

Minutes of a meeting of the **SOUTH HOLLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Wednesday, 27 July 2022 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

P A Redgate (Chairman)

B Alcock
J R Astill
J Avery
A C Beal
F Biggadike
H J W Bingham
M D Booth
C J T H Brewis
T A Carter

A Casson
P E Coupland
A C Cronin
R Gambba-Jones
R A Gibson
R Grocock
C J Lawton
A M Newton
N H Pepper

G A Porter
J L Reynolds
G T D Rudkin
G P Scalse
M D Seymour
G J Taylor
J Tyrrell
D J Wilkinson
C N Worth

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors M Hasan, J L King, S-A Slade, E J Sneath, A C Tennant, S C Walsh and A R Woolf, together with the Chief Executive.

In Attendance: The Deputy Chief Executive (Communities), the Assistant Director (Governance) and Monitoring Officer, the Assistant Director (Strategic Growth and Development), the Assistant Director (Regulatory), the Head of Delivery, the Democratic Services Manager and the Democratic Services Team Leader.

22. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 11 May 2022.

DECISION:

That the minutes be signed as a correct record.

23. ACTIONS

Members were advised that the Action Sheet detailed responses to the Questions without Notice raised at the last meeting, where responses could not be immediately provided.

24. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

The Leader of the Council declared an interest in relation to agenda items 10 and 18, as they related to the purchase of new

Action By

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properties, and he had the potential to know the parties involved. He would take no part in the discussion and would leave the meeting for consideration of these items.

25. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The following announcements were made:

- The following officers were welcomed to the meeting – John Leach (the Deputy Chief Executive (Communities)) was in attendance in the absence of the Chief Executive, and John Medler (the new Assistant Director – Governance (Monitoring Officer)) was also in attendance.
- Members were thanked for their continued support towards the Chairman's fundraising activities for his Chairman's Charity – he had recently completed a charity cycle ride, and in September would be undertaking a sponsored skydive with some members of the Democratic Services Team.

26. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET.

The Leader made the following announcements:

The South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (S&ELCP) had won an award at the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards recently. This year's Awards had the largest number of entries with the S&ELCP winning the Public/Public category award. The Leader wished to thank all staff who had been instrumental in getting the Partnership into a position to win the award. He also thanked all those staff not directly involved, but who had continued to undertake their day-to-day roles, providing high quality services to the community.

27. QUESTIONS ASKED ON NOTICE UNDER STANDING ORDER 6

There were none.

28. QUESTIONS ASKED WITHOUT NOTICE UNDER STANDING ORDER 7

Question to: Councillor Grocock

Question from: Councillor Newton

Subject: Update on trial period using hawks to disperse pigeons in Spalding Town Centre

Councillor Newton requested an update on the trial period for

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using hawks to disperse pigeons in Spalding Town Centre. Councillor Grocock advised that over the last two days he had spoken with local media on this issue. The 12-week trial period had ended on 20 June 2022. The hawk had been flown twice a day. He felt that the trial had been successful, and that the company used had reported back in early July stating that there were now fewer pigeons in the town centre. There had also been many letters from residents who were pleased with the action being taken by the Council. The public would be consulted on their views as to whether to use the hawk for a further period. Councillor Grocock confirmed that although a hawk had been used, its purpose was only to disrupt the pigeons and that none had been attacked, hurt or killed.

Councillor Newton asked a supplementary question, and asked if the Portfolio Holder would listen to what the public had to say? The Portfolio Holder responded that he always listened to what the public had to say. He had consulted with the public on which method to use to address the issue of the pigeons before using the hawk – this method had been the one favoured by the public.

Councillor Biggadike commented that he fully supported Councillor Grocock's decision to employ the use of a hawk to disperse the pigeons in Spalding town centre.

Question to: Councillor Porter

Question from: Councillor Brewis

Subject: The continued unfairness of Drainage Board precepts being treated as district expenditure.

Councillor Brewis stated that Drainage Board precepts continued to be treated as district expenditure. The Authority had raised the unfairness of the current situation with central government – how far had this discussion progressed? Councillor Porter responded by agreeing totally with Councillor Brewis's point and stated that the drainage burden should be shared across the whole country, and not just the areas that required land drainage - the whole country benefited from well drained agricultural land. When, in the past the government had paid a specific grant for drainage to be undertaken, there had been no issues however, with the drawing together of various funding streams into the Local Government Support Grant (LGSG) and then the subsequent withdrawal of the LGSG, affected authorities had been left to pick up this shortfall. It was a significant bill for SHDC – in fact, without this bill, SHDC would have the second lowest Council Tax in the country. The authority had been making good progress in its attempts to address the situation when the previous Chancellor had been in post – it was hoped that if he soon became Prime

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Minister, that this progress could be built on.

Question to: Councillor Gambba-Jones
Question from: Councillor Newton
Subject: Further roll-out of brown bins (garden waste)

Councillor Newton commented that she was pleased that the authority now had a new freighter to accommodate further roll-out of the garden waste service, and that more people could therefore use the service. She asked if the roll-out was happening quickly enough, and could everybody on the existing waiting list be accommodated? Councillor Gambba-Jones responded that, in relation to the waiting list (as it stood prior to the introduction of the third vehicle) if it had not yet been cleared, it would be imminently. New applications for the service were now being added as new subscription applications. These were running at around 150 per week, with the best week yet achieving 200 sales. The Council was trying to get as many people as possible signed up to the service. Subscriptions were increasing continuously, and the service had proved to be very successful.

Question to: Councillor Astill
Question from: Councillor Gibson
Subject: Live streaming of Council meetings

Councillor Gibson commented that new technology had been installed in the Council Chamber and meeting rooms – what stage was the live streaming of meetings now at? Councillor Astill responded that there was still some work to be done on some of the equipment however, a live-streaming start date of September/October 2022 was anticipated. It was hoped that live streaming of more meetings could be undertaken. The first meeting to be tested would be the Planning Committee and then a way forward with other committees would be addressed.

Councillor Gibson commented that Full Council should be a meeting that was live-streamed.

Question to: Councillor Coupland
Question from: Councillor Brewis
Subject: Council Tax charge for empty properties

Councillor Brewis referred to an issue around Council Tax charging for empty properties that he had raised under Questions Without Notice at the last meeting of Council – he commented that he had not received a response regarding this and asked when the issue would be resolved.

Councillor Coupland replied that he was of the opinion that this

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issue had been resolved. He could not discuss the specifics within the meeting and would ask the relevant team to contact Councillor Brewis with an answer.

Question to: Councillor Gambba-Jones

Question from: Councillor Newton

Subject: Continued closure of small play area off Lavender Drive, Spalding

Councillor Newton referred to the continued closure of a small play area off Lavender Drive in Spalding. There had been a requirement for some work to be undertaken however, repairs had not taken place and the play area was still closed. Officers had been unable to advise her of who could provide an answer on the current situation – when would the equipment be repaired, and when would the play area re-open? Councillor Gambba-Jones responded that he had visited the play area on another matter and whilst there, was concerned at the state of the play equipment and surface and had therefore requested the play area be considered for closure at that time – it subsequently was closed. An assessment and estimate for a repair bill had been provided, which was three times the budget allocated for play areas for the whole South Holland area. Careful consideration had to be given to the cost of repair, and he commented that the money could be better spent in other play areas in the locality of Lavender Drive. He also stated that some years ago, Government strategy had changed to encourage parents to extend their journey to play areas to encourage more exercise, and authorities were therefore being discouraged from adding small play areas. He could not provide assurance that this play area would re-open, as it was not cost effective, and there were other sites within the area. Historically, there had been shortcomings in the delivery of play areas and there would therefore be a review of how these issues should be approached, with a new play area strategy to be developed – this would be more strategic (ensuring that they were situated in the right place, were suitable for purpose, and whether additional were needed or any should be closed down).

Councillor Newton asked a supplementary question – what was the Council's annual budget for play areas? Councillor Gambba-Jones responded that the annual budget was £2,000 for the whole area.

Councillor Newton commented that this was very poor, and Councillor Gambba-Jones responded that this was the reason for developing a strategy going forward.

Question to: Councillor Porter

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Question from: Councillor Newton

Subject: Closure of GP surgery at Johnson Community Hospital

Councillor Newton commented on the closure of the GP surgery at Johnson Community Hospital, and proposals to move the patients to other surgeries within the area. What was the Council doing to engage with relevant bodies regarding the closure? When the surgery at Pennygate had closed a number of years ago, pledges had been made that consideration would be given to building a new, suitable surgery on the west side of Spalding to accommodate the people in that area. Should the Council be supporting efforts to make representations to pursue this? Councillor Porter shared Councillor Newton's concerns regarding the closure of the surgery at the Johnson Community Hospital. He believed that there had been planning consent given for a surgery on Wygate Park. The problem was securing the GPs to staff the surgery – these concerns had been raised with the Health Authority some time ago (before the CCG was set up), and the Council had suggested that it should be able to employ doctors from abroad instead. Since then, the UK had left the European Union which made this more difficult, and there were generally too few GPs in the country as a whole. Despite this, the more urgent decision of providing a service for patients rather than dispersing them throughout the remaining surgeries within the area (that were already busy) had to be made.

Councillor Newton asked if the Council would be sending a letter of representation to the Health Scrutiny Committee at LCC, and the Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board (LICB). She would herself be doing this but felt that this should also come from the Council. Councillor Worth responded that he would be happy to sign a letter in this regard.

29. COMMITTEE MINUTES

The minutes of the following Committees and Panels were noted:

- Joint meeting of the Performance Monitoring Panel and Policy Development Panel – 4 May 2022
- Planning Committee – 18 May 2022
- Policy Development Panel – 24 May 2022
- Performance Monitoring Panel – 15 June 2022
- Planning – 22 June 2022
- Licensing Committee – 29 June 2022
- Committee of the Licensing Authority – 29 June 2022

30. REPORT FROM CABINET MEETING ON 19 JULY 2022

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Consideration was given to the report of Cabinet which sought approval for the Cabinet's recommendations:

Acquisition of 18 rented S106 affordable homes in Holbeach, from a developer

The report was presented by the Portfolio Holder for Assets and Planning.

- Members asked that the Portfolio Holder provide an explanation of the process undertaken in making the decision.
 - The Portfolio Holder responded that there was a need for all types of affordable homes within South Holland. This developer had contacted the Authority about the scheme at an early stage, and the authority was very interested as there was a defined need. These arrangements were always carefully scrutinised to ensure that the Authority was getting good value for money.
- Members commented that a section of the Cabinet report stated that the developer had indicated that a management company be established for the site – it was important that there was due diligence to ensure that it was managed well in future.
- Members commented that it was important to start investing in 3-bedroom, rather than 1-bedroom properties, and that the Authority needed to be in contact with builders as early as possible in the future.

Members advised that there was no requirement for discussion of the information within the exempt appendix, and there was therefore no need for the meeting to go into private session for that item.

DECISION:

- 1) To approve the business case and approve the acquisition of 18 affordable homes within Holbeach, for the HRA; and
- 2) To delegate to the Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate Development) and S151, to agree the contractual matter (including the terms and conditions which may represent a minor variation to the scheme approved in the business case) such as signing the contract/transfer document and other incidental actions that may be required, and approving the associated due diligence and valuation required to purchase

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the properties, and to identify this scheme as a name scheme in the capital programme, in accordance with the approved budget.

(The Leader left the meeting at the start of consideration of this item and returned following discussion of it).

31. KEY DECISION PLAN

Consideration was given to the Key Decision Plan.

DECISION:

That the Key Decision Plan be noted.

32. IMPLEMENTATION OF REVISED HR POLICIES

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Corporate which sought Council’s approval for revised HR Policies.

DECISION:

That the HR policies appended to the report be approved.

33. SPECIAL URGENCY - NON-KEY DECISIONS - APPLICATION OF CALL-IN

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Governance which reported to Council reasons for urgency relating to a number of Non-Key Decisions, as required by the Council’s Constitution.

DECISION:

That the information contained within the report be noted.

34. NOMINATIONS FOR COMMITTEES AND OTHER SEATS AND PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION.

There were none. However, members were advised that Councillor H Drury had been replaced on the Pre-Application Consultation Group by Councillor R Grocock.

35. HEALTH SCRUTINY FOR LINCOLNSHIRE REPORT

Consideration was given to the report of Councillor Scalese in respect of Health Scrutiny for Lincolnshire.

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Councillor Scalese raised the issue discussed earlier in the meeting regarding the closure of the GP facility at the Johnson Community Hospital, and commented that this was bad news for patients. Recruitment to the NHS was currently very poor, and numbers wishing to be trained in certain professions was low. Incentives to address this were being considered by the relevant bodies. She also commented on the low number of NHS dentists across the whole of Lincolnshire.

DECISION:

That the report be noted.

36. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

There were none.

37. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

DECISION:

Under section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 4 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

38. REPORT FROM CABINET MEETING ON 19 JULY 2022 (EXEMPT REPORT)

Consideration was given to the report of Cabinet which sought approval for the Cabinet's recommendations:

Environmental Crime Enforcement

The report was presented by the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection.

DECISION:

That the recommendations, as detailed in the exempt report be agreed.

(The meeting ended at 7.48 pm)

(End of minutes)