

LALC Conference 2019 Q&A Session
Jonathan Owen (NALC), Cllr Richard Davies (LCC) & Marc Jones (PCC)

1. The Government has declared a climate emergency – what are your organisations doing about it?

R.D: Lincolnshire County Council have adopted a carbon management plan with a 40% reduction in carbon emissions. Skegness Project. Access Lincoln. Bus route improvement (this has been a challenge for rural areas).

J.O: Local councils have a huge amount to contribute to address the issues on the ground, some examples of what local councils are doing includes installation of electric car points and no car days. I encourage all councils to plant more trees, NALC are currently working with the Woodland Trust on this.

M.J: Lincolnshire police now have their first 10 electric vehicles in the fleet, not as response vehicles. The implementation of LED lighting provides a £170,000 p/a saving, plus the use of the new multi-service building for police, fire and ambulance service and new technology reducing officer time and travel.

2. There are still a number of underfunded rural authorities- how are your services progressing on fairer funding for areas such as Lincolnshire?

R.D: If Lincolnshire collected the same as, say Manchester, it would increase funds by approximately £160million. It is unfair on rural locations. How's it progressing? Unsure.

M.J: There could be 2200 officers across the County if Lincolnshire received the same level of funds. Currently there are 1050. The funding formula has to change, however, that needs legislation.

J.O: This is a matter close to my heart, working on rural coalition nationally and encouraging Ministers to recognise the need for fairer funding which requires rigorous rural proofing. Parish & Town Council fair funding is also being fought for. The referendum principles must not extend to the sector. We are encouraging access to funding for Parish & Town Councils.

3. There has been a number of rural thefts from farms, smash and grabs of cash machines. How are you progressing with that?

M.J: This issue has been taken to the Chief of police. The PCC is the representative from the community to the police. There were 2 arrests last week for cash machine thefts. Most have trackers or dye that ruins the money, therefore there has been some success. The crime enabled by rurality- developing a report over the next few months to take to Government.

R.D: The damage and impact of this is vast.

J.O: Parish and Town Councils can play a role in community safety and crime prevention including campaigns via social media, sharing information in the local area is effective when working with the police.

4. There has been an increase in vandalism and small crimes and parishioners are reporting that they have found reporting these crimes to 101 is a waste of time, as they wait and wait to get through and nothing appears to happen. Is it important to log these crimes? Does something get done?

M.J: Lincolnshire holds more data on 101 than other Counties so are in a good position to understand. The national target is to respond to 90% and Lincolnshire is above 92%. Staffing is adjusted to suit the peak times. The average time is 1 minute and 51 seconds to get through to 101 – although the average time is pointless as it doesn't solve the problem. Currently investing in a new £6.5million system to support multiple records of the same issue and allow online reporting.

5. Two questions- what are your organisations doing to support flooding issues and Where does recycled plastic go? What happens to it, and can councils access it?

R.D: Flooding is a huge issue in Lincolnshire. I believe plastic is commercially sold or melted down – possibly sold to make a return. Will send the info to LALC.

J.O: There are ways Town and Parish Councils can get involved with agencies to support. Developing neighbourhood plans to put in measures to support flooding is one option.

Steve Eason-Harris (LCC): there are 554 Parish and Town Council boundaries in Lincolnshire and over 200 newly developed emergency plans – we encourage all Councils to work with us to develop these plans.

6. Big issues around County Lines- can we do something with the police? What are County Council doing? Are there any NALC initiatives?

M.J: County Lines (to explain to those that don't know is organised crime where young people are exploited to bring crime, drugs etc to small rural areas). National, regional and local police are all working on this. Local intelligence goes 2 ways: local to national & national to local. Safeguarding and enforcement a priority. Gathering evidence takes time. I urge people to report- crime stoppers is free and anonymous.

-How are you working with schools? Children under 10 have been involved!

M.J: The mini police programme- working with half junior age schools. Safe Lincs Partnership programmes going into schools, working effectively as partners. Statistics of violence being used to highlight problem areas.

R.D: Social workers working with police. Proactive, preventative work is key. Always report concerns – rather 10 calls came to nothing than miss 1 vital call.

J.O: softer skills required at Town & Parish Council level- acting as the eyes and ears. Councils can look at spending and support on a local level.

7. Why do coastal strips such as Skegness have less police presence when paying the same?

M.J: That is down to the Police Chief and is assessed on need. During the summer there are more resources on the East Coast and less at other times. Forces are deployed daily based on evidence of need. Special Constables (volunteers) can be promoted in communities, who have the power to arrest. It's a good way to get involved if interested in joining the police.

8. Two questions-

a. Highways/Potholes/Fix My Street:

is it true that the more people that report issues the quicker it will be done

b. Speed limits:

Why do they take so long to reduce?

R.D: No, more reports doesn't affect the speed of repairs. Location, size, depth, type of road decide priority factors. Issues raised with County Councillors are taken on board.

Speed limits: There is a massive backlog. Accident blackspots are prioritised and around schools. It requires a 13 week consultation and formal meeting with County Council.

J.O: This issue varies from place to place – talk to the other agencies involved instead of festering on matters.

9. What do we do if our County Councillor does not attend meetings or answer our emails?

R.D: I don't know, make it clear in the ballot box.

J.O: There is no requirement for them to do so.

10. There is a successful factory in the area and the lorries come through the village destroying our roads, what can be done?

R.D: No control over it unless there is a HGV ban in place. The Government assumes that every road is to standard. It would cost around £400-500million to get Lincolnshire's roads up to standard. It is incredibly difficult to manage and can only be enforced if it was a condition of the planning permission. Unfortunately the planning system is broken.

J.O: There are lots of improvements required for the planning system, and a big call for Town and Parish Councils to be listened to regarding planning. Neighbourhood Plans have great

force across the Country. NALC are pressing the Government to ensure Neighbourhood Plans are adhered to.

11. Crime, prevention and fear are high on the agenda – we are continually advised to use 101 but nothing happens. When Councillors are reporting, still nothing happens.

M.J: It's not necessarily that nothing has been done, it could be that those reporting have just not been informed of what action has been taken. It could be that evidence is being built. There has to be a second piece of evidence to get a warrant- often that is what is missing. It could also be part of a much bigger operation. The information gap leaves frustration. Looking at developing Community Coordinator roles to give Town and Parish Councils a consistent service- the same person, same information etc. Will have a different and improved system. Options are to report to 101 or use Crime Stoppers, which has a greater size call centre and therefore will get through quicker. A new cloud-based system is the first in the County, got to continue delivering as things are now, with switch on being planned for Spring 2020, then each additional system will be added in and trialled.

12. We need to employ a Clerk but do not have enough precept...

R.D: Speak to LALC, perhaps share a Clerk with a neighbouring area?

J.O: Lots of small councils work together and share a clerk. Be braver in raising the precept.

Katrina Evans: can I just reiterate that you can raise your precept, referendum principles have not been extended to Town and Parish Councils. Speak to us at LALC, forward plan your budget and you may have to increase the precept.