

Agenda Item 5

EXECUTIVE DECISION – 5 JULY 2022

FOR LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL TO JOINTLY ESTABLISH THE INTEGRATED CARE PARTNERSHIP WITH THE INTEGRATED CARE BOARD

COMMENTS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

At its meeting on 30 June 2022, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considered the report and unanimously agreed to support the two recommendations to the Executive. The Board acknowledged the benefits of one ICP and one Health and Wellbeing Board (as well as one ICB) for Lincolnshire, as this would be beneficial in reducing the complexities, which are expected in other health systems where there was more than one upper tier local authority. It was hoped that the ICP would reduce 'silo' working, which has been a tendency of the NHS in the past.

In response to questions from members of the Board, the following points were confirmed:

- There was an aim to align both the membership and the meetings of the ICP and the Health and Wellbeing Board as much as possible. Under the legislation, the membership of the ICP was the responsibility for the ICP itself. However, there was an intention to seek representation on the ICP from higher education and the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership.
- In addition to the requirement to prepare an integrated care strategy, the initial focus of the ICP would be on prevention, exploring how the Council's public health function can further support NHS colleagues, and making use of the opportunities presented.
- Although the NHS Lincolnshire ICB would be in place from 1 July 2022, in effect replacing the Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group, acute hospital provider trusts would continue in their current form as separate NHS entities. Thus, United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust, and to a lesser extent North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust and Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust, as well as others, would continue to provide acute hospital services to Lincolnshire residents.

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PROCUREMENT OF LCC TELEPHONY SYSTEM

COMMENTS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

At its meeting on 30 June 2022, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considered the report and unanimously agreed to support the recommendations to the Executive.

In response to questions from members of the Board, the following points were confirmed:

- Members enquired about consequences from the long overdue “stabilisation upgrade” to the telephony system and queried why the upgrade was not carried out earlier as well as what could have been done to avoid implications by the delay. Officers explained that upgrade patches and version upgrades were deployed to ensure that software remained functional and up-to-date keeping systems functioning and technically compliant and this was the core purpose of that project. Numerous factors contributed to the delays including technical complexities in conjunction with the involvement of different organisations and key stakeholders, and more recently disruptions to the communications market during the pandemic. However, impacts to LCC had been well contained for many months now, including that the project had also provided an effective stabilisation of the existing software platform bringing service interruptions down limiting ongoing impact to LCC even whilst project completion was delayed in delivery. In addition, the target system had been available for some time with limited shortcomings to the requirements in the event LCC needed to perform an emergency migration away from the old system. Any commercial impact of the delay was mostly borne by the supplier and at each review continuing the technical project offered the best risk/cost profile for LCC. Officers highlighted the benefit of a stable and functioning system ahead of transitioning to the new system. When explaining why now was seen as the time to move to the next generation of telephony, Officers explained the pandemic saw disruption to the telephony market as organisations moved on mass towards alternative technologies to communicate, such as Zoom or Teams. This change saw new suppliers gain prominence in the market and a greater focus on products integrating with other solutions, such as Microsoft Office and Teams and away from putting telephones on desks. This combined with the Councils Digital Services aspirations means this was now the right time to move from the existing solution to a new solution that benefits from the recent advancements in functionality and provides the optimum base from which to re-procure the business operations element of the contact centre services.
- Members expressed a concern over the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) “bots” as part of automated interfaces with service users and emphasised in the need to maintain accessible and user-friendly services for all levels of technological ability, including elderly and vulnerable members of the public, ensuring that individuals would be able to reach services intended. Officers provided assurance that the new platform offered the opportunity to modernise interfaces with the public and that AI technology was used broadly to enable the use of natural language processing as means of processing and re-directing to the appropriate place (including leading to speaking with customer service representatives) as well as the use of chat functionality.

- Members enquired the ways in which the platform and new software solutions were being tested. Officers explained that testing was carried out by various groups of users from a diverse pool which included LCC staff members from across all directorates who were trained to look at solutions from a customer perspective, as well as established customer panels that allowed for customer opinions to be fed back from interactions with the systems under development.
- Officers added that a further work on how the interface will be designed was being proposed that aimed at understanding what market leading organisations were delivering and how to make the best use of the solutions available to support those who needed additional help, whilst enabling those who are able to transact by themselves. The intention was to start with lower complexity interactions and transactions and receive feedback whilst the system was being rolled out which would inform future developments.

REVIEW OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2021/22

COMMENTS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

At its meeting on 30 June 2022, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considered the report and agreed to support the recommendations to the Executive.

In response to questions from members of the Board, the following points were confirmed:

- Discussions on the allocation of underspends did not take place until the end of the financial year once the exact amounts and financial pressures were known. Each directorate would keep 1% of its underspend.
- The loss of £24m of government funding over the last two years had impacted significantly on the Highways budget. The additional funding proposed for Highways was supported by the Board given the state of the roads and footpaths were a main area of concern for local residents and led to several claims against the Council for pothole damage. A number of roads needed significant investment, particularly in rural areas which were affected by large agricultural machinery and urban areas due to the volume of traffic. The Highways Asset Management Plan would help to determine where the funding should be allocated according to priority.
- The Green Masterplan was a project included within the Development Fund. As part of the Green Agenda and in response to the rising cost of energy, the Council was investigating how it could get energy saving aids, such as solar panels PV and heat recovery, into the Council's buildings.
- The Council was facing considerable financial volatility and uncertainty due to inflation, on-going pay negotiations which were likely to be higher than budgeted for, higher energy costs when the current procurement deals for gas and electricity come to an end, and the increase in the national living wage which would impact on the Council's contracts with providers.
- The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government had announced at the Local Government Association Conference that there would be a consultation on a two-year financial settlement shortly. The fairer funding review, which was due this calendar year, may see limited redistribution across councils.

In addition, the following suggestions were made by members of the Board:

- That the ringfenced funding of £335,000 for civil parking enforcement and permitting should be used to employ more parking attendants across the county.
- That some of the underspend proposed for the contingency budget should be allocated to the Green Masterplan to fund energy saving schemes.

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CORPORATE PLAN SUCCESS FRAMEWORK 2021/22 - QUARTER 4

COMMENTS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

At its meeting on 30 June 2022, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considered the report and unanimously agreed to support the recommendations to the Executive.

In response to questions from members of the Board, the following points were confirmed:

- In relation to concerns raised about the ambition “Enable everyone to enjoy life to the full” and how achievable this was for all residents in Lincolnshire, the Deputy Leader of the Council agreed to raise this with the Leader of the Council and recognised that this ambition would not be applicable to all residents in Lincolnshire but for those that needed additional support.
- *PI 44: Days lost to sickness absence per FTE* - There had been an increase in mental health illness amongst Council staff since the Covid-19 pandemic. A range of measures had been put in place to support staff through staff networks, the Public Health team and HR. The Smarter Working Policy ensured bringing teams together could be maximised to help support colleagues. In addition, it was important to ensure that new starters to the Council were supported.
- *PIs 36 – 39: Waste & Recycling* - The headline figures for household waste recycling indicate that recycling rates were falling which was a concern. This was a reflection of changing habits during the pandemic where people were more at home and their approach to managing waste had changed. The rollout of the separate paper and card collections in three district areas was bringing benefits in terms of an upturn in the recycling rates and improved quality of the waste. There was a need to continue to improve and look at other initiatives to increase recycling rather than have waste go through the Energy from Waste plant. The Environment Act would bring further expectations and responsibilities on the Council as the waste disposal authority and the districts as the waste collection authorities in terms of how other elements of waste, such as food waste, were disposed of. The Council was waiting for revised legislation and guidance from the government and the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee would be kept informed of these developments. In response to a query on whether more in-depth data on recycling could be provided, it was agreed that the presentation of the information would be looked into to make these performance reports and the performance reports to the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee more effective for Members.
- *Activity A23: Advocate for investment in our transport and energy infrastructure, digital connectivity and schools, championing active, sustainable* - it was clarified that the work involved would be to deliver a report to help establish the Council’s evidence, based on an understanding of the infrastructure requirements. The challenge of finding a supplier to deliver this work reflected the challenges that exist in the wider marketplace which needed to be taken into consideration when planning future project timelines.

- *Activity A28: Champion Lincolnshire as a destination of choice to visit, live, relax, work and do business* - the handover of the Cluster Hub building at the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone had been delayed due to supply chain issues. The handover of the building was now scheduled for early July.
- *PI 32: Percentage of superfast broadband coverage in residential & business premises* – it was recognised that those areas of Lincolnshire which still did not have access to superfast broadband were at risk of being left even further behind with the roll out of ultrafast and gigabit broadband.
- *PI 43: Total number of contacts received* - there was now a focus on early intervention measures since the complaints team had been brought back in-house. This was resulting in an increase in the number of complaints being resolved early which was not specific to any one area of the Council. The complaints process was continually being reviewed and the complaints team would continue to be supplemented with some short-term support to enable further improvement in the early intervention approach. Further information on the complaints process would be provided at future meetings of the Audit Committee. A copy of the Ombudsman decision notice which had contributed to the increase in the number of complaints would be circulated to the Board.
- *PI 2: Percentage of pupils in outstanding or good schools* and the 16.6% of pupils not in outstanding or good schools. Some of those schools were part of the Lincoln Anglican Trust, which was run by the Church of England. The Council had raised concerns about this Trust with the Department for Education historically and one secondary school within the Lincoln Academy Trust had been judged inadequate, and a new sponsor was sought by the Department for Education who could not find another sponsor, and as a result this would delay the school being able to improve. Across all schools, the pupils were fairly evenly split between primary and secondary schools, and a breakdown of these figures would be provided to the Board. In addition, inspections of schools were paused during the pandemic and those schools not judged good or outstanding have had to wait a long time to be reinspected and to have the judgement changed to reflect any improvements in the school. The Council's role in school improvement has changed significantly over the last few years and the Council was increasingly focussed on ensuring schools were inclusive of all children such as those with SEND and in receipt of multiple fixed term exclusions.
- *PI 1: Percentage of schools that are judged good or outstanding* – Lincolnshire's figures were skewed by the large number of small rural primary schools, which limited the amount of per pupil funding they received, and the selective education system in Lincolnshire. Ofsted applied the same criteria for good and outstanding to every secondary school regardless of whether they were selective or non-selective which meant that some of the benchmarking for non-selective schools could be challenging when there was a cohort of children at the higher end who were being educated in another school in the same area. There was a range of other measures which also needed taking into account when considering the performance of children.