

# MEETING OF THE ENGAGEMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

FRIDAY, 13 JANUARY 2012

10.30 AM



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## PANEL MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Bob Adams (Chairman)  
Councillor Ray Auger  
Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing  
Councillor Ibis Channell

Councillor Jock Kerr  
Councillor Nick Robins  
Councillor Rosemary H Woolley (Vice-Chairman)

## OFFICERS

Strategic Director Corporate Focus (Daren Turner)  
Head of Finance (Richard Wyles)  
Head of Legal & Democratic Services (Lucy Youles)  
Benefits Manager (Lee Sirdifield)  
Reputation, Communications and Consultation Officers (Deb Wyles, Fiona Truman)  
Democratic Officer (Lucy Bonshor)

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## 45. COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None in attendance.

## 46. APOLOGIES

An apology for lateness was received from Councillor Bisnauthsing.

## 47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Woolley declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 (Parish Council and Community Engagement) as she was a parish clerk to various parish councils. Councillor Robins also declared a personal interest in the same item as he was a parish councillor.

## 48. ACTION NOTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 18TH NOVEMBER 2011

The action notes from the meeting held on 18th November were agreed as a correct record of the decisions taken.

#### **49. UPDATES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Head of Finance updated the Group on the Bourne Community Access Point (CAP). Tenders had been sent out and were due back in early February for the construction phase of the work. Contractors would hopefully be on site in March and the funding model for the project had been signed off by the Portfolio Holder. Arrangements with the on site manager had been made and planning permission had been granted on Tuesday. Good progress was being made and he was happy to bring a further update to a future meeting.

A question was asked about parking provision and access and the Head of Finance indicated that this would be looked at; it was possible that a parking order would need to be made for the car park which would limit the time that people could park.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services updated the Group on the Localism Act. Provisions of the act relating to Standards would now come into force on 1st July. The Monitoring Officers for the County were co drafting a current code of conduct which was mainly based on the previous code. Advice was being sort nationally on the situation with regard to independent members and the meaning within the Act; current thinking was that they were not co-opted members of the Committee.

#### **50. QUESTION WITHOUT DISCUSSION - COUNCIL 8TH DECEMBER 2011**

The Chairman referred to the question without discussion from Councillor Selby which had been referred to the Engagement PDG following the last Council meeting.

A schedule of events had been prepared by the Strategic Director Corporate Focus which listed the facts of when the issue came into the public arena which was around 16th November 2011 when the item was listed on the Forward Plan. The initial report for Cabinet to consider a scheme in principal and laying out the process and timetable for a decision was in the public domain when the agenda was published from 25th November. Open Cabinet received the report on 5th December.

Members of the Group felt that nobody had acted in an Ultra Vires manner. Neither the Cabinet nor Officers, if anything was a fault it was flaws in the current system that the Council had. However, this was the system that the Council worked under and therefore had and had to abide by. The legal process of making the decision had not been compromised.

##### **► Action Note**

**Letter to be sent to Councillor Selby listing the facts surrounding the issue and that the Group agreed that nothing had been done in an Ultra Vires manner.**

## 51. CORPORATE PLAN

The Strategic Director Corporate Focus gave a presentation to the Group on the draft Corporate Plan.

He referred to the plan which had been mentioned at Council in October when the Chief Executive had given Members a presentation on the Corporate Priorities. These priorities had formed the basis of the new Corporate Plan which was compiled usually every four years. The new plan was shorter than previous years, user friendly and aimed to tell a story of the Council's achievements. The structure of the plan was in a standard format with the following contents:

- Forward from the Leader and Chief Executive
- Our business as a council
- Where we are now
- A successful track record
- Where we want to be
- Our vision
- Key challenges to achieving our vision
- How do we get there and what do we want to achieve by 2021
- Our priority projects
- Spending plans
- Contact details

The Strategic Director then highlighted areas and the contextual information contained in the plan, listing achievements of the Council, the councils past priorities and how these can be taken forward in the future. The plan was an opportunity to take stock, to understand the needs of the district. He referred to the work undertaken by the Cabinet talking to various key stakeholders such as the Deputy Chief Constable, the Director of Public Health, a representative from the Chartered Institute of Housing and a Lead Officer from Excellent Age, Lincolnshire County Council to try and get an understanding of the key pressure points that the district faced from the police budget cuts, to the main diseases suffered by the district to the impact of crime, and issues faced by an aging population. Other data was also looked at to understand the State of District and how the Council's priorities could become simpler and more outcome focused taking into account all the information gathered.

*(10.55am Councillor Bisnauthsing arrived)*

He then went on to speak about the change from the past priorities to the current ones:

- Grow the economy
- Keep South Kesteven clean, green and healthy
- Promote leisure, arts and culture
- Support good housing for all

And how by building on these priorities would lead to a well run council. Although the inspection regime put in place by the last government had been abolished, the Council still had to show that it was well run, showed Value for Money and continued to drive out efficiencies.

Members questioned about the Customer First priority being “dropped” as this was a main priority. The Strategic Director said that it had not been dropped but that it should be implicit in the work that was done, it should underpin everything that was carried out by employees and the Council as a whole.

Further questions were then asked about the publicity for the document to which the Strategic Director replied.

Another Member referred to the team in Customer Services and informed the Group that if anyone was interested in a tour of the facility they should ring the Customer Services Manager, Hayley Kent Simpson who would be only too happy to show them around and they could see how the customer first priority was embraced.

Further discussion then followed on having a vibrant community in which people wanted to live and work and how leisure, arts and culture were a part of this. The need for Housing to be available for all and the support to be in place to help people facilitate this, from affordable housing to the provision for the elderly, the Council needed to understand the demand.

Another issue which faced the district was broadband access as within Lincolnshire this was very patchy.

The district needed to grow a mix of local economy and the Council needed a range of plans and projects to help move this forward and this was where priority projects came in which would invest in these areas and support delivery of outcomes.

Further discussion then took place on sustainable communities, transport links, rural isolation and good quality housing. One Member asked if the Council had to provide a Corporate Plan to which the Strategic Director replied that although it was not law, the DCLG expected authorities to have in place a plan showing their budget and how they expected to spend said budget. The Chairman said that the Corporate Plan in a way underpinned the budget of the Council and he thanked the Strategic Director for his presentation.

## **52. CUSTOMER ACCESS UPDATE**

Members received a presentation from Lee Sirdifield, Benefits Manager and Martin Taylor a consultant from Caltienne Ltd who had been doing work on internal demand analysis. The work looked at customer interaction with the Council whether it was by phone, e-mail, website or face to face.

The presentation looked at a channel assessment – understanding the customer experience, how and where they accessed the Council and the service they

received. A mystery shopping exercise was undertaken with model questions asked and each transaction graded. Following the findings from the exercise a range of recommendations had been put forward.

Mr Taylor then went through each channel and highlighted the best practice characteristics of each and the score that channel received. Some areas such as e-mail needed work done as inconsistencies existed across services, responses should be within a day, especially in today's climate not the eight days currently stated in the service legal agreement. Although the accommodation in Grantham was lovely the signage to the Customer Services was not good and the layout within did not naturally flow.

Mr Taylor referred to the recommendations made following the work undertaken which had been split into three areas; quick wins which required no budget; longer term wins which again required no significant financial investment and the third area which covered more complex issues.

Quick wins included changing the number in 118 databases, reviewing the e-mail response process, train front office staff on web content and navigation and change the recording announcement messaging. By publishing a postcode look up (system had already been put in place) this gave internet users information at one go integrating different service information in one place. Other recommendations included revisiting the opening hours of the Customer Service Section; having key performance indicators and service level agreements across all channels, service provision to be consistent across each area, having a more holistic view of the CRM system and better integration of web forms.

Once the draft strategy had been completed it would be brought back to the Group for discussion.

A short discussion followed with questions being asked about information available to customer service advisors to which the Strategic Director Corporate Focus replied.

The Chairman thanked Mr Sirdifield and Mr Taylor for attending and giving an informative presentation.

### **53. PARISH COUNCIL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Members received a presentation from Mrs Wyles from the Reputation, Communication and Consultation Service on the format for the proposed drop in sessions that were being trialled following the review of the local forums carried out during 2010/11. The drop in sessions had been arranged as a less formal way of consulting with the public following the findings of the review which found the forums too formal and not useful for parishes. The drop in sessions were aimed at the public with parishes due to receive quarterly newsletters giving information on events, any grants or other financial assistance that may be available and changes to services.

The sessions were scheduled to happen twice a year in January and July and would be at five locations within the district (Bourne, Grantham, Long Bennington, Stamford and The Deepings). Publicity posters had been sent to all Parish and Town Councils, District Councillors, libraries, leisure centres and doctors surgery and press releases had been sent to newspapers. The sessions had been arranged for between 4pm – 7pm to catch people returning from work or school. A specific section on the website had been designed to act as a conduit for people to find out more and to contact us. A postcard to collect people's views would be available at the sessions which would be attended by two representatives from Reputation, Communication and Consultation as well as a Head of Service.

Posters which would be on display at the sessions were circulated at the meeting although those on display would be larger. Various comments were made about the posters with some members liking them and others finding them too colourful. Some Members felt that the timescale for informing both parishes and the public had been too short and future ones should have more of a lead up but other Members disagreed saying too long a lead up and people forgot. It was reiterated to Members that the sessions were aimed at the public not parishes.

Further discussion took place on the completion of postcards at the sessions to find out people's views on the drop in trials. Members' suggested further information to be added which Mrs Wyles noted.

Depending upon the outcome of the sessions and how well they were attended would affect how further sessions were run, although it was proposed that future sessions would have themes that were relevant to those attending or contained information pertinent to the area or which the Council needed to consult on. The Head of Legal & Democratic said that in terms of engagement the sessions were a channel for communication, to enable the Council to communicate to the public in a clearer less formal setting.

*(12.45pm Councillor Bisnauthsing left the meeting)*

Further discussion took place on publicity and it was suggested that radio stations such as radio Lincolnshire and Gravity FM be contacted.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Wyles for her presentation and looked forward to an update later in the year.

#### **54. CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 12.53pm.

The Chairman asked that future presentations be forwarded to Members of the Group before the meeting if possible.