Lincolnshire Police.
- Procurement Lincolnshire, the shared service with the districts councils, has now achieved procurement savings of about £14m and been recognised by the LGA as an example of best practice.
- Our Audit department has continued its effective counter-fraud work, recovering £851,000 in 2011/12 and stopping a further £130,000 of attempted fraud. Over the past year, it has also generated income of over £500,000.

## **Councillor Big Society Fund**

This successful scheme allocates to good causes money made available by members foregoing a recommended increase in their allowances for two years.

Each member has had an allowance of £2,000 per year to allocate locally, and 578 individual awards have been made so far, totalling £279,000.

In many cases, the money has gone to small groups who have never received funding before, enabling them to play an even bigger role in their local communities.

## **Conclusion**

As I said at the start of this report, the tough economic conditions this country faces have made the past four years as challenging as any I can remember in local government.

For this council, that has meant striving to get more value out of every pound of taxpayers' money we spend, and keeping council tax down to help hard-pressed residents.

It has also meant protecting essential frontline services, and finding new and better ways of delivering them, while still investing sensibly to ensure future prosperity.

I believe that this authority – members and officers together – has risen to the task we set ourselves over the period of this council, and we can all draw real satisfaction from that.

However, Lincolnshire County Council never rests on its laurels, and there will be new challenges to meet after the voters have had their say in the election on 2 May.

For today, thank you again to all the members – from across the political spectrum – who have played such a full part in our shared four-year journey.

Whether you return to this authority next month, or move on to new endeavours, I wish you the very best for the future.

**Councillor Martin Hill OBE**  
**Leader of Lincolnshire County Council**

**12 April 2013**