

**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY
 COMMITTEE
 11 APRIL 2023**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR I D CARRINGTON (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors M A Griggs (Vice-Chairman), A J Baxter, M D Boles, I G Fleetwood, A G Hagues, Mrs J E Killey, L Wootten, R Wootten and N Sear.

Officers in attendance:-

Justin Brown (Assistant Director Growth), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Mick King (Head of Economic Infrastructure), Marianne Marshall (Communications) (Strategic Communications Lead), Nicole Hilton (Assistant Director - Communities) (remote) and Chris Miller (Head of Environment)

44 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

It was reported that, under regulation 13 of the Local Government Committee and Political Groups Regulation 1990, Councillor N Sear replaced Councillor H Spratt for this meeting.

45 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no interests declared at this point in proceedings.

46 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 28 FEBRUARY 2023

RESOLVED

That the minutes from the last meeting on 28 February 2023 are approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

47 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS

The Chairman informed Members that the inaugural meeting for the Motorhomes and Campervans Working Group was held on 8 March and was exploring the potential to enhance the current proposition for motor home tourism in Lincolnshire given the significant economic incentive to appeal to this market segment. The second meeting was anticipated at the end of April to explore evidence and outcomes from tourist operators and key contributors within the sector. The report outlining the outcomes and recommendations from the Group was to be considered by the Committee on 30th May.

The Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning made the following announcements:

- The trading position of businesses was improving nationally and locally; 60% of local businesses felt confident they would reach financial targets.
- The Lincolnshire Growth Hub continued to support to local businesses. The initial six months of the Made Smarter Industrial Digitisation programme for manufacturers was completed by LCC on behalf of the East Midlands Cluster, and interest had been registered from a range of small to medium enterprises (SME) manufacturers in Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Derbyshire, and Nottinghamshire.
- The Tourism and Countryside teams were updating the walking activities page on the Visit Lincolnshire website; new features would be launched in April, and there would be a large promotional campaign in May to celebrate Walking Month.
- Economic Development officers were working with ten Local Authorities on behalf of the Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub and had agreed a funding package to continue the delivery of a 'UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) shared service Growth Hub model' which would be available to all businesses in Greater Lincolnshire. From 1st May, new enquiries would be supported under the UKSPF arrangements, not European funding.
- A four-week consultation process was underway following the announcement that the government was consulting on transferring responsibilities for local economic development from Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to local authorities from April 2024. An updated policy decision was expected by summer, and it was assured that until any devolution deal was implemented in Lincolnshire the role of the LEP would not change.

Members noted the announcements, and the following comments were raised:

- Members were cautiously optimistic about the growth of the local economy and welcomed that recession was avoided this quarter.
- A response to the announced plans for Scampton would be circulated by the relevant Portfolio Holder upon Members' request.

The Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Funding highlighted further engagement was required with authorities that had not opted into the UKSPF to avoid insufficient service quality in certain areas of the county.

48 THEDDLETHORPE GEOLOGICAL DISPOSAL FACILITY WORKING GROUP - 6 MONTHLY UPDATE

The Committee received a report from Justin Brown, Assistant Director – Growth, on developments at the former Theddlethorpe Gas Terminal and the workings of the Community Partnership. At this point in proceedings, the Chairman highlighted that LCC was not the decision-making body regarding Theddlethorpe, but rather the residents; the Council engaged with the working group to support in providing advice on how to ask appropriate questions and communicate opinions effectively.

It was reported that:

- Four meetings had been held so far and the Terms of Reference focused on providing all possible information about the facility to residents as well as details about funding.
- The Community Investment Fund would provide an annual budget of £1m and was open for community groups, businesses, and schools to apply to. The formation of a subgroup of the Community Partnership was anticipated with an expectation of the first decisions on bids to be made in late June 2023.

- Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) had facilitated over 30 engagement events, and multiple drop-in events in Mablethorpe for residents.
- Engagement events helped identify that some residents opposed the proposal and others were optimistic; LCC was keen to ensure contrasting views were adequately represented.
- LCC was identifying potential for major infrastructure activity to support the site and residents with flood prevention, transport provision and environmental considerations. The government was required to invest in such infrastructure under policy relating to geological disposal facilities.
- The Planning and Regulation Scrutiny Committee had received a report from Harbour Energy which noted its interest in the site as part of their Humber Carbon Capture Initiative. Other investors had discussed the site with National Grid on a confidential basis.
- NWS reported that the geological facility would create 4000 jobs, and LCC had subsequently requested that a more localised report be produced assessing skills, skills provision and the availability of labour in the area.
- LCC believed it was important to view the ongoing situation as fluid and explore opportunities for locality and inward investment, as well as acknowledging risks.
- The UK Atomic Energy Authority had confirmed that a Tokamak fusion facility would be in West Burton, Nottinghamshire, near Gainsborough. This proposal did not involve the same detailed analysis as NWS, but similarities had been observed in terms of the scale of investment, effects on infrastructure and the local economy, training provision and environmental impact. Sponsors of the programme in West Burton were requested to brief Council in Summer 2023.

During consideration of the report, the following comments were noted:

- The Community Investment Fund would have a significant impact on a small area such as Theddlethorpe.
- Members questioned whether the Community Investment Fund annual grant of £1m would continue despite the absence of matched funding. The Assistant Director – Growth assured that there was no requirement for any project to have matched funding to apply for the grant; projects could be prioritised if they had received matched funding, however outcomes and benefits were the main determination.
- The questionnaire circulated to residents of Theddlethorpe had highlighted that they felt as if not enough information had been supplied by NWS at the engagement sessions, and Members suggested liaising with NWS to improve this. The Assistant Director – Growth agreed NWS should engage as far and regularly as possible and gave assurance that the NWS had hired staff charged with improving community engagement.
- Government policy had clarified that the facility would only dispose of waste from the UK.
- NWS had allocated staff to promote the Community Investment Fund to local businesses and to assist with developing business cases before applying.
- Detail was requested on the groups and businesses applying to the grant, however Members were informed that this information was analysed by NWS and fed back to the Community Partnership. The Assistant Director – Growth had encouraged NSW to update their websites regularly to ensure LCC had access to such information.
- LCC as the strategic transport authority should engage with NWS about the potential impact transport infrastructure would have on the area once an assessment of the transport requirements for the site had been undertaken.
- LCC, colleges and training providers in Lincolnshire were assessing how training for future jobs could be delivered to ensure positions were filled locally.

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- Members suggested that residents may view businesses who applied to the Community Investment Fund as supporting the proposal for the site, which was why there was very few applications. The Assistant Director – Growth assured the first year of any program was slow.
- It was assured that any area that formed a Community Partnership could apply to the grant, and Members were informed two other locations had done so. Formal rules would be implemented regarding managing the grant, and Members were informed that not all the locations would be selected to build a facility, but all would receive the funding until a decision was reached.
- Councillor M Hill OBE was a member of the Community Partnership, and LCC officers were working with him in ensuring NWS considered comments from residents. A community development manager had also been appointed to reduce the workload of Parish Councils regarding the proposal.
- Decisions about the Community Investment Fund was under the remit of the Community Partnership if the grant was above a certain threshold. It was noted this threshold was high and rarely hit by Community Partnership groups.
- The decision on the proposal was exclusive to residents in the form of a direct vote.
- Members questioned what infrastructure would be required to support new residents in Theddlethorpe who were employed at the facility. The Assistant Director -Growth informed work was being undertaken to ensure they could effectively travel to work, their homes would be protected from flooding, and that there would be a business supply chain to work with other local businesses.
- Further parallels were drawn between this proposal and the Tokamak fusion facility in terms of required technical business support, skills, and job creation. It was noted that opportunities to receive support for both services may overlap.
 - Members questioned whether a carbon capture operation would be mutually exclusive with the nuclear facility, or whether they could coexist on the same site; it was noted that the two sponsoring organisations had conversed, but the outcome was unknown.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee reviews and comments on the progress of the Community Partnership and notes that its public engagement programme will continue throughout the siting process of the disposal facility; and
2. That the Committee supports the work being carried out to take advantage of the opportunities for investment in strategic infrastructure and for employment and business supply chains.

49 ENERGY FOR GROWTH - ENERGY OPTIONS ANALYSIS FOR GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE - INTERIM REPORT

The Committee received an interim report from Mick King, Head of Economic Infrastructure on Energy Options Analysis for Greater Lincolnshire. The following matters were reported:

- The Greater Lincolnshire Infrastructure Group (IG) commissioned a report from Rider Levett Bucknall to identify the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs) and assessed the ability of the energy approach identified to meet the demand from growth immediately and over the next 20 years.

- The Committee's comments would be forwarded to the consultants before 12 April 2023 to be considered in the final report which would be issued in May and would be considered by the Committee on 11 July 2023.
- A plan of action would be produced after the publication of the final report to ensure benefits were optimized for residents and businesses across Lincolnshire.
- LCC had developed a good working relationship with National Grid Energy Distribution and Northern Power Grid through understanding short, medium, and long-term growth priorities in Lincolnshire.

The findings of the report were summarised as:

1. There was a clear shift towards innovation and alternative energy sources across the county.
2. Net zero was a common theme across all sectors and was demonstrated through the shift in energy providers and increase in private investment.
3. There was inconsistent collaboration across Lincolnshire.

During consideration of the report, the following comments were highlighted:

- The role of solar energy was not discussed in the interim report, but rather focused on the impact of growth in the short and medium term. It was assured that solar energy would be detailed in the Final Report, and multiple applications for solar energy were received.
- Analysis of offshore energy facilities would be included in the final report.
- The Central Lincolnshire Joint Local Plan (which involved North Kesteven, City of Lincoln and West Lindsey) received a planning inspectorate update which allowed districts to strongly encourage the provision of renewable energy in all new houses; all local planning authorities would receive this option.
- The report noted that two housing site opportunities would be scoped in Greater Lincolnshire to facilitate a collaborative approach which strongly delivered commercially viable net zero carbon emission development. There were numerous sustainable urban extensions (SUEs) in the county, and developments that were early in the planning process could incorporate SUEs.
- Members raised questions about the capacity of the power grid and limits to infrastructure, and the Head of Economic Infrastructure assured that regulated maps had been produced on the supply and demand of the grid and were well received. Additionally, grid capacity would be a key outcome explored in the final report.
- The Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning welcomed LCCs commitment to net zero, and noted numerous applications had been received to develop solar farms and other renewable energy projects across Lincolnshire. He encouraged similar developments in the south of England too.
- The cost of the commissioned work from RLB was commercially sensitive if disclosed, consequently the Head of Economic Infrastructure agreed to seek advice and circulate further detail if possible.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee reviews and comments on the Interim Report on the Energy Options Analysis for Greater Lincolnshire.

The Committee received a report from Rachel Stamp, Waste Partnership and Projects Manager, on the various public engagement initiatives for waste in Lincolnshire. It was reported that:

- The Environment Act was anticipated to lead to the most prominent changes in the service for decades.
- The service was working closely with the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership (LWP) to prioritise the waste hierarchy and fulfil objectives of waste management strategies.
- The twin-stream rollout of paper and card collection demonstrated that the public were willing to adapt their behaviour and that waste engagement initiatives changed perceptions of waste disposal.
- Daily partnership working with waste collection authorities (WCAs) was vital to the success of engagement initiatives.
- The community and schools programme 'Let's Talk Rubbish' was successful, and involved presentations, talks and activities highlighting the importance of the waste hierarchy and encouraged people to change their behaviour towards waste disposal. Over 30 schools and 600 children had engaged with the programme; a further 23 schools had signed up for this year.
- The service continued to deliver lectures to Geography students at the University of Lincoln on Waste Management in Lincolnshire. Additionally, a student placement was being hosted for year two of the geography undergraduate degree.

During consideration of the report, the following comments were noted:

- Members raised that there were some inaccuracies in the information circulated by the Spalding Recycling Centre twitter account. Assurance was provided that the service would be informed, and that updates would be accurate moving forward.
- The collaborative work with University of Lincoln was welcomed, and it was assured that the initiative would extend elsewhere in the county given its success.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee reviews the contents of the report
2. That the Committee is assured that action is being taken that allows Lincolnshire County Council to adhere to its statutory obligations as a Waste Disposal Authority and continues to improve the efficiency of the service.

51 TWIN STREAM RECYCLING UPDATE

The Committee received a report from Rachel Stamp, Waste Partnership and Projects Manager, which provided an update on the impact of the twin-stream paper and card waste collection project which was introduced in four districts across Lincolnshire. Nicole Hilton, Assistant Director – Communities, was in attendance remotely for this item. It was reported that:

- The initiative was trialed in 2019 and formally implemented in 2021. It intended to separate, and subsequently improve, the quality of recycling materials.
- Four WCAs had adopted the scheme – Boston Borough North Kesteven, West Lindsey and East Lindsey.
- Almost 14,000 tons of high-quality paper and card had been collected since the scheme's implementation.
- Paper and card were sent to a paper processing facility in King's Lynn, which reported that LCC produced the highest quality waste of any authority; materials were recyclable up to seven times.

- Contamination levels had reduced in the four WCAs from 32% to below 15%, and contamination of other recyclable materials such as metals, plastics and glass had also reduced to approximately 15%.
- The initiative was supported by information from The Performance and Improvement Team, who continued to engage with residents.
- Introducing the initiative to the three remaining waste authorities was expected once the four engaged authorities were stable within the scheme.

During consideration of the report, the following comments were noted:

- Members suggested the scheme provided a solution to contaminated waste and welcomed the success of the initiative.
- It was questioned whether food waste could be collected separately in the future, and the Waste and Projects Manager was confident this could occur once the impact of the Environment Act was realised. The Assistant Director – Communities expressed that lessons learnt from the twin-stream initiative would feed into a food collection program in the future.
 - It was noted that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) were involved with several national projects which would have to be in place before other local projects, like food collection, were introduced.
- The twin-stream rollout was adopted on a case-by-case basis when it was suitable; all parties involved would have to be adequately prepared before extending the initiative to the three remaining WCAs. It was anticipated that all WCAs would have adopted the scheme by 2024/25, and the Assistant Director – Communities gave assurance that the scheme has been introduced as fast possible.
- LCC communication strategy for the scheme were based on the direct experiences of residents.
- Further detail on the potential new burdens funding for authorities impacted by the Environment Act were expected by Summer 2023. The new burdens funding for food waste collection was awarded to WCAs rather than waste disposal authorities (WDAs).
- Members questioned whether the tonnage collected in each WCA was consistent, and were informed that indicative figures suggested a slight decrease. It was assured this trend was being analysed and further information would be circulated once completed, and that a reduction in tonnage was positive according to the waste hierarchy.
- Differences in tonnage collected between WCAs was attributed to behavioural differences, notably between rural and urban areas. Analysis was underway on how location impacted behaviour towards waste disposal.
- Members questioned how recycling would remain a priority within the context of more bins being issued e.g., for food waste, and highlighted the sentiment of some residents that there was insufficient space in their home. It was assured that options to remedy this concern were being explored, such as smaller bins, bin-sharing with neighbours etc. Furthermore, the service engaged consistently with residents in establishing the best solution for them.
- It was suggested that producers had a responsibility to use less packaging to reduce household waste; until this was realised, it would not be feasible to reduce the size of bins. The Assistant Director – Communities agreed that suppliers should reduce consumer item packaging, and consideration should be given to the materials used. She also informed Members that the behavioural shift required by residents to reduce bin capacity would take 15-20 years, therefore any plans to do were very far from implementation.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee reviews the contents of the report.

2. That the Committee is assured that action is being taken that allows Lincolnshire County Council to meet objectives defined within the Joint Municipal Waste Strategy and help contribute towards the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership objective of 'seeking the best environmental option to provide innovative, customer friendly waste management solutions that give value for money to Lincolnshire'.

52 ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report by Tracy Johnson, Senior Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Committee to consider and comment on the content of its own work programme for the year to ensure that scrutiny activity was focused where it can be of greatest benefit.

Since the publication of the agenda, there were two pre-decision items added to the agenda for meeting due to be held on 12th September 2023:

- A report on Waste Transfer Station Improvements
- Food Waste Disposal Procurement.

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The outcomes and recommendations from the reviews undertaken by Scrutiny Panels A - Town Centres Improvement and B – Agricultural Sector Support were scheduled for the 30 May meeting, as well as the outcomes and recommendations from the Motorhomes and Campervans Working Group.

RESOLVED

1. That the work programme be approved

The meeting closed at 12.07 pm