

**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
12 JANUARY 2021**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR MRS W BOWKETT (CHAIRMAN)

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

Councillors C J Davie, D McNally and E J Poll, attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Becky Allen (Communications) (Strategic Communications Lead), John Coates (Head of Waste), Ian George (Historic Places Team Manager), Matthew Harrison (Senior Commissioning Officer - Flood Risk), Nick Harrison (Democratic Services Officer), David Hickman (Head of Environment), Nicole Hilton (Assistant Director - Communities), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Neil McBride (Head of Planning), Keith Noyland (Head of Finance - Communities), Vanessa O'Brien (Sustainability Officer), Vanessa Strange (Head of Infrastructure Investment), Sarah Wells (Business Manager, Corporate Property Team), Adrian Winkley (Minerals and Waste Policy and Compliance Manager), Steve Golightly (Senior Sustainability Officer) and Ellen Massey (Sustainability Officer)

41 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs E J Sneath and Councillor H Spratt.

42 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest declared at this point in the meeting.

43 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2020

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

44 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS

Councillor C J Davie, Executive Councillor for Economy and Place reported that since the last meeting of the Committee the Chancellor had announced a new series of grants totalling £4.6 billion for UK businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors to support and protect jobs during the third national lockdown. Businesses in the three sectors would be able to claim a one-off grant worth up to £9,000. There

would also be a £594 million discretionary fund made available to support other impacted businesses, in addition to a further £1.1 billion for local authorities and Local Restriction Support Grants worth up to £3,000 a month. The Growth Hub would continue to be a bed rock of support for the business community providing support through grants and advice.

Across the County, small business tenants, which totalled around 200, in our business centres and industrial units were being supported. The offer of a three-month suspension of rent collection from April to June 2020 was designed to support their cash flow as the effect of the initial, national lockdown and other restrictions came into force from March. All but a handful of tenants had taken up the offer, and many had said what a huge benefit and peace of mind it provided in those days and weeks of uncertainty. Phased repayment plans had been put in place over the remainder of the year to continue to reduce the pressure on their cash flow.

He reported that the Tourism Commission had now had four out of its scheduled six meetings and had covered investment, product development and marketing so far. Its final report with recommendations would be produced in late February. Plans were underway to commission new research to understand how we might best support the digital business skills across the visitor economy. Similar proactive examples included the work with the Local Enterprise Partnerships to identify key pipeline infrastructure projects that would also form part of the county's Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Plan and plans being made for the Levelling Up Fund.

He reported that work continued to make strong progress on the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone north west of Holbeach. Following the award in August of £6.4m from the Government's Getting Building Fund, which was focused on Covid-19 recovery, the Council was moving at an unprecedented pace with the delivery of a Cluster Hub building on phase 1 of the scheme. This would provide a high quality business and collaboration space for small and start-up businesses working in the agri-tech sector and related businesses in the food supply chain, and would be the flagship of the development. Further access roads to open up additional plots on Phase 1, and the preparations for Phase 2, in partnership with South Holland District Council, were also underway, and due for completion by the end of the year. The University of Lincoln's national Food Centre of Excellence was on track for completion in February. Agents had been appointed to promote the development, and the launch of the new branding – South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone, at the heart of the UK Food Valley – would take place in early February.

He expressed his support for the committee who would be leading the way with the agricultural to look at the future of farming through a scrutiny panel which was being set up.

45 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PROPOSALS 2021/22

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Finance – Communities, on Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals 2021/22, which would be presented to the Executive on 2 February 2021. The views of the Committee would be reported to the Executive as part of its consideration of this item.

This report outlined the budget proposals for the next financial year 2021/22. The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2021/22 had not been issued at the time of writing the report, and the budget proposals for 2021/22 were therefore estimated at this stage. This report specifically looked at the budget implications for the Council's Environment and Economy services. The coronavirus pandemic had impacted significantly in the 2020/21 financial year, on both Council services and the local economy, and central Government had provided grant funding to cover the Council's costs and losses arising directly from the pandemic. It was assumed that where direct impacts carry on into 2021/22 these would continue to be funded by Government grant.

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

- The Committee was pleased to see that the Government was still providing the Council with grants during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- It was recognised that costs had increased due to the pandemic and would have to increase to reflect the rise in the National Living Wage from April 2021.
- In relation to the separated paper and card recycling scheme, this was now being rolled out across the county. Based on the returns from the trial, it was expected that it would eventually generate an income to the Council after taking into account the costs to the Council. The separated collections would therefore have both environmental and financial benefits in the long term.

RESOLVED:

1. That the budget proposals be noted;
2. That a summary of the above comments be passed on to the Executive as part of its consideration of the final budget proposals.

46 REVIEW OF THE LINCOLNSHIRE MINERALS AND WASTE LOCAL PLAN

Consideration was given to a report from the Minerals and Waste Policy and Compliance Manager, Planning and the Head of Planning, on a Review of the Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan, which would be presented to the Executive on 2 February 2021. The views of the Committee would be reported to the Executive as part of its consideration of the item. Members were reminded that an amended Appendix A to the report had been circulated to them and published on 7 January 2021.

A provisional review of the Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (LMWLP) had recently been undertaken by officers in accordance with the statutory procedure ("the Review") (Appendix A of the report). This had concluded that the following policies were not fully effective and should be updated: Policy M1 (Recycled and secondary aggregates), Policy M4 (Proposals for sand and gravel extraction), Policy M5 (Limestone), Policy M11 (Safeguarding of Mineral Resources), Policy M13 (Associated Industrial Development), Policy W1 (Future requirements for new waste facilities), Policy W3 (Spatial strategy for new waste facilities), Policy W4 (Locational

criteria for new waste facilities in and around main urban areas, Policy W6 (Landfill), Policy W7 (Small scale waste facilities), Policy SL3 (Waste site and area allocations). The report also proposed that other policies would benefit from being updated in order to: improve the clarity and focus of the policies; ensure greater consistency between the policies; allow any subsequent changes to legislation/national policy to be incorporated into the updated plan; ensure account was taken of any new social, economic and environmental priorities (including those arising from the pandemic) and enable greater public involvement in the process.

Subject to the Executive's endorsement of the Review, the approval of the full County Council would be sought to update the LMWLP. Work on the update would primarily be undertaken by the in-house Minerals and Waste Policy Team, but with some supporting documents prepared by external consultants. The process would be carried out in accordance with the programme set out in the proposed Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Development Scheme (Appendix B of the report) involving a number of stages - each requiring public consultation.

The report recommended that the Executive endorse the Review of the Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (Appendix A) and recommend to the full County Council that the whole Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan was updated in accordance with the programme set out in the proposed Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Development Scheme (Appendix B of the report) and that the Executive authorise the Head of Planning Services to make any minor amendments to the Review of the Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (Appendix A of the report) and the Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Development Scheme (Appendix B of the report) before they were considered by the full County Council, which may be necessary to allow them to be published on the County Council's website.

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

- The County Council had objected to the Draft Nottinghamshire Minerals Local Plan due to the low level of provision made for sand and gravel, which was based on past sales. Nottinghamshire's past sales had been suppressed due to sites being mothballed, and sand and gravel had instead been imported from Lincolnshire sites. There were therefore implications and concerns for Lincolnshire from the proposed levels, as these might result in the need for additional quarries in Lincolnshire to meet the shortfalls in Nottinghamshire.
- There had been a move away from landfill sites in Lincolnshire, with most household waste now taken to the Energy from Waste site, and it was expected that there would be even less reliance on landfill sites in the future. Any proposals for waste sites would be subject to public consultation. Councillor E Poll advised that only about 5000 tonnes of household waste went to landfill each year which could not be disposed of by other means.
- There were specific sites allocated in the current plan for sand and gravel extraction as operators had submitted sites during the preparation of the plan for consideration. However, there was little interest from the waste industry in identifying waste sites and only one specific site had been allocated.

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- Policy W5 had not been identified as needing to be updated but would be reviewed with all the other policies. Concerns were raised about the inconsistency of policy W5 which meant some planning applications would be considered by the relevant district council and others by the County Council depending on the origin of the waste. It was suggested that it would be more consistent to have one council deal with planning applications in relation to policy W5.

RESOLVED:

1. That the recommendations to the Executive outlined above and in the report be supported;
2. That the comments of the Committee as outlined above be passed on to the Executive for its consideration.

47 LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S GREEN MASTERPLAN

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Environment, on Lincolnshire County Council's Green Masterplan, which would be presented to the Executive on 2 February 2021 for approval. The views of the Committee would be reported to the Executive as part of its consideration of this item. The reports recommendation was that the Draft Green Masterplan be presented to the Executive for approval. The Head of Environment took the Committee through the online version of the Green Masterplan as the final version would be electronic rather than in paper form. He paid tribute to his colleagues in the Sustainability Team who had made a significant and valued contribution in the production of the Plan and driven it forward.

The Council had committed to achieving net carbon neutrality by 2050, in line with current national targets. The Green Masterplan provided a framework for achieving that ambition, as well as co-ordinating action across the County Council and with partner organisations. Without an approved Masterplan the Council was less likely to achieve the target it had set.

In response to the developing national agenda, local authorities had been working through national networks such as ADEPT and Solace to develop common approaches to key elements of the sustainability agenda. Principally these were:- Growing the zero and low carbon economy; Retrofitting homes and buildings; Decarbonising transport; Planning to deliver zero carbon development that protects and enhanced nature; Reducing waste and encouraging sustainable consumption; Restoring nature for all; Developing local authority funding, governance and accounting systems that were fit for purpose.

The Green Masterplan was designed to articulate the Council's own future actions to reduce its emissions, and also to provide a coordinating framework that would engage partners in the Council's approach, while supporting them to achieve their own ambitions. The Plan was integrated within the corporate transformation programme.

Key areas for delivery in the next few years included: 20% further reduction in carbon emissions from LCC's operations by 2023 (from 2018 baseline); Emissions of carbon from street lighting across Lincolnshire reduced by over 1,000 tonnes a year by 2024; Increased on-site generation of low carbon electricity through provision of solar panels on Highways depots and through refurbishment of assets such as Orchard House; Longer term decarbonisation of transport; Further reductions in LCC staff travel costs and mileage; Promotion of tree and habitat provision across Lincolnshire, working with the Local Nature Partnership to deliver the Nature Strategy for Greater Lincolnshire; Supporting partner organisations to achieve their ambitions for sustainable operations; Developing a suite of adaptation measures, such as improved resilience to flood risk and the impacts of climate change; Strengthening the role of sustainability in the Council's decision-making processes during 2021-22.

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

- The Sustainability team was congratulated on the document, which contained a lot of practical information and was dynamic.
- While the drive for electric vehicles was supported, one important issue would be selecting the alternative energy source to power large lorries over long distances. Alternative methods of fuel were available, such as bioethanol, but there was a need to modernise technology to run on alternative fuels. A trial had been conducted with Stagecoach buses to run on gas, but the biggest issue identified was refuelling. It was expected that a wide range of solutions and technology would be required for sustainable travel over a broad timeframe.
- Plastic free communities were being established nationally and also across Lincolnshire, where leaders within a local community were invited to lead and work with local communities and businesses to reduce plastic waste. There was growing public pressure to reduce plastic waste and companies would in future become 100% responsible for their waste which should result in a further reduction in plastic waste.

RESOLVED: That the recommendation to the Executive on the Draft Green Masterplan be supported and the comments from the Committee as outlined above be passed onto the Executive for its consideration.

48 DEVELOPMENT FUND - DRAINAGE INVESTIGATIONS AND FLOOD REPAIRS

Consideration was given to a report from the Senior Commissioning Officer - Flood Risk - Place, on the Development Fund – Drainage Investigations and Flood Repairs, which would be presented to the Executive on 2 February 2021. The views of the Committee would be reported to the Executive as part of its consideration of this item.

Funding to the value of £2.2 million (capital £2m, revenue £200k) had been made available to address drainage and flooding issues in Lincolnshire. A programme of work had been developed between the Floods Team and Highways with overall

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spend and delivery to be completed by March 2022. A governance structure had been established to facilitate the delivery of the works programme with update and progress reports to be made throughout the duration of the programme.

The Executive was requested to approve the Development Fund - Drainage Investigations and Flood Repairs Governance Structure attached in Appendix A of the report and the Programme of Works attached in Appendix B of the report; and delegate to the Executive Director – Place, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT, and the Executive Councillor for Economy and Place, the authority to take decisions to proceed with individual schemes and the terms of entering into any contractual documents to give effect to the schemes.

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

- There would be one project team drawing in staff from Highways and the Floods Team to co-ordinate the programme of work. A Programme Delivery Board would be coordinating delivery of the projects and reporting into senior managers and project sponsors.
- The programme of work was welcomed, particularly as there were a number of schemes listed that would address long standing issues in communities. The Committee was pleased to see that these schemes would finally happen and that there was a good spread across the county. It was now important to get these schemes completed as soon as possible.
- Additional schemes to replace the current schemes, once completed, would be dependent on funding in the future. The Council would continue to bid for funding for work in the future and it was recognised that obtaining funding would be more challenging in the future, particularly as a result of the economic circumstances arising from the pandemic.

RESOLVED:

1. That the recommendations to the Executive as outlined above be supported;
2. That the comments from the Committee as outlined above be passed on to the Executive for its consideration.

49 COUNTY FARMS

Consideration was given to an update report from the Business Manager - Corporate Property, on the County Farms Estate in terms of current challenges, the Agriculture Act and future strategy.

It was noted that the Covid-19 pandemic had caused some disruption to markets, such as for prime beef and chipping potatoes, but the economic impact for most arable farmers was relatively limited. The Council's primary concern was for the welfare of the tenants and the potential social impact of the lockdown measures and the isolation that this could bring to people already living in some relatively remote locations. Regular contact processes with tenants was put in place and contact details of Savills, Lincolnshire Rural Support Network (LRSN), and the Royal

Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI) were widely shared and encouraged as support networks.

The report made reference to the extreme weather experienced in Lincolnshire last year in particular record rainfall which had an economic impact on farming. Also noted was the action carried out to support tenants which included: The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI) had attended the annual tenants meeting on 27 February 2020. Invitations had been sent to all tenants and all contact details included; RABI details had been included within the annual newsletter to all tenants (February 2020); Emails sent to tenants on 17 March 2020 with team contact details and details of RABI and LRSN. Email sent to tenants on 29 June 2020 confirming contact details, reiterating RABI/LRSN's details, and sharing a link to Covid-19 Business Support; Email sent in October with link to the Farmworker App, with all contact details for Savills and RABI/LRSN. In respect of financial support and the potential difficulties in meeting rental demands, tenants had been encouraged to make contact as soon as possible in order that support and payment plans can be agreed.

Following the Agriculture Bill receiving Royal Assent in November 2020, DEFRA had produced its Transition Plan 2021-24, providing some clarity on plans for post Brexit farm support in England. The report highlighted information on the impact on direct payments. It was reported that DEFRA intended to run a Lump Sum Exit Scheme in 2022. This would allow farmers who wished to exit the industry to take their remaining transition period Direct Payments as a capitalised lump sum. The Lump Sum Exit Scheme was intended to assist farmers who were thinking about retiring whilst creating opportunities for new entrants into the farming sector.

(Councillor C J Davie gave his apologies for the remainder of the meeting and left at this point)

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

- There was no list for those people expressing an interest in entering into farming.
- It was noted that there were no plans to increase rents next year. Rents were considered on an individual basis every three years. Members had some concerns that rental increases would make it difficult for farmers already finding it difficult to manage with the challenges of the pandemic, Brexit and the recent bad weather. It was suggested that the Council should endeavour to retain existing tenants and continue to provide support where possible.
- The Committee asked if ways to encourage young people to enter farming could be considered.
- That a further update on County Farms be submitted to the Committee in six months' time.
- The Chairman suggested that the Business Manager - Corporate Property should be part of the scrutiny panel being set up to look at farming.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and a further update on County Farms be submitted to the Committee in six months' time.

50 HISTORIC PLACES TEAM STRATEGY

Consideration was given to a report from the Historic Places Manager, on an Historic Places Team Strategy. The Historic Places Team moved to Planning Services in 2019 following a Directorate review. The team ran the county's Historic Environment Record and uses the information held to promote the sustainable management of the historic environment. The Team provided advice on archaeology and the historic environment to local planning authorities and recovers the cost of providing this service. In order to promote a wider understanding of the county's rich heritage the team run a number of projects and was currently being funded by Historic England to produce an Extensive Urban Survey – a study of the thirty most historic towns in the historic County of Lincolnshire. The team also hosted the County's Finds Liaison Officer, a post part-funded by the British Museum as part of the national Portable Antiquities Scheme. In the context of an ever-increasing emphasis being placed on the role heritage can play in the economy, in health and well-being, and in education, it was considered essential to set out the key objectives the team would work to. This provided the opportunity to align the team's objectives with the County Council's Corporate Plan and to respond to national policy contexts.

The strategy set out how Lincolnshire County Council (LCC), through the work of its Historic Places Team and Planning Services, would work with partners to manage change in the County's historic environment and work to ensure the vision for the County's rich historic environment was realised through developing strong partnerships and by working with local people. A final draft of the Strategy, following amendment in the light of any comments made at the meeting, would be submitted to the Committee at its meeting due to be held on 13 July 2021, for immediate implementation upon full endorsement.

(Councillor M Griggs gave his apologies for the remainder of the meeting and left at this point)

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

- The report was welcomed and supported.
- There had been an impact on visitors to heritage and visitor sites in the County due to the Covid pandemic but Lincoln had fared well when compared to the statistics on visitor numbers to sites in other parts of the country. Particular reference was made to the comparatively large numbers who had visited Lincoln Castle and museums. It was noted that the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight had been significantly oversubscribed.
- A suggestion was made that encouragement should be given for the public to connect with Lincoln Heritage Forum.
- It was thought that community led heritage initiatives would have a greater longevity than those which were Council led.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the comments as outlined above be included in the final draft to be presented to the Committee in six months' time.

51 SERVICE LEVEL PERFORMANCE REPORTING AGAINST THE
PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 2020-2021 - QUARTERS 1 AND 2

Consideration was given to an update report from the Head of Economic Development, the Head of Environment and the Head of Service – Waste, on the Service Level Performance Reporting against the Performance Framework 2020-2021 - Quarters 1 and 2 for Economy, Flooding and Waste. The report was presented to the Committee by the Head of Infrastructure Investment.

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

- Members welcomed the report and the good performance under difficult circumstances especially with regards to the pandemic and flooding caused by the exceptional weather last year.
- There had been some challenges meeting the household recycling target. Reference was made to the peaks associated with the Covid lockdowns where the public were at home more and had more packages delivered. Also more households had taken the opportunity to have a clear out. All recycling sites were currently open and measures had been taken to protect staff and visitors.
- The recycling curb side glass collection in East Lindsey sometimes caused a number of issues with broken glass being left on the curb and road.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

52 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.

Councillor Dr M Thompson notified the Committee of an interesting link to The Institute for Sustainable Food at the University of Sheffield which he would pass on to Democratic Services so that they could email members.

RESOLVED: That the work programme be approved.

The meeting closed at 11.57 am