

**PUBLIC PROTECTION AND COMMUNITIES  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
9 MAY 2023**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR N H PEPPER (CHAIRMAN)**

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

Councillors: Jenny Barnett, Monica Stark and Mrs S Woolley attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Glen Garrod (Executive Director - Adult Care and Community Wellbeing), Lauren Grosvenor (Programme Manager, Public Health), Samantha Neal (Assistant Director, Prevention and Early Intervention), Alison Christie (Programme Manager, Strategy and Development) and Will Mason (Head of Culture)

69 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N F Clarke, E J Sneath and J L King.

It was reported that, under Regulation 13 of the Local Government (Committee and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, Councillor Noi Sear had been appointed as the replacement member for Councillor Mrs N F Clarke, for this meeting only.

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

70 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

71 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 21 MARCH 2023

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21 March 2023 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

72 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND CHIEF OFFICERS

There were no announcements by the Chairman, Executive Councillors or Chief Officers.

73 CITIZEN'S ADVICE LINCOLNSHIRE ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to a report from Citizens Advice Lincolnshire (CAL), which provided the Committee with an update on the performance of Citizens Advice services across Lincolnshire during 2022/23.

The Chairman invited Monica Stark, Chair of Trustees, Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire and Jenny Barnett, Chief Executive Officer, Citizens Advice Lindsey to present the item to the Committee.

Detailed at Appendix A was a CAL Health Presentation; and Appendix B provided the Committee with details of CAL 2022/23 dashboard.

During the presentation, the Committee noted that 2022/23 had been the most challenging year in the history of Citizens Advice nationally, due to the impact of high inflation. It was highlighted that a total of 15,021 people living in Lincolnshire had turned to Citizens Advice for help, and that the service was able to resolve 76,934 issues. It was highlighted further that demand on the Lincolnshire Adviceline was projected to have risen to 43,246 calls, it was however noted that the service had only been able to answer 34% of the calls due to a lack of resources. Reference was also made to specialist services, partnership working, the value of the service to society and feedback received from clients who had used the CAL service.

Page 31 (Appendix B) of the report pack provided an overall breakdown of the number of people helped and the types of issues the service had assisted with.

The Committee was invited to review and comment on the contents of the annual report, and during consideration thereon, the following points were noted:

- Support was extended for the first class high quality service provided by Citizen's Advice Lincolnshire;
- The Committee noted that historically there had been more separate Citizen's Advice charities across Lincolnshire. Currently however, there were three separately constituted Citizens Advice charities across Lincolnshire working in partnership as one: Citizens Advice Lincolnshire. No guarantee could be given that in the future this presence might be reduced to a presence of two a North and a South charity, or even one for the County. The Committee noted that the service needed to find a structure to support local communities across the County;
- It was reported that the number of missed calls were recorded, and that reporting was able to provide details of when clients had rung more than once. The Committee noted that when a call was unable to be answered locally it was routed to be answered in Gateshead at an overflow centre. It was however highlighted that some clients were not getting through. It was also reported that after one hour the

call was ceased automatically. It was reported further that call data was available and that the service was working to address such issues;

- Confirmation was given that CAL were being charged rent and service charges;
- The effect high inflation was having, and the societal changes that were now impacting most people for example, the need for a mobile phone, an essential item for keeping individuals connected allowing them to access funds, pay bills, and claim benefits etc. The Committee was advised that the service would not be able to get involved in a re-use scheme, as this would result in resources being diverted, undermining the core purpose of the service;
- Some concern was raised regarding the impact the cost of living was having on the residents of Lincolnshire and the choices they were having to make because of it. One member felt that more funding should be made available from the County Council's underspend to CAL, to help families in real poverty. The Committee was advised that the funding from the County Council to the Citizens Advice groups was purely for back office services and to keep running costs going. It was highlighted that the Council gave as much money as it could, as it valued the service being provided. It was noted that a further report would be considered by the Committee at its October meeting concerning the Citizens Advice Lincolnshire Grant Funding Agreement;
- The Committee noted that savings had been made by CAL but unfortunately, these figures were not available to be shared with members at the meeting;
- It was reported that CAL were constantly advertising for staff as the service continued to grow, so recruitment was a continual process. It was highlighted that staff did leave; therefore, consideration was being given to the salaries being paid and that these were now being reviewed twice yearly. It was highlighted further that recruitment was a problem to meet the ongoing demand on the service;
- Whether there was any duplication of services being provided, an example given was benefits advice. The Committee noted that when a client approached CAL and they were in debt, part of the process would be to look at their overall income and expenditure, and making sure the client was claiming all benefits they were entitled to. There was recognition that some duplication happened with what a District Council did. It was reported that some of these services formed part of the District Council funded projects, to support clients that needed help and support. Some concern was expressed that the duplication might be taking the service away from its core role. It was reported that CAL had good working relationships with District Councils, and they worked with them to support clients. Some District Councils also provided core funding to CAL and also provided additional funding for specific projects such as benefits advice;
- There was recognition that more could be done to achieve a higher level of satisfaction (85%), but it was highlighted that 85% from a national Citizens Advice perspective was a good acceptable level of achievement;
- Confirmation was given that there was no known conflict arising between volunteers and paid staff. It was highlighted that people volunteered for a whole range of reasons. It was noted that some people who had volunteered did then chose to go into paid roles. It was noted that around 50% of paid staff started as volunteers. It was noted further that CAL was working with universities to encourage younger

people to get involved. The Committee noted the process undertaken for someone to become a volunteer. Praise was extended to all volunteers and to the impact they had on society;

- It was reported that the East Lindsey area was very busy one, as it had a different population to other districts, having coastal deprivation, seasonal deprivation, rural deprivation, and lots of other challenges. It was noted that the service worked very closely with the District Council to support clients;
- Clarification was given that a client was never turned away, in the cases of a cross border client, they would be referred on to their local Citizens Advice;
- Confirmation was given that Adviceline was the main route into the service. It was noted that there was however 24/7 access through a self-referral application on the website; and
- Clarification was given that a 'unique' client was one individual who could come back to the service twice regarding two issues.

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

#### RESOLVED

1. That the Citizens Advice Lincolnshire Annual report and presentation be received.
2. That the comments and suggestions made in relation to the report be received and be taken into consideration by relevant officers and partners in Citizens Advice.

#### 74 RESETTLEMENT SCHEMES AND ASYLUM DISPERSAL IN LINCOLNSHIRE

The Committee considered a report from Samantha Neal, Assistant Director Prevention and Early Intervention and Lauren Grosvenor, Resettlement Programme Manager, which provided a further update on refugee resettlement schemes and asylum dispersal.

The Chairman invited Samantha Neal, Assistant Director Prevention and Early Intervention to present the item to the Committee.

Further to the report, the Committee was advised that the High Court would be hearing the West Lindsey District Council case with regard to RAF Scampton on Thursday 11 May 2023.

The Committee also noted that in respect of other asylum seekers schemes, whilst further information was indicated as being expected, no further information had been received regarding guidance or funding.

During consideration of this item, the following points were noted:

- Some concern was expressed to the lack of information relating to the Home Office proposal for RAF Scampton; the welfare and wellbeing of the asylum seekers, with

particular reference being made to the proposed shipping container type of accommodation. The Committee noted that the understanding was that the proposed accommodation would be a type of portable unit, quite often used for temporary accommodation, which was believed would have its own fresh water and sewage attached to it. One member advised that such a container had arrived in Britain, and it was the type of accommodation used by oil rig workers;

- The infrastructure impact of the proposed asylum seekers on Lincoln and the village of Scampton itself. Reassurance was given that the three Chief Executives and Leaders of the City of Lincoln, West Lindsey District Council and the County Council were holding weekly meetings to discuss the impacts and risks of the proposal. It was highlighted that they were also meeting with Leaders and Chief Executives of other larger sites, as RAF Scampton was not the only large site being proposed. Meetings were also being held regularly with the Local Government Association. The Committee was also advised that a weekly call was continuing with the Home Office, with local organisations to express the local concerns and a request had been made for a clear assurance framework around the concerns raised. It was also highlighted that the three Lincolnshire Leaders had written to the Robert Jenrick MP expressing their concerns and requesting a meeting with him, but as yet, no response had been received;
- Some general comments were raised with regard to the country's asylum seekers situation, the time taken to process applications and the impact that was having on those waiting for their claims to be processed, and the complex issues that posed; and the extreme politics presenting themselves concerning RAF Scampton;
- Reassurance was given that local MPs had been involved concerning the proposals for RAF Scampton, and that West Lindsey District Council was fighting the case against the proposals. Councillor J Brockway agreed to forward officer contact details on to Councillor K E Lee to enable her to find out further information concerning RAF Scampton;
- Some support was extended to the success of the Homes for Ukraine Resettlement Scheme; and the need for more housing to help Ukrainian guests, as well as local people desperate for housing. The Committee noted that the government had identified some additional funding specifically to build accommodation for refugees likely to be here for a longer term in three District Council areas, which was anticipated to be extended to others, but to date no further funding announcement had been made;
- It was reported that with the Afghan resettlement, a request would be made to local housing authorities to identify appropriate housing stock. It was highlighted that there were very tight rules as to what could be provided. It was noted that there was not an expectation that the house would come fully furnished, but it would have to be suitable for occupation; and
- The Committee was advised that unaccompanied asylum seekers would be assessed and dependent on their needs, there was contractual arrangement in place as well as foster care arrangements for young people. Reassurance was given that any provision was closely monitored to make sure that any agreed placement was safe for the longer term.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee extended his thanks to the presenter.

RESOLVED

1. That the Resettlement Schemes and Asylum Dispersal in Lincolnshire report presented be received and endorsed.
2. That the Committee's satisfaction with the developments in Lincolnshire be recorded, given that we are a County with less experience to resettlement in comparison to other areas nationally.
3. That assurance be received that robust governance and operational arrangements are in place to respond to national policy requirements as they emerge.
4. That the comments made during debate be taken into consideration by relevant officers and portfolio holders.

75 PUBLIC PROTECTION AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report from Kiara Chatziioannou, Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Committee to review the work programme, as detailed on pages 40 to 43 of the report pack and to highlight any additional scrutiny activity which could be included for consideration in the work programme.

The Scrutiny Officer briefed the Committee on the items scheduled to be considered at the 20 June 2023 meeting, these were shown on page 40 of the report pack.

During consideration of this item, one item was raised concerning the registering of Care Homes. As this matter was outside the remit of the Public Protection and Community Scrutiny Committee, the Executive Director for Adults and Committee Wellbeing agreed to respond to the individual Councillor outside of the meeting.

The Committee noted that since the agenda publication date, one further item had been added to the work programme for the Autumn of 2023, which was: an update on the Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service New Crewing arrangements.

RESOLVED

That the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee Work Programme report be received and that the work programme as detailed on pages 40 to 43 be approved with the addition of the update on the Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service New Crewing Arrangements.

The meeting closed at 11.55 am