

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview Committee held at the Hub, Mareham Road, Horncastle, Lincolnshire LN9 6PH on Tuesday, 17th October, 2023 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillor Fiona M. Martin, M.B.E. (Chairman)
Councillor Carleen Dickinson (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors Dick Edginton, Alex Hall, Neil Jones, James Knowles and Jill Makinson-Sanders.

Councillor Edward Mossop attended the Meeting as a Substitute.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

James Gilbert	- Assistant Director – Corporate
Suzanne Rolfe	- Group Manager – Insights and Transformation - Virtual
Colleen Warren	- Head of Finance, Public Sector Partnership Services Ltd
Rebecca James	- Scrutiny and Policy Officer
Lynda Eastwood	- Democratic Services Officer
Laura Allen	- Democratic Services Officer

42. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies were received from Councillors Claire Arnold, Billy Brookes and Stephen Evans.

It was noted that in accordance with Regulation 13 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, notice had been given that Councillor Edward Mossop had been appointed to the Committee in place of Councillor Robert Watson for this Meeting only.

N.B. Councillor James Knowles joined the Meeting at 10.04am

43. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (IF ANY):

At this point in the Meeting, Members were invited to declare any relevant interests. None were received.

44. MINUTES:

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 September 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

45. ACTIONS:

Members noted that the following Actions were now complete.

Actions from the Meeting held on 5 September 2023.

Action Nos. 32, 33 (b), 34 (a), 34 (b), 36, 37 (b), 38 (a), 38 (b), 39 (a), 39 (b), 40 (a) and 40 (b) – completed.

Comments were received as follows:

Action No. 33 (b) - 'Household Support Fund' 'A copy of the presentation will be circulated in the Members' Point Brief,' from the meeting held on 5 September 2023, page 67 of the Agenda refers.

A Member highlighted that communications could be improved and that the Household Support Briefing would work better if delivered face-to-face.

Action No. 36 - 'Health Scrutiny Committee (HSC) for Lincolnshire - Update', from the meeting held on 5 September 2023, page 67 of the Agenda refers.

A Member requested clarification in relation to Health Board and Committee appointments. It was confirmed that for the Health and Wellbeing Board there was only one representative for all District Councils, which was currently Councillor Richard Wright from North Kesteven District Council.

A Member highlighted concerns regarding the poor attendance for the Healthy Living Action Plan Meetings and queried if there was a follow-up action. The Scrutiny Officer explained that although the first meeting was poorly attended, another date was being arranged.

Action No. 40 (a) - 'Executive Council/Forward' 'Proposed disposal of ELDC land, Humberston Road, Tetney,' from the meeting held on 5 September 2023, page 68 of the Agenda refers.

A Member sought clarification whether the land at Tetney was to be used for Invest East Lindsey purposes. The Scrutiny Officer explained that it was on a list of potential sites for the Council to use or to invest, however it had been removed from the Forward Plan due to no proposals coming forward at this time.

Action No. 22 (c) - 'South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership Customer Strategy' 'An update on the Customer Experience Strategy Action Plan to be provided in six months,' from the meeting held on 25 July 2023, page 69 of the Agenda refers.

A Member reported that following meetings of the three Councils on the customer experience strategy, concerns were highlighted that customers' needs were not being addressed and customer feedback was still needed. James Gilbert, Assistant Director (Corporate) responded that information would be obtained on what consultations were taking place with

customers and a response would be provided to Members for the next Meeting.

A copy of the updated action sheet tabled at the Meeting is attached at Appendix A to the Minutes.

46. SUB-REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE SOUTH & EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS PARTNERSHIP:

The Chairman welcomed Suzanne Rolfe, Group Manager - Insights and Transformation to deliver a presentation to Members on the Draft Sub-Regional Strategy for the South & East Lincolnshire Council's Partnership (SELCP), pages 71 to 76 of the Agenda refer.

Members were advised that when the SELCP formed, the business case identified opportunities for greater alignment and closer working on a range of strategic issues that were common for each Council area within the sub-region. Since the existing Corporate Strategies for each of the Councils were reaching the end of their life, or were due for review, these would be replaced by the development of a Sub-Regional Strategy. Moving to a single Sub-Regional Strategy would cement the positive joint working between the three Councils and positioned the Partnership well for the future.

The draft Sub-Regional Strategy for the SELCP identified specific priorities where these were a matter of importance to one sovereign Council within the Partnership, pages 77 – 112 of the Agenda refer.

The emerging strategy had been developed by officers in consultation with Members. Consultation remained ongoing, with further Member input being sought before it was finalised and brought forward to Council for approval.

Members were invited to put their comments and questions forward.

- A Member queried where the vision was for taking the overarching strategy through to the next generation and up to 2050, when a more robust strategy would be needed to tackle serious problems, such as defending the district's coastline. In response, the Group Manager - Insights and Transformation stated that elements were already included in the strategy for the coast as an environmental priority, and it was hopeful that the final document would encapsulate long term visions.
- A Member referred to the consultation with Parish Councils and sought clarification on the timeline to ensure they were able to respond. In response, the Group Manager - Insights and Transformation confirmed the consultation had been sent out to Parish Councils, with most meeting in October or November. The aim was to continue working with Parish Clerks to ensure the

meeting dates could be accommodated and to obtain the comments in time.

- A Member further highlighted the significant issues of coastal erosion, rising sea levels and the need to protect the Council's assets, including the Council's commitment to repair and maintain these, page 111 of the Agenda refers. In response, the Group Manager - Insights and Transformation stated that these issues were expected to be included in the investment plan for the coast as part of local priorities, and feedback would be provided to those who were involved in shaping the plan.
- A Member expressed dissatisfaction that the rural inland areas of East Lindsey should not be dismissed only as being dominated by agriculture, also stating that Market Towns were the backbone of inland areas and deserved greater involvement and consultation.
- A Member highlighted issues with accessing the consultation weblink which may discourage users from participating. In response, the Group Manager of Insights and Transformation confirmed that the issue would be addressed to ensure the link was more accessible.
- A Member sought clarification whether the Sub-Regional Strategy would return to the Overview Committee or go straight to the Executive Board. In response, the Group Manager - Insights and Transformation confirmed that it would be presented to the Executive Board following further meetings with groups who had not yet had the opportunity to comment. In follow-up, the Assistant Director (Corporate) clarified that it was for Council approval on this document and Executive Board was making the recommendation to Council.

No further comments or questions were received.

The Chairman thanked the Group Manager - Insights and Transformation for her presentation and stated she would look forward to receiving a progress report at the next meeting.

47. BUDGET SETTING PROCESS 2024/25:

The Chairman welcomed Colleen Warren (PSPS) Head of Finance (Client) to provide an introduction and present Members with an update on the 2024/2025 Budget Setting Process.

Members received a presentation (a copy is attached at Appendix B to the Minutes), following which Members were invited to put their comments and questions forward.

- A Member requested clarification on Section 113 of the Local Government Act. In response, the Assistant Director (Corporate) explained that Section 113 allowed local authorities to share its workforce. For example, the role of Assistant Director (Corporate) was shared between the three Councils across the Partnership and the salaries were apportioned between them, whilst overall employment was maintained by East Lindsey District Council.
- A Member requested an update on Internal Drainage Board (IDB) levies. In response, the Assistant Director (Corporate) provided an update that the Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate Development) and Section 151 Officer was currently in London speaking at the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Sustainable Flood and Drought Management at the invitation of the Association of Drainage Authorities. Local authorities continued to face challenges due to the funding mechanism and IDB costs. At present the Council were trying to secure a meeting with the Treasury to enable further discussions, and an update was expected from the Local Government Association on whether a request for a Special Interest Group (SIG) was successful. Early indications was that the LGA would endorse the SIG and a 15-member group to be established who would elect a Chairman at its first meeting early in November. Conversations would continue and more authorities had signed up and wanted to be part of the SIG. A meeting was scheduled with the Lincolnshire and Welland Drainage Boards, and more councils were being encouraged to become part of the group.
- A Member requested clarification on the role of Head of Finance (Client) and queried how many officers worked directly for PSPS. In response, the Assistant Director (Corporate) explained that within PSPS there were accountants for PSPS finances and accountants for client finances, with ELDC being the clients as a Council. The Section 151 Officer was the Client Lead and was employed by South Holland District Council and shared across the three councils. The Section 151 Officer was responsible for the finances across the three authorities.
- A Member queried how financial success was measured for job roles such as those working in Environmental Services. In response, the Head of Finance (Client) stated that schemes were set up on the basis of full cost recovery. At the end of the financial year, the measure was to establish if the income targets had been met or to offset all or some of the costs.
- In relation to salary costs, a Member queried what percentage of the total budget was made up from salaries and how that compared with other councils with similar demographics. In response, the Head of Finance (Client) stated that although comparisons were not specifically performed, experience of other local authorities would reflect a similar percentage, varying between 90 and 92% of the

overall budget. Staffing would always be the biggest part of the budget for a local authority.

- A Member stated their recognition of the challenges faced by the finance team in relation to the short-termism of planning and predicting the Council's finances.

N.B. Councillor Dick Edginton left the Meeting at 11.22am

In response, the Head of Finance (Client) explained that there was always a level of uncertainty when building budgets and assumptions could be wrong. The main challenge faced was building budgets with a level of accuracy.

N.B. Councillor Dick Edginton returned to the Meeting at 11.26am

- A Member highlighted concerns with cutting staff numbers and queried the need for the large number of assistant directors at the higher level. In response, the Assistant Director (Corporate) stated he was not aware of recruitment requests being refused for replacing existing posts, and that the workforce was not currently shrinking. There were positive improvements from sharing several contracts across the partnership enabling money to be saved. For example, a shared mobile phone contract which had been secured would save circa £0.25m over three years. Aligning more contracts for all three councils would enable savings to continue.
- A Member queried the increase in audit fees and the financial impact for the Council. In response, the Head of Finance (Client) advised that the reason for the price increase was due to underpricing of the contract that was originally agreed five years ago. The prices had now increased to rebalance the underpricing with a 100-150% increase in audit fees expected for next year. Audits that did not complete in time were still outstanding, and that had created additional work. Highlighting the example of pensions, further work had been required to reopen the accounts and update the pensions. Resubmitting the accounts has impacted on the finance department which in turn had impacted on work for the current financial year.

Additionally, there had been a greater emphasis on valuations during audits, which had become more challenging every year. Valuations for the asset register were previously on a rolling five-year programme and there was now a yearly market or impairment review which required additional work. Both pensions and valuations had shown a significant impact on revenue and the balance sheet, and annual changes continued to create additional pressures.

- A Member queried if being a debt free authority made a difference to the audit and valuation process. In response, the Head of

Finance (Client) confirmed that the debt did not make a difference to the level of valuation work. Properties were the majority of the local authority's assets and the auditors would especially want to look at and verify everything in depth to ensure everything was correct.

- A Member enquired if there were any comments or concerns in relation to Kingfisher Caravan Park. In response, the Head of Finance (Client) stated that issues had been identified around income generation and in the valuation of assets which had impacted upon the 2021-2022 accounts. The auditors were currently challenging the Council's valuation methods. The difficulty was establishing whether the caravans were valued as investment property, or as Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE) which would be valued at resale value.
- A Member queried if the Council would be cutting back on how much funding was provided to Magna Vitae. In response, the Assistant Director (Corporate) stated it would depend on the contract that was negotiated and approved. Finance would be involved in the process, but it would not be performing scrutiny of the Magna Vitae contract as that would rest with the Council.

N.B. Councillor Neil Jones left the Meeting at 11.40am

Further to a discussion on specific areas that might impact on the 2024/25 budget, a Member highlighted waste management and car parking, following which it was agreed that the Committee would invite Councillor Martin Foster, Portfolio Holder for Operational Services to the next meeting.

N.B. Councillor Neil Jones returned to the Meeting at 11.42am

48. HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR LINCOLNSHIRE - UPDATE:

The Chairman referred Members to the briefing papers from Councillor Jill Makinson-Sanders, the Outside Body Appointee to the Health Scrutiny Committee (HSC) for Lincolnshire following its Meetings held on 13th September 2023 and 4th October 2023, pages 113 to 120 of the Agenda refer.

The Outside Body Appointee advised Members that there was a consultation currently taking place regarding hospitals in North Lincolnshire, particularly services at the Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital in Grimsby. Participation in the consultation is being considered by the HSC and individuals are encouraged to join. It was important to ensure East Lindsey residents had the same level of service at hospitals outside of the district and they had good representation to ensure an equal level of care.

No further comments or questions were received.

The Chairman thanked the Outside Body Appointee for her contribution on reporting back from the HSC.

Following which it was,

RESOLVED:

That the Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire briefing papers be noted.

49. UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY AND POLICY PANELS INCLUDING QUALITY CHECKING OF FINAL REPORTS:

(a) Update - To monitor the implementation of Magna Vitae's 5-year plan, including Key Performance Indicators:

Rebecca James, Scrutiny and Policy Officer referred Members to the briefing paper, pages 121 to 122 of the Agenda refer.

Members were advised that the panel had convened three meetings to date and had a clear idea of what information they required. The next meeting was to be held in November at the Embassy Theatre in Skegness.

(b) Update - To review the running of Invest East Lindsey Limited, with a particular focus on Kingfisher Caravan Park:

Rebecca James, Scrutiny and Policy Officer referred Members to the briefing paper, pages 123 to 124 of the Agenda refer.

Members were advised that the panel had convened three meetings to date and was progressing with speakers on planned topics during October and November.

(c) Update - To consider Public Convenience Provision in East Lindsey:

Rebecca James, Scrutiny and Policy Officer referred Members to the briefing paper, pages 125 to 126 of the Agenda refer.

Members were advised that the panel had convened three meetings to date and had received reports from the Assistant Director - Neighbourhoods, the Neighbourhood Services Manager and the Portfolio Holder for Operational Services. A panel only discussion was planned for its next meeting to be held on 23rd October 2023.

(d) Joint Scrutiny Panels Update:

Rebecca James, Scrutiny and Policy Officer referred Members to the briefing paper, pages 127 to 128 of the Agenda refer.

Annual Scrutiny of Partnership

It was confirmed that Councillor George Horton was to become the permanent representative on the panel in place of Councillor Claire Arnold.

No further comments or questions were received.

50. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION TRACKER:

Members were referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker, pages 129 to 140 of the Agenda refer.

Members were invited to review the tracker and to put their comments and questions forward.

Overview Standing Reference Group – Sutton on Sea Colonnade Project.

Recommendation No 1, 'To recognise the need to make Caravan Enforcement a priority for new Council, with the first priority dealing with the issue of unauthorised occupancy and to review and strengthen licence conditions,' page 133 of the Agenda refers.

Further to the update relating to recognising and prioritising Caravan Enforcement, a Member commented that the unauthorised running of businesses at caravan sites needed to be a top priority when reviewing licencing conditions. It was agreed that this issue would be referred to the Enforcement Manager as a suggestion to be added to the licencing conditions.

Recommendation No 6, 'Review the findings of the Capacity Grid operation undertaken on behalf of the council in 2018-19 and make recommendations in the light of this review,' page 136 of the Agenda refers.

Further to the update regarding the findings of the review undertaken by Capacity Grid on behalf of the Council, a Member queried why specific information requested was not provided. In response, the Scrutiny Officer advised that although Capacity Grid worked within the brief provided to them, the data collection method did not allow them to go back and breakdown different areas of information, for example to obtain specific information on caravans.

Recommendation No 10, 'ELDC will consider the feasibility of returning to house building/mixed stock holding to balance and influence our local market,' page 140 of the Agenda refers.

The Scrutiny Officer relayed an update from the Assistant Director - Strategic Growth and Development that the Council had recently agreed to take part in a Local Authority Housing Fund Scheme providing nine new properties for long term investment, with £1m in funding for temporary accommodation, including registering as a provider of social housing. It

was confirmed that feasibility was considered as part of the process with further information to be reported back to the next meeting.

No further questions or comments were received.

51. EXECUTIVE/COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN:

Members were presented with the Executive/Council Forward Plan 2023-24, pages 141 to 148 of the Agenda refer and were invited for their comments.

'Approval of the award and spend of funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund,' page 141 of the Agenda refers.

A Member highlighted some of the challenges with completing the paperwork for the Shared Prosperity Fund. It was agreed that feedback would be passed on to assist with improving the process.

No further comments or questions were received.

Following which it was,

RESOLVED:

That the Executive/Council Forward Plan 2023-24 be noted.

52. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The programmed date for the next Meeting of this Committee is Tuesday 28 November 2023.

The Meeting closed at 12.03 pm.