

**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
24 NOVEMBER 2020**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR MRS W BOWKETT (CHAIRMAN)**

Councillors C R Oxby (Vice-Chairman), Mrs A M Austin, M A Griggs, A G Hagues, C Matthews, E J Sneath, H Spratt and Dr M E Thompson

Councillor C J Davie, attended the meeting as an observer

Officers in attendance:-

Justin Brown (Assistant Director Growth), Angela Driver (Senior Enterprise Growth Officer), Nick Harrison (Democratic Services Officer), David Hickman (Head of Environment), Vanessa Strange (Head of Infrastructure Investment), Simon Evans (Health Scrutiny Officer), Dan Clayton (Sustainability Manager), Steve Golightly (Senior Sustainability Officer), Helen Jenkins-Knight (Senior Sustainability Officer), Vanessa O'Brien (Sustainability Officer),

Also in attendance:-

Revd Canon Alan Robson (Agricultural Chaplain, (Lincolnshire Rural Support Network) and Alison Twiddy (Lincolnshire Rural Support Network)

**31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor G Cullen.

**32 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations.

**33 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 20 OCTOBER 2020**

**RESOLVED**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**34      ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS  
AND LEAD OFFICERS**

Councillor C J Davie, Executive Councillor for Economy and Place, updated the Committee on a number of issues relevant to the Committee. There had been a number of recent Government announcements: investment in defence – a vital sector in Lincolnshire; a ten point plan for a green industrial revolution setting out the framework that would lead to major investment by businesses and stimulating further growth in the green economy which was a burgeoning industry in the County. On 26 November it was hoped that there would be good news for Lincolnshire from the Chancellor's Comprehensive Spending Review. National headlines suggested announcements for a national infrastructure strategy, civil service decentralisation, addressing levelling up through the Green Book and the launch of UK Shared Prosperity Fund - all of which could have huge impacts for the County.

Through the Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub, Government messages were being amplified to ensure that businesses were fully prepared. Growth Hub Advisers had been up skilled accordingly and dedicated EU Transition Advisers would be on hand to support businesses. New BEIS (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) funding had been provided to enable the provision of proactive telephone outreach calls to businesses to understand what they had done to become prepared and support any gaps /concerns. Specialist EU Transition technical support programmes, webinars and 1 to 1 guidance were listed on the *Building Business Resilience section of the BusinessLincolnshire.com* website. There was a local helpline provided by the Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce.

Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) would be hosting a *Go Digital virtual conference* on 26 November and over 100 people were booked to attend. Topics included how to embrace technology to grow, free digital tools to help business grow faster and how to sell via Amazon. The third Tourism Commission meeting would take place on 25 November and focus on product development, specifically what aspects of greater Lincolnshire and Rutland's current visitor offer were the ones that visitors most enjoyed, and how could they be future proofed for 2025. LCC would be represented at the Midland Forum for Growth - a 3 day virtual conference to showcase investment opportunities for the South Lincolnshire FEZ (Food Enterprise Zone), and Team Lincolnshire partners were presenting on opportunities for repurposing Lincolnshire high streets, future skills and education and there was a spotlight on the Lincoln Science and Innovation Park.

**35      LINCOLNSHIRE RURAL SERVICES NETWORK**

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Infrastructure Investment that provided an overview of the work of the Lincolnshire Rural Services Network (LRSN). LRSN were a volunteer led organisation that provided pastoral and practical support to farming and rural people during periods of anxiety, stress and problems relating to their families and businesses. LRSN had received a £40,000 grant from Lincolnshire County Council in 2019 as a result of the work of the Committee.

The Committee received a presentation from Alison Twiddy, Project Manager, and Alan Robson Agricultural Chaplain, from the Lincolnshire Rural Support Network on 'Supporting Lincolnshire's Agricultural and Rural Community to Live and Work Well'. The presentation included information on health screening and case work statistics as well as highlighting farming's future significant challenges which included Brexit, the weather, animal diseases, protecting the environment, farming's public image and export and import markets and tariffs.

Members considered the report, and during the discussion the following comments were noted:-

- It was thought that going forward there were likely to be business casualties in farming, particularly from the small and medium sized ones. It was noted that those that planned for the future and had the relevant skills and knowledge and had diversified where possible may have a better chance of survival in the longer term. Those businesses likely to experience difficulties may require assistance to transition out of the farming business in the future. It was suggested that any viable business needed to be able to provide a satisfactory lifestyle.
- There was continued support for the LRSN to develop programmes to support the farming sector.
- It was recognised that it would be important to help any farmers who felt isolated and lonely, particularly as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- It was suggested that support for young farmers entering the industry was important as was support for those about to retire and who may require help and advice on winding down the business or selling their farm in addition to general retirement advice.
- Farmers would need to be made more aware of the future challenges in order to make preparations and plan for the future.
- Was there anything more Lincolnshire County Council as farm/landowners could do to support tenants? Rent increases for some tenants were a concern.

RESOLVED: 1) That the report and presentation be noted;  
 2) That a further update to the Committee be given in six months' time;  
 3) That the Head of Infrastructure Investment discuss with the Executive a potential refresh of the Tenants Strategy.

### 36 POST COVID MID TERM ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Consideration was given to a report from the Assistant Director – Growth, which described:- the economic impact of Covid-19 as currently known; set out the actions that had already been carried out by Lincolnshire County Council (LCC), the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), and other partners to reduce the impact; explained the priorities of the midterm economic recovery strategy which the LEP had co-ordinated and would communicate to Government.

The report outlined the main economic impacts of Covid-19 as: rising unemployment, tightening labour market, reduced business investment, rapid digitisation, and localised impacts particularly on the tourism and hospitality sectors which provided a

high proportion of jobs/business activity. Also outlined was the detail of the mid-term strategy which was structured around three headings: protect, progress, and prosper.

The report also outlined examples of support given to businesses as follows:- District councils had distributed more than 19,000 grants with a value of £227m to businesses; LCC's Business Growth Hub had provided advice to 600 businesses and provided web based information that had been used by 42,000 users; redundancy task forces had been designed by the LEP and trained so that they could stand up should significant redundancies occur; the Local Enterprise Partnership had attracted £26m of infrastructure grant funding which was being invested in accelerating schemes like LCC's Holbeach Food Enterprise Zone; weekly assessments of the economic impact in Lincolnshire had been produced and government officials had been briefed weekly.

It was noted that there was a significant risk that young people with no qualifications would find it more difficult to enter the labour market. It was also noted there had been a reduction in part-time jobs available.

The Committee noted the ways that Covid-19 was impacting on the local economy and congratulated the officers and partner organisations on the steps they had taken to reduce that impact and for the additional work they had been undertaking. The content of the mid-term strategy was supported and members submitted the following comments on the scope of the short-term actions that were proposed to tackle the economic impact of the pandemic:

- Could LCC and District Councils spend more money in the local economy?
- Were the LCC procurement powers being used in the most optimal way?
- Continue to support, where possible, businesses with their digital offering and moving to online trading.
- It was acknowledged that the broadband signal was poor in some areas of the County and there was a need for rapid improvement to assist the competitiveness of existing and future businesses, the public who worked from home and prospective businesses considering moving to Lincolnshire. It was noted that LCC were in discussions to improve digital connections as well as how to create local energy companies.
- Increase the number of charging points for electric cars at tourist sites, particularly along the coast should be planned to encourage tourism.
- How could self-employment be promoted further?
- The key issues identified were tackling unemployment, advising businesses, promoting job vacancies and matching people to vacancies, helping businesses to diversify and promote themselves, and repurposing the high street and buildings previously occupied by shops and businesses no longer in use. Members suggested that they would like to see more local shops and traders alongside recognised national chains and for high streets to embrace change, particularly as they had been in decline before the Covid-19 pandemic.
- It was important to ensure resilience and sustainability was built into Lincolnshire businesses.

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- Economic planning in the future would need to address the County as a whole rather than concentrating on specific areas. One aim should be to plan to provide the infrastructure to encourage businesses to relocate to Lincolnshire.
- It was acknowledged rents were out of reach for some businesses and unaffordable rent increases forced businesses to close or relocate. There was a disconnect between what London based property agents thought rent should be in Lincolnshire and affordability.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the content of the mid-term strategy be supported.

37      BUSINESS LINCOLNSHIRE GROWTH HUB

Consideration was given to an update report from Angela Driver, Senior Commissioning Officer, Enterprise, on activity delivered by the Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub and the activity of other business support partners, with particular emphasis on the Covid-19 response.

The Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub had been launched in April 2015, following a Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) requirement for all Local Enterprise partnerships to facilitate the development of a Growth Hub to provide a single place to go for business support, helping businesses from all sectors at all growth stages. Case studies that highlighted the type of businesses the Growth Hub worked with, and the support provided, were highlighted in Appendix 1 of the report.

It was noted that the Growth Hub was performing well with positive feedback from service users. Within the bounds of available resources, the service was continually developing to respond to the changing needs of businesses and filling identified gaps in provision. There had been a huge effort from Economic Development officers and contracted suppliers to continue to deliver services through remote delivery models and to ensure appropriate support services are in place for businesses. There had been a large uptake in demand for services.

It was reported that there had been some recent enquiries from people wanting to rent land to start flower growing businesses. There was support from the Committee to investigate whether there was anything which could be done to assist these enquiries. Digital grant schemes, HR Hub and the redundancy schemes were particularly welcomed by the Committee. The Committee requested further information be circulated on the upcoming *Go Digital Conference*.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the Growth Hub be supported in highlighting services to business contacts.

**38      DRAFT GREEN MASTER PLAN**

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Environment, which provided a progress update on the Green Master Plan (GMP). On 17 May 2019, the Council had committed to making its activities carbon neutral by 2050. As a result, the Council had begun to develop a GMP as the mechanism that it would use to deliver net zero emissions. The GMP was a detailed action plan which set out Lincolnshire County Council's roadmap on how it would achieve carbon neutrality, as well as how the Council would support partners and communities in achieving a more sustainable future. The final report would be presented to the Committee at their January meeting before going to the Executive and County Council in February.

The Committee were asked to consider an initial draft of the GMP and provide guidance for officers to continue to develop the strategy prior to pre-decision scrutiny in January 2021.

Members considered the report, and during the discussion the following comments were noted:-

- The principles, as worded in the Plan, were supported.
- There was support for the draft plan in its present form which it was thought demonstrated a serious commitment to drive the green agenda forward and engage local communities and businesses. It was recognised that there was a range of areas that LCC could influence.
- The Committee were interested to know what savings had been made by LCC since the Covid-19 pandemic had started in terms of its carbon footprint.

(Councillors Mrs E Sneath and C J Davie gave their apologies for the remainder of the meeting)

(The meeting adjourned from 12:14pm to 12.16pm due to a loss of the live audio streaming. The adjournment was used to ensure that public access to the live audio stream of the meeting was restored).

Following the resumption of the meeting, the Chairman reiterated the reports recommendation and accordingly it was:-

**RESOLVED:** That the progress to date on the Green Master Plan be supported.

**39      FIFTH LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN**

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Infrastructure Investment, on the emerging concepts for Lincolnshire County Council's Fifth Local Transport Plan and an overview of the work being undertaken and the themes being considered. The Committee were invited to consider the development of the Local Transport Plan and provide input to help shape the document's development. It was also suggested that the Committee receive a further report in early 2021.

The production of a Local Transport Plan was a statutory requirement, under the Local Transport Act 2008, for local authorities where the long term policy structure for

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local transport delivery would be set out, including a set of scheme priorities and a vision connecting across the area's wider policy backdrop. The Plan would become one of the crucial strategic documents for Lincolnshire and would sit alongside: Greater Lincolnshire's Local Industrial Strategy, the Economic Recovery Plan, Greater Lincolnshire's Planning for Growth agenda, LCC's corporate plan, the Green Master Plan.

The document would address transport modes such as walking and cycling to freight and infrastructure, from roads to ports to cycle paths and would look at the rail and local bus services. The report suggested that the fundamental challenge for our future transport network would be how to balance the demand for clean growth and improved connectivity with an increasingly congested transport system that was, in many places, at capacity. The aim was to ensure that the existing infrastructure was used to its maximum efficiency through key strategic infrastructure investments and a significant mode shift from the private car to public transport and active forms of travel.

The Committee welcomed the report and thought that since the Covid-19 pandemic there was more awareness of the alternative options of walking and cycling rather than travelling by car.

RESOLVED: That the report be received and a further report be submitted to the Committee in early 2021.

40      ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK  
PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report from the Scrutiny Officer, which enabled the Committee to comment on the content of its work programme for the coming year to ensure that scrutiny activity was focussed where it could be of greatest benefit.

It was noted that the January agenda was particularly large and consideration could be given as to whether some items could be deferred to the following meeting. It was noted that the Committee had requested a further update from Lincolnshire Rural Service Network in six months' time and a further update on the Fifth Local Transport Plan.

RESOLVED: That the work programme be approved and amended as outlined above.

The meeting closed at 12.27 pm