

Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Board held in The Hub, Mareham Road, Horncastle, Lincolnshire LN9 6PH on Wednesday, 14th February, 2024 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Craig Leyland (Chairman)

Councillors Graham Marsh, Tom Ashton, Sarah Devereux, Martin Foster, Richard Fry and William Gray.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Christine Marshall	- Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate Development) and S151 Officer
Adrian Sibley	- Deputy Chief Executive, Programme Delivery and SIRO
Christian Allen	- Assistant Director - Regulatory
Andy Fisher	- Assistant Director - General Fund Assets
James Gilbert	- Assistant Director - Corporate
Emily Spicer	- Assistant Director, Wellbeing and Community Leadership
Colleen Warren	- Head of Finance, Public Sector Partnership Services Ltd
Stuart Leafe	- Strategic Finance Manager
Ann Good	- Democratic Services Manager
Elaine Speed	- Senior Democratic Services Officer and Civic Officer

57. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Grist and Kirk.

58. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (IF ANY):

No disclosures of interest were received.

59. MINUTES:

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10th January 2024 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

60. ACTION SHEETS:

The Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate Development & S151 Officer) confirmed all complete or in hand.

61. ANNUAL BUDGET REPORT 24/25 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY, CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND CAPITAL STRATEGY,

TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN:

A report was presented to enable consideration of the Annual Budget Report 2024/25, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Capital Programme and Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Policy and Annual Delivery Plan.

Attached to the report was the final detail of the 2024/25 budget, the 5-year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) from 2024/25 to 2028/29, Capital Programme, Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Policy, Treasury Management Strategy, MRP Policy and Annual Investment Strategy for 2024/25. The report also included the recommended level of Council Tax for 2024/25, considering the pressures including that of the IDB levy. This detailed the efficiencies required to support the MTFS. Executive Board was asked to consider the budget and associated appendices for referral onwards to Full Council. It was noted that the Pay Policy Statement would be dealt with separately.

Preparation for the budget had been a detailed process involving officers and the attached appendices reflected the latest known position and the report set out the basis for the final budget and MTFS for the next 5 years and assumptions used in its development. The Portfolio Holder added that the budget had been through a consultation process, shown at Appendix 6 to the report presented with positive acceptance ratings for projects the Council aspired to deliver.

The major changes and key pressures included within the proposed budget were as follows:

- A pay award for 2023/24 was agreed in November of 2023, being an uplift of up to 9.42% for the lowest paid through to 3.88% for those on the highest bands.
- For 2024/25 a 3.5% increase had been assumed with this moving to 3% for 2025/26 and 2.5% for 2027 onwards.
- The pension contributions would be 23.8% in 2024/25, and the pension contribution rate was assumed to stay at 23.8% throughout the life of the medium term financial strategy.
- The return on cash investment reflected recent increases to the Bank of England base rates, which had increased significantly from the recent historic low levels. A further meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee on the 1st of February 2024 had held the rate at 5.25%.
- Electricity and gas costs had been based on actuals for 2024/25, vehicle fuel costs had been based on 2023/24 actuals and current fuel prices.
- An increase in the internal drainage board levy.

- Increased contract and service costs were similarly a feature of the budget, albeit officers and members were working closely to seek to manage these implications and impacts, and which included increased demand for homelessness support, external audit fees and PSPS administrative contract increase.

With regards to council tax and business rates, the previous MTFS committed to a Council tax increase in line with the maximum allowed under the recent local government settlement. For East Lindsley District Council in 2024/25 this was £4.95 being a 3.06% per increase, and for band D properties generated an additional income of £370,000. The increase was reflected throughout the life of the MTFS.

Further information relating to Council Tax and Business Rates was provided at Paragraph 3 of the report presented.

The Local Government Settlement was provided at Paragraph 4 of the report presented and the main points were highlighted as:

- The Funding Guarantee had replaced the Lower Tier Services Grant;
- The Revenue Support Grant had been increased;
- Local Government Funding Reform;

With regard to the IDBs, paragraph 5 detailed substantial increases on previous years due to the extensive use of power and fuel for the activities these organisations undertook very necessarily along with other pressures. The 2024/25 IDB costs had been estimated at £5.3 million. The Council was liaising with the Boards to limit future increases where possible, however, with the pressures from power costs being experienced, particularly standing charges, in addition to pay pension, worsening weather events and contract inflation, this was proving impossible. Representations had been and continued to be made to government due to the substantial loss of income to this Council and others and a special interest group had been set up to lobby in respect of this matter.

Turning to the capital programme for 2024/25 to 2028/29, the Capital Programme included in Appendix One was subject to final editions and other announcements that may be received by the time of publication. A final version of the programme would be presented to Council on the 28th of February 2024 for approval if required.

As regards to reserves, the General Fund specific reserves were budgeted to increase by £468,000 in 2024/25. This was predominantly linked to financing the capital programme offset by the NNDR surplus, this figure will be adjusted once the outturn for 2023/24 was known.

With regards to balancing the budget, the following areas had been considered as part of the budget setting process in the short term:

- The use of reserves for invest to save initiatives;

- Continued work to engage on the internal drainage board finance challenge;
- Review of all new pressures and reserve and service budgets to consider efficiency opportunities and alternative options;
- Commercialisation opportunities;
- Alternative service delivery.

In the medium term, the Council would work with PSPS in terms of its transformation plans for the future to help finance contract cost pressures, driving transformational change using the Southeast Lincolnshire Council's Partnership Sub Regional partnership as a driver for innovation and efficiency, reviewing all assets to maximise income and efficiency of use, delivering and supporting economic growth and the review of fees and charges in light of inflationary cost increases where appropriate.

Detailed efficiency and transformation plans were being put together for consideration in order to facilitate delivery and to align constitutions across the South and East Lincolnshire Council's partnership and in addition to providing a written list of ease for the implementation of funding streams, it was proposed that some changes were made as part of the budget setting, decision making process and these were set out in Appendix 7.

In respect of additional considerations, it was proposed that Executive Board recommended that full Council reaffirmed its previous decision in respect to the long term empty homes, empty properties detailed in Appendix 1 and approved the introduction of the premium for substantially furnished with no resident, (second homes) to be introduced at the earliest time, 1st April 2025.

With regard to Fees and Charges, it was proposed that due to continued significant inflationary pressures to include an annual RPI uplift in all fees and charges where applicable.

As regards the Annual Delivery Plan, the South and East Lincolnshire Council's partnership annual delivery plan shown in Appendix 5 identified the planned programme of work for the partnership and sovereign Councils for 2024/25, drawing on the previously approved partnership work programme, as well as wider opportunities identified.

Finally, areas for priority investment and consultation. Some particular areas of investment and which were for consultation had been identified by Members including:

- Market towns and rural areas
- Driving and supporting economic growth
- Supporting the delivery of affordable housing
- Supporting the vulnerable
- Supporting healthy living
- Decarbonisation and continued investment in green initiatives
- Invest to save projects.

A new corporate priorities reserve had been established to facilitate the delivery of these areas of focus.

The Portfolio Holder highlighted support for the creation of a new updated and modernised car parking area in Sutton on Sea to compliment the new Colonnade development. This would form an additional report to Executive Board once details were confirmed. Finally, the Portfolio Holder extended his thanks to officers involved in the budget preparation.

The recommendations were duly proposed and seconded.

During discussion Members fully supported the recommendations

RESOLVED

That the following recommendations be approved for onward referral to Full Council on 28th February 2024:

1. That the Revenue Estimates for the General Fund and Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2024/25 – 2028/29 (Appendices 1, 1a and 1b) be approved.
2. That the Council Tax for a band D property in 2024/25 be set at £166.59 (a £4.95 per annum increase on 2023/24 levels) and be approved.
3. That the additions to and use of reserves (as detailed at Appendix 1) be approved.
4. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (at Appendix 1) be approved.
5. That the Capital Programme and Capital Strategy (Appendices 1 and 2) be approved, including the addition of £400,000 into the capital programme funded by the Corporate Priorities reserve for the Sutton on Sea Paddling Pool.
6. That the Treasury Management Policy 2024/25 (Appendix 3a) and Treasury Management Strategy, including the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy and Annual Investment Strategy 2024/25 (Appendix 3b) be approved.
7. That the proposed Fees and charges as set out in Appendix 4 be approved.
8. That the Annual Delivery Plan for 2024/25 (Appendix 5) be approved.
9. That the results of the Budget Consultation process at Appendix 6 be noted.

10. That the alignment of constitutional financial limits across the partnership (Appendix 7) be approved.
11. That Council be recommended to reaffirm its previous decision in respect of long term empty properties determined in Appendix 1, and determines the introduction of the premium for substantially furnished with no residents (second homes), to be introduced at the earliest point 1st April 2025.

Reasons:

To comply with the budgetary and policy framework and legislative requirement.

Other options:

No other options were considered.

62. FUNDING FOR GOOD HOMES ALLIANCE PILOT:

A report was presented to enable consideration of the use of Better Care / Disabled Facilities Grant funding received from Lincolnshire County Council to fund and host the Lincolnshire Good Homes Advice & Casework pilot.

This report presented a summary of the partnership project between the Centre for Ageing Better (CFAB), Lincolnshire County Council and Lincolnshire District Councils to develop a Good Home Alliance (GHA) in Lincolnshire.

It also explained how elements of the Alliance were being progressed and recommended support was given to progress the project's themes, specifically funding East Lindsey District Council's contribution to and hosting of a 2-year advice and casework pilot service across Lincolnshire that is central to the approach.

During his introduction the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Better Ageing referred to the Centre for Better Ageing, Lincolnshire County Council and all Lincolnshire District councils working together to support more people to improve the condition of their homes to help improve health and wellbeing. This project brought together Lincolnshire's ambition to support people to live independently, stay connect and have greater choice in where and how they lived.

This was focused on the development of a Good Home Alliance in Lincolnshire to provide a local public facing hub providing access to information and advice, finance schemes and a range of home improvement services.

It was estimated a pilot of four case workers would provide advice and support for up to approximately 1500 referrals each year, the service to be established in a sustainable way to meet identified needs. Full details of the Good Home Alliance pilot were set out within Section 2 of the report.

The pilot funding contributions were shown at Table 1 to paragraph 2.7 of the report.

Following which, it was confirmed that six of the seven districts involved were now confirmed. Thanks were expressed to those officers involved and Members fully supported the recommendations.

RESOLVED

1. That the additional allocation of £177,969 Better Care / Disabled Facilities Grant funding for 2023/24 received from Lincolnshire County Council be accepted;
 - a. That the use of £112,844 to contribute funding to a 2-year Good Home Alliance Advice & Casework pilot, funded via contributing Lincolnshire District Councils and County Council be approved; and
 - b. The use of £65,125 remaining additional BCF/DGF funding for 2023/24 to support the delivery of DFG and, where appropriate, Discretionary Housing Financial Assistance be approved.
2. That the hosting of the proposed 2-year Advice and Casework pilot on behalf of the Good Home Alliance funding authorities, inclusive of the recruitment of up to four (4) 2-year fixed term Advice and Casework Officers (in line with available funding) and the retention of the existing Healthy and Accessible Homes (Housing) Lead role for 2 years be approved; and

That subject to the Executive Board approval of recommendations 1 and 2 above, the Executive Board recommends that:

3. That Full Council be recommended to accept £340,965 funding from Lincolnshire County Council to fund the 2 year pilot service, inclusive of the £112,844 ELDC contribution; and

That subject to the receipt of additional external funding contributions, that the Executive Board recommends that:

4. That Full Council be recommended to delegate approval to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership and Portfolio Holder for Communities and Better Ageing, to accept up to £145,035 in additional external funding contributions to support the delivery and expansion of the Advice and Casework pilot throughout 2024/25 - 2026/27. Bringing the total available funding for the 2-year Advice and Casework pilot to £486,000 across 2024/25 – 2026/27.

Reasons:

A Good Home Alliance advice and casework pilot would help our residents, especially owner-occupiers who are older and vulnerable, to maintain their homes. This will benefit our community's health and wellbeing and should lead to considerable cost saving to the public purse. Additionally the

Centre for Ageing Better will continue to work with Lincolnshire Councils to fund an evaluation of the pilot. This will provide invaluable information and evidence on the benefits of the service to residents, the savings to the public purse and other operational learning to support the service being permanently delivered.

Lincolnshire County Council support the use of this additional Better Care / Disabled Facilities Grant funding to support the Good Home Alliance advice and casework pilot as set out within section 2 of this report.

The additional funding's purpose is to support the delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants and where appropriate Discretionary Grants.

Other options:

1) To allocate the total additional Better Care Funding (BCF) / Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding for 2023/24 received from Lincolnshire County Council to support the delivery of DFGs and where appropriate, Discretionary Housing Financial Assistance.

This option does not deliver against the ELDC commitment to support the delivery of identified actions within the Lincolnshire Homes for Independence Blueprint for people to live independently, stay connected and have greater choice in where and how they live.

This option does not support the continued development of the work that has been undertaken between the Centre for Ageing Better (CfAB), Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) and all Lincolnshire District councils to deliver against a key recommendation of the CfAB Good Home Inquiry "-placing a duty on local authorities to ensure every authority has a local 'Good Home Agency', a public-facing hub providing access to information and advice, finance schemes, and a range of home improvement services including maintenance and repair, accessibility adaptations and energy retrofit"

2) Development of a specific 'Good Home' information and signposting website only.

This option only partially delivers against the recommendations of the CfAB Good Home Inquiry, and risks leaving vulnerable residents without access to necessary support where they lack the capacity or capability to resolve identified housing condition related issues for themselves.

This option is also not recommended as there will still be a requirement for continued support and development to ensure the web-based resource remain up to date and of value and does not allow for a period of testing and ongoing refinement post site launch.

3) Host the Good Home Alliance Advice and Casework pilot within an alternative Authority, or delivery partner.

This option is not recommended at present due to the pilot nature of the service, available timescales to deliver and evaluate the pilot activities, and other recommissioning activities underway across the County.

ELDC is identified as the recommended host authority due to the level of funding being contributed by ELDC, representing 23% of the total 2-year funding, and the wider South and East Councils Partnership (SELCP) contributing almost 40% of the total proposed pilot funding.

A full options appraisal is included at Appendix 1 for other identified hosting options, including:

- LCC or other District Hosted
- Voluntary Sector Hosted
- Wellbeing Service Hosted (note – this option remains a potential preferred option following evaluation and ongoing service delivery recommendations)
- Do nothing.

63. PERFORMANCE AND GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK - QUARTER 3 MONITORING REPORT 2023/24:

A report was presented to bring together information relating to the Council's Performance and Governance Framework at the end of Quarter 3 2023/24 (as at December 2023).

During his introduction of the report the Leader of the Council advised that Portfolio Holders would be aware of any performance issues.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning was pleased to note that Planning showed a set of positive indicators.

RESOLVED

That the performance and risk information contained within the report and appendices be noted.

Reasons:

To monitor delivery of performance and governance objectives and to support future planning and decision making within the Council.

Other options:

Alternative reporting arrangements.

64. REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 - PARTNERSHIP POLICY:

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Leisure and Culture, and Carbon Reduction presented a report was that sought Executive Board

approval for the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000 - Partnership Policy. The Policy brought together the previous Joint RIPA Policy at East Lindsey District Council and Boston Borough Council with the South Holland District Council RIPA Policy to create a single RIPA Policy for the Partnership.

The new Partnership Policy sought to align and harmonise current practice and procedures across the three Councils and to bring RIPA related arrangements up to date with current guidance issued by the Home Office and the Investigatory Powers Commissioners Office (IPCO), the regulatory body that oversees compliance with RIPA by public bodies.

The output of this work was detailed at Appendix A to the report and Executive Board was asked to consider for approval the adoption of the policy for East Lindsey District Council. The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Leisure and Culture and Carbon Reduction highlighted a statement from the IPCO at paragraph 2.5 of the report that detailed ongoing compliance with the RIPA 2000.

During discussion Members supported the recommendations.

RESOLVED

1. That the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000 - Partnership Policy be approved.
2. That the Assistant Director Regulatory / Senior Responsible Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, be granted delegated authority to make such amendments to this policy as may from time to time be required in order to (i) reference any links or amended links to other documents as may be required; and (ii) reflect any issues over which the Council has no discretion including, but not limited to, references to any legislative changes and amended guidance. Any material amendments to the policy will be subject to the usual approval process in line with the Constitution.

Reasons:

To ensure that Members are aware of the duties imposed on the Council by the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and the requirement to adopt a Policy that is up to date, relevant and fit for purpose.

Ensuring Members are informed about RIPA activity, policy and procedures demonstrates good governance and an organisational commitment to the obligations imposed by RIPA on public bodies.

Other options:

Retain joint arrangements with Boston or adopt independent, sovereign policy to meet the obligations imposed by RIPA on East Lindsey District Council.

Neither of these options has not been explored as economies of scale, efficiencies and shared learning can be optimised by harmonising our approach to RIPA across the Partnership. This sub regional approach also accords with the objectives set out in the Memorandum of Agreement and the Business Case for the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership.

65. SOUTH & EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL'S PARTNERSHIP CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY:

A report was presented to consider adoption of the South and East Lincolnshire Council's Partnership Customer Experience Strategy and to commit to supporting the delivery of the vision, principles and approach to customer experience across Council Services.

During his introduction the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Leisure and Culture, and Carbon Reduction referred to the provision of a customer experience that was simple, effective and customer focused and ensured access to the many services that were offered. One of the key principles to achieving this vision was to understand our communities and customers, and how their changing needs informed service provision, now and into the future. The Strategy set out the outcomes sought over the next four years as:

- An organisational culture that was customer focussed
- A simple, effective and positive customer experience
- Support that meets our customer's needs

Success would be monitored through the South and East Lincolnshire Partnership Customer Experience Board which would have oversight of the strategy, associated action plan and appropriate performance indicators.

During discussion Members fully supported the recommendation.

RESOLVED

That the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership Customer Experience Strategy be adopted and a commitment given to supporting the delivery of the vision, principles and approach to Customer Experience across Council services.

Reasons:

The Strategy is an overarching document, developed by the Customer Experience Board with engagement with local stakeholders. It gives a framework and objectives to use to further develop consistent approach across Council services.

It demonstrates a clear commitment to shared objectives to improving Council staff and services engagement with our 'customers'.

Other options:

N/A

66. SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL'S COMMUNITY LOTTERY - ONE YEAR PROGRESS:

The Portfolio Holder for Partnerships presented to provide an overview of the first year of the South and East Lincolnshire Community Lottery Scheme.

This report was brought forward to give Members an overview on activity over the last year relating to the community lottery since its initial launch and how it had met its expectations to enable additional funding to be raised for community-based initiatives and partnership opportunities within voluntary and community sectors across South and East Lincolnshire. A breakdown of local good causes currently part of the scheme was included at Appendix B to the report.

During her introduction of the report, the Portfolio Holder referred to the Central Fund income, as detailed at recommendation 3 of the report, currently £2,450 available to each sovereign Council. It was suggested that this funding was utilised to support and promote civic community pride events, including supporting volunteering schemes in the district, whilst bringing this report forward.

Further reference was made to a change in the Gambling Act 2005. Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the report detailed the changes as of 1st October 2023, which had been updated into policies. The Council's external lottery management company, had updated their platforms accordingly.

The report also provided a reference to a nationally related data security incident notified to us, which had been responded to. This was detailed at paragraph 6 of the report presented.

Finally, it was noted that to ensure positive performance, a new targeted communication and promotion calendar would be in place. This would include reaching out to good causes to ensure they were aware of the scheme and the benefit it provided successfully monitored through both quantitative measures, number of tickets sold, number of good causes and quality of case study evidence.

RESOLVED

1. That the progress of the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Community Lottery scheme be noted and that Members support its continuation.

2. That the changes to the 'minimum age limits' to participate in the Community Lottery Scheme be noted.
3. That the central fund income be used to support civic community pride events designed to celebrate and promote voluntary and community sector activity, including the act of volunteering within the borough of Boston and the East Lindsey and South Holland Districts.
4. That the details of a data security incident on 8th November 2023 be noted.

Reasons:

To continue to raise funds for local voluntary and community groups across South and East Lincolnshire via the South and East Lincolnshire Community Lottery Scheme.

To promote and encourage voluntary and community sector activity within the borough of Boston and East Lindsey and South Holland Districts.

Other options:

Draw the current scheme to a close (not recommended) and seek alternative fund raising activities.

67. EXEMPT ITEM:

RESOLVED

That under Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the grounds that, if they were present, there could be disclosed to them exempt information as defined in paragraph(s) 1, 2 & 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended).

68. COMMERCIAL PROPERTY PORTFOLIO 007:

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented an Exempt Report by virtue of paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 due to it containing information relating to an individual, and information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person including the authority holding the information.

Following which it was

RESOLVED

That the recommendations contained within the Exempt Report be approved.

Reasons:

As contained in the Exempt Report.

Other options:

As contained in the Exempt Report.

69. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The meeting closed at 6.52 pm.