



**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
14 JANUARY 2020**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR MRS W BOWKETT (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors C R Oxby (Vice-Chairman), Mrs A M Austin, G E Cullen, M A Griggs, A G Hagues, C Matthews, Mrs E J Sneath, H Spratt, C L Strange and Dr M E Thompson

Councillors B M Dobson attended the meeting as an observer

Officers in attendance:-

John Coates (Head of Waste), Thea Croxall (Principal Commissioning Officer (Learning)), Ian George (Historic Places Team Manager), Neil McBride (Head of Planning), Keith Noyland, Daniel Steel (Scrutiny Officer), Vanessa Strange (Accessibility and Growth Manager), Emily Wilcox (Democratic Services Officer) and Alison Twiddy (Lincolnshire Rural Support Network)

54 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

There were no apologies for absence.

55 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

56 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 26 NOVEMBER 2019

It was agreed that the first bullet point of minute 5 be amended to read:

- Members were pleased to see that a reasonable amount of space in the Strategy had been given to the inclusion of issues around **sewage sewerage**, including issues of flood water getting into the **sewage sewerage** system.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 26 November 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**57 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS
AND LEAD OFFICERS**

The Chairman advised the Committee that the final report on the 2019 Wainfleet Flooding incident would be reported to the Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Committee on the 24 February 2020.

The Executive Support Councillor for Economy and Place informed Members that the Executive Councillor for Economy and Place was currently in the Florida looking to strengthen a partnership between Lincolnshire and America.

There had been another Chinese delegation visit to Lincolnshire. China was keen to work with Lincolnshire County Council on a modern modular construction building which was hoped to bring more employment into the area.

It was noted that Officers were working closely with Siemens on the energy agenda. There would be a future report to the Committee on the progress of the energy agenda and the future of the Energy Council.

58 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PROPOSALS 2020/21

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Finance - Communities, which outlined the budget proposals for the next financial year 2020/21 and the budget implications for the Council's Environment and Economy services. The Committee were invited to scrutinise and comment on the proposals prior to consideration of the final budget proposals by the Executive at its meeting on 4 February 2020.

Members were referred to table A, which set out the total proposed revenue budget for the Council's Environment and Economy Services. Members were advised that the Environment and Economy Services were proposing to make savings of £0.657m in 2020/21; and the proposals for these services had allowed for pay inflation of 2% for 2020/21.

Increased contributions from third parties, integration of Countryside Services systems with existing Highways Services systems and realignment of the budget with current service requirements was expected to generate savings in 2020/21 of £0.066m.

Members were then referred to table B, which set out the proposed gross capital programme for the Council's Environment and Economy services. The full gross capital programme totalled £170.077m for 2020/21, plus a further £364.159m for future years, with grants and contributions of £127.864m giving a net programme of £406.372m to be funded by the County Council.

Members were advised that the following changes had been made to gross capital programme in 2020/21 as part of the budget setting process:

- Addition of a programme of replacement of Household Waste Recycling Centres £2m in 2020/21 and £2m in future years;

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
14 JANUARY 2020

- Addition of funding to further develop the Council's Industrial Estate Provision, £0.5m in 2020/21 and £1m in future years;
- Addition of a range of Infrastructure and Economic Development initiatives to support economic and housing growth whilst reducing traffic congestion in and around Boston, £5.5m in future years. These schemes will replace the previous capital schemes for the Boston Barrier.

The budget proposals reflected the level of funding expected to be available to the Council from central government and an assumed increase in Council Tax in 2020/21 of 1.5% and an Adult Social Care 'precept' assumed to increase by 2% in 2020/21, giving a total Council tax increase of 3.5%.

Members were invited to ask questions, in which the following points were noted:

- It was confirmed that the revised capital programme for the £5.5m for the Boston Development Scheme was for half of the proposed £11.1m for the Boston Barrier. It was noted that the £11.1m was no longer required to build the barrier and the remaining budget was being used for infrastructure and economic development in Boston. It was agreed that further information be sought from key officers and be circulated to the Committee in due course.
- Members expressed their concerns over the limited budgets for rural and countryside services, as a growing service offering a range of benefits.
- Members were concerned that the Lead Local Authority Flood grant had not increased despite their having been an unprecedented amount of rainfall in 2019 and consequently a rise in flooding incidents across the County. Officers advised that the Council were still awaiting the detail of other grants they had applied for. Members were advised that the Council would likely request further funding from the government if a substantial amount of further work was needed. It was suggested that this be revisited at a later stage.
- Members were advised that the major project to alleviate flood risk listed in Table B consisted of a range of projects which were generally match funded with the Environment Agency.
- It was questioned whether the Council ever took a proactive approach, rather than a reactive approach to flood defence. Officers advised that although Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) were the Lead Flood Authority, there was also a need for partnership working. Officers aspired to obtain a more proactive approach, however this was a longer term piece of work which needed a stronger partnership arrangement.
- It was confirmed there had not been job losses as a result of a decrease in the budget for Highways. Savings had been made from system costs from the fix my street system.
- The Committee expressed the need to ensure that adequate funding was provided for rural services and flood defences.

RESOLVED:

1. That the budget proposals be noted;

2. That a summary of the above comments be passed on to the Executive as part of their consideration of the final budget proposals.

59 LINCOLNSHIRE RURAL SUPPORT NETWORK

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Infrastructure Investment, which introduced a presentation on the Lincolnshire Rural Support Network (LRSN).

The LRSN supported farmers across Lincolnshire with a range of health issues, one of them being Mental Health, which was prominent across the farming industry.

Members received a presentation on the work carried out by the LRSN, in which Members were advised of the following:

- 55% of farmers reported concerns of mental health; with 1 farmer taking his life every week and 3% of farmers feeling like their life was not worth living.
- Research suggested that far more support was needed for farmers to support them with mental health and this was evident in the work carried out by LRSN.
- Farmers were facing a number of future challenges which included Brexit; climate change and the weather; trading in a world market; animal disease and protecting the environment.
- The LRSN team advertised their services online; at livestock and horticultural markets; through physical health screenings; via their dedicated helpline and at Young Farmer's events. The network were currently reaching more than 140 agricultural families within Lincolnshire every year.
- The need for mental health support for farmers was significantly larger than farm related; financial or health related needs.
- Going forward, LRSN sought to recruit a number of workers with mental health experience.

Members were invited to ask questions, in which the following points were noted:

- Members commended the work LRSN carried out to support farmers and thanked all involved in supporting.
- Members recognised the isolation often faced by Farmers, especially in the current climate.
- However, it was suggested that there were still many people who were unaware of the LRSN and the support that they provide as an organisation. Members suggested that the LRSN communicate with the National Farmer Union (NFU) to reach more people.
- Members felt that there needed to be more recognition on prevention for mental health and other health issues. It was suggested that LRSN could liaise with Riseholme College in order to communicate to a younger audience.
- Officers were hopeful that the Government would continue to support common agriculture but no further information had been received at this stage.
- Members emphasised the importance of providing support to those with mental health issues and recognised the issue of poor mental health in the

farming industry. Members felt that the government needed to be involved at the highest level to enable full support.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

60 INTRODUCING A CHARGING POLICY FOR ARCHAEOLOGY ADVICE
AND PLANNING SERVICES

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Planning and the Historic Places Manager, which invited the Committee to consider the introduction of a charging policy regime for the Planning Services team when providing services for other Councils and for use in Planning Performance Agreements (PPA's).

Members were advised that there had been longstanding agreements with district councils to support the cost the County Council incurs in providing specialist advice on archaeology to the district councils in support of their planning services.

PPA's were a project management tool between the applicant and Planning Authority that provided certainty that a decision on a planning application would be received within an agreed timescales.

The costs of PPA's have previously been levied on an ad-hoc basis. However, the expansion of the service to providing archaeological advice to local authorities outside of Lincolnshire had resulted in a review of the charges applied for the work.

The proposed fee rates were £55.63 per hour for Planning Officers and £43.05 per hour for the Historic Places team.

In considering the report, the following points were noted:

- Officers confirmed that charges were made regardless of whether an application was received or not.
- Members endorsed the development and setting up of a formal charging regime for Planning and Archaeological advice.
- Members supported the idea of also charging for other types pre-application advice if this was something that was seen as beneficial to the Council.
- It was noted that LCC were one of the few council's that did not currently charge for pre-planning advice. It was confirmed that there was a market for other forms of pre-application advice. Officers agreed to bring a paper to a future meeting of the Committee which detailed the possibilities of charging for other pre-planning services.

RESOLVED:

1. That the committee endorse the development and setting up of a formal charging regime for Planning and Archaeological advice;

2. That a report be scheduled to allow the Committee to consider the charging of pre application advice for planning applications.

61 ADULT SKILLS & FAMILY LEARNING PROGRAMME UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report by the Principle Commissioning Officer (Learning), which provided a summary of the Adult Skills and Family Learning programme and an overview of the findings from the Ofsted Inspection that took place in June 2019.

Members were advised that The Adult Skills and Family Learning Programme raised achievements and aspirations by providing high quality learning opportunities in a safe environment that enabled learners to progress according to their ability, need and interests.

Members were referred to Appendix A for a full breakdown of the 2019/20 programme.

It was highlighted that the Adult Skills and Family Learning Service, alongside Young Peoples Learning Provision and the Council's internal Apprenticeship programme was inspected by Ofsted in June 2019. The service obtained one rating of 'Outstanding' and the remaining services were rated 'Good'. The service had put together a post-inspection action plan to address areas for development identified by Ofsted.

Members were advised that the purpose of the funding was to reach hard to reach adults who may have poor memories of education or little or no qualifications. Officers were also working with local data and intelligence to try and fill the gaps from Further Education provision.

Members considered the report, in which the following points were noted:

- It was confirmed that the Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications were offered to adults aged 19+.
- Members were advised that the Adult Skills and Learning Programme did not offer as many courses in Boston because there were already a wide range of qualifications offered by other organisations in this area.
- Officers recognised the shortage of people partaking in Level 3 and Level 4 qualifications. Officers were working to encourage people to join these courses as they could provide the skills needed to progress.
- It was questioned why there weren't more training opportunities available health care roles considering that the current shortage of health care professionals. Officers confirmed that courses had been offered but were often not filled. Officers acknowledged that they had a role to play in encouraging people to partake in these courses.
- It was noted that Officers had regular contact with the District Council's to ensure that all educational needs were met in all areas.

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
14 JANUARY 2020

- Members were advised that employees from the National Careers Service were available to talk to learners about their future development and possible career pathways to ensure that have the best chance of achieving a career that they aspire to.
- It was confirmed that qualifications available in Gainsborough and Mablethorpe were delivered locally.
- The Principle Commissioning Manager (Learning) agreed to circulate data on the progression of learners into employment or progression within their roles.
- Members questioned what areas were classed as Greater Lincoln. The Principle Commissioning Manager (Learning) agreed to circulate this following the meeting.
- It was noted that courses were held in the daytime and the evening.

RESOVLED:

1. That the report and comments made noted;
2. That the committee endorse the findings of the June 2019 Ofsted Inspection of the Adult Skills & Family Learning programme and continued development of the service.

62 ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report by the Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Committee to comment on the content of its work programme for the coming year.

Members agreed that the meeting scheduled for the 14 April 2020 be moved to take place on the 31 March 2020 to ensure that the Committee could consider the County Mixed Dry Recyclables procurement. The Democratic Services Officer would send an amended diary appointment in due course.

Members were invited to ask questions, in which the following points were noted:

- It was confirmed that a report would be scheduled for a future meeting to look into the possible impact that Brexit may have on the agriculture industry.
- It was suggested that the Committee write to the larger farming organisations to recommend a contribution towards the funding for rural support.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be agreed.

The meeting closed at 12:05

This page is intentionally left blank