

**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY
 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
 12 JUNE 2017**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR T BRIDGES (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors B M Dobson (Vice-Chairman), B Adams, Mrs A M Austin, G E Cullen, R Grocock, R P H Reid, Mrs E J Sneath, C L Strange and Dr M E Thompson.

Councillors R G Davies (Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT), M J Storer (Executive Support Councillor for Economy and Place) and A H Turner MBE JP (Executive Support Councillor for Commercial and Environmental Management) were also in attendance.

Officers in attendance:-

James Baty (Senior Project Officer (Economic Research)), Justin Brown (Commissioner for Economic Growth), Andy Gutherson (County Commissioner for Economy and Place), Cheryl Hall (Democratic Services Officer), David Hickman (Growth & Environment Commissioner), Daniel Steel (Scrutiny Officer) and Steve Willis (Chief Operating Officer, Development Services).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT COUNCILLORS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M A Griggs and H Spratt.

It was noted the Chief Executive, having received a notice under Regulation 13 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, had appointed Councillor R Grocock as a replacement member of the Committee in place of Councillor H Spratt, for this meeting only.

2 DECLARATIONS OF COUNCILLORS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Councillors' Interests at this point in the proceedings.

3 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICERS

The Executive Support Councillor for Economy and Place advised that focus was currently on the outcome of the General Election and awaiting details of the Government's work programme.

However, it was noted that the Conservative Party Manifesto 2017 had made a strong commitment to the items that were likely to be discussed at this Committee. Three examples were cited: the importance of creating a good environment for business growth; the provision of high quality training for individuals; and a leading

role for Local Enterprise Partnerships. It was advised that how the Government intends to take those items forward would be closely followed, including the ongoing discussions about the detail of Brexit, such as international trade deals and future agricultural policy.

The Executive Support Councillor advised that he had attended several meetings with the Executive Councillor for Economy and Place and various officers. It was highlighted that the Executive Support Councillor had emailed all Members of the Committee with information on the current activity of the Executive Councillor and relevant team, and it was agreed that this email would be re-circulated to Members of the Committee.

The Committee was advised that work was currently underway to develop a programme of activity that meets the Lincolnshire Conservatives' manifesto commitments. For example, a number of business events and schemes had already been arranged, which included a major Business Innovation workshop being held on 15 June 2017; a meeting with senior managers from the Economic Development team was planned to agree which business site projects should be taken forward as a priority; and a website that businesses could use to attract staff into hard-to-recruit vacancies in the area would be put in place in the near future.

It was also noted that the Executive Support Councillor was due to attend the Greater Lincolnshire Agriculture and Horticulture Forum on 13 June 2017. It was expected that the main topics for discussion would be the needs of the farming community from a domestic agricultural policy.

4 ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY 'WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO'

A report by Andy Gutherson (County Commissioner (Environment and Economy)) was considered, which provided an introduction to the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee and the services that were included in the Council's Commissioning Strategies for Environment and Economy.

Detailed information was provided as part of a presentation, which covered the following areas: -

- Organisational structure;
- Commissioning strategies;
- Scrutiny input;
- The Midlands Engine / Midlands Connect;
- Policy and Plans;
- Skills and productivity;
- Lobbying and attracting funding for Lincolnshire;
- The Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership's vision for the coastal economy;
- Overview of current projects;
- Lincoln Integrated Transport Strategy;
- Peppermint Junction Road Improvements, Holbeach;

- South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone;
- Western Growth Corridor; and
- Performance reporting.

During consideration of the presentation, the Committee was invited to ask questions where the following points were noted: -

- It was noted that one of the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) major priorities was utility provision in Lincolnshire;
- A Councillor raised a concern regarding the high percentage of housing planning applications not being progressed after planning permission had been granted. In response, the Committee was advised that the monitoring and delivery of housing was a district council planning function. However, it was advised that the adoption of local plans should ensure that the right and most desirable locations to build housing had been allocated;
- In response to a question, it was highlighted that the Greater Lincolnshire LEP had produced a water management plan, which focused on water management as a driver of economic growth on the east coast and throughout Greater Lincolnshire;
- A Councillor raised concerns regarding the lack of projects within the Boston area and that the benefits of the Midlands Engine might not reach as far as Boston. In response, the Committee was advised that the Boston Barrier, which had been funded by the Environment Agency, should encourage economic growth within the area of Boston. There was also a Boston Transport Strategy 2016-2036, which was focused on both easing existing problems and supporting the future development of the town through identifying a range of short, medium and long term proposals to improve access within the town and the immediate surrounding area;
- It was noted that the County Council was a member of the Midlands Engine and the priorities for the County would be promoted;
- A discussion took place regarding asset management vs highways demand. It was requested that the Committee considered an item on this matter at a future meeting however, it was noted that this topic was under the remit of the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee and therefore would be passed onto that Committee; and
- A Councillor raised concerns regarding the safety of the A15 and expressed support for making this road a dual carriageway. In response, the Committee was advised that this was not a priority for the Department of Transport, as the statistics had indicated that there was no safety issue and the road did not have sufficient usage to warrant being upgraded to a dual carriageway. However, the statistics had also indicated there was more of a need for improvements to be made to the A17.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation and the comments of the Committee be noted.

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5 ANNUAL STATE OF THE ECONOMY REPORT 2017

Consideration was given to a report by James Baty (Senior Project Officer (Economic Research)), which enabled the Committee to consider and comment on the Annual State of the Economy Report 2017, which was produced in April 2017 for the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

It was noted that the report was subtitled "10 things we learned about the Greater Lincolnshire economy during 2016", and was intended to provide an annual review of the main metrics which had an impact on the local economy.

During the presentation of the report, the following key points were noted: -

- Lincolnshire's economy over the last five years had grown at a slightly higher rate than the national average;
- Business survival rates were generally improving over the longer term. However, it was noted that the business survival rates for North East Lincolnshire were lower than the national average, owing to a statistical anomaly;
- It was requested that in future, all statistical information, where possible, was also broken down by district council area. It was noted that the vast majority of the data was supplied by the National Office of Statistics so it may not also be possible to provide certain information at district council level;
- A query arose on the number young people pursuing higher education outside the County and whether this had an impact on the county's workforce. In response, Members were advised that although a significant number of young people between the ages of 18-22 pursued higher education outside Lincolnshire. There was also evidence of a significant number of people who returned to careers in the county in their 30s;
- It was reiterated that the information contained within Annual State of the Economy Report 2017 was a snapshot in time. Further to this, the Committee was advised that the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership's website and the Lincolnshire Research Observatory were good sources of information;
- At any one time, there were approximately 13,000 vacancies in Lincolnshire. Approximately 4,000 of those vacancies were advertised through the Lincolnshire Job Centre with the remaining vacancies advertised through their own organisations;
- It was noted that the Office for National Statistics was due to publish its latest data covering 2016 onwards later on in 2017 for example the data in relation to the business survival rates.

RESOLVED

That the comments of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee be presented to the Executive Councillor for Economy and Place.

6 ENGAGING WITH MIDLANDS ENGINE AND MIDLANDS CONNECT

Consideration was given to a report by Justin Brown (Commissioner for Economic Growth), which described the work of the Midlands Engine partnership and considered how Lincolnshire County Council should engage with the partnership.

The Committee was advised that the Midlands Engine was a partnership which was seeking to promote growth across the whole of the East and West Midlands.

The Commissioner for Economic Growth presented the report to the Committee and provided the Committee with an opportunity to ask questions, where the following points were noted: -

- The Committee supported being 'at the table' and engaging as part of the Midlands Engine;
- It was suggested that both the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee and the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee could assist officers in developing a list of key priorities/priority economic projects for Lincolnshire;
- It was suggested that a letter of support was sent on behalf of the Committee to endorse the list of priorities identified through the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership to the Midlands Engine partnership;
- The Committee supported the identified Newark improvements (A1/A17/A46 junction) as a project which would have economic benefits as a gateway to Lincolnshire;
- The Port of Boston was highlighted as an important consideration for the Midlands Engine;
- The Committee strongly highlighted the need to ensure the whole of Lincolnshire benefited from the work of the Midlands Engine.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the ongoing development of the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership, and its use of the Strategic Economic Plan to attract resources into Lincolnshire, be supported.
- (2) That the priorities which have been identified through the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership's analysis, including the Committee's suggested priority areas, be supported.
- (3) That officers be requested to produce a strong overall economic narrative for engaging with the Midlands Engine along with specific project cases, which articulate the County Council's priorities to the Midlands Engine partnership.
- (4) That the Chairman be requested to write a letter of support, on behalf of the Committee, to endorse the list of priorities identified through the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership to the Midlands Engine partnership.

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7 ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report by Daniel Steel (Scrutiny Officer), which enabled the Committee to consider and comment on the content of its work programme for the coming year to ensure that scrutiny activity was focused where it could be of greatest benefit.

Following a discussion on the content of the work programme, the following points were noted: -

- A presentation on the archaeological finds from the Lincoln Eastern Bypass construction be added to the work programme for a future meeting;
- The Committee was advised that the item on the *Water Management Plan* was the vision of the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership. The purpose of the item was to update the Committee on the Water Management Plan and to shape policy around those elements of the plan where environmental and economic benefits overlapped;
- In response to a question, the Committee was advised that the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee would be asked to consider an item on asset management vs highways demand, as this topic was within the remit of that Committee.

The Chairman referred to the proposed new meeting dates for 2017/18, which had been emailed to all Councillors on the Committee on 5 June 2017. A list of the revised dates had been tabled for the Committee's consideration.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Work Programme be approved, subject to the inclusion of any amendments made at the meeting.
- (2) That the proposed new meeting dates for 2017/18, as tabled at the meeting, be noted.

The meeting closed at 12.20 pm.