

**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
12 SEPTEMBER 2023**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR I D CARRINGTON (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors Mrs A M Austin, A J Baxter, M D Boles, A G Hagues and H Spratt

Councillor P Dilks was also in attendance, and Councillors C Davie and T Carter attended the meeting remotely.

Officers in attendance:-

Paul Beales (Senior Commercial and Procurement Officer), Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Samantha L Harrison (Head of Economic Development), Marianne Marshall (Strategic Communications Lead), Hayley Redford (Project Officer - Economic Infrastructure), Johanna Rhoades (Project Officer - Utilities), Rachel Stamp (Waste Partnership and Projects Manager), Vanessa Strange (Head of Infrastructure Investment), Jess Wosser-Yates (Democratic Services Officer), and Simon Wright (Regeneration and Portfolio Manager)

17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillor K Cooke, I Fleetwood and M Griggs. It was reported that, under regulation 13 of the Local Government Committee and Political Groups Regulation 1990, Councillor P Skinner would replace Councillor L Wootten for this meeting only.

18 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were made at this point in proceedings.

19 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 11 JULY 2023

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

20 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS

The Chairman paid respects to Councillor Ray Wootten and reflected on his hard work at Lincolnshire County Council, notably within the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee as its former Chairman. The Committee observed a minute of silence for Councillor Wootten.

- The Sutton Bridge placemaking scheme was welcomed as a local initiative to maximise the influence of the marina, village centre and local businesses.
- Lincolnshire County Council continued to display leadership in energy infrastructure in Lincolnshire. The Council was developing working relationships with electricity Distribution Network Operators and increasing understanding of businesses and communities regarding energy.
- Over 80% of businesses supported by the Growth Hub had expressed confidence in their current financial outlook.
- Tourists were spending less money which impacted the visitor economy. Despite this, Visit Lincolnshire had over 1.6 million website views in 2023 so far, and the conversion rate to a booking or download was of 14.4%.
- The AgriFood and AgriTech sectors continued to receive high quality investment enquiries, and multiple businesses were supporting investment projects.
- The Business Lincolnshire (BL) Team continued to support businesses and multiple programmes relating to manufacturing, the visitor economy and net zero were launching in September 2023.
- BL were organising a 'Going Global' Export Conference in November 2023 which would encourage increased international trade for Lincolnshire from new and existing exporters.
- Families across the County were engaging with Family Learning workshops and courses.
- Support and provision for students for whom English was not their first language was broadening.
- 92% of Functional Skills students achieved their qualification; course delivery and opportunities were being extended to work settings to empower employees to progress.
- The continued success of the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone in South Holland was noted, and a local food sector control and automation company now occupied a bespoke facility. Additionally, the Hub' innovation centre now had six tenants.
- The outline stage for the Boston Road Industrial Estate expansion scheme in Horncastle was complete and would be considered at an upcoming Committee meeting.
- Approximately 150 small business tenants continued to be supported by the Council.

Members noted the announcements, and information was requested regarding the progress of the Future High Streets Fund in Grantham. The Executive Councillor for

Economic Development, Environment and Planning consequently agreed to plan a meeting alongside the Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT to discuss this further with members.

21 FOOD WASTE DISPOSAL CONTRACT PROCUREMENT

Consideration was given to a report from Rachel Stamp, Waste Partnership and Projects Manager, which invited the Committee to comment on the approval sought to procure a contract for the treatment of food waste through anaerobic digestion, which included collection from waste transfer stations by the supplier ahead of a decision by the Executive Councillor for Waste and Trading Standards between 18-22 September 2023.

During the Committee's consideration of this item, the following points were highlighted:

- Members who had experienced food waste collection in their divisions expressed positive views and welcomed the continuation of the service and wider roll out.
- Members enquired whether creating a central and council owned anaerobic digester had been considered as an option; Officers explained that waste minimisation was the highest priority. Volumes of residual and food waste were being monitored to enable future decisions, where that would be considered as a cost effective and optimum solution, however, currently engaging with a provider to procure a contract was based on existing need.
- Members emphasised on the importance of continuing to educate the public on waste disposal, recycling and all matters relevant to waste separation for appropriate, safe and effective reuse and disposal of items. Data and intelligence gathered from previous project roll outs offer insight to demographic characteristics across the county as well as practice and behaviours. Central government provided engagement and education that was being built on by local authority officers across the county who were aware of the needs and that understood those hard-to-reach localities and how to maximise take up of initiatives at these.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee considers the report.
2. That the Committee's support for the recommendations to the Executive Councillor for Waste and Trading Standards as set out in the report be noted.
3. That any additional comments to be passed on to the Executive Councillor in relation to this item.

22 APPROVAL TO PROCURE CONTRACTS FOR HAULAGE OF HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRES EXIT WASTE STREAMS

Consideration was given to a report from Rachel Stamp, Waste Partnership and Projects Manager on behalf of Mike Reed, Head of Waste, which invited the Committee to consider a report which sought approval of the Council's Haulage of Household Waste Recycling (HHWR) contract which was due to expire on 31 March 2024. This decision would be taken

between 18-22 September 2023 by the Executive Councillor for Waste and Trading Standards.

The Committee was guided through the report, which outlined a proposed course of action including procurement of new contracts on a lots-basis, and delegation of the necessary decisions. During consideration of this item, the following points were noted:

- Members were pleased that issues around the failure to collect waste streams were acknowledged and tackled through this report and were supportive of its recommendations.
- Members applauded the decision to award smaller contracts to local suppliers as means of increasing value on public expenditure through potentially lower prices and good value service provision.
- Members emphasised on sensitivities related to disruption that may be incurred by the routing of lorries, particularly where that crossed villages and hence enquired whether the contract specification could reflect on these matters at the procurement stage to avoid future frustrations. Officers gave assurance that haulers would be taking appropriate routes that minimized carbon footprint and abided by the rules pertinent to roads specifications and limitations. Terms were being monitored through the contract management to ensure that requirements were met; however, Officers explained that a certain degree of flexibility was required to meet future changes through the life cycle of the haulage.
- Assurances were given on the contracts containing tolerances that were being managed on a monthly basis to ensure performance was maintained at agreed standards (in line with the performance monitoring framework).
- Members highlighted that staff in HHWR Centres were consistently helpful.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee considers the report.
2. That the Committee's support for the recommendations to the Executive Councillor for Waste and Trading Standards as set out in the report be noted.
3. That any additional comments to be passed on to the Executive Councillor in relation to this item.

23 SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT: TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS

Consideration was given to a report which summarised the findings of Scrutiny Panel A (SPA) on Town Centre's Improvement, which was due to be considered by the Executive on 3 October 2023.

Kiara Chatziioannou, Scrutiny Officer and SPA project lead, introduced the report which was commissioned by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board in 2021 and provided a summary of the work undertaken by SPA since it was formed.

Councillor Phil Dilks, Chairman of SPA, guided the Committee through the report with the support of Councillor Tracey Carter, Vice-Chairman of SPA, who was in attendance remotely.

The Committee was informed that the report detailed a set of wide-ranging and robust recommendations to support the future of Lincolnshire's town centres in response to various challenges, such as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis and increased online shopping. These recommendations included:

- Recommendation 1: LCC to hold annual meetings with the eight established Local Transport Broads (LTBs) to encourage strategic partners to agree on actions to address town centre issues.
- Recommendation 2: The establishment of a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for town centre matters.
- Recommendation 3: Placemaking, funding and skills to be encouraged to ensure accessibility and to support infrastructure whilst preserving the local character of town centres.
- Recommendation 4: To support the digitalisation of the high-street by promoting technological advancement, supporting employees to improve digital skills and current, modern content creation to advertise town centres.
- Recommendation 5: Data driven decision-making and targeted investment.
- Recommendation 6: The development of a Green Retail/Hospitality Guide for support independent businesses to become more environmentally friendly.

Members considered the report, and during the discussion the following points were highlighted:

- The Committee congratulated the work of the panel and thanked all officers, members and contributors involved.
- Members recognised the challenging economic environment that town centre businesses faced. Business rates were highlighted as an issue for many. The issue was also raised by expert witnesses during the review.
- Members recognised that business support activity happens at both an upper and lower tier. County Council staff will continue to provide an effective complementary service – efficiently and avoiding duplication.
- Supporting businesses to “go green” through adopting sustainable and conscious practices was another priority identified and supported by Members. The work described in the report was welcomed.
- The rurality of Lincolnshire emphasised the importance of reliable public transport to access town centres. It was noted that the work of SPA had acknowledged this consideration; connectivity could be supported through planning and place-making.
- Members reflected upon a variety of important factors that create and support thriving High Streets, from: the importance of high streets having a diverse independent range of businesses and the great value of independent shops; to the value of the quality of the built and natural environment which provided the town's

centres' aesthetics and enhanced individual character, creating vibrant environments appealing to residents and visitors.

- The Committee acknowledged challenges faced by market-stall owners such as discount chain stores and online shopping.
- Louth town centre was considered to be a good example of utilising government funding to enhance town centres.
- Absent landlords remained an issue in many town centres which required attention. Members cautioned that Local Planning Authorities must be included in the development of placemaking plans; this should be explicitly captured in recommendations (R3) and future action plans that emerged from this review. Assurances were given that LCC was already undertaking a key role in the development of spatial planning, working with Local Planning Authorities and lobbying the government to ensure that the rural voice of Lincolnshire was heard (e.g., in relation to the Planning Reform Bill).
- Members were pleased to receive assurances on Transport Boards being the appropriate forum for discussion and addressing local town centre issues and opportunities,
- Members noted the importance of integrating various Local Authority tiers to ensure formal partnership working between Parish and Town Councils, DCs, LCC, private and third sectors, as well as the wider community.
- It was noted that some services were now inaccessible in some Lincolnshire town centres such as post offices and banks.
- Members emphasised the importance in ensuring high quality, healthy produce was available on the high street.
- It was raised that Recommendation 3 would involve close partnership working with planning authorities; The Head of Infrastructure Investment assured that the wording report would be amended to emphasise the importance of inclusion, and clarified that the present wording reflected an acknowledgement to devolution within the context of Greater Lincolnshire.
- Data management was a sensitive matter that required well defined responsibilities for those custodians of sources and data. Assurances were offered that data was stored and used appropriately and was already being used towards making crucial decisions that impacted the future of towns and the county as a whole (i.e., Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure, Energy Options etc.).

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee formally recognises Scrutiny Panel A's efforts in carrying out the scrutiny review.
2. That the Committee acknowledges that the findings of the review have created future opportunities for the Council to build on strengths and address weaknesses identified, supporting Lincolnshire Towns to remain viable and resilient.
3. That the Committee supports the report and recommendations as summarised on pages 42-44 of the report

4. That the Committee approves the draft report attached as Appendix A as the final report on Town Centre Improvements for submission to the Executive at its meeting on 3 October 2023.

24 ENERGY OPTION ANALYSIS FOR GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE FINAL REPORT, OUTCOMES, AND NEXT STEPS

Consideration was given to a report presented by Vanessa Strange, Head of Infrastructure Investment and Johanna Rhoades, Project Officer – Utilities on behalf of the Head of Economic Infrastructure which summarised the Energy Options Analysis for Greater Lincolnshire Final Report, as well as its outcomes, next steps and actions.

The Committee had considered the Interim Report in April 2023 and had provided feedback regarding additional areas for consideration which were addressed in the Final Report.

The report, which was undertaken by Rider Levett Bucknall (RLB), comprised of the research and engagement RLB had completed during the commission period, this included engagement with a range of partners across Greater Lincolnshire such as District Councils and the Energy Sector.

The Committee was guided through the report and next steps, and during consideration of the report, the following points were highlighted:

- It was requested that the Committee considered energy option analysis annually under the thematic area entitled Energy Efficiencies.
- Members welcomed the presentation of the report, notably that it summarised issues raised with the Interim Report and highlighted the pages where these concerns had been addressed.
- Some members suggested that ground source heat pumps were a cheaper, simpler source of energy rather than geothermal. Members requested that a point of accuracy regarding deep geothermal be checked.
- The report had acknowledged that there was no commercial scale carbon capture storage within the United Kingdom currently; however, officers explained that the technology was of particular interest for businesses based on the Humber Bank.
- Members highlighted the need to consider the tensions around land use. Members noted the desire to use land for energy from solar farms to the use of farmland for feedstock for anaerobic digestion.
- Grid capacity and its inflexibility was a serious hindrance to economic development.
- Members recognised the importance of being able to benefit locally from local energy infrastructure, for example that energy from off-shore wind turbines should benefit not bypass Lincolnshire. This should be taken into account for future Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) applications.
- The Head of Infrastructure Investment assured that LCC proactively responded to government consultations and consistently makes the case for better energy infrastructure. This work formed part of the case making.

- Members highlighted that there was a lack of power in some towns and that electrification of housing and car charging would increase pressures further. The Head of Infrastructure Investment described the work underway to highlight shortages in the network. The mapping tool produced as part of the report had been well received by officers at Local Planning Authorities who recognised the benefit for local plan work. The report formed part of a range of work that LCC was doing to promote infrastructure that supported growth and provided good outcomes for individuals, businesses and communities.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee thanks Officers for their detailed report and assurances given relevant to requirements for further research and engagement in identifying and implementing innovative solutions towards delivering longer term outcomes and beyond.
2. That the report be received, and that the Committee's endorsement of actions undertaken, and actions planned that were reported be recorded.
3. That the comments from discussion, as captured, be shared with Leading Officers and relevant Portfolio holders for their consideration; and
4. A thematic area entitled Energy Efficiencies be added on the list of items to be programmed in the 2023-24 period.

25 SUTTON BRIDGE PLACE MAKING - SCHEME OVERVIEW

Consideration was given to a report from Simon Wright, Regeneration and Portfolio Manager, and Hayley Reford, Project Officer- Economic Infrastructure which provided an update on the Sutton Bridge place-making scheme.

The Scheme sought to deliver a programme of integrated initiatives in Sutton Bridge through enhancing the villages major assets and creating the right conditions to increase footfall between the marina and village centre. It aimed to increase local spend and small business growth, and added value to extend the original mooring that were built in 2012. The Moorings were funded through the Sail the Wash initiative and were subsequently extended in Summer 2021.

The Committee considered the report, and the following points were highlighted in the discussion:

- Members welcomed the scheme and hoped it would encourage visitors to the village.
- Another round of consultation could occur; consequently the Chairman requested this item returned to Committee once further engagement had materialised for continued consideration.

- Members questioned the impact the scheme would have on the winter/year-round economy in Lincolnshire. The Regeneration and Portfolio Manager noted there was no specific information available regarding this or the marina itself; whilst it would be an attractive prospect for day boats, he accepted they may not be used as much in the winter. He provided assurance that improvements to the walkway across the riverbank would enhance the village year-round.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be endorsed by the Committee,
2. That the Committee's satisfaction be recorded on the overall placemaking plan and the positive impact it is anticipated to have for the village's community and on visitor experience.
3. That the comments from discussion, as captured, be shared with Leading Officers and Relevant Portfolio holders for their consideration and reflection upon as they progress with the next steps of the project.

26 SERVICE LEVEL PERFORMANCE REPORTING AGAINST THE PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 2023 - 2024 - QUARTER 1

Consideration was given to a report presented by Samantha Harrison, Head of Economic Development, Rachel Stamp, Waste Partnership and Projects Manager and Chris Miller, Head of Environment on performance achieved for Waste, Economy and Flooding in Quarter 1.

During consideration of the report, the following was noted:

PI 76 – Recycling at County Council owned Household Waste Recycling Centres

- It was reported that 73% of materials presented at HHWRCs were recycled, and Members acknowledged this figure was lower than previous quarters.
- Members highlighted residents' concerns regarding HHWRCs being closed.
- The Waste Partnership and Projects Manager highlighted the importance of considering all Performance Indicators (PIs) in isolation as the overall volume of waste presented had decreased which was positive; waste minimisation was the priority of the waste hierarchy.

PI 160 Recycling Rate (new national formula)

- Members requested that data for this PI be broken down in terms of the type of recycling, and potentially by district. Members were informed by the Waste Partnership and Projects Manager that there were limitations in how far the data can be dissected, thus it was suggested that Waste PIs were considered by the Committee on an annual basis to facilitate an in-depth discussion into details within the data.

PI 162 Household waste to landfill

- Members praised that the measure was 0.01% which achieved the forecast of 2.63%. the Waste Partnership and Projects Manager noted this was due to working with providers to secure alternative energy recovery for curbside materials rather than sending to landfill.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee thanks Officers for clarifications offered in relation to each area's respective performance
2. That the report be received, and that comments from the discussion, as captured, be shared with Leading Officers and Portfolio holders for their consideration.

27 ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report by Kiara Chatziioannou, 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 could be of greatest benefit.

There had been no changes published, although the Scrutiny Officer informed Members that the next meeting would include an item inviting the Committee to consider potential topics for a Scrutiny Review

RESOLVED

That the Committee notes the report and approves of the existing work program as detailed on pages 297-304, and that the additional item regarding Energy as highlighted in discussion.

The meeting closed at 12.40 pm