

**PUBLIC PROTECTION AND
 COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY
 COMMITTEE
 16 MARCH 2021**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR N H PEPPER (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors A N Stokes (Vice-Chairman), W J Aron, K J Clarke, Mrs C J Lawton, C R Oxby, A H Turner MBE JP, L Wootten and R Wootten

Councillors: L A Cawrey and Mrs S Woolley attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Sara Barry (Head of Safer Communities), Graeme Butler (AIP Manager), Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Diane Coulson (Assistant Director - Public Protection), Paul Dolby (Senior Trading Standards Officer), Fiona Fielding (Senior Commercial and Procurement Officer), Nick Harrison (Democratic Services Officer), David Hickman (Head of Environment), Nicole Hilton (Assistant Director - Communities), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Emma Milligan (Trading Standards Operational Delivery Manager), Lee Sirdifield (Assistant Director – Corporate) and Ryan Stacey (Assistant Chief Fire Officer)

49 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ms K Cook and Councillor B Young, Executive Councillor for Community Safety and People Management.

50 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations.

51 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 26 JANUARY 2021

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 January 2021, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

52 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS
 AND CHIEF OFFICERS

The Chairman reported that the April meeting of the Committee had been cancelled due to the close proximity of the May local elections.

53 LOCAL FLOOD INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Environment, which clarified and formalised the Council's discretionary provision of sandbags during flooding incidents, and set out the process for providing this resource. This was being presented to the Executive on 7 April 2021. The views of the Committee would be reported to the Executive as part of its consideration of this item.

The report recommended to the Executive that it approve the maintenance of a stock of 10,000 sandbags to be available for distribution in the event of a flooding incident; approve the "Proposed new protocol for provision of sandbags" as set out in the report; and delegate to the Executive Director – Place, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Commercial and Environmental Management, authority to approve arrangements with District Councils for the collection of contaminated sandbags for disposal.

Lincolnshire County Council would maintain a total stock of 10,000 sandbags and sand to fill them, equally distributed between the four highways depots. The bags would mostly be stored empty in order to prevent degradation of the materials should they remain unused for any significant period of time. In anticipation of small-scale local need each depot would maintain a stock of 50 pre-filled sandbags. Pre-filling of additional sandbags would be undertaken in the event of severe weather forecasts predicting high likelihood of impacts. Requests for sandbags could be made by parish and town councils, along with other organisations, to the County Council on behalf of local communities. Priority locations would be:- where there was a risk to life and or property; Vulnerable members of the community; critical infrastructure.

The report outlined in detail how the process of requesting sandbags worked and the collection and disposal process of contaminated sandbags.

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

- It was questioned whether the even distribution of sandbags at each depot was the best scenario and would they be better distributed where flooding was more likely to occur, this thought was dispelled as it was thought flooding could occur anywhere in Lincolnshire.
- The main stocks of sandbags would be evenly distributed across the four primary highways depots, though additional stock would be held in a further four to ensure (eight depots in total) even coverage across the county. The protocol would increase the speed of response to localised incidents, particularly when the severity of the incident was expected to be high. Members of the public would contact the 24-hour flood line number which links into this system.
- Lincolnshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) maintained links to alternative methods of flood prevention on its website. An important resource for these was the National Flood Forum which researched different technologies and approaches. The government was actively promoting the enhancement of resilience of local communities. There were regular reviews of alternative

methods of flood prevention, in particular flood door barriers and inflatable bags. This was an active area of government research at present.

- The LRF was working closely with Parish and Town Councils with their local flood plans. Larger authorities had better capacity to manage major incidents due to the sheer logistics of deploying large amounts of materials.
- There was some concern that building on floodplains was still an issue. Due to recent adverse weather incidents, some older properties were also now at risk from flooding. As the lead local flood authority, the Council provided advice on planning applications to local planning authorities. Flood risks were minimised by working with District Councils and partners through the Lincolnshire Flood Risk and Drainage Management Partnership to prepare in advance for when incidents happened and for adverse outcomes.
- Support would be given to elderly residents and vulnerable individuals with the provision and positioning of sandbags where needed. It was planned to deploy sandbags directly by the Council and partner organisations where appropriate, as well as promoting this capacity locally rather than leaving distribution of sandbags to communities. The LRF maintained plans for safeguarding vulnerable members of the community which was a key element to consider both at strategic planning and operational delivery.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee support the recommendations to the Executive, as set out in the report and outlined above;
2. That a summary of the comments made be passed on to the Executive in relation to this item.

**54 SERVICE LEVEL PERFORMANCE REPORTING AGAINST THE
PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 2020-2021 - QUARTER 3**

Consideration was given to a report from the Assistant Director – Public Protection; Assistant Director – Communities; Assistant Director – Corporate; Assistant Chief Fire Officer, the AIP Manager on behalf of the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership, which set out the performance of the Tier 2 Service Level Performance Measures 2020/21 Quarter 3 that were within the remit of the Committee.

The report detailed the performance measures for:- Community Safety, Fire Safety, Libraries and Heritage, Road Safety, Trading Standards and Volunteering.

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

- Officers were thanked for their comprehensive and informative reports.
- It was noted that one of the three fire incidents reported involved a mobility scooter. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer undertook to inform the Committee about the nature and cause of the fire following the meeting.
- Discussion took place about the most frequent causes of fire, which included electrical fires, misuse of battery or mains appliances – particularly mobile phones and counterfeit charging units.

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- It was noted that the Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on targets and performance.
- There had been an increase in products removed from the market by Trading Standards. In particular hand sanitizers which were often not up to the required standards and that Trading Standards had been required to provide greater support and guidance on this during the pandemic.
- Trading Standards were managing the challenging conditions within the current staffing resources as best they could based on intelligence received and risk assessments.
- The Chairman thanked all those involved in voluntary and community organisations for all their hard work over the last 12 months which had been a particularly challenging year due to the pandemic.

RESOLVED: That the Committee reviewed the report and performance measures for Quarter 3.

55 FOOD SAFETY ENFORCEMENT WITHIN TRADING STANDARDS

Consideration was given to a report and a presentation from the Trading Standards Operational Delivery Manager, on a review of the delivery of Food Safety enforcement within the Trading Standards Service in Lincolnshire.

The report made reference to: interventions at food establishments; food complaints, the Primary Authority Scheme, provision of advice to businesses, food sampling, food safety incidents, liaison with other organisations, training and competency, activity and outcomes on food safety and standards in 2020-2021.

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

- There were spot inspections of premises in line with inspection plans. The service was heavily reliant on intelligence received.
- The on-line inspections of food business websites carried out in place of site visits due to the Covid-19 pandemic had been successful in identifying a number of non-compliant businesses and had been a worthwhile alternative exercise.
- The programmed food sampling was due to be completed. Officer initial samples were lower than expected due to restriction on inspections because of the pandemic.
- Instead of conducting site visits, Trading Standards had taken the opportunity to complete a project to review the level of compliance in food products being sold online in Lincolnshire. Of those, 33 had been identified as non-compliant and follow up work was planned. Initially, advice would be issued in writing with site visits built into next year's inspection programme where necessary. The relatively high number of butchers identified was a result of more of them having an online presence due to the pandemic and them requiring additional assistance and advice on allergens and product contents for example.

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- The Service had good relationships with the District Council Environmental Health Teams and joint working was undertaken where necessary. District Councils had been operating remote inspections during the pandemic and it was reported that there was a backlog of new business and annual inspections.
- Increasing the number of Officers who were competent generally should be a target for the service. This would allow the service to increase the number of interventions that could be carried out and expand their business advice.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and it be recorded that the Committee was satisfied with the delivery of Food Safety and Standards work within the Trading Standards Service.

56 CITIZENS ADVICE LINCOLNSHIRE QUARTER 3 UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report from the Assistant Director - Corporate, on the Citizens Advice Lincolnshire Quarter 3 update.

It was noted that the Council was seeking to evaluate the performance in detail over the next twelve months to inform future funding arrangements. The grant funded service supported the delivery of confidential, impartial and quality assured advice and assistance through the network of local Citizens Advice offices and outreach locations in the County. It included a core service across a broad range of advice as follows:- debt and money, benefits, housing and employment, consumer, relationships and family, discrimination, law and rights, tax and education. Advice was free and accessible to all.

During the quarter over 7,500 people across the County had been supported, addressing over 21,000 issues, including: benefits, Universal Credit, employment and advice provided via Adviceline to 3,696 clients, and there had been a significant increase in requests for support that fitted into the 'other' category. There were three key areas that accounted for the increase: an increase in clients who required the support of food banks; an increase in clients who needed to make some form of charitable application, including applications for white goods and support for fuel payments; and an increase in clients who required 'support in kind' including clothes and furniture. It was noted that these increases in requests and activities were a concerning trend and reflected the impact of Covid-19.

It was recognised that due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, residents had been unable to access Citizens Advice offices and there had also been a loss of volunteers during this period.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and it be recorded that the Committee was satisfied with the work of the Citizen Advice Lincolnshire for Quarter 3.

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WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted a report from the Scrutiny Officer, which provided the Committee with the opportunity to consider and 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 next meeting of the Committee would be held on 15 June 2021.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be approved.

58 CONSIDERATION OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

RESOLVED

That, in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that if they were present there could be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Section 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

59 RE-PROCUREMENT OF CORONIAL POST-MORTEM AND MORTUARY
CONTRACTS

Consideration was given to an exempt report from the Head of Safer Communities, on the re-procurement of Coronial Post-Mortem and Mortuary Contracts which was being presented to the Executive on 7 April 2021. The views of the Committee would be reported to the Executive as part of its consideration of this item.

The report recommended that the Executive:- approve the re-procurement of the post-mortem and mortuary service; and delegate to the Executive Director - Resources authority to determine the appropriate procurement approach and approve the terms and the award of any resulting contracts.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee support the recommendations to the Executive, as set out in the report and;
2. That a summary of the comments made be passed on to the Executive in relation to this item.

The meeting closed at 12.13 pm