



**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
30 NOVEMBER 2021**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR R WOOTTEN (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors M A Griggs (Vice-Chairman), A J Baxter, M D Boles, I D Carrington, A G Hagues, Mrs J E Killey, H Spratt, G J Taylor and L Wootten.

Councillor T Dyer attended the meeting as an observer.

Councillors C J Davie and D McNally attended the meeting as observers via Microsoft Teams.

Officers in attendance:-

Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Dan Clayton (Sustainability Manager), Matthew Harrison (Senior Commissioning Officer – Flood Risk), Brendan Gallagher (Principle Planning Officer) David Hickman (Head of Environment), Vanessa Strange (Head of Infrastructure and Investment) and Emily Wilcox (Democratic Services Officer).

Officers in attendance via Microsoft Teams:

Samantha Harrison (Head of Economic Development), Chris Miller (Deputy Head of Environment) and Mike Reed (Head of Waste).

33 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

An apology for absence was received from Councillor I G Fleetwood.

34 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

**35 MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON 19 OCTOBER 2021**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

36 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS

The Chairman welcomed the students of Bishop Grosseteste University who were in attendance as observers to the meeting and highlighted the benefits of student engagement with the democratic process.

The Executive Councillor for Waste and Trading Standards announced that the construction of the new tactical HWRC site would commence on the 6th of December with a six month construction period. The site would be larger than the existing site and provide a better experience for residents to dispose and recycle their material.

North Kesteven District Council and Boston Borough Council had now successfully introduced the separate collections for paper and card recycling which had led to a significant improvement in contamination levels. West Lindsey District Council would also be introducing this service in the coming months. The roll out of the collection service had been supported by additional officers who had been present during bin collections where they had monitored contamination levels and educated residents when possible. Sampling had indicated that the lifestyle of residents played a significant part in the composition of waste, for example access to shops and takeaway food outlets. The Executive Councillor for Waste and Trading Standards thanked Offices and Councillors at both Boston Borough and North Kesteven District Councils for their efforts in making the project a success.

The Performance Improvement Team had also created and tested an education and packaging programme for Primary Schools and delivery was due to commence to all schools in 2022.

The Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning informed Members that the Government were due to make an announcement on the Levelling Up White Paper would be in the week commencing December the 13th. It was emphasised that Levelling Up was critically linked to infrastructure for Lincolnshire, particularly with a need to address decades of underinvestment by central government as the Council strived for a fairer funding deal for all of our residents.

The Executive Councillor advised Members that Cityfibre had announced they would invest £21 million into a new citywide network that would bring full fibre broadband connectivity to Lincoln which would bring much needed improvements for Lincolnshire.

Elsewhere, initial results from the Lincolnshire Quarterly Economic Survey showed falling UK market activity levels with export markets. Officers continued to analyse trends so that they could best understand how to shape their support across all sectors.

Nationally, the Resolution Foundation report into the long term implications of COVID-19 on the labour market had shown that at the end of the job retention scheme, there had not been a spike in unemployment, but that participation in the labour market had actually

reduced, with 586 thousand more economically inactive people than at the start of the pandemic.

Work was underway for the redesign of the Business Centre in Market Deeping, and work was nearing completion on the Boatshed Café on Huttoft Car Terrace, which would be beneficial for the visitor economy in the area.

It was also noted that the Council were promoting the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone and the wider Agriculture food offer, with two leads being followed up with both the UK and the foreign investor, as well as on the food enterprise zone or the construction of the hub building, which was supported by the Getting Building fund from the UK.

The Council were working hard to ensure that a train service was maintained for the Lincoln Christmas Market.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that there were 5 national infrastructure applications for giant solar farms in Lincolnshire. The Council would consider the benefits of land for food and renewable energy sources and would then submit a response in due course. The Committee were reassured that all relevant Members would be consulted before a response was submitted.

37 SERVICE LEVEL PERFORMANCE REPORTING AGAINST THE PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 2021 - 2022 - QUARTER 2

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Economic Development, which invited the Committee to consider a report on the Service Level Performance Reporting against the Performance Framework for Quarter two for 2021/22.

The Head of Economic Development was pleased to report that the service had exceeded the target for the number of businesses supported, having supported 1126 businesses. This was due to the introduction of a strong package of support to help businesses to navigate through the challenges posed by Covid-19.

The service had also been successful in their bid for future European Regional Development Fund money and had £1.06m, which would enhance the current business support program. The programme would work with the Lincolnshire Growth Hub to continue to provide businesses with advisory support with grants and provide guidance, workshops and events until June 2023.

The service had exceeded the number of qualifications achieved by adults and within the same period, with 973 individuals undertaking qualifications which was achieved by expanding online courses and learning opportunities.

The Head of Economic Development was pleased to report that the Council had received over £15m worth of external funding over the period, which had exceeded the target. This was predominantly due to an extension of some of our European Regional Development

Fund projects which had enabled the Council to provide further business support across the Lincolnshire area.

The Business Support Programmes that were provided included a rural support programme, a digital programme, a recovery programme and a programme to invest for the future. All programmes were supported through the Council's website, through social media, Councillor briefings and via the Local Enterprise Partnership.

There was a clear and robust system in place for monitoring the destinations of all learners, which included a follow up and report to the learning board. It was agreed that a further update be provided within the report to the next meeting.

It was clarified that the Council received an allocation from the Department for Education (DfE) for learner provision which was increased during the pandemic due to a need for further support. The Council also applied for further growth funding that was added to the allocation and therefore the providers contracts were increased to meet the needs of the learners.

Members were encouraged that the targets for the support package were being met. The Committee were also welcomed partnership working between the County Council and other District, City and Borough Council Economic Development Teams on future projects.

The Head of Environment then provided an update on performance with regard to flooding within Lincolnshire. It was noted that as the Lead Local Flood Authority for Lincolnshire, the Council had a number of statutory powers and responsibilities for managing flooding within the County. The Head of Environment highlighted the following with relation to flood risk performance measures

- 13 new formal investigations had been launched as a result of flooding during the previous quarter, which had affected a total of 16 properties. In addition to those formal investigations, the Council now maintained records of 'near-misses', where the trigger threshold for a formal investigation might not be reached, but where the information was retained to provide context for ongoing or new investigations and to identify locations where persistent issues might be developing
- The general trend for the number of investigations was rising and officers were closely monitoring the situation

The Chairman welcomed an update from the Head of Waste on service level performance for quarter two. Members were advised that the recycling rate at household waste recycling centres had decreased down to 71% which was being monitored and the service were looking at ways to address the issues and introduce a campaign which would notify the public informally how they could recycle better; the overall recycling rate that for this last quarter is around 44%, which was similar to previous quarters and the total tonnage of waste collected was 546 kilograms per household which was slightly under the target of 560. It was thought that this was due to a number of factors including less material being presented at the house waste recycling centres and seasonal composting. Officers were

working to identify the national trend in the reduction of recycling and would be increasing their engagement with the public through education campaigns and other means.

The Committee were invited to ask questions on the performance updates of both flooding and waste, and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- Officers advised that the targets that had been set were historic and as waste and recycling collection developed, targets would need to be reviewed to ensure they were appropriate and were reflective of the current trends and recycling and disposal rates.
- It was suggested that there was an opportunity for the Council to improve its recycling rate by working with partners to promote textile recycling. The Head of Waste confirmed that the Council had 11 sites across the County with textile banks. Officers were happy to engage with Councillors on this issue to identify if and where there was a need for more textile recycling points across the County.
- Officers were investigating the reasons for the slight variation in recycling across the County's household waste recycling centres to see whether improvement could be made.
- It was acknowledged that there was a need to better understand recycling rates to understand why rates were lower despite the increasing amount of opportunity for people to recycle.
- Officers were working on providing a breakdown of recycling rates for each District, however it was difficult to provide comparative data as all District offered different ways of recycling. Once available, the data would be shared with the Committee.
- Concerns were raised over very low recycling rates in some student areas in Lincoln. The Waste Team acknowledged that there were improvements to be made to positively engage with certain groups in order to improve recycling rates in certain areas.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the comments made by the Committee be noted.

38 FLOOD AND COASTAL INNOVATION PROGRAMME - THE GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE
GROUNDWATER PROJECT

Consideration was given to a report by the Senior Commissioning Officer – Flood Risk, which provided an overview of the Flood and Coastal Innovation Programme for the Greater Lincolnshire Groundwater Project.

As Lead Local Flood Authority for Lincolnshire, the Council were leading on the development of a collaborative approach based on the existing flood risk management partnership, who had been successful in their Expression of Interest into the Government's Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme. The report outlined the partnership's objectives. These included identifying opportunities to manage groundwater in a sustainable way that

manages flood risk whilst protecting the environment, enhances watercourses and and improves Greater Lincolnshire's resilience to groundwater flooding. In improving protection to homes, businesses and local communities, the aim was to develop community resilience and enhance the resilience of Lincolnshire's natural capital. The partnership was now developing an outline business case, which was due to be submitted in April 2022.

The programme would provide the opportunity to develop an understanding of a broad range of groundwater risks and opportunities across Greater Lincolnshire, leading to a range of practical actions delivered in partnership over the next six years.

The Committee considered the report and supported the work on groundwater flooding which was an extremely challenging and complex issue that affected many of Lincolnshire's residents.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the comments made by the Committee be noted.

39 THE LEVELLING UP AGENDA FOR LINCOLNSHIRE

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Infrastructure and Investment, which provided an update on the Levelling up Agenda for Lincolnshire, which aimed to reduce inequality between communities to deliver sustainable, inclusive on our plans for growth in Lincolnshire, whilst addressing the challenges for Lincolnshire's communities, individuals and businesses.

The Levelling up agenda highlighted some key opportunities for Lincolnshire around the UK shared prosperity fund; manufacturing and clean energy on the Humber bank; agrifood across the UK Food Valley. It was important to provide opportunities for businesses to raise their productivity and access new markets.

The agenda would look to address the lifestyle benefits of our rural and coastal living such as outdoor lifestyle in affordable housing and the wider infrastructure that they connect to.

The ambitions for the levelling up fund included a range of schemes including town regeneration schemes and the introduction of walking and cycling facilities. The fund sought to identify Lincolnshire's 'unique selling points' and build on the strengths within Lincolnshire around peoples needs, within the available timeframes.

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

- Investment in Lincolnshire was welcomed, however some Members raised concerns that the principles behind the 'levelling up' fund did not accurately represent the wealth inequality of some of the poorer divisions within the County in which many

basic needs were not being met such as affordable housing or access to green space. Officers acknowledged the points raised and recognised the importance of communicating directly with residents to better understand their needs and wishes. The Council had engaged with communities in a number of ways on a range of issues.

- Members commended the use of funding being spent in an appropriate way which would stimulate local economic growth. It was commented that economic development could be furthered with the introduction of Devolution in Lincolnshire which would deliver more powers to local government to make improvements locally.
- It was suggested that levelling up in Lincolnshire should mean providing better access to services to everybody, regardless of their circumstances.
- It was confirmed that Midlands Engine looked at the economic activity across the whole of the Midlands.
- There were a number of pieces of work across the Council that fed into the levelling up agenda, such as the local transport plan, bus service improvements and other highways projects.
- The Executive Support Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning brought attention to the investments in Gainsborough which would be highly beneficial for the economy.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the comments made by the Committee be noted.

40 PLANNING FOR STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE IN GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE

Consideration was given to a report by the Principle Planning Officer, which invited the Committee to agree on the priorities for officers to develop and up-to-date evidence based infrastructure matters.

Members were referred to page 87 of the agenda pack, which provided a summary of the Council's proposed £1 billion pipeline of infrastructure projects and the potential benefits of the projects.

The Principle Planning Officer recorded his thanks to the Greater Lincolnshire Partners who had helped and supported in the development of the planning for strategic infrastructure in Greater Lincolnshire so far.

In analysing the Greater Lincolnshire Economic plan, alongside the six local plans for districts across the County, Officers had identified 59 potential projects in the pipeline to be undertaken in relation to strategic infrastructure which had been placed on a scoring matrix to identify which projects would be prioritised.

The Principle Planning Officer was pleased with the plans that had been progressed despite the challenging circumstances faced as a result of the pandemic. Work would now be undertaken to address thematic gaps, two of which would include a digital infrastructure and health and care infrastructure; deliver a step change in the collaboration and our proactive engagement of partners and develop greater openness and sensitivity and the Council's processes and methodology to ensure a greater sensitivity and awareness to longer term projects in order to be able to promote collective readiness to establish a comprehensive pipeline of projects.

Members were referred to Appendix A for a full list of projects.

Members considered the report and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- The Committee welcomed investment for infrastructure projects in Grantham and supported partnership working between the County and District on the development of projects and were pleased to see that improvements to the A17 were a priority as many residents had to travel out of the area for employment.
- It was suggested that a second bridge for Gainsborough be considered as a possible project due to congestion and poor traffic flow throughout the town.
- It was clarified that the Gainsborough Green Grid was a series of cycle and pedestrian routes that would be greened.
- Documents such as the Greater Lincolnshire Economic plan had been used as a starting point to identify projects on an evidential basis.
- Members raised concerns with broadband issues not being considered as a priority despite causing significant issues for some areas across the County. The Principle Planning Officer advised Members that Officers would look to focus on the digital debate as a key focus for 2022.
- It was explained that the plan was a prioritised pipeline in which some projects had been prioritised for the short term as they had demonstrated a strong degree of strategic fit and deliverability. Members were invited to discuss any further queries they wished to raise with the relevant officer outside of the meeting.
- Members commended the work of officers and hoped that the Council were successful in any future bids for grant funding.

RESOLVED:

1. That agreement be given by the Committee to the priorities set out within the report;
2. That the comments made by the Committee be noted.

41 TREE STRATEGY: "THE RIGHT TREE IN THE RIGHT PLACE"

Consideration was given to a report by the Sustainability Manager, which provided an update on the Green Masterplan and the initial progress towards the County Council's target to reach net zero carbon by 2050.

The Committee was informed that the Council had put in a successful application to the Local Authority Treescapes Fund for the delivery of trees in non-woodland settings. This was partly driven by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) through the Forestry Commission, seeking to mitigate the anticipated loss of trees through ash dieback disease. The findings of surveys carried out by the Council's highways team had concluded that Lincolnshire was expected to lose about 80 to 90% of trees on the highways network through ash dieback.

As a whole, Lincolnshire had one of the lowest tree coverage rates in England, partly because of its importance as an agri-food producing and processing area. Further funding for the planting of trees provided an opportunity to address this disparity.

In partnership with District and Parish Councils, Lincolnshire County Council had identified a number of sites across the County to plant trees and a map had been produced for locations where it would be suitable to plant new areas of woodland, which was set out in within the report.

The Sustainability Manager emphasised the importance of putting the right tree in the right place to ensure that trees were not planted on areas which were already important habitat areas or wetland areas. The tree strategy looked to address these issues as well as addressing the potential that existed for providing trees highways and streets.

It was hoped that with the currently obtained funding and the bids for other funding resources, the Council would meet the target for a tree for every resident - 750,000 trees over the next 2 to 3 years.

Members considered the report and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- The Committee welcomed the introduction of a tree strategy and the progress that was being made in the planting of more trees across the County, for environmental and aesthetic reasons.
- It was confirmed that the Council would be taking part in the Jubilee Tree Planting Celebrations that were planned for 2022 and a number of sites had already been identified for this event.
- Hedgerow planting was not allowed to be included in the LATF. However, there were plans to add to existing woodland through improving hedgerows.
- The Council were working closely with District Councils to analyse any existing strategies that were in place and have a joined up approach.
- The Council would be working with the Woodland Trust on the tree strategy project.
- It was hoped that Officers would continue to work closely with local planning authorities to provide practical help for developers in the provision of trees in the development of new housing estates, in line with requirements in the Environment Act.

RESOLVED:

1. That the proposal to submit an application to the Trees Call for Action Fund be supported;

That the progress towards developing a Tree Strategy for the County be endorsed.

42 ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report by the Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Committee to review their work programme for the coming year.

The Committee was referred to the work programme, which was set out on pages 96-97 of the report.

Members were advised that the item on the Internationalisation Strategy had been moved to the meeting in February agenda. An update on Infrastructure Planning would also now be reported to the Committee in May 2022.

The Chairman thanked the students and lecturer from Bishop Grosseteste University for attending the meeting and in turn they thanked the Committee for an opportunity to attend and gain an insight into local politics.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme, with the amendments identified, be endorsed.

The meeting closed at 10:39