

**PUBLIC PROTECTION AND COMMUNITIES
 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
 31 JANUARY 2023**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR N H PEPPER (CHAIRMAN)

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

Councillors: A P Maughan, (Executive Support Councillor - Fire & Rescue and Culture Services), D McNally (Executive Councillor - Waste and Trading Standards) and S P Roe (Executive Support Councillor – Children’s Services, Community Safety, Procurement) attended the meeting as observers.

Councillor L A Cawrey (Executive Councillor - Fire & Rescue and Cultural Services) observed the meeting virtually via Microsoft Teams.

Officers in attendance:-

Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Glen Garrod (Executive Director - Adult Care and Community Wellbeing), Mark Keal (Head of Trading Standards), Keith Noyland (Head of Finance - Communities), Martyn Parker (Assistant Director Public Protection), Claire Seabourne (Partnership and Commissioning Manager), Ryan Stacey (Assistant Chief Fire Officer) and Paul Dolby (Senior Trading Standards Office)

Officers in attendance via Microsoft Teams:

Nicole Hilton (Assistant Director - Communities), Will Mason (Head of Culture), Samantha Neal (Assistant Director, Prevention and Early Intervention) and Lauren Grosvenor (Programme Manager, Public Health).

51 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs N F Clarke, Councillor M R Clarke and J L King.

52 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

None were declared.

53 MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC PROTECTION AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 13 DECEMBER 2022

PUBLIC PROTECTION AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
31 JANUARY 2023

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Tuesday 13 December 2022 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

54 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND CHIEF OFFICERS

The Committee noted that Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell OBE (Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety and Procurement) had sent her apologies as she was attending the memorial service for the Ingoldmells flooding events.

55 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PROPOSALS 2023/24

Consideration was given to a report from Keith Noyland, Strategic Finance Lead – Place (Fire & Rescue), which invited the Committee to consider the budget proposals for the next financial year 2023/24 for the Council's Public Protection and Communities services, prior to consideration by the Executive at its meeting on 7 February 2023.

In guiding the Committee through the report reference was made to the background information relating to the local government settlement and the Council's overall financial position; Table A provided details of the proposed revenue budget for Public Protection and Communities services and identified movements from the current year's budgets in terms of cost pressures and expected savings. It was reported that the main change to the budget was the net increase of £326,000 for Fire and Rescue services which resulted from inflationary increases in fuel costs, the facilities costs for the headquarters at Nettleham and increasing FireLink costs, which had been further exacerbated by the withdrawal of the related Home Office grant.

The proposed capital programme was set out at table B, in which no changes to previous versions of the budget had been proposed.

Consideration was given to the report and during discussion, the following points were highlighted:

- Members asked what the Registration services budget was likely to look like in the 2023/24 to meet inflationary costs and deliver a full cost recovery model. Officers provided assurance that the costs coming into the service would be less as more was being done on-line through the improved digital service offer;
- The impact of the fluctuation in fuel prices on the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) was queried. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) explained that the current decline of fuel prices was not anticipated to remove cost pressures, most of which had already been incurred in the current year;

- In relation to “unavoidable service specific cost pressures” (para 1.15- relevant to the FRS) that amounted to £487,000, Members asked what this comprised of. Officers explained that the figure included fuel costs, costs of facilities and headquarters related costs and explained that these were partially offset by savings that emerged from the rent savings following the acquisition of the Waddington Training Centre site;
- Members requested further information about the rolling programme for the replacement of FRS fleet vehicles and associated equipment increase to c£2.6 million. The ACFO explained that this covered vehicles (e.g., fire engines) and operational and specialist equipment (e.g., thermal imaging cameras, cutting equipment, FRS boats etc). It was reported that these had been reviewed to establish their life expectancy to ensure that the service was not needlessly replacing equipment;
- Reference was made to the withdrawal of the Firelink Grant (para 1.18, second bullet point) which resulted in fire services incurring the costs for communication and mobilising systems used;
- Assurance was provided that although no new projects were added to the Capital programme (para 1.22), a new developments capital contingency within the programme at £5 million per annum, was available to be used to fund any projects brought forward during the year. This meant that there was £50 million of capital available (over the 10-year capital programme) for other projects in addition to those already featured within the capital programme. Members were satisfied that despite increased costs and inflation rates, the services needs were being met and projects were not being delayed or deferred due to cost pressures;
- Members noted the absence of an increase in funding to Citizens Advice Lincolnshire (CAL). In line with the cost-of-living crisis and inflation in the market, CAL was a valued source of advice and support to residents that lacked resources and experienced hardships. Members were concerned by the increased pressure on CAL to support residents with restricted funding. Officers gave assurance that there were ongoing negotiations with CAL to look at efficiencies that could be achieved through the better use of resources. In addition, the role of CAL was under review and officers offered to bring back a report relating to the procurement process and the commissioning arrangements with CAL;
- Members requested that an item be featured on a future agenda for the Committee in relation to CAL, which reflected procurement and commissioning arrangements.

RESOLVED

1. That the report and recommendations to the Executive be supported.

2. That comments made, as recorded, be passed on to the Executive for their consideration on 7th February.

Note: Councillor K E Lee wished it be recorded that she voted against the budget proposals as there had been no increase in funding to CAL.

56 HMICFRS UPDATE FOR LINCOLNSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE

Consideration was given to a report from Ryan Stacy, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, which provided the Committee with an update on the response to the Inspection Outcomes from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in December 2021.

Members were referred to the two main areas of concern highlighted by HMICFRS – regulatory fire inspections; and ensuring fairness and promoting diversity.

It was reported that since the inspection, there had been an increase in the number of qualified, highly trained inspectors and a clearly defined development pathway for those individuals had been identified. It was noted that there had also been a change to the quality assurance guidelines to ensure that all fire safety education was risk assessed and quality assured.

The Committee was advised that action had been taken to ensure fairness and promote diversity had included the development of a face to face training package which had been delivered to all staff in 2022, and that further training around specialist areas of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) would be rolled on out a needs basis in 2023. It was highlighted that the EDI steering group was also being better utilised along with wider use of equality impact assessments.

In a letter from HMICFRS, as detailed at Appendix A to the report, it was reported that sufficient progress had been made in both areas of concern.

Consideration was given to the report and during the discussion thereon, the following points were noted:

- The Executive Councillor for Fire, Rescue and Cultural Services extended thanks to the service for their work to address the issues identified;
- The dedicated email address and contact points to allow staff to feedback confidentially EDI issues and concerns were being used by staff. An email address which linked to the Human Resources team at Lincolnshire County Council also provided a confidential way of raising issues, had also been provided to staff. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer assured Members that the Senior Leadership Team were committed to listening and responding to concerns and challenges raised;

- Inspections were predominantly unannounced, but announced visits were also necessary in some instances;
- The benefits of training on unconscious bias were acknowledged;
- Inspection teams identified diagnostic categories which contributed to promoting the right value and culture within the service, but the views of the Senior Leadership Team also contributed to identifying the values;
- A review of resources in the non-operational side of the fire service was ongoing which would inform workplace planning moving forward to identify whether further resource was needed to address future challenges, such as the development of online training;
- There was sufficient resource within the full-time operational staff team, but recruitment and retention challenges for on-call team operational staff was ongoing;
- Assurance was provided that complaints of unfair behaviour were always investigated thoroughly.
- In addressing potential issues with culture, the Committee were reassured that Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue service had spoken directly to staff to identify any potential issues; and that individuals with any issues at all levels had been provided with the opportunity to speak directly with the Senior Leadership Team with any concerns. It was noted that the Senior Leadership Team had benefitted from the opportunity to personally engage with fire stations, which was not the case in larger metropolitan areas, and that action would be taken if behaviours occurred;
- It was agreed that feedback from the staff survey would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee as a standalone item;
- Of the 15 Fire Safety Regulatory auditors who carried out building inspections had an enhanced level of training, 12 were qualified up to a level 4 diploma, and the others would be qualified within the next six months. It was noted that there a programme to upskill watch based leaders to the level 3 certificate, giving grounding in fire safety enforcement was also in place and provided development pathways into a protection role; and
- Changes to inspection criteria would mean that HMICFRS would make 11 judgements across five categories. Officers were confident that Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue would receive at least a 'satisfactory' judgement in all areas at their next inspection.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be received, and satisfaction be given to the actions implemented to address the recommendations made by HMICFRS, progress made and assurance received on continuous improvements.
2. That the comments made, as recorded, be taken under consideration by the relevant Lead Officers and Executive Portfolio holders.

PUBLIC PROTECTION AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
31 JANUARY 2023

Consideration was given to a report from Mark Keal, Head of Trading Standards, which provided the Committee with an overview of the review of the delivery of food standards enforcement undertaken by Lincolnshire County Council Trading Standards in 2021-22.

Enforcement work over the Christmas period had included work to address consumer protection and the safety of products sold at the Christmas market, including assessing the safety of light up toys and attending Lincoln and Sleaford Christmas market to identify any potential issues; carrying out inspections at local venues in which concerns had been raised; and using media sources to educate and inform on trading standards.

Consideration was given to the report and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- Officers acknowledged that the number of food inspections had reduced, however this was in partly due to having several officers in training to become inspectors which was having an impact on available resources. It was reported that officers were working to encourage recruitment to the area of food inspection, to allow further inspections to be made;
- In inspecting food outlets, District Council's predominantly inspected hygiene factors, but would also raise any concern over allergen enforcement to Lincolnshire County Council which could then trigger a joint inspection or further investigation on a trading standard issue;
- Officers would carry out follow-up checks in instances where a number of trading standards matters had been highlighted, but not in instances where minor issues had been addressed;
- Depending on the circumstance, some inspections would be planned rather than unannounced;
- The importance of all new food businesses receiving food safety training was highlighted. Assurance was provided that all registered food businesses would receive notification of food safety requirements, including hygiene and labelling, upon registering. Food safety videos had been produced in 18 languages and access to translation services was available if necessary;
- The importance of clear and correct labelling on food products was emphasised and assurance was provided that trading standards teams worked with businesses to enforce standards;
- Any non-compliance where the supplier or manufacturer originated out of County would be referred back with the results of any sampling carried out; and
- When necessary, Trading Standards Officers provided intelligence to other organisations, such as Crime Stoppers.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be received.
2. That feedback and comments from the debate be taken into consideration by Officers.

58 RESETTLEMENT SCHEMES AND ASYLUM DISPERSAL IN LINCOLNSHIRE

Consideration was given to a joint report from Samantha Neal, Assistant Director – Prevention and Early Intervention and Lauren Grosvenor, Programme Manager Public Health, which provided the Committee with an overview of refugee schemes and asylum dispersal, the national position and the response by Lincolnshire organisations to national policy decisions.

With reference to the report, the distinction between refugees and asylum seekers and their rights and responsibilities was emphasised. The Assistant Director – Prevention and Early Intervention also referred Members to the update on the Ukraine Crisis Resettlement Scheme, as detailed in the report.

Members were assured that an effective and active countywide partnership was in place with clear expectations which aided in the support of refugees and asylum seekers in Lincolnshire.

Consideration was given to the report and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- Funding to support with the Homes for Ukraine scheme had provided the opportunity to recruit staff to support in meeting the increase in workload which included a permanent role within the Public Health team with a focus on monitoring work to support re-settlement schemes in a broader sense. However, very little funding was in place to support asylum dispersal;
- Details on the allocation of recently announced new funding from the Government to aid with homelessness support and new housing options for Ukrainian guests (and anyone else at risk of homelessness) had not yet been released but were expected in the coming months. The Committee acknowledged the difficulties in long term planning to maximise the funding potential given the lack of detail;
- A homes scheme which sought nominations for accommodation to Afghan refugees had not been proposed, rather the offer of independent accommodation was sought from local Housing Authorities. All Housing Authorities (in Lincolnshire, the District Councils) had been urged by the government to identify suitable housing where refugee families could settle;
- Many Ukrainian refugee families were now seeking or had already found independent accommodation;
- The Council was in receipt of grant funding for education provision for Afghan schemes;
- A need for more timely communication between Serco and local authorities in the coordination of services for new arrivals to hotels had been acknowledged by Robert Jenrick, MP and work had been carried out to address issues raised which would enable more efficient communication in future;
- The Committee was reassured that once local authorities were notified of plans for new arrivals to hotels, rigorous assurance checks were carried out to ensure the

safety of all those involved and to ensure that appropriate food and accommodation was provided;

- Around 800 Ukrainian families were housed in Lincolnshire in around 360 homes via the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. A survey had been launched to identify the barriers to employment for Ukrainian Refugees. Once the results had been analysed, the Council would work with the Department of Work and Pensions to identify ways of overcoming those barriers to employment;
- Asylum Contingency hotels often placed individuals from a number of different nationalities, with one hotel recently housing individuals from 11 different countries;
- The Government were looking for available housing with the aim of moving asylum seekers out of hotels and into alternative suitable accommodation. It was clarified identifying the locations of asylum contingency hotels was not the responsibility of the Council, at which it had no control over; and
- The Committee expressed disappointment that individuals were not permitted to work whilst seeking asylum, which would likely benefit the mental wellbeing of many individuals as well as benefiting the County. The benefits of working in partnership with other organisations across the East Midlands to establish support for asylum seekers was highlighted, for example having set up volunteer opportunities for individuals which provided much needed social interaction.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be endorsed, and satisfaction be given to the developments of resettlement schemes and asylum dispersal in Lincolnshire.
2. That assurance be given to the robust governance and operational arrangements in place to respond to requirements.
3. That feedback and comments from the debate be taken into consideration by the relevant officers.

59 PUBLIC PROTECTION AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report from Kiara Chatziioannou, Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Committee to consider its work programme, as set out on pages 75 – 78 of the agenda pack.

As requested, details on the Citizens Advice negotiations, procurement process and commissioning arrangements, and an item on the Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service equality and diversity staff survey feedback would be reported to the Committee either at a future meeting, or as a briefing paper.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be received.

2. That approval be given to the existing work programme and additional items, as recorded.

The meeting of the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee ended at 12.01pm.

SITTING AS THE CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

60 SAFER LINCOLNSHIRE PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report from Claire Seabourne, Safer Lincolnshire Partnership Business Manager, which provided an update on the strategic activity of the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership (SLP) for the year previous.

The Safer Lincolnshire Partnership Manager updated the Committee on the new statutory duty around Serious Violence; details of which were contained in paragraph four of the report. It was highlighted that although the duty had not been due to come into force until January 2023, partners had been keen to respond proactively, and with funding from Lincolnshire's Police & Crime Commissioner, a Violence reduction Strategic Needs Assessment had been undertaken.

It was reported that Lincolnshire was well ahead of this deadline. Details of Lincolnshire's achievements in this regard were set out within the report presented, with reference being made to domestic homicide reviews, financial information and communications.

Consideration was given to the report, and during the discussion the following comments were noted:

- Assurance was provided that there would be no delay in notifying, reviewing or information sharing to the SLP of new homicide cases as a result of the delegation of Domestic Homicide Reviews to the Lincolnshire Domestic Abuse Partnership;
- The Committee acknowledged the need for SLP to focus limited resource on targeting reoffending in the areas that caused the most threat and harm;
- A need for MPs to lobby for more police funding in Lincolnshire was emphasised. The Committee was reassured that the Chief Constable for Lincolnshire Police was holding regular meetings with MPs, and the Police and Crime Commissioner had lobbied government for further funding;
- Concerns were raised over reports to the proposed cuts to PCSO's in Lincolnshire and the impact the lack of support would have on communities; and
- That a briefing paper would be made available to members of the Committee concerning the Community Trigger process.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be endorsed.
2. That satisfaction be given to the activities undertaken that demonstrate the efforts of the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership to discharge its statutory duties.
3. That feedback and comments from the debate be taken under consideration by officers and portfolio holders.

The meeting closed at 12.21 pm