

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 01 DECEMBER 2023

Statement from: Councillor Lindsey Cawrey - Executive Councillor for Fire & Rescue, Emergency Planning and Culture Services

LINCOLNSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE (LFR)

Operational Response

Once again, the service has had to deal with a variety of operational incidents in which our front-line responders have been tested to ensure they are resolved. The summer months proved to be quieter than last year as the county didn't experience the same levels of hot weather, however, we still attended a range of outdoor fires.

At the end of October and into early November, the recent storms have brought about some extreme weather, which has resulted in areas of Lincolnshire suffering from widespread flooding. The service has supported the community by providing messages of advice, standing up operational assets to standby at locations of higher risk and mobilising officers and appliances to inspect and remove flood water where suitable. These incidents which have been caused by environmental impacts continue to be a significant challenge to the service.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

The Service was one of the first services to be inspected as part of the first tranche of the third round of inspections made of fire and rescue services by HMICFRS. The visit was conducted over eight weeks in May and June of this year and had a significant impact upon the service in terms of supporting the inspection process.

The initial feedback received following the inspection appears to be largely positive, although as always, there will undoubtedly be areas for improvement identified by the inspectors. Overall, the inspectorate suggested that the service was moving in a positive direction.

The final report was due mid- to late-August once a moderation process, involving benchmarking against other inspections, had been completed, however it is understood that publication of the report will be delayed until the end of November.

Integrated Risk Management, Operational Support & Service Support

Our integrated risk management team have continued to develop the new Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) for 2024-2028. We have worked very closely with a risk profiling company, Operational Research in Health (ORH), to ensure that we have a focused understanding of the risks in Lincolnshire, and how our service can best meet the needs of our communities. The document is now in the design phase, and we are seeking to ensure that our communities have a variety of options to access and understand its content. This is an integral part of the rollout.

A contaminations group has now been established, following the ongoing release of information from the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and representative bodies regarding firefighter contamination and its effects. This also follows on from national research undertaken by the University of Central Lancashire, where the designation of firefighting is now recognised as a carcinogenic occupation by the World Health Organisation.

This group will be integral in the design of new firefighting Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), fire appliances (reference to the clean cab policy) and LFR properties to ensure we are able to mitigate the potential issues we face and keep our firefighters safe.

Work continues in our operational support department to ensure we have the right fleet and equipment in the right place, at the right time, to meet the risks we've identified in Lincolnshire. Projects are now underway to review the replacement of some of our fire appliances, the replacement of our fleet maintenance contract, a review of our current PPE in response to the impacts of climate change, the changing dynamics of the incidents we attend and contamination, as detailed above. A review of our current officer response vehicle provision is also underway.

The service support team, amongst their business-as-usual activities, are heavily involved in the fire control mobilisation project. This is an extensive piece of work that will provide a robust and future proofed solution regarding our ability to receive 999 calls and to mobilise assets to incidents. Pending approval, Phase 1 of this work will be completed by March 2025, with Phase 2 seeking to implement new station mobilising equipment and our fire appliance mobile data terminals (MDTs). The team are also working alongside our protection and prevention departments to scope out a new and improved management information system. This will provide a streamlined solution to the way we collect and utilise data, avoiding duplication and double keying.

The service support team are also working with the Information Management Team to assess the impact of the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) replacement programme, required to be fully implemented by December 2025. The identification of impact is crucial in ensuring we are able to maintain service delivery during this transition.

All three departments are working with the resourcing project team to identify how the structures of these teams may look in the future, to service the needs of LFR, Lincolnshire County Council and the communities we serve and protect.

People

The service continues to ensure that the recommendations contained within the London Fire Brigade Cultural review and within the HMICFRS culture and values spotlight report are actioned within our service.

We have also seen good progress with our activities outlined within our people framework, including a service-wide rollout of equality, diversity, and inclusion training. Earlier this quarter, we reviewed the pilot of our talent management process which saw over 100 individuals from across our organisation engage in a talent conversation. We have also seen employee voice grow, where we now have active participation in six staff networks.

We are making good progress with our review of staff structures to ensure we are making the best use of skills and that the service is capable of meeting future demands. This review has already seen the successful expansion of our Fire Protection team. All staff continue to receive meaningful and regular engagement on this project through management updates and newsletters.

Fire Protection

The team have continued to work hard to ensure we deliver against the Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP). A working group has been established to review the current risk methodology and we have been able to integrate partner datasets into RBIP, resulting in one comprehensive list of properties for inspection. We have seen an increase in the number of formal notices issued by fire safety inspectors, with actions being followed up with a consideration for prosecution.

Local policies and internal structures have been developed which has ensured that we are in line with legislative fire safety updates. Automated reporting mechanisms are now in place, allowing owners of high-rise and multi-occupied residential buildings to report issues that may impact on the safety of buildings. To date, we have received a number of updates via the reporting mechanism that has allowed support to be provided and required actions to be taken.

A positive recruitment process has allowed us to fill vacancies in the team that were created through individuals leaving the Service. We are monitoring the impact of these fire safety inspectors leaving, prioritising work and activities as required. A robust development process is in place with all new inspectors progressing well. Following Phase 1 of the internal resourcing project, we have successfully recruited into the managers' posts, which will allow us to continue to develop the capabilities and capacity of the team.

Fire Prevention

We have successfully updated our risk profiling process, and we are now able to identify and proactively target household-level risk. The process is aligned with our identified vulnerabilities and is a result of analysis of local and national datasets. The process has been rolled out across the Service with our community safety advocates and our operational crews utilising the updated process. A quality assurance exercise is being carried out to allow the validity of the profiling process to be confirmed. We have seen a significant increase in the number of Home Fire Safety Visits being carried out, with plans in place to further increase the outputs.

Following the introduction of the Serious Violence Duty, work has been carried out to review the impact for the prevention team and Service as a whole. The Duty is clear and places responsibility on Fire and Rescue Services to support the reduction of serious violence in their local areas. A gap analysis has been carried out and a delivery plan developed to outline how LFR will contribute to the wider agenda. In addition to activities within the Service, we are sitting on the Serious Violence Duty Core Priority Group, as part of the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership.

Supporting the development of the 2024-2028 CRMP, we have been reviewing the community risks and ensuring that we have robust plans in place to mitigate potential impacts. With home and road safety identified as priorities, we are now looking to take the lead on a county-wide water safety group. Terms of reference have been developed, with the second meeting of the group planned for November 2023.

EMERGENCY PLANNING AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY SERVICE

Emergency Planning & Business Continuity Service Storm Babet

October saw the first autumn storm of 2023, storm Babet. The team co-ordinated the multi-agency Lincolnshire Resilience Forum (LRF) response to both the initial impact and ongoing issues that arose consequently. Formal command structures were put in place and the County Emergency Centre was opened. Multiple areas were flooded or affected and several breaches and potential breaches to riverbanks occurred most notably in Horncastle, Wainfleet, Fiskerton and Coningsby, although many other areas were impacted.

Repairs to the bank of the River Witham in Fiskerton are going to take some time, and bespoke evacuation plans were developed for the village and for residents in Short Ferry to enable them to return to their properties whilst this work was carried out. The team are now actively working with these communities to assist them in developing their own community emergency plans. The UK government's Flood Recovery Scheme has also been enacted allowing residents to claim if their properties have been affected by flooding and meet the criteria.

Business Continuity Audit

During October 2023, Internal Audit carried out a full audit of LCC business continuity preparedness. Its objective was to assess the effectiveness and readiness of the council's business continuity management and delivery. The audit aimed to identify strengths, weaknesses, and any areas for improvement. It focused on looking at delivery, training, assessment and plans across different services. As this is a corporate risk, it gets a high profile with the Audit Committee.

We are audited every three years and, the last time this was conducted, we received substantial assurance. In preparation for this, the team have ensured that all area plans have been updated and validated through a series of tabletop exercises, an area highlighted during the last audit for some improvement. The final report is expected towards the end of November 2023.

Rest Centre Exercise 4 October 2023

The Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Service co-ordinated a live exercise on the Lincolnshire Coast on the 4 October 2023. This tested our capability to respond to an evacuation by setting up a rest centre and direct warning and informing through door knocking. The area chosen for the exercise was Sutton on Sea and Skegness, two community information evenings were held prior to the exercise to give residents further information and train volunteers who wanted to be involved. A similar exercise took place in Anderby with

great success a couple of years ago. These types of exercises are vital to ensure our plans remain fit for purpose and give us the opportunity to test in the field our new registration and mapping systems.

The exercise was well received by the community, and it was great to be able to work alongside our Community and Ready for Anything volunteers in the process.

Ready For Anything Volunteers

Following the challenges presented by the flooding in Lincolnshire in 2019, high profile incidents such as the Grenfell Tower fire and the Manchester Arena attack and more recently, the Coronavirus pandemic, the use of volunteers and embracing and channelling public goodwill, has never been more important. Through the Ready for Anything scheme, individuals can support emergency responders and communities during and after crisis. Lincolnshire Resilience Forum (LRF) has teamed up with North Yorkshire Resilience Forum to launch the scheme in Lincolnshire, building upon the outstanding achievements of their volunteers. Training is well underway in Lincolnshire, and volunteers have been deployed in the recent Storm Babet response. Further information and engagement sessions are being held over the next few months to recruit and train new volunteers.

Training & Exercises

Preparations continue for Exercise Imp which is next year's LRF multi-agency exercise. It is hoped to test our developing plans for the recovery from a Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear (CBRN) incident. The team will be leading this piece of work and co-ordinating the planning group. The team are also working closely with Lincoln City Football Club management team, as this will be the fictitious location for the incident, and they are keen to be involved with the exercise.

LRF Winter Campaign

Storm Babet served as a timely reminder that the LRF and our communities continually need to be prepared for extreme weather and flooding events as we move through the autumn and winter months. The Emergency Planning Chair and the LRF Warning & Forming group have been putting together practicable advice for the public. This year's campaign has been enhanced by the LRF's new website which saw a dramatic increase in traffic along with Facebook and Twitter/X social media accounts during storm Babet. The team continue to promote this site and hope that residents will use it as a trusted source of information both in peacetime and during emergencies.

The website was developed because of a successful bid for Cabinet Office innovation funding. To date, ten other Local Resilience Forums across the UK have actively adopted the website format and another four are currently working with the team to do the same. This project is held up as best practice and a positive example of how this funding scheme is not only benefitting individual LRFs but multiple LRFs.

CULTURE

Lincoln Castle wins VisitEngland's Gold Award

Now in their ninth year, VisitEngland's Accolades are designed to celebrate excellence within the visitor attraction sector and showcase those who go the extra mile to provide a high-quality day out.

Gold award status recognises those attractions that have scored highly across the board, and Lincoln Castle is one of only three venues in the whole of the East Midlands to receive the award this year.

Alongside our sister sites across the city and beyond, Lincoln Castle attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors and, in turn, supports the visitor economy of Lincoln and Lincolnshire. For a sector that is struggling to recover from the effects of the pandemic and an ongoing cost of living crisis, it's important we celebrate Lincoln Castle's success as an opportunity to entice more people to enjoy our beautiful county.

Lincoln Castle Illuminated

The magical and much-loved Christmas event will run from Friday 8 December until Saturday 23 December 2023, giving families and friends the perfect and unmissable opportunity to get into the festive spirit in the heart of Lincoln.

Visitors will be able to enjoy the castle grounds bejewelled with festive lights and illuminated Christmas features. The Illuminated Wall Walk will give visitors the chance to see this historical landmark sparkling with festive lights, and to take in the beautiful night-time views across the city and county.

This year will also feature a 'Mini Polar Express' alongside other traditional fairground rides to be enjoyed by the young and young at heart.

Sam Scorer: A Life in Fourteen Buildings Exhibition

28 October 2023 to 21 January 2024.

Sam Scorer is widely recognised as the most significant architect of post-war Lincolnshire, and this exhibition celebrates a local architect of national significance.

Through loans from the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Architectural Association and local, personal collections, the exhibition considers the main themes that are expressed through Scorer's work and that remain relevant to the designers of the contemporary built environment. These include envisioning the future through architectural design, architecture's relationship with the wider context and legacy-building. The exhibition also serves as a bridge between the past and the present.

Through the use of 3D and immersive models, you are invited to deepen your understanding of architectural processes - from concept to completion - and encouraged to reconsider your

relationship with your built environment through various activities; both within, and beyond, the Usher Gallery's walls.

Libraries – Summer Reading Challenge (SRC)

This year's Reading Challenge has been phenomenally busy and successful with over 3,600 children participating across the core and mobile libraries. This is a 16 per cent increase on 2022's actual and a nine per cent increase on the stretch target GLL had set. We also saw an 11 per cent increase in the number of children completing the challenge in 2023 compared to 2022. Nineteen of the Community Hubs ran the SRC this year, with a total of 556 children participating and 371 completing.

This year's sport and games theme provided ample opportunity for engaging staff run activities. We were delighted to also be able to link with a number of community sport initiatives and providers, resulting in additional activities such as yoga and karate taster sessions and visits by professional football players from Lincoln City Football Club. Over 100 activities were held across the 15 core sites that were attended by just over 4,000 people.

Libraries – Continuing To Grow

The library service has continued to thrive, with Quarter Two in particular exceeding pre-covid levels by 10 per cent and reporting an overall 16 per cent increase in visits, when compared to last year's figures; August seeing a 20 per cent increase on August last year, due to the Summer Reading Challenge. Digital issues continue to represent approximately 25 per cent of all issues. The new app, which launched in April 2023, has seen a total of 54,843 app launches across Quarter Two alone.

In summary, our customers continue to engage with the library service, whether this be through the physical library or through a digital offer, evidenced by a positive increase in issues per visit, and increased usage of our digital platforms; website visits have exceeded the target to date by 102 per cent.

Libraries continue to be a vital community asset across Lincolnshire, with a total of 1,590 hours between July and September. This success is largely down to the wide variety of community events and groups offered across the libraries. Community use across the libraries continues to include the independent readers and writers' group and local/family history societies, all of which continue to be popular.

Learning Award for the Museum of Lincolnshire Life

The Museum of Lincolnshire Life has gained the Sandford Award in recognition of its outstanding learning programme for schools, colleges and universities. The lead assessor commented on the "engaging active learning programme which makes use of the special aspects of the museum and presentation of its collection in room sets". They also spoke about their "imaginative family activities during the school holidays" and "inspirational visits for learners". This latest recognition builds upon our previous Sandford Award successes at Lincoln Museum and Lincoln Castle.

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