



**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
29 NOVEMBER 2022**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR I D CARRINGTON (CHAIRMAN)

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

Councillors T Dyer and D McNally attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Chris Miller (Head of Environment), Karen Seal (Principal Place and Investment Officer), Kelly Owbridge-Tasker (Portfolio Team Leader, Economic Infrastructure), Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Matthew Michell (Waste Strategy Manager), Mike Reed (Head of Waste), Neil McBride (Head of Planning), Samantha Harrison (Head of Economic Development), Simon Wright (Regeneration and Portfolio Manager), Thomas Crofts (Democratic Services Officer), Vanessa Strange (Head of Infrastructure Investment), Marianne Marshall (Strategic communications lead), Mick King (Head of Economic Infrastructure) and Karen Seal (Principal Officer for Place & Investment)

Justin Brown (Assistant Director – Growth) and Nicole Hilton (Assistant Director – Communities) attended the meeting remotely.

11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

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

12 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest at this point in proceedings.

13 MINUTES OF THE RECONVENED MEETING (13/09/2022) HELD ON 25 OCTOBER 2022

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the reconvened meeting held on 25 October 2022 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

- Cllr H Spratt gave apologies for absence.

14 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 25 OCTOBER 2022

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 October 2022 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

- Cllr H Spratt gave apologies for absence.
- Correction of typographical error.

15 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS

The Chairman announced that following a discussion at the previous meeting of an item which was in relation to issues of parking and tourism in the coastal area, that a working group had been set up. Outputs from this working group were being reported back to this Committee upon the completion of its remit.

Councillor T Dyer, Support Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning, made the following announcements:

- Progress continued at the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone. Phase I – the Council’s first innovation centre, ‘The Hub’, opened in September, and the first two business tenants had recently moved in.
- Interest in the 27-acre phase II continued, including advanced discussions with businesses interested in purchasing land.
- At Kirton Distribution Park in Boston Borough, two separate developers continued to undertake due diligence with a view to completing the purchase of phases II and III.
- A tour of potential economic regeneration schemes, along with Councillors Butroid and Cllr Carrington and the Economic Infrastructure management had been conducted, which included a viewing of Boston Road Industrial Estate expansion in Horncastle. The estate was currently at capacity, and there was demand for up to a further nine acres.
- Spitalgate Business Park in Grantham was also viewed as well as several other smaller sites, which were currently at the initial exploration stage.
- Formal confirmation had been made in the Autumn budget that the national Made Smarter Programme had been extended, which would help small and medium sized manufacturing firms boost their productivity through advanced digital technology.
- A successful bid for the region to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport’s Create Growth programme saw £1.275m in grant funding coming to the area. Businesses will be supported to reach investors through pitching events and would be able to draw from a fund managed by Innovate UK.
- An event to celebrate the success of the £370k Coastal Community Fund programme was to be held on 30 November 2022.

16 INWARD INVESTMENT STRATEGIC PLAN FOR TEAM LINCOLNSHIRE

Consideration was given to the report by Samantha Harrison, Head of Economic Development, and Karen Seal, Principal Place and Investment Officer on the outcomes of the 2020-22 Inward Investment Plan and investment objectives set out in the 2023-25 Strategic Plan for Team Lincolnshire (TL).

The Principal Place and Investment Officer guided the Committee through the report, and the following was highlighted:

- 147 businesses had engaged with the Inward Investment Plan this year; this was an increased compared to 109 last year.
- TL had serviced 102 inward investment enquiries and a number of sector propositions had been developed to attract further inward investment across sectors
- TL had aided in generating 331 jobs.
- There was a particular focus on promoting place, agrifood, sustainability and defense moving forward.

The Head of Economic Development praised the collaboration between public and private sector partnerships with TL members in promoting Lincolnshire.

The Chairman clarified the acronyms MIPIM – Le marché international des professionnels de l’immobilier (translated - The International Market for Real Estate Professionals), and UKREIIF – United Kingdom’s Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum.

During consideration of the report, the following was noted:

- Members expressed that the closure of Doncaster Airport could impact the strategic objectives of TL, and it was assured work was ongoing with West Lindsey to explore the potential viability of reopening it. The Principal Officer for Place and Investment acknowledged that the re-opening of the airport would aid businesses in its proximity and informed the Committee that TL was working with Doncaster airport on a potential development strategy.
- Benchmarking data for inward development was requested to compare the success of TL in a national context, as well as further information on the 102 Inward Investment enquiries received by TL. Officers confirmed a benchmarking exercise would be undertaken by the Inward Investment Team; information regarding investment enquiries would be limited due to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) but it was assured that Lincolnshire was in the top ten counties in receipt of foreign direct investment (FDI) nationwide.
- The Head of Economic Development assured members that despite closures of agrifood companies in Lincolnshire, TL was part of the Lincolnshire growth hub and former staff had been supported in finding alternative employment.
- Members questioned whether TLs business plan was aligned with Lincolnshire County Councils (LCC) approach to solar farming, and Officers highlighted that the plan was environmentally conscious as it supported businesses willing to adopt decarbonization. The Chairman also highlighted there were multiple wind power national infrastructure projects

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(NIPs) being developed in Lincolnshire, and that the Committee was awaiting comments from the Planning Team.

- It was highlighted that there was a potential to digitalize agricultural machinery to aid in achieving strategic objectives, and Officers assured that intelligence, information and satellite activity were a focus of TL, and relevant work had been undertaken with the Business Hub.

It was noted that Karen Seal, the Principal Place and Investment Officer was leaving the position. The Committee and the Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning thanked her for her work.

RESOLVED:

1. That the initial 2020-22 Inward Investment Plan and its achievements be endorsed.
2. That the objectives set out in the 2023-25 Strategic Plan for Team Lincolnshire be endorsed.
3. That the comments of the Committee be included in the next steps of the action plan as reported.

17 SERVICE LEVEL PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE CORPORATE PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 2022-23 QUARTER 2

Samantha Harrison, Head of Economic Development, Chris Miller, Head of Environment and Mike Reed, the Head of Waste presented reports on the performance of the Tier 2 Service Level Performance measures for 2022-2023 Quarter 2 for Economy, Flooding and Waste which are within the remit of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee.

It was reported that:

Economy:

- Business support measures were enhanced by the Lincolnshire Growth Hub and had contributed towards business growth.
- A pub diversification programme was being implemented to raise visitor market investment.
- TL had represented the county at various events, including 'Getting Your Business to Net Zero', 'Leading a Food Revolution', and the launch of the Greater Lincolnshire Defense and Security Network.
- Qualifications received by adults were 749, which exceeded the target of 400. This was attributed to courses having multiple qualifications attached to them.
- Lincolnshire had benefitted from the European Development Fund and the Levelling Up A16 Fund was expected in due course.

Flood:

- The statistics for Section 19 investigations in the report were not targets, but contextual measures in line with the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

- Ongoing sector 19 investigations increased from three in Quarter 1 to 58 in Quarter 2.
 - 54 of these were due to the storm event in August 2022 which affected 101 properties, of which 79 were residential, ten were commercial, and 12 were streets/highways.

Waste:

- It was noted that figures in the report were at the behest of external factors such as weather, economy, and resident behavior, and were not a reflection of performance.
- Household waste was 498kg per household in Quarter 2, which fell below the target of 560kg.
- Household waste sent to landfill was 4.92% which was below the target of 5%.
- The household recycling rate was 70.6% which was below the target of 75%, but over the 66% annual forecast. The Head of Waste stated that this percentage was dependent on the type of waste the public presented to waste centers.
- The overall recycling rate was 43.8% which was below the target of 50%. This was also considered to be resultant of external factors such as public behaviour and weather patterns. Analysis was being undertaken to attempt to control these circumstances where possible.

During consideration of the report, the following was noted:

Economy:

- More data was requested on businesses that were in receipt of economic support. It was agreed a map would be circulated to Members, although the names of the businesses would remain anonymous to adhere to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- There was a Direct Advisor and a pub diversification programme to offer support to the pub sector.
- The targets for the next three quarters were listed in the Corporate Plan
- The European Growth Fund would no longer be available from June 2023 which could lead to a lack of business support in Lincolnshire; there was a shared prosperity fund available which was contingent on all seven authorities opting in. A small grant from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy was anticipated, and affected staff had been put on notice, with some agreeing to leave at Christmas. It was assured that private business link advisors were working until the funding was withdrawn.

Waste

- Fly-tipped material could not be processed by energy-from-waste (EfW) plants because its contents were unknown, and potentially hazardous or contaminated; these materials were processed at landfill sites.
- Underperforming targets were considered justified as many controlling factors were external, and Members questioned whether this undermined the statistics in the report as they did not accurately indicate performance. The Head of Waste agreed that figures were not reflective of service but rather public behaviour towards waste; Members suggested this could be alleviated with a public information campaign improve recycling awareness.
- DEFRA were attempting to standardise an approach towards waste management performance. The Waste Strategy Manager highlighted the most data for performance was

published in arrears and the most recent was from 2020, therefore an accurate benchmarking exercise would be difficult.

- The recycling rate had not returned to pre-pandemic levels; the National Association of Waste Disposal Officers (NAWDO) was compiling national figures from waste disposal centres as per the Committee's request, and this benchmarking data would be in the next report.
- Parts of Lincolnshire had adopted the twin stream recycling collection service which resulted in decreased contamination and heightened public engagement. The Head of Waste agreed to circulate further performance data but was cautious to avoid devaluing areas that had not adopted the system.
- Members questioned whether increasing the recycling target from 48% to 50% was an unnecessary criticism of the workforce considering that the initial target was not being met. Officers agreed that the target was aspirational, however the target was changed by the Waste Partnership, and District Councils were mostly involved with this matter.
- An instance was cited where a Member was denied use of a waste site, resultantly the Head of Waste explained that this was due to a driver shortage in haulage and at Biffa. It was assured mitigation measures were in place, and suggested Lincolnshire could adopt a recycling centre permit system for residents.
- Full bins at recycling centres previously resulted in recyclable materials being processed at landfill, and staff shortages had led to the closure of a site.
- Additional detail was requested in relation to the 70.6% recycling rate, and Members questioned whether LCC offered local intervention for below-target waste sites. The Assistant Director of Growth assured he was corresponding with the Head of Performance to include this information in future reports.
- Members considered whether the withdrawal of recycling credits had removed the incentive for District Councils to promote recycling; Officers assured they were working with District Councils on public engagement, but paying residents based off their behaviour was not a process they wanted to support.
- The implications of the Environment Act 2021 were unknown, and the Waste Strategy Manager was awaiting a response from DEFRA as well as the results of a consultation about the deposit return scheme.
- Information packages had been circulated in primary schools and Officers had hosted 'Waste Matters' and 'Recycling Matters' talks with children. Members suggested that a wider public information campaign could be advantageous following the implementation of the Environment Act. The Head of Waste assured work was being undertaken alongside the Communications Team to develop a public recycling information campaign.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee support the report
2. That Committee received assurance where targets were not achieved
3. That comments from the debate, raised by Members be passed on to the relevant Executive Councillor.

Simon Wright, Regeneration and Portfolio Manager delivered a report on the Council's updated Lettings Strategy.

It was reported that:

- LCC held the portfolio of managed workspace which aimed to strengthen the local economy whilst optimising rental income and supported high quality business spaces such as offices and business units.
- In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, the Portfolio Team strived to obtain market rent on all its properties.
- Responses to common challenges considered common market practice, statute and relevant case law precedent.

During discussion of the report, the following was noted:

- Mercury House in Gainsborough was 30% vacant and the Regeneration and Portfolio Manager highlighted the economic importance of location by citing a similar property in Market Deeping that was performing better due to its proximity to Peterborough's asset base. Members were assured there was a proactive marketing campaign to keep vacancies to an acceptable level.
- Members questioned whether occupancy rates would improve if rents were lower. The Regeneration and Portfolio Manager expressed that rent levels were bound by the principle of 'best consideration' in legislation. An online marketing strategy utilising in-house websites amongst other things was being considered, however there were too many fees attached.
- It was clarified that another report describing the performance of the portfolio and providing information on the businesses receiving support by LCC would be bought to the Committee in 2023.
- The Lettings Strategy helped to develop the asset base of LCC.
- Data on successful enquiries would be included in the next report
- The portfolio was dynamic and constantly reviewed, and there was a strong working relationship with business developers. LCC did not compete with the private sector or local government partners; in cases where private developers intervened, they were facilitated by LCC. Alternatively, LCC would put forward a business case if a funding package can be proven to provide additional support.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be endorsed and comments be noted
2. That the comments made by the Committee be taken under consideration by relevant Officers and Portfolio holders.

19 UPDATE AND REVIEW OF PLANNING SERVICE'S PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE SERVICE

Neil McBride, Head of Planning, delivered a report which provided an update and overview of Planning Service's pre-application advice service since its introduction in May 2021.

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It was reported that:

- The introduction of a fee for the provision of pre-application advice was previously supported by the Committee and was implemented in May 2021.
- The previous rate for officers was £55 per hour which was the lowest national figure. Following a benchmarking exercise, it was proposed that rates should be increased to £90 per hour to manage additional costs.
- The Proposed Revised Charging Schedule of each category of service provision were outlined in Appendix A of the report.

During consideration of the report, the following was noted:

- Members considered whether demand on the local service had changed once a fee was introduced at other Local Authorities; Officers clarified that the nature of building applications that were outlined in the report only applied to LCC property. This meant charges were incurred by other areas.
- Resident applications were not under the remit of the Planning Team, but rather District Councils.
- Authority to review the Charging Schedule had been delegated to the Head of Planning as per the decision of the Executive Council in March 2021.
- An annual update of the Charging Schedule was requested by Members in order to monitor its performance.

RESOLVED

1. That the data presented regarding the uptake and performance of the pre-application advice service since its introduction be noted.
2. That the increase in the hourly charge out rate for Planning Officers to £90 per hour be supported.
3. That the proposed revisions to the pre-application service be supported.
4. That the delegated authority to the Head of Planning to review or update the Charging Schedule and/or terms of the pre-application planning advice service be noted.

20 GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE AND RUTLAND INFRASTRUCTURE FRAMEWORK

The Committee received a report on the framework which guided future strategic infrastructure investments in Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland. The report was introduced by Vanessa Strange, the Head of Infrastructure Investment and was delivered by Mandy Ramm, the Funding and Investment Manager.

It was reported that:

- Strategic, high-quality infrastructure was needed in Lincolnshire to harvest economic growth. Infrastructure investment also was in line with the governments commitment to Levelling Up and ensured residents had access to high-skilled, well-paid employment.

- The Framework encompassed eight infrastructure themes, seven priority economic sectors, and three cross cutting themes: Net Zero, Skills, and Social Infrastructure (including digital accessibility).
- Adopting a holistic approach to infrastructure provision would help to overcome regional challenges to growth.
- Adopting the Framework would provide an opportunity for economic partners to voice their local and strategic needs.
- The Framework was crafted to complement the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership's (GLLEP) Local Industrial Strategy and Plan for Growth, Vision 2050 and Local Transport Plan 5.
- No new funding was required for the proposals due to the flexibility of the Framework.

During discussion of the report, the following was noted:

- The process-driven approach of the Framework was welcomed, and Members questioned what outcomes were anticipated to identify potential future improvements. The Funding and Investment Manager assured that once the Action Plans were implemented, the thematic responses would expose detailed outcomes.
- The Framework would be beneficial when collaborating with government departments and other local authority partners.
- Additional information would be circulated to Members on how conclusions in the report were reached in the context of competing ideas.
- The public had been consulted on some aspects of the Framework.
- The Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Framework (SIDF) required no funding as its role was to position LCC in a place that it can take advantage of financing bigger investments.
- Thorough work with internal and external partners had prevented duplication of other documents and frameworks. The Infrastructure Group represented a business-led approach; it was offer-led and involved an array of organisations.
- The report existed within the broader context of devolution.
- Additional information was requested following the implementation of the Action Plan; the Head of Infrastructure Investment agreed to return to the Committee at this stage or within 12 months.
- Assurance was given that the final copy of the Framework would be circulated to the Chief Executives and the Leader for approval.
- The vast number of partners and methodologies involved in developing the Framework underlined the complexity of driving infrastructure projects.

RESOLVED

1. That the approach including the Strategic Infrastructure themes and objectives be supported.
2. That the report be endorsed and comments be noted

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The Committee was referred to the work programme, which was set out on pages 103-106 of the agenda pack. Kiara Chatziioannou, the designated Scrutiny Officer for this Committee, informed Members of the contents of the agenda for the upcoming January meeting.

Following discussion by the Committee earlier in the meeting, the report of LCC's Lettings Strategy was added to the work programme. In addition, the Committee noted that the report on the Energy Options Analysis for Greater Lincolnshire be moved to the meeting in February 2023.

It was noted that an update on the Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland Framework would be added to 'items to be programmed' until a suitable date was identified.

RESOLVED

That the proposed work programme be approved, subject to the additions above.

The meeting closed at 12.50 pm