



**PUBLIC PROTECTION AND COMMUNITIES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
25 JANUARY 2022**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR N H PEPPER (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors A N Stokes (Vice-Chairman), M R Clarke, Mrs N F Clarke, A Dani, W H Gray, A M Key and K E Lee.

Councillors: R D Butroid, C Matthews, A P Maughan, D McNally, S P Roe, L A Cawrey and Mrs S Woolley attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Sara Barry (Acting Assistant Director - Public Protection), James Chapple (Head of Registration, Celebratory and Coroners Services), Kiara Chatzioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Nicole Hilton (Assistant Director - Communities), Mark Keal (Trading Standards Manager - Safer Communities), Emma Milligan (Trading Standards Operational Delivery Manager), Keith Noyland (Head of Finance - Communities) and Claire Seabourne (Partnership and Commissioning Manager)

99 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J L King and E J Sneath.

Note: Councillor J L King observed the meeting remotely, via Teams.

100 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of members' interest were made at this stage of the proceedings.

101 MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC PROTECTION AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 DECEMBER 2021

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 14 December 2021 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to typographical error, Councillor T R Ashton's name being spelt correctly at minute number 90.

102 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND CHIEF OFFICERS

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Councillors R Butroid (Executive Councillor People Management, Legal and Corporate Property), L Cawrey (Executive Councillor Fire & Rescue and Cultural Services), C Matthews (Executive Support Councillor NHS Liaison, Community Engagement, Registration and Coroners), A P Maughan (Executive Support Councillor Fire & Rescue and Cultural Services), D McNally (Executive Councillor Waste and Trading Standards), S Roe (Executive Support Councillor Children's Services, Community Safety and Procurement) and Mrs S Woolley (Executive Councillor NHS Liaison, Community Engagement, Registration and Coroners).

No announcements were received from either Executive Councillors or Senior Officers.

103 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PROPOSALS 2022/23

Consideration was given to a report from Keith Noyland, Head of Finance – Communities Financial Strategy, which invited the Committee to consider and comment on the budget implications for the Council's Public Protection and Communities services, prior to the Executive meeting on 8 February 2022, at which the final budget proposals would be made for 2022/23.

The Committee was advised that the largest cost pressure of £0.131m was for Fire and Rescue and that this had arisen due increased training costs, increased costs for Urban Search and Rescue, investments to maintain the stability of the mobilising system and to maintain the delivery of the Community Fire Protection programme following the withdrawal of Home Office funding. Table A, on page 20 of the report pack provided details of the proposed revenue budget for the Council's Public Protection and Communities services. It was noted that overall, budget proposals had allowed for pay inflation of 2% in 2022/23, and that this was being held centrally pending agreement of any pay settlement, following which service budgets would be updated, and that these figures were not reflected in Table A.

It was reported that Table B on page 22 of the report, set out the proposed capital programme. It was highlighted that other than some re-phasing of existing project expenditure, there had been no changes to the previously approved capital programme relating to the Public Protection and Communities services.

The Committee was invited to consider the report and comment on the budget proposals for consideration by the Executive at its meeting on 8 February 2022. During consideration of this item, the Committee raised the following comments:

- Clarification as to whether in Table B, there was likely to be any expenditure in the columns depicted with zeros currently. The Committee was advised that for the 2021/22 column, no further expenditure was expected in future years, and it was therefore not included in the following two columns of the table. An explanation was also given to the rolling programme for the replacement of fire and rescue fleet vehicles and associated equipment; and that the difference between the two years

was due to the timing of the expenditure, as some delays had been caused by Covid-19 and Brexit;

- Reference was made to a number of other specific grants to be received, detailed in the last bullet point on page 18 of the report. It was reported that the final settlement announcement was expected mid-February; and that these amounts would be included in the budget report going forward for Council consideration on 18 February 2022; and
- One member enquired whether the new fire station at Leverton was included within the figures presented. It was reported that property budget was reported as part of the corporate capital budget (from Corporate Property); and confirmation was given that Leverton fire station had not currently been budgeted for, but it was recognised as a future commitment.

RESOLVED

That the budget proposal for the next financial year 2022/23 for the Council's Public Protection and Communities services be received and that the comments raised by the Committee be forwarded on to the Executive for consideration at its meeting on 8 February 2022.

104 REGISTRATION SERVICE FEE SETTING 2022/23 TO 2024/25

The Committee considered a report from James Chapple, Head of Registration and Coroners Services, which invited the Committee to consider and comment on the Registration Service Fee Setting 2022/23 to 2024/25, prior to a decision being taken by the Executive Councillor for NHS Liaison, Community Engagement, Registration and Coroners between the 26 and 28 January 2022.

The Chairman invited James Chapple, Head of Registration and Coroners Services, to remotely, present the item to the Committee.

The Committee was advised that the current fee structure had been introduced in 2013; and that no formal reviews had taken place since that date. It was highlighted that all ceremony types currently, were below cost recovery, with the shortfall being passed on to the taxpayer. Appendix A provided details of the costs the Council was entitled to recover from users of the service. It was highlighted further that the proposal did not relate to the affordable weddings and the statutory wedding which were currently set at £46.00.

The Committee was advised of the background behind the fee increase; benchmarking information; affordability and accessibility, it was highlighted that Lincolnshire operated the most extensive coverage of statutory ceremonies of any registration service in the country; and that the removal of the standard ceremony would see the introduction of an affordable smaller wedding and civil partnership (up to 25) offering delivered from four registration service points in the county.

It was reported that the proposed fee structure would ensure that Lincolnshire was competitively priced but remaining below the cost of many neighbouring authorities. The proposed new fee structure would enable the service to move towards cost recovery. It was noted that there would be an initial increase of 16% followed by a 3% yearly increase. It was noted further that the benefits of the initial uplift would not be fully realised until 2023/24, as the service would still honour where required standard ceremonies that had been booked for 2022/23.

Details of the proposed schedule of fees were shown on pages 30 to 33 of the report pack for the Committee to consider.

The Committee noted that in addition to the booking fees for ceremony suites, the services was also proposing to introduce some level of service fees to cover costs of holding ceremony bookings which were later cancelled or rearranged. Details relating to other fees were shown on pages 32 to 33 of the report.

During consideration of this item, the Committee raised the following comments:

- Members requested further information around how the proposed changes were formulated. Officers explained that that income and expenditure analysis had been undertaken around the actual cost of delivering each ceremony type based on the financial cost, the time for each task registrars needed to undertake. Confirmation was given that the wider registration staff had been consulted around this and had been cited on this proposal;
- Members were pleased to hear that the shift to a new digital platform which allowed those who wished to book a ceremony to proceed with the process online, and also allowed for payments towards fees to be made incrementally over a period of time prior to the ceremony. This then allowed for further flexibility in amending bookings within certain set of timelines and deadlines agreed;
- Printed material would also continue to be offered to members of the public who did not have access to the internet, which provided detailed information on services provided;
- The introduction of a cancellation fee was positively received by members in the interest of avoiding income loss from last minute cancellations and no-shows. It was noted that extenuating circumstances would be considered by exception where cancellation fees could be waived;
- Members expressed concerns on the increase of the cost for enhanced ceremonies, for couples who wished to have guests at their ceremonies which might be an inhibiting factor. Officers provided assurance that smaller ceremonies across four locations in the County were offered as an alternative option and that an off-peak pricing structure was also in place;
- It was emphasised that although the increase in fees was justifiable, however, following recent increase in other costs of living (e.g., increases in petrol, food and heating costs), assurance was sought that the service would remain affordable.

Members were assured that the prices being introduced, remained competitive and below the cost of other neighbouring Local Authorities. In addition, assurance was given that although figures were to increase year-on-year this would be to meet and maintain cost recovery rather than making an additional surplus;

- Members were pleased to hear that all venues were disability compliant; and
- Officers added that over the next few years new, larger venues were to be added to the existing portfolio.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be received and that support be given to the recommendations as set out on page 27 of the Executive Councillor report.
2. That the comments raised by the Committee be shared with the Executive Councillor for NHS Liaison, Community Engagement, Registration and Coroners, prior to the decision being taken between 26 – 28 January 2022.

105 TRADING STANDARDS IMPACTS AND OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

The Committee considered a report from Mark Keal, Trading Standards Manager, which provided a review of the delivery of Trading Standards services in Lincolnshire for the financial year 2020/2021.

The Committee was advised of the background to Trading Standards services, and the key role they played in enhancing the economy for legitimate businesses and safeguarding the financial interests of the residents of Lincolnshire; the Authority's statutory responsibilities to deliver consumer protection for the residents of Lincolnshire; the close working of trading standards officers with other partner agencies and stakeholders; and the challenges of the Coronavirus pandemic on the service.

The strategic priorities for 2020/21, and the outcomes and activity against the strategic priorities for 2020/21 were summarised on pages 40 to 46 of the report for the Committee to consider.

The Committee also received a short presentation from Emma Milligan, Trading Standards Operational Delivery Manager, which provided an insight into unsafe goods, and counterfeit goods. Committee Members were given the opportunity to watch a short video regarding the testing of a product which did not comply to safety standards; seeing the positive impact of trading standards supporting businesses in Lincolnshire with advice to grow and prosper as part of the Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub, with reference being made to an artisan fudge maker based in Grantham. It was highlighted that further details of the case study were available on the Council's website. A demonstration was also received as to how trading standards officers were able to test cigarettes to ensure they complied with the Ignition Propensity safety standards; and reference was made to the impact illegal and unsafe tobacco had on health and personal safety.

During consideration of this item, the Committee raised some of the following points:

- **Duty Free cigarettes.** The Committee was advised that there was no issue with cigarettes being brought back from holidays if they were for the individuals private use, and provided that quantity of cigarettes being brought back did not exceed the prescribed quantity (200). The Committee was advised that problems arose when items were smuggled into the country, as these goods were not brought from reputable sources. Further clarification was sought regarding the personal safety of others with regard to illegal tobacco. Officers advised that liability in this type of instance would be a matter for a civil litigation lawyer. The Committee noted that cigarettes brought in a legitimate supermarket, for instance in Spain were subject to the same legal requirements regarding propensity, as the UK as it was European legislation;
- **Products containing cannabis.** It was reported that any product containing cannabidiols would have to go through a registration process to actually be approved for sale;
- **The level of compliance in food products being sold online in Lincolnshire.** The report highlighted that 33 food producers and retailers had been found to be non-compliant. One member of the Committee from personal experience extended his thanks to trading standards staff for the help and advice he had received when setting up his business. It was highlighted more needed to be done to promote to members of the general public the positive experiences of dealing with trading standards, particularly regarding their help to local businesses.
- **An explanation was provided regarding the primary authority scheme, where some of the bespoke businesses that received help, paid for the advice received.** In these instances, an agreement was set up with the business for the number of hours expected within a year; if more hours were required then subsequent adjustments were made. It was noted that the service was to just basically cover the cost recovery for officer time;
- **How frequently intelligence meetings were taking place with various agencies.** The Committee noted that frequency would be dependent on the type of subject. It was also highlighted that information sharing agreements were in place, so actual intelligence information was shared fairly frequently;
- **Safeguarding the public from scams.** It was reported that scam information was shared with the public as soon as either complaints were received, or intelligence gathered had identified a potential trend. The Committee noted that officers put out information through the communication team, social media, and local radio stations and that officers were continually looking at different ways to get messages out to the public. It was highlighted that some scams received national media attention, such as bank scams;
- **Staffing.** The Committee was advised that currently there were no vacancies within trading standards. The Committee noted that the service had links into the University of Lincoln, as officers provided lectures for law students on trading standards and consumer protection;

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- Page 46, item 83 reference to European funding. It was reported that the EU funding was for the work being carried out with Business Lincolnshire. Confirmation was given that the funding was available for this work for a further year;
- One member welcomed the work carried out by officers during the pandemic, to ensure the safety of personal protective equipment being sold on-line and through local retailers; and also, to the testing of hand sanitisers and face masks, as a number had been found to be non-compliant;
- One member enquired whether there was a pattern as to where illicit tobacco was being found across the county. The Committee was advised that there were several towns, where more goods were seized and these were: Lincoln, Boston, Grantham and Spalding. The Committee noted that activity was more prolific in larger towns;
- Areas of work that received the most enquires from trading standards. It was reported that overall, it was a bit of a mixture, but areas highlighted included: breaches of contract law in relation to cars and mobile phones; criminal law there was illicit tobacco, doorstep crime and rogue trading; and with regard to food establishments there was an increased concern regarding allergens. The Committee was advised more work would be done concerning this matter throughout the year, as new rules were due to be received;
- Thanks were extended to the trading standards team for their very informative presentation;
- Advice for businesses going on-line. The Committee noted from the council's website there was a link to Business Companion, an application which following a series of question was able to provide information to potential businesses thinking about going on-line;
- Explanation of Metrology Services. The Committee was advised that this was verification work, ensuring that weight and measures were as they should be. It was noted further that this service was offered to businesses; and
- Counterfeit alcohol. It reported that that on occasions there had been counterfeit vodka, whiskey and wine which had been found not to be safe for human consumption. The Committee noted that the trading standards team worked closely with the Lincolnshire Police Licensing team and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

RESOLVED

That the report be received and that the comments raised by the Committee be noted.

106 PUBLIC PROTECTION AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK
PROGRAMME

The Chairman invited Kiara Chatziioannou, Scrutiny Officer, to present the report, which invited the Committee to review the work programme as detailed on pages 50 to 51 of the report pack and to highlight any additional scrutiny activity to be included for consideration in the work programme.

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Appendix A to the report provided the Committee with an extract from the Executive Forward Plan relating to the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee.

During discussion, the Committee raised the following suggestions:

- Adult Education and Community Engagement and Development (requested via email prior to the meeting) was included in the list of items to be programmed;
- Community Trigger – A summary paper would be shared with Members of the Committee prior to the next meeting and that the topic was included on the list of items to be programmed;
- Progress update surrounding the Ermine Library Hub;
- Anti-social behaviour;
- Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue HMICFRS inspection outcomes report; and
- That when future performance reports were presented to the Committee, a request was made for an update from each area regarding the effects of Covid-19 and what actions were being done to address any backlog in work.

RESOLVED

That the work programme presented be noted, and that consideration be given to the suggestions raised.

The meeting of the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee ended at 11.34am.

107 **SAFER LINCOLNSHIRE PARTNERSHIP UPDATE**

SITTING AS THE CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chairman invited Claire Seabourne, Safer Lincolnshire Partnership Business Manager-Safer Communities, to present the item, which provided the Committee with an update on the activity of the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership and advised of future areas of focus for the partnership.

In guiding the Committee through the report, reference was made to the legislative background to the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership and its statutory duties; progress made over the last year relating to anti-social behaviour; domestic abuse; fraud; modern day slavery; and reducing offending, details of which were contained within the report presented.

It was reported that the current strategy was due to end in March 2022 and that a new strategic assessment had been produced, from which future areas of focus had been identified, and from which a revised strategy would be developed. Details of the strategic assessment was shown on pages 59 and 59 of the report pack.

The Committee was advised that running in parallel with the strategic assessment, a health check of the partnership had been conducted to ensure compliance with statutory duties and governance and to understand the efficiency and effectiveness of the current operating and delivery model. It was highlighted that the review had found the partnership to be compliant with statutory duties and to operating well.

In conclusion, it was highlighted that the partnership had made significant progress against the strategy during the year, and that the work on both the Strategic Assessment and Health Check had put the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership in a strong position moving forward.

During consideration of this item, the Committee raised the following points:

- One member enquired as to how many times the community trigger had been requested in the last 12 months. The Committee noted that the Community Trigger process was being refreshed; and that a significant project had also taken place to ensure a smooth customer journey. Some concern was raised regarding some members of the public fear of approaching the police. Officers reassured the Committee that they were not aware that this was an issue. It was highlighted that not approaching the police was likely to be because there was a lack of awareness regarding the community trigger process. It was noted that lots of work was being done by all agencies involved in anti-social behaviour, to ensure that people were able to get to the right place first time rather than being passed from one agency to another; and that this was an area of focus for the Core Priority Group. A request was also made for further consideration of the community trigger process by the Committee. Officers advised that this information would be included in the reports the Committee would receive later in the year regarding priorities. Officers agreed to circulate community trigger information to all members of Committee after the meeting;
- The impact of anti-social behavior on victims, and a request was made as to how many incidents were currently under investigation. Unfortunately, officers were unable to provide details of the specific numbers involved, as different recording mechanisms were involved. The Committee was advised that a piece of work had been undertaken supporting victims to engage with the right agency to get the right support. It was highlighted that the Committee would be receiving a more detailed report relating to each of the priorities later in the year, which would address the issues raised;
- The new Domestic Abuse Strategy. The Committee was advised that the strategy had been drafted and published and would be covered in more specific detail in future reports to the Committee; and
- Modern-day slavery training programme. One member enquired whether the training programme raising the awareness of modern-day slavery would be repeated and whether the social media pack mentioned in the report had been developed. It was confirmed that there were no plans to repeat the training at this moment in time, as modern-day slavery had not been identified as an area of focus from April 2022. Officers agreed to look into the query regarding the social media pack.

RESOLVED

1. That the report presented be received and noted.
2. That the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership Plan to reduce crime and disorder and anti-social behaviour in the county be endorsed and that updates on the progression of the delivery plan be received by the Committee at a future meeting.

The meeting closed at 11.34 am