

BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

At the Meeting of Boston Borough Council held at the Jakemans Community Stadium, Pilgrim Way, Wyberton, Boston, on Monday, 22nd November, 2021 at 6.30 pm

Present:

The Mayor (Councillor Frank Pickett), in the Chair
Councillors Tracey Abbott, Tom Ashton, Alison Austin, Richard Austin BEM, Peter Bedford, David Brown, Michael Cooper, George Cornah, Anton Dani, Deborah Evans, Paul Goodale, Martin Griggs, Martin Howard, Jonathan Noble, Yvonne Stevens, Chelcei Trafford, Peter Watson, Judith Welbourn, Nigel Welton and Stephen Woodliffe

Officers –

Chief Executive, Strategic Advisor, Democratic Services Delivery Manager, and Civic and Member Services Officer.

27 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 27 September 2021 were taken as read and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

28 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alan Bell, Katie Chalmers, Viven Edge, Neill Hastie, Judith Skinner and Paul Skinner.

29 COMMUNICATIONS

The Chief Executive reported on the recent sad passing of Shaun Lewis from the Council's Car Park Enforcement Team and expressed condolences on behalf of the Council to his family, friends and colleagues.

30 DEPUTATIONS AND PETITIONS

The Chief Executive reported there were no deputations or petitions.

31 QUESTIONS FROM ELECTED MEMBERS

The Chief Executive reported there were no questions from elected members.

32 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Chief Executive reported there was a question from Mr. Darron Abbott.

Question asked by Mr. Darron Abbott pursuant to paragraph 10 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution:-

“At every local election I can remember the promise of being open and accountable has appeared on Conservative leaflet. Is this a commitment made by the candidate alone if

elected or is it extended to making a promise that the whole Council will become open and accountable and to whom is this promise made?"

Response by Councillor Nigel Welton

"Thank you for your question Mr Abbott, yes indeed openness and accountability whether on a leaflet or not is something that I am sure every candidate aspires to.

Once elected all members are bound by the current code of conduct which is based on the Seven Principles of Public Life, also known as the Nolan Principles.

I am sure you are aware of these principles which is available on the .gov website and our councillors code of conduct is accessible on our website.

If you wish, I can send you links to both, but for clarity the seven principles are:-

- Selflessness
- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Honesty and
- Leadership

I hope this provides some insight and answers your question."

Supplemental question asked by Mr. Abbott pursuant to paragraph 10.8 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution:-

"You received my supplementary question at 2 p.m. this afternoon so should be able to answer.

So do we put this into practice all of the way through this Council.

There is a requirement to publish details of the contract register, after checking this morning the final entry is 18/19 Q4, this was brought to the attention of the relevant portfolio holder earlier this year, nothing done.

The deal with Garfit's park for a local football club to have exclusive use of the facilities for a rent of £1,500 per year. The agreement that was never passed over to the finance department to raise an invoice for the rent that was never paid. Then the Council officers deliberately gave misleading information twice in Freedom of Information request before being honest in the third attempt regarding this arrangement. The continual fly tipping in the park by one person and despite assurances by Christian Allen the blind eye continued to be turned.

We had the Asda/Tesco Fly tipping fiasco with lots of strange deals that has now been covered over and all forgotten about apart from the Portfolio Holder that lost their position in the cabinet because of the mess. I understood that the new contracts were to be agreed and signed by the end of November but has still yet to be approved by Cabinet.

Then more confusion and misleading information in a freedom of information request about £2000 paid out of a budget that does not exist. This contradicting information given to a portfolio holder by an officer.

The cover up of events last week which I am sure you are aware, let's just refer to this as operation dam buster.

The refusal to answer a subject access request because some of the documents will cause embarrassment to the Council.

Finally an item on this evening's agenda the city status bid I have emailed both Councillors Noble and Austin for details of the costs of this application, in fact at the last Cabinet meeting you raised concerns that there was no mention of the costs of preparing the bid. I note that the costs are minimal, whilst I appreciate that Councillor Austin is not bound by the openness and accountable policy that applies to other conservative members, I would have thought someone could have given me some idea of what this project is costing.

After these instances would you agree that the open and accountable policy is only operated when it is great publicity for this Council?"

Response by Councillor Welton

"I did receive your supplementary question and having read through it I can only find one question in the last sentence and the answer to that is no."

33 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Tom Ashton declared an interest in the reports on the agenda relating to the Joint Scrutiny of the Strategic Alliance and the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership on the grounds of being an elected member of East Lindsey District Council. Councillor Ashton confirmed that he would consider the matters as a member of Boston Borough Council only.

34 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was moved by Councillor Peter Watson, seconded by Councillor Anton Dani and

<p>RESOLVED that the confirmed minutes of the meetings of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 24 May and 20 September 2021 be received.</p>

35 JOINT BBC / ELDC SCRUTINY OF THE STRATEGIC ALLIANCE

Councillor Stephen Woodliffe, Chairman of the Corporate and Community Committee, introduced a report by the Scrutiny Officer on a review of the Strategic Alliance undertaken by a Joint Scrutiny Panel of members from both authorities.

The review focused on four key areas of:

- To understand the progress that had been made so far in bringing together functions and teams across the alliance;
- To assess whether joint working on the planning and delivery of services had mitigated pressure on the Councils' budgets; and whether projected savings (money and capacity) were being achieved;
- To understand the opportunities that had been secured by the Councils' working collaboratively together;
- To understand how it had been possible to merge cultures, the difficulties that had arisen from this and how this could be managed.

The Panel met on three occasions, interviewed six witnesses and conducted a survey of BBC and ELDC Councillors to canvass their views. The results of the survey were attached at Appendix D of the report.

The report of the Joint Scrutiny Panel was set out in Appendix A of the report and contained eleven recommendations arising from the Panel's considerations:-

1. That staff 'snapshot' surveys are reported to Overview / Scrutiny on a 6-monthly basis along with staff turnover figures, in order to monitor any significant changes;
2. Review the ICT roadmap priorities and ensure that shared email addresses for officers is given the highest priority;
3. To develop a shared strategy to ensure that staff are valued and given opportunities to progress, with a view to enhancing recruitment and retention;
4. To better communicate to staff, councillors, and residents any relevant updates or priorities, and to celebrate the successes across the alliance;
5. To provide opportunities for more collaborative working for all councillors, such as scrutiny panels, project groups, and other shared opportunities across the alliance / partnership, especially where there is commonality, e.g., licensing and planning policy;
6. To provide an opportunity for councillors to visit partner districts to meet other councillors and gain an awareness of the 'place' of other districts;
7. Move to an alignment of policies, e.g., procurement, climate change, and recycling;
8. To encourage the development of a strong sense of identity within the 3 areas of the alliance and the opportunities that they offer. This will help develop a sustainable, resilient, and vibrant economy and population;
9. To prepare a strategy so the partnership is fully prepared for the possibility of devolution.

10. That the alliance should work together to lobby the government to ensure the financial sustainability of the IDBs on which the residents and the land of the 3 councils heavily rely;
11. To convene a shared scrutiny panel of the 3 Councils in the new Partnership at the end of the first and second year, in order to undertake a review of the Partnership and merged workforce.

The report had been considered at the meeting of the Corporate and Community Committee held on 4 November 2021, and referred to full Council.

Members welcomed the positive report, but raised some concerns regarding questionnaire responses identifying communication as an area for improvement and the lack of response to the survey had been disappointing.

In summing up Councillor Woodliffe thanked Members for their supportive comments and recognising the important function scrutiny played in the democratic process, and agreed to take on board the issues raised in respect of communication.

It was moved by Councillor Stephen Woodliffe, seconded by Councillor Judith Welbourn and

RESOLVED that the report of the Joint Scrutiny Panel, as set out in Appendix A, be noted.

36 BOSTON CITY STATUS APPLICATION

Councillor Richard Austin, Portfolio Holder for Heritage, introduced a report by the Assistant Director – Economic Growth, on the proposal to submit an application for Boston to receive City Status as part of a competition launched to celebrate Her Majesty the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee in 2022.

The report stated that the Council was working with partner organisations to form a bid for City Status. Other towns known to be intending to apply included Bangor, Irvine, Merthyr Tydfil, Oban, Guildford, Warrington, Newport, Reading, Dudley, Swindon, Medway, Wrexham and Middlesbrough. Although it carried no special rights, the status of city was considered to be a marker of prestige and conferred local pride.

The application for city status supported the priorities in the Corporate Strategy by raising the profile of Boston as a place to live, visit and invest in, supported the town Investment Plan (Town Deal), bolstered the growth objectives as a regional sub-centre of the County, championing skills development and learning, supporting businesses, promoting trade and inward investment opportunities and equipping Boston and its centre for the future.

There were five parts to the application process, which included a summary, an introduction highlighting why the area deserved city status, a profile of the area to incorporate statistics, up to 50 photographs of permanent features and a detailed map of

the area showing the main tourism, leisure and entertainment sites, green spaces accessible to the public and main transport routes.

Full details of the focus and strength of the proposed application was set out in section 2 of the report, which had been created by an internal working group, and considered at meetings of Group Leaders, Boston Town Deal Board, Stakeholder engagement event, and Cabinet on 20 October which had supported the application for city status.

In order for the application to be submitted within the deadline of 8 December 2021, it was proposed to grant delegated authority to the Deputy Chief Executive – Growth, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to approve and submit the bid on behalf of the Council.

Members expressed their overall support for submitting the City Status application, recognising the benefits that it could bring to the area by promoting the history and heritage, its worldwide connections and increase investment opportunities for economic growth. However, it was also recognised that the application if successful would need to be supported by action and investment.

Clarification was sought as to why the Council was not applying for Royal Borough status rather than city status as it was suggested this would be of greater significance and attract more visitors. In response it was noted that guidance had been sought on the option for Royal Borough status, but since 1926 the entitlement had been strictly enforced.

It was moved by Councillor Richard Austin, seconded by Councillor Nigel Welton and

RESOLVED

- 1. That the proposal for Boston Borough Council to submit an application for the town to receive City Status as part of the competition to celebrate Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 be agreed.**
- 2. That delegated authority be granted to the Deputy Chief Executive – Growth, in consultation with Councillor Richard Austin, Portfolio Holder for Heritage, to approve and submit the application for City Status by the deadline of 8th December 2021.**

37 SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS PARTNERSHIP

The Strategic Advisor introduced a report setting out the progress of the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (SELCP) since the approval of the business case by the partner authorities in July / August 2021, and seeking consideration of a series of recommendations to support and enable the successful achievement of the Set Up stage for the strategic partnership.

The report stated that the business case for the SELCP had identified and established four stages for building the partnership, namely:-

- Setting the Foundations
- Set-up
- Accelerate; and
- Embed

The progress of the Setting the Foundations stage, as identified by key deliverables in the approved business plan, was set out in Table 1 of the report.

The next phase was to move to the Set-Up stage to maintain the successful momentum and ensure the Partnership could positively impact on the lives of all communities with South and East Lincolnshire.

The report was divided into sections to provide information and background in support of the recommendations relating to the Set-Up stage under the following headings:-

- Setting the Foundations
- Work Programme
- Performance Framework
- Financial Opportunities
- Governance Framework; and
- Employment Terms and Conditions

The Strategic Advisor provided context and narrative to the recommendations when introducing the report.

Members debated the paper before them, highlighting concerns regarding the low ranking of the area in respect of education, skills and training identified in Appendix B Performance Framework, and the need to invest in education. The lack of information in the proposed performance framework was questioned and it was noted that the document would be fully populated once the work programme set out in Appendix A had been agreed.

Discussion moved to Appendix D of the report, which had been restricted from publication, therefore it was **moved by Councillor Nigel Welton, seconded by Councillor Martin Griggs and**

RESOLVED that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of Appendix D of the report 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 Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

The Strategic Advisor provided an update on the consultation with affected staff on the proposed single terms and conditions, including pay structure, for the Shared Corporate Management Team and progress on the recruitment process for the vacant post of Deputy Chief Executive– Communities.

Council was accepting of the proposals recognising that to recruit and retain high calibre professional officers with the required skills, knowledge and experience it was necessary

to offer an attractive remuneration package. However, equalising the pay for all employees across the authorities should be taken forward as a priority.

It was moved by Councillor Nigel Welton, seconded by Councillor Martin Griggs and

RESOLVED that the exclusion of the public and press from the meeting be rescinded for the decision to be taken in open session.

It was moved by Councillor Nigel Welton, seconded by Councillor Jonathan Noble and

RESOLVED

- 1. That the progress of the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership since approval by Council on the 2 August 2021 be noted.**
- 2. That the Work Programme priorities for the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership for the Set-Up stage as set out in Appendix A be approved.**
- 3. That the performance framework and the frequency of performance reporting to Council for the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership as set out in Appendix B be noted.**
- 4. That the financial opportunities for the MTFs for each partnership Council, to be developed as part of the budgeting setting process for each Council, as set out in Appendix C be noted.**
- 5. That the governance framework for the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership and proposals for the scrutiny of the partnership on an annual basis be noted.**
- 6. That the employment terms and conditions (including the pay structure) for the Integrated Shared Senior Management Team as set out in Appendix D be approved.**

(The meeting ended at 8.40 p.m.)