

MINUTES

COUNCIL
THURSDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2011
2.00 PM



PRESENT

Councillor Michael Cook Chairman

Councillor Bob Adams
Councillor Mark Ashberry
Councillor Ray Auger
Councillor Robert Broughton
Councillor Terl Bryant
Councillor Paul Carpenter
Councillor Mrs Frances Cartwright
Councillor George Chivers
Councillor Paul Cosham
Councillor Nick Craft
Councillor Alan Davidson
Councillor Breda Griffin
Councillor Reginald Howard
Councillor Mrs Rosemary Kaberry-Brown
Councillor Jock Kerr
Councillor Vic Kerr
Councillor Michael King
Councillor Charmaine Morgan
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 Peter Stephens
Councillor Judy Stevens
Councillor Adam Stokes
Councillor Ian 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 Paul Wood
Councillor Rosemary H Woolley
Councillor Raymond Wootten
Councillor Debbie Wren

OFFICERS

Chief Executive (Beverly Agass)
Strategic Director (Daren Turner)
Head of Legal & Democratic Service
(Lucy Youles)

OFFICERS

Head of Finance (Richard Wyles)
Principal Democracy Officer (Jo
Toomey)

50. PRAYERS

After the formal opening of the meeting, a point of order was raised. A Councillor asked the chairman for a ruling on the practice of prayers after the opening of a council meeting. There was no provision in the constitution that addressed the issue, nor was prayers included as an item on the agenda. The Secular Society had taken out a case against Devon County Council, which was awaiting judicial opinion. The Chairman said he would consider the issue together with feelings expressed by other councillors for and against prayers after the meeting was formally opened.

51. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

Two questions were received from Mrs Patrick of Stamford and one question was received from Mr Burling of Grantham. A transcript of the questions and answers is below:

Mrs Patrick Good afternoon Mr Chairman, good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. I do have the Chairman's permission to say first of all to Mr Stokes and Mr Michael Smith for doing the health and safety check at the back. They have done a wonderful job, and I thank the team as well. Thank you very much.

Question 1. Councillor Bryant, when will the footpath on Essex Road be completed?

Cllr Bryant Thank you very much indeed, Mrs Patrick. This work, which is on our property, is not normally the kind of work that we do has been necessary as a result of a road traffic accident. The footpath improvements will be complete by the end of January 2012.

Mrs Patrick Thank you Mr Bryant. It's nice to know when we're going to have it finished. Question 2: please can you tell me when the people in Supported Housing will know their fate?

Cllr Bryant Thank you Mrs Patrick...I'm happy to try and answer this question which I believe relates to a service delivered by South Kesteven on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council. We are keen to receive clarification about Supported Housing and we have been working on this with the County Council for over three years to clarify future arrangements. Once the exact position is clear, we will, of course, help the County Council to pass on any information as effectively and as quickly as possible. I'm acutely aware that the people that may be affected by this are County Council's clients but they're also South Kesteven tenants and residents. I hope this response, Mrs Patrick, has answered your question. More details may be available and probably more appropriately if

you submit a similar question direct to the County Council.

Mrs Patrick Thank you Mr Bryant. The reason I ask this question is because we have a gold star service and Lincoln admit we have the A1 service, but all they've done in three years is dangle carrots like they do for donkeys, but we and SKDC and the staff that give us this service are not donkeys. They want to know if their jobs are there and we want to know if our rents and everything else is going to do, so please, could you on the behalf of these people and myself, chivvy the Portfolio Holder at Lincoln because he's at fault because he promised me in April that everything would be done by July. Thank you so much.

Cllr Bryant Probably there doesn't need to be a response but suffice to say I have attended at least three meetings at Lincoln and I am as frustrated as you are.

Chairman Thank you Mrs Patrick. Mr David Burling.

Mr Burling Thank you, Mr Chairman. As highlighted on the SKDC website [<http://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2017>], in 2007 Grantham was awarded over £6million as it achieved Growth Point status.

Could the appropriate portfolio holder please provide a full breakdown of how this money has either been spent or has been allocated for future projects?

Cllr Mrs Cartwright Hopefully you've received a written copy so you can take this in properly. Grantham was awarded Growth Point Status and received the following funding from central government over a three year period:

Capital	£5,447,908
Revenue	£574,424

Lincolnshire County Council was selected as the Accountable Body to hold the funding for accounting purposes. The funding is not ring fenced and there are no time constraints on its expenditure.

The capital funding has been allocated to the following priority projects:

£1,850,000	Towards delivery of the Southern Relief Road
£1,500,000	Towards the Station Approach Regeneration and Business Innovation and Incubation Centre
£1,900,000	Towards Town Centre Public Realm

improvements

Currently, over £1.6 million of this funding has been spent and it is anticipated that the bulk of the remaining funding will be spent on these projects over the next 1 to 2 years. This is supported by additional funding from both South Kesteven and Lincolnshire County Council to the tune of over £5m.

Chairman Does that answer your question?

Mr Burling That answers my question. Can I ask a follow-up? Thank you for that information. I haven't received a written copy yet but I'll check my e-mails when I get back. Is it possible that that information you provided be published on the Grantham for Growth website, which remains woefully out of date and could provide the people of Grantham with an up-to-date idea of where the development is, if that's possible.

Cllr Mrs Cartwright Thank you, I'll certainly look into that for you and see if it can be done. Thank you.

52. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bevan, Bisnauthsing, Mrs Bosworth, Channell, Cooke, Dilks, Higgs and Jacky Smith.

53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Wootten declared a personal interest in agenda item 6, the presentation by Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue, as a member of Lincolnshire County Council, who was responsible for the service.

Councillor Adam Stokes declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 as a member of Lincolnshire County Council.

Councillor Carpenter declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 as a member of Lincolnshire County Council.

54. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 OCTOBER 2011

Subject to the following amendments, the minutes from the meeting held on 20 October 2011 were proposed, seconded and agreed as a correct record:

- That the minutes show that Councillor Woolley left the meeting before debate started on Civilian Parking Enforcement and returned at 15:50 after the adjournment.

55. COMMUNICATIONS (INCLUDING CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS)

The Chairman reminded Councillors that at the beginning of his term of

office instead of adopting a single charity, he would pay small grants to local community groups. He asked Councillors to recommend any community groups in their Ward that would benefit from a small donation. The Chairman also advised he would take the chain on a tour of the district during the last few months of his term.

56. LINCOLNSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE

Representatives from Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue gave a presentation on the service. Nick Borrill, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer gave an overview of Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue:

- The county was split into three sections: east, west and south.
- There were 38 fire stations across the county, two were manned 24 hours a day by full-time fire fighters, four were manned by full-time fire fighters during the day and retained fire fighters at night. The rest were manned by retained fire fighters.
- The work force was approximately 950. 80% of fire fighters were on the retained duty system.
- Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue had three key strategies: prevention, protection and response.
- Key strands of the prevention strategy were: home safety, arson reduction, road safety and youth engagement.
- The protection strategy concentrated on providing education and regulation. The key elements were based around fire safety legislation, safe systems of working, environmental protection and business continuity and management.
- The response strategy's key components were attending fires and road accidents, partaking in the co-responder scheme, specialist response teams and national resilience (including urban search and rescue, which is involved in training and international search and rescue operations).

Steve Wright explained that he had recently taken responsibility for community fire safety, which included the Arson Task Force (ATF) and the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership (LRSP). Key responsibilities of community fire safety were reducing the number of deaths and injuries caused by fire and reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads.

- Home fire safety checks helped prevent death and injury as a result of fire; they focused on education and prevention, detection (fitting smoke alarms), and helping people plan an escape route. Checks targeted key groups who were most likely to become victims of fire.
- Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue participated in a number of partnerships: Smoke Free Homes, Promoting Healthy Living, Sensory Impaired Lincolnshire Central Services, Addaction, First Contact, Telecare and Safe at Home.
- The ATF, predominantly a police and fire service partnership, investigated all deliberate primary fires.

- The ATF had direct input into FarmWatch and the organisation had worked extensively with the National Farmers' Union to prevent stack fires.
- Bike teams were deployed to assist with public engagement. They also gathered intelligence on potential fire risks.
- School engagement was undertaken with children in years 2 and 6.

Kieron Davies the Community Fire Protection Manager talked about district council responsibilities and the work Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue undertook with businesses.

- The district council was responsible for fire safety in all premises it owned and communal areas in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO).
- SKDC was praised for the working relationship between its officers and officers from Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue.
- Members' attention was drawn to recent legislation changes, which saw the introduction of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- Key areas in the district for Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue were HMOs, sleeping accommodation above restaurants and residential care homes.

Councillors had the opportunity to ask questions of the fire officers, which addressed the following issues:

- Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue was reviewing its structure. Consultation was underway on proposals that would increase the number of stations manned by full-time fire fighters.
- Proposals for a national control room had been cancelled. Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue's arrangements would need reviewing in two years to ensure technology was appropriate. The Department for Communities and Local Government made funding available for consortiums to develop their control rooms.
- As all organisations were required to make savings, partnership working would be key to delivering services as efficiently as possible.
- There were few incidents of violence against fire fighters. Any incidents were treated seriously with police providing support.
- Recruitment could prove challenging as retained fire fighters were required to live within 5 minutes journey time of the fire station.
- Dates for the fire service Christmas float would be published shortly. A press release was being produced for local newspapers.
- Fire and Rescue was notified of planning applications for businesses like hotels and restaurants. They were also consulted in relation to building control matters.
- Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue carried out a risk-based inspection of businesses. They used information from national gazetteers with local intelligence from retained fire fighters and local fire data.
- If a member of the public complained of a potential hazard, an inspection would be carried out within two hours.
- In 2004, the government published figures that indicated the

- national weekly cost of primary arson was £53.8m.
- Response times, which were locally set, were arrival of the first appliance within 10 minutes to 80% of fires, and the arrival of the second appliance within 15 minutes to 80% of fires.

The Chairman thanked the fire officers for attending the meeting and an interesting presentation.

57. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2011-12 UPDATE

Decision:

The Council approves:

- 1. The amendments to the 2011/12 Treasury Management Strategy as identified in report number HOF183.***
- 2. Delegated authority to the Strategic Director – Corporate Focus (s151 officer) and the Resources Portfolio Holder to authorise the most suitable and financially advantageous method of borrowing to finance the HRA self-financing payment.***

The Head of Finance presented report number HOF183 on the revision of the Treasury Management Strategy. The report was presented to Council in preparation for changes to the management of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The new system, which would see the HRA become self-financing would commence in April 2012. The report explained the calculation that would determine the Council's share of the national housing debt. Current estimates indicated the Council's debt would be £122m. This would require a significant level of borrowing by the Council, which was not possible within the existing prudential indicators.

Changes to the Treasury Management Strategy detailed in the report were: updated prudential indicators, modified investment criteria and the addition of an ethical statement. The report also requested delegated authority for the Strategic Director – Corporate Focus and the Resources Portfolio Holder to authorise the method of borrowing to finance the HRA self-financing payment.

The recommendations in the report were proposed and seconded. In moving the recommendations, the Portfolio Holder thanked officers for their work and the Governance and Audit Committee for their scrutiny of the report.

One Councillor highlighted the self-financing of the HRA as a key issue for the Council with attached risks related to borrowing that could impact on Council tenants. Another issue highlighted was producing a thirty-year business model when a wide range of variables could change during that period. He proposed an amendment:

"To refer the business planning process to Resources Committee to model options in borrowing and rents that will be tied to the charges through the period of the business plan. To consult with tenants and assess the impact of rent rises in terms of affordability and sustainability."

The amendment was seconded. Brief debate ensued. No concerns or amendments were proposed at the meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee, which met on 1 December 2011. Officers explained that the Council was legally required to consult on any rent increase applied to the housing stock and that the Housing Revenue Account already featured on the work programme for the Resources PDG, which had had involvement from an early stage.

The amendment was put to the vote and lost.

A question was asked on why the calculation for the HRA valuation used a 6.5% discount rate; this was specified by government.

An amendment was proposed and seconded: that the second recommendation be amended to read:

"One-off delegated authority to the Strategic Director – Corporate Focus (s151 officer) and the Resources Portfolio Holder to authorise the most suitable and financially advantageous method of borrowing to finance the HRA self-financing payment."

The amendment's proposer felt it should be clearly specified that the delegation was for the one-off transaction related to the self-financing payment because of the large sums of money that were involved. The amendment was to clarify that the delegation was temporary.

A Councillor speaking against the motion argued that the self-financing of the HRA was a single requirement that would take place in one day, thus the temporary nature of the delegation was implicit in the recommendation. Speaking in favour of the motion, a Councillor said that a delegation to borrow this amount of money should be temporary and clearly enumerated.

Officers clarified that the Council was given a debt ceiling by the government. This was adjusted to accommodate the self-financing of the HRA. The single transaction date was 28 March 2012, when money would be borrowed and paid to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The amendment was put to the vote and lost.

In summing up the original motion, the proposer said he hoped the Council would support it. On being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

58. QUESTIONS WITHOUT DISCUSSION

Two questions without discussion were received and referred to the relevant Policy Development Group for a response.

Question 1

To: Councillor Linda Neal, Leader of the Council

From: Councillor Ian Selby

Does this council feel that it is appropriate for council policy to be announced in the Press and published on the Council's website by the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet before any level of committee or full council discussion or debate by this council. Regardless of whether members agree or disagree with a policy, this shows blatant contempt for non-cabinet members of this council and this kind of policy making off the hoof would not be tolerated in the House of Commons in Westminster. For clarification I am referring to the announcement of £5m to be spent by this council on the Local Government Mortgage Scheme. The first opportunity for any discussion by full council will be March 1st 2012 and this will be nearly 3 months after the announcement of the policy. Furthermore, much preparation will have been undertaken before any such policy announcement so therefore there has been much time for common courtesy to have been offered to members of this council. Will the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet make a full and unreserved apology to this council?

Referred to the Engagement Policy Development Group.

Councillor Selby moved a request that his motion be forwarded to Cabinet as well as the Engagement PDG. This was seconded. On being put to the vote, this motion was lost.

Question 2

To: Councillor Mike Taylor, Resources Portfolio Holder

From: Councillor Charmaine Morgan

In light of the changes planned by the Government to Housing Benefit can South Kesteven District Council provide a full breakdown of the number of Housing Benefit recipients in council and private accommodation who will be affected by the housing benefit changes including the percentage reduction/increase in benefit to be displayed in financial and percentage terms.

Please also provide the numbers of claimants affected by the differing percentages given changes will vary according to circumstances under Government proposals.

Can the information be broken down so that the figures are clear for each town/s and associated rural area/villages.

Can the Council confirm that all landlords and claimants have/will be notified of the changes to housing benefits in adequate time for plans to be made?

How will the information be conveyed?

This information is required so that we can determine the potential impact the changes will have on the household income of claimants, landlords and the impact on any supporting agencies.

Referred to the Resources Policy Development Group

59. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting was closed at 15:53.