

## **COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 11 DECEMBER 2020**

**Statement from: Councillor C N Worth, Executive Councillor for Culture and Emergency Services**

### **CULTURE**

#### **Vision for Heritage in Greater Lincolnshire**

We have launched our vision for heritage in Greater Lincolnshire which recognises the cultural importance of the area from the Humber to the Wash, setting out a plan to increase engagement and the chance for everyone to see and explore the great things about that area.

Focusing on 6 strands, core to this vision is the drive to unlock the potential of Greater Lincolnshire's rich heritage in every way possible, enhancing our great spaces for residents and visitors to make great memories, and securing the finance to ensure our rich past is fit for the future.

Greater Lincolnshire enjoys a rich and varied heritage, and the stories our heritage tells, if brought together, would boost economic growth, tourism, inward investment and inward migration of high quality business and commerce across Greater Lincolnshire.

#### **Reopening of Libraries continues to be positive**

The positive start to the libraries recovery following the first national lockdown continues and all 15 core libraries and 17 Community Hubs are continuing to offer a 'click and collect' service to customers.

Prior to the second lockdown, all 15 core sites re-opened for collection of pre-preserved items, PC use and deposits of existing loans during this period; with 14 core libraries transitioning to browsing as of September and Bourne continuing to offer the takeaway only.

To ensure we are operating in a Covid secure way, sites are still operating on slightly reduced hours and the number of PCs available to use is reduced to adhere to social distancing requirements.

#### **Core Libraries Stats for Aug- Oct**

- New online joiners: 310 in August, 282 in Sept and 334 in Oct with an additional 700 on site joiners in Oct.
- Increase in e-books: up 282% in August, 276% in Sept and 260% in Oct.
- Increase in e-audios: up 64% in August, 37% in Sept and 35% in Oct.
- Increase in e- newspapers and magazines: up 202% in August, 423% in Sept and 234% in Oct.
- Increase in music streams and downloads: up 10% in August, 6% in Sept and 30% in Oct

NB: % increases based on comparison of the same month in 2019 and 2020

### **Upgrade to Library IT systems complete**

The improvements to the IT across the county's libraries are now complete. The new Library Management System has been installed and is in use by customers across all core sites and community hubs. All libraries have also received their new equipment, including PC's and printers. There are some elements to finalise behind the scenes but for customers all changes are now in place. This is with the exception of one site, where a fire has caused slight delays to the implementation of the new IT, however as soon as is possible the IT will be installed.

### **Successful reopening of our Heritage Sites**

We were happy to be able to continue to provide access to Lincoln Castle grounds during the second lockdown, and since we reopened the grounds at the end of May to provide a safe place for our communities to visit and enjoy themselves, over 187,000 people have visited the grounds. We were able to still provide a takeaway cafe service for our visitors at this time.

Prior to the second lockdown which saw the rest of our heritage attractions temporarily close again, we had been performing significantly above the national average with Lincoln Castle receiving over 60% of the visitors we'd normally expect and The Collection museum welcoming 35% of the visitors we'd normally see in October. This compares to a national average of just 20%.

### **Wildlife Photography Exhibition**

The Wildlife Photography Competition, open since 19 September 2020, continues to be very popular with visitors. There are 43 images framed within the gallery space which includes the winner and two runners up in each category. Further to the winners, all the images that had been entered are displayed via a projector show. The Wildlife Trust of Lincolnshire supported the exhibition and were part of the judging team.

### **Make Kits**

Our Make Kits continue to go out to EDAN Lincs Domestic Abuse Service and to the Lincoln Food bank, to help keep people creative and engage with families and younger audiences that cannot always get into our sites.

### **'Where's Wally? Spooky Museum Search'**

The Collection, along with Lincoln Castle, was one of 70 museums in the UK that was chosen by the 'Kids in Museums' charity to participate in the national 'Where's Wally? Spooky Museum Search'. This was a free event for visitors to the museum, with 8 Wally characters hidden around the museum for visitors to find and an activity sheet to complete. The event ran from 17 October-1 November to coincide with the Leicestershire/Nottinghamshire half term in the first week and Lincolnshire half term in the second week. This attracted 1,648 visitors during that period.

## **Vikings – Valhalla and Ubisoft**

The Collection joined forces with Ubisoft, creators of the game 'Assassins Creed: Valhalla' which is partially set in Viking Lincoln and Lincolnshire to give gamers a sneak preview of stills from the game. Anyone following our social media pages in the run up to the launch of the game on 10 November 2020 has been presented with fascinating facts about Viking Lincoln, Lincolnshire and information on our collections, alongside stills from the game.

## **Gainsborough Old Hall**

The operational handover of Gainsborough Old Hall to English Heritage was successfully completed, on time, at the end of the County Council's lease on 1 November 2020.

## **EMERGENCY SERVICES**

The previous few months have been largely shaped by the continued Covid-19 crisis that affects us all. We have been embedded within the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) in supporting the county wide response by providing resources and skills within the command and control structure of the County Emergency Centre and on a response function such as EMAS ambulance driving, delivery of food parcels and face fit testing at care homes.

We showed an increased level of appliance availability during the summer months, which we recognised was an impact of Covid-19 that enabled more of our On Call personnel to provide cover at their local stations. We also worked to enable training to be continued on our stations in a Covid-19 compliance manner to ensure we maintained operational competence and maximised the increased availability of our operational staff.

During this period we signed off the decision paper to allow a technical refresh programme of our Breathing Apparatus Sets that will enable an upgrade of this equipment to be rolled out across the Service by 31 March 2021.

Following extensive feedback and consultation, our Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2020-2024 has been signed off and gone to print. This outlines the identified risks across the county and how as a Fire Service we will aim to respond and mitigate these risks.

The Service continues to review the way in which we deliver our core functions, recognising that we need to use new and innovative ways to provide an effective service delivery, specifically through the use of IMT which has been demonstrated by the use of Microsoft Teams over the last few months.

## **Fire Station Chief Officer Group (COG) Inspections**

Due to the effects of Covid-19 and the restrictions this has had on our ability to visit and inspect stations, we have postponed our COG inspections for 2019/20. We are using this year to review this programme to re-launch in 2020/21.

We have been reviewing an engagement programme that will be launched shortly which will make more use of Microsoft Teams to engage with all areas within the Service and enable councillors to access our staff, as this has been fed back as a positive area for all concerned.

### **Fire Protection**

With the development of the 'virtual' fire safety audit, the Protection Team have been focusing on identified high risk premises as per the risk based inspection programme. With the initial easing of restrictions, where possible, a number of face to face audits have been completed, but during lockdown restrictions, the team returned to the virtual audit as the primary method of contact and auditing. Support in the form of advice and guidance is also available to businesses. Key partnerships with LCC Adult Social Care, the Care Quality Commission and United Lincolnshire Hospital Trust have allowed important information and messages to be shared resulting in risks being managed and mitigated.

Following successful enforcement action in the East of the county, the Team are pursuing a prosecution case due to the serious nature of the breaches against the fire safety legislation. A really good example of how the protection work has continued even with the difficult conditions being encountered.

With the two Central Government funding streams confirmed, progress on two additional posts within the team is being made. The additional posts will offer an enhanced capability and resilience to support the required outcomes of the Protection Uplift programme.

It has been confirmed that all Fire & Rescue Services will also be receiving a third stream of government funding. This grant fund has been identified to support the FRS implement the actions that have resulted following the release of the Phase One Grenfell Tower Report Recommendations. Following the initial release of the recommendations, a team within LFR have carried out a strategic gap analysis to develop a local action plan. The team will continue to work through the highlighted areas and utilise the money to develop local capabilities/response and protection elements of service delivery.

### **Fire Prevention**

To align to the LRF's communication strategy, efforts were focused on supporting firework and bonfire night safety messages. A number of radio and television interviews were carried out to support the safety messages.

A link with the Communities and Volunteer Cell has been developed, with further communications required to identify the best way for the Prevention Team to support the overall aim of reaching out and providing support to those who most need it.

Although we have restrictions in place, we have been able to start work on the commissioned evaluation of our community safety activities. Lincoln University will be supporting the evaluation which will take place over a 12 month period. Whilst we are conscious that Covid-19 will impact on the work, we are confident that the report will allow us to ensure we are targeting those most at risk and making our communities safer.

The vacancies within the team have now been filled and we have welcomed two new Community Safety Advocates into the Service. One of the roles will be looking specifically at how we can improve our engagement with communities and the hard to reach groups across the county.

### **Emergency Planning**

The Emergency Planning and Business Continuity team continue to play a significant role in the multi-agency response to the coronavirus pandemic. The team are co-ordinating the involvement of LCC services and voluntary organisations and ensuring that our internal plans and business continuity arrangements dovetail with those of the LRF. The team also performs the LRF Secretariat role and is therefore responsible for scheduling all strategic and tactical command meetings and for providing advice and guidance to LCC commanders and those from partner organisations. As an organisation, LCC have added more managers to its strategic and tactical commander duty officer rotas to ensure more resilience and the team have completed training for all those new to these rotas and provided refresher training to those that were on them already.

During the second wave of this prolonged national emergency, staff welfare, mental health and resilience became an important issue and consideration during the response. It has been necessary to implement strict Covid safe arrangements for staff working out of the County Emergency Centre to ensure their personal safety and the team are now working both from home and this location on a split shift system to address this issue. Clear welfare pathways have also been made available to all staff should they wish to use them.

As the second wave continues into the winter period, we should expect that there will be a requirement to respond to a concurrent emergency and the ethos has been that this should not be seen as an 'if' but 'when.' It is unlikely that we will get through the next six months without the requirement to respond to flooding for example whilst still responding to Covid-19. Central government has instructed LRFs to plan for a worst case scenario of Covid-19, winter flu, EU transition and a concurrent emergency and this has factored heavily as part of current local planning and preparedness.

During this time LCC also underwent an internal Business Continuity audit which the department is responsible for co-ordinating. This audit looked into all aspects of LCC arrangements including methods, documentation, corporate arrangements, governance and training and exercising. I am pleased to report that we received an outcome of substantial assurance.

### **Blue Light Collaboration**

The Collaboration Delivery Group (now being the tier of governance below the Blue Light Steering group) continues to work on a number of initiatives including:-

- Information sharing
- Joint training
- Inter service secondments
- Collaborative wellbeing work

## **Fire and Rescue Inspection**

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) carried out a Covid-19 themed inspection in early October 2020 with a clear aim to inform national best practice and to document the position of the Fire sector in terms of a snapshot in time.

- (a) what is working well and what is being learnt;
- (b) how the fire sector is responding to the Covid-19 crisis;
- (c) how fire services are dealing with the problems they face; and
- (d) what changes are likely as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As a result, our process of risk assessments (tied to the 5 national alert levels) was requested to be shared nationally. Since this, the indicators of different levels have changed but the methodology has allowed us to alter our RA processes to fit national initiatives. The results of the inspection are due to be published in January 2021.

We have requested re-submission of the early data collection as many areas have moved on since March; we have also now moved into the late data collection phase and await clarification of future inspection dates.

## **People**

We continue to have a good number of potential on-call recruits but course numbers continue to be limited by Covid-19 precautions, albeit we are hoping to be able to run a double recruits course in the New Year. We have initiated a project looking at modular delivery of recruit training to see if we can deliver the course differently in order to allow us to maximise the number of new entrants.

We continue to develop our Learning Management system concentrating now on ensuring that our Phase 2 development process is incorporated onto the system. We are currently setting the terms of reference for an LCC internal audit of our training recording process which is the final stage of our response to the 'cause for concern' raised by HMICFRS in 2018.

Our new Water Carrier has been delivered by Emergency 1 to Lincolnshire. Whilst not yet ready for service, we decided to continue the fit-out with Lindums in Lincolnshire to ensure that it did not become stranded up in Scotland due to Covid-19. We have also taken the decision to upgrade our Interspiro Breathing Apparatus and will have the new enhanced sets in Service by April 2021.

## **Registration, Celebratory & Coroners**

Following the first lockdown period ending in June 2020, all offices (with the exception of Bourne Registration Office) have remained open for the registration of births, deaths and taking notices of marriage/civil partnership. We are working with the team from Property Services and have identified suitable accommodation for an office in Bourne within the same building and this should be open once it has been adapted to meet our requirements.

Marriages and civil partnership ceremonies were not permitted to take place during the restrictions in place from Thursday 5 November-Wednesday 2 December 2020 inclusive, but at the time of writing they plan to resume from 3 December 2020.

The continued uncertainty and changing levels of restrictions have created an increase in the public contacting the service. This is proving to be a strain on resources, however, the team are working hard to manage this increase in workload.

Birth registration appointments continue to take place and all backlogs from earlier in the year have been cleared. These appointments are continuing to be carried out in a Covid secure environment and the majority of the information is continuing to be collected over the telephone. Parents only need to call into the office to check the information gathered and collect their certificates, therefore reducing the amount of time spent with staff in the office.

Death registrations are still taking place over the telephone and will continue to be done this way for the foreseeable future. Work is ongoing with NHS partners to ensure medical certificates of cause of death (MCCDs) are received in a timely manner to allow us to register deaths within the five day legal requirement. We continue to work with hospitals, bereavement centres, GP surgeries, nursing homes and funeral directors to ensure that the impact on bereaved families is kept to a minimum.

The on-going restrictions and uncertainty continue to impact wedding and civil partnership ceremonies. Many couples have chosen to postpone their ceremonies to a time when they hope that there will be fewer or no restrictions and they are able to have the ceremony they choose. Unfortunately, this has had an impact on our ability to generate income and has put pressure on our overall budget projections.

Due to the restrictions we have not been able to hold group Citizenship Ceremonies and there is currently a backlog of around 80 citizens waiting to have their ceremony. The service is currently exploring the option of restarting ceremonies by offering an individual ceremony either in person or by holding a Home Office approved virtual ceremony through Microsoft Teams.

Fortunately business has been able to continue due to the essential nature of the service and staff are working really hard to keep some sort of normality during these difficult times.

During April and May, the Coroners Service continued to process referrals and managed to hold a significant amount of short inquests. Over the summer Coroners Courts were set up in Lincoln. The space within each court has allowed inquests to continue and much of the backlog has been cleared. Unfortunately, the larger inquests which can require over 30 people, and jury inquests have had to be postponed due to Covid security concerns. We are now exploring suitable locations and technology solutions with the aim of starting these up in 2021.

At the end of August HM Senior Coroner for Lincolnshire Timothy Brennand, took up a post in Manchester. Since 1 September 2020, Paul Smith has been HM Acting Senior Coroner for Lincolnshire. Mr Smith was previously the Area Coroner.

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