



Leader's statement 2021

Councillor Martin Hill OBE
Leader, Lincolnshire County Council
Friday 21st May 2021



Proud to have the responsibility

Once again, I am heartened that Lincolnshire residents have given us their vote of confidence, to continue providing sensible and proactive leadership of this council.

This is a loud and clear message that our Conservative-led administration has focused on the issues that really matter to them.

Our residents know we are delivering on our promises – and this has been despite a devastating global pandemic. The council has successfully managed our response to the coronavirus outbreak in Lincolnshire, supporting businesses and providing direct help to residents in need.

I am proud that this council has delivered on our pledges from the 2017 elections. We have kept council tax low while investing in our county for the 750,000 people who call Lincolnshire their home.

Our services are either good or excellent, as judged by independent inspectors and we are regarded as first class in children's safeguarding and highways management.

We're determined to continue our investment and innovate at every opportunity, making services better rather than just keeping them the same.

Our response to Covid-19 has not only supported our communities when they've needed us most, but also offered us the opportunity to do things differently as we move forward.

Even with the issues we have faced over the past 18 months, this authority has achieved an enormous amount and I'll highlight some of our key successes today.

But I will also outline what we want to deliver in the next four years. Across the board, we are committed to putting our efforts into the things that local people really care about, as we have set out in our manifesto, and that's been agreed in the council's corporate plan.

As you know, our services cover areas as diverse as roads and broadband, schools and safeguarding, flood risk and fire and rescue, social care and public health.

But our role goes further than this. We can't and shouldn't focus only on what we deliver in isolation. Instead, we must continue to strengthen our excellent partnership work across the whole of Greater Lincolnshire, championing what we have to offer on the national stage.

Not only will this ensure we all use public money in the most effective way, but will mean we're best-placed to secure more investment in our area too.

I'm pleased that the government recognised how vital local services are, and provided additional funding during the Covid response

In a world which has shown us recently that there is much that is outside of our control, I am honoured our residents have put their confidence in us once again.

Supporting wellbeing

Our county is a great place to live and raise a family and we should be reassured by this. Improving residents' lives is at the heart of everything we do.

Now more than ever, it's important that we ensure children and young people achieve at school, that adults are supported in their working lives and that older people can live independently.

As we all know, our older population is growing as people live longer and many people choose to move to our county to retire.

Lincolnshire's older population is higher than the national average, with the over 65s already making up 45 per cent of the population.

It is unsurprising then that this area of our work has the largest budget in the council



and we will be spending £284m on running these services this year.

The additional funding from the government during the Covid pandemic has been administered through our commercial team and this has been particularly valuable in allowing residential care homes to operate safely and home care services to continue.

Our adult care, community wellbeing and public health initiatives support all adult residents in Lincolnshire with a huge range of challenges. Throughout the last year, we have moved forward with delivering three Extra Care Housing schemes across Lincolnshire, aimed at helping older people achieve greater independence and wellbeing, as well as keeping them out of hospital.

These schemes will see an increase of 150 housing units before the end of 2025, and we're now looking at investing in another 125 units in future years.

For any residents struggling with health and wellbeing issues, we continue to

commission One You Lincolnshire and Wellbeing Lincs to support people with their mental and physical wellbeing.

And we must continue to help all those who care for others.

Over 10,000 carers sought support from the council last year and we are currently reviewing this. Whilst the current service is effective, we know we can make the process better going forward.

As the number of Covid cases has reduced significantly in Lincolnshire, the vaccination programme is progressing at pace.

Our public health teams have seen a year like no other and the success of testing, vaccinations and targeted support reflects the value of integrating this service within the county council.

It's important though that as we look beyond the pandemic, the younger generation are given every opportunity for the future. Our children's services teams have been working hard to support this.

Attendance at schools and early-years settings has remained above national levels and our team of health visitors have continued to deliver vital and tailored support to all new parents.

While the number of children in care is comparatively low in Lincolnshire, we have seen an increase, and more children have had to be found placements further from home.

To address this we are planning to develop two new children's homes, as well as introducing a new approach to working



with the families of children at risk of coming into care.

Recognising the challenges of mental health to our children and young people, I'm pleased that we have been successful in our bid for two further Mental Health Support Teams.

These teams will be based in Boston and Skegness, in addition to the two current teams operating in the Lincoln and Gainsborough areas.

A further bid has also been submitted to NHS England for further mental health support in other areas of Lincolnshire and could mean up to six more teams would be recruited by 2025.

We continue to invest in school facilities and classrooms, including our huge improvement programme for our SEND schools.

Across the county we are creating more than 500 new school places to meet growing demand. An additional £30m has been committed towards new and improved SEND facilities recently meaning there is now £86m available for the programme.

This reinforces our commitment to all our young people in ensuring they can access high-quality education, as near to their family as possible.

Keeping Lincolnshire moving

We know that being able to get around our large rural county safely and without delay is of high importance to residents, and road improvements have always been a priority investment for this council.

We have delivered a number of successful road schemes in recent years. Most notably over the last 12 months – the completion of the Lincoln eastern bypass and the second phase of the Grantham relief road, with progress also being made on the Spalding relief road.

Many projects in other parts of the country have been abandoned or delayed, so our achievements here should not be underestimated.



Construction of the third, and final, section of Grantham's new relief road started last month and there has been progress with our plans for the North Hykeham relief road, which is now entering the design phase.

Our hard work in preparing plans for this scheme meant we were able to put forward the project to the Department of Transport, and when funding became available last year, we secured £110m. We are very much hoping that construction can begin in 2025.

Today I am reinforcing our commitment to investing in crucial infrastructure across the county, with projects aimed at reducing congestion and improving traffic flow in many of our towns, including Sleaford, Boston, Skegness and Horncastle.

We are completing the major improvements to Holdingham roundabout, a new roundabout at Welton and the re-construction of Roman Bank in Skegness.

And this is in addition to the constant maintenance work our teams carry out on roads and footways.

In the past 12 months, we have investigated and repaired tens of thousands of potholes and made more than 3,000 improvements to our footpaths. We know how important this is for motorists, so this year's budget included an additional £12.3m for road maintenance and repair and it is our intention to improve that further this year.

As well as investing in roads, we have maintained a comprehensive network of public transport. This includes subsidising bus routes and our popular CallConnect services which are important to residents and businesses. And we will continue to promote sustainable transport, with improvements to cycling and walking routes, listening to the needs of our communities.

Safety

Lincolnshire is a safe place to live, work and visit, and we want it to remain that way for the future. It's important that residents feel safe in their homes, as well as when they're out and about.

We are continuing to fund our falls prevention service, jointly with the NHS for a further three years. During the pilot scheme, responses to people who had fallen were significantly quicker, with a reduction in hospital admissions and better outcomes for residents.

The Team Around the Adult initiative has had over 160 referrals since October 2020, helping people at risk of homelessness, who suffer from mental illness or drug and alcohol addiction.

In the last year, our commercial team have also managed the procurement of important services to keep people safe including the re-ablement service and domestic abuse refuges.

This month has seen the delivery of the last of 33 new fire appliances that have been rolled out to fire stations in the county, with all the latest equipment. With the addition of a new multi-purpose water carrier too, our fire crews are now some of the best equipped in the country.

To keep our roads safe in bad weather, 41 new gritting vehicles will also be rolled out in the coming years, and the road safety partnership continues its work to reduce road deaths with 230 parish councils signed up to community speed-watch initiatives.

It's important that we keep up our partnership work with NHS and emergency services in the county and work collaboratively to keep residents safe. This also includes looking for further opportunities to share buildings and response arrangements.



Our emergency planning team was recently recognised with a High Sheriff award for their work in bringing together the multi-agency response to the pandemic. We have recently upgraded the county emergency centre and work with our partners to prepare for all types of emergency continues.

As a main risk to the county, we continue to invest in flood alleviation schemes. Last year, 50 properties were protected through the scheme at Digby, and this year we will spend a further £2.5m on more flood prevention work to protect more homes. We have also been successful in applying to Defra for £7.5m over the next six years to address groundwater flooding across Greater Lincolnshire.

Economy

As a council, we are ambitious for our county and want our businesses to thrive and grow. Our council-led and partnership infrastructure projects are already supporting businesses to be better connected and encouraging more private sector investment.

For example, we have completed the infrastructure needed at the 15-acre South



Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone and started the construction of a hub building on-site.

This will house some of the country's leading food technology businesses, as well as a research and development centre from the University of Lincoln. 27 acres of land has now been purchased in partnership with South Holland District Council to develop the second phase.

We have also extended Skegness Business Park, creating much needed year-round jobs on the coast.

Working with the Greater Lincolnshire Enterprise Partnership, we will continue to develop plans for large economic projects to secure the funding needed to take them forward.

Our successful broadband roll-out will deliver 100% superfast coverage to the county by 2025, while our adult learning programme has seen 6,000 learners undertake training this year. By working with universities and colleges we are ensuring Lincolnshire has the workforce it needs into the future.

But the Covid pandemic has had an impact on just about every business in the country. While the government has provided an enormous package of support, we recognised locally that many small businesses have not been eligible for this.

So this year we allocated £12m to help businesses to thrive, adapt to new customer requirements and embrace digital technology. Over 1500 businesses applied to our four different schemes in March and we have already given funding to more than 580 of them.

The Business Recovery Fund has provided up to £10,000 to a range of businesses – many of which hadn't been established long enough to qualify for government support.

The incredibly popular digital and rural schemes have already paid out almost a million pounds of funding between them too.

We believe this to be the only scheme of its kind in the country – but absolutely the right thing to do to support our economy.



The Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub have provided business support and assistance to over 2,200 county businesses this year which have led to the creation and safeguarding of jobs, even in this difficult period.

One of the hardest-hit sectors will undoubtedly have been leisure and tourism businesses, so we will continue to work with partners on a high quality tourism offer, and to promote Lincolnshire as a visitor destination.

And we are continuing to invest in our coastal areas including the opening of the new Boat Shed café at Huttoft next month.

This year we have led a Tourism Commission, and the recommendations will help to shape the future of this important economic sector, including the redevelopment and re-launch of the Visit Lincolnshire website.

Protecting our environment

Preserving our heritage and landscape and reducing carbon emissions has been a key aim of this council for some time.

By March 2020 we had reduced our carbon emissions by over 28% since March 2017, already exceeding our planned target for 2023.

Our Smarter Working programme is looking at how we can reduce the number of council buildings and unnecessary travel, while offering staff flexible working utilising the technological advances we have seen during the Covid response.

This is in line with our Green Masterplan which aims to see the council become carbon neutral by 2050 – or sooner if that's practicable.

We know environmental issues are a real concern for our residents, especially littering and fly tipping.



So we're looking at things we can do to help. We will work closer with our district council colleagues and support our communities in the fight to keep our county free of litter.



Our Household Waste Recycling Centres remain popular with 530,000 bookings since the 'Click and Tip' system was introduced.

Right now, we are reviewing how they operate, in line with the easing of social distancing regulations, and are continuing with our £2m project to deliver a new Household Waste Recycling Centre at Tattershall.

Following a successful trial of separate paper and card collections from households, the scheme is now being rolled out across the county. This will increase recycling rates, lead to less haulage and processing, saving around £2.1m once all districts have been included.

In the coming weeks, we're also launching an exciting new programme educating

our youngsters in primary schools about recycling, and will be in communities talking to people too.

It's important as always that we strike the right balance between new and old and that developments in the county are appropriate. Our heritage and countryside should be enjoyed and celebrated, and we continue to protect the county's assets including our heritage attractions.

Delivering on our promises

There is so much about Lincolnshire to be cherished and protected, not least our people. They have shown themselves once again, through the toughest of times, to be warm-hearted and generous.

Their willingness to come forward as volunteers to help others through this pandemic is something I reflect on with gratitude and pride.

There is still a lot to be done to ensure our future prosperity too. We will always aim to provide the services our residents deserve, but also to uphold our responsibility as leaders.

Our conversations with the government must continue so that we can establish a fair and secure funding for Lincolnshire going forward.

We cannot simply do what we've always done, but we must adapt and improve, build on our successes, and deliver a better, brighter future for Lincolnshire.

So it is now time once again, to roll up our sleeves and deliver what we have promised.



Lincolnshire
COUNTY COUNCIL
Working for a better future

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