



**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
19 OCTOBER 2021**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR R WOOTTEN (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors M A Griggs (Vice-Chairman), A J Baxter, M D Boles, I D Carrington, I G Fleetwood, A G Hagues, H Spratt, G J Taylor, L Wootten and R B Parker.

Councillors Ruth Carver, R J Cleaver, C J Davie, T J G Dyer, D McNally, N Sear, Ms Rose Battey and Amy Thomas attended the meeting as invited guests.

The following presenters attended the meeting virtually, via Teams:

Ruth Carver (Local Enterprise Partnership Chief Executive) and Amy Thomas (Lincolnshire Rural Support Network).

Officers in attendance:-

Justin Brown (Assistant Director Growth), Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Mike Reed (Interim Head of Waste), Vanessa Strange (Head of Infrastructure Investment) and Sarah Wells (Business Manager, Corporate Property Team).

24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs J E Killey.

It was reported that, under Regulation 13 of the (Local Government Committee and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, Councillor R B Parker had replaced Councillor Mrs J E Killey for this meeting only.

25 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declaration of members' interest were made at this stage of the proceedings.

**26 MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2021**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 14 September 2021 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

27 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS

The Chairman wished it to be noted that Councillors R J Cleaver and N Sear, were in attendance for agenda item five.

The Chairman invited Councillor C J Davie, Executive Councillor Economic Development, Environment and Planning to provide an update to the Committee.

The Committee were updated on the following: -

- Climate Summit – The event had provided a wide range of speakers and that the feedback received from delegates attending was the summit had proven to be a successful and inspirational event. It was highlighted that delegates were given an insight in to what the Council was doing to drive for green growth across Greater Lincolnshire, and the Green Masterplan, which now underpinned so much of the Council’s work. Areas highlighted were the launch of the consultation on the County’s Local Transport Plan, which had green transport and the environment as central themes along with supporting sectors to continue to grow and recover; and the appointment of the Considerate Group to produce a Green Tourism Toolkit;
- The continuing work of Team Lincolnshire, particular reference was made to a recent event at Hemswell Cliff, to which 70 delegates had attended the joint event organized by Team Lincolnshire and the Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce. The Committee noted that Team Lincolnshire were due to launch their new website on 26 October 2021. The new website would provide members with more support and provide them with a better platform to showcase their businesses. The website would also act as a driver for investment to both new investors to the region as well as established businesses;
- The difficulties many sectors were facing concerning supply chains and recruitment. It was highlighted that there was a noticeably high number of vacancies persisting in transport, logistics and warehousing, and that there was a lack of HGV drivers. The Committee noted that the Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) had responded to a call for evidence from the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee on these issues;
- It was hoped for some positive announcements on the Levelling Up Agenda, from the bids that had been submitted in June to the Community Renewal Fund and the Levelling Up Fund, as well as information on the coming UK Shared Prosperity Fund;
- Wednesday 20 October 2021, Team Lincolnshire were holding the second South Lincolnshire FEZ webinar. The event would be showcasing the progress to date and the wider opportunities in relation to the UKL Food Valley; and
- Thursday 4 November 2021 team Lincolnshire would be attending the Fresh produce Consortium event at the Lincolnshire Showground to showcase to investors the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone (FEZ) and the UK Food Valley.

28 SUPPLEMENTARY WASTE COLLECTIONS SERVICES

Consideration was given to a report from Mike Reed, Head of Waste, which invited the Committee to consider and comment on the proposal to discontinue the Supplementary Waste Collection Services at Stamford and Mablethorpe, which was the subject of a decision by the Executive Councillor for Waste and Trading Standards being taken between 21 and 28 October 2021.

As there were several speakers for this item, the Chairman advised the Committee how he intended to proceed with this item.

The Chairman also advised that a petition had been received, which contained one specific request: "This petition demands that Lincolnshire County Council, restores the Saturday recycling materials collection from Stamford Cattle Market"

The Committee noted that emails had also been received from two Stamford residents, Mr A Margett and Ms A Nash; Councillor Mrs G Johnson, The Mayor of Stamford; Cllr K H Cooke, Leader of South Kesteven District Council; Councillor Mrs A Wheeler, South Kesteven District Councillor for Stamford St. George's Ward; Councillor S Ford Stamford Town Council; and Mr S Palmer, a former County Councillor for Alford and Sutton.

The Chairman invited Ms Rose Battey to introduce the 'Restore the Saturday Waste Recycling Waste Collection in Stamford, Lincolnshire' petition. In her five minute statement reference was made to some of the following points: the disappointment of Stamford residents to the proposed discontinuation of the supplementary waste collection services at Stamford; the failure of the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership to meet their 50% recycling target; that some residents would not have vehicles available to them to travel 12 miles to Borne Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC); the effect on carbon omissions for making having to make the 24 mile round trip; the potential increase in the amount of fly tipping; that there was no reference to CO2 admissions within the report; and that the services should be restated.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee extended thanks to Ms Rose Batty for her eloquent statement, and formally received the 'Restore the Saturday Waste Recycling Collection in Stamford, Lincolnshire' petition. It was noted that the petition would be referred to the Executive Councillor for Waste and Trading Standards who would arrange for a formal response on behalf of the Council.

Local Electoral Division Councillors R J Cleaver (Stamford West) and N Sear (Mablethorpe) were also invited to speak for a period of three minutes, both requested that the Executive Councillor for Waste and Trading Standards should reject the recommendations in the report and to pursue alternative forms of collection that ensured that Household Waste Recycling Centres' (HWRC) policy requirements were being applied correctly and consistently, that enhanced recycling and eliminated the use of landfill and deterred fly-tipping.

The Head of Waste advised the Committee that in 2016, a decision had been taken to continue with a residual waste collection service on Saturday mornings at both Stamford and Mablethorpe. This had been based on the size of the population in both towns, neither of which had a HWRC. It was highlighted Stamford was within a 12-mile radius of the HWRC at Borne and that Mablethorpe was also within the 12-mile radius of Trusthorpe. (The HWRC policy states that: "The majority of households (95%) should be within a 12- mile radius of a HWRC").

Details of the 11 HWRCs in Lincolnshire were shown in Appendix A to the Executive Councillor report; and Appendix B provided a list of the 10 strategic objectives of the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS).

It was highlighted that the County Council was responsible for waste disposal and that District Councils were responsible for waste collection. The Committee noted that during Covid supplementary services had been suspended as they did not provide a safe method of collecting materials; and when restrictions were eased, a booking system was put in place within HWRCs to restrict numbers visiting a site and to aid with social distancing; this method of control was unable to be applied to the supplementary services and therefore the supplementary services had not been reintroduced.

The Committee was advised that smaller items of residual waste could be deposited in household wheelie bins and that larger residual waste items could be dealt with by bulky waste collections. It was reported that both South Kesteven District Council and East Lindsey District Council had the ability to collect bulky residual waste items and to charge for this service.

It was reported that during the 18-month suspension of the supplementary waste collection service, there had not been any noticeable increases in fly-tipping in Mablethorpe or Stamford above the expected normal levels, which suggested that behavioural change during this period, residents had disposed of material differently, such as via kerbside collection or at the closest HWRC.

It was highlighted that it was not possible to extend the supplementary waste collection service as there was an impact on costs and recycling rates, which would in turn impact on the sustainability of the HWRC services more widely and the ability of the County to meet the recycling targets adopted by the JMWMS.

During discussion, the Committee raised the following points:

- Supplementary Waste Collection Services (SWCS) were no longer required in line with the evolution of environmental services which were now more focused on recycling. It was clarified that the Stamford and Mablethorpe SWCS had not operated in the last 18 months. SWCSs were inefficient in enabling materials to be recycled and did not help with recycling targets being achieved. District Councils offered kerbside collections on a fortnightly basis which provided the opportunity for smaller items of residual waste to be deposited in household wheelie bins and that larger residual

items could be dealt with by bulky waste collections or by being taken to (HWRCs) which offered the opportunity for disposing of bulky waste that could not be collected at kerbside recycling points;

- Members emphasised the importance of utilising both kerbside (bulky waste) collection and HWRCs as means of reducing carbon emissions, and mileage incurred travelling to sites. Increased collection services were within the gift of District Councils, being collection authorities, to be decided and implemented;
- Members took a view that if services were to remain in place, it might raise a strong case for other areas to request the same service which would be unsustainable financially and environmentally;
- It was acknowledged that although the lack of means to transport waste in less affluent areas was putting a strain on residents, data gathered at HWRCs could have provided information on how far residents were travelling to dispose of their waste. Officers confirmed that advice would be sought from a legal perspective to establish whether such data could be used going forward;
- Following questions, Officers clarified that the relocation of HWRC facilities was not being considered as an option, nor was allowing cross-border disposal of waste based on residents' proximity to a facility at the edge of their district. The latter was due to burdening of Council Tax for neighbouring authorities and residents of that district. Regarding finding a bigger location to replace the use of the Cattle Market was also problematic, as a more permanent site required planning permission where segregation bins would be provided; in addition, collection of a wider variety of recyclable materials meant that the location would also be under scrutiny from the Environment Agency;
- Members argued that the recommendation of the report was based on a policy position held by the County Council and maintained that there was opportunity for working closer with District Councils and other stakeholders for performance to be improved going forward through a targeted approach including stronger messages and educating people at these challenging times;
- A member noted that lack of funding in Local Authorities had added to the lowering of recycling rates in the County that had fallen from over 50% to barely 40%. An example was given of a privately owned recycling centre in the Deepings area, the owner of which continued supporting the local residents with separating recycled items from other household waste, similar to HWRC operation model, despite the withdrawal of recycling credits, was mentioned to support a view of an alternative method that could be implemented in Stamford and Mablethorpe. Withdrawal of credits was said to have cost South Kesteven District Council circa £1m per annum. It was also emphasised that the public did not care about whether the responsibility for collection rested with District Councils and that the disposal of waste was the responsibility of the County Council, the public just wanted their waste being disposed of without driving a 25-mile return trip to Bourne:
- With reference to underachievement of objectives (page 21, Objective 5 "To contribute to the UK recycling targets of 50% by 2020 and 55% by 2025") it was noted that the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership was faced with unknown factors contributing to recycling targets not being met; Members emphasised on the need to assess what these factors had been and ask fundamental questions around these, it

was therefore proposed that the matter came under further investigation through the Scrutiny Committee function;

- Members maintained that following the potential enactment of the recommendation of the report, Stamford and Mablethorpe areas should be monitored to assess whether this had an impact on fly tipping rates. Assurance was given that evidence was being gathered and officers were working with District Council partners to create a database of itemized materials collected from locations that was helping in benchmarks being established, better flow of information between partners and that a clearer picture would be available going forward. Looking at Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) by District Council was also a useful way of assessing differences in performance geographically. It was reported that KPIs were reported quarterly, but the district breakdown was not included yet;
- It was acknowledged that regardless of the decision fly tipping remained an issue in these areas. Fly tipping had increased nationally over the past 18 months which was believed to be due to illegal trade where van owners/traders took jobs via social media outlets to collect and dispose of bulky household waste and subsequently disposed these items in countryside locations, by public highways and other landfill sites. There was no evidence that household behaviour had changed, or that residents exhibited negative behaviour associated with the increase in fly-tipping. During the last 18 months it was believed that behavioural change has taken place whereby residents were using the HWRCs instead of the supplementary services as items did not appear to have been fly tipped;
- Members emphasised that more needed to be done on educating the public about recycling and how to separate items in their grey bins as it was noted that 3 out of 10 items in the bins would be unsuitable and would therefore contaminate the rest of the contents. An example of a paper wheel with items and how they should be disposed was offered to showcase that simplified solutions could be implemented in support of providing messages to the public on effective recycling. Officers assured the Committee that through working in partnership, with the public and private businesses recycling was encouraged and that a strong and positive message was carried. However, it was noted that a performance team was looking at the contamination levels to enable the development of a clear picture around where contamination had been more prominent (geographically, across the county);
- Members requested that consideration was given to alternative methods for these areas in collaboration with partners, District Councils and government departments, with the latter supporting the enforcement of fly tipping offenders being pursued, which would ultimately lead to a cleaner and safer environment. Assurance was given that the Partnership had recently implemented an Environmental Crime Initiative and was working with a variety of stakeholders including the Police, District Councils, and landowners. It was noted that stronger punitive action against fly tippers was being explored and that a particular task force of officers, whose remit was to pursue offenders, was already formed. Assurance was also given that there had been recent prosecutions of rogue traders for such offences. Covert cameras were also employed as means of capturing rogue traders and fly tippers across various locations; and

- A Member suggested exploring opportunities for the installation of textile recycling banks on County Council premises around the County. This would allow for the generation of income for the Council whilst offering an alternative outlet for recycling of materials that would otherwise end up in the landfill.

The Chairman extended his thanks on behalf of the Committee to all participants.

RESOLVED

1. That support be agreed to the proposed recommendation shown in the Executive Councillor report.
2. That the comments highlighted by the Committee be passed to the Executive Councillor for Waste and Trading Standards in relation to this item.

Note: Councillors A J Baxter and R B Parker wished it to be recorded that they had voted against the recommendation to the Executive Councillor.

29 COUNTY FARMS

Consideration was given to a report from Sarah Wells, Business Manager Corporate Property, which provided the Committee with an update on the County Farms Estate.

The report highlighted the Brexit trade agreement impact on County Farms, which included problems encountered in dealing with the new international trade regime; the difficulties tenants had reported sourcing labour, with one of the larger farming businesses reporting that their labour costs were increasing by 25% year on year.

It was noted that there had been no direct notifications of haulage issues. It was noted further that a concern had been raised regarding sourcing haulage when required and that this would inevitably feed into cost inflation.

The Committee was advised that there had been no specific reports of CO2 issues. There was, however, a concern that the prices in nitrogen fertilizer, which was a key input for all County Farms tenants, would filter through to increased costs for the 2021/22 year.

The Committee noted that the Council offered continued support to all tenants; and that a Business Resilience Programme was being offered across the wider East Midlands LEP on behalf of the area's growth hubs.

It was highlighted that it was expected there would be limited take up of the Government's proposed Lump Sum Exit Scheme, as a result of a recent survey with tenants, it was felt the proposed £100k financial cap would not provide sufficient funds, particularly for those without accommodation.

It was reported that a review of the County Farms Strategy would be concluded by December 2022; and that five schemes on the farm estate would be included in the Council's recently awarded Treescape programme, incorporating some 1200 plants, for the County Farms to play a part in the Carbon agenda.

During consideration of this item, the Committee referred to:

- Whether the shortage of labour could be a problem. It was noted that the labour shortages could be an ongoing issue, and that tenants could work together as co-operatives to help overcome some of the issues. Looking at alternative labour, a suggestion put forward was the utilization of lower grade prisoners to help in the agricultural industry. A further suggestion was providing transport for younger people in urban areas to work in Lincolnshire. Reference was also made for the need to increase rates for people working in the agricultural industry and to re-invigorate the market to encourage more people into the vacant jobs;
- Accommodation available to those working on County Farms;
- The impact of Brexit; and
- The mental health impact on the farming community.

RESOLVED

That the report be received and that the comments raised by the Committee be noted.

30 GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE PLAN FOR GROWTH

The Committee considered a report from Justin Brown, Assistant Director – Growth and Ruther Carver, LEP Chief Executive, which invited the Committee to consider and comment on the Greater Lincolnshire Plan for Growth.

The Committee was advised that the Plan for Growth was a 1–5-year economic action plan and framework for post Covid-19 recovery in Greater Lincolnshire, which had been developed in full partnership across Local Resilience Forum Business and Economy partners. Appended to the report was a copy of the Greater Lincolnshire Plan for Growth for the Committee to consider.

It was noted that the current plan comprised of 63 actions which were either current activities relating to the economic response to the pandemic or were a critical part of a longer-term ambition. Each of the actions contained in the plan were assigned to a lead organization, and that the LEP would play the ongoing role of ensuring that the actions within the plan were delivered. Page 36 of the report provided a list of the organization's involved in the development of the plan. It was highlighted that the agreed actions contained within the plan were vital to meeting the ambitions of the five core themes and the six specific sector opportunities for Lincolnshire, these were detailed on pages 36 and 37 of the report.

Pages 37 to 39 of the report provided details relating to specific projects that the Council were the current lead for, or were involved in steering, to help deliver the priorities within the plan.

During consideration of the item, the Committee raised the following comments:

- Thanks were extended to officers for the excellent report;
- Clarification was given that on page 36 the Higher Education Colleges should be Further Education Colleges;
- Page 38 of the report – reference to Health and Care. The Committee was advised that Adult Social Care and Economic Development were collaboratively working on an initiative to help care businesses to take advantage of business advice and be able to access grants;
- The value of partnership working;
- The need to encourage businesses to take on apprentices and graduates. The Committee was advised that the Council took on apprentices and graduates and encouraged contractors employed by the Council to do the same;
- Better transport provision in the County to attract people to the area. The Committee noted that the Transport Plan would address some of these issues. This item would be considered by the Committee at the January 2022 meeting;
- The need to look at alternate renewables, reference was made to onshore wind turbines and solar panels. Some concern was expressed to the use of agricultural land for this purpose;
- Clarity was sought as to who owned the document and who had the authority to change it? The Committee noted that there was collective ownership of the plan; and that the Council needed to endorse the plan as it delivered a large part of the Strategy; and
- The need to ensure that all parts of Lincolnshire benefitted from the plan.

RESOLVED

1. That the Greater Lincolnshire Plan for Growth be endorsed.
2. That the Comments raised by the Committee be received.

Note: Councillor A J Baxter wished it to be recorded that he had abstained from voting on this item.

31 LINCOLNSHIRE RURAL SUPPORT NETWORK

The Committee considered a report from Vanessa Strange, Head of Infrastructure Investment, which provided an introduction relating to the Lincolnshire Rural Support Network (LRSN) and the support given to LRSN from the Council in 2019, due to the work of the Committee.

The Chairman invited Amy Thomas, Head of the Charity Lincolnshire Rural Support Network, to remotely present this item to the Committee. The presentation referred to:

- Who the LRSN were. It was noted that the LRSN had been established in 1999 as a resource for the County's rural communities and businesses. It was noted further that the LRSN was now a well-established, medium sized, regional, volunteer led charity that provided help, support, and advice to members of Lincolnshire's farming and rural communities in time of crisis, stress and change;
- The role of LRSN. The Committee was advised that LRSN had 20 years' experience of offering services and support to the rural community across Lincolnshire; and that feedback from service users consistently indicated the services offered were valued. As well as professional nursing and healthcare staff, LRSN had access to a significant number of committed volunteers with knowledge and experience across a full range of issues affecting the mental health of people in rural communities. The core work included: casework, one-to-one work with individuals; a helpline which was manned between 8.00am to 8.00pm, with an emergency out of hours contact number; Health screening operating alongside drop-in advice points (Louth Market and Spalding Auction) and through 'click, book, chat' digital clinics overseen by a volunteer medical director and delivered by Registered Nurses;
- It was reported that the presenting issues which the LRSN supported varied from anxiety through to alcoholism, depression and self-harm, debt, financial and other farm business, and personal issues. It was highlighted that year-on-year the LRSN had seen an increase in the number of families and individuals needing support. The Committee was advised that for the year ending 31 March 2021, 193 families had been supported, which was a 21% increase on the previous financial year. It was highlighted that 60% of new cases were mental health related. It was highlighted further that for the current financial year as of September 2021, the team had already supported 122 families and undertaken 83 health checks. It was felt that as winter approached, and as a result of other pressures within the industry, that services would be called upon more than ever before;
- The Committee was advised that during the pandemic, LRSN had been able to respond quickly and adeptly to working in a virtual environment, with the introduction of an online health and wellbeing clinic 'Click, Book, Chat' service and extending helpline hours. The LRSN had embraced technology by hold its AGM virtually, introduced shared blogs, and shared team videos. It was noted that fundraising through the pandemic and in a virtual environment had been challenging. However, the charity had been very fortunate that supporters, individuals, corporate partners, and volunteers had continued to fundraise for the LRSN, despite the pandemic. The LRSN had also introduced the May Marathon, which had helped raise their profile with a range of audiences; and
- For the future, LRSN was planning to refresh its long-term plan and strategic goals, extending services both geographically and into new sectors whilst continuing to provide the best support to Lincolnshire's agricultural and rural communities as they faced an uncertain and challenging future. Some projects being developed were:- Delivery of the Future Farming Resilience Fund as part of the PCF Farm for the Future

Project; the introduction of a mobile health screening unit which allowed the delivery of outreach and health screening across the County; and the development of a Legacy Campaign in order to further widen the charity's already diverse funding base.

During consideration of the presentation, the Committee raised the following points:

- Thanks were extended to LRSN for way they supported rural communities;
- Some concern was expressed to the rising number of mental health issues. The Committee was reminded that the Scrutiny Panel B – Agricultural Sector Support Review would be looking at this matter;
- A request was made for Scrutiny Panel B to conduct interviews with farmers and others in the rural community to get their views and experiences;
- From personal experience, and the rise in the number of number of families requiring help, one member urged the Council to support the work of the LRSN.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee extended his thanks to the LRSN team for all the support provided to the rural communities across Lincolnshire.

RESOLVED

1. That the report and presentation relating to the work of the Lincolnshire Rural Support Network be received and that future opportunities to support the sector be considered.
2. That comments raised by the Committee be shared with Scrutiny Panel B, who will be undertaking a Review of Support to the Agricultural Sector in Lincolnshire.

32 ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report from Kiara Chatziioannou, Scrutiny Officer, which enabled the Committee to comment on the content of its work programme for the coming year to ensure that scrutiny activity was focused where it could be of greatest benefit. Details of the Committee's work programme were shown on pages 68 to 70 of the report pack.

RESOLVED

That the work programme presented be approved.

The meeting closed at 12.42 pm.

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