



**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
10 APRIL 2018**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR T BRIDGES (CHAIRMAN)**

Councillors B M Dobson (Vice-Chairman), B Adams, Mrs A M Austin, G E Cullen, M A Griggs, R P H Reid, S R Kirk, Mrs E J Sneath, C L Strange and Dr M E Thompson

Councillors C J Davie, E J Poll, M J Storer and A H Turner MBE JP, attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Steve Blagg (Democratic Services Officer), Justin Brown (Commissioner for Economic Growth), Andy Gutherson (County Commissioner for Economy and Place), David Hickman (Growth & Environment Commissioner), Daniel Steel (Scrutiny Officer), Andy Brooks (Commissioning Manager (Regeneration Programme)), Matthew Michell (Environmental Services Senior Officer (Technical)) and Vanessa Strange (Accessibility and Growth Manager)

69 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT COUNCILLORS

None received.

70 DECLARATIONS OF COUNCILLORS' INTERESTS

No declarations were made at this stage of the meeting.

71 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 FEBRUARY 2018

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 27 February 2018, be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

72 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS

The Executive Councillor for Economy and Place made the following announcements:-

- International Trade

He stated that he would be hosting a business event for numerous businesses and politicians from Hunan, China. A wide variety of topics would be discussed including investment opportunities in Lincolnshire. A very senior visit was being planned for Hunan province officials in October 2018.

- Investment

He referred to the continued good work taking place with Greater Lincolnshire Partnership Local Enterprise Partnership (GLLEP) in promoting Lincolnshire for UK based developers and had attended a very successful "Lincolnshire in London" event in which Lincolnshire developers had brought their potential clients to the event. A number of contracts had been agreed.

A successful Team Lincolnshire brunch was arranged at the annual MIPIM in France which was funded by GLLEP and private businesses with 165 developers in attendance.

- Skills and Utilities

He had been informed that employers had stated that their two main challenges were skill shortages and lack of utility infrastructure.

The Council continued to lobby for improved utilities and both he and Executive Support Councillor Mark Storer had explored opportunities around Smart grids, electric vehicle charging points and had been impressed by a development at Hemswell Cliff where an anaerobic digester was producing energy for local businesses.

The skills deficit was being addressed from the Council's Skills Support to the Workforce programme and a Careers Learning scheme funded by the Government would be launched to help people gain training, Lincolnshire was just one of a few areas in the country to benefit. He stated that the shortage of HGV drivers was going to be an issue in the near future.

- Business Infrastructure

The provision of business premises continued to be a priority for the Council and the current rate of occupancy was 90% which provided an income and allowed headroom for flexibility for economic development or shocks. He had taken decisions to deliver the Holbeach Food Enterprise Zone and the North Sea Observatory at Chapel Point adding that the latter was magnificent and would help to extend tourism.

- Tourism

The publicity in connection with the various celebrations in the county associated with the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the RAF and the Mayflower 400 were attracting tourists.

He was concerned about the effects on retail due to the increased use of the internet and stated that there was a need for the Committee to examine the future role of High Streets.

Comments by the Committee and the responses of officers included:-

- Where were the Chinese visitors staying? The Executive Councillor stated that they would be staying in the City of Lincoln.
- The Executive Councillor stated that he had visited the newly opened Bomber Command Centre and agreed that it was excellent and would attract tourists. He thanked the late Lord Lieutenant, Tony Worth, for his involvement in starting the project.
- Lincoln Castle was an excellent tourist attraction.
- Concern was expressed about car parking charges in Lincoln deterring tourists and shoppers. The Executive Councillor stated that there was an opportunity for smaller shops to convert to collection points for retail customers. The Council was examining a reduction in the Business Rates to help retail shops. He welcomed the Park and Ride service at Waitrose, Lincoln.
- The Committee agreed to consider the opportunities for converting empty retail premises into residential accommodation at a future meeting. The Executive Councillor stated that there was a problem with absentee landlords and to consider how town centres were managed in the long term.
- The Executive Councillor agreed with the comment that the visitor experience was becoming more important for people visiting town centres.

### 73 JOINT MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Committee received a report in connection with the progress to date and forward plan for the development of a Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) for Lincolnshire. The public consultation on the Strategy would run from 4 April to 2 July 2018. As part of the consultation process the Committee's comments were sought. Comments from the consultation exercise would be considered by the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership in producing a revised Strategy to come before this Committee in the Autumn before the Strategy was subsequently approved by the full Council.

Comments by the Committee and the responses of officers included:-

- The reduction in recycling rates could be caused by the reduction in packaging.
- The closure of some household waste recycling centres was causing fly tipping in some areas and some sites were difficult to get to because of their location. Officers stated that there were currently no plans to re-open Whisby but these comments would be fed in as part of the consultation process.
- The recycling options required simplification as the public had problem knowing what could and could not be recycled.
- The hierarchy of how waste should be handled was very good. There was a need for local authorities to work with businesses. Officers stated that a food waste pilot project was due to take place in an area of South Kesteven District

Council and to use the waste for the production of energy. It was also hoped that households would realise how much food they were wasting and its cost.

- What was the cost to build a new Energy from Waste plant? The Executive Councillor for Commercial and Environmental Management stated that the cost of building a new plant was in the region of £1m per thousand tonnes.
- It was noted that recycling rates were down and poor recycling led to an increase in the Council Tax because of increased disposal costs. It was also noted that collection authorities in Lincolnshire operated different types of collection services. Officers stated that the reduction in recycling rates was due to people becoming lazy in their recycling habits and contamination of recycled material was an issue which affected the cost of disposal.
- Plastic bottle litter was a big problem on the east coast. It was noted that Germany had a system of refunding the return of plastic bottles and a similar system should be introduced in this country. Officers stated that the introduction of plastic bottle banks paying a refund was being examined by the Government, although it should be noted that current plastic recycling relied on income from recycled plastic.
- Had Slippery Gowt landfill site been mothballed? The opening of the new Household Waste Recycling Centre in Boston was welcomed. Officers stated that Slippery Gowt landfill site had been mothballed.
- The recycling of glass in household bins needed to be clarified as glass was recyclable in some areas and not others. The Executive Councillor agreed that more clarity was required about what could and could not be recycled adding that glass mixed with paper could reduce the quality of the recycled paper.

#### RESOLVED

(a) That the comments made by the Committee be compiled into a formal response to be taken into consideration as part of the on-going public consultation process.

(b) That Members of the Committee be encouraged to respond individually to the on-going public consultation process.

(c) That the Committee receive a further report on the Strategy when it had been revised in the light of responses received through the public consultation process.

#### 74 IMPLEMENTING THE OUTCOMES OF THE UTILITY STUDY

The Committee received a report in connection with implementing the outcomes of the Utility Study which was commissioned by GLLEP, the County Council and other local authorities in greater Lincolnshire to ensure that utilities were capable of meeting the increased demand from infrastructure projects. Officers stated that some projects were stalling due to the shortage of energy provision and that no strategy was in place to address this shortage in the future. There was a need for improve communication between utilities and businesses to avoid infrastructure problems in the future.

The Executive Councillor for Economy and Place stated that this was an important issue and that a long term view needed to be taken adding that Lincolnshire was the first local authority in the country to focus on utilities. He stated that a unified response was required to the Government from local authorities and business on this matter. He stated that the anaerobic plant at Hemswell was a good example of providing energy for local businesses and that these were the type of facilities required in the future.

Comments by the Committee and the responses of officers included:-

- The cost to developers if there was no infrastructure was high.
- Battery storage technology was improving all the time. The Executive Councillor for Economy and Place stated that battery storage was becoming important in Lincolnshire and added that more Government investment was required in infrastructure.
- Water pressure on the east coast was a problem and it was suggested utilities should be consulted on appropriate planning applications. Officers agreed that it was important for utilities to be consulted on appropriate planning applications and there was a need to consider how utilities were involved in this process. Perhaps a "utilities champion" was required and to bring in an expert to consider how this matter was taken forward. Officers stated that a business case to the Government was important. There was a need to identify those areas where the Council could help and a mechanism needed to be in place to inform utilities of proposed development. Members were requested to notify officers of any problems in their own areas.
- The Executive Councillor for Commercial and Environmental Management stated that it was unfortunate that top tier local authorities had lost their strategic planning role and emphasised the importance of the Joint Waste Management Strategy especially the conversion of waste to energy.
- The planning process needed to consider the provision of broadband in rural areas.
- The regional managers for the utility companies should be asked to attend a meeting of this Committee to respond to questions on utility infrastructure.
- The Government should inform developers that local authorities would be given the power to instruct developers that they must proceed with development within a specified period of time otherwise they would be refused development permission. The Executive Councillor for Economy and Place agreed that this was an important point adding that more homes were needed. There was an opportunity to amend the National Planning Policy Framework as it was currently being consulted upon to ensure that more houses were built.

The Committee agreed that in addition to the recommendations in the report a letter should be sent to the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government and local MPs requesting legislation to ensure developers implemented planning permission for development within a specified period.

## RESOLVED

(a) That the comments made by the Committee in connection with the strategic direction detailed in the report be noted.

(b) That the next steps in the action plan on utility provision be endorsed which include:-

- Establishing a strong lobby for Greater Lincolnshire on utilities.
- Making sure that good quality information is collected and given to organisations which needed to hold it.
- Increasing the dialogue between businesses, planning organisations and utility providers

(c) That a letter be sent to the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government and local MPs requesting legislation to ensure that developers implemented planning permissions for development within a specified period.

75 ANGLIAN WATER DRAFT WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Committee received a report in connection with Anglian Water's Consultation Draft Water Resources Management Plan, a statutory document which sought to manage pressure on public water supplies arising from population growth, climate change, environmental protection and increasing risk of drought. The views of the Committee were sought on the consultation to help officers prepare a formal response, on behalf of the County Council, in consultation with its partners, by the closing date of 1 June 2018.

Comments by the Committee and the responses of officers included:-

- The negative effects of global warming.
- The idea of a pipeline from Elsham in north Lincolnshire and the construction of two major reservoirs was supported. A reservoir in south Lincolnshire was particularly welcomed as this would support tourism. Officers stated that Anglian Water had not made any decision about reservoirs or their location.
- The need for proper water infrastructure to meet the demands of extra housing.
- Had the Drainage Boards been consulted as there no mention of them in the report? Officers stated that some of the Boards had been involved in the consultation process.
- Was desalination proposed in the Plan? Officers stated that desalination was included in the draft Plan.
- Good water and sewerage resources came at a cost.

RESOLVED

(a) That the comments made by the Committee be taken into consideration in the preparation of the formal response from the County Council to the consultation.

(b) That the Committee support the key elements in the consultation draft Water Resources Management Plan, as outlined in the executive summary.

76     'A GREEN FUTURE': DEFRA'S TWENTY-FIVE YEAR PLAN TO IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT

The Committee received a report in connection with the Defra's twenty five year Plan to improve the environment – "A Green Future". The Committee's views were sought on the key proposals within the Plan and to guide officers in implementing them within the Council's Commissioning Strategies.

The Committee and the Executive Councillor for Commercial and Environmental Management supported the key proposals within Defra's 25 year Plan and wished to consider further exploration of specific subject areas at future meetings as the County Council developed its response to this new policy direction.

RESOLVED

That the Committee supports the key proposals within Defra's twenty five year Plan and wished to consider further exploration of specific subject areas at future meetings as the County Council developed its response to this new policy direction.

77     FOOD, FARMING AND THE ENVIRONMENT: DEFRA CONSULTATION ON FUTURE FARMING POLICY

The Committee received a report in connection with a consultation document from Defra on "Health and Harmony: the future for food, farming and the environment in a Green Brexit". The views of the Committee on the document were sought. Officers stated that the County Council was engaging with other agencies throughout the county in preparing its response to the consultation.

Comments by the Committee and the responses of officers included:-

- As well as stewardship of the land agriculture had an important role in producing food to reduce the reliance on importing food.
- There was a need to maintain good soil structure. It was noted straw was burnt at plant at Sleaford instead of being ploughed back into the soil. Officers stated that there was much discussion in agriculture about which elements of the industry got priority. The issue of farming co-operatives was all dependent on the business model being proposed but it was accepted that there were limitations of getting into farming because of the cost of rent, etc.
- Co-operatives in farming were noted.

- Retail confidence was low and farmers needed to know what was happening in the next five years not twenty five years which was too longer a timeframe and Defra should be reminded of this.
- Concerns about land usage. There needed to be more joined up thinking as there were issues of a potential shortage of labour due to Brexit which could in turn mean that food would not be produced.
- The change from large industrial agricultural units to smaller units was welcomed.
- The re-planting of hedgerows was welcomed.

Comments made by the Executive Councillors for Economy and Place and Commercial and Environmental Management included:-

- There was still a requirement for foreign workers in the food sector.
- The prospect of young people running County Farms was welcomed.
- Traceability of food was becoming more important to customers and was welcomed.
- The Government needed to decide its priorities on what was more important in areas like Lincolnshire, i.e. provision of housing or protection of agriculture from flooding.

The Committee acknowledged that it was difficult to plan for the next twenty five years due to Brexit, and that there was a need to plan for the next five years. The Committee agreed that a letter should be sent to the Minister for State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and local MPs, on the need to plan for the next five years in addition to the next twenty five years.

#### RESOLVED

(a) That the comments made by the Committee on the consultation be noted and taken into consideration in any response to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

(b) That a letter be sent to the Minister for State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and local MPs, on the need to plan for the next five years in view of Brexit in addition for the next twenty five years.

(c) That the Executive for Economy and Place, in consultation with the Chairman of the Brexit Working Group, in responding formally to the Defra consultation on future farming policy, be endorsed.

#### 78 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received its Work Programme.

#### RESOLVED

That, subject to the following items being programmed for future meetings – County Farms; Conversion of retail premises to residential accommodation; and a report

back on consultation responses from the Joint Municipal Waste Strategy, the Work Programme be noted and updated accordingly.

The meeting closed at 12.50 pm

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