TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS LIAISON COMMITTEE

24th January, 2019

Present: Councillor Hasthorpe (in the Chair)
Councillors Fenty, Patrick and Pettigrew

B. Purchon Ashby Cum Fenby Parish Council
J. Bratton Barnoldby Le Beck Parish Council
A. Poppleton Bradley Parish Council
V. Turner Bradley Parish Council
C. Hewins Healing Parish Council
S. Bailey Humberston Parish Council
D. Robinson Humberston Parish Council
D. Watkins Humberston Parish Council
B. Duke Immingham Town Council
S. Greenbeck Laceby Parish Council
D. Johnson Laceby Parish Council
B. Metcalf Laceby Parish Council
D. Raper New Waltham Parish Council
M Archer Waltham Parish Council
K. Kiddle-Bailey Waltham Parish Council

Also in attendance:

Mike Peck Scene Pro Ltd
Alan Barker ERNLLCA
Rachel Carey North East Lincolnshire Council
Deb Swatman Engie
Paul Windley North East Lincolnshire Council

LM.33 Apologies

Apologies for absence from this meeting were received from Councillors Watson and Shreeve (NELC), Councillor Turner (Bradley Parish Council), Councillors Keyworth and Pagram (Habrough Parish Council), Councillor Hall (Humberston Parish Council), Councillor Crofts (Stallingborough Parish Council), Kim Kirkham (Clerk to Ashby Cum Fenby and Barnoldby Le Beck Parish Councils) and Supt Hall (Humberside Police).

LM.34 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in any items on the agenda for this meeting.
**LM.35 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Town and Parish Council Liaison Committee held on 22nd November, 2018 were approved as a correct record.

**LM.36 Highways Maintenance**

The Committee received a presentation from Mr Mike Peck of Scene Pro Ltd, detailing work with North East Lincolnshire on taking forward highways maintenance issues.

Ms Swatman introduced the item and noted that the contract with Scene Pro had been procured via Safer Roads Humber to provide road safety triage surveys. This was a three year contract and would identify highways works to be taken forward. At the moment they were looking at A and B roads within the Borough.

Mr Peck explained the statutory requirements that the authority had to abide by and the challenges faced in doing so. There were traditionally two options available – manual and technical surveys. The latter tended to be very expensive so this programme would provide something in-between the two. They were looking to reduce risk by taking a proactive approach to identify safety issues. The benefits of this approach would be the provision of a comprehensive, independent audit which would help to demonstrate ‘due diligence’. The output would be reviewable from the office and it would enhance existing maintenance strategies while also adding value to the Safer Roads Humber partnership work. Mr Peck illustrated the types of data provided and reported that initial findings were that roads in North East Lincolnshire were performing far better than those in other areas.

The Chair thanked Mr Peck for the informative presentation and he felt that this demonstrated that the authority was taking a proactive approach to road safety.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

**LM.37 Committee Action Plan**

The Committee received an update on the action plan for the Town and Parish Council Liaison Committee.

On verge parking, Immingham Town Council had raised concern that there appeared to be no enforcement or checks of verges. Ms Swatman agreed to look into this and provide some statistics on what measures were being taken in Immingham. On the issue of broadening this regulation across the Borough, Ms Swatman reported that this was still being worked on. Councillor Hewins enquired if they were still on
schedule to have a scheme in Healing within the next six months. Ms. Swatman confirmed that it was but she cautioned that they had to be consistent in their approach and there were some challenges but it remained a priority. Councillor Johnson felt that the problem was down to poor parking and he enquired how easy it was to enforce, particularly down narrow streets. If there were no restrictions then this would be very difficult but was noted that there can be exemptions for narrow roads. Councillor Duke enquired whether it was possible for town or parish councils to operate such schemes themselves. Ms Swatman confirmed that this was a local authority obligation and could not be transferred.

On policing matters, Councillor Archer asked if the response sent to him after the previous meeting could be re-sent to him as he could not recall receiving it.

On the development of this committee, it was noted that there hadn’t been any response yet from the parish councils on the future role of this committee, although it was noted that there had been an increase in the number of issues raised for consideration by the committee. The parish council representatives were asked to take this back to their councils.

RESOLVED –

(1) That the update be noted.

(2) That statistics on measures being taken to enforce parking restrictions on verges in Immingham be forwarded on to the Town Council.

**LM.38 Finance and Commissioning Plan 2019/20 – 2021/22 Post Settlement**

The committee received a report from the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Resources presenting how North East Lincolnshire Council planned to deliver its financial strategy over the coming three year period.

Ms Carey summarised the key issues contained within the report.

Councillor Hewins enquired about the implications of business rate retention.

Ms Carey explained that the expectation was that councils would receive the same proportion of business rates as they currently do from central government but the benefit would come through growth of the council tax base.

Councillor Patrick added that the Treasury had made clear that the
change would be cost neutral but noted the impact of the removal of government funding and the pressures within children’s services and adult social care in particular.

Councillor Archer enquired whether this was the reason behind the proposed withholding of the precept support grant.

Councillor Patrick confirmed that it was.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

**LM.39 ERNLLCA Update**

The Committee received an update from Mr Alan Barker, Executive Officer – ERNLLCA, on issues affecting town and parish councils.

Mr Barker referred to the local elections in May which would involve town and parish councils and highlighted the Local Government Association’s national campaign to encourage people to become a councillor. He encouraged everyone to promote the campaign using their websites and notice boards.

Mr Barker noted that the Committee for Standards in Public Life was due to publish its report next week on the outcome of its consultation on local standards arrangements. He understood that this was expected to contain some interesting recommendations and he anticipated that it would be followed by a second stage of consultation.

In terms of training events, in the first week of February there was a session on the role and responsibilities of clerks as a financial officer. There would be a substantial training programme available following the elections and he had been asked to re-run the ‘Be a Good Councillor’ event.

On the national agenda, he noted the success in persuading the government that the council tax cap should not apply to parish councils and the resulting three year exemption. Pressures resulting from parish councils taking in services from principal authorities were a key factor in this. Mr Barker reported that ministerial priorities involved neighbourhood plans and the provision of three year financial plans. There was also likely to be a push on the local council awards scheme.

Mr Barker concluded by referring to constitutional changes within the organisation in terms of membership requirements and the General Data Protection Regulation. He also referred to issues caused by the high take up of the Desktop Advisory Service but asked for everyone’s patience while these were resolved.

Councillor Metcalf enquired whether clerks training would be available in the evening.
Mr Barker responded that unfortunately not but there were e-learning courses available. While he understood the pressures on people’s time, he felt that it was really important to attend local training events, not least in terms of building up networks.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

**Policing Matters**

Supt Hall had unfortunately given apologies for his absence from this meeting but he had requested that any concerns be reported back to him for a response.

Councillor Duke commented that Immingham Town Council had raised concerns about the reduced police presence in the town and the increased anti-social behaviour. He added that contacting the police was very difficult.

Mr Windley noted that these concerns had been passed on to Supt Hall who had agreed to contact Councillor Duke direct to discuss this matter further. Supt Hall also reiterated that Immingham did receive 24/7 policing cover.

Councillor Fenty commented that, in his experience, it was often very difficult to get an answer using the 101 telephone number.

Councillor Archer noted that this had been raised at the Humber Rural Crime Forum and changes were going to be made to the contact system. In the meantime, alternative options such as Crimestoppers and the Community Alert system were available.

Councillor Archer reported on other issues that had been raised at the Humber Rural Crime Forum. It was now possible to have ‘no cold calling’ areas by applying to Trading Standards. Community Speedwatch was being introduced on a trial basis across the Humberside Police area. As part of the Rural Crime Initiative, parish councils were also urged to keep their emergency plans updated. Councillor Archer agreed to pass this information on to Mr Windley for wider circulation to the town and parish councils.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

**Highways/Traffic Update**

The Committee received an update on highways and traffic issues from representatives from Engie.

Ms Swatman reported that the Community Speedwatch scheme was an initiative being promoted by Safer Roads Humber and involved
members of the community undertaking speed surveys. She agreed to provide a further update at the next meeting should she receive information on how this was being rolled out.

The A18 safer roads scheme was due to commence in February 2020 and was currently at design stage.

The Moody Lane/Woad Lane maintenance scheme was due to commence in March, 2019 and was expected to take nine months.

Pothole funding had been received and the resulting patching and structural repairs were due to be completed by the end of March, 2019.

The Toll Bar junction scheme was out to tender and was due to be awarded in March, 2019. This would be followed by significant engagement.

Councillor Bailey enquired about progress with the introduction of verge parking restrictions in Humberston.

Ms Swatman responded that they were looking to identify where this could be applied with consistency utilising the Traffic Regulation Order guidance that had recently been approved. She expected that, in the next six months and having consulted with the parish councils, a plan would be in place and Humberston would be part of that.

Councillor Archer enquired about consultation with the parish councils on the A18 and Toll Bar schemes, and whether they would be timed to avoid any overlap.

Ms Swatman confirmed that the intention was to avoid any overlap through diversion routes being staggered. There would be consultation on the diversion routes and widespread communication of plans.

Councillor Archer raised concern about changes to the criteria for pothole repairs and noted issues that had been brought to his attention by cyclists.

Ms Swatman asked Councillor Archer to provide specific locations and she would then look into how these repairs were being prioritised.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

**LM.42 Member Development Update**

The Committee received an update on member development events.

Mr Windley noted that North East Lincolnshire Council was currently reviewing its Member Induction programme for this year and will keep town and parish councils informed of any relevant induction events. On
13th February, 2019 there were three one hour sessions being provided throughout the day on the Dementia Friends initiative which were aimed at changing people’s perception of dementia. Anyone interested in attending was asked to contact Mr Windley.

Waltham Parish Council had forwarded details of an event called ‘Local Government Commercialisation: Generating Income To Support More Effective Public Services’ that was taking place on the 6th March 2019 at Lords Cricket Ground in London. Mr Windley agreed to forward on details if anyone was interested in attending.

**LM.43 Issues Raised by Town/Parish Councils**

**Immingham Town Council**

There had been two issues raised by Immingham Town Council which were not received in time to be included on the agenda for this meeting. The first related to waste and recycling, and problems caused by a perceived lack of planning for collections over the Christmas period. In addition, it was felt that the recycling boxes were not fit for purpose.

A briefing note was circulated at the meeting in response to the issues raised. Councillor Patrick, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Transport and Energy, commented that there had been extensive planning but there had been a number of challenges resulting from staff availability and the substantial increase in the amount of waste presented. This had caused operational issues, particularly around the need to continually off-load waste once collected. Councillor Patrick noted that collections were caught up with and he apologised for the inconvenience caused. He reported that a full service review was underway and this would include looking at different containers and new compacting vehicles to make collections more efficient in future.

Councillor Poppleton commented on the lack of communication over changes to collection days.

Councillor Patrick apologised and noted that communications would be improved.

Councillor Duke enquired whether wheelie bins had been considered for all collections.

Councillor Patrick responded that this had been considered and had been included as an option being trialled for recycling. He reminded everyone that there was an assisted collection scheme already in place. Councillor Patrick commented that they had looked at a number of local authorities in trying to identify the most suitable collection method for North East Lincolnshire.
The other issue raised by Immingham Town Council related to changes to the No. 5 bus service which was previously subsidised by North Lincolnshire Council to run through South Killingholme and East Halton but would no longer service these areas. Having contacted officers, it would appear that in 2017, Department for Transport (DfT) grant funding was secured to support a number of sustainable travel schemes in the borough to access key training and employment sites across North and North East Lincolnshire. Funding was allocated for two years to increase the frequency of the bus service and extend the route to include South Killingholme in anticipation of the ABLE UK development. Unfortunately the ABLE UK development has not generated the expected passenger growth and Stagecoach had made a commercial decision to not continue the enhanced service following the end of the funding. Stagecoach East Midlands have consulted with both North and North East Lincolnshire Council and a combined 5 and 6 bus service had been running from 7th January 2019. As this did not appear to be a wider issue affecting parish councils in North East Lincolnshire, it was suggested that this was an issue for the areas concerned to take up with their respective principal authorities.

**Waltham Parish Council**

Waltham Parish Council had grave concerns over the way in which officers of North East Lincolnshire Council handle the Parish Council concerns and observations over hedges and trees compromised by planning applications, especially on Awarded Hedges. The Parish Council has the benefit of a Parish Award Charter. This issue has been raised many times by the Parish Council with officers but has met with very little success and, as far as we know no Enforcement Actions for breaches in conditions have been actioned. This Parish Council wonders if any other Parish Council has similar concerns.

Mr Windley reported that officers had asked for specific examples where hedge and tree removal had caused concern and would then respond accordingly. The matter of overall legislative control has been discussed with the Trees and Woodlands Officer who would be happy to provide a presentation to a future meeting of this committee on controls that exist if this would be beneficial. This was agreed and welcomed by the committee.

**Barnoldby Le Beck Parish Council**

Clarification was requested on the clearance of Japanese Knotweed. The parish council had a couple of development sites that had this invasive plant and needed clarification on who monitored the development sites to make sure the plant was removed correctly. The parish council would also like to know if a certificate was raised for public record.
Mr Windley reported that Japanese knotweed was a matter covered under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The council had contacted DEFRA about this previously and they had responded that there was no statutory requirement for any public body or for landowners to remove the plant from their property or to control it; nor is strategic widespread control the sole responsibility of any statutory authority. It is an offence to allow the plant to escape or cause it to grow in the wild. The Environment Agency had provided guidance on its control and disposal. An informative was used in the planning process should Japanese Knotweed be raised. If any was found on council land and the council intended to keep the land then there would be a treatment program of spraying over around 5 years to eradicate it. If it was on the council’s land and the council was intending to dispose of the land then a contractor specialising in invasive weeds would be appointed and they would be expected to provide a certificate. Mr Windley noted that the planning enforcement team had been made aware of the development sites referred to by the parish council.

Mr Windley referred to an additional issue raised by Ashby Cum Fenby Parish Council in relation to responsiveness of Officers. This was discussed with the Chair and it was felt that, given that this had been the only such issue raised since the previous agreement that parish councils should send any specific issues of non-compliance with the Town and Parish Charter directly to Mr Windley to pursue, then this should be raised with the officer concerned. This had been done and the outcome would be reported back to the parish council. However, it did provide the opportunity to remind everyone to contact Mr Windley if there were any issues of non-compliance and he would liaise with the Chair if this became a more general issue.

**LM.44 Referrals to Scrutiny**

There were no matters referred to scrutiny.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.43 p.m.