

## 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 12 February 2026 commencing at 6.30 pm.

**Present:** Councillor Owen Bierley (Chairman)

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

**In Attendance:**

Paul Burkinshaw	Chief Executive
Peter Davy	Director of Finance and Assets (Section 151 Officer)
Sally Grindrod-Smith	Director Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Lisa Langdon	Assistant Director People and Democratic (Monitoring Officer)
Ellen King	Policy & Strategy Officer – Corporate Strategy & Business Planning
Lynne Thomsett	People Services Manager
Sue Leversedge	Financial Services Manager (Deputy Section 151)
Cara Markham	Commercial, Cultural and Leisure Development Manager
Ele Snow	Senior Democratic and Civic Officer

**Apologies:** Councillor Paul Swift  
Councillor Baptiste Velan

**Membership:**

### 90 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

### 91 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING/S

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources

Committee held on Thursday, 15 January 2026 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

## **92 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

## **93 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE**

With no comments or questions, the Matters Arising Schedule, setting out the position of previously agreed actions as at 4 February 2026, was **DULY NOTED**.

## **94 WLDC CORPORATE PLAN**

The Committee gave consideration to a report presented by the Chief Executive, regarding the Council's draft Corporate Plan ('Our West Lindsey, Our Future') and the corresponding Thematic Business Plans covering the period 2026-2030. Members were asked to approve the draft documents for onward recommendation to Full Council. It was explained that based on the recommendations of the Peer Review, the upcoming Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), and the change in political administration at the Council, a review and refresh of the Corporate Plan had been undertaken to ensure it was reflective of the Administration's priorities, was cognisant of the requirements placed upon the Council by LGR, and responded effectively to the recommendations of the Peer Challenge.

It was highlighted that alongside the draft Corporate Plan, the corresponding draft Thematic Business Plans set out the key deliverables and performance measures aligned to delivering the Corporate Plan. Members were asked to review the draft documents and make a recommendation to Full Council that they be formally approved at the meeting scheduled for 3 March 2026, alongside the Council's budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), to ensure an alignment of priorities and resources to enable delivery.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive and invited Members of the Committee to comment.

Members of the Committee expressed their support for the suite of documents, and the vision for the district, whilst others questioned whether the Plan went far enough in terms of expanding and improving on previous plans. It was enquired as to whether there was sufficient focus on deliverable and measurable outcomes, rather than the internal processes of the Council.

In response, the Chairman noted that the Plan was developed with due consideration given to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), meaning plans encompassed longer term visions with shorter term actions. The Chairman also acknowledged comments from a Member of the Committee regarding the importance of assuring residents of the Council's commitment to the district, and highlighted the unparalleled Member involvement, not only with the internal governance processes by way of a new delivery panel structure, but also in the development of the Plan, with a number of sessions having been held with Councillors. He highlighted that a number of consultations had been taking place with residents, the outcomes of which had also been used to inform the development of the presented Plan.

In response to further comments regarding the delivery of change, and how to affect visible improvements across the district, the Chairman highlighted the need to focus on areas over which the Council had direct influence, whilst using lobbying opportunities to encourage change elsewhere. The Chief Executive added that delivery of the Corporate Plan would be overseen closely by Members, with involvement in the internal governance structure and frequent reporting through the committee meetings.

In drawing the debate to a close, the Chairman expressed his thanks to those Officers involved in the creation of the Corporate Plan, and welcomed the Member involvement. Having been proposed, seconded, and voted upon, it was

**RESOLVED** that

- a) the draft Corporate Plan ‘Our West Lindsey, Our Future’, which covered the period 2026 – 2030 as set out in Appendix 1, be **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council for approval; and
- b) the corresponding ‘Thematic Business Plans’, which set out key deliverables and key performance indicators assigned to each Corporate Plan theme as set out in Appendix 2, be **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council for approval alongside the Corporate Plan; and
- c) it be **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council that the draft Corporate Plan and Thematic Business Plans be subject to annual review and approval by Council alongside the annual budget; and
- d) the new governance arrangements as outlined in paragraph five of the report, to ensure effective and efficient delivery of the council’s priorities, be noted.

## **95 WORKFORCE PLAN**

The Committee heard from the People Services Manager regarding the Workforce Plan 2026 – 2030. It was explained that the Workforce Plan had been developed alongside the Corporate Plan for 2026 – 2030 and set out how the council would attract, retain and develop staff to deliver the best possible outcomes for residents. A key component of this was the agreed core values and behaviours required of every individual to ensure that the positive culture in the council was maintained and developed into the future.

Members heard that the themes within the Workforce Plan were developed from engagement events with staff and councillors. A series of workshops were held during September 2025 to which all staff and councillors were invited to attend. It was explained that the Workforce Plan was intended to reinforce the positive culture at West Lindsey District Council based on shared values, positive behaviours and a commitment to supporting the workforce into the future.

In response to questions from Members of the Committee, it was explained that whilst the document presented to the Committee had not been seen by the Joint Staff Consultative Committee, the workforce development plan had been, and the full process had been

undertaken by engaging with all staff. Additionally, in order to aid the re-energised recruitment process, the Workforce Plan would be used to demonstrate the ethos of the council, and as a reflection of the calibre of people already working for the council, and being recruited.

Members expressed their support and appreciation for the Plan, noting the positive comments made regarding staff during the Peer Review in 2025, and citing the recent recruitment exercise at the Caenby Corner Depot as a live example of the positive recruitment processes.

With Members of the Committee expressing their thanks to all council staff, and sharing examples of behaviours and attitudes which demonstrated the positivity, helpfulness, and dedication of the council's employees, the Chief Executive echoed their praises, and highlighted the use of the Workforce Plan to be a key tool in demonstrating those positive attributes within the workforce.

Having been proposed and seconded, the Chairman called the vote and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that the Workforce Plan 2026 – 2030 be approved.

## **96 PRIDE IN PLACE FUNDING**

Members heard from the Director of Planning, Regeneration & Communities, with a report seeking to set out the funding available for the Pride in Place programme and secure approval for the expenditure of the first tranche of revenue investment and how the programme would be managed. She explained that further to the announcement of the Pride in Place funding allocation for Gainsborough West, more detailed guidance was issued by the government in December 2025. An early capacity payment of £150,000 had been received, with the purpose of the funding being to support the establishment of a Neighbourhood Board, including the recruitment of a Chairperson, commencement of meaningful local community engagement, and beginning work to move forward with the requirement to prepare a 10 year vision and four year investment plan.

It was also explained that the report presented an initial Business Case for the programme which supported the resourcing requirements, and set in place the thinking around how the council would manage the requirements of the programme in its role as accountable body. Further detail on future tranches of funding was also included, with early thinking around next steps and future decisions for the council.

Members expressed their widespread support for what was considered to be an exciting opportunity, not just for the town of Gainsborough, but also for the district, in bringing increased investment and opportunity into the area. In response to questions regarding the involvement of the Council in the establishment of the Neighbourhood Board, it was explained that there would be Councillor membership on the Board, and there would be early oversight through feedback and details shared via reports through the Council's committee structure. It was also highlighted that the involvement of local Councillors would be crucial when considering the level of community involvement and ensuring a sense of ownership within the community.

With regard to the appointment of a Chairperson, it was explained that the government had provided a job description, against which any Expressions of Interest would be tested. The membership of the Board would also need to comply with the usual expectation of declaring interests and ensuring no conflicts arose. It was highlighted that the Monitoring Officer and the S151 Officer would be involved with ensuring due diligence was undertaken. Additionally, it was highlighted that membership of the Board needed to include a Police representative, as well as local Councillors, meaning there would be cross-organisation involvement.

Further discussion ensued with Members enquiring as to the boundary of the area covered, options for changing the boundary, and how that would impact the local communities. It was explained that, as an example, if a school was served by the area but not within the boundary, the school could be involved with the work but monies had to be spent within the designated area.

With regard to the financial details, it was explained that funds could be saved or borrowed against, in order to fund larger projects, however the investment plan would be used to guide that.

The Chairman thanked Members for their comments, and acknowledged the work undertaken by Officers, thanking them for the work which had already gone into the project.

Having been proposed and seconded, the Chairman took the vote and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that

- a) the expenditure of the initial £150,000 of revenue funding be approved to support the establishment of the Pride in Place Programme and the required workstreams as set out in the table at paragraph 3.3. Income and expenditure budgets to be created to reflect the grant being received and spend activity; and
- b) the draft Business Case at appendix 1 which set out the proposed Project Management Office arrangements to be established to support the council's role as accountable body, be approved.

**Note:** Councillor J. McGhee left the Chamber at 7.55pm

## **97 BUDGET AND TREASURY MONITORING QTR. 3 2025/2026**

The Committee heard from the Financial Services Manager regarding the quarter three Budget and Treasury Monitoring report for 2025/26, for the period ending December 2025. It was explained that in relation to revenue budgets, the forecast outturn position was a net contribution to reserves (or underspend) of £387,000, which was an increase of £210,000 from the forecast position reported at quarter two. The increase from the quarter two position was due to the following changes in forecast against expenditure budgets:

- Salary underspend had increased by £20,000

- Hire of street cleansing sweepers was a saving of £75,000 in the current year due to a change in how the council was required to account for the hire of equipment. From 1 April 2025 the council was required to treat leases as a council asset and the cost of this impacted on the revenue accounts from next year. This had been reflected in the MTFP for 2026/27
- The underspend against fuel budgets had decreased by £12,000 due to an increase in fuel price from December

The movement in significant variances against income budgets included:

- An increase in net interest receivable forecast of £134,000 due to slightly higher base rates than those forecast at the time of budget setting
- Property rent reviews had resulted in increased income of £27,000
- Planning fee income was forecast to be £95,000 above budget due to the expected completion of a number of large applications
- Crematorium income was forecast to be £69,000 below target, partly due to an increase in direct cremations and farewell services,
- Housing Standards income was forecast to be £32,000 below budget. This was mainly due to £25,000 being built into the base budget for income from the selective licensing scheme which did not proceed.
- Land charges search fee income was forecast to be £14,000 below budget
- The forecast pressure on housing subsidy income had reduced by £17,000 due an increase in ad hoc admin grants received to offset that pressure.

Members heard that any reported variances which had been identified as ongoing had been reflected in the Medium Term Financial Plan from 2026/27.

In relation to the capital programme, Members were advised that £5.148m was forecast to be carried forward into next year, and there was a reported net underspend of £0.052m. It was explained that £0.017m for member ICT equipment was to be moved to revenue budgets due to the low value of the purchases. These movements would be reviewed and actioned through the final outturn report presented to the Committee in June 2026.

Members were directed to section 2.3.2 of the report, where it was requested for the Committee to approve the amendment to the fees and charges schedule for 2026/27 to include a new line relating to the Animal Welfare (Primate Licenses) which would come into force on 1 April 2026.

The Financial Services Manager concluded by advising that the treasury management activities during the reporting period were disclosed in the body of the report, and there had been no breaches of treasury or prudential indicators during the period.

**Note:** Councillor J McGhee returned to the Chamber at 7.59pm

The Chairman thanked the Financial Services Manager for a detailed and well-presented report. With no comments or questions, the recommendations contained within the report were duly proposed, seconded, and voted upon. It was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that

**REVENUE**

- a) the forecast out-turn position of a £0.387m net contribution to reserves as of 31 December 2025 (see Section 2) relating to revenue activity, be accepted; and
- b) the use of Earmarked Reserves approved by the Chief Finance Officer using Delegated powers (Section 2.4.1) be accepted; and
- c) the contribution to Earmarked Reserves (2.4.2) be accepted; and
- d) the amendment to the fees and charges schedule for 2026/2027 be approved and **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council for approval and inclusion within the 2026/2027 Revenue Budget (2.3.2).

**CAPITAL**

- e) the current projected Capital Outturn position of £8.757m (Section 3) be accepted; and
- f) the variances to the Capital Schemes as detailed in 3.2 be noted, with any amendments to be actioned at year end.

**TREASURY**

- g) the report, the treasury activity and the prudential indicators (Section 4) be accepted.

**98 CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE DRAFT BUDGET 2026/2027 AND ESTIMATES TO 2030/2031**

The Committee heard again from the Financial Services Manager who explained the report being presented detailed the draft controllable service budgets for 2026/27 for the Committee, and estimates for the following four years, as well as those recommended by the Prosperous Communities Committee in January. She explained that for services within the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee, the net base budget had decreased by £0.226m from 2025/26 to 2026/27. Details of the significant movements were provided at Appendix 3.

Members were advised that the main reasons for the net decrease included:

- The actuarial review of the pension fund was completed in October and set the

employer contribution amounts payable for the three years from 2026/27. The results had been favourable for the council in budgetary terms, which reflected the national position in relation to the local government pension scheme. For the Committee this had resulted in a reduction in salary costs of £577,000.

- Contractual reviews of rental agreements for properties had resulted in an increase in income of £43,000,
- These reductions were offset by an increase in salary costs, with the council assuming a pay award of 3% for 2026/27. For the Committee this increased the salary costs by £102,000.
- Contractual Increases totalled £271,000 with the largest being insurance premiums at £73,000 due to changes in property values and increase in fleet numbers for the food waste collection service. Other contractual increases applied to audit services, legal services, and software development and licences.
- There was an ongoing Housing benefits subsidy pressure of £87,000 mainly due to placements in unregistered supported accommodation as reported in the previous outturn report for the current financial year
- There was an ongoing repairs and maintenance budget of £10,000 for the changing places facility as previously approved by Members
- There were also inflationary increases applied across all services which totalled £30,300, against utilities, ongoing contracts, subscriptions and memberships where inflationary increases were included within the agreement.

Members were directed to appendix 7 which provided details of significant movements across both committees.

Furthermore, the Financial Services Manager explained that the final finance settlement had been announced earlier in the week, and had included an increase to the Homelessness grant. The amount relating to this grant included at appendix 7 had increased by £52,800 to £615,200. There was no impact on the bottom line for the MTFP as the corresponding income had been increased within the funding section of the MTFP.

Following the confirmation of the three year settlement from Government, Officers were able to report that the proposed service budgets contained within the report contributed towards a balanced budget for 2026/27. Members were asked to recommend the budgets for both committees to Full Council for inclusion in the medium term financial plan.

Members of the Committee expressed their thanks to the Finance Team for their commendable work, acknowledging the amount of effort required to achieve a balanced budget, calling it a remarkable achievement.

With no further comments or questions, and having been proposed and seconded, the Chairman took the vote and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that

- a) the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee budget 2026/2027 be accepted and **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council for inclusion in the overall Council budget 2026/2027; and
- b) the Prosperous Communities Committee Budget 2026/2027 be accepted and **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council for inclusion in the overall Council budget for 2026/2027; and
- c) any minor changes be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Chairman of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee; and
- d) the 2027/2028 to 2030/2031 estimates for both this Committee and those of Prosperous Communities Committee be **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council for inclusion in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2026/2027 to 2030/2031 (as amended by any decisions taken on this agenda).

## **99 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 26/27-30/31, THE BUDGET 26/27, CAPITAL PROGRAMME 26/27-30/31**

The Committee gave consideration to the Medium Term Financial Plan 26/27-30/31, the budget 26/27, capital programme 26/27-30/31. The Director of Finance and Assets (Section 151 Officer) explained that the report set out the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2026/27 onwards. The purpose of the Medium Term Financial Plan was to set a robust overall framework for the Council's Financial Strategy and spending plans over the next five years. The report set out the revised financial plans within the Financial Analysis for changes in Government Funding, the economic environment and local engagement. The plan reflected the revisions to previous estimates and covered the period 2026/27 to 2030/31. The Medium Term Financial Analysis included the draft budget for 2026/27 for scrutiny and consideration prior to recommending to Full Council.

Members heard that the government conducted a spending review during 2025 and, this combined with the first reset of the business rates system, had been incorporated into the provisional local government finance settlement announced in December. At the time of writing the report, the final settlement had not been announced, this was subsequently announced on Monday prior to the meeting. It was explained that this was a three year settlement and the government had tried to simplify the funding landscape by removing a number of specific grant streams and combining them into a much smaller number. The draft settlement outlined that the Council had received small, below inflation rises, in core spending power, however the Council was then informed late in the previous week that, due to incorrect business rates data being used in the provisional settlement, the Council would receive substantially less funding in the final settlement which was a similar situation to a significant number of district councils.

Although the government had mitigated this in the 2026/27 funding figures, the Council had lost circa £730k over the last two years of the settlement between provisional and final settlements and therefore the report would need to be updated prior to going to Full Council. Due to the final settlement coming so late there was no option at this stage but to use reserves in 2028/29 to cover the shortfall. It was hoped that the government would

reconsider this position in December when the final year two allocations were to be released.

Members heard that the government had delivered on its promise to deliver a three year settlement and so there was now more certainty of three years funding allocations making it easier to plan over the medium term. The spending power assumptions made by government were predicated on the Council increasing Council Tax by the maximum amount permitted. The Council had planned for this situation and therefore the Section 151 was pleased to present a balanced budget for the next three years with a small draw on reserves for 2028/29.

It was highlighted that the budget was predicated on Council Tax rises of 2.97% in 2026/27 and 2.99% thereafter which was included in the spending power assumptions. This meant for 2026/27 a Band D property would pay £256.14 per year, which was a rise of £7.38 from 2025/26. As part of the settlement the government announced a further year of assistance to authorities such as West Lindsey who were affected by drainage board levies, however the exact amount the council would receive would not be known until the spring.

The Section 151 Officer continued that the 2026/27 Draft Budget totalled £21.4m and was fully funded, and represented a balanced budget. Contributions to Earmarked Reserves totalled £2.550m with the Use of Earmarked Reserves being £0.985m. Total useable reserves were projected to be £27m at the end of 2026/27. The movement on the General Fund Balance was forecast as a reduction of £0.146m and was forecast to be £2.052m at the end of 2026/27. The Capital Programme totalled £12.164m over the Medium Term Financial Plan and was fully funded. Also included in the MTFP was a risk register at appendix 2, Pay policy statement at appendix 6 and human resources statement at appendix 7.

The Chairman and Committee Members thanked the Officers for their time and dedication to achieving the best for the Council, commenting that the delayed notice of the finance settlement from government made their job harder than it needed to be.

In response to robust questioning regarding the rate of council tax rise, whether this was inflation related, and whether alternative options had been fully considered, it was explained that whilst every department within the council had been tasked with identifying savings and efficiencies as far as possible, there had been increased costs absorbed by the Council in relation to the food waste collection service meaning savings and efficiencies had been incorporated into budgets already. Additionally, where there had been above-inflation price rises for contracted services, the Council had had to pay those increases. The Chief Executive added that the upcoming Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) changed the agenda for local authorities in needing to prepare for that but no additional funding being available.

Members of the Committee made reference to the particular struggles faced by rural communities and authorities, with funding structures being seen as favourable to urban locations. In light of comments regarding LGR, Members were keen to highlight the financial strength of the Council, reiterating comments made in other forums that monies should be used for the benefit of the district whilst the Council still had opportunity to influence spends.

The Chairman and Members of the Committee again commended the Section 151 Officer

and his team on their achievements with the short turnaround for the settlement details, and, having been proposed and seconded, the Chairman took the vote. It was

**RESOLVED** that

- a) the approval of the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2026/27 – 2030/31 be **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council; and
- b) the review of Reserves and the proposed use and contributions to both the General Fund Balance and Earmarked Reserves as detailed at 2.7 within the Medium-Term Financial Plan be approved; and
- c) a balanced Revenue Budget for 2026/27 (Appendix 1) had been considered and be **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council; and
- d) the Capital Programme 2026/27 – 2030/31 (Appendix 4) had been considered and be **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council; and
- e) the Statement of the Chief Finance Officer on the Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves be accepted; and
- f) any housekeeping or changes required to the Medium-Term Financial Plan due to the final financial settlement and any approvals elsewhere on this agenda, be delegated to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Chairman of this Committee prior to the final consideration by Full Council on 2 March 2026.

## **100 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN**

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

## **101 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 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

**Note:** The meeting entered into closed session at 8.45pm

## **102 LEA FIELDS DIRECT CREMATIONS**

The Committee gave consideration to the last report of the evening, presented by the Commercial, Cultural and Leisure Development Manager, regarding a review of the direct cremation fee at Lea Fields Crematorium. Members heard that, due to competitor analysis, and the increased presence of nationally based direct cremation services, it had been necessary to revisit the fees charged for direct cremation options at a local level.

Members engaged in significant discussion regarding the upward trend of direct cremation

services, citing the impact of the covid pandemic, when traditional funeral services had not been permitted, alongside the cost of living crisis, and the fact that people now saw direct cremations as an acceptable alternative to traditional funerals.

In response to questions regarding the longer term strategy for the crematorium, it was explained that, whilst the work on the longer term view was already underway, it was necessary to make short-term immediate changes.

Members were accepting of the need to review the fee, acknowledging this would be recommended to Full Council for approval. There followed further discussion regarding the media coverage of direct cremation services, the approaches used by national providers in comparison to local providers, and the desire for Lea fields Crematorium to be the local choice for local people.

Having been proposed, seconded, and voted upon, it was

**RESOLVED** that the proposed Direct Cremation fee of £400 and termination of the Funeral Directors Incentive Scheme be **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council for approval and inclusion within the 2026/2027 Revenue Budget.

The meeting concluded at 9.25 pm.

Chairman