

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 4 November 2024 at 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Stephen Bunney (Chairman)
Councillor Matthew Boles (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Emma Bailey	Councillor John Barrett
Councillor Eve Bennett	Councillor Owen Bierley
Councillor Trevor Bridgwood	Councillor Mrs Jackie Brockway
Councillor Liz Clews	Councillor Karen Carless
Councillor Christopher Darcel	Councillor David Dobbie
Councillor Adam Duguid	Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan	Councillor Paul Key
Councillor Mrs Angela Lawrence	Councillor Paul Lee
Councillor Jeanette McGhee	Councillor Peter Morris
Councillor Maureen Palmer	Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Roger Pilgrim	Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers
Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings	Councillor Tom Smith
Councillor Jim Snee	Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee
Councillor Paul Swift	Councillor Trevor Young

In Attendance:

Sally Grindrod-Smith	Director Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Emma Foy	Director of Corporate Services and Section 151 Officer
Lisa Langdon	Assistant Director People and Democratic (Monitoring Officer)
Katie Storr	Democratic Services & Elections Team Manager

Also in Attendance:

Chairman of Nettleham Parish Council, Councillor Angela White and Vice-Chairman of the Neighbourhood Planning Group John Evans to the meeting.

Apologies

Councillor Frazer Brown
Councillor Jacob Flear
Councillor Sabastian Hague
Councillor Lynda Mullally
Councillor Baptiste Velan
Councillor Moira Westley

36 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed all those present and watching remotely. Special welcome was paid to Chairman of Nettleham Parish Council, Councillor Angela White and Vice-Chairman of the Neighbourhood Planning Group John Evans who would later in the meeting present the reviewed Nettleham Neighbourhood Plan to Members.

37 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Having been proposed and seconded, on being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council held on 2 September be confirmed, approved and signed as a correct record.

38 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Paul Key declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 9c (Statutory Review of Polling Districts, Polling Stations and Polling Places) given the reference to Gladstone House Social Club of which he was a Committee Member.

Councillor John Barrett declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 9a (Adoption of Neighbourhood Nettleham Plan Review) as he had been involved in the Review.

Councillor Tom Smith declared a personal interest in Motion 2 given its direct mention of Sir Edward Leigh MP, for whom Councillor Smith worked for as Director of Constituency Communications.

39 MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman introduced the report advising Members that it would be taken "as read" unless Members had any questions that they wished to raise.

With no comments or questions and with no requirement to vote, the matters arising were **DULY NOTED**.

40 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman

The Chairman addressed the Council, referencing briefly some of the events in which he had been involved and attended since Council last met, in what had been a busy period.

These had included attending Civic Services for Lincolnshire County Council and Kirton-in-Lindsey Town Council and the Lincoln College Higher Education Graduation Service.

It had been the Chairman's privilege to attend three Heritage Art events, these being: the

launch of Heritage England's New Beginning Community Scheme, which had been held in the magnificent surroundings of the 15th century Gainsborough Old Hall, held in conjunction with the Friends of Gainsborough Old Hall, who were celebrating their 75th anniversary.

The Council's own Trinity Arts Centre had also celebrated its 40th anniversary. The Gainsborough Arts Society had held a celebratory lunch and lecture at which the Chairman had attended. Councillor Howitt-Cowan had supported the Chairman at the event and thanks were paid to him.

The Gainsborough Heritage Association had held an evening reception to celebrate their 30th Anniversary. It had been a fabulous evening, attended by a number of Councillors and had served as a welcome opportunity to learn about the history of the town through the exhibits and shows.

2024 marked the 50th anniversary of the reorganisation of Local Government as laid out in the Local Government Act of 1972. West Lindsey District Council had been formed in 1974. In commemoration of this, the Chairman on behalf of the Authority had hosted a Golden Awards ceremony for the staff, a Civic service and a Reception. He considered all three events had been a great success providing current and past staff and members the opportunity to celebrate the successes of West Lindsey. As part of the celebration, a competition was held to design a commemorative flag, which was on display in the Chamber for the meeting, along with a hanging display showing a timeline of some of the historical moments in the Council's history.

The Chairman further advised of an album being created of the Council's history in more detail. The flag, book and other items would be placed in a special time-capsule to be incorporated in the new cinema complex. The hanging displays would form permanent displays in the Guildhall.

He paid tribute to all the staff involved making the events very successful and memorable and gave them all a round of applause.

Following the motion to Council the previous month regarding an extension to Household Support Fund, the Chairman spoke of his pleasure of learning that the Government had extended the Household Support Fund for a further six months, providing much needed support to those families facing hardship because of the cost of living. The work of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and other organisations was praised, and it was hoped with continued pressure from such organisations and Councils, further extensions would be considered by the Government.

Bringing announcements to an end, congratulations were paid to Gainsborough Trinity on winning their first-round match in the FA Cup, the first occasion in 76 years. They would now play Harrogate in the second round. He asked Members associated with the club to take the Council's congratulations and best wishes back to the team.

Leader

The Leader made the following address to Council: -

“I have the following items to report: -

RAF Scampton - in recent weeks we have sent a letter to the Minister Dame Angela Eagle calling for an urgent dialogue with ourselves regarding the future of the RAF Scampton and we're still waiting for a response. That was at the time of writing these notes and hoping we do receive a response very soon and I will keep Members updated on that.

Savoy Cinema - a small delegation of Officers and Members recently attended the site visit to see the progress of the building. It was extremely pleasing to see the project progressing on track with the facility planned to be open by June 2025.

Devolution – Devolution has been given the green light by the Government for Greater Lincolnshire. I am attending a growth summit on 15 November to hear the plans for the next stages. We are also working with the seven district authorities on the four seats for the Mayoral County Combined Authority (MCCA) and the other working groups involved around devolution and I will provide further updates on that at future meetings.

The Local Government Association (LGA) conference - I attended the LGA conference, along with the Chief Executive. Attending the conference, provided opportunity to visit both Knaresborough and Harrogate's newly refurbished leisure facilities. This enabled us to further our thoughts and develop our thinking in relation to sports and leisure across the district, and again, that piece of work is progressing.

Peer Challenge Review, January 2025, - we have the next planned peer challenge review in January and we have been working hard with Officers to prepare for that which I must say most likely will involve most Members of the council and Officers and is a really important piece of work for us to do.

And finally, Chairman, the Labour Government's first budget has been announced, £1 .3 million was announced in the budget for local government. The budget gap for the next financial year for local government is £2 .3 million.

So, there's still a further £1 million shortfall. That's just a standstill position. Therefore, across the county, we will continue to see services being cut and fees and charges will continue to increase. £5 million was announced for new housing and we wait to see more detail on how this will unlock more housing locally, especially in relation to affordable housing across the district.

The good news is that UK Shared Prosperity Fund has now been confirmed for a further transitional 12 -month period, albeit at a lower level than previous years.

But that's good news for the authority in terms of the next 12 months”.

In response to the Leader’s Announcements the Leader of the Opposition requested that his Members be fully briefed from the Leader regarding the ongoing work across the Council so expectation could be met in respect of the Peer Review.

The Leader confirmed that the timetable for the planned week visit, would be issued very shortly.

Director of Planning Regeneration and Communities on behalf of the Head of Paid Service

The Director of Planning Regeneration and Communities, addressed Council, on behalf of the Head of Paid Service, and was delighted to start announcements with an update on two areas of collaboration for the District Council that have been recognised through the shortlisting for national awards.

Firstly, the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan had been recognised by the Royal Town Planning Institute having been shortlisted for the National Award for Excellence in Plan-making; wonderful recognition of the ambition of the Local Plan and the collaboration between West Lindsey District Council, North Kesteven, the City of Lincoln and Lincolnshire County Council. The results would be published on the 26th of November.

Secondly, the teams working to support the Step Fusion project in West Burton have been shortlisted in the Collaborative Initiative of the Year by the Institute of Economic Development. The collaboration saw the District Council working closely with UK Industrial Fusion, Bassetlaw District Council, Nottinghamshire County Council and other partners across the region to realise the strategic opportunity that the delivery of fusion energy right on our doorstep here in Gainsborough could bring to the district. The outcome of the awards would be known within the week.

Opportunity was also taken to raise awareness of two live public consultation exercises the District Council were currently undertaking.

Firstly, the Budget Consultation, which was an annual exercise that welcomed views as part of the Council's budget setting process. The consultation could be accessed online. In person events had also been held across the district with the final session being held Wednesday 6 November from 2pm onwards in the Old School Hall in Nettleham.

Secondly, a consultation on the district's emerging economic growth strategy had just gone live. Views were being sought from all stakeholders, including those who lived, worked and traded in West Lindsey, on our strategic approach to growth.

The consultation also invited respondents to reflect on challenges and opportunities for the local economy both now and over the next five years, again the consultation could be accessed online.

Concluding her announcements, the Director of Planning Regeneration and Communities took opportunity to highlight the events pages of the District Council's website which were full of many diverse events across the whole district and within many of the communities including what looked to be pretty spectacular bonfire events over the next couple of days particularly in Market Rasen and Ingham.

Other highlights brought to the attention of Members were the performance of Macbeth at

the Broadbent Theatre and a music night hosted by the Rase Heritage Centre. The festive period would kick off with the Christmas lights festival in Gainsborough on the 15th and 16th of November and tickets were now available for the annual panto at the Trinity Arts Centre, with some performances are already sold out.

This brought announcements to a conclusion.

41 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chairman advised the meeting that no public questions had been received.

42 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 9

The Chairman advised the meeting that no questions under Procedure Rule No.9 had been submitted by Members.

43 MOTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10

The Chairman advised the meeting that two Motions had been submitted pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No. 10 and these were set out on the agenda.

As the mover of the first motion, Councillor Bridgwood was invited to read aloud his motion to the meeting, as follows: -

“Motion 1 - The development and planning approval process in respect of Battery Electric Storage System (BESS) sites.

The need to switch to renewable energy is well established. As a result, there is a need for large scale development of BESS sites in order to mitigate the fluctuation of renewable energy due to the lack of consistency with solar and wind systems.

A modern well designed and constructed BESS site is, in all probability of very little risk. Based on analysis of incidents involving BESS sites, the majority of incidents occur during the construction and commissioning phase of development.

Generally, the planning process is concerned about the impact of developments in an area when they have been completed.

As such it would seem that the potential risk area for a BESS site, (Construction & Commissioning phase) is currently given little consideration by the current statutory consultees.

The Government published a research briefing on 19 April 2024 <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7621/CBP-7621.pdf>

However, it would appear this provides little clarity and raises further questions (See comments by Paul Christensen, Director Lithiumionsafety Ltd Consultancy in background information attached).

In August 2023 the Government updated its planning practice guidance to encourage developers and local planning authorities to consult their local Fire & Rescue Service on planning applications for BESS sites.

The National Fire Chiefs Council produced a guidance document in April 2023 which was reviewed in July 2024 and went through consultation which closed on 22 August 2024. The final version is yet to be published. <https://nfcc.org.uk/consultation/draft-grid-scale-energy-storage-system-planning-guidance/>

However, the Local Fire Authority (LFA) is not a statutory consultee for planning applications and therefore they do not have to be consulted and even if they are consulted their feedback is only advisory. Furthermore, they are not funded to respond to such consultations which can create capacity issues.

As such currently there is no defined safety regulator.

Even the statutory consultees who are consulted review the applications based on the final site, rather than the Health & Safety issues that could arise during construction and commissioning, the riskiest part of the development. Highways do not consider the implications of a major fire on the local highway network nor the risk of contaminated run-off water in the event of a fire, neither does The Environment Agency.

This technology is fairly new, and development is very fast moving (see background information for number of sites), so there is a lack of legislative control in place. too stricter a regime risks tying up the developing industry.

Given the current situation Council resolves to:

- Lobby the Government (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to make Local Fire Authorities statutory consultees in respect of planning applications relating to Renewable Energy Sites and specifically Battery Electric Storage System sites.
- Write to the Local Government Association and Greater Lincolnshire Local Authorities to highlight the current situation and lack of oversight on such developments and request that they too lobby the Government to bring about this national change.

I so move
Councillor Trevor Bridgwood”

Members also noted the background information, attached to the agenda and referenced in the Motion.

Having been duly seconded, the seconder of the Motion took opportunity to make a statement setting out his reasoning for the support, starting with reference to comments made by a market leader only that day on BBC News relating to the instability of some electric vehicle batteries.

The District would also see large scale NSIP projects, and other renewable energy schemes in the near future. With all developers having their own ideas and their own consultants who produced documents, but in reality he concurred with Councillor Bridgwood that there needed to be some level of legislation, nationally, to actually ensure that the safety of the public was at the heart of all such developments.

Acknowledging there was a need to have energy and whilst it could be generated through various renewable means, some of that energy needed to be stored but it needed to be stored in a proper and safe manner.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Fleetwood also undertook to raise the matter at the County Council to ensure that they were fully aware of the issues attached to such developments, not necessarily just through fire and rescue, but through the planning system.

Debate ensued, with Members speaking in support of the motion and the need for national legislation, concerns were expressed that there was tendency for the UK Government to rush towards renewable energy without the basics having been put in place. This was a matter national government needed to address and on being put to the vote it was: -

RESOLVED unanimously that: -

- (a) the District Council lobby the Government (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to make Local Fire Authorities statutory consultees in respect of planning applications relating to Renewable Energy Sites and specifically Battery Electric Storage System sites; and
- (b) the relevant Director for the Service area, write to the Local Government Association and Greater Lincolnshire Local Authorities to highlight the current situation and lack of oversight on such developments and request that they too lobby the Government to bring about this national change.

Note: Councillor Ian Fleetwood declared a personal interest in the above item of business as the Chairman of Lincolnshire County Council's Planning Committee.

Motion 2

The Chairman, as the mover of the second motion, read his motion aloud to the meeting as follows: -

“In founding the Metropolitan Police in 1829 Robert Peel created ‘modern’ policing.

The underlying principle of which is to make the community safer by preventing the occurrence of crime and disorder and by ending the need to tackle anti-social behaviour with military force and severe legal punishment.

The first Metropolitan Police Commissioners Charles Rowan and Richard Mayer stressed the need for the Police and Public to work together in the interests of community welfare. This required the 'Peeler' or 'Bobby' to be seen in public on the 'beat'. The emphasis was very much on community cohesion rather than crime detection.

Peel being clear that if officers spent time on the latter, high levels of anti-social behaviour would continue and the public remain threatened and feeling unsafe.

The current Chief Constable of Lincolnshire Police, Paul Gibson, echoes the aims of Peel, Rowan and Mayer in the document "Making Lincolnshire Safe Strategy 2024 -2025" by making Neighbourhood Policing a major priority for the force as evidenced in the following extracts in the section entitled 'Building Confidence in Policing'.

- " Neighbourhood Policing is effective as it engages creatively with the communities and solves problems"
- " takes a proactive approach to prevention, working in partnership"
- " maximising our visibility"
- " opportunities for collaboration with partners, community groups, schools etc"
- " focus on rural crime and the prevention of harm in the rural communities"
- " expand connections with the community"

Worthwhile aspirations but not being fully met across our district – the limited number of officers and resources available focusing on detecting and solving serious crime – leaving precious few resources and individuals to carry out 'preventative work'.

In some areas levels are so low that Neighbourhood teams are providing minimal part time cover for less than half the week – hardly working with the public to bring about community safety and welfare. In fact, it harbours the opposite – residents do not have confidence in the force and so do not report issues etc. taking the attitude 'there is no point as there are no officers to deal with the concern.'

Both the Chief Constable and Marc Jones, The Police and Crime Commissioner are lobbying The Home Office and Central Government to provide sufficient funding to finance a force that they believe will deliver both the 'preventative' neighbourhood policing and crime detection. So far, they have had little success leaving Lincolnshire Police as the second lowest centrally financed force per head of population in the country at just over £100 per head a total of £89.834m for 2024 -2025.

To this a further £86m is added from local sources – one of the highest

contributions per head in the country. Nevertheless, the combined figure of £174m makes the Authority the least funded force in the country, with the third lowest number of officers per 1000 head of population.

This is detrimental to our low-density rural area where the numbers of officers per head of population need to be higher than the national average to compensate for the time taken travelling between communities and to visit the myriad of hamlets and 'isolated' standalone properties.

This Council resolves to instruct the Chief Executive, Leader and Chairman to write:

- to the Chief Constable and Police Commissioner to support their lobbying for fairer funding for Lincolnshire police to ensure that they can establish and sustain a truly preventative Neighbourhood Policing Structure, alongside an effective detection service, enhancing community safety and well-being in our District.
- to petition Sir Edward Leigh MP, The Home Office and Treasury to provide a realistic funding formula to allow Lincolnshire police to carry out the preventative policing principles laid down by Peel, Rowan and Mayer in 1829 alongside the justice system functions of crime detection.

I so move
Councillor Stephen Bunney”

Having been duly seconded, the seconder addressed the Chamber, adding that following a recent visit by the Police to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee there was a suspicion of underreporting. The importance of reporting incidents and how this supported the Police was stressed.

Debate ensued and the Leader of the Opposition proposed an amendment as removing Sir Edward Leigh and the Treasury from the final paragraph, offering rationale for the amendment which was aimed at strengthening the action and directing it squarely at the department responsible for Policing, the Home Office.

With the amendment duly seconded and Members declining opportunity to debate the amendment, on being put to the vote the amendment was carried.

Further debate ensued with a Member commenting on the current conditions in terms of pay and working conditions for Police Officers, which had led to some of the lowest morale in the police across the country. An annual survey conducted by the Police had found that one in six Police officers reported back that they were thinking of leaving the force. Over half reported stress and low mood exacerbated by their workload and low pay. As such it was important the District Council supported the local force in their persistence for increased resources and funding particularly in rural areas and given recent serious incidents.

Members also commented on how reduced police visibility could feed into underreporting, with communities, historically, knowing their local officer, building community relationships and confidence, something reducing resources had eroded.

The motion as amended, was put to the vote and it was: -

RESOLVED unanimously that: -

- (a) the Chief Executive, Leader and Chairman write to the Chief Constable and Police Commissioner to support their lobbying for fairer funding for Lincolnshire Police to ensure that they can establish and sustain a truly preventative Neighbourhood Policing Structure, alongside an effective detection service, enhancing community safety and well-being in our District; and
- (b) the Chief Executive, Leader and Chairman petition, The Home Office to provide a realistic funding formula to allow Lincolnshire police to carry out the preventative policing principles laid down by Peel, Rowan and Mayer in 1829 alongside the justice system functions of crime detection.

Note: Councillor Tom Smith declared a personal interest in the above motion as his sister was a Police Officer.

44 ADOPTION OF THE NETTLEHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REVIEW

Before introducing the report, the Chairman again welcomed Chairman of Nettleham Parish Council, Councillor Angela White and Vice-Chairman of the Neighbourhood Planning Group John Evans to the meeting.

Members gave consideration to a report which sought Members' approval to adopt the review of the neighbourhood plan for the parish of Nettleham.

Members were advised this would be the second reviewed neighbourhood plan to be adopted within West Lindsey and would replace the original neighbourhood plan for Nettleham to form part of the development plan and thereby have a major influence on planning application decisions in the Nettleham parish.

The Nettleham Neighbourhood Plan Review involved two rounds of public consultation and had been successful at both examination and referendum. The referendum, held on Thursday 26 September, saw residents voting 94.56% in favour of the plan with a turnout of nearly 27%

The Chairman moved the recommendations before inviting local Ward Member comment. Councillor Barrett commended the Group for their excellent Plan, spoke of their commitment to getting the task completed, which was no easy feat and required dedication and hard work. He paid tribute to Parish Councillor Mrs White, Mr Evans and all those involved, particularly Chris Higham, before seconding the report.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Parish Councillor Mrs White and Mr Evans made a short address to Council, as follows: -

“Good evening, Chair, Councillors, Chief Executive and Officers of the Council. I am Angela White, Chair of Nettleham Parish Council and member of the working group. I am accompanied by John Evans, former Chair of Nettleham Parish Council and Vice-Chair of the working group.

Thank you for this opportunity to present the Council with our reviewed Nettleham Neighbourhood Plan.

Our original Nettleham Neighbourhood Plan was presented to the Council and adopted in March 2016. It was the first in West Lindsey to be completed with development site allocations. It has been used many times to influence planning decisions for our Parish.

In view of the numerous changes to the NPPF and the CLLP review it was decided that our NP needed to be reviewed to ensure that the policies were not out of date.”

Mr Evans continued the address: -

“Our review which commenced in 2019 was funded mainly by Government grants of £18,000 through Locality. It was originally intended to be a light touch modification, but in view of all the changes in planning law and the evolving CLLP a more detailed change was deemed necessary. Of course Covid 19 played its part in slowing down the consultation process and we also wanted to pace our review with the details emerging in the CLLP review so we were consistent with that plan.

The review group comprised a total of 9, residents and parish councillors, approximately half had worked on the original plan, but new people were welcomed for their fresh ideas. This work was preceded by a detailed Character Assessment of the village. We have taken that information to identify green (biodiversity) corridors and design guides to influence the character of any new developments in the Parish.

We were disappointed that unlike previously the CLLP team decided on new housing numbers and site allocations without prior meaningful consultation with local communities. However we did at least manage to influence the designs of the allocated sites with our site specific design guides.

The Nettleham Neighbourhood Plan was taken to referendum on September 26, 2024 and received a vote in favour of 94% on a turnout of over 26%.”

Concluding the address, the Chairman of the Parish Council, Councillor Mrs White thanked her colleagues on the working group for their commitment and hard work over the past 5 years: Chair, Chris Higham; Vice–Chair John Evans; Cllr John Barrett; Cllr Christine Johnson; Malcolm Leaning; Richard Porter; Terry Williams and Carol Worthington and at West Lindsey Nev Brown, the Neighbourhood Planning Officer and Katie Storr and her team for organising the Referendum. Particular thanks were expressed to Luke Brown, the Group’s planning consultant for his expert help and guidance over the past 5 years and Jan

Austin for her excellent Character Assessment.

The Chairman of Council then formally received the Plan from the Chairman of the Parish Council and Mr Evans to a round of applause from all Members.

Debate ensued with both the Leader of Council and Leader of Opposition congratulating the Group on their achievements, with the Leader commenting on how he was inspired by the community involvement, with some of those mentioned in acknowledgements, having served the community for over 50 years. Full recognition of the effort required to complete a Neighbourhood Plan was paid.

The weight, which would now be given to the document when considering planning applications, was also recognised demonstrating how communities could get involved and shape their communities.

Having been proposed and seconded on being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) the reviewed Nettleham Neighbourhood Plan be adopted (made) in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012; and
- (b) the newly adopted (made) Nettleham Neighbourhood Plan Review September 2024, replace the Nettleham Neighbourhood Plan adopted in March 2016, to form part of the West Lindsey Development Plan for Nettleham parish area.

Following a further round of applause the visitors left the meeting at this point.

45 RECOMMENDATION FROM THE LICENSING COMMITTEE - GAMBLING ACT 2005 STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES (GAMBLING POLICY) - APPROVAL

Councillor Mrs Snee, in her capacity as Vice Chairman of the Licensing Committee presented the report which sought approval of the Gambling Act 2005 – Statement of Principles, following on from public consultation and having been considered and recommended for adoption from the Licensing Committee.

Members were advised as a licensing authority, West Lindsey District Council were required to publish a statement of principles in relation to gambling licensing. These principles were intended to guide decision makers, applicants, objectors and others regarding the decision-making process in relation to applications.

The statement of principles set out how the Authority would work to fulfil its licensing objectives and determine applications it received.

The functions which the Council exercised within its statutory role as the Licensing Authority played a key role in ensuring that residents, businesses and visitors could enjoy a variety of activities within the District in a safe and regulated manner. The statement of principles

helped to ensure that this could continue with the Authority being required to review the Statement every three years, ensuring it was up-to-date and effective.

With the recommendation having been moved and duly seconded debate ensued.

Members commented on the need to protect and regulate wherever possible. Councillors were keen to understand particularly how children were protected.

Pages 62 to 63 of the policy referenced measures establishments must take to protect children from those activities categorised highest risk.

Exchanges made between Councillors highlighted both the fun side and the devastating impact gambling addictions could have. All concurred on-line gambling caused some of the most significant risk with children exposed to a greater degree than they ever had been. On-line gambling was not regulated by District Council Policies as it fell outside of their jurisdiction.

Members considered the Policy took a proportionate approach to issues and establishments the District Council could influence via legislation and enforcement.

RESOLVED that the recommendation from the Licensing Committee be accepted and in doing so the Gambling Act 2005 – Statement of Principles 2025-2027 be approved for adoption.

46 STATUTORY REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING STATIONS AND POLLING PLACES

Members considered a report which set out details of the statutory requirement to review Polling Stations, Places, and Districts. Members noted that compulsory reviews must be held once every five years with the last statutory review having been reported to Council in November 2019.

The process undertaken was set out in Section 3 of the report and a summary of the responses received was set out in Section 4 and Appendix 1.

Arising recommendations for each polling place were contained in Appendix 2. With the vast majority remaining unchanged, where a change was proposed these were summarised at Section 5.4 of the report.

Finally, Members were advised that proposed changes would become effective for the next scheduled polls in May 2025.

Debate ensued and local Ward Member for Scampton welcomed the move back to the Community Centre, agreeing that schools were not the best place for polling stations, moving the paper.

Local Ward Member for Saxilby expressed concerns at the proposal to move the Polling Station for residents of North and South Carlton, suggesting the alternative would pose difficulties and inconvenience for residents and that the Parish Chairman had been unaware.

Officers acknowledged that the comments, a full equality impact assessment had been undertaken, the facilities were below standard, and the Council had a duty to its staff too. All key holders and venues had been contacted as part of the review. The polling station remained within the accepted distance of travel and residents could chose to move to an alternative voting method. Accepting it could be viewed as not ideal, with no other facilities in the village residents already needed to travel for basic services, it really was a difficult balancing act and residents could raise their concerns post the decision.

Concern was expressed regarding the use of Gladstone House, with some Members feeling, given a Member of Council's association with the establishment there was potential for undue influence. Another venue in the area had not been used historically for that reason. Concerns were also expressed that venue had a liquor licence that ran over polling hours. For these reasons it was requested that the word permanent be removed from the report and an alternative found, one suggestion being the Hastings Centre on North Warren Road.

Officers responded, giving assurance that the polling station had worked well, there had been no complaints regarding its use or petitions and its was the duty of staff to ensure it was free from influence on the day.

The Leader of Council voiced his objection, advising he had complained previously but no amendments had been made and he was of the view it was the only licensed polling station.

In response Officers acknowledged there had been a previous complaint from elected Members, the earlier reference meaning public complaints. A number of licensed premises were used for polling stations; however, none were permitted to serve alcohol on the day of polling unless there was a totally separate room away from the polling station.

In response to comments across the Chamber, Officers outlined the various venues which had been approached in the Ward and of the constraints but indicated they were happy to remove the word permanent as requested by Members and investigate further alternatives, if that was the Chamber's wish.

A previous suggestion of deferring the paper was withdrawn. The report, as amended was duly seconded and on that basis it was: -

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the process undertaken, and responses received, summarised in Appendix 1 be noted;
- (b) the proposals for the polling districts, polling places and polling stations in the District, as set out in the analysis of polling stations document attached at Appendix 2 of the report be approved, subject to the word permanent being removed in reference to the polling station at Gladstone House with an alternative to be sourced where feasible; and
- (c) the outcome and recommendations arising from the next statutory review be received by Council not later than November 2029.

Note Councillor Dobbie declared a personal interest in the above item as a Member of Gladstone House Social Club.

The meeting concluded at 8.24 pm.

Chairman