

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 29 July 2025 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Stephen Bunney (Chairman)
Councillor John Barrett
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
Councillor Trevor Bridgwood
Councillor Frazer Brown
Councillor Peter Morris
Councillor Lynda Mullally
Councillor Maureen Palmer
Councillor Roger Pilgrim

Also Present: Councillor Moira Westley (Visiting Member)

In Attendance:
Nova Roberts Director of Change Management, ICT & Regulatory Services
Claire Bailey Change, Projects and Performance Officer
Molly Spencer Democratic & Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Liz Clews

Membership: Councillor Stephen Bunney was appointed substitute for Councillor Liz Clews

8 TO OPEN THE MEETING AND APPOINT A CHAIRMAN

The Democratic and Civic Officer opened the meeting and explained that the first item of business was to appoint a Chairman for the meeting. Proposals were duly sought.

A Member of the Committee proposed Councillor Stephen Bunney, this was duly seconded, having been voted upon, it was

RESOLVED that Councillor Stephen Bunney be appointed Chairman of the Committee for the purpose of this meeting only.

Councillor Bunney took the Chair and proceeded with the agenda'd business.

9 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

On being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

held on Tuesday 24 June 2025 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

10 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

11 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

The Democratic and Civic Officer provided an update against the matters arising related to the Battery Storage Legislation. The Battery Energy Storage Fire Safety Bill, had its first reading 21 October 2024 and the second was scheduled for 29 May 2026. The committee would be updated once there was a further update.

Concern was expressed over the slow progress, which was attributed to delays at a national level. Reference was made to actions taken by another local authority, which had established a task and finish group and conducted a technical review in collaboration with the local fire and rescue service. A framework for assessing applications had been adopted within the same timeframe.

It was noted that a document outlining best practice standards had also been produced. The Member indicated a willingness to circulate both the framework and the document for consideration.

The Chairman clarified that the discussion related to the matters arising schedule and suggested that the detailed points raised be considered for inclusion in the forward plan. Agreement was reached to revisit the topic at a later meeting.

With no further comments or questions, the Matters Arising Schedule was **DULY NOTED**.

12 SCRUTINY OF PROGRESS AND DELIVERY REPORTING THROUGH THE POLICY COMMITTEES - QUARTER FOUR REPORT AND SUMMARY OF YEAR END PERFORMANCE 2024/25

The Change, Projects and Performance Officer introduced the Scrutiny of Progress and Delivery reporting through the Policy Committees - Quarter Four Report and Summary of Year End Performance 2024/25. It was explained that the purpose of the report was to ensure that the relevant policy committees had applied appropriate scrutiny and challenge to the information presented.

Members were asked to consider the minutes and responses from the Prosperous Communities Committee meeting held on 3 June 2025 and the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 12 June 2025.

It was proposed that the report be accepted, with the view that a satisfactory level of scrutiny had been applied by both committees. The proposal was seconded, and it was noted that effective collaboration had taken place between Members and Officers throughout the process.

With no further comments or questions it was

RESOLVED that the Committee had examined the responses provided by the Prosperous Communities Committee and the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee and assured that an appropriate level of challenge had been applied to the information contained in the report.

13 FORWARD PLAN

With no comments or questions the forward plan was **DULY NOTED**.

14 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

The Democratic and Civic Officer provided an update on the committee's work plan. It was confirmed that Lincolnshire Police would attend the meeting on 14 October 2025, with all councillors invited to submit questions in advance to support a focused and representative discussion. Everyone Active had agreed to attend the January 2026 meeting. The Lincolnshire Resilience Forum (LRF) had been invited to attend in April 2026, though Members expressed a preference to bring this item forward, subject to availability.

Members raised concerns about the inconsistent progress of emergency planning across Parish Councils. Difficulties in completing framework plans were noted, particularly in identifying volunteers for key roles. It was clarified by the Chairman that the frameworks were adaptable and could be tailored to local needs. The importance of ensuring preparedness and building confidence at both community and authority levels was emphasised. It was agreed that, if the LRF could not attend earlier, alternative arrangements would be explored.

Concerns were raised about significant financial reserves held by some Parish Councils, with suggestions that these funds should be used to support local resilience and emergency planning. It was agreed that the Section 151 Officer would be asked to update the committee outlining the current position and potential actions.

A Member requested for a paper to be brought back within two committee cycles outlining the current position on planning frameworks in relation to Battery Energy Storage Sites (BESS). The paper would assess the Council's powers, relevant legislation, and examples from other authorities. This would inform potential next steps, including pre-scrutiny or referral to another Committee. It was noted that the matter should be approached from a public safety and sustainable energy perspective, rather than a climate change debate. Engagement with the County Fire Chief and local MPs was encouraged to support lobbying efforts.

Advice was provided by the Lead Officer, who recommended that a paper be prepared to outline the current position regarding planning frameworks. This would include an assessment of the Council's powers, the status of relevant legislation, and examples of approaches taken by other authorities, including district, borough, city, and unitary councils. The purpose of the paper would be to support a clear understanding of the Council's position, the potential impact on existing planning applications, and the scope for pre-

scrutiny.

It was proposed by a Member that the Environmental Sustainability Group be involved in progressing BESS related matters. The group, which met regularly and had a remit to lobby national government, could support work on alternative energy and planning frameworks. This approach was proposed as a more agile route for influencing policy and feeding into any feasibility study.

Concern was raised regarding the performance of West Lindsey Markets. It was noted that the Member Market Working Group had not met since October 2024, however it was on the Committee Work Plan for an update to be presented to the Committee. Officers undertook to seek details of the current situation from the Director for Commercial and Operational Services, and this would be shared in due course.

The Chairman highlighted that there were amendments to the workplan which had been proposed and would require a Committee resolution. Having been proposed and seconded, he took the vote and it was

RESOLVED that

- a) Lincolnshire Resilience Forum (LRF) be invited to attend an earlier meeting, subject to their availability; and
- b) the Section 151 Officer provides an update to the Committee outlining the current position on Parish Council reserves and potential actions; and
- c) Officers be requested to present a paper, outlining the Council's position on planning frameworks in relation to Battery Energy Storage Sites (BESS), including legislative context and examples from other authorities.

With no further comments or questions the Committee Work Plan was **DULY NOTED** taking into account the amendments above.

The meeting concluded at 7.03 pm.

Chairman