

## **COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 17 September 2021**

**Statement from: Councillor L A Cawrey, Executive Councillor for  
Fire & Rescue and Cultural Services**

### **FIRE & RESCUE**

We continue to have a good number of potential on-call recruits (284) and we are now able to run full courses within restrictions, with 51 new recruits commencing since 1 January 2021. We will also be trialling our new modular training for on-call recruits later this financial year. We had 83 applications for our Wholetime Transfer (WT) recruitment campaign appointing 15 competent WT firefighters from our existing on-call workforce or from other Fire and Rescue Services. Our recruitment team are currently processing more than 470 applications for the 20 new trainee WT firefighters who will commence training in January 2022.

Our training team have certified 245 Breathing Apparatus wearers this year and have also appointed 18 new co-responders. Whilst Covid19 precautions placed significant restrictions on driver training, we have been able to provide familiarisation training to all of the crews receiving the new Scania fire engines and are now catching up on the LGV and co-responder new and refresher driver training. We have recently awarded the contract for our new Trauma Care training to LIVES and this will commence later this year.

Lincolnshire County Council Internal Audit has carried out two audits in the period. The audit of our training recording process provided for a high level of assurance. The second on re-imbursement of expenses found substantial assurance with some minor remedial actions being taken.

Our operational support team have continued to deliver a number of key fleet projects completing the procurement and delivery of 33 Scania Fire Engines; the new Water Carrier to Market Rasen and the additional Hidrostal Flood Pumps and vehicles intended for Alford and Holbeach. They also completed the full refresh of all our Breathing Apparatus sets and radios by 31 March; the supply of 200 Draeger smoke hoods (as recommended by Grenfell enquiry); improved protection half-face masks and our procurement team are currently out to tender for the provision of gym equipment to our wholetime stations. We have commenced repairs to our Fire Training buildings at Skegness and Gainsborough with remedial work also planned for Boston and Lincoln South. Equality Impact Assessments are being completed for all of our Fire buildings and will inform any future building planned at Grantham and Leverton.

### **Emergency Planning**

The Emergency Planning and Business Continuity team continue to play a significant role in the multi-agency recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. The team are co-ordinating the involvement of Lincolnshire County Council services and voluntary organisations and ensuring that our internal plans and business continuity arrangements dovetail with those of the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum (LRF).

The Secretary of State has approved an LRF Funding Pilot with an approved budget of £7.5m nationally. Each LRF has received an allocation based upon a combination of population size and the Index of Multiple Deprivation; in Lincolnshire's case this amounts to £179,187.00.

The purpose of the funding is to support LRF's building of core strategic capacity and capability, to take an active role in developing and delivering national priorities as set out in the Integrated Review and to provide evidence to feed into the National Resilience Strategy and review of the Civil Contingencies Act.

The Emergency Planning and Business Continuity team have picked up this project on behalf of the LRF for the duration of the pilot funding scheme. The team are already involved in the initial stages and capacity has been found for a project team to deliver different elements of it. These skills have already been utilised as part of the EU Exit and COVID response and recovery. It is also seen as an opportunity to help shape the future of emergency planning and LRFs nationally through involvement in the Integrated Review and the Civil Contingencies Act. All costs associated with the project are being met by the LRF.

From 1 September the team moved from Fire and Rescue and joined the Resources Directorate under Public Protection reporting to Di Coulson and Andrew Crookham. The team will remain in their accommodation at the County Emergency Centre and all preparations are underway to ensure as smooth a transition as possible.

## **CULTURE**

### **The Usher Gallery**

Following discussions between the County Council and the City of Lincoln Council, subject to formal agreements being made, we will continue to run the Usher Gallery as an art gallery and Lincoln's museum and art collections will remain in Lincolnshire.

Discussions finalising these formal agreements are at a mature stage and as a result of the new arrangement, we look forward to using the Usher Gallery more flexibly with the gallery being used for community, cultural and creative industry use including but not limited to income-generating activity through third party hire including cultural talks and tours, weddings, ceremonial celebrations, educational and children's activities.

It will be a much improved solution – bringing more visitors to the site, for more reasons and more often.

### **Lincolnshire Archives**

#### **Archive Service Accreditation Award**

In July, The National Archives announced that Lincolnshire Archives had successfully retained its Archive Service Accreditation. This award looks at an organisation's ability to develop, care for, and provide access to its collections, and those areas such as resources and planning which underpin those activities. In essence, Archive Service Accreditation

defines good practice and nationally agreed standards for archive services across the UK, thereby encouraging and supporting the development of the archive service.

As a result, Lincolnshire Archives remains as an appointed Place of Deposit for public records. The Accreditation Panel which made the award noted:

“...that this is an effective service closely integrated within Culture and with strong embedded support.”

## **Heritage**

### **Treasure**

In April 2021 we made a number of exciting new acquisitions, all early Medieval in date, via the British Museum Treasure Scheme. External funding was secured via the Arts Council England/Victoria & Albert Museum (ACE/V&A) Purchase Grant Fund, The Headley Trust and the Friends of Lincoln Museums and Art Gallery to fund the purchases.

The new acquisitions include two gold pendants and a silver gilt mount. The high status gold pendants from Binbrook and Rauceby are both Early medieval dating from the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The exquisite styling of their decorative gemstones and glass are uncommon and the first additions to our collection. The high status silver gilt mount represents only one of twenty existing similar mounts found in England, thought to derive from richly embellished belts or equestrian equipment manufactured on the Frankish continent during the period of Carolingian period (9th-10th century).

### **Thomas Price sculptures**

We have recently taken receipt of three new acquisitions of contemporary sculptural work by the leading black British artist, Thomas J Price, funded via our membership of the Contemporary Art Society (CAS) acquisition scheme and the support of the Heslam Trust. The works consist of three heads depicting three black men cast in bronze. Each character has been based on people's behaviour 'types' represented in the media, and ancient, classical and neoclassical sculptures.

It provides an opportunity to connect Lincolnshire audiences with a black British working artist who is taking centre stage as part of a national campaign, exploring local links to current social movements and debate.

### **Art Fund Grant**

In January 2021 we were also successful in the awarding of £35,000 from the Art Fund Respond and Reimagine Grant to help develop more online learning resources. The funding will support the development of new digital content and outreach activities encompassing a range of new learning offers that emphasise the sense of our 'local place' by linking to our sites, collections and exhibitions.

The project involves designing new innovative digital assets to engage audiences and showcase our collections and exhibitions. Our outreach kits explore the art and history of our sites, from prehistory to the twentieth century, and we are creating new digital learning kits with films, podcasts, live streamed sessions and much more.

A new Virtual Immersive Environment of the archaeology gallery launched as part of our July 2021 festival of archaeology. We're currently exploring creating 3D scans of artefacts from our wonderful collection of art and archaeology and the bringing to life, via Virtual Reality, hidden stories of Roman and Viking Lincoln. We'll also be delivering digital training sessions inviting young people to take up opportunities to work alongside us.

### **Exhibitions and engagement**

Despite closures during lockdowns we have continued to deliver a range of exhibitions and engagement:

We initiated our latest Wildlife Photography Competition which will open up at the North Sea Observatory in Autumn 2021.

We opened Old Salt, a commissioned art work from the artist Laura Wilson, which has culminated in a sound installation at The Collection and included works from the archaeology collection that inspired her work.

We worked with the National Gallery to bring the Van Huysums painting to The Bridge food bank on Newark Road, linking this with workshops, special 'make kits' and facilitating the link to the National Gallery for two local schools.

We continued our work on the make kits working with the food banks in Lincoln and in particular The Bridge on Newark Road. We also worked closely with EDAN to bring a group of women and children in from the nearby refuge, and are continuing with the workshops being delivered there.

### **Visit England Assessments**

The Collection, Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Visitor Centre and Lincoln Castle have all been nominated for Visit England's Welcome accolade following mystery visits to each site this summer. In order to be nominated for this award, the staff must score at least 98% for this section of the overall report. We are delighted and incredibly proud of the standard of customer service that our teams deliver.

The Visit England Assessment (otherwise known as VAQAS which stands for Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme) is a quality accreditation for visitor attractions including museums, art galleries, safari parks, gardens, historic houses, theme parks etc.

### **Performance**

Visitor numbers to our heritage attractions - as lockdown restrictions have eased - have been very positive, with Lincoln Castle grounds continuing to be very popular as a green space for people to enjoy. With almost 200,000 having visited since April 2021, we are proud to report that income at the castle is up on pre Covid levels.

### **Libraries**

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

This past year has highlighted how truly amazing the library service has been, proactively responding and improving delivery to ensure essential services have been provided – so no

one has been left behind or suffered from social isolation. Feedback received from customers shows they are a real lifeline to many, and further illustrates how important this service is to the community.

The positive start to the libraries recovery continues with all 15 core libraries offering browsing to customers alongside PC use and deposits of existing loans. Since the easing of restrictions, study spaces and casual seating have also been reinstated, with plans in place to re-establish events and activities over the coming weeks. Thirty three of our community hubs have also returned to service delivery to customers, which again has been a welcomed development by many.

### **Performance**

The number of new online joiners, over 300 a month from April through June, is significantly above the pre Covid average of 48.

E-book and e-audio issues are still performing higher than pre Covid, though they have reduced compared to the same period in 2020 when sites were closed. Due to customers now returning to sites and borrowing physical items and e-newspapers and magazines, we are happy to report that issues are still increasing.

### **Community Hubs**

GLL continue to provide support to 36 community hubs through dedicated Library Development Officers. Of these, 34 hubs are run by community groups. They continue to thrive and have proven to be well embedded within the communities.

We are close to finalising a new potential provider taking over the management of the Ermine Community Hub, following Learning Communities' voluntary liquidation in May 2018. We are excited to be able to once again offer this vital service to its local residents.

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