

# MINUTES

COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 13 DECEMBER 2012

2.00 PM



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## PRESENT

Councillor Mrs Rosemary Kaberry-Brown Chairman

Councillor Bob Adams  
Councillor Mark Ashberry  
Councillor Jean Bevan  
Councillor Pam Bosworth  
Councillor Robert Broughton  
Councillor Terl Bryant  
Councillor Paul Carpenter  
Councillor Mrs Frances Cartwright  
Councillor George Chivers  
Councillor Michael Cook  
Councillor Kelham Cooke  
Councillor Alan Davidson  
Councillor Phil Dilks  
Councillor Breda Griffin  
Councillor David Higgs  
Councillor Reginald Howard  
Councillor Vic Kerr  
Councillor Michael King  
Councillor David Nalson  
Councillor Mrs. Linda Neal  
Councillor John Nicholson  
Councillor Alan Parkin  
Councillor Helen Powell  
Councillor Nick Robins

Councillor Graddon Rowlands  
Councillor Bob Russell  
Councillor Bob Sampson  
Councillor Susan Sandall  
Councillor Bob Sandall  
Councillor Trevor Scott  
Councillor Ian Selby  
Councillor Rob Shorrocks  
Councillor John Smith  
Councillor Mrs Judy Smith  
Councillor Jacky Smith  
Councillor Peter Stephens  
Councillor Judy Stevens  
Councillor Adam Stokes  
Councillor Brenda A Sumner  
Councillor Mike Taylor  
Councillor Mrs Jean Taylor  
Councillor Jeff Thompson  
Councillor Frank Turner  
Councillor Bruce Wells  
Councillor Martin Wilkins  
Councillor Rosemary H Woolley  
Councillor Raymond Wooten

## OFFICERS

Chief Executive (Beverly Agass)  
Strategic Director (Daren Turner)  
Strategic Director (Tracey Blackwell)  
Head of Finance (Richard Wyles)

## OFFICERS

Head of Legal and Democratic Services  
(Lucy Youles)  
Benefits Manager (Lee Sirdifield)  
Principal Democracy Officer (Jo Toomey)

## **50. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM**

### **Transcript of Public Open Forum**

#### **Mrs Patrick**

Good afternoon madam chairman, good afternoon Councillors. My question today is to Councillor Bryant. Councillor Bryant, have you considered putting solar panels on Council property to help offset large electricity bills where consumption is great.

#### **Councillor Bryant**

Thank you Mrs Patrick for that question, I could just say yes but I will give you a full answer. Potential use of solar panels to upgrade communal buildings will form a key consideration along with a range of other issues when we review our assets management strategy for the Council's housing stock. Work will commence on this early in 2013 and will take into account the implications of central government's initiatives on the Green Deal, eco-obligations and the potential for a range of incentive schemes; all of the implications are, as yet, totally unclear. Heating upgrades have taken place in 127 properties this year with a further 93 properties planned by the end of March 2013. Of these properties, 112 have been switched from solid fuel to gas, er...sorry, from electric to gas, all of which is greener options. Loft insulation as you very well know is being topped up in 195 properties across the district with an additional 37 properties planned for completion. During 2012 we brought in £800,000 of external funding alongside our own investment which has improved the energy efficiencies of 155 hard-to-heat council-owned homes. An additional 62 properties are being externally wall insulated in Rippingale, Billingham and Folkingham using the eco-funds. We currently have plans to further invest in energy efficiency improvements during 2013 and 14, which subject to budget approval could see significant numbers of homes helped with the energy efficiency measures. I look forward to your supplementary question.

#### **Mrs Patrick**

Mr Bryant, the reason I ask this question, last week we had a conference here and Mr Ian Richardson mentioned about eco and electricity and everything else. Well we have a complex on Essex Road which has lighting on 24/7 365 days of the year, three washing machines and three dryers which run for about 12 hours a day and on the south side of that building if solar panels were put you'd get 16 hours of daylight a day in the summer and 8 in the winter and perhaps that would take your electricity bill down greatly because it's in a sun spot, thank you very much.

#### **Councillor Bryant**

May I answer that? Thank you very much indeed Mrs Patrick, I won't ask where

the clothes lines went now we're using electricity. Fine, maybe I should see about getting a clothesline installed. Optimising energy efficiency and energy utilisation will be key features on the Council's review process and we'll be looking to evaluate a range of approaches to minimise energy use whilst of course keeping our buildings comfortable, safe places to live work and visit. Thank you Mrs Patrick.

*The public open forum ended at 14:09.*

## **51. EAST MIDLANDS AMBULANCE SERVICE - 'BEING THE BEST'**

The Chairman welcomed representatives from East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) who gave councillors a presentation on their 'Being the Best' programme:

- Andrew Spice – Commercial Director
- Greg Cox – Service Delivery Manager – Lincolnshire
- Steve Illingworth – Operational Support Manager – Lincolnshire

Mr Spice provided a contextual overview of the service EMAS provided; it covered the whole of the East Midlands region and received approximately three-quarters of a million calls annually. Approximately 600,000 calls required the service to send staff out, either in a fast response vehicle, motorbike or double-crewed ambulance. The number of calls was increasing each year by approximately 5% to 7%.

The 'Being the Best' programme comprised a package of changes in respect of asset management, service provision, deployment and staff management. The consultation document on which the presentation was based, constituted an estate strategy which comprised changes aimed at making the most of clinical staff and improving performance against key targets.

Representatives reported that the service did receive some complaints, the majority of which were in respect of response times rather than the quality of care given. EMAS had a number of performance indicators it was required to meet including two key indicators relating to response times: A8 (reach 75% of all life-threatening calls in 8 minutes or less) and A19 (get an ambulance to transport a patient to hospital, on scene within 95% of all cases within 19 minutes). In September 2012 neither target was achieved in Lincolnshire (73.89% and 88% respectively); cumulative performance between April 2012 and September 2012 also fell below target levels (74.88 and 89.53% respectively). Below these performance indicators were a number of targets that measured the quality of service.

As part of the consultation, EMAS was talking to patients, the public and stakeholders. Key proposals included replacing 66 ambulance stations with 13 hubs/super stations and introducing 118 Community Ambulance Posts (CAPs). Five hubs were planned for Lincolnshire. The hubs would be the start and end

point of the working day, providing a base for vehicle maintenance and the clinical cleaning, stocking and preparing of ambulances; these activities currently carried out by ambulance crews would be undertaken by dedicated staff. There would also be an educational facility, which would replace regional facilities, so that staff could be trained locally. Management/supervisory staff would also be available at hubs to brief and debrief teams as appropriate.

CAPs would replace standby points (points at which ambulances park in laybys, car parks, etc.) All CAPs would include a building which provided facilities for crews to rest. These would either be shared facilities with other local stakeholders, or when this option was not available, modular buildings. The location for CAPs was based on modelling work that identified the best places from which to respond to help EMAS provide a better service. Local knowledge was helping inform the exact location of the CAPs.

The model proposed by EMAS had been successfully introduced by West Midlands Ambulance Service and the South Coast Ambulance Service who were two of the best performing services in the country.

The Council was advised that proposals would be formally submitted to the EMAS board in January 2013 and changes would be implemented over a five year period beginning at April 2013. Mr Spice informed Councillors that there would be no change to the level of cover provided within the district and investment would be made to the fleet. He added that the proposed changes were not designed to cut costs but drive improvements to services.

Several Members referred to a number of different consultation events that had been held within the district at which strong feelings were expressed by local residents, and the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 27 November 2012, at which a presentation was given. A number of examples were also given of instances where EMAS had failed to meet its targets in respect of response times. Mr Spice stated that these examples supported the need for change and improvements to service.

A small number of Councillors referred to a petition that had received 12,336 signatures over 23 days. The Chief Executive clarified that the petition was not undertaken on the Council's behalf and it was presented to EMAS representatives outside the meeting.

Concern was expressed by a number of Councillors that there was no plan to create an ambulance hub in Grantham and that the hub from which services from the district would start was in Sleaford. They suggested that the planned growth within the district supported the case for a hub in Grantham. They also highlighted the good transport links with easy access to the A1 and the south of the district. When asked whether EMAS had ever considered positioning a hub in Grantham, Mr Spice responded that all possible options had been considered, which would have included a hub in Grantham. In response to a question, Mr Spice denied that there had been recruitment for a hub in

Sleaford. One Member added that as part of consultation, concerns were expressed about engaging with blind and partially-sighted residents in the county; representatives stated they would follow this up after the meeting.

Debate ensued about the potential impact of changes on EMAS staff with specific reference to increased journey time between home and work and travelling between hubs and CAPs at the beginning and end of shifts. EMAS representatives advised that staff would be able to arrive at the hub, and after a quick check of their vehicle, leave the station in a very short-time. Work was also underway to stagger shifts to ensure that no area would be left without cover because of changeover. Consultation was also underway with staff in respect of shift lengths; any changes would need to strike a balance between staff preference, clinical need and staff safety.

Some Members suggested that EMAS providing a hub in Grantham would help support the sustainability of Grantham hospital and ensure it was protected from the further loss of services.

The consensus of Councillors was that services for the residents of South Kesteven should be of the highest quality and available within the times set out within the performance standards while taking account of the planned growth within the district.

Staff from EMAS were thanked for attending the meeting and giving their presentation.

## **52. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bisnauthsing, Channell, Cosham, Craft, Morgan, Ian Stokes, Wood and Wren.

## **53. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

No interests were disclosed.

## **54. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 OCTOBER 2012**

It was proposed and seconded that the minutes from the meeting held on 18 October 2012 be agreed as a correct record. This was put to the vote and carried.

## **55. COMMUNICATIONS (INCLUDING CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS)**

The Council noted the Chairman's engagements.

**56. LOCALISATION OF SUPPORT FOR COUNCIL TAX BENEFITS POLICY**

**Decision:**

- 1. The Council approves the scheme for the localisation of council tax support as detailed in the local scheme rules from 1 April 2013. The scheme for working age customers having the following characteristics:**
  - i. 80% maximum eligibility for those who do not fall into a vulnerable group**
  - ii. 100% maximum eligibility for vulnerable customers (as defined)**
  - iii. No restrictions based on size of property or council tax band**
  - iv. Carers, the disabled and war pensioners protected**
  - v. Inclusion of enhanced working disregards meaning that a certain amount of earnings is ignored in the calculation of support**
- 2. Council to approve amendments to the council tax discount and exemption arrangements in relation to Class C (unoccupied and unfurnished) to provide a one month exemption followed by 25% discount for remaining 5 months. This is to be introduced from 1 April 2013**
- 3. Council to approve amendments to the council tax discount and exemption arrangements in relation to Class A (in need of structural repair) to provide a 25% discount for 12 months. This is to be introduced from 1 April 2013.**
- 4. Council to introduce 100% charge for properties that have been empty for a period of between six months and two years. This is to be introduced from 1 April 2013.**
- 5. Council to introduce an empty homes premium of 150% for those properties that have been empty for two years or more. This is to be introduced from 1 April 2013.**
- 6. Council approves that delegation be given to the Strategic Director – Corporate Focus in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders to approve amendments to the local scheme (appendix 5 of report number HOF215) in order to ensure consistency with changes to the national default scheme. The changes provide clarification only**

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Resources – Well Run Council moved the recommendations in report number HOF215 on the localisation of support for

council tax support policy and amendments to council tax discount and exemption arrangements. He also moved a further recommendation:

*“that delegation be given to the Strategic Director - Corporate Focus in consultation with the Portfolio Holders to approve amendments to the local scheme (appendix 5 to the report) in order to ensure compliance with current changes to the national default scheme.”*

The Portfolio Holder reminded Councillors that there had been a 10% cut in grants for council tax benefit and that there was a requirement for authorities to develop a local scheme for council tax support. Legislation stipulated that pensioners had to be protected from any reduction and the proposed local scheme protected a number of other vulnerable groups. He noted that protecting certain groups increased the burden of the cuts over the remaining recipients who did not fall into any of the exempt categories. Councillors were reminded that the changes also impacted on the county council and police, who had been consulted as other precepting authorities. The scheme would be reviewed at the end of its first year of operation. He also thanked the officers who helped produce the proposed scheme and the Resources PDG for their work. The proposal was seconded.

A number of Councillors spoke against adopting the proposed scheme, highlighting difficulties determining what should and should not be defined as vulnerable. They argued that the scheme would not achieve one of its objectives: making work pay; they stated that working families would be worse off. Concerns were also expressed about the impact of the changes on families with children. They felt the issue should have been brought to full Council at an earlier stage so that all members would have the opportunity to have input in the formation of the policy. The content of the equality analysis attached to the report was also challenged with some Members suggesting that changes would have a disproportionate impact on women, as were the way in which the consultation outcomes were recorded in the report.

Councillors who spoke in favour of the draft scheme refuted that the meeting provided the first opportunity for councillors to get involved; they highlighted the public consultation (including drop-in sessions), a briefing session which was held for Councillors and the discussions that were undertaken by the Resources and Communities Policy Development Groups. The grant the council would receive was to be based on outturn figures from 2009/10 and reduced by 10%; Members noted that the caseload had increased since that time. Members expressed regret about the position in which the Council found itself but stated that the Council had tried to ensure a higher disregard so that families working and on low wages in receipt of some form of benefit were allowed to earn a bit more before they were required to contribute to their council tax. The council had worked with other authorities in the county to try and form a common scheme; a Member who had been involved in those discussions stated that a common scheme had not been possible because of the diverse demography of the county's residents but stated that SKDC's

scheme was more generous than some other authorities who were only offering a discount of up to 75%.

A motion without notice was proposed in accordance with Article 13.4 of the Council's Constitution, which requested that the report be referred back so that the relevant officer could carry out a full Equality Impact Assessment on the basis of the consultation data and the information available to the Council as it stood currently. This was seconded.

Those speaking in favour of the motion highlighted their belief that the changed policy would have a disproportionate impact on women, particularly single mothers. Councillors speaking against the proposal and expressed their confidence in the Equality Analysis; they highlighted its thoroughness and that the neutral assessor was the Council's equality officer. Officers provided information on the numbers of claimants in work within different unprotected categories. The motion moved without notice was put to the vote and lost.

The mover of the original proposition was invited to sum up and stated that the scheme was designed to do the best for residents and highlighted the range of opportunities through which members could have influenced the scheme.

The recommendations as originally proposed were put to the vote and carried.

*16:00 to 16:20 – the meeting was adjourned.*

## **57. ELECTORAL REVIEW - COUNCIL SIZE**

### ***Decision:***

- 1. The Council approves the draft submission on Council size which is attached as appendix A to report number LDS084 for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.***
- 2. That the Council delegates authority to the Electoral Review Working Group to make any alterations to the submission as requested by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.***

The Governance and Communication Portfolio Holder moved the recommendations in report number LDS084. He reminded Members that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) had given a presentation at a recent meeting and explained the criteria met by the Council which triggered an electoral review. The council appointed a politically balanced working group that was tasked with producing the draft submission document. The Portfolio Holder thanked the members of the working group, noting their hard work; he also thanked the officers who had supported the review. The chairman of the electoral review working group seconded the recommendations.

Brief discussion ensued about the draft submission and the recommendation to reduce the Council size by three. It was acknowledged the document was lengthy but it was required to address a number of specific areas, which were stipulated by LGBCE. Those councillors speaking in favour of the draft submission noted that the submission had to be based on evidence; this was collected through information on governance arrangements, levels of council business, Members' attendance and responses from an activity questionnaire.

A Councillor who spoke against the proposal to reduce the Council size by three members did not feel that, with a growing population, Councillors would be able to effectively represent their constituents and suggested a submission should be made to stay the same or increase the council size. Members noted that projected growth was included in the report and the requirement of LGBCE that any growth must be deliverable and completed within the five year period after the review's completion.

Councillors were advised that if they did not agree with the submission put forward by the Council, they would have the opportunity to put forward their own submissions on council size as part of the public consultation that LGBCE would undertake.

Following a brief summation by the Governance and Communication Portfolio Holder, the recommendations were put to the vote and carried.

## **58. UPDATES TO THE CONSTITUTION**

### ***Decision:***

***The Council approves the recommendations made by the Constitution Committee at its meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2012 as follows:***

***1 At page 104 of the Constitution relating to delegations to the Property Development Manager add:***

**8. In consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Governance and Communication, to determine the regulations and procedures from time to time applicable in accordance with the Localism Act, The Assets of Community Value (England) Regulations 2012 and guidance issued relating to applications to include a property on the list of assets of community value.**

**9. In consultation with the Head of Finance and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services in accordance with the provisions of the Assets of Community Value (England) Regulations 2012,**

- to consider correctly completed applications received to nominate a property to be included on the list of assets of community value and
- to determine applications to include a property on the list of assets of community value or on the list of assets which have not been included on the list of community assets.
- To consider and determine applications for compensation received from owners or former owners of property which has been included on the list of assets of community value.

**2 At page 93 of the Constitution relating to delegations to the Strategic Director Corporate Focus (Section 151 Officer) add:**

**27. To consider and determine applications for a review of a listing and applications received for compensation received from the owner of any property included on the list of assets of community value in accordance with the Assets of Community Value (England) Regulations 2012.**

The recommendations in report number LDS085 were moved by the Chairman of the Constitution Committee who explained they related to the community right to bid, which enabled communities to identify assets of community value and have them listed. This had been debated by the Communities PDG. The recommendation gave officers delegated authority to consider applications for the listing of assets and to maintain a list of those assets. The proposition was seconded, put to the vote and carried unanimously.

**59. NOTICES OF MOTION GIVEN UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12:**

***Decision***

***This Council resolves to fly the Union flag at least during opening hours all year round and at its main offices in Grantham and where practical at its offices in Bourne, Stamford and the Deepings whilst not precluding flying special flags on special days.***

Councillor Dilks proposed the notice of motion

*“This Council resolves to fly the Union flag at least during opening hours all year round at its main offices in Grantham and where practical at its offices in Bourne, Stamford and the Deepings.”*

In proposing the motion, Councillor Dilks highlighted the symbolism of the Union flag and the demonstration of national pride and unity that would come as a result of its flying. He also drew Councillors’ attention to recent celebrations in the district and nationally at which the Union flag was flown

including the Queen's Diamond jubilee, the royal wedding and the Olympic and Paralympic games.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Cooke suggested an addition that would not preclude the flying of special flags on special days. Councillor Dilks agreed to incorporate this in his motion.

Several Members spoke in favour of the motion as adapted, acknowledging the importance of flying special flags on special days and the positive, unifying message that would be communicated by flying the Union flag. A number of Councillors also expressed their pride in being able to vote on this motion.

The adapted motion was put to the vote and carried unanimously.

## **60. CLOSE OF MEETING**

The Chairman wished all Councillors a merry Christmas and closed the meeting at 17:00.