



**PUBLIC PROTECTION AND COMMUNITIES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
9 NOVEMBER 2021**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR N H PEPPER (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors A N Stokes (Vice-Chairman), Mrs J Brockway, M R Clarke, Mrs N F Clarke, W H Gray, A M Key and K E Lee

Councillors Mrs S Woolley attended the meeting as an observer.

Councillors L A Cawrey Councillors A Dani, J L King, A P Maughan and Councillors A Dani, J L King and E J Sneath also attended the meeting as observers via Microsoft Teams.

Officers in attendance:

Kiara Chatzioannou (Scrutiny Officer) and Emily Wilcox (Democratic Services Officer)

Officers in attendance via Microsoft Teams:

James Chapple (Head of Registration, Celebratory and Coroners Services) Diane Coulson (Assistant Director - Public Protection), Louise Egan (Library and Heritage Client Lead), Will Mason (Head of Culture), Ryan Stacey (Assistant Chief Fire Officer)

82 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received for Councillors A Dani, J L King and E J Sneath, however, it was noted that they were in attendance via Microsoft Teams as observers.

83 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor A M Key declared a non-pecuniary interest for item 5 as he was a private funeral Celebrant and therefore, would leave the meeting for the duration of item 5.

**84 MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC PROTECTION AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY MEETING
HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2021**

Councillor M R Clarke thanked Democratic Services for assisting with the responses to a number of queries raised at the last meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 September 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

PUBLIC PROTECTION AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**9 NOVEMBER 2021**85 **ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND CHIEF OFFICERS**

There were no announcements by the Chairman, Executive Councillors and Chief Officers.

86 **LINCOLNSHIRE REGISTRATION AND CELEBRATORY SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT**

10:07am- Councillor A M Key left the meeting for the duration of this item.

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Registration, Celebratory and Coroners Services, which provided an update on Lincolnshire's Registration and Celebratory Service for the previous year.

The Registration and Celebratory Service had faced a difficult and challenging year with the delivery of services being greatly impacted by the pandemic. Government lockdowns, restrictions and social distancing measures had caused significant disruption across the service.

Despite the challenges faced, the service has remained open to the public throughout 2021 and offices continued to operate as Covid secure environments with protective screens and sanitising stations.

Death registration volumes in 2021 were comparable to the numbers registered in 2020 and were expected to rise further as winter approached. Plans were in place to manage the rise and the service was confident that they could meet the demand for an increase in registrations.

Marriage and civil partnership ceremonies had also been heavily impacted by the restrictions put in place as a result of the pandemic. The easing of restrictions had seen unprecedented levels of demand which was due to further increase as many weddings had been postponed to 2022. Existing staff had worked incredibly hard to meet the needs of the service and the service had also trained over 40 current Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) employees as ceremony Celebrants to provide cover.

A full review of Lincolnshire's Registration and Celebratory Service was scheduled for 2022, which would look to make the service more accessible and enhance the current customer offer due to the introduction of a newly accessible IT system which would allow the public with the introduction of online appointment bookings, online prepayment for registration services and certificates, and online communications directly from registration service.

Overall, despite a disrupted and challenging year for the registration service, the service had continued to deliver a high level of customer service with registration volumes across all disciplines exceeding that of 2020.

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The Executive Councillor for NHS Liaison, Community Engagement, Registration and Coroners recorded her thanks to the officers and all those involved with the registration service for their hard work to keep the service operating in difficult circumstances. The Executive Councillor also thanked those LCC officers who had trained as Celebrants which had made an enormous difference to the level of service able to be provided.

The Committee considered the report and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- 6 registration staff had left the service due to retirement and to progress a career in another sector. A number of Celebrants were also on relief contracts and could therefore leave the service on their own terms.
- To train a Registrar in all disciplines would take several months, however Celebrants could be deployed quickly once they had completed a short period of training which included classroom work and shadowing.
- Registrations and marriages/civil ceremonies took place seven days a week. The service operated from 12 sites across the county which could accommodate the increase in demand.
- The new IT system was a tried and tested, leading bespoke service which was used by over 100 Local Authorities across England and Wales.
- The Head of Registration, Celebratory and Coroners Services agreed to investigate whether the service used the County News magazine to highlight the locations of their Registration Offices.
- Despite the introduction of IT services, the Registration Service would remain an accessible service for all and could still be accessed via phone or for walk in services.
- In line with legal requirements, all birth registrations had continued to take place in person during the pandemic.

The Head of Registration, Celebratory and Coroners Services welcomed the proposal for future reports to be scheduled that in future the Committee receive an annual report at the end of the financial year and further updates on a six-monthly basis.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be noted;
- 2) That updates be on the Head of Registration Celebratory and Coroners Service be received on a six-monthly basis, to include the annual report at the end of the financial year.

87 COMMUNITY HUBS - FIVE YEAR UPDATE

10:21am – Councillor A M Key returned to the meeting.

Consideration was given to a report by Louise Egan, Library and Heritage Client Lead which invited the Committee to consider and comment on the information included in the report and highlight any additional priorities for consideration.

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Members were advised that community hubs received a small financial support from Lincolnshire County Council and professional operational support from Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), the Council's outsource library provider and were open for a minimum of six hours a week and that's for 50 weeks of the year.

The community hub model was operating successfully, despite the on-going restrictions that had been put in place as a result of the covid-19 pandemic, many communities had relied on community hubs.

However, the library service had been heavily impacted due to the pandemic, as many of the volunteers were classed as vulnerable and therefore were unable to continue delivering the service at many sites.

In line with the central government requirements sites were shut temporarily during the lockdowns that were put in place in March 2020 and January 2021. Prior to reopening, each site was subject to a rigorous risk assessment process with each and every community hub, to ensure the safety of both the volunteers and customers and services had returned subject to safety measures.

The Committee considered the report and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- In 2017, Learning Communities, who operated the Ermine Community Hub went into administration and ceased the delivery of services to the Ermine Community Hub. Rather than close the site, GLL had taken on the operation of the site until 2020 when sites were closed due to the covid-19 pandemic. However, due to staffing issues GLL had needed to prioritise the continuation of services that they were contractually obligated to deliver, and therefore the Ermine Community Hub was temporarily closed. The Council are currently in the process of formalising a contract with Bishop Grosseteste University to undertake the management of the Ermine Community Hub site in the coming months. Councillor Mrs N F Clarke requested to be kept up to date with progress.
- Councillor Mrs N F Clarke requested that the St Giles area be considered as a location for community hub.
- The Executive Councillor for Fire & Rescue and Cultural Services thanked officers and GLL colleagues for their work to continue to offer online services. In spite of the pandemic, the community hub model had continued to be successful. The Executive Councillor also recorded her thanks to the Library and Heritage Client Lead and Councillor K Lee for their work on the proposed contract with Bishop Grosseteste University which would provide a further library service in Lincoln.
- Community Hubs were used by LCC, Police and NHS colleagues to hold meetings and operate drop in centres. Officers continued to explore opportunities further to ensure connection point and can meet needs of communities.

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- The Committee were encouraged by the success and popularity of Community Hubs and their role in combating social isolation.
- The team made use of LCC social media channels and the County New magazine to highlight the strengths of the Community Hub model.
- The Committee thanked the council and GLL colleagues for their work to promote the community hub model.
- The Libraries and Heritage Client Lead was part of continued discussions with LCC's property team to resolve an issue with disruption caused by a particular community hub. The Library and Heritage Client Lead agreed to liaise with Councillor J Brockway to find a solution. Members were reassured that prior to being established, all community hubs went through a business application process which identified what the site was permitted to be used for and whether that was within the needs of the residents within the local area.
- The Library and Client Heritage Lead agreed to send an invitation to Councillor K Lee for the meeting to discuss the Ermine site.
- Community Hubs were used for a range of reasons, including more recently for the use of covid-19 vaccination sites.
- It was acknowledged that in more rural villages, a lack of public transport provision could be an obstacle for some residents wishing to attend their community hubs which could lead to social isolation. Members were reassured that transport links were considered when establishing each community hub and online provision was also made available.
- There was the capacity to open four more community hubs across the County. Application packs could be provided on request. Library and Client Heritage Lead would liaise with Councillor A M Key on the process of applying for a new Community hub.
- It was questioned whether the purchasing of new IT equipment as a result of the pandemic had led to a decrease in people using library facilities within the community hubs. Officers were monitoring the patterns of usage for libraries to identify any possible changes which could be made to increase usage. The Council were promoting the library offer as well as publicising the additional safety measures that were in place at the current time.
- Books no longer needed to be quarantined upon being returned to libraries. There were a number of methods in place to ensure the safety of the public which included sanitising stations, socially distanced study spaces, Perspex screens and encouraging the use of mask wearing.

RESOLVED:

That the report and comments made be noted.

88 INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2020-2024 - YEARLY UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer committee members with an update on progress against the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2020-2024.

Members were advised that the IRMP and planning process and frameworks had been restructured and to include four delivery frameworks and an overarching framework which articulated the service's approach to evaluation.

Performance of the plan was monitored by a service delivery board which was responsible for the delivery of high risk, high complexity or high value projects to support the IRMP.

The current programme included projects such as:

- ☒ replacement equipment to mobilise fire engines, both on fire stations and in the control room
- ☒ replacement technical response units
- ☒ replacement emergency services communications equipment and infrastructure
- ☒ replacement mobile data terminals

A risk identified in the IRMP was the impact of climate change and the increased instances of flooding which had a service level impact on resourcing for protracted periods which resulted in a cost pressure. As a result, LFR had purchased four trailer-mounted, high-capacity flood pumps which would mean that the service could respond to flooding incidents whilst still being able to respond to other incidents.

The report proposed that LFR continued to work with the Executive Councillor for Fire & Rescue and Cultural Services to develop an improved set of performance indicators which could be better scrutinised by the Committee.

The Committee considered the report and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- The Executive Councillor for Fire & Rescue and Cultural Services thanked LFR officers and colleagues for continuing to respond to challenges during the pandemic.
- The committee welcomed the purchase of new flood pumps. It was confirmed that it was not a statutory duty to respond to flooding events but the Fire Service, however the service wanted to ensure they could respond to the risks communities were experiencing.
- There was sufficient resource within the service to respond to reported incidents, despite the challenges faced by the need to rely on on-call firefighters to maintain a service.
- The failure to meet the target for responding to high risk and critical residents smoke alarms within 5 days was not met for a number of reasons, which was mainly due to the individual being vulnerable or having complex needs meaning there was a request to have somebody else present at the visit. This meant that not all visits were able to be facilitated within the 5 day target. Members were reassured that the reason that the target had not been met was due to external issues outside of the services control.
- The Assistant Chief Fire Officer emphasised the importance of the What Three Words application for addressing the location of emergency incidents and encouraged

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Members to promote the message to the public. Opportunity for Councillors to communicate the message.

- The rural nature of Lincolnshire meant that there could be longer response times to incidents. For this reason, LFR benchmarked against councils with a similar demographic.
- The Scrutiny Officer was working to identify dates for potential visits to the control room and the County Emergency Centre and invitations would be sent out in due course.
- LFR worked with other partners to identify areas which were more susceptible to flooding issues to ensure that plans could be put in place to mitigate the risk, where possible.
- The Committee were assured that LFR were subject to internal monitoring as well as being inspected by HMICFRS annually.
- LFR participated in a number of desktop exercises including service wide exercises such as the recent 'Silver Siren' exercises which involved the Royal Air Force, National Search and Rescue, East Midlands Ambulance Service and other local authorities. The media and local residents were notified about any desktop exercises in their area.
- Members were encouraged to respond to invitations to visit their local fire station which was a valuable experience.
- LFR regularly monitored the diversity of their workforce to maintain a gender balance be ethnically diverse. The Committee acknowledged that despite on-going efforts, there were still difficulties in recruiting women and minority groups into their non-operational roles and work.
- Members thanked LFR for their efforts to keep the County safe.
- The Committee recognised that the potential difficulties faced by some people trying to fit smoke alarms themselves. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer recommended the use of wired in fire alarms which had a battery life of up to 20 years and avoided the use of changing batteries regularly. An effective way of fitting fire alarms was an approach of using sticky pads to stick to the ceiling.
- The Executive Councillor for Fire & Rescue and Cultural Services had attended the Boston Stamp exercise and had observed that the community engagement and goodwill generated which was invaluable.
- As a result of the Grenfell Fire tragedy, all Fire and Rescue Services now were consulted at the first stage of planning for building control applications, where they which allowed for LFR to have a greater input into the materials buildings were made of.
- The Council had 19 high rise buildings, of which 1 building still had existing cladding materials similar to those that were used on the building on the Grenfell tower. LFR were working with the building owners and residents to remove and remediate any risk to the building, including working on evacuation plans and ensuring fire alarm systems were upgraded.
- LFR had produced an internal report which addressed the recommendations that arose as a result of the Grenfell Tower report and put in place an action plan to avoid similar risks in Lincolnshire.

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- Safe and well visits were now person centred and LFR worked alongside partners in other care services to ensure people were signposted and engaged with on other issues such as financial scams or hoarding, where necessary.
- THRIVE was LFR's behavioural framework which stood for trust, help, respect, inclusive, value and empower.
- Assurance was provided that improvements been made to processes to reduce the risk of incidents where fire engines were unable to be deployed in a timely manner to due roller shutter doors not being fully open.
- Members welcomed cross-border working.
- The National Fire Chief's council had a number of programmes in place to alleviate the risk of miscommunication between emergency services such as that which happened during the Manchester Arena Bombing. All Fire and Rescue Services were working to the same criteria standards on this issue.
- Plans were underway for the provision of a new fire station in Leverton.

RESOLVED:

That the report be endorsed and any comments made be taken under consideration.

89 PUBLIC PROTECTION AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given a report by the Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Committee to consider and comment on the contents of its work programme for the coming year.

The Scrutiny Officer advised the Committee that there had been no further changes to the work programme since the publication of the agenda.

The Chairman also reminded Members of the Committee's remit for consideration when considering the contents of its work programme.

It was suggested that the Committee consider scheduling a future report to analyse the risks posed by cyber fraud and other cyber-crimes.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme, as detailed in the report, be approved.

The meeting closed at 12.00 pm