

MINUTES

COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 17 DECEMBER 2020

1.00 PM



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Meeting held virtually, via Skype

PRESENT

Councillor Breda Griffin (Chairman)
Councillor Ian Stokes (Vice Chairman)

Councillor Bob Adams
Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor David Bellamy
Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing
Councillor Mrs Pam Bosworth
Councillor Robert Broughton
Councillor George Chivers
Councillor Louise Clack
Councillor Kelham Cooke
Councillor John Cottier
Councillor Helen Crawford
Councillor John Dawson
Councillor Phil Dilks
Councillor Barry Dobson
Councillor Mike Exton
Councillor Paul Fellows
Councillor Jan Hansen
Councillor Graham Jeal
Councillor Gloria Johnson
Councillor Mrs Rosemary Kaberry-Brown
Councillor Anna Kelly
Councillor Ms Jane Kingman
Councillor Philip Knowles
Councillor Nikki Manterfield

OFFICERS

Chief Executive (Karen Bradford)
Strategic Director Commercial and
Operations (Gary Smith)
Assistant Chief Executive Housing Delivery
(Ken Lyon)
Director of Law and Governance (Shahin
Ismail)
Interim Director of Finance (Richard Wyles)
Interim Assistant Director Housing (Chris
Stratford)

Councillor Annie Mason
Councillor Penny Milnes
Councillor Virginia Moran
Councillor Dr Peter Moseley
Councillor Robert Reid
Councillor Susan Sandall
Councillor Ian Selby
Councillor Jacky Smith
Councillor Mrs Judy Smith
Councillor Judy Stevens
Councillor Adam Stokes
Councillor Jill Thomas
Councillor Rosemary Trollope-Bellew
Councillor Sarah Trotter
Councillor Dean Ward
Councillor Hilary Westropp
Councillor Amanda Wheeler
Councillor Mark Whittington
Councillor Jane Wood
Councillor Sue Woolley
Councillor Linda Wootten
Councillor Ray Wootten

OFFICERS

Interim Head of Governance (Dan
Snowdon)
Acting Principal Democratic Officer
(Shelley Thirkell)
Democratic Officer (Lucy Bonshor)

Statement by the Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council gave a brief statement. Following the Government's first review of the Tier system, South Kesteven remained in Tier 3. The Council would continue to support residents and businesses where possible, especially those in the hospitality sector during this uncertain time. Currently the rate of infection, as at 11 December 2020 stood at 182.6 per 100,000 which was below the national rate of 188.6 per 100,000.

Members were informed that a vaccination centre for Covid-19 had been opened at the Meres Leisure Centre, Grantham and a drive through testing station had been opened at St Martin's Park in Stamford, for those who lived in the south of the District.

Although there would be a relaxation of restrictions over the Christmas period he urged people to continue to follow the Government guidance to help keep everyone safe.

48. Register of attendance and apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Goral, Lee, Morgan, Robins and Steptoe.

49. Disclosure of Interests

Councillor Whittington declared an interest in relation to agenda items 7a and 7b, due to owning property, however it was noted that these motions had been withdrawn.

50. Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2019/20

The Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen presented the 2019/20 Scrutiny Committee Annual Report. The report summarised the work that had been undertaken by each of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees during what had been a challenging year. He thanked Members, and Officers for their support during the year and gave special thanks to the Scrutiny Officer who had provided support to the Scrutiny Chairmen and their Committees. He thanked the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for their support during the past year as the Chairmanship was passed on to Councillor Ray Wootten, for the forthcoming year.

Councillor Jeal was thanked for his work as the Chairman of Chairmen of Scrutiny.

A Member felt that the annual report was not a reflection of proper Scrutiny. It was suggested that the Annual Report should also have included examples of where Scrutiny should have taken place and lessons Scrutiny could take from this to improve performance.

In accordance with Article 4.10 (iv), a motion was proposed without notice:

That the role, structure and performance of the Scrutiny Committees should be referred to a suitable independent individual nominated by the Local Government

Association (LGA) to review whether or not it is fit for purpose and how it might be improved.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the motion had been properly made in accordance with the Council's Constitution. The motion was seconded.

Debate on the motion followed with Members supporting the proposal. It was stated that Scrutiny should not be used to criticise, but to advise when things went wrong, failure in the Scrutiny process was not beneficial to the Authority. Reference was made to other local authorities who had alternative Scrutiny processes.

Thanks were given to Zena West, the Scrutiny Officer, who had left the authority for the work she had done in Scrutiny. It was agreed that the current Scrutiny process did not work as effectively as it could and needed to be reviewed. Those Members who were County Councillors gave examples of Scrutiny Committees that were in place at Lincolnshire County Council.

It was acknowledged that although the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings had continued during the pandemic, the effectiveness of Scrutiny could be vastly improved. Some Members felt that if the Scrutiny process should be more independent to ensure more productive meetings. Members agreed that the current Scrutiny process was not as effective as had hoped and needed to be reviewed, the motion was supported by Members.

Before the vote took place the Monitoring Officer clarified the position with voting. She stated that although the business of the previous meeting (26 November 2020) was on the agenda, in her view it was a new meeting and therefore the decision to have recorded votes on all items of business, did not apply to this meeting.

On being put to the vote, it was **AGREED:**

That the role, structure and performance of the Scrutiny Committee system should be referred to a suitable independent individual nominated by the Local Government Association (LGA) to review whether or not it was fit for purpose and how it might be improved.

The substantive motion was then voted on and Members noted the Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2019/20.

51. Housing Compliance Audit 2020 including Riverside Inquiry and Housing Development Update

Before discussion on the item commenced, it was proposed that Standing Orders be suspended as per Article 4.10 and 4.11 of the Council's Constitution due to the nature of the items and to help with the flow of the debate. The proposer also had three amendments to make and was happy for these to be dealt with together, rather than individually. The Monitoring Officer clarified the position in relation to the proposal and the amendments.

The proposal to suspend Article 4.10 and 4.11 of the Constitution was seconded.

On being put to the vote it was **LOST**.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning stated that there had been two system breakdown incidents at Riverside over the previous weekend which had been addressed and the systems were now working.

The report provided Members with an update and information regarding the Housing Compliance Audit and the Riverside Independent Inquiry 2020.

Briefings on the Compliance Audit and the Riverside Inquiry had been given at the November meeting of the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Governance and Audit Committee. An all Member briefing had been provided on the Compliance Audit, the amended HRA 3 year rolling new build programme and the Riverside Inquiry in November 2021. Since the report had been circulated improvements had started and a high-level overview of tasks had taken place, which had already changed the original red/amber status to amber. Easier monitoring of the improvement plan had been put in place and would be a regular item on the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it would also be reported to the Governance and Audit Committee. Meetings had taken place with all Housing Officers, with the Chief Executive's support to ensure improvement to the functions of the Housing Service.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning reminded Members that the Council had reported itself to the Housing Regulator, therefore any timelines would be stipulated as such, by the Housing Regulator, and not by the Council. A meeting with the Housing Regulator was expected to take place in January 2021 where recommendations would be discussed, which would look at the compliance challenges faced by the Council. Members would be updated as soon as information was known. The six recommendations contained within the report were proposed by the Cabinet Member, which was seconded.

Members expressed grave concern over the non-compliance by the Council of basic housing responsibilities and checks. Its failure to carry out proper, gas, electric, legionella, asbestos and fire safety checks. Members felt that they had let down the tenants, some of which were frail and vulnerable.

Although the plans and measures announced to date were welcomed, it was felt that they did not go far enough and that the timeframe was too long, an amendment to the recommendations was proposed.

(14:08 Cllr Selby left the meeting)

The amendment was that in response to the housing compliance report the Council resolves to provide whatever resources prove necessary to achieve full compliance with all legal requirements in 12 months. The amendment was seconded.

(14:20 Cllr Kaberry-Brown left the meeting and did not return)

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning reiterated that the timescale for when and how the Council came out of the current measures was governed by the Housing Regulator. He acknowledged that Members wanted things done expediently but they were unfortunately beyond the Council's control.

The Member who had proposed the amendment did not believe that if the Council could achieve the necessary outcomes within 12 months that the Regulator would say no. The safety of tenants was a top priority and they had been let down.

The Chief Executive stated that the Council did have a choice as to whether or not they referred themselves to the Housing Regulator. It was agreed with the Leader and the Cabinet to refer the Council to the Housing Regulator and also to be transparent in the findings of the Riverside Inquiry report and also the outstanding Health and Safety report. Staff had already been redeployed to a Housing Task Team to make sure the Council delivered its requirements, especially around compliance, as soon as possible. The Council did not have control or influence over timescales once intervention had taken place by the Regulator. Intervention continued in relation to monitoring and to ensure new policies and practices were embedded within the Authority. The Council had redeployed resources utilising frameworks to get pieces of work done as soon as possible and new policies were being developed and embedded and it was these that the Council would be monitored against. It was reiterated that the timescales were in the hands of the Housing Regulator.

Members supported the work that had been done already but still felt that a target of 12 months should be achievable, an amendment was proposed to include the wording provided the Regulators allow the Council to achieve this.

The Interim Assistant Director of Housing provided a point of information. He stated that once the Regulator was involved with compliance issues it was very unusual to see a local authority emerge out of the compliance notice period, prior to the initial 12 months, unless the compliance matter was relatively "light" or "focused", which was not the case for South Kesteven. Once the meeting was held with the Regulator in January 2021 the scope and nature of the compliance notice would be understood. It was noted that local authorities and organisations, who had reported themselves to the Housing Regulator, had not found it possible to complete the regulatory process within 12 months.

Whilst some Members continued to express their concern about what had happened to the tenants and that three years felt too long, it was appreciated that the Council should be led by the Regulator's guidance.

The Interim Assistant Director of Housing reiterated that once the notice was received from the Regulator and the position was known, then dialogue on the scope of the specific issues of non-compliance could be processed and the notice could be moved through in a logical and sensible way. The regulation period would be undertaken in the shortest possible time through partnership working with the Regulator and tenants. The Regulator had to be certain that the notice was complied with and sustained.

A question was asked about what the notice covered, it was confirmed that it covered all the Council's housing stock.

It was confirmed that the proposed amendment before Members had been properly made, although it was reiterated by the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning that the timescales were within the control of the Housing Regulator and not the Council.

On being put to the vote the amendment was **LOST**.

A further amendment was then proposed following the report on the Inquiry undertaken at Riverside.

That this Council resolves to urgently consider setting up a Housing Compliance and Complaints Committee, to focus directly on achieving and maintaining legal compliance. The Committee would allow elected Members to monitor complaints relating to housing and scrutinising the Council's role as a landlord. Consideration should also be given to how best to involve elected Members in inspecting properties prior to the start of new tenancies, it was requested that a report to be brought to the next meeting of full Council in January 2021.

The amendment was seconded.

Support was given to the amendment. The public's perception was important and it was felt that people did not believe that they or Members had a voice. Clarification was asked in relation to the recommendations before Members and the public's involvement in the plans.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning proposed that a Working Group was convened. He referred to the meetings currently held in relation to Planning with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee and the Head of Management Policy. It was proposed that meetings of a similar structure also be held for Housing. Weekly meetings were currently being held with the Chief Executive, Leader, the Interim Assistant Director of Housing and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning in relation to compliance criteria. Members were assured that work was being undertaken as quickly as possible.

Further debate followed and it was felt that the reasons given indicated a need to have a Committee to deal specifically with Housing. There needed to be a separate Housing Scrutiny Committee and a Housing Compliant and Complaints Committee should also be established, in addition to the six recommendations.

The amendment before the Council was voted on and **LOST**.

A further amendment was then proposed by the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning to allocate £780,000 to bring forward the Stock Condition Survey. This amendment was seconded.

Members questioned why this was not contained within the original report and the Interim Director of Finance stated that the money had originally been in the budget

proposals for 2021/22. However, an opportunity had occurred through the procurement framework to expedite the work earlier than previously predicted and place the contract within 2020/21. If Members did not agree the amendment today the procurement work would not be agreed until the budget was discussed for 2021/22 in March 2021, therefore the stock condition survey could not be brought forward.

On being put to the vote it was **AGREED**:

To allocate £780,000 to enable the stock condition report to be brought forward to 2020/21.

A further amendment was then proposed in relation to the work that Mr Philip Gadd had undertaken in making the Council aware of the problems at Riverside. It was proposed to add a further amendment to the recommendations contained within the report to honour Mr Gadd.

The amendment proposed was:

That the Council recognises that it owes a debt of gratitude to Mr Philip Gadd for his determined and tireless work on behalf of residents at Riverside, Grantham. The Council further agrees to make a suitable apology to Mr Gadd for its failure to respond in an appropriate and timely fashion to the concerns that he repeatedly raised over four years. The proposal was seconded.

The Interim Assistant Director of Housing clarified that there had been disruption at Riverside, Grantham recently but he confirmed that all the issues relating to the heating and hot water had been fully resolved.

One of the Ward Councillors for the Riverside area spoke of how he had been involved over the four year period with the problems at Riverside and had spoken to tenants including Mr Gadd and his brother and that this had been noted in the independent Riverside report by Julie Picken. He placed on record his thanks to the Interim Assistant Director of Housing, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning and the team for all their hard work. He also gave special thanks to the Chief Executive. A further Ward Councillor, for the Riverside area stated that she spoke to people regularly at Riverside and that the work had been undertaken to sort the problems out.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning acknowledged the work that Mr Gadd and his brother had done over the years for the residents at Riverside and that he had been in dialogue with Mr Gadd since he had taken over the Portfolio for Housing in February 2020. The heating problems had been sorted and there was compensation in place for tenants, for any extra expenses for electricity over the previous week. He stated that shame and blame would not move things forward and that he would not support the proposed amendment.

Further debate followed with Members referring to the work that Mr Gadd had done on behalf of the residents of Riverside, Grantham and that he should be given credit. Thanks were given to Mr Gadd from the Leader of the Independent Group who felt

that the Council owed Mr Gadd gratitude for what he had done in bringing the problems at Riverside to the Council's attention. He thanked the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning for the work that had been undertaken over the last three weeks but he felt that the Council had let the residents at Riverside down.

On being put to the vote the proposed amendment was **LOST**.

Under 4.13.5 of the Council's Constitution the following Members asked for their vote for the amendment to be recorded.

Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing
Councillor Louise Clack
Councillor Phil Dilks
Councillor Anna Kelly
Councillor Penny Milnes
Councillor Virginia Moran
Councillor Ian Selby
Councillor Amanda Wheeler
Councillor Paul Wood

The Leader of the Council stated that at previous Council meetings where Mr Gadd had been present he had thanked Mr Gadd for raising the issues at Riverside. The Leader then spoke about Members concerns in relation to Riverside and the Housing Compliance audit and the action that the Council was taking. It was hard to understand why such symptomatic failings were allowed to happen over such a long time. The Council's focus was on addressing the failings and putting them right. Direct action in response to the findings had been taken and the Council was working closely with the social Housing Regulator. In-depth updates would be provided to Members regularly and steps were being taken to support tenants through the process.

The Leader, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning and the Chief Executive had commissioned an audit of the Housing Service in July 2020. Following the findings of the audit the Interim Assistant Housing Director had been appointed, who had extensive experience of housing and the social Housing Regulator. Work was already taking place in developing response and improvement plans and weekly strategic meetings were being held.

Officers of the Council had been seconded to work in the Housing Response Team, from different areas of the Council. A wider review of Housing had taken place, which had highlighted issues with the stock condition survey, the outstanding Voids Policy and the Stay Put Policy which was currently being drafted. The Voids Policy was due to go before the next Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which was the Scrutiny Committee whose remit covered housing matters.

In summing up the Leader stated that the priority of the Council would always be the residents and tenants of the District and he apologised for how they had been let down. Clear and open communication with tenants would be the Council's approach going forward and over 6,000 letters had been sent to the Council tenants. A

dedicated helpline had been put in place to answer tenant's questions and to support them through the process. The Council continued to proactively engage with tenant's to ensure that they were fully informed of the actions that the Council were taking.

If the Council was found to be non-compliant by the Housing Regulator then a period of intervention would follow and the Council would be monitored to make sure that processes and policies were embedded within the housing service and maintained.

The Leader gave his assurances to Members that the Council was determined to resolve the issues and deliver a housing service that the tenants deserved.

(15:25 Cllr Adams left the meeting and did not return)

Further comments were made about the Riverside issues and the problems with the Housing Department, the timeframes involved when the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning was made aware of the issues and the time gap before it was reported to the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning stated that he was aware of the report in August 2020, however the report author could not attend the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2020, which was why it went to the November 2020 meeting of the Committee.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning thanked the Leader for his comments and reiterated that the Scrutiny of housing issues came under the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee's remit. Issues would also be reported to the Governance and Audit Committee. He thanked Members for their support in relation to the stock condition report. He then spoke about his proposal for a Housing Working Group and made reference to a working group that he was part of at Lincolnshire County Council. He asked that Members with a genuine interest in housing form the Working Group, from all parts of the District. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning also spoke about funding that had been granted from Homes England and that the roll out of housing within the District needed to be balanced and in the right areas. He recommended the proposals listed within the report and asked that Members noted the proposal for a Housing Working Group be convened, preferably before the next Council meeting in January 2021.

The Monitoring Officer clarified what Members were voting on and it was the six recommendations within the circulated report plus the amendment agreed by Council, so there was a total of seven recommendations.

On being put to the vote it was **AGREED**:

1. To review the Housing Compliance Audit and improvement plan to meet the recommendations indicated within the Housing Audit plan and agree that the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive quarterly updates on the progress being made within the work programme.
2. To approve the revised 3 year rolling HRA New Build Housing Investment programme and support the principle that the housing service should focus on

compliance priorities, utilising where necessary funds released through rationalising the HRA New Build Housing Investment programme proposals.

3. That Officers provide necessary updates to Members regarding key performance and delivery of programmes to ensure capital investment and compliance objectives are achieved.
4. To note that the Council has reported itself to the Social Housing Regulator and is jointly working with the Regulator towards compliance as a matter of priority.
5. That the Council notes the recommendations contained in the attached Independent Consultants Report, and requests that officers be required to update the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress to achieve full implementation of the recommendations on a quarterly basis.
6. The Council notes that the HSE report dealing with potential breaches relating to the management of asbestos during the carrying out of the Riverside hot water and heating repairs will be submitted to the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee once received.
7. The Council approves the allocation of £780,000 to enable the stock condition report to be brought forward to 2020/21.

52. Updates from the Leader of the Council

(a) Meetings of the Cabinet

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 13 October 2020 were included in the agenda papers for Members information.

(b) Decisions made under urgency provisions

The Leader informed Members that one decision had been made under urgency provisions as set out within the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 and the Council's Constitution and that related to St Martin's Park, Stamford.

(15:40 Cllr Bellamy left the meeting and did not return)

(15:40 – 15:51 meeting adjourned)

53. Members' Open Questions

Question 1

Councillor Kelly asked the Leader (on behalf of a constituent) if the statue of Baroness Margaret Thatcher was owned by South Kesteven District Council, where funding/donation money was to go and whether the amount received to date, covered the unveiling event.

The Leader of the Council replied that the statue was currently owned by the Public Memorials Appeal, but would be transferred to the Council as a 'Deed of Gift'. Details were currently being finalised in relation to where the money would go. He had already received enquiries from individuals and organisations about contributing to the unveiling event. Currently the decision made by Cabinet on 1 December 2020 had been called-in and was going to the Culture and Visitor Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5 January 2021. He stated that it was his view that the event would be fully paid for by the private sector and the funding received would also contribute to the maintenance and upkeep of the statue and also contribute to the Baroness Margaret Thatcher exhibition at Grantham Museum.

Question 2

Councillor Dawson asked the Leader for an update on St Martin's Park development at Stamford.

The Leader replied that the site had been purchased in March 2019. The collaboration agreement between South Kesteven District Council and Burghley Estates had been signed. The outline planning application had been validated and could be viewed through the planning portal: the reference was S20/2056. Morris Homes would be delivering the residential development, Inspired Living would be leading on the retirement development and Burghley Land Ltd would be delivering the commercial and mix use parts of the site. The Heads of Terms with all three parties had been agreed and sales contracts would start to be drafted by the Legal Teams in the New Year. Demolition on site was currently being discussed with the partners and it was hoped that it would start in 2021, excluding the 1904 building which it was hoped could be turned in to more commercial space.

Question 3

Councillor Dilks asked the Leader why there was no mention of the Riverside report or the Housing Compliance report within SKToday which had recently been circulated, only reference to Good Housing for All and High Performing Council, he felt the publication was an ideal opportunity to let residents know what was going on.

The Leader responded that the themes highlighted by Councillor Dilks referred to the Council's key aims within the Council's Corporate Plan. Council house tenants received a specific publication called Skyline and both the Riverside report and the Housing Audit report would be mentioned within the next publication of this document and would be shared with Members as well.

Question 4

Councillor Sandall wished to place on record her thanks to the Leader and the team responsible for the work done to enable St Martin's Park, Stamford to be used as a Covid-19 testing facility which had been easy to access and use.

The Leader stated that he would pass on her thanks to the teams involved that had made it possible to use St Martin's Park as a testing facility.

Question 5

Councillor Wheeler asked the Leader what could be done to support businesses during this devastating time to ensure that they would remain viable during the difficult months ahead as Government had kept Lincolnshire as a whole within Tier 3, even though the number of cases in Stamford were well below the average and were comparable to Rutland County Council who remained in Tier 2. She also asked what MP's and the Leader were doing to address this oversight when a review was undertaken in two weeks' time, as other Counties had been divided up and she gave Peterborough and Cambridgeshire as an example.

The Leader stated that there were support packages in place which included discretionary grants for businesses. He had been in touch with businesses in the south of the District and those within the hospitality sector and that he would be raising the matter with Business Lincolnshire. The MP's for the south of the district Gareth Davies MP and Rt Hon Sir John Hayes MP had been working closely with Government Ministers to try and get South Kesteven removed from the Lincolnshire area, unfortunately it was not within his gift to change the Tiers but he would continue to make representations to Ministers in relation to the Tier structure for Lincolnshire.

As the meeting had reached the three-hour time limit an extension of 35 minutes was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed.

Question 6

Councillor Exton asked the Leader for an update on the old ambulance station premises in Stamford.

The Leader replied that Lindum Construction had started work on 5 October 2020 and construction would run for a period of up to 16 weeks. Works were on target with a completion date of 25 January 2021. Letting agents were marketing the building and viewings would be taking place in the New Year.

Question 7

Councillor Stevens asked the Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations for assurance that the Big Clean work would continue in the New Year.

The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations responded that members of the Big Clean were out and about locally every day. If special measures were brought in, this would be looked at, as they had been back filling loader work through the Covid-19 crisis. He hoped that the Big Clean initiative would be kept going for many years to come.

Question 8

Councillor Crawford asked the Cabinet Member for Culture and Visitor Economy when the refurbishment and the moving of the Registry Office in relation to the Corn Exchange, Bourne, would be complete. She also asked that her thanks be given to those involved with the work that had already taken place.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Visitor Economy stated that a lot of work had been done in relation to the refurbishment of the Corn Exchange Bourne and the registry office would be moved to the side of the library so that Lincolnshire County Council would all be in the same area, providing the Registry Office with its own entrance/exit. The old offices that the Registrar had would be used as dressing rooms for performers. The stage had been repainted, there were new curtains, lights and the hallway had been painted. It was hoped that the work would be completed by the end of this financial year. A personal thanks was given to Ian Bland and his Team for all their hard work.

Question 9

Councillor Ray Wootten asked the Leader about the independent report carried out by Julie Picken on Riverside. Although both he and Councillor Jacky Smith were mentioned within the report, he asked why they had not been interviewed and their evidence gathered for the report.

The Leader stated that he was not part of the decision making in relation to the report and how it was investigated. He was happy to send a letter to Julie Picken asking her to consider adding an addendum to the report with an interview with both Councillor Ray Wootten and Councillor Jacky Smith as Ward Councillors, however it would be up to Julie Picken whether or not she carried this out.

Question 10

Councillor Baxter asked that the Chairman and Leader on behalf of all Members pass on their gratitude and best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New year to all Council Officers and the staff of the Council's wholly owned companies. He asked if the Leader would consider a small investment that could be of benefit to all staff, if he hadn't already, to recognise the contribution that staff had made during the year.

The Leader responded by stating that a token of thanks would be given to all Officers, with the addition of a half day's holiday for Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

Question 11

Councillor Selby thanked everyone involved in setting up the vaccination centre at the Meres Leisure Centre in Grantham. He also thanked the Interim Assistant Director for Housing and his team for the work done in his ward in relation to housing case work. He asked if a referendum was to be taken in relation to the Margaret Thatcher statue as reported in one of the national newspapers and who would be unveiling the statute. He suggested that local names be put in a hat to either unveil the statute or attend the unveiling. He also referred to a painting done by the local artist Terry Shelbourne that was currently in the archives at Lincoln and he asked if this could be displayed when the unveiling took place.

The Leader stated that the newspapers had misquoted what had been said at the recent Cabinet meeting in relation to the referendum and that one would not be taking place. A person of significant national interest would be unveiling the statue and for security reasons he could not say anything further. There would be an

opportunity for local people to be involved in the event and attend the unveiling. He would make enquiries in relation to the painting.

Question 12

Councillor Paul Wood asked the Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations if the food waste scheme was to be expanded.

The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations stated that the food waste trial had been successful and would continue as per the current trial. DEFRA was expected to issue a paper on the future of waste which had been delayed due to Covid-19. One of the issues believed to be within the paper was that authorities would be required to collect food waste from every household from 2023. Collecting food waste was expensive and had financial implications. Work was on going with partners to help find a solution.

Both the Leader of the Council and the Opposition Group Leader thanked all staff for the work that they had done over last year in dealing with the Coronavirus crisis. They also thanked volunteers who had helped within the community during difficult times.

54. Notices of Motion given under Article 4.9 of the Council's Constitution:

(a) Councillor Charmaine Morgan

Motion withdrawn.

(b) Councillor Charmaine Morgan

Motion withdrawn.

55. Exclusion of Press and Public

Not required.

56. Meetings of Cabinet - Appendix 2

Noted.

57. Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 16:18.