

**PUBLIC PROTECTION AND COMMUNITIES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
8 NOVEMBER 2022**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR N H PEPPER (CHAIRMAN)

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

Councillors: L A Cawrey (Executive Councillor Fire & Rescue and Cultural Services) and C Matthews (Executive Support Councillor for NHS Liaison, Community Engagement, Registration and Coroners) attended the meeting as observers.

Officers in attendance:-

Mark Baxter (Chief Fire Officer), Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Nicole Hilton (Assistant Director - Communities), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Will Mason (Head of Culture), Samantha Neal (Assistant Director, Prevention and Early Intervention), Glen Garrod (Executive Director - Adult Care and Community Wellbeing) and Lauren Grosvenor (Service Manager – ICS Business Support).

33 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apoloiges for absence were received from Councillors Mrs J Brockway, A Dani and J L King.

Apoloiges for absence were also received from Councillors A P Maughan (Executive Support Councillor for Fire & Rescue and Cultural Services) and Mrs S Woolley (Executive Councillor for NHS Liaison, Community Engagement, Registration and Coroners).

It was noted that Councillor J L King would be observing the meeting remotely, via Teams.

34 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were received at this point in proceedings.

35 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2022

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20 September 2022 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

36 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND CHIEF

OFFICERS

The Chairman advised he had attended the County Emergency Planning Centre visit on 30 September 2022 which highlighted the active role of Members in emergencies. In addition, he had attended the Fire and Rescue Long Service Awards ceremony on 3 November 2022 alongside other Members and praised those who received an award.

The Executive Councillor for Fire & Rescue and Cultural Services echoed the Chairman's comments and announced that Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) had been granted £206,000 of funding per year from Arts Council England as part of the National Portfolio Organisation three year Funding Settlement. She thanked Cultural Services for their work in ensuring LCC's successful bid and stated the funds would be used to initiate projects for the Usher Art Gallery and The Collection Museum in Lincoln.

37 FRS ATTENDANCE AT FLOODING INCIDENTS - ANNUAL REPORT ON PERFORMANCE

The Committee considered a report from Mark Baxter, Chief Fire Officer, which provided an update on flooding incidents Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue (LFR) had attended since 2017, and the demand that placed on LFR operational response.

It was noted that the report was part of the four-year trend analysis on LFRs capabilities to respond to flooding. Members were assured that LFR was able to respond to flood threats year-round, including during high-risk periods.

The Chief Fire Officer stated that flooding incidents that required fire appliances were the most frequent due to their broad pumping capacity and assured Members that all firefighters had necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) and were trained to respond to all flooding incidents. Furthermore, it was LFR policy to respond to every incident where someone had disclosed flooding was entering their property or if they were in physical danger.

Severe weather was acknowledged as a real and emerging risk affecting every area in Lincolnshire, but it was concluded that LFR had significant capabilities to deal with this emerging challenge.

During discussion of the item, the following was noted:

- LFR maintained close contact with other departments relating to flooding incidents. The Control Centre had a substantial list of contacts, and the Emergency Planning Team liaised between them. Additionally, a Tactical Coordination Group was in place to coordinate a multi-agency response, and the LFR informed Highways on flooding incidents;
- The data collated by LFR was subject to annual review as part of the risk analogy process at LCC;
- The Committee considered the boats used by LFR. The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that rescue rafts were the most capable for the majority of incidents

because they were inflatable, carried equipment and were able to access precarious locations. In contrast, demand was negligible for rigid boats;

- The LFR was intrinsically linked to the national coordination of flood response known as 'National Resilience' which enabled LFR to request personnel, equipment and advice on a national scale;
- It was noted that St. Giles in Lincoln experienced vast surface water flooding, and the Chief Fire Officer assured that the trained staff within the call centre responded according to the severity of the incident. Members were also informed that if the surface flooding was not endangering life or property, then LFR would liaise with the relevant agency to offer residents support;
- A wide range of flooding pumps were available for LFR. Members were informed that the standard pump was found on the fire appliance. Additionally, high volume pumps were available for protracted incidents as they could deal with high volumes of water;
- The provision of sandbags fell under the remit of the District Council and was facilitated through the Emergency Planning Department. The Chief Fire Officer advised that LFR maintained a conduit role and brought partners together under these circumstances;
- Reassurance was given that resources were positioned tactically and were situated in proximity of high-risk areas, but distant enough to avoid damage by flood incidents themselves;
- All firefighters in Lincolnshire were trained to operate in ankle-deep surface flooding with access to a dry suit and necessary PPE, and some were trained to operate in fast flowing flooding. It was noted that LFR did not respond to sub-surface flooding, although they informed the police who responded to these incidents; and
- Members were informed of the potential dangers of low-level flooding for both residents and firefighters due to hazards such as displaced manhole covers. There was ample communication to the public surrounding this, and the Chief Fire Officer was happy to work with the Committee to develop a winter safety message for residents about shallow flooding.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee extended his thanks to the Chief Fire Officer for his presentation.

RESOLVED

1. That the report presented be received and that the Committee's satisfaction in relation to the service performance be recorded.
2. That the comments and suggestions made by the Committee be taken into consideration by relevant officers.

38 LINCOLNSHIRE CREWING ARRANGEMENTS CONSULTATION OUTCOME

Consideration was given to a report from Mark Baxter, Chief Fire Officer, which advised the Committee of the outcomes of the Lincolnshire Crewing Arrangements consultation with

wholetime staff at Boston, Gainsborough, Grantham, Lincoln North, Louth, Skegness, Sleaford, and Spalding fire stations regarding the proposed changes to their contractual arrangements. It was highlighted that most of the changes were purely contractual and therefore did not impact the way of working.

It was reported the most significant proposal were changes to Sleaford fire station; where wholetime personnel staff were suggested to be on site seven days a week during the day rather than 24 hours a day as night-time cover would be provided by on-call personnel. As part of the consultation, LFR presented recommendations to the Fire Brigades Union and Sleaford Town Council at public meetings. Within these consultations, special considerations were made to the impact of Sleaford town centre's one-way system, and it was noted that the perceived savings of £30,000 would be used to reinvest into on-call staff at Sleaford.

The Chief Fire Officer expressed thanks to the close working relationship with the Fire Brigades Union throughout the consultation process. It was noted that the implementation would be delayed until 2023 to ensure staff remained in receipt of night-time allowances. Furthermore, FRS intended to maintain communication with staff to ensure their preferences were implemented such as asking where personnel wished to work and maintaining flexible shift patterns.

During discussion of the item, the following was noted:

- Assurance was given that the amended crewing arrangements in Sleaford would not negatively impact response times or the effectiveness of service whilst still maintaining flexibility. For instance, personnel were able to respond from home if they lived within five minutes of the station, and the financial state of staff would be protected as opportunities would be available to move to stations which offered higher night-rates. The Chief Fire Officer advised the Committee that LFR was not anticipating seeing a detrimental effect on performance, and that a quarterly review of performance of Sleaford Station would be undertaken along with a deeper review on an annual basis. The Committee requested that an update be brought back in the Autumn of 2023 after six months of implementation;
- Members highlighted that there was no staff engagement data included in the report, however the Chief Fire Officer gave assurance that staff were heavily involved in the consultation process. Stations affected by the consultation had received regular visits and had facilitated engagement with staff through the Fire Brigades Union which ensured that feedback fed into future recommendations;
- The Committee raised that only 63% of personnel completed the 'Expression of Interest' form, and whether those who did not complete it would be randomly assigned to a station. The Chief Fire Officer informed members that LFR was aware of staff who wished to relocate, and that this engagement would be an ongoing process subject to changes. Support would be provided by the Divisional Commanders who worked locally to ensure staff were satisfied with their location;
- The Chief Fire Officer highlighted that there was a national recruitment challenge regarding on-call firefighters, but targeted recruitment was underway in Sleaford. Additionally, he was confident that availability of on-call staff would be maintained at

Sleaford and gave assurance that this station would be prioritised for recruitment in the future; and

- Members raised questions around the length of the recruitment process for firefighters; resultantly the Chief Fire Officer clarified that typically, the process took six months to one year depending on the individual and their availability, and bespoke courses were offered in instances where several individuals could train alongside each other.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee extended his thanks to the Chief Fire Officer for his presentation.

RESOLVED

1. That the proposed changes be supported and the comments raised by the Committee be recorded.
2. That an update on the new crewing arrangements be brought to the Committee in Autumn 2023 after six months of implementation.

39 BRIEFING PAPER - LINCOLNSHIRE'S UKRAINE RESPONSE

The Committee considered a report from Semantha Neal, Assistant Director of Prevention and Early Intervention, which provided assurance on the progress of arrangements established by Lincolnshire County Council, Lincolnshire's District Councils, and multi-agency partners to deliver the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme 'Homes for Ukraine' (HfU) in line with government requirements.

The Chairman invited Semantha Neal, Assistant Director of Prevention and Early Intervention and Lauren Grosvenor, Service Manager – ICS to present the item to the Committee.

The Committee commended the depth and success of the HfU scheme, and praised the work of officers, agencies and sponsors who had engaged in the resettlement programme.

During consideration of the report, the following was noted:

- Members supported the work of the Lincolnshire Community Foundation for aiding sponsors to purchase push-bikes as a means of transport for Ukrainian guests. The Assistant Director of Prevention and Early Intervention informed the Committee that Active Lincolnshire had also identified the potential for a larger-scale bike programme to complement the HfU scheme, and to support all refugees in Lincolnshire. A part-time project officer was leading the project alongside the Council's Sustainability Team, and consideration was being given to using the hire bike scheme to supplement this;
- Some Councillors questioned whether LCC helped to fund Ukrainian guests staying in privately rented accommodation. The Committee was advised that some individuals had organised these arrangements independently but was assured that support was

given where it was needed. It was noted that information had been circulated to hosts and guests regarding social housing availability. In addition, work was being undertaken in collaboration with District Councils to formulate a personal housing plan and offer budgeting advice. This included providing a top-up for deposit and rent payments on a case-by-case basis. It was noted this support was not exclusive to the HfU scheme but was based on District Council statutory homelessness duties;

- Members considered why Lincolnshire had the 17th highest number of HfU visa applications nationally and was second in the region. The Assistant Director explained that this was the result of individuals freely volunteering to host Ukrainian guests and expressed that they were a credit to the county;
- Questions were raised regarding the 12% of hosting arrangements cited to have broken down in the report. The Assistant Director noted that the reasons behind break downs were complex but suggested that more stable arrangements exist where open and frank conversations were had initially between both parties to manage expectations. It was noted further that a range of support was available including through the Wellbeing Service which offered mediation, and a fortnightly newsletter circulated to guests and sponsors offering advice. Hosts were also encouraged to establish relationships with their guests before the arrangement progressed;
- Members questioned the criteria for suitable accommodation, and they were informed that it was developed alongside District Councils and housing standard experts. Homes were assessed through pre-arrival visits and would advise any sensible changes that could be made. The Assistant Director disclosed that over 600 homes had been inspected to date, and less than ten had been deemed unsuitable;
- It was considered how LCC tracks guests who return to Ukraine, and Members received assurance that contact was maintained in cases where a host was notified. It was also noted that there was currently little clarity received from central government concerning when the duty of Local Authorities and hosts ended; the scheme had been designed to last 12 months, but many hosts and guests had informed LCC that they wished to continue beyond the scheme;
- The Committee was assured that there were no instances of Ukrainians experiencing homelessness in Lincolnshire. Members were informed that there were two operational managers responsible for tracking and mitigating homelessness, and LCC tracked all Ukrainian guests entering and leaving the country. The Assistant Director gave the Committee assurance that the location of all Ukrainian guests arriving in Lincolnshire were known. The Committee was advised that the council had been contacted by the Strategic Migration Partnership of East Midlands to assist other authorities implement the HfU scheme;
- The Committee was advised that the council was not aware of any hosts citing the cost of living crisis as contributing towards a breakdown of an arrangement but accepted that it could add strain on the sponsors. It was noted that it could be possible to increase the payment hosts received to incentivise people to extend arrangements past the six-month timeframe, however a response was anticipated from central government regarding costs, and the Committee would be informed once a response was received;

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- Members were assured that a dedicated Communication Officer at North Kesteven District Council was working closely with the press to help spread messages regarding the HfU scheme. Councillors were urged by the Assistant Director to promote the scheme to potential new hosts where suitable, and to potentially support a campaign to aid Ukrainian guests to find employment in the future; and
- The Committee requested that a further update on the HfU scheme and other resettlement schemes should be brought to the Committee in January 2023.

The Chairman on Behalf of the Committee extended his thanks to the presenters.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be endorsed and the comments raised by the Committee be noted.
2. That an update report be received by the Committee at the 19 January 2023 meeting.

40 PUBLIC PROTECTION AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman invited Tracy Johnson, Senior Scrutiny Officer, to present the report which invited the Committee to review the work programme as detailed on pages 38 and 39 of the report pack and to highlight any additional scrutiny activity to be included for consideration in the work programme.

The Committee was advised that the following would be added to the January 2023 meeting: Annual Budget 2023/24; and Resettlement Schemes. It was also noted that an update on the crewing arrangements would be received in the Autumn of 2023.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that the Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue - Progress on Response to Inspection Outcomes from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services would not be available for the December 2022 meeting and the Committee agreed to defer the report to the January 2023 meeting.

Other items highlighted by the Committee included: an update on Community Triggers. The Committee was advised that a report on Anti-social Behaviour was to be programmed onto a future agenda and that this would include the Community Trigger Strategy. In addition, an update on rogue traders following the Christmas period was requested as part of the Trading Standards Food Update planned to be received at the 24 January 2023 meeting.

RESOLVED

That the work programme presented be received subject to the addition of the items mentioned above and the suggestions made by the members of Committee.

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The meeting closed at 11.55 am