



Open Report on behalf of Andy Gutherson, Executive Director - Place

Report to:	Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Date:	28 November 2023
Subject:	Scrutiny Panel B - Agriculture Sector Supports in Lincolnshire Scrutiny Review – Executive Response and Action Plan

Summary

On 05 September 2023 the Executive received a report on Agriculture Sector Support in Lincolnshire which was prepared by Scrutiny Panel B, on behalf of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee. The Executive agreed to make arrangements to respond to the report by 05 November 2023. The Executive's response will:

1. Indicate which recommendations have been accepted; and
2. Where recommendations are accepted, to bring forward an action plan for their implementation.

Action Required

The Committee is invited to receive the Executive's response to the report and to agree a plan to monitor and scrutinise the implementation of the agreed recommendations.

1. Background

In February 2021, the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee identified support to farmers as a potential topic for a scrutiny review.

The Committee recognised the unprecedented change that the sector is experiencing and will continue to experience. Drivers for change include global forces such as international conflict, Covid-19 and climate change as well as national policy decisions such as leaving the Common Agriculture Policy and the intent of the Agriculture Policy to create churn and transition.

On 30 September 2021, the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee considered and approved the allocation of this review topic to Scrutiny Panel B.

The following key lines of enquiry for the scrutiny review were agreed by the Panel:

1. To examine ways of developing support to meet the unmet needs of the agricultural sector in Lincolnshire, including mental health and any hardships arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and the EU Transition.
2. To examine and review what skills and training provision is required for agricultural businesses, as well as to seek ways to disseminate best practice amongst these.
3. To consider ways of supporting/encouraging farms 'Going Green' (i.e., incentives for environmental improvements, reducing CO2 emissions etc.) in line with the Lincolnshire Green Masterplan.

On 05 September 2023 the Executive was invited to consider the report and assign responsibility to the relevant Executive Councillor(s) for responding to the report.

As part of its response, the Executive is requested to indicate to the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee which recommendations in the report are accepted.

Where recommendations are accepted, there is also a request for an action plan, showing what steps are being taken to implement the recommendations, with projected timescales, where possible. This will enable the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee to monitor the implementation of any actions arising from the report. The Executive Councillors and officers have met to establish the attached action plan. The Executive Councillors are keen to ensure that the Council has a leading role in shaping and supporting the Agriculture Sector of Lincolnshire for the future.

The Executive Councillors also noted the discussion at the Scrutiny Panel on the role that the County Councils Green Masterplan plays in helping to support the sector for the future.

The agriculture review has identified the importance of the Council setting a clear vision for its role in the future sustainability of the sector and of communicating that view to the Government, and key stakeholders including local partners, farmers, and the public.

The actions in the attached plan indicate the practical steps that will be taken, but the Executive Councillors were keen to ensure that the Council performs the role that it has in a collaborative, strategic manner by leadership, direction, and in a proactive way. The key principles that will be adopted in delivering the action plan are as follows:

Leadership statement – a clear statement to be prepared, and communicated to partners, setting out the Council's ambitions for the county's agricultural future and focusing on corporate priorities for the future, such as the Green Masterplan across the whole of the sector, and the contribution to low carbon targets.

Informed analysis of development - a commitment to improve and strengthen the way that departments across the whole of the Council advise the Executive on the cumulative impact of agricultural and farming development on the corporate ambitions of the Council; local

ward members to be supported in demonstrating how agricultural developments might impact on their area.

Communication – clarity in the way that we advise and support the sector and our tenant farmers, on opportunities, policies, and support available, finally there is also an opportunity to collectively raise the profile of the sector through flagship events and with national and local partners.

2. Conclusion

The Committee is requested to consider the attached Action Plan and agree a plan to monitor and scrutinise the implementation of the agreed recommendations.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Executive Response to Agriculture Sector Support – Scrutiny Review Action Plan Arising from Recommendations

5. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Report by Scrutiny Panel B on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board	https://lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s57082/5.0%20SPB%20-%20Agriculture%20Sector%20Supports%20Scrutiny%20Review%20Report-%20Cover%20Report.pdf (cover)
	https://lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s57083/5.1%20Appendix%20A%20-%20Scrutiny%20Panel%20B%20Final%20Report.pdf (report)

This report was written by Nicola Radford, Senior Commissioning Officer – Growth, who can be contacted on 07500 992115 or via email at Nicola.radford@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

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