

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT
 BOARD
 26 AUGUST 2021**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR R B PARKER (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors T Smith (Vice-Chairman), Mrs J Brockway, R J Kendrick, C E H Marfleet, N H Pepper, R Wootten, Mrs M J Overton MBE and L Wootten

Added Members

Parent Governor Representatives: Miss A E I Sayer

Councillors: R D Butroid and M A Whittington attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Debbie Barnes OBE (Chief Executive), Pam Clipson (Head of Finance, Adult Care and Community Wellbeing), James Drury (Executive Director Commercial), Michelle Grady (Assistant Director – Finance), Andrew Hancy (Head of Business Support), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Sophie Reeve (Assistant Director - Commercial), Vicki Sharpe (HR Services Manager), Nigel West (Head of Democratic Services and Statutory Scrutiny Officer) and Emily Wilcox (Democratic Services Officer)

The following officers/representatives joined the meeting remotely via Microsoft Teams: Michelle Andrews (Assistant Director - Corporate Recovery), Pam Clipson (Head of Finance – Adult Care and Community Wellbeing), Angela Lawton (Strategic Finance Manager – Children's Services), Sue Maycock (Head of Finance – Corporate), Keith Noyland (Head of Finance – Communities), Dave Simpson (Technical and Development Finance Manager)

Councillor M J Hill OBE also attended the meeting remotely via Microsoft Teams.

30 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Adams, C S Macey, E W Strengeiel and P M Dilks.

It was reported that, under Regulation 13 of the Local Government Committee and Political Groups) Regulation 1990, Councillor L Wootten was replacing Councillor C S Macey, and Councillor M J Overton MBE was replacing Councillor P M Dilks for this meeting only.

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31 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

32 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 JULY 2021

RESOLVED:

That minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

33 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND CHIEF OFFICERS

The Chairman announced that he had attended the last meeting of the Executive on 6 July and presented the Board's comments on the Quarter 4 performance, future wide area network (WAN) options appraisal, One Council commissioning framework and the review of financial performance reports. In relation to the One Council Commissioning Framework, the Chairman had highlighted the Board's support for the increased emphasis on championing Lincolnshire and keeping commissioning local. The Executive had recognised the need for balance between value for money and championing Lincolnshire, and that using local suppliers where possible was the right way forward but value and quality also needed to be taken into consideration.

The Chairman reminded Members that a briefing paper on the Quarter 1 performance had been circulated to the Board for information, and to contact the relevant officers with any questions.

The Leader of the Council announced that discussions were on-going for a possible nuclear waste disposal facility within the county, and the matter would be considered by Scrutiny in due course. There had also been a recent announcement from the Government on devolution in rural areas, in which a white paper would be released in October. Lincolnshire Leaders continued to discuss whether it was feasible to pursue a devolution deal for Greater Lincolnshire.

The Chief Executive informed Members that Lincolnshire had welcomed locally employed Afghan families to the county. The families were currently being accommodated in hotels across the county. Lincolnshire County Council were working with district council colleagues to find permanent settlement for the families and ensure adequate support was provided through the health and wellbeing service.

34 CONSIDERATION OF CALL-INS

None had been received.

35 CONSIDERATION OF COUNCILLOR CALLS FOR ACTION

None had been received.

36 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2021/22 - QUARTER 1 TO 30 JUNE 2021

Consideration was given to a report by the Assistant Director – Finance, which invited the Board to consider a report on the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2021/22, which was due to be considered by the Executive on 07 September 2021.

The Assistant Director – Finance highlighted the key areas for the revenue spending compared with budgets for the financial year, noting that the overall revenue position was forecasting an underspend of £1.194m (excluding schools and Covid-19) for 2021/22. It was estimated that the forecasted Covid-19 position may not be contained within the Government's emergency grant the County Council had received.

Members were advised that forecasts showed an overall deficit of £5.897m, and that general reserves at the end of the year would remain within the target range of 2.5% to 3.5%.

The impact of the revenue budget forecast on the Council's resilience had been assessed and it had been concluded that the Council's financial resilience remained strong. With a healthy reserve balance, the Council continued to strengthen their financial resilience as set out in paragraph 1.22 of the Executive Report.

Members were invited to consider and comment on the report, in which the following points were noted:

- The forecasted overspend of £5.897m in relation to Covid-19 was mainly in the capital programme and was due to the increased costs arising from the supply and demand of materials and labour. This cost pressure would be kept under review and consideration would be given to deferring other capital schemes to keep within the allocated budget.
- A number of the capital projects and programmes were in Corporate Property and Place where construction was a key element. There were several issues affecting these schemes, including inflationary costs of between 7% and 10% for some raw materials and supply issues. It was unclear as to whether the supply issues were a temporary blip due to a combination of the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit, and the Suez Canal blockage, or would continue for some time. In addition, there was a huge growth in construction in the US which was impacting on the availability of materials. A report on the supply issues and the significant impact on the delivery of the capital programme would be produced shortly.
- Insurance premium costs were increasing rapidly, as there was a lot of uncertainty in the industry and it had been noted that many of the Council's Adult Social Care providers were experiencing increased premiums. The Council was due to re-procure

its insurance contract in 2021 but had extended the current contract by two years to let the insurance market settle back down. The Insurance Officer would be looking at options for keeping the premium increase as low as possible and the Council would consider the whole market to ensure it was receiving the best value premium.

- The forecast overspend arising in Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue (LFR) was due to the cost of covering long term sickness. Sickness rates in LFR were higher than other areas of the Council. The Chief Executive agreed to provide a briefing paper to the Board on the sickness figures in LFR.
- The Covid Winter Grant Support for Families was in relation to the free school meals funding received for families following the campaign by the professional footballer Marcus Rashford. The funding was distributed to schools so that they could identify which families should receive the vouchers, and also to the district councils to provide grants to vulnerable people. In addition, schemes were set up through the voluntary sector for people to purchase white goods.
- The underspend within Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) was due to staffing vacancies in the team which process Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP). The Council was facing cost pressures in relation to the High Needs Block, but not as severe as other councils. Work was being undertaken to lessen this pressure by reducing the number of out of county placements. In addition, the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy and the High Needs Transformation Programme would help to address the pressure on the High Needs Block. One strand of the High Needs Transformation Programme was to ensure that early access to specialist advice was provided so that the child's needs were appropriately catered for. The Chairman of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee highlighted that the Committee had been pleased to see the progress made with the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy since 2018 and that the work was being recognised nationally. The Board was pleased to hear that the Council had been shortlisted for a national award.
- The planned budgetary savings were forecast to be achieved, and had been identified due to necessity. Some of the savings were income related, namely due to annual increases in charges. In relation to the adult charging planned saving of £1.8m, this was due to the service being provided to more people which generated more income. The charge would also increase to reflect any rising costs to provide services, such as from the national living wage. The Council had worked with Serco to improve the time taken to conduct assessments for financial contributions.
- The revenue spend on Highways was to address issues such as road safety, potholes and verges. Highway improvements were part of the capital programme. An extra £12m had already been added to the revenue budget and the financial outturn 2020/21 report to the County Council in September 2021 would be recommending that additional funding should be set aside for highways schemes. The Council's spending on highways was in excess of the Government's suggested spend.
- The cost of disposing fly tipping waste would be borne by the County Council, whereas the district councils would be responsible for collecting it.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Board support the recommendation to the Executive as set out in the report;
- 2) That a summary of the comments made, as set out above, be passed on the Executive in relation to this item.

37 CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2021/22 - QUARTER 1 TO 30 JUNE 2021

Consideration was given to a report by the Assistant Director – Finance, which invited Board to consider a report on Capital Budget Monitoring, which was due to be presented to the Executive on 07 September 2021.

The Capital Budget Monitoring Report compared the Council's projected expenditure with the approved Capital Programme, and provided explanations for any significant forecast over or under spending.

The Assistant Director – Finance gave an overview of the report, advising Members that the current 2021/22 forecasted position was an underspend of £26.913m (Block schemes £13.400m, Project schemes £13.513m). For the project schemes, the whole life budget was forecast to be underspent by £0.560m. Members were referred to Appendix A to the Executive report which provided a more detailed breakdown of the overall financial position for the council's capital budget programme.

Members were invited to consider the report and during the discussion, the following points were noted:

- The capital programme was at risk of either overspends or delays causing underspends. Some schemes were delayed because of availability and supply issues with raw materials due to a combination of the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit, and the Suez Canal blockage, and also due to a shortage of labour. In addition, there was an increase in global demand for construction material, particularly in the US where there was a huge growth in construction which was impacting on the availability of raw materials. A report on the supply issues and the significant impact on the delivery of the capital programme would be produced shortly.
- The forecast underspend for 2021/22 of £13.513m in the project schemes was mainly due to two projects relating to the Spalding Western Relief Road which were forecasted to underspend in year by over £18m in total.
- The funding for the two Spalding Western Relief Road schemes that were currently underspending was committed and could not be diverted elsewhere otherwise the schemes would not be able to be completed. Instead, consideration would be given to bringing forward other schemes to reduce the level of underspend. However given the current issues with supply and availability of raw materials and labour, these schemes could face similar

challenges and increased costs, and it was currently unclear whether this was a short or long term issue. In addition, bringing forward other schemes in the current financial year would be challenging due to the short timeframe. There was a need for caution about making any dramatic changes to the capital programme.

- There was a forecast overspend on Highways Asset Protection of £4.145m. Approval would be sought from the County Council in September 2021 for an additional £10m of funding to be added to the capital programme budget for Highways.
- The A16/A1073 Spalding to Eye Road Improvement scheme was completed but still listed to account for any new or on-going compensation claims. Officers agreed to review how this scheme was reported in future.
- The £1.468m funding allocated for the fire station projects in Grantham and Leverton was previously contingency funding held for the property scheme. This would now be separated out from the block funding of around £3m for property maintenance.
- It was currently budgeted that the whole life cost of the Grantham Southern Relief Road scheme would be £104m, including grant funding from the Government, but this was still subject to considerable change due to supply and labour issues.
- The funding allocated for the Linelands –Extra Care Housing scheme, which was no longer going ahead, would now be used for the Welton - Extra Care Housing scheme instead.
- For the North Hykeham Relief Road scheme, £48m had been allocated in the capital programme to help fund the scheme. In addition, there would be an additional £110m of funding from the Department of Transport, subject to a highways business case for the earmarked funding. It was proposed to start the scheme in 2025, subject to receiving the earmarked funding.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Board support the recommendations to the Executive, as set out in the report;
2. That a summary of the above comments be passed on to the Executive as part of their consideration of this item.

38 RE-PROCUREMENT OF THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH CONTRACT

Consideration was given to a report by the HR Services Manager, which invited the Board to consider a report on the Occupational Health Contract, which was due to be considered by the Executive Councillor for People Management, Legal and Corporate Property between 06 and 10 September 2021.

Members were referred to Appendix A to the report, which set out a proposal for the re-procurement of the Occupational Health Contract for four years from April 2022 to March 2026, with an estimated value of £1.1m.

The HR Manager emphasised the key objective in re-procuring the contract, which was to support employee health and wellbeing; this priority had gained impetus since the onset of Covid, and the resultant strain and difficulties experienced by employees dealing with the pandemic and working from home.

Alongside this, the Council looked to facilitate a quicker return to work for absent employees, identify reasonable adjustments to support employees with long-term health conditions and to enable them to work in a safe manner and to provide a provision of access to Independent Qualified Medical Practitioners is a statutory requirement of the Council's and LFR's pension schemes when making assessments for ill-health retirement alongside a number of other objectives.

It was noted that the Council had been in contract with its incumbent Occupational Health supplier, HML, since 7 March 2017, and had extended the contract by a further 12 months due to prevailing difficulties brought about by the pandemic.

The report proposed to procure ESPO's Occupational Health Services Framework 985_19 for 4 years (2 years fixed +1 extension year +1 extension year) from April 2022- March 2026, with a Contract Value based on the current working volumes at current rates (the Council's pay unit rates for each appointment): approximately £1.1 million for the 4-year period from April 2022 until March 2026.

Members considered the report and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- The occupational health contract would provide a range of activities to help improve staff's health and wellbeing, but would not resolve all health issues for staff, as a number of these would be reliant on the health service, such as for operations or treatment. The occupational health service would enable staff to continue to work by identifying adjustments that could be made to their role or workplace.
- An assessment of the number of staff that were able to continue working through early screening and intervention would show the benefits of the service and how it was performing.
- The Council has an ageing workforce and the Board recognised that early intervention was important to ensure that staff were able to thrive at work and then have a long and healthy retirement. It was recommended that a preventative strategy, with some key performance indicators, should be considered to ensure early intervention was provided to support staff with health issues.

- Occupational health would provide a more in-depth assessment of a person's ability to work than a GP, and would look at options such as making adjustments or redeployment to enable a person to continue to work.
- The person's health issues and the need for a physical assessment would be taken into account when deciding whether to offer a face to face or video appointment.
- The option for video appointments had been included to open up the contract to a wider range of providers for the tendering process.
- All of Lincolnshire's district councils were offered the opportunity to be included in the contract but all except one had declined the offer. It was unclear whether this was as a result of the formation of the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership, as Boston Borough Council already had an alternative provider for occupational health services.
- Sickness levels were continuing on a downward trend year on year. However there had been an increase in stress and emotional wellbeing sickness amongst staff and the Council was working with partners to increase the services available. There was a need to improve awareness of the health and wellbeing services available to staff and remove the stigma around accessing these services.
- It was recommended that councillors should also be able to have access to some of the health and wellbeing services available to staff.
- It was suggested that a councillor development session should be considered to support councillors to raise awareness amongst staff of the services that were available.
- The Board supported the recommendations to the Executive, as set out in the report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Board support the recommendations to the Executive Councillor for People Management, Legal and Corporate Property, as set out in the report;
2. That a summary of the above comments be passed on to the Executive Councillor for People Management, Legal and Corporate Property as part of their consideration of this item.

39 CUSTOMER STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the Head of Business Support to consider a report on the Customer Strategy, which was due to be considered by the Leader of the Council on the 7 September 2021.

The council's Customer Strategy had been developed with three core priorities:

- Customer Experience – putting our customers at the heart of what we do, and ensuring our employees are clear and fair when communicating with customers
- Voice of the Customer – ensuring a strong customer voice across the organisation, working with customers to improve the way that we do things
- Our Future Offer – Enabling the Council to be in the best possible place to determine the right operating model from 2024 onwards.

The vision of the strategy was outlined as follows: “We will deliver strong, joined up services that are designed to ensure we are able to meet our customer’s current and future needs”. The strategy and supporting action plan set out how services would be enhanced to provide easier access and improved end-to-end solutions. Members were referred to the Customer Strategy and the action plan, which were set out at appendix 1 and 2 to the Executive report.

Members considered the report and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- The strategy would be an outward facing live document aimed at the Council's customers. The style of the strategy was supported as it was well laid out and easy to read. However, it was highlighted that the action plan was too corporate in the language used in some places. It was confirmed that the action plan would continue to be refined and developed as it was implemented.
- The inclusion of the action plan with the strategy was supported, and it was recommended that for future strategies, the action plan should also be attached as it helped to explain how the strategy would be implemented. There was no definition of who the customer was included in the strategy as there were so many different groups of customers that the Council interacted with. The Voice of the Customer priority would ensure the Council was engaging more with different groups of customers to consider how the Council could provide its services, how the services would be used in future, and then look to refine the services to meet the customers' needs. It was recommended that the photographs included in the document were relooked at to ensure that they reflected the diverse nature of Lincolnshire's communities. It was confirmed that alternative photographs that were more representative of Lincolnshire's communities were being requested through the Communications team.
- Digital connections need to be improved in some parts of Lincolnshire. In areas where there was a lack of digital connections, customers would only be able to access the Council's services by telephone.
- Support was given to the development of a chat facility on the Council's website which was currently being looked into.

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RESOLVED:

1. That the Board support the recommendations to the Leader of the Council as set out in the report;
2. That a summary of the above comments be passed on to the Leader of the Council as part of his consideration of this item.

40 PERFORMANCE OF THE CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES CONTRACT

Consideration was given to a report by the Assistant Director – Commercial which provided an update on Serco's performance against contractual Key Performance Indicators specified in the Corporate Support Services Contract between March and July 2021.

Members were referred to Table 1, for a summary of overall KPI performance for the period, with Table's 2 and 3 highlighting those KPI's which had failed to meet Minimum Service Level or Target Service Level performance.

Despite difficult circumstances as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, KPI's had remained largely 'green' and performance had been positive.

Members were informed that on 17 June the Avaya Contact Centre system suffered an outage and was not fully restored until 22 June. Despite the deployment of mobile phones to the customer services team, a full service could not be provided. As a result, system restoration had a significant effect on the abandoned call rates as well as not being able to answer customer emails which had led to a backlog when the system was eventually restored, leading to further resourcing issues within the customer service team. LCC had considered these mitigating circumstances and Members were advised that KPI's had now returned to 'green' status.

The Operations Director – Serco advised Members that overall performance for the period had been good, despite market troubles and difficulties with recruitment. Serco continued to manage the impact of Covid-19 as well as a change in dynamic with more people working remotely. It was expected that there would be a larger contingent of workforce present towards the end of 2022.

The Operations Director – Serco highlighted some key areas of achievement during the period, which included receiving the Customer Service Excellence Award, which was a national standard within government, and a successful roll out of IT to Members.

12:00pm – *Councillor R Kendrick left the meeting and did not return.*

Members considered the report and during discussions the following points were noted:

- In response to a question, the Assistant Director – Commercial explained that those calls which were abandoned a short time into the phone-call did not contribute to the target set.

- The Operations Director – Serco also assured Members that the automated message at the beginning of calls to the customer service centre was reviewed on a regular basis in consultation with Lincolnshire County Council colleagues to ensure it was as concise as possible. However, the message would be reviewed again to ensure it was appropriate.
- The Operations Director – Serco agreed to circulate further information on the Customer Service Excellence award.
- Members commended the positive performance of the Corporate Support Services Contract, and it was agreed that on behalf of the Board, the Chairman should send a letter of congratulations to customer service colleagues for their hard work and achievements.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Board were satisfied with the Performance of the Corporate Support Services Contract;
2. That a letter of congratulations be sent to the customer service team on behalf of the Board.

41 COVID-19 UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report by the Assistant Director – Corporate Recovery, which provided an update on Covid-19 in Lincolnshire.

Members were referred to paragraph 2 of the report, which set out the latest data on Covid-19 within Lincolnshire, as of 23rd August 2022, including:

- The rate of Positive Cases per 100,000 Population was 26.5 (11th June 2021) in comparison to the 23rd August 2021, which was reported at 326.7 per 100,000.
- On the 13th June 2021, Lincolnshire Covid-19 cases reported in the last seven day period was 202, in comparison to the figure reported on the 23rd August 2021 which was 2487.
- Deaths reported in the last seven day period up to the 13th June 2021 for Lincolnshire as defined below was reported as 0, however in the last seven day period up to 23rd August 2021 it was reported as 7.
- The number of Covid-19 vaccines administered up to the 6th June 2021 for Lincolnshire was 861,263, as of the 19th August 2021 this was reported as 1,056,410.

It was anticipated nationally that as the restrictions were lifted, Covid-19 case rates, hospitalisations and deaths would increase; however due to the success of the vaccination programme, hospitalisations were expected to rise more slowly than in previous waves.

The council continued to assess and remain cautious to the risks of Covid-19 as protecting the public's health and mitigating harm to the county's residents, families, and vulnerable people continued to be the priority as preparations were made for a long term recovery.

Members considered the report and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- Officers were working closely with colleagues in Public Health to ensure they were working within the guidance set by the government and promoting the correct message.
- Officers were confident that school leaders, head teachers and staff would take appropriate action to keep children safe within the school setting.
- The Chief Executive advised that Lincolnshire's schools had followed national guidance throughout the pandemic. The current guidance was that pupils would not be required to wear a face covering upon their return to school in September. Each school worked closely with the council's health protection team and Members were assured that officers would work closely with schools where cases were increasing to prevent further spread.
- Members raised concerns about possible scare-mongering around the vaccine in certain areas which looked to discourage children from taking the covid-19 vaccine.
- Members were concerned that a return of pupils to school for the new school year could lead to a further rise in cases. Officers acknowledged that there was a need to educate young people on the preventative measures that could be used to reduce the spread of the virus, particularly in conjunction with the return of children to school for the new school year.
- There had been a positive number of young people aged 16/17 years taking up vaccinations it was acknowledged that a drop-in service rather than an appointment service had increased opportunities for take up.
- Assurance was provided that officers constantly reviewed new guidance and adapted the Council's approach in line with any changes in guidance.
- The Chief Executive explained that if those of school age were to be offered the vaccine in future, all options for locations in line with any national policy and guidance would be considered, including mass vaccination in the school settings as has been the case with previous vaccination roll-outs.
- A range of venues were being considered as possible vaccination centres, including venues within the community that were frequently attended by young people, to enable an effective response following a national decision.
- The decision of whether to vaccinate children was not a local decision to be made by the County Council or Lincolnshire Resilience Forum, and vaccinations were also an NHS function. The Council would follow the national requirements regarding vaccination.
- At this point there had been no specific guidance with regards to mandatory vaccination of children under the age of 16 against covid-19. However, under current vaccination programmes, children still had a right to access education regardless of their vaccination status.
- With regards to the vaccination of Looked after Children, where the council had parental responsibility, teams within the council would engage and agree a plan of action in collaboration with the young person. If a solution could not be found, it was likely that this would be a matter for the courts. However, the Chief Executive was

not aware of a situation where a decision was not able to be agreed with regards to the vaccination of a looked after child.

- It was agreed that a further update be provided to the Board at their meeting in September.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted;
2. That a further update be scheduled for the meeting on 30 September 2021.

42 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Democratic Services and Statutory Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Board to agree the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2020-21 for submission to the County Council on 17 September 2021.

Members were referred to the report, as set out in Appendix A to the report, which outlined the work of the Overview and Scrutiny function for 2020-21.

Members considered the report and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- Members commended officers for a well presented document, noting that it was engaging and user friendly.
- It was agreed that the annual report be amended so that the Covid-19 section was the first topic on the report, given that it had been the issue that had affected Lincolnshire the most over the past year.
- Officers were thanked for their work helping Members with the scrutiny panels.

RESOLVED:

That the report be submitted to the meeting of the County Council scheduled for 17 September 2021, subject to the above amendment.

43 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

This item was for information only.

The meeting closed at 12.40 pm