

Minutes of a meeting of the **PERFORMANCE MONITORING PANEL** held in the Function Room, South Holland Centre, Market Place, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 1SS, on Wednesday, 8 September 2021 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

M D Booth (Vice-Chairman)

J R Astill
C J T H Brewis
T A Carter
A C Cronin

J D McLean
N H Pepper
P A Redgate
G P Scalese

J Tyrrell
S C Walsh
A M Newton

In Attendance: The Assistant Director Communities and Operations, the Assistant Director Strategic Growth, the Assistant Director Property and Delivery, the Head of Delivery, the Economic Development and Inward Investment Manager, the Senior Change and Performance Business Partner and the Democratic Services Team Leader.

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors B Alcock, J L King, A C Tennant and D J Wilkinson

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Notification had been received that Councillor A M Newton was replacing Councillor B Alcock for this meeting only.

2 **PERFORMANCE MONITORING PANEL**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Performance Monitoring Panel held on 18 March 2021.

AGREED:

That the minutes be signed as a correct record.

3 **JOINT PERFORMANCE MONITORING PANEL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Joint Performance Monitoring Panel and Policy Development Panel held on 29 June 2021.

AGREED:

Action By

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That the minutes be signed as a correct record.

4 JOINT PERFORMANCE MONITORING PANEL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Joint Performance Monitoring Panel and Policy Development Panel held on 22 July 2021.

AGREED:

That the minutes be signed as a correct record.

5 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

Councillor Carter did not have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, but in the interests of transparency, declared that in relation to agenda item 10, she was the owner of a storage business.

6 QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 6

There were none.

7 TRACKING OF RECOMMENDATIONS

There were none.

8 ITEMS REFERRED FROM THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL.

There were none.

9 KEY DECISION PLAN

Consideration was given to the Key Decision Plan issued on 19 August 2021, and the following points were raised.

- Members questioned whether the purpose of the property acquisitions to support Housing Options service delivery was to house homeless people
 - Officers confirmed that this was the case.
- Members enquired about a property which had already been acquired, and was due to be ready at the end of June. The work on the property had been more extensive than ward members had been advised, and work was not yet finalised. Members asked whether a survey had taken place after completion of the property and asked whether due diligence

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had been conducted. Members wanted to prevent the same situation occurring in the future.

- The officer confirmed that due diligence had taken place. A thorough inspection had been carried out when vacant possession had been obtained. The officer confirmed the additional work that was required, that the purchase decision had been made by the Portfolio Holder, and that the decision had been through the scrutiny process.
- Members asked when the property would be on stream
 - The officer confirmed this would be October 2021. The completion of works had been delayed due to reduced availability and increased costs of supplies, and a national shortage of labour had been seen in the construction industry.
- Members were disappointed that a surveyor had not been instructed.
 - Officers confirmed that a range of surveys, including structural surveys were completed prior to purchase as required.

AGREED:

That the Key Decision Plan issued on 19 August 2021 be noted.

10 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/INWARD INVESTMENT UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Acting Executive Director, which provided an update to the Panel on current work being undertaken to support the South Holland economy.

The Inward Investment Manager gave an update on this item, and the following points were covered:

- The team had continued to concentrate on the delivery of the Government's Covid-19 business grants (the Local Restrictions Support Grants, the Open but Impacted discretionary grant programme and the Restart Grant). The schemes had drawn to a close, and a total of 5544 payments totalling £30,519,323 had been distributed to South Holland businesses since the start of the first lockdown in March.
- In November 2020, SHDC was allocated £2,774,439 in Additional Restrictions Grant Funding. The report detailed how the authority had used the money to support businesses.
- As restrictions eased, face to face visits with businesses had resumed.

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- Construction on the first of the University buildings on the Food Enterprise Zone (FEZ) in Holbeach was now complete and had officially been handed over to the University, Construction on the second had begun, to be followed by a third building. Interest levels in sites remained high.
- Inward investment activity had been centred mostly around the FEZ. All plots on Phase 1 were already reserved or under offer, there was considerable interest in Phase 2 and there were already enquiries for office space in the hub building.
- The ERDF funded Grants4growth programme had continued to perform throughout the pandemic period and was on track to deliver all of its contracted outputs on time and within budget. It was still awaiting go-ahead for a further year's extension.
- The Inward Investment Team were taking an active role in the business and economy element of the Spalding town centre work, and were also engaging with the Town Centre Steering Group and the Economy and Skills subgroup.

Members considered the information, and the following issues were raised:

- Members asked whether any businesses that had received grant funding, had subsequently closed.
 - Officers were not aware of any and stated that despite the pandemic, reports had indicated that the South Holland economy had done well.
- It was confirmed that although there had been some movement on numbers of people claiming Universal Credit, the change was not significant.
- Members thanked the officers for the administration of grants and acknowledged they had been a lifeline for many businesses.
- Regarding the online job fair, members enquired whether data existed that gave information on job vacancies and the number of job seekers. Members also asked which schools had engaged with the Enterprise Advisor Network.
 - Officers did not have this information to hand, and advised that they would circulate the information to members.
- Members asked about businesses that had been identified for the agri-food sector bid.
 - Officers confirmed this was a package of funding from central government that businesses would be

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able to bid into as and when the funding was approved.

AGREED:

That the report be noted.

11 DWP

A presentation was given to the Panel by the Partnership Manager for the Department for Work and Pensions, which included details on the scope of Universal Credit and current projects.

The Universal Credit presentation included information and data regarding:

- Employment Rate;
- Moving Disabled People into Work;
- Black Minority Ethnic (BME) employment rates;
- Older Workers;
- Gender gap employment rate;
- Universal Credit claimants;
- New style Jobseekers Allowance;
- Youth Unemployment.

The following projects were discussed:

- A redundancy toolkit had been created which combined support available to businesses and employees who faced potential redundancy. This had been created by a partnership of agencies led by the Chamber of Commerce Federation of Small Businesses. DWP received indicators through the insolvency service regarding likelihood of redundancies of more than 20 employees. None had been received in the last 3 months throughout Lincolnshire.
- The Kick Start scheme was a significant response to Youth Unemployment which was still available to young people and businesses. Most had been developmental roles. Applications could still be accommodated.
- The Restart Programme engaged people who had been unemployed for at least 12 months.
- Short Intervention Training Programme fulfilled specific employer needs and enhanced employability of potential applicants through the utilisation of short certification. Funding from this scheme accommodated opportunities.
- The local DWP was involved in a pilot scheme which related to

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LGV shortages. Full assessment had not yet been published but indicators recommended the utilisation of funding streams; and identified pathways for return to the sector such as funded certifications. Frustrations had existed from process delays caused by Covid.

- On-line jobs fairs had been effective during the Covid period.

Members thanked the Partnership Manager for the DWP for attending and made the following comments:

- Members requested contact details for the Partnership Manager in case of future queries, and it was confirmed these could be provided.
- Members requested reassurance that all people, including those who lived on the outskirts of the district who needed to look for work outside of district boundaries (such as Peterborough, Wisbech and Kings Lynn) were supported. The issue of inadequate public transport into Spalding was also highlighted.
 - The Partnership Manager DWP confirmed that support was not limited by boundaries. All opportunities would be considered. DWP obtained and presented comprehensive details from employers which enabled customers to make informed choices, including regarding commute.
 - Where there had been staff shortages, wider opportunities were experienced where employers had increased flexibilities regarding shift patterns and transport provision.
 - Online recruitment driven by employment agencies, direct adverts and social media, had assisted in providing wider access to opportunities which were not limited by physical boundaries. Those with the capacity to travel widely were being facilitated.
- Members expressed the need for opportunities across the whole district, not just in Spalding. Concerns were raised about long commutes and the related carbon footprint impact. Shorter journey times were preferred.
 - The Partnership Manager DWP confirmed that DWP were receptive and available to all and would relay all offers that employers made whilst practicing due diligence around exploitation and coercion risks.

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The Chairman thanked the Partnership Manager for the DWP for his presentation.

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12 MARKETING/RENOVATION OF INDUSTRIAL UNITS

The Panel received a presentation from the Assistant Director, Property and Delivery on the current situation regarding the current occupancy levels, future marketing, new lettings and maintenance works on industrial units. The following information was provided:

- The officer stated that various presentations and reports relating to the replacement Letting Policy, and the marketing and maintenance of units, had been provided to both the Policy Development Panel and Performance Monitoring Panel during the summer of 2020
- a new Lettings Policy was approved in September 2020 and was now being implemented through the granting of new leases to existing and any new tenants;
- examples of repairs and improvement works undertaken and planned;
- that of the 50 units in SHDC's Industrial Estates, 49 were currently let with the final unit under offer and with solicitors;
- opportunities existed for increasing the portfolio of industrial units under ownership and management, if the full business case was approved, to build new units at Crease Drove in Crowland. There could be opportunities to build units there for start-up as well as expanding businesses including the possibility of subdivision of units for small businesses on a serviced space basis, a suggestion made at a previous Performance Monitoring Panel meeting;
- organisational changes, namely bringing all asset matters under a single Directorate and recruitment to a key post in the team as well as the new Lettings Policy, had added additional capacity, commercial approach and expertise to support the effective management of the industrial estates.

Members thanked officers for the presentation and made the following comments:

- Members were grateful for the improvements made to the Railway Lane site which would be attractive to potential tenants.
- Members questioned whether a risk existed regarding delivering the Crease Drove expansion which had been paused when the pandemic started (March 2020) due to the possibility of build cost increase; and whether the budget needed to be reviewed as a consequence.
 - Officers confirmed that the tender process would now recommence and officers would assess the tender

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prices when they were returned. The build cost and anticipated rents achievable based on an assessment of market interest were two key ingredients to progressing the business case and both activities would now commence. Capital funding had already been set aside for 22/23 to support this project but the exact figure required would not be known until tenders had been returned and evaluated.

- Members asked whether progress had been made on discussions regarding compounds at Railway Lane.
 - The Officers confirmed that the site was suitable for a container and/or yard based storage and all suggestions were welcomed. The market needed to be tested for feedback for 2022.

- Members had noticed a number of vehicles parking on the roadside in the Railway Lane area and asked whether there were opportunities to create some additional formal parking on the site.
 - The officer responded that this would be investigated, and all comments were welcomed.

The Chairman thanked the Assistant Director, Property and Delivery for the presentation.

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13 Q4 PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW REPORT 20/21

The Senior Change and Performance Partner advised the Panel that, although the Q4 20/21 and Q1 21/22 Performance Overview reports were included for information, he would concentrate on presentation of the Q1 report as this provided more up to date information.

14 Q1 21/22 PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Manager for Growth, which provided an update on how the Council was performing for the period 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021.

The Quarter 1 2021-22 Performance Report detailed in Appendix A aimed to provide members, businesses, and residents with an overview of how the Council was performing against a number of key strategic indicators in an ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The reported indicators provided an indication of performance and business intelligence as compared to the previous year to highlight how key services had performed whilst the organisation had continued to respond to the challenges and pressures that

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the pandemic had presented to both the organisation and the district as a whole.

As highlighted previously the report did not contain a suite of performance indicators to the same scale and breadth as presented to the Panel in previous years. This was because, in many cases, the focus of many council services and their attendant resources had shifted away from pre-March 2020 'business as usual activity', and was instead now focused on a different range of areas directly aligned to supporting the council with its pandemic response and recovery.

Consequently, the report sought to provide a summary of performance in key areas which reflected the current performance of the council in a number of critical areas, whilst the organisation remained focused on supporting its communities, residents and local business in extra-ordinary times. The narrative within the report provided supplementary commentary to support the data.

Members considered both the Q4 20/21 report and the Q1 21/22 report and made the following comments:

- Members queried the reference to adverse weather conditions which had affected waste collections (Q4 report, section 2.4 of the report). Members could not recall such challenging weather conditions.
 - The officer would investigate this point and provide members with clarification
- Members welcomed Q4 data regarding increased emails (detailed in section 2.2 of the report) and the explanation relating to the reduced bounce from the website (detailed under the Customer/Digital section of Appendix A).
- Members considered the narrative and response regarding Freedom of Information (Appendix A) as poor. Data needed to be managed when it was first received rather than revisited later. This issue was apparent from the narrative in the Q1 report so why had this not improved?
 - Officers accepted the point raised regarding Freedom of Information but advised that GDPR permissions would have to be confirmed before this could be shared.
- Members asked for more information regarding complaints received. The report stated there had been an increase in the number of complaints dealt with (Appendix A) but a statement demonstrating an understanding of root causes or trends had

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not been included.

- Officers confirmed that a breakdown of complaint data was held and would be shared.
- Members requested the increase in void days from Q4 at 2190 compared to 1600 one year ago be investigated. Members stated that work on kitchens and bathrooms in empty houses should cease and be prioritised for inhabited homes instead.
 - The officer agreed to investigate this point with the Assistant Director Housing so that feedback regarding the narrative could be provided. CG
- Members asked for clarification regarding Business rate relief (Appendix A, Business rate collection rate) as the narrative had changed from Q4 to Q1.
 - The officer agreed that he would investigate this item. CG
- Covid Business related enquiries (Appendix A, Public Protection) had increased as expected but the narrative was missing which could have highlighted trends and therefore informed actions.
 - The officer advised that he would investigate the missing narrative. CG
- Officers reported they were pleased that fly tipping had improved.
- In connection with fly tipping, Members noted that the report did not include reference to tipper trucks. Criticism had been received on social media regarding fly tipping and how this had been dealt with. Members were aware that work had been done and advised communications to the press would be worthwhile regarding completed work. Enforcement data was also requested.
 - Officers confirmed that a report on enforcement would be presented at the next PMP meeting. There had been challenges in this area but progress had been made which would be detailed in the report. EH

AGREED

That both the Q4 Performance Overview Report 20/21 and the Q1 21/22 Performance Overview reports be noted.

15 PERFORMANCE MONITORING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Manager – Governance which set out the Work Programme of the Performance Monitoring Panel. The Work Programme consisted

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of two separate sections, the first setting out the dates of the future panel meetings along with proposed items for consideration, and the second setting out the Task Groups that had been identified by the Panel.

Members were advised that, following a discussion at Full Council on 29 July 2021, it had been agreed that a Task Group be set up to look at the current and future operations of the South Holland Centre. Scrutiny Chairmen had agreed that the Task Group would be joint, with members being sought from both the Performance Monitoring Panel and the Policy Development Panel. Members had been requested to express their interest in joining the Task Group, and nine members had come forward (Councillors Alcock, Biggadike, Booth, Carter, Cronin, Redgate, Walsh, Wilkinson and Woolf, with Councillor Newton as co-optee). The Panel felt that a membership of nine would be too large for a workable group, and that five members would be appropriate. Councillors Carter and Booth withdrew leaving seven members. It was agreed that the Chairmen of both Panels would consider the members who wished to be involved and make the final decision of how the five would be selected, and that the final membership would then be confirmed at the meeting of the Policy Development Panel on 21 September 2021.

AGREED:

That the report be noted.

16 ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

There were none.

(The meeting ended at 8.00 pm)

(End of minutes)