



To be submitted to the Council at its meeting on 28th July, 2022

ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL

1st March 2022 at 6.30 p.m.

Present:

Councillor Furneaux (in the Chair)
Councillors Cairns, Callison, Dawkins, Harness, Sandford (substitute for Hogan),
Sheridan and Smith.

Officers in attendance:

- David Baker (Contract Business Manager, EQUANS)
- Anne Campbell (Scrutiny Committee Advisor)
- Jonathan Ford (Accessibility Officer, EQUANS)
- Damien James-White (Assistant Director Regeneration)
- Simon Jones (Assistant Director of Law, Governance and Assets)
- Guy Lonsdale (Deputy Section 151 Officer)
- Mark Nearney (Assistant Director of Housing, Highways, Transportation and Planning)
- Sophie Pickerden (Committee Support Officer)
- Anthony Snell (Senior Transport Officer, EQUANS)
- Paul Thorpe (Operations Director, EQUANS)

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Jackson (Leader of the Council)
- Councillor Shreeve (Portfolio Holder Finance, Resources and Assets)
- Councillor Swinburn (Portfolio Holder Environment and Transport)
- Councillor Procter (Portfolio Holder Economic Growth, Housing and Tourism)

There were two members of the public present.

SPE.60 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from this meeting were received from Councillor Hogan.

SPE.61 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor Procter declared personal interest in SPE.66 as he purchases business parking permits in relation to his business interests in the borough.

Council Dawkins declared personal interest in SPE.70 as his partner is employed by EQUANS.

SPE.62 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting of the Economy Scrutiny Panel held on 4th January 2022 be agreed as an accurate record.

SPE.63 QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public for this meeting.

SPE.64 FORWARD PLAN

The panel received the published forward plan and members were asked to identify any items for examination by this panel via the pre-decision call-in procedure.

RESOLVED – That the forward plan be noted.

SPE.65 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY

The panel received a report from the Assistant Chief Executive (Statutory Scrutiny Officer) tracking the previous recommendations of this panel.

Regarding SPE.38, council plan, Ms Campbell advised that regular updates would be presented to all scrutiny panels on performance against relevant vital sign indicators, the frequency and detail of that report was being determined. Members reiterated their need for smart targets and detailed performance reports and agreed that this be recorded in the minutes. Furthermore the panel confirmed that this item be retained in tracking until the requested written response was received.

RESOLVED – That items referenced SPE.54, SPE.55, and SPE.56 be removed from tracking as complete.

SPE.66 THE BOROUGH OF NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL (OFF-STREET PARKING PLACES) ORDER 2022

The panel received a report from the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport detailing the process to proposed changes arising from the Council's parking strategy key actions. The report would be considered by Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 9th March 2022 and was submitted to this panel for pre-decision scrutiny. After a short

introduction from the portfolio holder, members' questions were invited and the following issues were raised:

- In response to a question regarding electric vehicle (EV) charging and four hours free parking, Mr Thorpe confirmed that ticketing machines would be programmed to issue free tickets for charging EVs. Non-compliance with the policy would be enforced in the usual way.
- Regarding Church Lane car park, Humberston. Mr Nearney advised that further investigative work, consultation and development was required. A written response would be provided to the member concerned.
- A member expressed concern that increased off street parking charges may not necessarily increase revenue and sought assurances that this consequence had been fully explored.
- Regarding residents parking charges and permit schemes, Mr Thorpe committed to respond in writing to the member concerned.
- Opportunities to offer motorists more flexible parking options were welcomed.
- In response to the Chair, officers confirmed that legal processes including formal consultation would commence following Cabinet's decision. Informal consultation with businesses affected had raised no issues or concerns.

Mr Thorpe highlighted that there had been no increases to off-street car parking charges for 10 years and it was appropriate to implement a new regime. The portfolio holder added that the proposed increases were to be phased in with an annual review to ensure that the policy was having the desired effect.

In closing, the Chair commented that it was reassuring that the panel's previous comments had been taken into account as evidenced within the report now submitted

RESOLVED – That the report and panel's comments be noted.

SPE.67 LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN (LTP) DELIVERY PLAN 222/2025

The panel received a report from the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport setting out the schemes to be delivered through the Council's 2022/23 – 2024/25 capital programme for approval. This report would be considered by Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 9th March 2022 and was submitted to this panel for pre-decision scrutiny. Mr Snell was able to advise that the Department for Transport (DfT) grant funding had now been confirmed and this year's award maintained a similar level of capital funding as in 2021/22. This was in line with similar local authorities.

Members raised the following issues.

A number of schemes listed in locations had only recently benefitted from junction improvement improvements. Whilst Mr Thorpe did not yet have details to respond to specific queries, he did assure members that a number of teams and agencies would work together to determine, design and develop improvement schemes and these would be shared with members in due course.

Regarding references for funding schemes in multiple locations, Mr Snell confirmed that a list of schemes was used to prioritise and schedule work as resources became available.

Mr Snell committed to send additional details regarding works to Armstrong Street/Beeston Street/Charlton Street to the ward councillor to enable a better understanding of work, phases and timeframes.

There were a number of queries regarding the scale and ambition of the borough's EV charging infrastructure. Members were not convinced it would be adequate to meet the increasing numbers of local motorists turning to EV. There were also concerns that future tourists and visitors to the borough would require adequate and accessible charging points. The Chair concluded that the £20k replicated throughout the capital programme did not increase over time to correspond with the phasing out of petrol vehicles.

Mr Snell advised that the £20k per annum, allocated in each year of the programme, was intended to be a local contribution to match with external funds. These funds would emanate from resolutions made at COP26, albeit that anticipated grants had not yet been announced. Mr Thorpe alleged that NEL residents with electric vehicles were charging their vehicles at home and referenced the local targets as set out in the council's zero carbon road [map](#).

Regarding proposed EV charging points in Abbey Walk car park. Mr Thorpe confirmed that this location was considered safe and most suitable.

Mr Snell committed to respond to a query regarding specific indicators which may have been affected by the pandemic and/or associated lockdowns rather than the performance of the council or its partners.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport confirmed that a £10k fund for ward schemes remained. This small budget enabled ward councillors to bid for funding for small highways schemes within their wards.

RESOLVED – That the report and panel's comments be noted.

SPE.68 ENHANCED BUS QUALITY PARTNERSHIP AND SCHEME

The panel received a report from the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport describing how North East Lincolnshire Council would

meet the legal requirements of the Bus Services Act 2012 and deliver the Enhanced Bus Quality Partnership and associated improvement plan schemes and outcomes. The panel noted this report would be considered by Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 9th March 2022 and was submitted to this panel for pre-decision scrutiny. The portfolio holder confirmed that the council still awaited the announcement from the Department for transport regarding Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding.

Mr Ford confirmed that flexible ticketing options was just one of the ways aimed to make it easier for the public to use local buses. All journey tickets could be bought in advance, on-line or on a bus.

Mr Ford was unable to confirm whether the partnership would ultimately result in more buses, more routes or more jobs; this being the domain of the operator(s).

In response to the Chair Mr. Ford confirmed that the partnership and scheme would be reviewed annually and this would be an appropriate interval to bring an update on progress to the panel.

RESOLVED – That the report and panel's comments be noted

SPE.69 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT 2021/22 - QUARTER 3

The panel received a report from the Executive Director of Environment, Economy and Resources providing key information and analysis of the Council's position and performance for the third quarter of the 2021/22 financial year. This report was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 16th February 2022 and referred to all scrutiny panels.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPE.70 REGENERATION PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER 4

The panel received a report from EQUANS containing a summary of performance against agreed key performance indicators for the period up to quarter four, being October to December 2021.

Members raised the following issues:

The panel queried the statement “reduced market confidence”, this did not correspond with members’ experiences either as ward councillors or as members of the planning committee. It was agreed that members receive a rationale behind the statement and a detailed breakdown of figures. Mr Lonsdale advised that the calculations undertaken to arrive at the figure (#45) were complex and based on council tax band D equivalents. Calculations were also impacted by the numbers of demolitions and empty properties. Mr Thorpe committed to provide the requested information.

Regarding penalty charge notices (PCN), Mr Thorpe advised that over the reporting period there had been a decrease in car park use, with usage rates fluctuating greatly throughout the year. He confirmed that the team were currently recruiting to two vacancies which would bring the team to full strength.

In response to questions Mr Thorpe gave a brief update on new enforcement software and capability. He was able to confirm that the system was also used by the environmental enforcement team. A new closed-circuit television (CCTV) system would soon be out to tender. This would link to the new system and assist in enforcement of traffic regulation orders (TRO) for example bus lane monitoring and cashless technologies. Members had recently benefitted from a member development session on planning enforcement, the TRO process and parking enforcement.

Regarding the quality inspection of works. Mr Thorpe advised that all works, projects and programmes, including those undertaken by EQUANS were quality checked by experienced inspectors using the same criteria and legislation. He acknowledged that in some cases block paving may be initially replaced with concrete or tarmac to make safe following works, before being made good. The portfolio holder asked that photographs of areas of concern be forwarded to him.

RESOLVED – That the report and panel’s comments be noted.

SPE.71 SOUTH HUMBER INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME (SHIP) - UPDATE

The panel received a briefing note and presentation from the Assistant Director Regeneration providing an update on the above. The presentation would be made available on the panel’s webpage and forwarded to all panel members.

Members raised the following issues:

In response to members question Mr Jaines-White acknowledged that the programme timeline and anticipated income had changed over the past two years, due largely to the impact of the pandemic. However he was confident that the pragmatic estimates of income would be achieved, subject to land assembly. Pressed on what would be the financial position had delays not occurred Mr Jaines-White could not speculate and confirmed that no business enquired had been turned away, the infrastructure was in place, the mitigation site was being lauded as best practice, freeport capital had resulted in speculative units, land was being acquired from the authority; in short, the council was in a strong position to do business.

In closing the Chair acknowledged the panel's support and positive comments on the SHIP and confirmed that it would stay in the panel's work programme to receive updates on progress

RESOLVED – That the briefing note, presentation and panel's comments be noted.

SPE.72 EMPTY HOMES UPDATE

The panel received a requested update from the Assistant Director for Housing, Highways, Transportation and Planning on the above. Mr Nearney invited members questions:

Regarding financial assistance for landlord's Mr Thorpe advised that there had been previous schemes for landlords unfortunately these were not now available.

It was confirmed that the panel would retain this item in its work programme for the 2022/ 23 municipal year and receive regular updates commencing with the panel's July 2022 meeting.

Mr Nearney advised that the North East Lincolnshire Council Property Working Group met monthly to monitor progress and look at specific properties to collectively consider the most cost effective ways to return properties into use. Action points were taken from these meetings. Mr Nearney and other managers monitored the actions and outcomes.

In response to a question from the Chair regarding properties in probate Mr Thorpe confirmed that these particular properties could take a long time to bring back into use. The council maintained the services of a consultant who assisted the authority in this regard. The arrangement was akin to a no win no fee transaction.

RESOLVED – That the report and panel's comments be noted.

SPE.73 ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME - REVIEW 2021/22 AND WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

The panel received a report from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer (Assistant Chief Executive) summarising the panel's agreed 2021/22 work programme and the timetable of activities to undertake this work. The panel considered issues it may wish to retain in or add to its work programme for 2022/23

In introducing the report, the Chair looked forward to the now regular June workshop to finalise and plan the panel's work programme. Members suggested the following potential items for the panel's 2022/23 work programme:

- SHIP timely updates on progress

- Empty homes, regular updates
- Monitoring performance relating to the delivery of the council plan and economic strategy
- Enhanced bus partnership update on progress
- Gypsy and Travellers designated stopover site (pre-cabinet)
- Aspects relating to COVID recovery plan including the effect on current programmes
- Implementation of freeport proposals
- Energy Carbon Roadmap – regular updates.

RESOLVED – That the report and panel's comments be noted.

SPE.74 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER

There were no members' questions to the portfolio holders.

SPE.75 CALLING-IN OF DECISIONS

There were no formal requests from members to call in decisions taken at recent meetings.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.25 p.m.