

Open Report on behalf of Andy Gutherson, Executive Director – Place

Report to:	Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Date:	24 November 2020
Subject:	Lincolnshire Rural Services Network

Summary:

The Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee have given considerable consideration and input into the Agriculture Bill which became law in November 2020.

Significant discussion has focussed on the need to support the sector through the current challenging period of change for Lincolnshire's farming businesses and the people they employ.

Today the committee will hear from Lincolnshire Rural Support Network who received a £40,000 grant from Lincolnshire County Council in 2019 as a result of the work of the Committee.

Lincolnshire Rural Support Network will provide an overview of the work that they are doing and provide an update on the sector in Lincolnshire.

Actions Required:

The Committee will receive the presentation from Lincolnshire Rural Support Network and follow with discussion.

The committee to give consideration to future opportunities to support the sector.

1. Background

Lincolnshire farming businesses continue to experience a perplexing present as well as an uncertain future. Recent years have seen challenging weather conditions for many growers. This has combined with uncertainty about future trade and labour as a result of leaving the EU and a lack of clarity surrounding financial incentives such as the Environmental Land Managements Scheme (ELMS).

When the committee met in January positive conversations reflected that many land based businesses in Lincolnshire had seen opportunities that maximised their assets outside of traditional food production, proactively diversifying by developing different income streams

– from energy businesses to tourism. For those who have had their tourism businesses impacted by Covid-19 there is an additional challenge.

Lincolnshire County Council has a keen interest in Agri-Food as a key sector for the County. The authority also has an interest in the sector as a land owner and landlord. Officers from corporate property intend to join the committee in January 2021 to discuss the current picture and understand the views of the committee ahead of the refresh of the County Farms Estates Strategy review which will take place in 2021, providing the opportunity to review, consult and consider the many factors currently being proposed.

Lincolnshire Rural Services Network

LRSN is a volunteer-led organisation that provides pastoral and practical support to farming and rural people during periods of anxiety, stress and problems relating to their families and businesses.

In 2019 Lincolnshire County Council was able to grant £40,000 to LRSN, as they pulled together a funding package to employ a mental health professional to support the work being undertaken. The £40,000 contribution from Lincolnshire County Council completed the funding jigsaw.

They will give a presentation detailing the work that they are doing and provide an update on their experience of the sector in Lincolnshire as 2020 draws to an end.

More information about LRSN can be found at their website: www.lrsn.co.uk and during the presentation to be given to Committee.