

Meeting of the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

**Tuesday, 20 February 2024, 10.30
am**

Committee Members present

Councillor Bridget Ley (Chairman)
Councillor Lee Steptoe (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Ben Green
Councillor Tim Harrison
Councillor Robert Leadenham
Councillor Nick Robins
Councillor Max Sawyer
Councillor Murray Turner
Councillor Mark Whittington

Other Members present

Councillor Graham Jeal
Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Richard Cleaver
Councillor Phil Dilks
Councillor Matthew Bailey

Officers

Graham Watts, Assistant Director
(Governance and Public Protection) and
Monitoring Officer
James Welbourn, Democratic Services
Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and
Section 151 Officer
Nick Hibberd, Head of Economic
Development and Inward Investment
Nicola McCoy-Brown, Director of Growth
and Culture
Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues,
Benefits Customer and Community)
Emma Whittaker, Assistant Director of
Planning
Gyles Teasdale, Property Services Manager
Gary Andrew, IT Services Manager
Kay Boasman, Head of Waste Management
and Market Services
Charles James, Policy Officer

67. Public Speaking

Mr Bell – Question to the Committee in relation to Agenda Item 12, ICT Cyber Security Update

'In agenda item 12 there is a report but the actual content of the item is in an Exempt appendix. How are the committee intending to discuss the content in the Exempt appendix and to approve the report unless the committee go into private session? Is it the intention of the committee to propose a motion to exclude the Press and Public when that agenda item is being considered? If not, could the appendix please be supplied to those present during the discussion on that report?'

(End of public question)

The Chairman responded by confirming that if the Committee wished to exclude the public and press to discuss the content of an exempt appendix, they would need to propose, second and agree a motion to do so. It was to be noted, however, that the approval required was for noting only of an update report– not the approval of the report itself.

The Monitoring Officer informed the speaker that the Council attempted to be as open and transparent as possible in relation to all of the information that the Committee was to consider. The reason why the appendix only was recommended to be dealt with in private session was because the information within the main report was able to be put in the public domain and there was no reason to exclude the press and public. If Members wished to discuss any contents of the appendix which Officers recommended did contain exempt information, there would need to be a proposition to exclude the press and public. It was the choice of the Committee if discussion was to include specific details contained within the appendix.

Mr Bell confirmed that *'such items were all subject to the public interest test and he was unsure which article in Schedule 12A was being relied upon to exclude that item. It was not stated either in the agenda or papers so he did not know what the reason was. It was for the Councillors to decide whether to apply that exemption or not and they must apply the public interest test and consider whether the public interest in keeping the information confidential overrides the public interest in disclosing that information. I would like to see confirmation of this consideration recorded within the minutes and how conclusion was reached'*.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that in Schedule 12A the legitimate exemption reasons were listed and also set out in the Council's 'access to information' procedure rules. Alongside each of the reasons was a statement which read:

'Exempt information, if and so long as in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information'.

The Monitoring Officer clarified that the principle was applied to every recommendation that was made when as Monitoring Officer, he recommended a restriction to any information with papers. On the Council's website, the exemption

reasons wording was 'lifted' when trying to access restricted documents, confirming the paragraph wording in relation to the public interest test applied.

68. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gloria Johnson.

Councillor Mark Whittington substituted for Councillor Johnson.

Apologies for delayed attendance were received from Councillor Dilks who was to present the report on agenda item 9 – Section 106 Update and Proposed Administration and Monitoring Fees for Section 106 Planning Obligations.

The Chairman proposed a change to the running order of items so that agenda item 10 – Findings of Car Parking Utilisation and Capacity Study and agenda item 11 – Markets Operational Review Update were heard ahead of agenda item 9. This was seconded and **AGREED**.

69. Disclosure of Interests

There were no interests disclosed.

70. Minutes of Joint Finance and Economic & Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committees meeting held on 9 January 2024

The minutes of the Joint Finance and Economic and Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committees held on 9 January 2024 were proposed, seconded, and **AGREED** as a correct record.

A Member confirmed that several members of the public asked that he raise comments about declarations of interest in the meeting of 9 January 2024 and how they related to future judicial reviews of decision-making of this Council.

- The Member asked if the Monitoring Officer could confirm whether any public complaints were made about the meeting and whether there had been any conversations in advance of the meeting about declarations of interest and about judicial reviews of decision-making?

The Monitoring Officer informed Members that no complaints had been received in relation to any interests disclosed in the meeting of 9 January 2024. Any advice offered to individual councillors was a private discussion. Any complaints were to be referred to the Monitoring Officer who would then investigate. In relation to interests, the onus was on the councillor to decide whether a declaration was required.

71. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2024 were proposed, seconded, and **AGREED** as a correct record.

A Member asked when the Committee was to receive a report on the Draft Economic Development Strategy as the item was no longer scheduled within the Work Programme. The Member considered that the document was essential to coordinate the delivery of a coordinated Economic Development service quoting a report from November 2022 which confirmed that 'doing nothing was not an option'.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that the Strategy was a priority and a new Head of Economic Development and Inward Investment had recently been recruited. The Leader agreed that the Strategy should be rescheduled within the Work Programme and was currently a work in progress, apologising for the delay but emphasising that it was essential to get the Strategy right. He confirmed that there was a plan to hold a Members Working Group to discuss the Draft Economic Development Strategy in the week commencing 18 March 2024. Feedback from the Working Group would then be fed into the Draft Strategy before being heard by the Cabinet. With Cabinet's approval, a consultation period would follow. It was hoped that approval could be obtained in the early summer.

It was **proposed** that a report on the Economic Development Strategy be heard at the next Committee meeting on 8 May 2024.

The Leader questioned whether there was enough time to complete the consultation process but that all efforts to achieve this would be made.

The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that a consultation should not be carried out in the middle of a pre-election period unless it could be demonstrated that it was undertaken under 'business as usual'.

The Chairman informed Members that the Economic Development Strategy would be revisited during the Work Programme item later in the meeting.

72. Updates from previous meeting

The Chairman informed Members that following a discussion in the November 2023 Committee meeting about the Council Tax Discount Scheme for veterans, further work had been completed by Officers. The Head of Service for Revenues, Benefits, Customer and Community provided an update.

The 2021 census confirmed there were 8,694 veterans that were resident within the district of South Kesteven. It was not known in which Council Tax Band the veterans resided. The census gave an indication of the socio-economic classification which detailed 555 veterans were not in work or in

some kind of occupation. This left 8,140 veterans who the Council will class as employed for modelling purposes as a result of the meeting held in November 2023.

For the following options, no precepting Authority had confirmed their willingness to agree to a scheme. The outcome of the consultation was shared with this Committee in November 2023 with regards to the potential of any such scheme. Should a scheme be taken forward as part of consultation for implementation for 2025-2026, those preceptors again would be required to be consulted upon, as well as public consultation.

Further clarification was also needed in regards to scheme eligibility and as a result, a number of assumptions had been made for the 2 modelling options.

Financial option 1 – Assuming all veterans live in Band A and all 8,104 veterans are eligible. The Council Tax Band A for 2023-2024 is £1,307.64. With a 5% discount, the total cost would be £532,209. With a 10% discount, the total cost would be £1,064,418. (Further breakdown could be circulated to Members if required).

Financial option 2 – To award all veterans that live in Band A and to remove anyone who is in receipt of Council Tax Support and Single Persons Discount.

Across the district there were just over 67,000 residents. Of those 30% in Band A, just under 6% were in receipt of Council Tax Support and just over 13% were in receipt of a Single Persons Discount.

With 2,426 veterans assumed to be living in Band A and working (therefore assumed to not be in receipt of Council Tax Support and Single Persons Discount, this would leave 855 veterans who could potentially benefit from the scheme.

Financial modelling for this would be for 5% - £55,900 and for 10% - £111,800.

The Officer emphasised that eligibility was key and assumptions had been made in the calculations. A further report on the scheme was to be heard at the meeting on 8 May 2024 with a recommendation for a way forward. Once scheme eligibility was confirmed, a further report would be brought before the meeting on 25 July 2024.

ACTION:

A breakdown of the financial modelling was to be circulated to Members of the Committee.

The Head of Service for Revenues, Benefits, Customer and Community was thanked by Members for providing a detailed report.

The following points were raised during discussion:

- There was concern over the large difference in potential cost, based on eligibility criteria.
- It was noted that the Armed Forces Covenant was perhaps not fully understood. While veterans were not to be disadvantaged, there was no obligation for the Council to provide discounts. There were many organisations available that offered support.

The Chairman clarified that a meeting was to take place following the circulation of the financial breakdown of each proposed option prior to the item returning to the committee meeting on 8 May 2024.

73. Announcements or updates from the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members or the Head of Paid Service

The Leader of the Council informed Members that there were now funds allocated to the Grantham Future High Street Fund, allowing for the commencement of work on the Station approach and the Market Place, Phase 1. Those works were expected to be signed off by Lincolnshire County Council during March 2024 allowing procurement to take place shortly afterwards. Work was expected to be completed by the autumn, including the toilets at Conduit Lane, Grantham.

The Leader confirmed that work on the Customer Service Centre in the Picture House was to start imminently.

The Deputy Chief Executive informed Members that the target for completion of the Customer Service Centre was September 2024. The design was being finalised and then the contract was to be awarded and works could start.

Councillor Harrison requested that it be placed on record that he was not in favour of the work planned for the Market Place, Grantham. Concern was expressed over the area not being fully levelled as originally agreed and the disruption to the events that would have to be cancelled while the work was undertaken.

A Member asked if the changes made to the original plans for the work in the Market Place could be explained at a future Committee meeting. It was agreed that discussions would continue under the Work Programme item.

74. Budget Monitoring Q3 Forecast

The Leader of the Council introduced the report covering April to December 2023.

The Revenue budget for the General Fund set by Council on 1 March 2023 was £22.256m.

The approved budget amendments, together with forecast changes since the previous budget update report, indicated a projected reduction in the use of reserves for 2023/2024 of £1.393m. This was a reduction in use of reserves of £312k since quarter 2 budget update report presented to the Finance & Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November and Cabinet in December.

Since the quarter 2 report, it had been confirmed there would be no further salary award payments to be made following the national settlement and as such, there was a reduction in the required approved funding of £86k.

The budget set by Council on 1 March 2023 for the 2023/2024 General Fund Capital programme was £12.147m. The General Fund confirmed that there had been a further reduction in the forecasted use of a budget stabilisation reserve which was positive. Investments were performing at a better rate and better performing income was confirmed, particularly on green waste and commercial waste.

The budget set by Council on 1 March 2023 for the 2023/2024 HRA Revenue Budget was £7.519m. The budgeted surplus was fully utilised to fund future investment in stock growth and property maintenance. Void rates remained challenging and particular issues were experienced in terms of tackling damp and mould in Council properties.

The budget set by Council on 1 March 2023 for the 2023/24 HRA Capital programme was £18.479m.

The Council Tax collection was £83.731m as at 31 December 2023 against an annual debt of £99.900m. This was 0.21% below the expected target equating to a reduction in the collection of Council Tax £210k. The service continued to issue reminders and summonses in line with the recovery timetable and provided advice & support for those council taxpayers who were struggling to meet their obligations.

The Business Rates collection was £33.760m as at 31 December 2023 against an annual debt of £40.834m. This was 3.31% above the expected target at 31 December 2023 which equated to an increase in the collection of business rates of £1.352m. The business rates base remained volatile.

Rent Collection was £20.077m as at 31 December 2023 against an annual debt of £28.197m. This was 0.30% below the expected target rate at 31 December 2023 which equated to a reduction in the collection of rent of £86k.

Members raised the following points during discussion:

- How much income was lost each month through void properties?
- Had the recruitment of tradespeople been widened?
- The integration of the Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing Teams was to provide a more efficient and effective service. Was this proceeding well?
- A Member noted the vacancy turnover rate and suggested the charts be separated between permanent staff and staff intentionally hired to be temporary employees as savings on agency staff may be possible.
- A comparison of collection rates with neighbouring Local Authorities would be welcomed.
- A Member asked about the justification of spending £90,000 moving the housing team.
- A Member noted the £50,000 spent on the external audit. A guarantee was requested from the leadership that they would keep the Stamford Arts Centre open.
- The overall decrease of close to £7 million in the reserves was noted. Consideration was given as to whether the Council's Governance could be interpreted as 'stable'.

Councillor Baxter stated the integration of the Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing Teams was complete. Savings had been made but not as high as first calculated due to alterations in the level of services offered.

The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed a saving of £160,000 had been achieved through the integration of the Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing Teams. However, £50,000 had been recalled by the service for extra grass-cutting due to the wet season. Further savings were likely as work continued to align the services. The Officer informed Members that Void properties and the current turn-around times were on the agenda for the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, however current rental costs on empty properties were £98,000 per month. While the Council welcomed comparisons with other Local Authorities for collection rates, there was some reluctance from other Councils to make their rates public.

The Leader confirmed that employees were staying at SKDC longer leading to a decrease in vacancy rate. Budgets were prepared on the assumption of a 3% vacancy factor.

The Deputy Chief Executive said that £90,000 was used to modify and adapt the unit to suit the needs of the housing team, including accommodation for the number of staff.

ACTION:

A financial breakdown of the cost incurred to move the Housing Team were to be circulated to Committee Members.

The Leader informed Members that the money from reserves had been spent on essential improvement projects, as opposed to taking out loans.

The Deputy Chief Executive clarified that the audit fees were a result of a Central Government mandate and that the Council had no role in negotiating those fees. It was not expected that Governance Reserves would be reduced in the next financial year.

The Leader informed the Committee that he could not give a guarantee on the Stamford Arts Centre, but that, especially with the money spent on the Arts by the Council, it was highly unlikely that the Stamford Arts Centre would be closed.

It was AGREED that Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. Reviewed and noted the forecast 2023/2024 outturn position for the General Fund, HRA Revenue and Capital budgets as at the end of December 2023**
- 2. Identified any variances that may have required action or investigation.**

75. Findings of Car Parking Utilisation & Capacity Study

The Deputy Leader of the Council introduced the report.

The Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee recently recommended that an independent car parking study was carried out to assess the utilisation of the Council operated car parks in the four market towns – Grantham, Stamford, Bourne and Market Deeping. The study was also to advise on the future of free parking at Bourne and the Deepings as well as to review the appropriateness of the Council's arrangements for Blue Badge holders.

The Deputy Leader informed Members of the action plan within the report and invited comments and scrutiny from the Committee. The parking charging proposals were going out to a public consultation shortly after the relevant statutory bodies had been consulted.

The Deputy Chief Executive stated that a similar report was commissioned by the Council two years ago. This report was mainly observational and endorsed the findings of the Council's own analysis. The district-owned car parks in Grantham were underperforming and there was an oversupply of parking in the town, influenced by car parks owned by the private sector. A capacity issue was evident in Stamford, particularly on peak-time days of Friday and Saturdays. Both Council-owned multi-storey car parks in Grantham were currently operating at a loss which created a burden on the tax-payer. It may be considered that capacity in Grantham may be required to be reduced rather than to unsuccessfully try to compete with the private sector. Free-parking times may have negative financial consequences if capacity was not increased sufficiently to cover the cost, even though free-parking would have a positive impact on attracting visitors to support local business. The Officer recommended that the Committee may wish to hear an update six months after the implementation of the new charges to consider whether any further modifications were required.

During discussion, Members raised the following points:

- A Member asked why Morrisons was included in the study and not Asda. It was noted that Asda had two hours of free parking and a lot of people parked at Asda to do their shopping.
- The study may not be representative because it only captured one weekend in November. It was hoped the current status in Stamford, including free overnight parking, was maintained, a petition had collected 2,600 signatures in reference to the matter.
- The towns must be considered separately as all had different needs.
- It was noted that some of the council-owned car parks were used by some as long-term residential parking. The Member also commented that some significant council-owned car parks, were not mentioned in the survey, and suggested that all council-owned car parks should be included in future surveys.
- Was there any data found by the study regarding accessibility and motorcycle parking spaces? It was noted that the SKDC website stated that seven council-owned parking lots had motorcycle spaces, and the Member asked if the council intended to keep them free of charge and if they were taken into account for the capacity numbers. Were there any confirmed motorcycle parking spaces in Watergate, Grantham?

- Would the proposed charges and reductions increase or decrease the council's income and by how much?
- The cost for new car parks seemed quite high. At what point would the Council have had made enough income to break even on the expenditure?
- Had 'future-proofing any investment been considered?

The Deputy Chief Executive informed Members that not all facets of parking in Grantham were included in the study, but Morrisons was observed due it being in the same parking area as the council parking. The Council had usage information that informed the proposals and therefore was representative of the characteristics of parking in each town. The scope of the study was linked to the economic centres of the towns. The consultation had not formally started and comments would be invited.

The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the study did not mention motorcycle spaces but that he would supply that information to Committee Members.

ACTION:

Data on motorcycle spaces within each car park to be circulated to Members.

The Deputy Chief Executive stated that the Watergate car park was currently being re-configured due to the building of a housing development and that the status quo for motorcycle charges was to be maintained. The Officer added that it would be difficult to predict either an increase or decrease in income as there were many variances to consider.

The Deputy Leader confirmed that the future was a consideration and these were incorporated into the Local Plan as the Council were expecting local towns to expand.

It was proposed, seconded, and **AGREED** that:

The Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- **Considered the findings of the car parking study.**
- **Made any observations in relation to the Survey findings and the current car parking tariff proposals.**
- **Supported the extension of the Cattle Market car park in Stamford in order to provide additional parking.**

- **Agreed to commission a further car parking study six months after the implementation of the new car parking tariffs to assess their impact.**
- **Requested that further work was undertaken with respect to:**
 - o **The future car parking arrangements in Bourne and the Deepings**
 - o **The current parking arrangements for Blue Badge holders**
 - o **The future capacity requirements for Grantham and Stamford**

It was proposed, seconded, and **AGREED** that the Committee pause for a 10 minute break. *(The time was 12:45).*

76. Markets Operational Review - Update

The Leader of the Council introduced the report.

Following an independent review of the market operations in 2023, a number of concerns were raised around the governance of the Market Service, in particular the operational and financial practices of the service. An Action Plan identifying required corrective measures was put in place and updates had been provided to the Governance & Audit Committee in June 2023 and September 2023.

The original market review identified several areas of concern, which included the vacant post of a Markets Manager, along with staff not having appropriate job descriptions or contracts of employment which led to their methods of working, not reflecting the Council's pay policy. Following two unsuccessful recruitment processes a new Market Manager was appointed and had been in post since 30th October 2023.

A 30-day consultation (with staff) commenced on the 30th October 2023. Toward the end of the consultation, market staff advised of queries about flexibility of contracts. Final contracts were issued early in January 2024. There were now 17 market staff on permanent contracts and 3 on casual contracts.

Most of the market workers would now be paid an annual salary at a set grade. This meant each would receive a consistent and regular amount of pay each month plus any additional hours worked during the month. They would also be entitled to paid holidays.

Current waste collection and disposal methods remained. Street cleansing and waste disposal functions for the Grantham and Stamford (Friday) markets were undertaken by market staff. The costs of collection and disposal of trade waste had effectively been historically subsidised and should not continue in

the long term. Traders at the Saturday markets at Stamford and Bourne were required to remove their own waste.

A significant area of concern in the original market operations review was that a number of traders were making cash payments for the hire of their stall/pitch. This was a risk to the Council and to the officers designated to collect the fees. Following the successful trial of a card payment system, traders were now required to pay either by this method or by direct debit. There were still a small number of traders paying by cash but the newly appointed Head of Service (Waste and Markets) was working with the Market Manager to eliminate cash payments.

Stalls at Bourne market had been checked and repaired by the original supplier. The stalls used at Stamford were currently being repaired. Once completed the operative carrying out the repairs was to move to Grantham market. Delays occurred whilst seeking a specialist qualified contractor with the requisite documentation to do the work.

The markets operated in much the same way for many years and risk assessments and method statements had not been reviewed. These were now in progress and should be completed by February 2024. These were to be reviewed at least annually and also as and when required (e.g. in response to any accident or near miss) to ensure they remained responsive to the changing health and safety risks and issues faced.

Members raised the following points during discussion:

- What was the feedback from market traders? How would the feedback inform operational processes in the future?
- The changes were largely welcomed. A Member confirmed that most traders were willing to adhere to the new card-payment system.

The Leader of the Council said a market review team has been established and was to meet on 22 February. This team would discuss strategies moving forward. Today's report covered feedback solely from the review.

It was proposed, seconded and **AGREED that The Finance and Economic Committee:**

1. Noted the updated position with respect to the Market Operational Action Plan and the progress made to date and provided any feedback.

2. Agreed that Markets returned to 'business as usual' given the appointment of a new Head of Waste Management and Market Services and a new Market Manager.

77. Section 106 Update and proposed administration and monitoring fees for Section 106 planning obligations

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning introduced the agenda item.

A Section 106 (S106) agreement was a legally binding agreement or 'planning obligation' between a local planning authority, like South Kesteven District Council and a property owner or developer. The purpose of a S106 agreement was to mitigate the impact of the development on the local community and infrastructure. Typically, these agreements addressed issues such as:

- Affordable housing
- Highways
- Education
- Public open space and leisure
- Town centre improvements

During a restructure of the Planning Department (Winter 2022-2023), the role of Infrastructure Delivery Officer was created, replacing a more administrative monitoring role. Following a competitive recruitment process, the role was successfully recruited to in September 2023. The role involved monitoring and recording obligations, as well as liaising with stakeholders to ensure any financial contributions were appropriately spent.

Currently the Infrastructure Delivery Officer (IDO) was working with the Assistant Director of Planning & Growth, Development Management and Enforcement Officers to review the current processes and practices to identify opportunities for improvement.

The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (CIL Regulations) required that from the financial year 2019/2020 onwards, any local authority that had received developer obligation (either through Section 106 planning obligations or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)) must publish an IFS by 31 December each year. The Planning Committee (7 December 2023) received an update and reviewed the IFS for the financial year 2022-23 prior to its publication on the website.

The Council was able to set charges to recover the cost of delivering discretionary services. For the Planning Service, this means the Council can recover costs associated with monitoring Section 106 agreements.

Members raised the following points during discussion:

- The report was welcomed as positive.
- What happened if the Developers did not honour the Section 106 agreement? A Section 73 Notice by Developers working at Barrowby was mentioned as an example.

The Assistant Director of Planning confirmed that Section 106 agreements are legally binding and that failure to comply with them can be enforced through the courts. The Officer also mentioned that there were clauses in Section 106 agreements that confirmed that late payments were subject to interest charges. There were mechanisms in place, such as a Section 73, to vary the terms of a planning permission which would require an application to the Council. This would be considered in line with current procedures.

Councillor Mark Whittington declared an interest in that he is the councillor for the Barrowby Ward and has had meetings with a development group in his ward that had a Section 106 agreement.

It was proposed, seconded and **AGREED that the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**

1. Noted the update regarding Section 106 Monitoring, including the publication of the Infrastructure Funding Statement.

2. Recommended to Full Council that the charging mechanism for the administration and monitoring of Section 106 agreements currently set out in the “Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (2012)” was updated.

It was proposed, seconded and **AGREED** that an extra 30 minutes be added to the committee’s meeting time as the meeting was approaching 3 hours in length.

78. ICT Cyber Security Update

The Chairman reminded Members of the Committee that the appendix to the report was exempt and that they may need to move to exclude the public and press to discuss the document in detail.

The Deputy Leader of the Council introduced the agenda item which served as an update regarding the completion of the Cyber Treatment Plan which was funded by the Cyber Security Resilience Grant.

On 27 April 2022 the Leader of the Council approved the acceptance of the Cyber Security Resilience Grant award of £150k from the Department for Housing Levelling up and Communities (DLUHC). The purpose of the grant was to fund the actions identified in the Cyber Security Treatment Plan which the Council produced in conjunction with the Local Digital Cyber support team. The plan identified the improvements the Council should implement to increase Cyber Security and Resilience.

The plan was expected to be completed over a 12-month period and quarterly meetings were held with Livtech, who were the organisation responsible for

monitoring the completion of the actions included in the plan on behalf of DLUHC. Positive feedback was received during the meetings regarding the progress the Council was making with completing the identified actions.

Livtec signed off the completion of the plan on 23 May 2023 as the Council only had 2 outstanding actions to complete. One action had been completed but the completion of the final action was delayed due to the delivery timeframe of the required equipment. The equipment had now been received and the final action was expected to be completed by 31 March 2024.

Cyber security remained a key priority for the Council, for example, the National Cyber Security Centre process weekly checks against our external Internet Protocol addresses to identify any weaknesses or changes that have been made that reduce our cyber security resilience and the Council will complete any required actions. An annual penetration test was also completed to ensure that the Council is Public Sector Network compliant, this penetration test would identify any weaknesses in our systems which needed to be addressed prior to certification being issued.

It was **AGREED that the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the completion of the Cyber Treatment Plan attached at Appendix A.**

79. Corporate Plan 2024 - 2027 Provisional Key Performance Indicators

The Leader of the Council introduced the report.

The Corporate Plan 2024-2027 was adopted by Council on 25 January 2024.

Effective performance management was essential to the success of the Plan. It established how delivery would be monitored, improvements driven and open and transparent accountability upheld. There were two suites of performance indicators to support the Plan.

The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) would monitor the delivery of the Corporate Plan Actions and the overall performance of the Council. This report proposed the KPI suite for the fifteen actions that fall within the scope of the Finance and Economic OSC. Accountability for delivery of these actions rested with the Senior Management Team.

The Strategic Socio-Economic Indicators (SSEIs) would monitor the progress towards the fulfilment of the Council's vision, 2034 outcomes and the overall performance of the district. Each SSEI was benchmarkable against other local authorities, aligned to the Office for Local Government (OFLOG) suite, and will be reported in the annual State of the District report (SOTD).

An effective KPI suite must be able to perform three functions:

- Measure activity and performance.
- Understand experiences and outcomes.
- Use evidence to inform and drive improvement.

Meeting these functions had underpinned the approach to developing the KPI suite. To do this, two basic foundational principles had been observed:

- The selected metrics must be wholly within the Council's control, so offering accountability and stimulating continuous improvement.
- The selected metrics must be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant & Timely).

The draft KPIs had been developed in close consultation with the relevant Officers for each service. It was expected that the KPI suite would experience a degree of evolution over the next four years. This improvement will be prompted by the needs of decision makers and the scrutiny committees and further consideration of how to best meet those needs by Officers.

During discussion, Members raised the following points:

- It was acknowledged and welcomed that the KPIs would evolve over time and be subject to consistent scrutiny.
- A Member stated that they did not feel as if the council is honouring the first KPI – on Economic Development.

The Organisational Development and Change Manager suggested adding a sixteenth KPI regarding income recovery, recommending that the collection process was effective, efficient, timely and fair.

It was proposed, seconded and **AGREED that the Committee:**

- 1. Confirmed the key performance indicators it wished to review associated with the actions in the Corporate Plan 2024-27 adding a sixteenth KPI regarding income recovery, recommending that the collection process was effective, efficient, timely and fair.**
- 2. Noted that key performance indicators be monitored throughout the year as determined by the Committee in agreeing its work programme.**
- 3. Noted that the KPI suite will be reviewed and if necessary revised as part of the annual review process.**

80. Work Programme 2023 - 2024

The Committee considered the Work Programme 2023-2024.

The Deputy Chief Executive suggested discussion of the Provisional Outturn for 2023 and 2024 be added to the May meeting and confirmed that an update on St Martins Park, Stamford would be added to the agenda for the meeting on 8 May 2024. The Officer confirmed that the Depot Project updates would be heard by Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the coming year after the tender process had been completed.

The Director of Growth and Culture confirmed that a Working Group for the Economic Development Strategy was arranged for 18 March 2024. The Officer informed Members that a timeline of the Economic Development Strategy process could be circulated to Members of the Committee.

ACTION:

A copy of the timeline of the Economic Development Strategy process to be circulated to Members of the Committee.

An update on the draft Economic Strategy was scheduled, as discussed earlier in the meeting, for 8 May 2024.

The Work Programme, with amendments as discussed was proposed, seconded and **AGREED**.

81. Any other business, which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstance decides is urgent

There was no other business.

82. Close of meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 13:45.