

Agenda Item 5

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 11 DECEMBER 2020

Statement from: Councillor M J Hill OBE – Leader of the Council

COMMERCIAL TEAM

Serco Performance During the Covid-19 Crisis

The Serco Contract Performance is measured through a series of Key Performance Indicators, and these will continue to be measured during the second lockdown period. Serco previously delivered strongly, and changes made and learning from the previous lockdown are expected to ensure on-going effective service delivery. All Services expect to continue to be provided as before.

Extension to Corporate Support Services Contract

Following the Executive's decision on the 2 June 2020 to retain Serco's Services for the period 1 April 2022 until 31 March 2024, work has been completed and the Extension Deed was signed on 19 October 2020. The Extension provides the Council with additional benefits and savings totalling £5m.

CORPORATE PROPERTY

Smarter Working

An Office Accommodation Strategy has been completed to enable the delivery of the Smarter Working Programme. This will see the Council's office estate become managed workspace enabling a significant reduction in numbers of buildings and supports a more agile way of working.

Extra Care Housing

Construction of the 75 Unit Development at De Wint Court in Lincoln is well advanced and is scheduled for completion in October 2021. The Executive have approved a second scheme in Nettleham for 43 units, and a third scheme in Sleaford for 40 units is scheduled to be reported to the Executive in February 2021. This scheme will also include accommodation for working age adults with physical and learning difficulties.

One Public Estate

The programme has supported the LRF during Covid-19 identifying testing and vaccination sites as well as coordinating advice on managing buildings safely during this period. A further bid has been made to the Cabinet Office for OPE 8 funding to support five schemes across greater Lincolnshire.

Special Schools Programme

The procurement of the construction of the new developments continues with the first project at Boston John Fielding under construction.

South Park Blue Light Centre

This was the Winner of the Government's Property Profession Annual Awards in the One Team Category.

FINANCE

Revenue Budget and Capital Programme for 2020/10 – Monitoring Reports

In these uncertain times, it is more important than ever to keep a vigilant eye on our finances. Our second round of Budget Monitoring Reports for the current financial year was based on the position as at 30 September 2020. The reports were presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Management Board at its meeting on 26 November 2020, with the comments of the Board presented to the Executive on 1 December 2020. This showed a satisfactory position, with a forecast of an underspend within 1% of the Revenue Service Budgets and a 5% forecast underspend on our Capital Programme for the current year.

Financial Impacts of Covid-19

Our Budget Monitoring Reports have also set out the additional costs we have incurred relating to the Covid-19 pandemic response. The Government has now distributed four tranches of Covid-19 Emergency Support Grant using a Covid-19 Relative Needs Formula as the basis of distribution. We have been allocated £44.5m of this Emergency Support Grant. We also expect to be able to claim a further £4.2m for lost sales, fees and charges income. We have been continually monitoring the costs and forecasts of additional expenditure and income losses due to Covid-19 and at this point, we believe we can manage our costs within the financial support provided. We have also received a number of specific grants relating to our Covid-19 response.

Budget 2021 and Beyond

Prior to Covid-19 we were expecting to see the outcome of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review and Fair Funding Review, looking at how funding is distributed to Local Authorities. The Fair Funding Review has now been delayed and we are awaiting our settlement proposals following the Government Spending Review. In light of this uncertainty the Executive will be proposing a one year Revenue Budget for 2021/22, with minor updates to the Capital Programme. We continue to lobby through the CCN and other Bodies for a fairer deal for Lincolnshire.

Covid-19 Update

We continue to face challenging and difficult times in our efforts to bring Covid-19 under control in Lincolnshire. The next few months are going to be critical and I want to express my thanks to everyone involved in the outbreak management response for their relentless efforts to keep our residents safe.

I am disappointed that the government decided to place the whole of Lincolnshire in Tier 3 when we came out of lockdown on 2 December 2020. Infection rates have been falling in those few Districts that were previously causing concern. The restrictions will have a significant impact on our local economy, especially in the run up to Christmas and will have a crippling effect on our hospitality sector.

I, along with the all the District Council Leaders in the County, have written to Ministers calling for more support for our businesses in the County and clarification on what we need to achieve, to be in Tier 2. We hope that on 16 December 2020, when the government reviews the tiers, Lincolnshire moves down to Tier 2.

But there is light at the end of the tunnel. We are shortly due to start a community testing programme which will help us to investigate any rises in case rates and identify people who are asymptomatic so they can self-isolate to slow the spread of the infection. The

additional testing capacity will include new rapid lateral flow devices which offer quicker results and the potential to shorten or avoid isolation if used regularly.

I think you will all join me in welcoming the encouraging news about the vaccines. We are still waiting to hear when they will be approved by the regulators, but nevertheless, it is a significant step forward. Our Health colleagues have been working hard to plan the mass vaccination programme for Lincolnshire, which should be starting in earnest in the New Year.

With the easing of restrictions for the Christmas period we expect to see a rise in infection rates in January. I would, therefore, urge everyone to continue to follow the simple steps of hands, face and space to prevent the further spread of the virus.

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