

**Questions to Council Under Rule 11 of the Constitution –  
Council 19<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

**1 Councillor Jill Makinson-Sanders to Councillors Adam Grist, Portfolio Holder for Market Towns and Rural Economy and Councillor Richard Fry, Portfolio Holder for Finance**

What is holding up the long awaited extension to Louth Industrial Estate? When will the infrastructure go in? Why was this not put forward for Levelling Up funding, given its capacity to create jobs, increase business rates and attract vibrant new industry into the area?

- A** *The Member has already recently been provided with a detailed response from Officers on this question, prior to submitting it again to Council.*

*The consented planning scheme has a significant funding deficit to provide the associated infrastructure works. The Council has been actively exploring potential bidding and/or investment opportunities to complete a viable funding package in order to commission the capital works. The Council is acutely aware of Levelling Up Fund opportunities and has made thematic submissions under previous Levelling Up Fund bidding rounds which provided a better fit to the eligibility criteria, successfully securing £8.1m of Government investment into our market towns under Round 2.*

**2 Councillor Ros Jackson to Councillor Graham Marsh, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Leisure and Culture, and Carbon Reduction**

There has been a lot of concern in Louth about the future of Charles Street Recreation Ground, and the fishing pond. Can you give an update please on the future of this amenity area, and how it will be maintained? How are meetings with Louth Town Council, local interest groups, and Magna Vitae progressing?

- A** *I can confirm that the Council is in ongoing discussions about the future potential operation of the site with one organisation currently, however, it would be inappropriate at this stage to suggest what the outcome of those discussions may or may not be.*

*Our ambition for the site is to see it provide a valuable, quality environment to the benefit of Louth residents, our wider community and visitors to the area and whilst we remain in negotiation, we will continue to ensure that as much of the site as possible remains accessible with some parts, such as the lake, needing to be kept secure.*

**3 Councillor Daniel Simpson to Councillor Graham Marsh, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Leisure and Culture, and Carbon Reduction**

When contacting the East Lindsey District Council by phone and getting no reply, there is the option to use a call back service. How much is the "call back" service costing East Lindsey District Council alone, annually and the cost to date since introduction.

- A** *The contact centre enhancement of 'call back in queue', was implemented on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023. Since its implementation up to the end of Q1 there have been 2161 successful call backs. This is where a customer, in the queue can select an option*

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*for a call back, disconnect their call but remain in the virtual queue until their virtual position in the queue has been reached, at which point the call is once again connected to the customer.*

*As this enhancement was built into the original contract, there are no additional charges for this concept and enhancement to the customer experience, of which there has been overwhelming positive feedback.*

*In terms of outbound call charges, we do not yet have the data to represent this, however we anticipate that outbound call charges either replicate those, when compared to last year, or are slightly reduced based on the call packages that we have built into the contract. This is based on the fact that before this enhancement was introduced, standard call charges were in place, along with manual interceptions of calls waiting. Intercepting calls, has been a practice used within Customer Contact for some time, to minimise call wait times for the contact centre, support the services performance objectives and support ongoing customer quality and satisfaction levels.*

### **4 Councillor Daniel Simpson to Councillor Graham Marsh, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Leisure and Culture, and Carbon Reduction**

What is the % of calls made to the East Lindsey District Council that finish up as a call back.

- A** *The call back solution, which is an enhancement to the new contact centre solution, was implemented on the 9<sup>th</sup> May. The number of call backs for East Lindsey, since its implementation, until the end of Q1 is 2161 and this equates to 10% of the calls. This feature has received fantastic feedback from customers and supporting an improved customer experience.*

### **5 Councillor Daniel Simpson to Councillor Graham Marsh, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Leisure and Culture, and Carbon Reduction**

About the phone call handled by Spalding reporting the said litter bin, I was asked at the end to rate the handling of the actual call on a scale of 1-5. My reply was nobody gets top marks, however the tenacity of the operator as to why it was important to achieve top marks, and if not, sort out why not, did earn her the 5 marks in the finish. Is there any merit in getting rid of some expensive management and letting the call operators run the job and should callers really be expected to rate a phone call.

- A** *Customer Satisfaction is a KPI measurement for Customer Contact. Since Covid, volumes of requesting customer satisfaction increased by 400%, in the absence of certain service provisions being removed and it was felt that it was more important than ever to gauge the experience and feedback from customers. All types of feedback, both positive and constructive help the service, ensure there is focus in the correct areas and to apply improvements where needed.*

*There are opportunities through the new contact centre solution, to apply alternative means of obtaining customer satisfaction in the future and remains on the plan for ongoing system development.*

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### **6 Councillor Daniel Simpson to Councillor Craig Leyland, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Affairs**

How many employees does the East Lindsey District Council employ directly ..... Not including those working across the partnership, not those employed by arms length companies eg Magna Vitae or Invest East Lindsey.

**A** *415 employees*

*392.1 is total FTE*

### **7 Councillor Daniel Simpson to Councillor Craig Leyland, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Affairs**

Reading Audit reports you get the impression that PSPS distances itself from Invest East Lindsey. What is the trading status of Invest East Lindsey in terms of financial soundness, profitability, and viability.

**A** *Invest East Lindsey is a going concern and the appointed accountants for the company have not raised any concerns with regards to this. Along with a lot of other companies it has been impacted upon by Covid/other factors and international events in terms of the delivery of its business plan.*

### **8 Councillor Daniel Simpson to Councillor Craig Leyland, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Affairs**

What monies to date have been advanced to Invest East Lindsey and are there any plans to advance more monies.

**A** *Breakdown of the advances are as follows:*

*Caravan Sales Loan £272,600*

*Caravan Hire Fleet £290,780 (balance now £268,951.51)*

*Caravan Hire Fleet Expansion Loan £1,100,000*

*Housing Development Loan £2,750,000 (balance now £2,250,000 and a further £1m expected to be repaid by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024)*

### **9 Councillor Daniel Simpson to Councillor Craig Leyland, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Affairs**

Rumours abound regarding the once profitable Kingfisher Caravan Park, a jewel in the asset portfolio of East Lindsey District Council. Exactly what is the present trading status of Kingfisher in terms of financial soundness, profitability, and viability.

**A** *I thank Councillor Simpson for his question; Kingfisher Caravan Park continues to make a surplus year on year; whilst that surplus has reduced significantly, its operation remains viable and profitable.*

### **10 Councillor Daniel Simpson to Councillor Craig Leyland, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Affairs**

With regard to the Kingfisher Park is there anything coming down the line that has the potential to incur costs to the East Lindsey District Council or require some reputation management.

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**A** *I thank Councillor Simpson for his question, as you may be aware, a legal challenge was lodged by the Kingfisher Owners Group against the Council in 2020; that challenge remains outstanding and our lawyers continue to press for it to be heard in the High Court; however, the position of the other side remains unacceptable to the Council and our lawyers are pressing for a Master to determine the course of the case.*

### **11 Councillor Andrew Leonard to Councillor Richard Fry, Portfolio Holder for Finance**

Outside the budgeted cost of the Hub, how much extra has been spent on storage and property not on the hub site but associated with the new premises.

**A** *I thank Councillor Leonard for his question; whilst £237,000 was spent remodelling Banovallum Court for such purposes, the cost associated with those works was all included within the HUB's total approved budgets.*

### **12 Councillor Andrew Leonard to Councillor Craig Leyland, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Affairs**

Allowing for the demise of many grasses that were planted and the short Allium bulb season that has finished outside at the front of the building, what else can we look forward to now.

**A** *I thank Councillor Leonard for his question, as I have advised previously, the planting scheme at the HUB is absolutely as we planned and I'm sorry that some don't appreciate the nature of the scheme that has been delivered.*

### **13 Councillor Andrew Leonard to Councillor Craig Leyland, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Affairs**

Why has renovation on the adjacent building not commenced yet.

**A** *I thank Councillor Leonard for his question, whilst a number of tentative options have been discussed informally, there are no current plans in hand for the asset; however, it's future will be fully reviewed in line with our newly adopted asset strategy.*

### **14 Councillor Andrew Leonard to Councillor Tom Ashton, Portfolio Holder for Planning**

How many planning applications currently submitted to this authority are out of time, assuming they are they particularly attributed to one officer and what are the reasons why?

**A** *Cllr Leonard,*

*Thank you for your question,*

*I can advise that of the 418 applications currently being considered; 41 of those are currently 'out of time' being beyond their statutory determination period and not currently subject of an agreed extension of time - This is less than 10% of all applications.*

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*Additionally it is possible for some of those 'out of time' to subsequently become 'in time' as a result of agreements with Applicants/Agents.*

*Those applications are attributed to the Council as Local Planning Authority, and are spread across the various case officers that we have. They are also for a range of different application types and complexity, each with their own issues. The reasons why each will be 'out of time' will be case specific. Whilst I note you have suggested that these are attributable to one un-named officer, I do not consider it relevant to name, or single out particular officers – particularly given the values and behaviours that this Council has adopted. The performance of an individual is an internal, service manager issue; the collective performance of the service is in my view the most pertinent for Members as it is that which we are measured against nationally.*

*In terms of reasons, there can be many reasons for this including but not limited to:*

- *Requests for additional or amended information*
- *Requests for scheme amendments to make unacceptable schemes acceptable*
- *S106 and Legal negotiations*
- *Awaiting determination by the Planning Committee following a 'call-in' request*
- *Awaiting determination by the Secretary of State on a 'call-in' based on legislation requirements*
- *Delays in responses from key consultees*
- *Resourcing pressures – including absence; Appeals; meetings/discussions etc*

*As Portfolio Holder I am fully aware of the current performance of our team; and I am pleased to say that we continue to perform positively against the national performance indicators in respect of both Speed and Quality of decision making. This is particularly important when I consider the challenges faced within many other authorities - some of which are at risk of designation by the Secretary of State; and the widely reported pressures of attracting and retaining planning professionals within local government.*

*I have no concerns in respect of the performance of the team. I would like to thank them for their continued hard work and dedication to determining applications efficiently; ensuring we make quality decisions in the context of the Local Plan; and supporting positive outcomes wherever possible.*

*Should you wish to discuss further with me privately, I would be happy to do so.*

### **15 Councillor Jill Makinson-Sanders to Councillor Richard Fry, Portfolio Holder for Finance**

What was the logic behind PS2 taking on all the financial functions of this council, leaving a Section 151 officer without a cohort of staff reporting to him/her? What other councils in this country have a Section 151 department that is similarly staffed?

- A** *The Council made a previous decision to outsource its finance function to PSPS Ltd based on a business case at that time.*

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*There a limited number of examples of outsourced finance functions across England. PSPS have recently commissioned CIPFA to carry out a review of the finance function and the Council is engaged in this process.*

### 16 **Councillor George Horton to Councillor Martin Foster, Portfolio Holder for Operational Services**

How often are each of the Playparks in Louth inspected for broken glass, dog mess and for grass cutting? Is the maintenance increased in the long school holiday to ensure families wanting to make the most of summer days are not put at risk?

**A** *Children's play areas are safety inspected, on a weekly basis.*

*Our Neighbourhood Service Operatives also attend the amenity sites and play areas - two, to three times per week, to empty the litter and dog bins (per schedule work instruction) and would clear broken grass and report wider issue with the site (grass cutting issues etc.) – back to their supervisor, if required.*

### 17 **Councillor Jill Makinson-Sanders to Councillor Graham Marsh, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Leisure and Culture, and Carbon Reduction and Councillor Adam Grist, Portfolio Holder for Market Towns and Rural Economy**

Louth's excellent publicly run Playgoers Theatre lost any Arts Council funding it had after the Lincoln organisation it was affiliated to failed to be granted support. It would appear Magna Vitae and Vital and Viable have not answered pleas for help. We have recently lauded theatrical efforts in Skegness and Spilsby and we don't want to lose this market town exemplar. So what can we do to help keep theatre alive and well in our largest market town?

**A** *The decision not to support the LOV network, which Louth Theatre was a member of, was an Arts Council England decision in line with their funding criteria. The funding requirements are available online here:*

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/npo/requirements-funded-organisations>

*East Lindsey District Council has adopted a Cultural Framework for Renewal – a strategy supported by Arts Council England. This led to the successful application to become a National Portfolio Organisation with funding for art and culture activities across the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership geography. This funding supports an activity plan with a set of outputs and outcomes that align with both our Cultural Framework and ACE criteria. The activity plan does include a programme of learning and mentoring opportunities, which will be accessible to art, culture and heritage organisations. East Lindsey District Council's place team have met and engaged with representatives from the Theatre, providing an update on the proposed NPO activity.*

*The ELDC Place team also lead the Vital & Viable programme, which has supported a range of activity and projects in Louth, highlighted in [the 2022/22 report](#). The Place team is continuing its V&V programme in Louth with a range of initiatives, including a new food and drink festival in October, [Wolds food map](#) and tourism promotion with a [recent feature in The Guardian](#).*

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### 18 Councillor George Horton to Councillor Martin Foster, Portfolio Holder for Operational Services

Following on to my recent call of nature in Skegness, I commend how clean and fresh the toilets were. However, charging 40p to use the facilities seems a little expensive for men who want to spend a penny. What is the actual cost to the authority for the maintenance of the toilets and is there any return to the council?

- A** *Danfo's annual management fee following the current 1 year contract extension is: £627,254 with of an estimated income return of between £250,000 - £300,000. Therefore, the income we receive directly reduces the management fee to around just over half the costs – enabling ELDC to offer award winning toilet facilities, at our busiest towns/tourist centres – at a more sustainable cost.*

*Ends*