

**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY  
 COMMITTEE  
 13 JULY 2021**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR R WOOTTEN (CHAIRMAN)**

Councillors T R Ashton, M A Griggs (Vice-Chairman), A J Baxter, M D Boles, I G Fleetwood, A G Hagues, G J Taylor and P A Skinner

Councillors Mrs A M Austin, T J G Dyer, and D McNally, attended the meeting as observers.

Councillors Mrs J E Killey, Mrs W Bowkett, C J Davie attended the meeting as observers via Teams.

Officers in attendance:-

Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Ian George (Historic Places Team Manager), Nicola Grayson (Extensive Urban Survey Project Officer, Planning), Nick Harrison (Democratic Services Officer),

Officers in attendance Via Teams:- Becky Allen (Communications) (Strategic Communications Lead), Amanda Bond (Special Projects Officer), Mick King (Head of Economic Infrastructure), Samantha L Harrison (Enterprise Commissioning Manager), David Hickman (Head of Environment), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Marianne Marshall (Strategic Communications Lead), Neil McBride (Head of Planning), Mary Powell (Commissioning Manager (Tourism)), Mike Reed (Delivery & Transformation Manager (Waste)), Vanessa Strange (Head of Infrastructure Investment) and Simon Wright (Principal Officer (Regeneration))

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors I Carrington and A P Maughan. It was reported that, under Regulation 13 of the Local Government Committee and Political Groups) Regulation 1990, Councillor P A Skinner was replacing Councillor A P Maughan and Councillor T R Ashton was replacing Councillor Carrington for this meeting only.

An Apology for absence was also received from Councillor L Wootten.

Councillor J E Killey gave an apology for non-attendance in person but did attend Via Teams.

**2 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

None received.

2

**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**13 JULY 2021**

3

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 16 FEBRUARY 2021

RESOLVED:

That minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS

Councillor C J Davie, Executive Councillor for Economy and Place, reported that work was still on-going in unprecedented times and this was certainly true for the businesses that the Council supported. The Council continued to be responsive to needs and were championing business, creating opportunities and supporting growth. He noted that the economy had grown again this month – by an estimated 0.8%. This was the fourth consecutive month of growth, albeit slower compared with March (2.4%) and April (2.0%). There had been many positive investments across Lincolnshire from existing and new employers and changes to employment levels will be watched keenly. For many businesses from the visitor economy to the agri food sector they were recruiting and they needed many more applicants. At the recent Coastal Developers Forum, which he chaired, businesses were keen to share with MPs and Civil Servants the number of vacancies that they were currently carrying and how it was limiting what they could offer. The Council played a vital role in enabling this dialogue with government and continued to make the voice of Lincolnshire businesses heard in Whitehall and Westminster.

The Levelling Up agenda was a huge opportunity for Lincolnshire and it had been a busy few months developing bids – the Executive had tasked officers with supporting district bids alongside the Council's own submission to the Levelling Up fund and the associated Community Renewal Fund (CRF). The Council's Levelling Up Fund bid focussed on movement around the UK Food Valley – in particular improvements to the A16 corridor. The Community Renewal Fund would be announced in early August. Lincolnshire's bid included three programmes that would be delivered by the Council. They focused on delivery in three areas: Green Lincolnshire, Digital Lincolnshire and an Entrepreneurs Academy. There would be linkages developed between each of the three programmes and to other proposed CRF activity and any business facing activity would be delivered in line with the Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub offer to ensure that any CRF investment was logical, accessible and added value to the current business offer and that customers accessed the best support to meet their individual needs. Another area of work highlighted was the continued investment in businesses – from the Rural Business Grants to Digital voucher scheme. These had ranged from: Outside catering facilities to support changed trading patterns post COVID, to new tourism projects, to food business investment, through to village shops. Focus had been on helping businesses survive from and respond to the pandemic, and as rules changed, there would be further opportunities for the economy to open up.

## 5 MARKET DEEPING GROW-ON BUSINESS SPACE

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Economic Infrastructure, Growth and the Special Projects Officer, on the Market Deeping Grow-On Business Space, which was the subject of a decision by the Executive Councillor – Economic Development, Environment and Planning and the Leader of the Council between 19<sup>th</sup> July and 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021. The views of the Committee would be reported to them as part of their consideration of the item.

In February 2021 in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning and the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee, the Economic Infrastructure (EI) team had set out a proposal to deliver Grow On space in the Deepings area through alterations to the Eventus Business Centre in Market Deeping. The main aims of the transformational activity were to: increase lettable space overall (assisting both growing businesses and newer ones); introduce new agile / 'co-working' space, with provision for safe and social distancing but which also offered greater choice and flexibility for businesses in the longer term; provide for safer and more user-friendly management of the building; and implement Mechanical and Electrical (M&E) improvements/upgrades (where appropriate). The anticipated benefits/outcomes were: an increase of over 2,000sq ft of lettable space; new opportunities for flexible and collaborative working for existing tenants and local businesses; improved layout, accessibility, safety and operability for tenants, visitors and staff; increased income generated from new lettable space; and efficiency savings resulting from upgrades to ageing equipment/fittings.

In the context of the pandemic, the Economic Infrastructure Team had sought to assess the current market, and had revised the strategy accordingly in order to best respond to the needs of the business community and this was outlined in the report. Additionally, the project now captured the work associated with necessary maintenance and safety enhancements now the building had been operational for over 10 years. The identification of fire safety and repair works would impact on the cost of the proposed project, the details of which were included in the report .

The report recommended that the Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning: -

- 1) Approve in principle the development of Grow On business space in the Deepings area through alterations to the Eventus Business Centre in Market Deeping comprising the whole of Project 1 and the whole of Project 2 as set out in the Report;
- 2) Delegate to the Executive Director for Place, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning, authority to approve the final form of and the entering into of all contract documentation to give effect to the above decision.
- 3) That the Leader of the Council (Executive Councillor for Resources, Communications and Commissioning) approve the scheme business case for the development.

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

- One member expressed disappointment that there had not been enough funding for Eventus 2. It was noted that there was currently a 95% occupancy rate with no waiting list and that it had been thought that the development of a further centre at this time would be high risk.
- The centre needed to be future proofed with such facilities as video conferencing.
- The development was welcomed as a positive development in providing more space for businesses. There was a demand it was thought for more incubator space.
- There were businesses located in the centre who had achieved significant growth and would require additional space and it was hoped that space could be provided for these types of businesses, allowing for the remaining space to be let.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the recommendations to the Executive Councillor – Economy and Place and the Leader of the Council (Executive Councillor - Resources and Communications) outlined above and in the report be supported;
- 2) That the comments of the Committee as outlined above be passed on to the Executive Councillor – Economy and Place and the Leader of the Council (Executive Councillor: Resources and Communications) for their consideration.

#### 6 SERVICE LEVEL PERFORMANCE REPORTING AGAINST THE PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 2020 - 2021 - QUARTER 4

Consideration was given to an update report from the Head of Economic Development, Head of Environment, and the Head of Waste, on the Service Level Performance Reporting against the Performance Framework 2020-2021 – Quarter 4 for Economy, Flooding and Waste.

This report set out the performance of the Tier 2 Service Level Performance measures for 2020/21 Quarter 4 for Economy, Flooding and Waste which were within the remit of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee. The Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee was invited to consider and comment on the details of the performance contained in the report and recommend any changes or actions to the relevant Executive Councillor.

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

- 'Near-miss' data related to reports where properties did not flood but had appeared at risk. Information was being compiled on this to be used to reinforce other sources of information to prioritise future capital works, to keep the emergency response organisation and arrangements up to date, and to help target the developing programme of improving the performance of riparian (privately owned) watercourses.

- Initiatives were being developed to encourage community groups to remove and dispose of rubbish. Education campaigns were also on-going.
- The initiative to collect cardboard and card in Boston was highlighted as a project which would enable uncontaminated waste to be collected and recycled. Cardboard and card were sometimes with the normal collections contaminated by food waste and could not be recycled.
- There was a view from one member that the performance on waste recycling was inadequate and had been for some time. This was unfortunate as demand for recycling was increasing. It was also thought that contamination rates were also poor and particular reference was made to the disposal of nappies.
- It was thought that there needed to be more educational campaigns on recycling. For example grass should be composted and mulched and not put in the green bin.
- It was noted that District Councils had different policies re bin provision which had an effect on recycling and what waste could be accepted.
- The Head of Environment undertook to provide information to members following the meeting on the criteria used for the scheme to protect properties from flooding.

RESOLVED:

That the report and comments, as outlined above, be noted.

## 7 THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON LINCOLNSHIRE'S HIGH STREETS

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Infrastructure Investment, on the Impact of Covid-19 on Lincolnshire's High Streets. The report highlighted that the current Covid-19 pandemic had exacerbated the trajectory of change previously identified. It was noted that the dramatic move to home working, increase in internet shopping and home deliveries had removed dependence on town centres at a pace more revolutionary than evolutionary, yet the need for community remained.

The report provided some context for the current changes, and highlighted some of the work happening across the public sector, considered briefly what the Council's ability to affect change might be, and in particular a proposal to use publicly owned buildings and land to increase footfall, including the provision of "hubs" in town centres. The report suggested that many people were now seeking a place to drop into to work and to meet – perhaps for half a day. Digital hubs were physical spaces with access to superfast broadband alongside community and business focussed services. Members provided digital connectivity, support the development of digital skills, and encouraged the use of emergent digital technologies.

The report outlined the Investment received or applied for to date through the levelling up agenda.

The Committee was asked to consider the international, national and local trends affecting Lincolnshire's High Streets, debate what could form a helpful High Street review, building on the 2019 review and share thoughts and ideas to help shape the development of hub provision in Lincolnshire, and the future funding landscape such as the UK Shared Prosperity

Fund. They were also asked about their experience of their local towns following the pandemic and whether businesses in their divisions were working differently following the pandemic.

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

- It was noted that some towns featured a number of absent landlords who had no direct personal interest in the towns and whom it was difficult to contact. Some shops had been empty for years and it had been difficult to contact the landlords who were sometimes private investment companies.
- There was a desire to repurpose shops and empty spaces for housing.
- The pedestrianisation of high streets and other improvements such as reducing traffic congestion, improving air quality and increasing the availability of parking should be considered to work towards towns becoming 'destination' areas. Particular reference was made to focussing on Gainsborough market place.
- The promotion of joined up and joint working between local councils to coordinate improvements.
- The new Transport plan for Lincolnshire would address the current challenges and be considered by the Committee later in the year.

RESOLVED:

That the report and comments be noted.

## 8 LINCOLNSHIRE EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY - PROGRESS REPORT

Consideration was given to a progress report from the Historic Places Manager the Extensive Urban Survey Project Officer on the Lincolnshire Extensive Urban Survey. The report set out the background to the project, which was being funded by Historic England. The project was producing a report for each of the thirty historic towns of Greater Lincolnshire and formed part of a national programme. The towns would be evaluated to assess their historic character and identify the nature and extent of surviving heritage assets whether as standing structures, below ground archaeological deposits or in the surviving historic town plan. The principal outputs would be an Historic Character Assessment report for each town. These would be made available digitally through the project's bespoke website. The project outputs would be used to support and inform a variety of planning policies from national objectives as reflected in the NPPF to the local policies of respective local planning authorities.

The report highlighted that the pandemic had had an impact upon the delivery of aspects of the project. For example, the County Archives and Local Studies Libraries had been inaccessible for large parts of the last year and progress had been slowed. The pandemic had also hugely impacted the amount and type of community engagement that had been able to be done.

(Councillor Mrs A Austin attended the meeting at this point)

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

- The report was welcomed as a good tool for planning and tourism and members looked forward to the results of the project.
- It was suggested that a launch party could be held to publicise the end of the project and highlight the results which could result in information which had significant publication value.

RESOLVED:

That the report and comments be noted.

## 9 TOURISM COMMISSION UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report from the Tourism Manager, on a Tourism Commission Update. The Tourism Commission had been set up by the County Council to take a strategic role in supporting and shaping the future of the industry within Greater Lincolnshire. It had met six times and by February 2021 had produced a series of recommendations for future work that were now in delivery and these recommendations were: 'By the end of 2025 the Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland visitor economy would be: a well-known, thriving and attractive destination, well on its way to flying the 'Green Tourism' flag, future focussed, adapting to a continually changing audience, developing a joined up 'New products' selection, showcasing the quality and sustainability of the region, taking online bookings for holidays and attractions, embracing digital opportunity, working hard to attract large scale Investments to continually improve the offer, creating highly qualified and highly motivated employees, a warm welcome, a place to tell your friends about, a place to come back to'.

The Government, in June had produced its own recovery plan and their aims had a good fit with these recommendations. Work had been undertaken in Greater Lincolnshire during the past year to prepare for the recovery phase. It was reported that new recovery funding put in place by the County Council would help to deliver the recommendations and further external funds would be applied for.

Following a comment from a member it was confirmed that visits to the website had increased significantly since the advertising campaign which had commenced in June and were continuing to increase. The next report to the Committee would include more detailed data on website use.

RESOLVED:

That the report and comments be noted.

10 HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE OPERATION

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Waste, on the Household Waste Recycling Centre Operation which was the subject of an Executive Councillor decision between 19 -23 July 2021. The views of the Committee would be reported to the Executive Councillor for Waste and Trading Standards as part of their consideration of this item.

The Committee was asked to consider whether it supported the recommendations to the Executive Councillor for Waste and Trading Standards and agree any additional comments to be passed on to the Executive Councillor for Waste and Trading Standards in relation to the item.

The recommendations were:

- 1) Subject to the removal of Covid-19 social distancing guidance, to approve the removal of the HWRC booking system to allow residents to have uncontrolled access to the HWRCs;
- 2) Approve the continuation of a registration system to be used for residents with vans and trailers;
- 3) Delegate to the Executive Director – Place, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Waste and Trading Standards, authority to determine the final form of and make changes to the detailed arrangements of 1) and 2) to address any operational concerns.

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

- The Chairman of the Committee reported that he had received on 12 July 2021, correspondence from one of the site contractors which he had passed on to the Executive Councillor for Waste and Trading Standards and added that he would consult the Executive Councillor on his decision.
- It was acknowledged that recycling and waste disposal had been one of the main complaints from residents during the last local elections.
- The booking system was introduced to control the number of daily visits to the Recycling Centres due to Covid and in line with reducing contact between staff and members of the public using the facilities.
- The system had been in place for the past 12 months; in line with the relaxation of social distancing guidelines (from the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021) and in light of evidence that: the registration system was near its maximum capacity, thus preventing residents from making use of the service as they could not book a slot; the number of ‘no-shows’ after bookings were made (12-15% currently); and also considering that the system had failed on a number of occasions in the past 12 month period, there was a strong case for reverting to the previous model that allowed uncontrolled entrance to residents to enable better use of the sites. There were suggestions that fly tipping had increased since the booking system had been introduced however the report indicated that there was no clear evidence for this. New initiatives to tackle fly-



tipping were being worked on, including community groups, education, and looking at how it could be included in crime prevention publicity.

- The demographic of the service users was taken under consideration to prevent commercial users from using these facilities. A system of pre-registration for vans and trailers was being considered.
- Members expressed concerns on the numbers of ‘no-shows’ and on the abuse of the facilities by trade and commercial users at the expense of Lincolnshire taxpayers.
- Members suggested that following removal of the booking system, the service should be advertised as being accessible only to Lincolnshire residents and that spot checks should be formally implemented as a means of ensuring the appropriate use of the facilities.
- Assurance was sought that physical support from site staff would be provided to the elderly and vulnerable residents in line with the Equality Act 2010, to assist them to unload their vehicles. Members were pleased to hear that contractors, subject to staff availability, had agreed to provide assistance to members of the public on a discretionary basis, whilst continuing to adopt strict instructions in regards to supporting and prioritising the elderly and frail where possible.
- Members expressed concerns at the number of complaints from Boston residents in relation to the booking system for the facilities as well as the increase in fly-tipping. The profile of the local community was highlighted as featuring a low wage economy; residents living in small size accommodation (flats/ shared houses) which lacked facility and space for storage of rubbish and recyclables; and a throwaway culture due to limited resources to invest in high quality items, which were disposed of when faulty. This economic profile was consistent with trade professions suggesting that the household vehicles could often be a commercial van. This social profile was also associated with varying working-hour patterns which often did not tie in with facilities’ opening hours and bookable slots.
- Alternative suggestions for operating the service were made, including keeping the booking system in place, exploring the possibility of adopting a hybrid approach, installing an ANPR system at the entrances to sites, highlighting peak hours on the website, varying the open days, and extending the opening hours to seven days per week. However, it was recognised that some of these suggestions would entail increased costs and staffing resources, and that there was a need for the service to remain flexible and accessible to service users.

Councillor M A Griggs moved an amended recommendation 2 as follows, which was seconded by Councillor M D Boles:-

*‘Looks at the removal or fairer use of a registration system used for residents with vans and trailers’.*

Following a vote it was unanimously:-

RESOLVED:

That the recommendations, including an amended recommendation 2, as outlined above, be supported and the views of the Committee be reported to the Executive Councillor for Waste and Trading Standards as part of their consideration of this item.

11 CONSTRUCTION OF THE HUB BUILDING, SOUTH LINCOLNSHIRE FOOD ENTERPRISE ZONE

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Economic Infrastructure, Growth and the Principal Officer – Regeneration Economic Infrastructure, on the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone which was being presented to the Leader of the Council (Executive Councillor for Resources, Communications and Commissioning) and the Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning between 15 and 23 July 2021. The views of the Committee would be reported to them as part of their consideration of the item.

The purpose of the report was to seek formal approval for the construction of a managed workspace building (the Hub) on the Council owned Plot 12 of the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone in order to provide a range of business space for new and small agri-tech businesses, and approval for the scheme appraisal for the construction. The construction and operation of the Hub building would provide a mixture of small workshop, office and collaboration space designed to encourage and support new and small enterprises in the Agri-tech sector. The building would be strategically important to ensure the future success of the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone by providing the space and becoming a focal point for all the occupiers and visitors to the Food Enterprise Zone.

It was noted that £5.174million had been identified for the construction of a 1,422 sq. m Hub building following the success of a recent "Getting Building Fund" bid which awarded £6.368million to the Council for development. This would meet the full capital cost of constructing the Hub building and the Council would not be required to make a capital contribution to this aspect of the project. The mix of office space and workshops would be let at market rents and on "easy in, easy out" lease terms, in line with the Council's other managed workspaces.

The Committee was asked to consider the report and determine whether it supported the recommendations to the Leader of the Council (Executive Councillor for Resources, Communications and Commissioning) and the Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning as set out in the report and agree any additional comments to be passed on to them.

The recommendations were that : the Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning approved the further development of the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone through the construction and management by the Council of a managed

workspace building (the Hub Building) on the Council owned Plot 12; that the Leader of the Council approve the capital business scheme appraisal for the construction of the Hub Building and approve the entering into of a contract for the main construction works.

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

- Members supported the recommendations as a welcome addition for businesses.
- In relation to environmental features such as biodiversity and renewable energy, beyond the minimum statutory requirements of the development, it was reported that there was now an opportunity to look at alternative power solutions which may be more environmentally friendly. For Phase one, a traditional model for energy supply was followed due to spatial restrictions and to ensure sufficient space was reserved for business. Phase two provided a great opportunity to explore green energy opportunities emerging from gaining access to a greater land parcel.
- Members hoped that the development would encourage greater use of the port of Boston.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendations as outlined in the report and above be supported and the comments above be forwarded to the Leader of the Council (Executive Councillor for Resources, Communications and Commissioning) and the Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning.

## 12 PROPOSALS FOR SCRUTINY REVIEWS

Consideration was given to a report from the Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Committee to make suggestions for in-depth Scrutiny Reviews, for consideration and decision by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 30 September 2021.

On 17 June 2021, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board had agreed to request that each overview and scrutiny committee identify potential topics for in-depth scrutiny reviews, which would be undertaken by the two Scrutiny Panels, taking into account the prioritisation toolkit. The Board would consider all the suggestions at its meeting on 30 September 2021, with a view to making a decision on which reviews would be approved. This Committee was requested to consider whether it would wish to make any suggestions to the Board.

It was noted that the Committee at its last meeting in February 2021, had identified support to farmers as a potential topic for a scrutiny review. The Committee had established a working group, which met in March 2021, to identify some key lines of inquiry for a potential scrutiny review. The Board had considered a proposed terms of reference at its meeting on 17 June 2021. There were mixed views expressed at this meeting about whether a review of Lincolnshire agricultural sector support would be a good idea at this moment in time, especially in the light of the uncertainty surrounding the outcome and content of the proposed Agricultural Bill currently going through Parliament.

**12**

**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**13 JULY 2021**

There was support for reviews on agricultural sector support, town centre improvements and a more in depth look at recycling rates in order to reduce contamination and waste and increase recycling.

RESOLVED:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board be informed that the Committee had suggested reviews on:- agricultural sector support; town centre and high street improvements; and, a more in depth look at recycling rates in order to reduce contamination and waste and increase recycling.

**13**      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.

The Committee noted that an additional item on the Coastal Resilience and Innovation Programme had been added to the work programme. The Chairman also proposed a Committee site visit to look at robotics in the food processing industry.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme as amended above be approved.

The meeting closed at 12.30 pm