

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA on 15 January 2026 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Owen Bierley (Chairman)
Councillor Paul Swift (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Matthew Boles
Councillor Frazer Brown
Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor Paul Key
Councillor Tom Smith
Councillor Moira Westley
Councillor Trevor Young
Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings

In Attendance:

Peter Davy
Sally Grindrod-Smith
Lisa Langdon

Director of Finance and Assets (Section 151 Officer)
Director Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Assistant Director People and Democratic (Monitoring Officer)
Financial Services Manager (Deputy Section 151)
Homes, Health & Wellbeing Team Manager
Senior Homelessness Prevention Officer
Senior Democratic and Civic Officer

Sue Leversedge
Sarah Elvin
Laura Hill
Ele Snow

Apologies:

Councillor Jeanette McGhee
Councillor Baptiste Velan

Membership:

Councillor L Rollings was appointed substitute for Councillor B Velan

81 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

82 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held on Thursday, 11 December 2025 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

83 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest as this point in the meeting.

84 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

With no comments or questions, the Matters Arising Schedule, setting out the position of previously agreed actions as at 7 January 2026, was **DULY NOTED**.

85 REVIEW OF EARMARKED RESERVES 2025/26

The Committee gave consideration to a report presented by the Financial Services Manager (Deputy S151), regarding the annual review of usable reserves for 2025/26. Members were asked to consider the reserves held by the council to ensure whether they were still required, and whether the balance was appropriate and provided financial resilience for the council. Members were directed to the table at appendix A of the report, which listed the current and forecast balances against each reserve, including all approved use of and contribution to reserves.

It was noted that, although not yet approved, the table also included the £8m previously considered by Members to be provisionally allocated to fund future priorities. The Committee heard that the Corporate Plan was under development and, once finalised, a separate report would be brought to Members to discuss the specific allocation of the £8m to align to corporate priorities.

Members heard that usable reserves totalled £28.6m as at the end of 2024/25, with the forecast balance as at 31 March 2031 being £18m. Whilst there was no prescribed level of reserves the council should hold, the level should not be excessive. The total forecast balance of usable reserves of £18m equated to approximately 96% of the revenue base budget requirement for 2025/26, which, in theory, meant the council could operate for a year from reserves if there were a catastrophic event. It was highlighted that the general fund balance was not earmarked for a specific purpose but was available for emergency or unforeseen events. The balance had been reviewed against the Council's budget requirement and was proposed to hold between £2 and £2.5m, which was no change from the current approved balance.

The Committee thanked the Financial Services Manager for the well presented report, and extended thanks to the financial services team as a whole, for the work they did to maintain the council in a stable financial position.

Members discussed in detail the potential impact of the upcoming Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), highlighting the desire to use available monies for the benefit of the West Lindsey residents whilst the council remained in existence. Several Members raised concerns that the positive balances in West Lindsey would be used under LGR to offset inherited negative balances of other local authorities. The Section 151 Officer acknowledged the concerns raised, noting the need to balance the desire to spend to benefit residents, with the need to maintain prudent accounting.

The predicted timescale for LGR was discussed, with Members noting a number of unrelated decisions which had been recently overturned by the Government. It was recognised that, whilst plans for LGR continued to progress, it would be unwise to take action to spend reserve balances if there was any uncertainty around the future of the council. It was suggested that available funds could be better used to ensure the longevity of capital assets, meaning residents would continue to benefit from availability of community services regardless of which authority was in place.

With Members of the Committee agreeing that funds should be used to benefit the district as far as possible ahead of LGR, the recommendations as contained within the report were proposed, with an additional recommendation moved. This was “that the council revisits this scenario as and when necessary”. The two printed recommendations, and the proposal for a third recommendation, were duly seconded.

On taking advice from the Senior Democratic Services Officer and S151 Officer, the Chairman suggested that the additional recommendation re amended to read “that the council revisits this scenario within a six month period”. Both the proposer and seconder were in agreement with the amendment. On taking the vote, it was unanimously **agreed** that the third recommendation be included.

With all Members in agreement, a Member of the Committee wished it to be a matter of record that the need for a review was entirely aimed at external sources, there was no implied doubt of West Lindsey District Council officers, with the operation within the council being regarded as ‘perfection’.

In sharing his agreement with those comments, and having had all three recommendations proposed and seconded, the Chairman took the vote. It was unanimously

RESOLVED that

- a) a general fund balance of between £2.0m and £2.5m be maintained; and
- b) the reserves held by the Council, and their levels as detailed in Appendix A, had been duly considered; and
- c) this scenario be revisited within a 6 month period.

86 CHANGE TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE WORKING GROUP KNOWN AS THE 'SAVINGS BOARD'

The Committee gave consideration to a paper presented by the Section 151 Officer regarding amendments to the Terms of Reference for the working group known as the Savings Board. The amendments included a change of membership from three administration members and two opposition members to five cross party Members, a change to the title of the Group to be the ‘Member Board for Efficiencies, Income Generation, and Savings’, as well as a focus on online meetings. The original terms of reference for the group had been agreed at the meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee on 14 November 2024 and were provided to Members within the meeting papers. A highlighted version to show all amendments was also provided.

In response to a question regarding the low number of meetings which had been held since the group's inception, Members were directed to the rationale provided within the report, which included the launch of a Fair Funding Review into Council funding and grants, as well as the announcement of a programme of local government reorganisation in England.

The reason for membership of the group being sought from those who were appointed to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee was explained by the Chairman, highlighting the decision-making responsibilities of the Committee.

Having been proposed, seconded, and voted upon it was

RESOLVED that

- a) the reviewed Terms of Reference for the Working Group previously known as the Savings Board, as shown at appendix 1, be approved; and
- b) the Committee nominate five cross-party Members to sit on the Member Board for Efficiencies, Income Generation, and Savings, with names to be provided after the meeting.

87 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

With no comments or questions, the Committee Work Plan was **DULY NOTED**.

88 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Note: The meeting entered into closed session at 7.13pm

89 HOMELESSNESS RESERVE DRAW DOWN

Members heard from the Homes, Health & Wellbeing Team Manager regarding an update on a complex homelessness case. Details were provided regarding the duty of West Lindsey District Council with regard to homelessness, as well as options explored in relation to the presented case.

Members acknowledged the complexity of the case, and recognised the ongoing difficulties. Relevant questions were posed regarding the history and circumstances, details of which were explained by Officers.

In response to questions regarding use of the homelessness reserve, timescales, and next steps, it was explained that the reserve could only be spent on homelessness and, subject

to approval from the Committee, the work would be undertaken as soon as practicably possible.

In expressing their thanks to the team involved and indicating support for the proposal, the recommendations as printed within the report were duly moved and seconded. On taking the vote it was

RESOLVED that

- a) the use of Homelessness Reserve to discharge a homelessness duty be approved; and
- b) authority be delegated to the S151 Officer to approve the final amount of drawdown from the reserve once final figures are obtained, and to approve the increase of the 'Disabled Facilities Grants' capital scheme to reflect the expenditure and use of reserves.

The meeting concluded at 7.52 pm.

Chairman