

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT
BOARD
25 JANUARY 2024**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR A N STOKES (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors T J N Smith (Vice-Chairman), M Brookes, P M Dilks, R J Kendrick, K E Lee, C S Macey, C E H Marfleet, N H Pepper and N Sear

Added Members

Church Representative: M Kyle

Councillors: M A Whittington and M J Hill OBE attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Debbie Barnes OBE (Chief Executive), Andrew Crookham (Executive Director Resources), Nigel West (Head of Democratic Services and Statutory Scrutiny Officer), Emily Wilcox (Democratic Services Officer), Justin Brown (Assistant Director Growth), Leanne Fotherby (Commercial & Procurement Manager), Michelle Grady (Assistant Director – Finance), Andrew Hancy (Head of Business Support), Adam Hopley (Head of Finance - Corporate) and Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer)

79 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors I Carrington and J Brockway.

It was reported that, under Regulation 13 of Local Government Committee and Political Groups Regulation 1990, Councillor N Sear was in attendance as a substitute for Councillor I Carrington, for this meeting only.

80 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were declared.

81 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 NOVEMBER 2023

RESOLVED:

That minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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82 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND CHIEF OFFICERS

There were no announcements.

83 CONSIDERATION OF CALL-INS

There were no Call-ins to consider.

84 CONSIDERATION OF COUNCILLOR CALLS FOR ACTION

There were no Councillor Calls for Action to consider.

85 SUBMISSION OF BUSINESS CASES FOR CAPITAL FUNDING UNDER THE GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE DEVOLUTION DEAL

Consideration was given to a report by the Assistant Director – Growth on the proposed submission of business cases for capital funding under the Greater Lincolnshire Devolution Deal, as set out in the report at pages 15-26 of the agenda pack. The Board were invited to consider and comment on the report prior to its consideration by the Executive on 6 February 2024.

The Board supported the recommendations to the Executive, as set out at Appendix A, and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- Members welcomed the proposed schemes. Officers confirmed that they had received three submissions from Boston Borough Council and detailed why these had not met the threshold for consideration, mainly citing funding restrictions (pertinent to pursuing land acquisition), misalignment with the devolution prospectus, potential overlap with previous grants allocation, and lack of awareness about proposed employment sites. Officers committed to revisiting the communication strategy for clarity and provided assurances about the benefits of the UK Food Valley Grant Programme which was queried in the debate.
- Members were also cautioned that these schemes were governed by tight terms of arrangements with a view of being delivered within certain periods of time which made it impossible for some of the proposed projects with longer delivery horizons to meet the criteria for recommendation. It was also clarified that decisions were based on pragmatic delivery of projects recommended and this may be a changing situation in the preparation of the final business plans – notably if partner organisations were unable to engage with the projects given their own workloads.
- Members inquired about the additional £1.5 million allocated for Flood Prevention Schemes and whether this was on top of previously allocated funds. Officers confirmed that to be additional funding. Concerns were expressed about the

significant allocation of £9 million to Old Roman Bank, Sandilands, compared to other projects, which prompted questions about the determination of priorities and funding distribution. Officers explained that the resurfacing projects contributed to the benefit-cost ratio required by the Levelling Up Department, emphasising the interconnections between roads and junctions.

- The Chief Executive highlighted the tightly controlled process of managing the contingency money provided by the Department for Levelling Up and Housing Communities (DLUHC) as being distinct from devolution money. Officers acknowledged the challenge of delivering projects within the specified time frame, expanding on concerns about the feasibility of implementing schemes such as the Lincoln Bailgate one within the upcoming fiscal year within which money ought to be spent. It was clarified that the receipt of funding was not conditional to a devolution deal being agreed.
- Members inquired about the significant barriers affecting the viability of phase two of Sleaford Moor Enterprise Park, specifically mentioning archaeology. Officers rationalised challenges in selling land at a viable price, citing archaeological findings as barriers, and proposed a scheme using grants to address abnormal extra costs, making the land attractive to private businesses.

Councillor K E Lee wished it be noted that she abstained from voting on this item due to what she described as unfair distribution of funding, with £9m proposed for Old Roman Bank, Sandilands, and due to concerns over a lack of much needed funding to repair the Bailgate, Lincoln, which she would continue to lobby for.

RESOLVED:

1. That the recommendations to the Executive be supported;
2. That a summary of the comments made be shared with the Executive ahead of its consideration of a decision.

86 COUNCIL BUDGET 2024/25

Consideration was given to a report by the Assistant Director – Finance, which invited the Board to consider and comment on the Executive’s budget proposals, as set out at Appendix A to the report.

Members were informed of a recent announcement by the Government to allocate £500m of funding to social care needs across the Country. The amount of funding allocated to Lincolnshire was currently unknown and whilst additional funding was welcomed, cost pressures were still anticipated over the coming years and therefore it was still recommended that Council tax be increased to ensure no cuts to services.

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The Board supported the budget proposals set out at Appendix A to the report and during the discussion the following points were recorded:

- Members welcomed the government’s announcement of an extra support package, in addition to the provisional settlement funding, to aid local authorities in delivering essential services. Some concerns were raised about the potential need for a Council tax increase amid the cost-of-living crisis, citing ongoing challenges such as the national living wage and service demands. Officers stressed the importance of fact-based decision-making, suggesting that discussions about using the extra one-off money should wait until the final settlement was received. It was assured that Council tax base information and business rate collection figures, expected by 31 January, would be debated by the Executive on 06 February.
- Members acknowledged the potential need for the Council to transition to a lower cost base due to budget deficits and sought clarification on associated risks and service implications. They inquired about the yearly increase in working age adults needing care, specifically in mental health, and requested details on the cost implications. They also questioned the impact of financial savings by unpaid carers and whether certain benefits, like war pensions, were considered in income assessments. The discussion also covered cost pressures related to Children in Care (CiC), especially those under the National Transfer Scheme (NTS). Officers responded by outlining the use of the financial volatility reserve, addressing care demands, and explaining NTS financial dynamics. They committed to providing more information on specific benefit considerations. The Leader emphasised the need for wise use of funds and highlighted the Council's stable financial position compared to other authorities, considering the government's expectations and conditions tied to additional funding for social care services.
- Members expressed concern over the cost pressure of £3.2 million for educational transport, describing it as a significant financial challenge. They queried if lobbying, particularly by the County Council Network (CCN), had sought to impose a cap on these costs. The Chief Executive acknowledged CCN's attention to the issue in a commissioner report, proposing potential solutions and advocating for a review of outdated home-school transport legislation. While recognising the escalating costs, the discussion also highlighted internal efforts to transform the system and manage expenses. The Chief Executive stressed the importance of exploring means testing and noted the inclusion of educational travel processes in the Business Performance Improvement Program for increased efficiency.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Executive’s budget proposals, as set out at Appendix A to the report, be supported;

2. That a summary of the comments made be shared with the Executive.

87 SERVICE REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PROPOSALS 2024/25

11:10am – Councillor P M Dilks left the meeting.

Consideration was given to a report by the Strategic Finance Lead – Corporate, which invited the Board to consider and comment on the Service Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals for 2024/25, as detailed within the report.

The Board unanimously supported the proposals.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Service Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals 2024/25 be supported;
2. That the views of the Board be reported to the Executive as part of its consideration of the budget.

88 APPROVAL TO AWARD A CONTRACT FOR THE MANAGED SERVICE OF THE COUNCIL'S MULTI-FUNCTION DEVICES (MFDS)

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Business Support, which invited the Board to consider a report on the Approval to Award a Contract for the Managed Service of the Council's Multi-function Devices (MDF), as at pages 95-104 of the agenda pack. The Board were invited to consider and comment on the report prior to consideration by the Leader of the Council (Executive Councillor for Resources, Communications and Commissioning) between 29 January and 2 February 2024.

The Board supported the proposals to the Leader of the Council and during the discussion the following points were recorded:

- Members welcomed the awarding of the contract to a Lincoln based company.
- Members raised concerns about potential disruptions during the transition from the current printer provider to the proposed supplier. Emphasising the essential role of Multifunctional Devices (MFDs) in the Council's operations, they sought assurance regarding a smooth transition without disruptions to business activities. Officers responded, affirming that the transition had been carefully assessed. Collaborating with Serco, they outlined a planned three-month phased program to replace machines, ensuring a seamless handover and implementation of new technology.
- Members questioned the significant reduction in the current printer contract cost, from £480,000 per year in 2017 to £175,000 per year in 2024. Offering assurance that the service quality would not be compromised, Officers explained that the reduction was attributed to changes in usage patterns due to the pandemic. With a shift in working practices, the machines' usage had decreased. Officers affirmed their satisfaction with the contracted service, emphasising the managed service nature

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that ensures the supplier's responsibility for appropriate machines and collaborative efforts to match the right equipment with the Council's activity volume.

- Members sought clarification on how the printer contract accommodated individuals using printers at home and whether personal printer costs were covered. Officers clarified that standalone printers in certain areas were not part of the contract. However, individuals seeking a printer for home use must undergo a specific approval process managed by the service to determine eligibility. This process applied to specific needs and service area roles requiring printouts, but the majority of printing occurred through the contracted devices.

RESOLVED:

1. That the option to approve the award of a contract to Hewlett Packard Apogee for the provision of a fully managed service for the Council's Multi-Functional Devices be supported;
2. That a summary of the comments made be shared with the Leader of the Council (Executive Councillor for Resources, Communications and Commissioning) between 29 January and 2 February 2024 ahead of his consideration of the decision.

89 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMMES

Consideration was given to an update by the Chairman of the Adults and Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, which set out the recent work and the planned work of the Adults and Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, as set out at pages 108-110 of the agenda pack.

Consideration was given to an update by the Scrutiny Officer, which set out the recent work and the planned work of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee as set out on pages 111-117 of the agenda pack. The Board was advised of two changes to the work programme since publication:

- The 6-monthly update on the work of the Theddlethorpe Geological Disposal Facility Working Group had been added to the April 2024 agenda; and
- The report on Transition of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) had been deferred to the meeting scheduled for May 2024.

Consideration was given to an update by the Chairman of the Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire, which set out the recent work and the planned work of the Chairman of the Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire, as set out on pages 118-123 of the agenda pack. The Board was advised that further to publication of the agenda, the update from North West Anglia was now due to be considered by the Committee on 20 March 2024 and had been replaced on 21 February by an item from United Lincolnshire Hospital's NHS Trust on pressures at the Trust, including Lincoln County Hospital.

Consideration was given to an update by Chairman of the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee, which set out the recent work and the planned work of the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee, as set out on pages 124-136 of the agenda pack. A pre-

decision scrutiny report on the Bus Service Improvement Plan had been added to the agenda for April 2024.

RESOLVED:

1. That satisfaction with the activity undertaken by the scrutiny committees be recorded;
2. That the activities planned for the scrutiny committees for 2024/25 be endorsed.

90 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Board was invited to review its work programme, as set out on pages 137-146 of the agenda pack.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 11.47 am