

Guildhall Gainsborough
Lincolnshire DN21 2NA

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This meeting will be webcast and published on the Council's website

AGENDA

Prayers will be conducted prior to the start of the meeting.
Members are welcome to attend.

Notice is hereby given that a meeting of the Council will be held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA, , on **Monday, 8th September, 2025 at 7.00 pm**, and your attendance at such meeting is hereby requested to transact the following business.

To: Members of West Lindsey District Council

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

To confirm and sign as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council held on 7 July 2025.

(PAGES 6 - 29)

3. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members may make any declarations of interest at this point and may also make them at any point during the meeting.

4. TO APPOINT A VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE DISTRICT COUNCIL FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE 2025/26 CIVIC YEAR

Following which, the Vice-Chairman appointed will make the Declaration of Acceptance of Office

5. MATTERS ARISING

Setting out the current position of previously agreed actions as at 29 August 2025.

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6. ELECTION OF LEADER

The following nomination(s) have been received in accordance with Article 6 of the Constitution:

Nominee:	Councillor Jackie Brockway
Proposer:	Councillor Maureen Palmer
Seconder:	Councillor Stephen Bunney

7. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY LEADER

8. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- i) Chairman of Council
- ii) Leader of the Council
- iii) Head of Paid Service

9. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Questions, if received, under this Scheme will be published by way of supplement following closure of the deadline.

(TO FOLLOW)

10. QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 9

Questions, if received, under this Scheme will be published by way of supplement following closure of the deadline.

(TO FOLLOW)

11. MOTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10

Motion 1

“West Lindsey is currently undergoing radical changes in its administration and opposition.

A large majority of Councillors would like to work together more closely in a manner which transcends party politics, in order to improve our collective service to West Lindsey residents and businesses. This change aims to improve the resilience of the Council and to increase experience available to as many Councillors as possible.

I invite Councillors to support the following ten-point commitments:

- 1. That the West Lindsey Administration be acknowledged as the administration of the council.
- 2. That the Leader of the council should hold the Leader's position only and should not hold chairmanships or vice-chairmanships on any committee at WLDC.

Agendas, Reports and Minutes will be provided upon request in the following formats:

Large Clear Print: Braille: Audio: Native Language

3. That Councillors, whenever possible, should hold no more than one Special Responsibility position and should receive no more than one Special Responsibility Allowance.
4. That Councillors from different parties within the WLA are allowed to substitute for each other to cover absences, so long as they are members of the formally constituted WLA.
5. Each committee should have one vice-chairman. In the absence of the named person a vice-chairman should be nominated from the body of the committee for the duration of the meeting.
6. That the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of any West Lindsey Council committee should not be in the same political party unless the political balance of the Council prevents this.
7. That the new Administration commits to a timely refresh of the Council's Corporate Plan with the adoption of new values and behaviours to reflect the priorities on the new Administration and welcomes the member and staff engagement that is planned in September
8. That the new Administration welcomes the review of internal governance arrangements currently underway to streamline decision making and become more delivery focussed
9. That the Council commits to respond positively and in a timely manner to the Corporate Peer challenge recommendations to ensure the positive work of the council is fully reflected and acknowledged by the LGA Peer Team in its follow up visit next year.
10. That the Council continues to collaborate with its Lincolnshire local authority partners on LGR to ensure that the challenges and opportunities for West Lindsey are fully recognised in proposals that are submitted to government for the benefit of our communities.

I so move
Councillor Jackie Brockway"

12. REPORTS FOR DETERMINATION

- a. Adoption of the Dunholme Neighbourhood Plan Review

(PAGES 31 - 37)

- b. Review of the Allocation of Seats to Political Groups on Committees / Sub Committees

To note the Group Leaders of each Group and the number of Members to be appointed to serve on each Committee in accordance with the provisions of

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Section 15 of the Local Government Act.
(PAGES 38 - 49)

c. Appointment of Committees for the Remainder of the Civic Year 2025/26

In accordance with the provisions of Section 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, to appoint Members to Committees for the Civic Year, in accordance with the wishes expressed by the Political Groups.

(TO FOLLOW)

d. Appointment of Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen for the remainder Civic Year 2025/26 and to Confirm the Normal Commencement Time for Each Committee

(TO FOLLOW)

e. To Re- appoint to Outside Bodies

(TO FOLLOW)

f. West Lindsey District Council Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Report

(PAGES 50 - 130)

g. Local Government Reorganisation Update

(PAGES 131 - 178)

h. Recommendation from Corporate Policy and Resources Committee - New Fee relative to Markets for 2025/26

(PAGES 179 - 182)

i. Recommendation from Corporate Policy and Resources Committee - Annual Treasury Management Report 2024/25

(PAGES 183 - 199)

j. Dispensation for Councillor Attendance - Councillor Liz Clews

(PAGES 200 - 204)

Bill Cullen
Interim Head of Paid Service
The Guildhall
Gainsborough

Friday, 29 August 2025

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA on 7 July 2025 at 7.00 pm.

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

Councillor John Barrett	Councillor Eve Bennett
Councillor Owen Bierley	Councillor Trevor Bridgwood
Councillor Mrs Jackie Brockway	Councillor Frazer Brown
Councillor Karen Carless	Councillor Christopher Darcel
Councillor David Dobbie	Councillor Adam Duguid
Councillor Jacob Flear	Councillor Sabastian Hague
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan	Councillor Paul Key
Councillor Mrs Angela Lawrence	Councillor Paul Lee
Councillor Jeanette McGhee	Councillor Peter Morris
Councillor Lynda Mullally	Councillor Maureen Palmer
Councillor Roger Pilgrim	Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers
Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings	Councillor Jim Snee
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee	Councillor Baptiste Velan
Councillor Moira Westley	Councillor Trevor Young

In Attendance:

Bill Cullen	Interim Head of Paid Service
Peter Davy	Director of Finance and Assets (Section 151 Officer)
Lisa Langdon	Assistant Director People and Democratic (Monitoring Officer)
Sally Grindrod-Smith	Director Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Nova Roberts	Director of Change Management, ICT & Regulatory Services
Rachael Hughes	Head of Policy and Strategy
Katie Storr	Democratic Services & Elections Team Manager

Also in Attendance 1 Member of Press
7 Members of Public

Apologies Councillor Emma Bailey
Councillor Liz Clews
Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Paul Swift

18 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

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

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Full Council held on 12 May 2025 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

19 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made at this point in the meeting.

20 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**.

21 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman

The Chairman addressed the Council, referencing briefly some of the events in which he had been involved and attended since assuming the role of Chairman at the Council's Annual General Meeting in May 2025.

First reference being to the Lincolnshire Show, and what the Chairman considered had been a really successful couple of days. Engagement levels had been high and the cinema project and the robotic dogs had drawn the crowds, the marquee had been as busy as the Chairman could recall and he advised Council that he had emailed both Officers and Staff involved in the event to congratulate them on the success of the event.

The second event referenced being the GO festival. Again, the Chairman considered the event to have been a successful one, the Gainsborough Market Place had been busy for the entire day, and Councillor Barrett ringing his bell attracting the crowds had been a noticeable part of the day. Thanks were again expressed to those Members and Officers involved, with a number of Officers volunteering their time to ensure the event ran smoothly.

Finally, the Chairman referenced the opening of the Meatery in the Gainsborough marketplace, commenting on the improved street scene along that row of shops. He paid credit to those shop owners and businesses and looked forward to welcoming forward-thinking business and entrepreneurs to the Town and District.

Leader

The Leader addressed Council and advised that himself along with his Deputy and the

Director of Change Management, ICT and Regulatory Services had attended the LGA conference the previous week. The key theme of the conference had been Local Government Reorganisation, its likelihood and the timescales involved.

The Leader also took time to celebrate the imminent opening of the Savoy Cinema in Gainsborough. He praised the Council as a whole and the Officers involved in delivering what he considered a real success for the Town and District, and something to be truly proud of. Reference was made to the all Councillor invite to visit the facility and the regenerated Whitton's Gardens on Friday 11 July and encouraged and welcomed Councillors attendance.

Head of Paid Service

The newly appointed interim Head of Paid Service addressed Council and spoke of the privilege at attending Full Council on what was his first full day in post and his delight at working for West Lindsey. Mr Cullen outlined his previous local government experience, having been a Chief Executive for the last eight years in Leicestershire, and his aspirations for his time with the Authority, these being to support both Members and Officers in continuing to provide high-quality services for our communities. He spoke of the enormous passion that existed across this council, demonstrated through his early meetings with teams and of the strong, shared commitment to delivery.

Whilst announcements would be brief, he believed they reflected the vibrant energy of West Lindsey and the ambition of the Council's priorities.

- **Go Festival 2025 – A Celebration of Culture**

As referenced by the Chairman of Council, on 14 June, Gainsborough had hosted its very own arts and culture festival, Go Festival 2025, themed "*Go With the Flow.*"

The event had featured dance performances, water-themed acts, and yoga flow workshops, bringing together local schools, community groups, and internationally renowned artists across multiple venues in the town centre.

Engagement had been strong, both in the lead-up and on the day itself, with tremendous coverage on social media and overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Planning was already underway for the festive season, and work continued to explore sustainable resourcing and funding for future events.

- **Lincolnshire Show – Showcasing Local Excellence**

The Lincolnshire Show had returned on 18 and 19 June, offering two days celebrating the District's proud agricultural heritage. Thanks were expressed to the Officers, Members, and the Council's partners—from Savoy Cinemas, STEP, and Lincoln Rugby Club—who had come together to create an outstanding experience in the West Lindsey Marquee. The show had attracted visitors from near and far, including members of the Royal Family!

- **Wolds Word Fest – Literature in the Heart of the Wolds**

This past weekend had seen Market Rasen come alive with the Wolds Word Fest, a celebration of all things literary. This had included a packed programme of community-led events with the festival continuing throughout the month, bringing people together through storytelling and creative expression. Again, thanks were expressed to all the staff involved in delivering the Council's ongoing programme of events.

- **Sports & Leisure Consultation – Help Shape the Future**

The Council had now launched its Sports and Leisure Consultation, which invited residents and participants across the district to share their views. This would help shape future provision and complemented the wider work which was ongoing in reviewing facilities across Central Lincolnshire, in support of the shared goal: enabling healthy, active lifestyles for all.

- **UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Supporting Communities & Growth**

Following recent decisions by the Prosperous Communities Committee and the Corporate Policy & Resources Committee, the Council now had an agreed programme for the 2025–2026 UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

This would build on the success of the 2022–2025 programme, with Council poised to invest over £1 million to support community initiatives, businesses, and town centres across the district.

- **STEP Skills Collaboration – Investing in our Workforce**

The recent announcement of the STEP Skills Collaboration Agreement was very pleasing with West Lindsey having played a key role in championing the initiative alongside local skills providers.

It represented a vital step towards preparing the workforce to meet the demands of the STEP programme, creating meaningful job and training opportunities for our communities.

- **Draft Accounts Published**

Since the last Full Council meeting, the Council had published its draft accounts. The hard work involved in producing the annual accounts was acknowledged. Whilst the accounts were currently subject to audit, it marked a significant milestone in the Council's financial management processes.

- **National Spending Review & Local Government Finance**

Members' attention was drawn to the recent announcements following the Government's Spending Review, which included consultation proposals for changes to the local government funding formula and Council Tax arrangements.

Assurance was given that Officers were actively reviewing these developments and would respond accordingly to the technical consultations in due course.

- **Local Government Association Annual Conference**

Finally, Mr Cullen referenced the Local Government Association Conference, as highlighted by the Leader of the Council.

The Conference provided a great opportunity, nationally, for Council Leaders, Chief Executives and other senior Officers and Members to come together to share good practice and hear about all the new transformation opportunities that were out there, and to showcase the fantastic work local government does, particularly districts.

Mr Cullen highlighted some notable sessions, including an emotional and emotive presentative from the Chief Executive of Sefton Council, and the community work the Council had delivered, in the aftermath of the Stockport attacks last July, and in recovering from those challenges and tragedies, work that was still continuing.

Deputy Prime Minister, Angela Rayner, and Wes Streeting, had remotely attended the conference, where attendees had heard pledges around consolidating economic growth funds and funding pots, simplifying funding mechanisms and also seeking to differentiate impact on local service delivery from rural areas to areas of key deprivation.

There was a further commitment from Ministers to cut bureaucracy and to the recently published new local government outcomes framework, which was a new reporting regime that underpinned the work of local government.

This brought announcements to an end.

22 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chairman advised the meeting that one question had been received from a Member of the Public. The question submitter was not present at the meeting, therefore at the request of the Chairman and in accordance with the Scheme, the Monitoring Officer, read the question aloud to the Chamber, as follows: -

“Since becoming Leader of the Council in May 2023, I am aware that you have successfully driven through the Council’s opposition to having asylum seekers housed at RAF Scampton and you are now leading a £300m regeneration project on that site. What other initiatives are you most proud of?”

The Leader of the Council responded as follows: -

“Thank you, the Liberal Democrat Administration Group have had a two -year battle with the Government to Save RAF Scampton from being used as an asylum centre.

Our fight to save the heritage of the site and deliver a £300 million development on the site is still ongoing with this Labour government. It's clear that if we had had a Conservative Group being in control of this council, our fight would have been lost and the asylum seekers would have been housed on the site, as they

would not have taken their own government to judicial review.

The Liberal Democrat administration group took control of the council in 2023. It's been Conservative led for 14 years and where the council was Officer led, lacked leadership and direction. In contrast, we've shown strong leadership with a much more hands-on approach to running the council.

We're particularly proud of a number of initiatives but I'll attempt to list a few: -

Town Centres

Town centres are challenging for most councils. We have delivered a £20 million investment into our town centre. The investment in one year by our own administration is more than has been invested in the history of this council. We see this is phase one of the regeneration of the town centre. Phase two, which I will talk about later, is now to attract more high street retailers to the town.

Jobs and growth development

We are extremely proud of our work on the Step Fusion Project, which will attract thousands of new jobs to the area. It will also create opportunities for education and skills development for our young people, and we aspire to bring a university facility to West Lindsey.

Improved access to health services across the district

It has been a key priority for our administration, and we have been extremely encouraged by the meetings held with Integrated Care Board colleagues on delivering a new GP service to Gainsborough and exploring opportunities for health improvements elsewhere in the district.

The Environment

The Environment is such an important issue and tackling problems such as fly tipping is always challenging for councils. We have employed two additional enforcement officers across the district.

Culture

The absence of a cultural strategy was highlighted as a weakness of the Council in a previous peer review report. In the first year of our administration, we delivered a cultural strategy, and we have also invested in three new posts to support the delivery of the cultural strategy.

As part of the Levelling-Up project we delivered a new pocket park on the former Baltic Mill site and improvements to Whitton's Gardens including refurbishment of the old toilets which sat empty and derelict for 10 years. It's now been transformed into a new cafe, and Ice Cream Parlour.

Support to Communities

Supporting our communities is essential, and we've been extremely proud to deliver 300 community grants to support groups across the district. An example of the grant scheme was financial support to Hemswell Parish Council, with £100,000 to deliver community projects.

In the past eight months we have been working closely with Officers, and we have set 33 new priorities which have been fully costed and deliverable.

The key items include: -

For the town centre: -

Attracting high street retailers to the town centre which is a major challenge as we all know. We aim to appoint an individual with a particular skill set in being able to persuade quality retailers to come to Gainsborough.

Car parking - We have listened closely to the views of retailers and businesses in the town centre, and we plan to extend the free car parking from one hour to two hours.

Investing more in our town centre properties, we obviously see the need for doing that and to attract new retailers we need to offer some more further incentives, so we intend to invest a further £450,000 in grant assistance to make vacant buildings turn-key ready.

Additional GP practices.

Access to timely GP appointments in some parts of the district is extremely difficult and we have led on the discussions with the Integrated Care Board. We have identified £25,000 to support the initial work of our partners to build a new GP practice in Gainsborough, and we look forward to that.

To support great opportunities, including the STEP program, Scampton, and Agri-Tech, we've ring-fenced £150,000 out of the UKSPF program.

We recognise the importance of developing arts and sports participation across the district, and we committed a further £25,000 to support these activities.

Putting West Lindsey on the map, we hope to hold an international event of some kind in the district. We have identified £10,000 to support the initial discussions on delivering a major event across the district.

We intend to also expand the successful community grant scheme, and committed a further £475,000 from the UKSPF fund.

We all know that the Gainsborough Swimming Pool is now over 50 years old, and the leisure centre is in need of refurbishment. A feasibility study will be presented to the next Corporate Policy and Resources Committee meeting on the refurbishment plans.

Seven years ago, one of the decisions from the previous Conservative Administration Group was to remove the Gainsborough indoor bowls facility at the Gainsborough Leisure Centre without any consultation. We plan to replace the facility with a county standard bowls facility.

During the past year, despite objections from the Conservatives and the Independents, we established the Savings Board, a review of CCTV service will be presented to the board in the next current cycle.

My list is not exhaustive, but I hope it demonstrates some of the excellent work we have led on across the district.

Thank you very much for the questions.

The question submitter would receive the response in writing, in accordance with the Scheme.

23 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 9

The Chairman advised the meeting that one question had been received pursuant to Procedure Rule No.9, from Councillor Emma Bailey, Ward Member for Lea. The question had been circulated to all Members, separately to the agenda, and published on the website.

In the absence of Councillor Bailey, the Chairman invited Councillor Lynda Mullally to put the question to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Trevor Young, as follows:-

“Can the Leader offer residents reassurance that the sands and Minerals site that has been previously identified in Lea will not be reconsidered. This is the wishes of the residents represented by the Friends of Lea Marshes, in Lea, over their concerns regarding destruction of ecosystems, potential impairment of water quality, water level of the river could increase, loss of habitats not to mention the daily barrage of noise, and dust pollution as well as the increase in Co2 emissions from numerous trucks to and from the site.

The LCC Aggregates Monitoring Report 2025 states that approximately 50% of the total sand and gravel extracted in Lincolnshire is exported out of the county. This would increase the environmental impact even more. The world is extracting sand more than 3x faster than nature can replenish and whilst we agree there is a need for homes in the UK and therefore the sands and minerals to do this, however, we should be looking at designing and constructing houses and infrastructure, reducing the level of demand of sand eg. recycling old concrete.

Thank you”

The Chairman thanked Councillor Bailey, in her absence, for the question, and invited Councillor Trevor Young, in his capacity as Leader of the Council, to respond.

The Leader indicated to the Chamber that Councillor Bailey would receive a response in writing as per procedure rule 9.5 b) iii).

24 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 in the agenda.

As the mover of both motions, Councillor Trevor Bridgwood was invited to read aloud his first

motion to the meeting, as follows: -

Motion 1 – The Council resolves to remove Cllr Trevor Young as Leader of the Council

Council at its meeting on 12th May 2025 resolved to appoint Cllr Trevor Young as Leader of Council for the civic year, Minute 6 refers.

Since that time, I believe that Cllr Young has lost significant support from the Liberal Democrat Administration, Article 6.3 (c) of our Constitution states, the Leader of the Council will:

“be the lead member for matters regarding the priorities and aims of the administration and its political manifesto”

As Cllr Young has unfortunately, I believe, lost the support of his Group, he can no longer, in my view, fulfil this function of the Constitution. Therefore, in the interests of the Council and its need for clear and concise leadership, and in concordance with the spirit of the Constitution, acknowledging Council Procedure Rule 13 – the required 10 signatories have been received to seek Council support to rescind that decision.

As such Council resolves: -

1. to rescind the decision made at the AGM on 12th May 2025 to elect Cllr Trevor Young to office of Leader (minute 6 relates); and
2. by resolution of this Council, in accordance with Article 6.1 (c) remove Cllr Trevor Young from office of Leader.

I so move
Cllr Trevor Bridgwood”

With the motion duly seconded, in the first instance Councillor Young was given a right of response but he indicated he would reserve the right to speak until the conclusion of the debate.

Debate ensued, with the Deputy Leader being clear that in her view this was a personal agenda, requesting a Leader to step down when they had performed poorly, would be perfectly acceptable, however Councillor Rollings did not consider this to be the case in respect of the current Leader outlining some of the key achievements as mentioned in the answer to the public question. In her view the Scampton outcome would have been very different under a different administration.

It was suggested the motion showed a disregard to the communities who had wanted a change in Leadership, as demonstrated by the Local election results in 2023, a disregard for the work that could have been achieved with new priorities being set and it showed elected Members up.

She called for the motion mover to be transparent about his political affiliation, questioned the credibility of the newly formed Consensus Independent Group and suggested the Opposition Group had their own inner politics to resolve, with a recent change of Group Leader. She urged Members to reflect on the political parties they were in, their political aspirations and vote according to their consciences.

A supporter of the motion stated the motion was a constitutional one and nothing more and moved a procedural motion that the matter be put to the vote.

This being a constitutional motion, was refuted by those who supported the Leader, the motion sought to remove the leadership and the Liberal Democrat administration within the council. There were again comments relating to political affiliation which led to the Chairman making a ruling that such comments were not relevant to the motion and would not be tolerated again.

Those speaking in support of Leader considered the motion divisive with the sole intention of causing upset and fractions with the Council, which had otherwise had a stable leadership. The Administration had demonstrable delivery and if the motion was supported it was suggested the Council would become unmanageable.

In opposing the Motion, a request for a recorded vote was made.

Other Members spoke in support of the Leader, referenced recent press communications and sought to correct those statements, suggesting that there had been no such hoarding of positions, as suggested and questioned if that was the case why the motion submitted made no such reference to such discontent.

A Member expressed his grave concern at the situation, and asked Members to think about the public perception, the Council in his view needed to be focused on LGR, delivering for the district and providing a strong voice in any negotiation. He called for renewed focus.

With no further speakers, Councillor Young used his right to reply and in doing so expressed his disappointment in the situation not for him, but for the Council and its residents. He sought to address what he considered key matters in his closing statement bringing to Councils attention that the Liberal Democrat Group, were the only Group with manifesto, a set of fully costed deliverable priorities. No other Group had presented a shadow budget or alternative priorities. He outlined how the Group had engaged and built their priorities over the last 12 months, noting the achievements as referred to in the response to the public question and suggesting no other Group had a mandate to deliver.

In concluding he was of the view that a period of no leadership would significantly disadvantage residents when serving the public should be the key priority and would hamper negotiations relating to Local Government Reorganisation at a crucial time.

With the final comment going to the motion proposer, it was re-iterated the motion was simply a constitutional one.

A request for a recorded vote had been made earlier in the debate, with a second member supporting that request, the motion was put to a recorded vote, with votes being cast as follows: -

For: Councillors Barrett, Bennett, Bierley, Bridgwood, Brockway, Brown, Carless Duguid, Flear, Key, Lawrence, Lee, McGhee, Morris, Palmer, Pilgrim, Rodgers and Snee J, Snee M and Westley. (20)

Against: Councillors Darcel, Dobbie, Hague, Howitt-Cowan, Rollings, Velan, Young (7)

Abstentions: Councillors Boles, Bunney and Mullally (3)

With a total of 20 votes cast for the motion, 7 votes against, and 3 abstentions the motion was declared **CARRIED** and as such it was:

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) the decision made at the AGM on 12th May 2025 to elect Cllr Trevor Young to office of Leader (minute 6 relates) be rescinded; and
- (b) by resolution of this Council, in accordance with Article 6.1 (c) Cllr Trevor Young be removed from office of Leader.

Councillor Bridgwood was invited, by the Chairman, to put his second motion to the meeting as follows: -

“Motion 2 – The Council resolves to remove Cllr Lesley Rollings as Deputy Leader of the Council

Council at its meeting on 12th May 2025 resolved to appoint Cllr Lesley Rollings as Deputy Leader of Council for the civic year, Minute 7 refers.

Since that time, I believe that Cllr Rollings has unfortunately lost significant support from the Liberal Democrat Administration. Article 6.4 of the Constitution of West Lindsey District Council states that the Deputy Leader of Council is appointed to fulfil the functions of the Leader of the Council in their absence, thus, they too must be able to be the lead member for the administration's priorities and aims. As Councillor Rollings, I believe, no longer commands the confidence of a significant number of the Liberal Democrat Administration, acknowledging Council Procedure Rule 13 – the required 10 signatories have been received to seek Council support to rescind that decision.

As such Council resolves: -

1. to rescind the decision made at the AGM on 12th May 2025 to elect Cllr Lesley Rollings to office of Deputy Leader (minute 7 relates); and
2. by resolution of this Council, in accordance with Article 6.1 (c) remove Cllr Lesley Rollings from office of Deputy Leader.

I so move

Cllr Trevor Bridgwood”

With the motion duly seconded, in the first instance Councillor Rollings was given a right of response, and in doing so questioned the motive and again called into question the politics of the motion submitter. With this having earlier been ruled not relevant to the motion, the Chairman re-iterated his stance to such comments and advised that the motion had been accepted as procedurally correct by the Proper Officer. The Chamber were again reminded to address the motion.

A supporter of the motion challenged the statements made and, in her view, as evidenced by the votes cast in previous motion, the Deputy Leader was no longer in a position to the fulfil the role as laid out in the Constitution and as such moved a procedural motion that the matter be put to the vote.

Again, those in support of the Deputy Leader questioned the motive behind the motion and considered it had been approached in a way to cause the most disruption.

The former Leader spoke favourably and at length of the hard work and tireless efforts he had seen from the Deputy Leader in undertaking her role, again stressing to the Chamber that no other group had produced a manifesto or had an alternative delivery plan, regardless of politics he called for hard work and dedication to be respected.

Following heated exchange with comments becoming personal, and some Members failing to follow the ruling of the Chairman, the Chairman invoked procedure rule 18.2.

The Chairman permitted debate to resume, subject to his ruling being obeyed going forward. With a motion to move to the vote having been made the Chairman sought and received a seconder.

Some members objected, indicating they had not been given opportunity to speak. The Chairman indicated he was willing to continue hearing speakers, subject to the debate remaining calm, but following continued disruption, and the need to invoke rule 18.2 for the seconded time, the procedural motion “to move to the vote” was put to the vote and **CARRIED.**

With Members resuming their seats, the Chairman issued a reminder that further disruption would result in him moving a motion to have Members removed.

The Chairman indicated he would put the motion to the vote, resulting in a request for a recorded vote being made and supported by a second member. As such, the motion was put to a recorded vote, with votes being cast as follows: -

For: Councillors Barrett, Bennett, Bierley, Bridgwood, Brockway, Brown, Carless Duguid, Flear, Key, Lawrence, Lee, McGhee, Morris, Palmer, Pilgrim, Rodgers and Snee J, Snee M and Westley. (20)

Against: Councillors Darcel, Dobbie, Hague, Howitt-Cowan, Rollings, Velan, Young (7)

Abstentions: Councillors Boles, Bunney and Mullally (3)

With a total of 20 votes cast for the motion, 7 votes against, and 3 abstentions the motion was declared **CARRIED** and as such it was:

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) the decision made at the AGM on 12th May 2025 to elect Cllr Lesley Rollings to office of Deputy Leader (minute 7 relates) be rescinded; and
- (b) by resolution of this Council, in accordance with Article 6.1 (c) Cllr Lesley Rollings be removed from office of Deputy Leader.

25 ADOPTION OF THE REEPHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Chairman, prior to introducing the report, advised the Chamber that unfortunately, representatives from the Parish Council and Neighbourhood Planning Group were not available to attend the meeting, in line with custom and practice.

The Chamber, in their absence, acknowledged and congratulated the Parish on the commitment and level of dedication needed to get a Neighbourhood Plan to adoption stage concluding in a round of applause.

Ward Members addressed the Chamber and again spoke of the dedication and commitment of the Parish in preparing and promoting their Plan. Members also commented on the support shown for the Plan by those voting. It was suggested that the Chairman of Council should consider visiting Reepham to personally congratulate them, given they had been unable to attend.

The Chairman agreed to consider the request.

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

RESOLVED that the Reepham Neighbourhood Plan be adopted in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.

The Chairman again congratulated the Group on their achievement, before proceeding to the next item of business.

26 REVIEW OF THE ALLOCATION OF SEATS TO POLITICAL GROUPS ON COMMITTEES / SUB COMMITTEES

The Chairman presented the report, which set out details of the political groups on the Council, the number of Members to be appointed to serve on each Committee, and the allocation of seats on each of the Committees based on political groupings, noting the reasons for the review as detailed in the report and with the last review having been undertaken at the Annual General Meeting.

This was a matter, which had been determined by the Head of Paid Service under his delegated authority, in Consultation with the Group Leaders, with all Group Leaders having indicated their agreement to the allocations, as such, there was no requirement for a vote.

The Group Leader of the Liberal Democrat Administration addressed the Chamber, and in referencing the reason for the re-balance, proceeded to question the Councillor on her motives. Objections were made across the Chamber and the Chairman called for the comments to refrain from being personal in nature. Having been granted permission to continue, the Group Leader was again halted from continuing, with the Chairman ruling the debate out of order.

In response to Members' questions regarding the accuracy of the position stated in the report, in relation to Group Membership and how long the current balance would remain in place, the Monitoring Officer advised that this was the Group Membership as reported to Officers and supported by the required notices. Should further notice be received, then the political balance would be re-calculated and reported to the next Council Meeting.

Following further questions relating to the pausing of the allocations process based on the balance within the report, the Monitoring Officer reaffirmed her previous position, only on receipt of formal notice could the balance be re-calculated.

With no further questions or comments posed, the following was **DULY NOTED: -**

- (a) the details of the political groups, as set out in Appendix A of the report,
- (b) the number of Members to be appointed to serve on each committee and sub-committee; and
- (c) the allocation to different political groups of seats on committees/sub-committees, as set out in Appendix B of the report.

27 APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE CIVIC YEAR 2025/26

The Chairman of the Council presented the report which set out the wishes expressed by the political groups in respect of the appointment of Members to serve on each of the Council's formal Committees for the remainder of the 2025/26 Civic Year.

Members were advised that the published report had contained some blanks where nominations had still been awaited from the Group Leader of the Liberal Democrat Administration namely: -

- 1 seat on Prosperous Communities Committee
- 2 seats on Planning Committee
- 1 seat on Corporate Policy and Resources Committee
- 3 seats on Chief Officer Employment Committee
- 2 seats on Standards Committee
- 3 seats on Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 2 seats on both Licensing and Regulatory Committee.

The following nomination was provided verbally to the meeting,

Councillor Lesley Rollings (Liberal Democrat) to join the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee. The Group Leader advised the remainder of the names would be provided to the Head of Paid Service, over the coming days.

With Councillor Brockway having been appointed Group Leader of the Opposition Group, and relevant notice received, the Chairman advised that the previously expressed wish for her to sit on the Governance and Audit Committee would now be unconstitutional, due to the limitations on membership set out in the Constitution, and as such sought an alternative nomination from the Group Leader.

The Opposition Group Leader advised that an alternative name would be provided to the Head of Paid Service, over the coming days.

On that basis it was

RESOLVED that in accordance with the provisions of section 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the wishes expressed by political groups and provided verbally at the meeting, Members be appointed to serve to the Council's Committees for the remainder of the 2025/26 civic year as follows: -

Chief Officer Employment Committee (11 Members)

Councillor O Bierley
Councillor J Barrett
Councillor P Key
Councillor P Morris
Councillor J McGhee
Councillor M Palmer
Councillor L Rollings
Councillor T Young
Vacancy (Liberal Democrat Group)
Vacancy (Liberal Democrat Group)
Vacancy (Liberal Democrat Group)

Corporate Policy and Resources Committee (11 Members)

Councillor O Bierley
Councillor M Boles
Councillor S Bunney
Councillor I Fleetwood
Councillor P Key
Councillor J McGhee
Councillor R Patterson
Councillor L Rollings

Councillor T Smith
Councillor P Swift
Councillor T Young

Governance and Audit Committee (6 Members)

Councillor John Barrett
Councillor S Bunney
Councillor D Dobbie
Councillor A Lawrence
Councillor B Velan
Vacancy (Opposition Group)

Licensing Committee (13 Members)

Councillor J Barrett
Councillor E Bennett
Councillor K Carless
Councillor L Clews
Councillor D Dobbie
Councillor P Key
Councillor P Lee
Councillor M Palmer
Councillor Mrs D Rodgers
Councillor T Smith
Councillor B Velan
Vacancy (Liberal Democrat Group)
Vacancy (Liberal Democrat Group)

Regulatory Committee (13 Members)

Councillor J Barrett
Councillor E Bennett
Councillor K Carless
Councillor L Clews
Councillor D Dobbie
Councillor P Key
Councillor P Lee
Councillor M Palmer
Councillor Mrs D Rodgers
Councillor T Smith
Councillor B Velan
Vacancy (Liberal Democrat Group)
Vacancy (Liberal Democrat Group)

Planning Committee (11 Members)

Councillor J Barrett
Councillor O Bierley
Councillor M Boles
Councillor K Carless
Councillor D Dobbie
Councillor I Fleetwood
Councillor R Patterson
Councillor T Smith
Councillor P Swift
Vacancy (Liberal Democrat Group)
Vacancy (Liberal Democrat Group)

Prosperous Communities Committee (11 Members)

Councillor O Bierley
Councillor F Brown
Councillor S Bunney
Councillor C Darcel
Councillor P Lee
Councillor J McGhee
Councillor L Mullally
Councillor R Patterson
Councillor L Rollings
Councillor T Young
Vacancy (Liberal Democrat Group)

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (13 members)

Councillor J Barrett
Councillor T Bridgwood
Councillor F Brown
Councillor L Clews
Councillor C Darcel
Councillor P Howitt-Cowan
Councillor P Morris
Councillor L Mullally
Councillor M Palmer
Councillor R Pilgrim
Vacancy (Liberal Democrat Group)
Vacancy (Liberal Democrat Group)
Vacancy (Liberal Democrat Group)

Standards Committee (6 Members)

Councillor J Brockway

Councillor Mrs D Rodgers
Councillor T Bridgwood
Councillor L Rollings
Vacancy (Liberal Democrat Group)
Vacancy (Liberal Democrat Group)

Note: Relevant Group Leaders to advise the Head of Paid Service of names for outstanding positions.

28 APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN AND VICE-CHAIRMEN FOR THE REMAINDER CIVIC YEAR 2025/26 AND TO CONFIRM THE NORMAL COMMENCEMENT TIME FOR EACH COMMITTEE

Having re-appointed the Committees, the report under consideration sought to appoint Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen to each of the Committees and for Council to re-affirm the normal commencement time for each meeting.

Members noted that no nominations had been included in the report and as such the Chairman advised he would take nominations, any counter nominations and hold a vote for each position in turn, with the exception of those highlighted in the report.

Therefore, nominations were sought for the position of Vice-Chairman of the Chief Officer Employment Committee.

In response to a Member's Point of Information, Officers confirmed that if no nominations were made and no positions appointed to, each Committee would need to, when it met, appoint a Chairman for the meeting only. The Committee not having a Chairman, would not prevent the Committee's from meeting, and as such this was a matter for Member decision.

Nominations were sought for the position of Vice-Chairman of the Chief Officer Employment Committee, with the following nominations being proposed and seconded: -

- Councillor Lesley Rollings
- Councillor John Barrett

Another Member supported the notion of deferring appointments given the Council would most likely need to revisit these matters at its next meeting. However, with formal nominations made and not withdrawn the Chairman advised the Chamber they would now need to vote on the matter.

On moving to the vote, a request for a recorded vote was made and duly seconded. As such the motion was put to a recorded vote, with votes being cast as follows: -

Votes for Cllr Rollings: Councillors Darcel, Dobbie, Hague, Howitt-Cowan, Rollings, Velan and Young (7)

Votes for Cllr Barrett: Councillors Barrett, Bierley, Bridgwood, Brockway, Brown, Carless, Duguid, Lawrence, Lee, McGhee, Morris, Palmer, Pilgrim and Rodgers (14)

Abstentions: Councillors Bennett, Boles, Bunney, Flear, Key, Mullally, Snee J, Snee, M Westley (9)

With a total of 7 votes cast for Councillor Rollings, 14 votes cast for Councillor Barrett and 9 abstentions, Councillor Barrett was declared **APPOINTED**.

Arising from political exchange the newly notified Leader of the Opposition confirmed her previous stance on the number of Vice-Chairmen and that in her view each Committee should only have need for one. The Chairman in bringing order advised Members that reducing the number of positions was not within the gift of Members this evening and would require a motion with notice to Council.

Moving to the next position to be appointed to, again Members expressed support for the notion to defer, with several Members informally supporting calls for a deferral and becoming frustrated by the procedure.

Having sought advice the Chairman advised the Chamber that if nominations for positions were made, seconded and not withdrawn, they would have to be put to the vote, alternatively, noting the mood and appetite of the Chamber, a Member could choose to move a formal procedural motion to defer the appointments to the next meeting.

A procedural motion to defer the appointments was duly made and seconded and on being put to the vote was **CARRIED**.

The Chairman confirmed that the appointment made earlier would stand until the next meeting, given it was voted upon prior to the motion to defer being supported.

In responding to Members' questions as to how Committee briefings would operate in the interim period in the absence of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen, Officers indicated that all Members appointed to the Committee would be invited to attend the planned Committee briefings, again re-iterating Council business would not be hindered, and Members would continue to be engaged.

On that basis it was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) Councillor John Barrett be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Chief Officer Employment Committee;
- (b) the remainder of the appointments detailed in Table 1 of the report be deferred to a future meeting; and
- (c) the normal commencement time for each of the Committees be confirmed in accordance with the schedule detailed in Table 1 of the report.

29 RECOMMENDATION FROM CHIEF OFFICER EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE - APPOINTMENT TO STATUTORY POSITION OF HEAD OF PAID SERVICE, RETURNING OFFICER AND ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER

The then Chairman of the Chief Officer Employment Committee presented the report which sought to appoint Mr Paul Burkinshaw into the role of Chief Executive and further sought to designate him as Head of Paid Service, Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer

The appointment process undertaken was detailed in Section two of the report and section three gave brief details of the candidate's previous experience.

The Chairman for the Committee took the opportunity to thank everyone who had been involved in the process, spoke of the positive outcome and how she and looked forward to Mr Burkinshaw joining the Council.

With the recommendation proposed and seconded, and with no questions raised, on being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED that the recommendation from the Chief Officer Employment Committee be accepted and Mr Paul Burkinshaw be formally appointed to the role of Chief Executive and designated as Head of Paid Service, Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer from the date of commencement of employment as Chief Executive.

30 ADJOURNMENT AND MONITORING OFFICER ADVICE POST ADJOURNMENT

The Chairman proposed a 10-minute adjournment prior to Members considering the final item of business. With Council signifying their agreement, the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 pm, resuming again at 8:37pm.

With the meeting resumed the Monitoring Officer, for transparency purposes, outlined to all Members, advice which had been given to some Members, in the break relating to whether or not an extraordinary Council meeting would be required to resolve some of the matters that Council haven't been able to make a decision on during the evening's proceedings.

The advice being that it was a matter for this Council. Full Council were able to call an extraordinary meeting if they felt it is required, alternatively, Full Council could wait until the next scheduled council meeting in September to make a decision on matters that remained unresolved following this evening's meeting. It was entirely a matter for Members.

This resulted in a number of views being expressed by a variety of Members as to the best way to proceed and a rationale for their views. It was confirmed that only one full round of committees was scheduled between now and the next meeting of Council. Arising from the debate a number of formal proposals were moved namely: -

- To hold an Extraordinary Council meeting on 11 August;
- To hold an Extraordinary Council meeting on 18 August
- To consider the matters at the next scheduled meeting on 8 September

To assist deliberations, the Chairman allowed all three motions to be debated simultaneously with Members having a lengthy and frank exchange of views on the needs, merits or otherwise of each option proposed.

In light of comments and views expressed all formal proposals were subsequently withdrawn, with Council indicating it was content at this time to wait until the scheduled meeting in September.

31 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

The Chairman invited the Interim Head of Paid Service to firstly give Members an overview of the Local Government Re-organisation (LGR) process to-date and going forward after which the Policy and Strategy Manager would present the report for consideration to Members.

In addressing the Chamber, the Head of Paid Service advised that LGR affected 21 areas of the country, the report before Members provided an update on LGR with Council having last considered the matter at a March meeting. The report sought approval of the next steps, as detailed in the recommendations

Following the decision of Council, in March, an interim proposal in response to the Government's statutory invitation was submitted. The Government had since provided feedback on all the proposals submitted in a single letter to the Greater Lincolnshire Council Leaders on 3 June this year (Appendix 2 of the report related). As well as providing feedback, the Government had committed to also providing capacity funding of just over £350,000 to Greater Lincolnshire authorities to support the development of the final proposals.

In wider context Members were advised the Devolution Bill was likely to be published in July and would likely receive Royal Assent next spring. The Bill would introduce a four-part kind of process, namely: -

- structures /areas of new strategic authorities,
- the powers and functions of those new strategic authorities including things like the development of spatial development strategies for areas.
- wider reforms including abolishing the committee system. (although early indications were those districts subject to LGR would be exempt – clarification awaited
- addressing local audit arrangements

The Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) expectation was for areas to try and collaborate and come together on a single proposal, however indications were that this was unlikely for most of the 21 two-tier areas. As a result, multiple proposals were expected, and this was being acknowledged by the officials at MHCLG.

The development of area Committees was a suggestion being keenly pursued by MHCLG but the challenge back had been the lack of blue-print for such proposals, whilst there was a

Government desire to have some form of consistent approach to local engagement.

There was no sign that the Government were proposing shifting from their timetable on LGR, even though many areas were late in receiving their response to their initial proposals. There had been no deviation from the requirement to submit final proposals by 28th of November, nor to the programme for vesting days for areas not fast tracked, this being by the 1st of April 2028.

Acknowledging the wider strategic context, the Policy and Strategy Manager summarised the report to Members outlining in detail the contents of the letter of response received from the Government, which had re-affirmed the final submission date and provided confirmation that final proposals would be evaluated against the criteria previously outlined in the statutory invitation. The criteria had been included at Appendix 1 of the report and was summarised aloud to the Chamber.

The letter also made clear that Councils should work together and where possible, reduce the number of final proposals being submitted in each area. Working collaboratively for a common interest of Greater Lincolnshire residents, sharing information and ensuring consistent assumptions and data sets remained a key principle of the Government's vision for this part of the process.

The paper also provided an update on the position of each authority across Greater Lincolnshire following receipt of the feedback letter. However, it was stressed that these positions were subject to change.

Finally, the report addressed West Lindsey's position and in considering the response letter and the requirements of the final proposal, three possible options, including risks and opportunities, had been worked up for Members' consideration and discussion at an all-Member workshop held on 23 June. Feedback from that had been used to shape the options further and inform the recommendations now presented to Members for decision.

The options considered at the Workshop had been in summary: -

- option one - no engagement, not submitting a final proposal for local government or the organisation in Greater Lincolnshire and not actively engaging with the development of any final business cases being considered by the other authorities.
- Option two - supportive engagement, working with all final proposals being developed for Greater Lincolnshire, with an option to take a decision to formally support a specific proposal prior to the submission date, (28 November).
- Option three - directive engagement and a full submission, where the council would develop its own final proposal and work up a full business case, which accords with the requirements of the Government's criteria.

Indication from the Workshop had been a preference for option two, in acknowledging there remained much work to be done by both West Lindsey and across Greater Lincolnshire to prepare a final proposal.

As such Council were being asked to support the recommendations contained in the report which would allow further work to take place across all of the final proposals being developed at the current time, reserving the opportunity for a future decision on which proposal Council may choose to support prior to the November submission deadline.

Debate ensued with the former Leader, in reference to previous position statements made by North Lincolnshire, outlined conversations he had at the LGA Conference which suggested there was the potential to re-engage them and that political leaders would be willing to work with West Lindsey. This was something the former Leader was of the view should be explored and encouraged dialogue to commence and for there to be Member engagement at any such discussions.

Officers outlined the position as reported to the Lincolnshire Chief Executives meeting on 4 June and were pleased to confirm that Lincolnshire Council's had written to the two unitary councils to the north seeking agreement to data share, with a positive response and agreement having now been received from North Lincolnshire.

In responding to a Member's comments, that in his view a single county option, should not be acceptable or the preferred option, Officers gave reassurance that at this stage the report was not recommending that the District Council support any one proposal but that they continue to work alongside all authorities and make a decision around their preference at a later date. The single county option was being developed by the County Council, but no formal decision had been made.

Officers were thanked for all their work to-date and for the clear and informative way the complex situation had been documented. Option two was considered to be a wise position at present and the Opposition Group Leader indicated her Group could support the recommendations.

Members spoke of previous good partnership working with NKDC and City of Lincoln and still had a desire for this to be considered as an option but were not opposed to the suggested way forward.

In responding to Members' questions regarding the capacity funding and its allocation, Officers outlined a decision made by Lincolnshire Chief Executives in June that would see the money held by the County Council. It had also been agreed that a top slice of that money would be used to create a shared baseline of both finance and demand data with any remaining monies shared equally between the number of proposals that were being developed.

Given the scale of work required the funding would not go a great way.

With no further comments, and the recommendations proposed and seconded en-bloc, on being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the matters set out in this report, including government feedback on the interim proposals submitted by councils in Greater Lincolnshire be noted;

- (b) option two be approved as the Council's next course of action, this being to undertake 'Supportive Engagement' working across all Final Proposals being developed for Greater Lincolnshire, with further assessment and decision-making opportunities for members at a future Council meeting; and
- (c) the financial and resource implications for the Council in preparing for LGR and the allocation of £50,000, which will be approved in line with financial procedure rules, and which will facilitate the initial preparation of data and evidence to enable the Council to engage effectively with the Final Proposals being worked on across Greater Lincolnshire be noted.

The meeting concluded at 9.14 pm.

Chairman

Council Matters Arising Schedule

Purpose:

To consider progress on the matters arising from previous Council meetings.

Recommendation: That Members note progress on the matters arising and request corrective action if necessary.

Matters arising Schedule

Status	Title	Action Required	Comments	Due Date	Allocated To
Black	Motion to Council to improve GP Access	<p>Council at its meeting on 2 September passed a motion relating to the above - immediate actions requested were</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">o To call on the ICB to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to demonstrate accurate need around GP provision.o Engage with local health authorities, NHS representatives, and community stakeholders to gather input and support for the initiative.	Initial communication has been sent to the ICB - Council will be updated of any progress through Council Matters Arising Schedule		
Black	Motion To Council – Protecting British Farms and Preserving Rural Communities	<p>Motion to Council Jan 2025 Chief Executive and Leader to write to the chancellor setting out DC views on this matter and negative impact on communities</p>	Letters have been issued . Progress or responses to the letters will be reported through Council Matters Arising Schedule		

Agenda Item 12a



COUNCIL
Monday 8 September 2025

Subject: Adoption of the Dunholme Neighbourhood Plan Review

Report by:	Director - Planning, Regeneration and Communities
Contact Officer:	Nev Brown Senior Neighbourhood Planning Policy Officer nev.brown@west-lindsey.gov.uk
Purpose / Summary:	To adopt the Dunholme Neighbourhood Plan Review

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Members formally agree to adopt (make) the Dunholme Neighbourhood Plan Review in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.

That the newly adopted (made) Dunholme Neighbourhood Plan Review September 2025, replaces the Dunholme Neighbourhood Plan adopted January 2017, to form part of the West Lindsey Development Plan for Dunholme parish area.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

This work is a duty under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.

Regulation 18A of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012, stipulates that a neighbourhood plan (NP) must be made (adopted) within eight weeks of the referendum, which was held on 24 July 2025. This requirement will be met if the Council adopts the Dunholme Neighbourhood Plan Review (DNPR) at its meeting on 8 September 2025.

Financial: FIN-65-26-MT-MK

For neighbourhood plan reviews requiring an examination and new referendum the Council receives a grant of £20k from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to help support its neighbourhood planning role in the district. A claim of £20k will be submitted for the DNPR when the funding window reopens.

Staffing:

Internal resources are in place to deal with neighbourhood planning and therefore there are no HR implications.

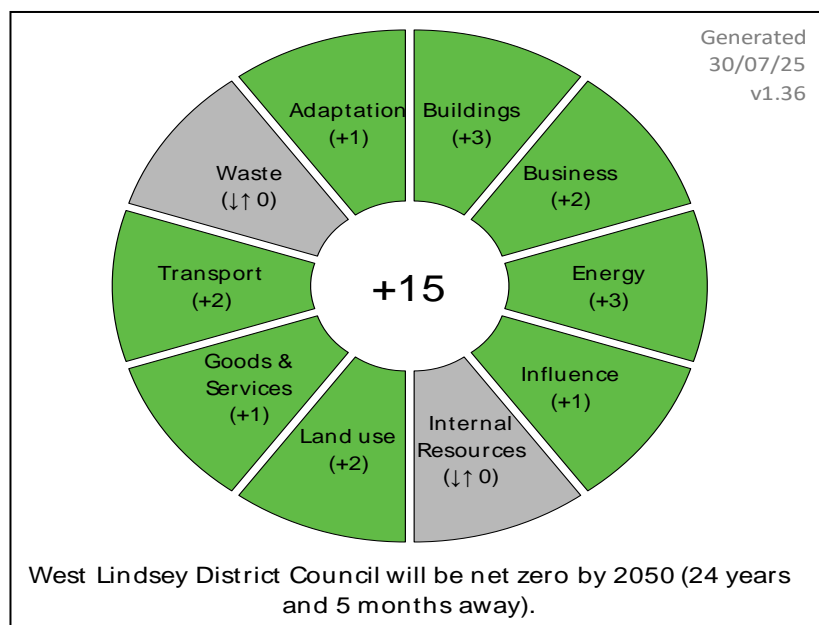
Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:

The DNPR has been examined under the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations for any issues relating to equality and diversity.

Data Protection Implications: n/a

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

The DNPR scored well when it was evaluated using the Council's Climate, Environment, and Assessment tool. Please see below. The DNPR's approach to buildings including their construction and the provision of green/blue infrastructure received a positive result.



The DNPR has been the subject of a Strategic Environmental and Habitats Regulations Assessment Report which concluded that the DNPR would be unlikely to give rise to any significant effects on protected sites.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

The DNPR expects new green space to be safe and useable for residents.

Health Implications:

The DNPR protects local green spaces within the village which are used for sports and informal recreation that help improve the health of the local population.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Risk Assessment : n/a

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

☐

No

x

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

x

No

☐

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report seeks Members' approval to adopt (make) the Dunholme Neighbourhood Plan Review (DNPR) as part of the West Lindsey Development Plan. The report follows the DNPR's successful referendum which was held on 24 July 2025.
- 1.2 The DNPR would be the third review of a NP to be adopted within the district. There are seven other NPs being reviewed, all at different stages of preparation.

2. Background

- 2.1 NPs were introduced in the Localism Act 2011. They are important and powerful tools that give parish and town councils the statutory planning powers to shape how their communities develop. A NP is a document written by parish/town councils that sets out planning policies for a parish area which are used to help decide planning applications.
- 2.2 There are legal steps to creating a NP, for the first time, which must be followed, and they are: area designation, plan preparation, consultation, examination, referendum, and finally adoption (making).
- 2.3 Where a NP is being reviewed it does not need to redesignate its area. For later steps, if the review involves material modifications which change the nature of the NP it would require examination and referendum. A referendum is not required for a NP review which includes material modifications, but they do not change the nature of the NP. For a NP which has only minor modifications there is no requirement for an examination, referendum or readopting of the NP. It would be authorised under the scheme of officer delegation.
- 2.4 Following a successful examination and/or referendum, it is a requirement that the NP should be adopted by Full Council for it to formally become part of the West Lindsey Development Plan for that NP area alongside the Local Plan. In the case of a NP review, this would see it replacing the original NP for that area.
- 2.5 As part of the Development Plan, the adopted NP would be given full weight in helping determine future planning applications within its parish. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

3. Decision & Reasoning

- 3.1 Having completed preparation and consultation steps on the DNPR, Dunholme Parish Council (PC) submitted the plan to the Council for examination in July 2024 and comments were invited from the public and stakeholders.

- 3.2 The Council, in agreement with the PC, appointed an independent examiner to determine whether the DNPR met legal requirements and, as it was a NP review, if an examination was sufficient or if it should also go to a referendum.
- 3.3 The Examiner's Report concluded that the DNPR met legal conditions, and that subject to the modifications proposed in the report, the DNPR should proceed to a referendum, as it contained significant changes to the original plan. The DNPR was examined alongside the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan and was prepared in accordance with EU obligations or Convention rights.
- 3.4 The Examiner's Report was considered under the Council's delegated powers, and it was agreed that the DNPR should proceed to a referendum and if successful should be recommended for adoption (making) by the Council.
- 3.5 The DNPR referendum met the requirements of the Localism Act 2011. It was held on 24 July 2025 in Dunholme and posed the question:
- 'Do you want West Lindsey District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Dunholme to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?'***
- 3.6 At the referendum 88.70% of residents who voted were in favour of the DNPR. Legislation requires that the Council must make the NP if more than half of those voting have voted in favour of it. Greater than 50% of those who voted were in favour of the DNPR being used to help decide planning applications in the plan area.

The results of the referendum were:	Votes Recorded	Percentage
Number of votes cast in favour of 'yes'	259	88.70%
Number of votes cast in favour of 'no'	32	10.96%
Number of ballot papers rejected	1	0.34%

Electorate	1886
Ballot Papers Issued	292
Turnout	15.48%

- 3.7 In accordance with national planning guidance, an adopted (made) DNPR should be given full weight in the determination of planning applications within the parish area.
- 3.8 West Lindsey District Council strongly supports parish/town councils with their NPs. With the adoption of the Dunholme NP Review, West Lindsey will have 27 adopted NPs covering a large part of the district. For the latest on NPs in West Lindsey please go to:

[Neighbourhood planning | West Lindsey District Council \(west-lindsey.gov.uk\)](https://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning)

4. Recommendation:

- 4.1 That Members formally agree to adopt (make) the Dunholme Neighbourhood Plan Review in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.**
- 4.2 That the newly adopted (made) Dunholme Neighbourhood Plan Review September 2025, replaces the Dunholme Neighbourhood Plan adopted January 2017, to form part of the West Lindsey Development Plan for Dunholme parish area.**



Council

Monday 8 September 2025

Subject: Review of the Allocation of Seats to Political Groups on Committees/Sub -Committees

Report by:

Monitoring Officer

Contact Officer:

Katie Storr
Democratic and Elections Manager and Deputy
Monitoring Officer
katie.storr@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Purpose / Summary:

This report sets out the details of the political groups on the Council, the number of Members to be appointed to serve on each committee and the allocation to different political groups of seats on the committees.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1) that the details of political groups, as set out in Appendix A, be noted;**
- 2) that the number of Members to be appointed to serve on each Committee, arising from the Head of Paid Service's delegated decision, and following consultation will all Group Leaders be noted; and**
- 3) that the allocation to different political groups of seats on committees, as set out in Appendix B, arising from the Head of Paid Service's delegated decision following consultation with all Group Leaders, be noted.**

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

Council is required to review the allocation to different political groups of seats on committees and sub-committees, in accordance with the provisions of Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, when either a trigger is met (election, resignation change in Group Membership) or at least annually at its annual meeting as set out in the Constitution.

This review has been prompted by formal notification of changes to Group Membership. Four political groups have been dissolved: the Liberal Democrat Administration Group, the Opposition Group, the Lincolnshire Independent Group, and the Consensus Independent Group. In their place, two new groups have been established: the West Lindsey Administration Group and the West Lindsey Liberal Democrat Group.

Financial:

None directly arising as a result of this report.

Staffing:

None directly arising as a result of this report.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:

None directly arising as a result of this report.

Data Protection Implications:

None directly arising as a result of this report.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

None directly arising as a result of this report.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

None directly arising as a result of this report.

Health Implications:

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Working Papers and Options considered in August 2025 held by Democratic Services.

Risk Assessment:

n/a

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

☐

No

x

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

☐

No

x

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In accordance with the provisions of Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Council is required to review the allocation to different political groups of seats on committees and sub-committees.
- 1.2 The last review of the allocations took place on 8 July 2025 at a meeting of Full Council.
- 1.3 This review has been prompted by formal notification of changes to Group Membership. Four political groups have been dissolved: the Liberal Democrat Administration Group, the Opposition Group, the Lincolnshire Independent Group, and the Consensus Independent Group. In their place, two new groups have been established: the West Lindsey Administration Group and the West Lindsey Liberal Democrat Group.
- 1.4 Existing political groups for the purposes of the Local Government (Committees & Political Groups) Regulations 1990 are as follows:

Group	No. of Members	Leader	Deputy
The West Lindsey Administration Group	30	Councillor Jackie Brockway	Councillor Moira Westley
The West Lindsey Liberal Democrat Group	6	Councillor Trevor Young	Councillor Lesley Rollings

- 1.5 The Council currently has no unaligned Members.
- 1.6 The Council has delegated authority to the Head of Paid Service to agree, following consultation with the Group Leaders, the overall allocation of seats to groups resulting from the application of rounding.
- 1.7 Full details of group membership are set out in Appendix A.

2. The Allocations

- 2.1 In accordance with the provisions of section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (Duty to allocate seats to political groups), the Council is required to give effect, so far as reasonably practicable, to the following specified principles:
- (a) that not all the seats on a Committee/Sub-Committee are allocated to the same political group;

- (b) that the majority of the seats on a Committee/Sub-Committee are allocated to a particular political group where the number of persons belonging to that group is a majority of the authority's membership;
 - (c) subject to paragraphs (a) and (b) above, that the number of seats on the ordinary Committees which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the total of all the seats on the ordinary Committees of that authority as is borne by the number of Members of that group to the membership of the authority;
 - (d) subject to paragraphs (a) to (c) above, that the number of seats on the Committee/Sub-Committee which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the number of all the seats on that Committee/Sub-Committee as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the authority.
- 2.2 (b) above applies to a lesser degree if there is no one Group with a majority of seats on the Council. External advice is sought when necessary to ensure the application of the rules is applied equitably.
- 2.3 The Group Leaders were consulted on the number of Members to be appointed to serve on the Committees. Any "trading" required to achieve the mathematical requirement is a matter for Group Leaders to determine between themselves.
- 2.4 In order to give effect, so far as is reasonably practicable, to the principles specified above and in consultation with Group Leaders as required by the delegation, it has been determined that the best fit to meet the political balance rules is for the:
- Planning Committee, Corporate Policy and Resources Committee, Prosperous Communities Committee, Chief Officer Employment Committee to comprise 11 Members;
 - Standards Committee and Governance and Audit Committee to comprise 8 Members.
 - Licensing Committee, Regulatory Committee to comprise 11 Members *
 - Overview and Scrutiny Committee to comprise 11 Members
- 2.5 Applying group numbers to the seats available on the Committees gives the allocation set out in Appendix B, which was supported by Group Leaders as the most reasonably practical in the circumstances.
- 2.6 *As agreed as part of the Annual Review of the Constitution during 2017/2018, the same 11 Members must comprise both the Licensing Committee and the Regulatory Committee. Licensing Committee, and due to the linked nature Regulatory Committee, are the only Committees which fall outside of the Political Balance Rules.

- 2.7 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is not deemed “an ordinary” Committee, and whilst it must be politically balanced, it sits separate to the “ordinary committees”; its Membership has been set at 11 based on a 9:2 split between members of the West Lindsey Administration Group and West Lindsey Liberal Democrat Group, respectively.

Local Government & Housing Act 1989

The Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990

Political Groups on the District Council – August 2025

The West Lindsey Administration Group (30 Councillors)

(Comprising 13 Conservative Councillors, 11 Liberal Democrat Councillors, 3 Independent Councillors, 2 Lincolnshire Independent Councillors, and 1 Reform UK Councillor)

Conservative (13)

Councillor John Barrett

Councillor Owen Bierley

Councillor Jackie Brockway

Councillor Frazier Brown

Councillor Adam Duguid

Councillor Ian Fleetwood

Councillor Angela Lawrence

Councillor Paul Lee

Councillor Peter Morris

Councillor Maureen Palmer

Councillor Roger Patterson

Councillor Roger Pilgrim

Councillor Tom Smith

Liberal Democrat (11)

Councillor Emma Bailey

Councillor Eve Bennett

Councillor Matthew Boles

Councillor Stephen Bunney

Councillor Liz Clews

Councillor Jacob Flear

Councillor Lynda Mullally

Councillor Jim Snee

Councillor Mandy Snee

Councillor Paul Swift

Councillor Moira Westley

Independent Councillors (3)

Councillor Karen Carless

Councillor Jeanette McGhee

Councillor Diana Rodgers

Lincolnshire Independent (2)

Councillor Chris Darcel

Councillor Paul Key

Reform UK (1)

Councillor Trevor Bridgwood

The West Lindsey Liberal Democrat Group (6 Councillors)

(Comprising 5 Liberal Democrat Councillors and 1 Independent Councillor)

Liberal Democrat (16)

Councillor David Dobbie

Councillor Sabastian Hague

Councillor Lesley Rollings

Councillor Baptiste Velan

Councillor Trevor Young

Independent Councillor (1)

Councillor Paul Howitt Cowan

Appendix B

Political Make-up of the Council, on which calculations have been based: -

<u>Political balance on the Council</u>		
Group	No.	%
/ WL Admin	30	83.3333%
£ WL Lib Dems	6	16.6667%
£ n/a	0	0.0000%
£ n/a	0	0.0000%
Vacant	0	0.0000%
Council of	36	100%

Number of Seats allocated to each Group based on vary size Committees and rounding applied for each individual Ordinary Committee.

<u>Single committee spread (or sub-committee)</u>										
Committee Size	% WLA	Rounded to whole	WLLD		N/A		N/A		Vacant	
18	15.000	15	3.000	3	0.000	0	0.000	0	0.000	0
17	14.167	14	2.833	3	0.000	0	0.000	0	0.000	0
16	13.333	13	2.667	3	0.000	0	0.000	0	0.000	0
15	12.500	12 OR 13	2.500	2 OR 3	0.000	0	0.000	0	0.000	0
14	11.667	12	2.333	2	0.000	0	0.000	0	0.000	0
13	10.833	11	2.167	2	0.000	0	0.000	0	0.000	0
12	10.000	10	2.000	2	0.000	0	0.000	0	0.000	0
11	9.167	9	1.833	2	0.000	0	0.000	0	0.000	0
10	8.333	8	1.667	2	0.000	0	0.000	0	0.000	0
9	7.500	7 OR 8	1.500	1 OR 2	0.000	0	0.000	0	0.000	0
8	6.667	7	1.333	1	0.000	0	0.000	0	0.000	0
7	5.833	6	1.167	1	0.000	0	0.000	0	0.000	0
6	5.000	5	1.000	1	0.000	0	0.000	0	0.000	0
5	4.167	4	0.833	1	0.000	0	0.000	0	0.000	0
4	3.333	3	0.667	1	0.000	0	0.000	0	0.000	0
3	2.500	2 OR 3	0.500	0 OR 1	0.000	0	0.000	0	0.000	0

Selected Committee Size Option and Balance Across Total Number of Ordinary Committees

Fig 1

V8 Committees (exc O&S)	Places	WLA	WLLD	NA	NA	<i>check</i>
Prosperous Communities	11	9	2	0	0	11
Corporate Policy and Resources	11	9	2	0	0	11
Governance and Audit	8	7	1	0	0	8
Planning	11	9	2	0	0	11
Chief Officer Employment	11	9	2	0	0	11
Standards	8	7	1	0	0	8
Total	60.00	50	10	0	0	60
Number of committees requiring variation		NIL	NIL	N/A	N/A	

Fig 2

GROUP	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>% of C'I</i>	<i>Rounded to whole</i>
WLA	49.9980	0.8333	50
WLLD	9.9600	0.1660	10
NA	0.0000	0.0000	0
NA	0.0000	0.0000	0
	<hr/> 60.00		<hr/> 60

TABLE 1 –**ORDINARY COMMITTEES SPLIT PER GROUP HAVING APPLIED ANY VARIATIONS REQUIRED AND AGREED BY GROUP LEADERS**

	WLA	WLLD	Total
Prosperous Communities (11)	9	2	11
Corporate Policy and Resources (11)	9	2	11
Governance and Audit (8)	7	1	8
Planning (11)	9	2	11
Chief Officer Employment (11)	9	2	11
Standards (8)	7	1	8
Total no. of seats (60)	50	10	60

TABLE 2 – NON-ORDINARY COMMITTEES

WITH POLITICAL BALANCE APPLIED	WLA	WLLD	Total
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (11)	9	2	11

TABLE 3

	WLA	WLLD	Total
Licensing (11)	9	2	11
Regulatory (11)	9	2	11
Total no. of seats (22)	18	4	22

Note the membership of the two committees above has to be identical

Licensing Committees must comprise at least 10 Members in accordance with the LA 2003

These meetings do not have to be politically balanced.



Council

**Monday, 8th September
2025**

**Subject: West Lindsey District Council Corporate Peer Challenge
Progress Report**

Report by:

Interim Chief Executive
Bill Cullen
bill.cullen@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Contact Officer:

Corporate Policy & Strategy Officer – Corporate
Strategy & Business Planning
Ellen King
ellen.king@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Purpose / Summary:

To present an update report on progress against
the recommendations made in the Council's
Corporate Peer Challenge report.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That members:

1. Receive and note the findings and recommendations from the Council's LGA Corporate Peer Challenge 2025 (Appendix 1).
2. Note the progress that has been made to date against the recommendations.
3. Approve the proposal for a Peer Challenge Progress Review to take place in the first half of 2026, subject to agreement with the Local Government Association

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

There are no legal implications arising from this report. It is a requirement on all Councils under the Best Value Duty to undergo a Corporate Peer Challenge every five years, and to publish the recommendations and action plan. In publishing this report, the Council has fulfilled this requirement.

Financial: FIN/73/26/CL/SL

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

This report contains a number of recommendations, some of which will have financial implications. Where appropriate, proposals to answer specific recommendations will be brought to the appropriate committee for decision where the associated financial implications will be laid out in full.

Staffing:

There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

The report makes recommendations in respect of the organisational structure. Where appropriate, proposals to answer specific recommendations will be brought to the appropriate committee for decision where the associated staffing implications will be laid out in full.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:

Not applicable in the context of this report.

Data Protection Implications:

Not applicable in the context of this report.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

Not applicable in the context of this report.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

Not applicable in the context of this report.

Health Implications:

Not applicable in the context of this report.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

None

Risk Assessment:
Not applicable

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

☐

No

X

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

☐

No

X

Executive Summary

The Local Government Association (LGA) requires all councils to undertake a full Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) once every five years. West Lindsey District Council's latest CPC took place in January 2025. This report highlights the findings and recommendations of the Peer Team, with a full copy of the LGA's report attached as Appendix 1.

In responding to the findings of the Peer Team, the Council is required to produce an Action Plan setting out how the recommendations will be implemented. This report presents, for information an update on progress to date against the recommendations.

The report focuses particularly on progress in relation to three areas of work, these being:

1. A refreshed Corporate Plan based on the priorities of the Council through the lens of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).
2. Designing a new organisational structure that is aligned to the core themes of the refreshed Corporate Plan; ensuring the Council has the right capacity in the right places to deliver key priorities and prepare for the implementation of LGR.
3. Implementing a new internal governance and monitoring framework that aligns with the new Corporate Plan, streamlines decision-making touch points and empowers both staff and members to focus on delivering the priorities of the Council over the next three years.

It is a requirement on Councils undergoing a Corporate Peer Challenge to take part in a progress review to assess progress against the recommendations. This report also seeks approval from Council to arrange a follow-up review in the first half of 2026.

1 Introduction

1.1 Between 21st and 24th January 2025, the Council participated in its latest full Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC), conducted by an LGA Peer Team who spent three and a half days on site at the Guildhall meeting with a range of members, officers, residents, local businesses, Parish Councils, community groups and other public sector partners in order to build a picture of the Council's effectiveness in five key areas, these being:

- Local Priorities & Outcomes
- Organisational & Place Leadership
- Governance & Culture
- Financial Planning & Management
- Capacity for Improvement

1.2 Additionally, the Council requested that the Peer Team explore the effectiveness of the Council's Together 24 Programme in transforming services; and to explore how the Council as a Local Planning Authority could best work with developers and partners to implement greater consideration of public views.

1.3 In preparing for the Peer Challenge, the Council was required to present a Position Statement (copy attached as Appendix 2) which is a self-assessment of the Council's performance against each of the five themes, and a source of further context and understanding for the Peer Team ahead of their site visit.

2 Positive Findings

2.1 There is much to be proud of in the feedback report, which is a reflection of the commitment, passion and ambition our staff and members have for the existing Corporate Plan themes of Our People, Our Place and Our Council. In particular, the report highlights the following strengths:

Our People and Our Place

- i) The Council is constantly learning and improving, building positive relationships and working well with partner organisations; with one partner describing the Council as 'absolutely phenomenal'.
- ii) We have good strategic relationships with partners including registered housing providers and Central Lincolnshire Local Plan partners. Both this, and the Council's Housing Strategy were cited as examples of good practice.
- iii) We support, work with, and celebrate the diversity of our communities through our approach to consultation and engagement.

Our Council

- iv) The Peer Team was impressed with the passion and commitment from Council staff who came across as positive, flexible, empowered, committed and enthusiastic.
- v) There is a good programme of training and development available for members.
- vi) Councillor / Officer relationships are generally good. Councillors trust and value their staff.
- vii) The Corporate Plan and strategic business planning is based on robust, intelligent use of local information. Staff understand the priorities of the Administration. This has resulted in successful delivery of projects for local communities.
- viii) The Council is managing its finances well through good financial governance and a comprehensive approach to financial planning and monitoring.
- ix) We have a robust, well communicated and data driven approach to performance management.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 The Peer Team's report makes eight key recommendations for the Council to act on. For context, these recommendations are set out in full below.
- 3.2 **Recommendation One – review your management structure as a priority:** Your Management Team may only comprise of three officers by June 2025 and may not include two of your three statutory roles. Staff are concerned about the impacts this could have on their capacity and increased workloads. A gap in the officer structure between service managers and directors is also causing a few issues. So complete your review of, and agree, your management structure with your administration to enable you to recruit accordingly.
- 3.3 **Recommendation Two – prioritise the filling of your new management structure, especially the Head of Paid Service and Section 151 Officer:** Following on from recommendation one, appoint on an initial interim basis if necessary to ensure your statutory appointments start work as soon as possible. Prioritising recommendations one and two will build your management resilience to maintain 'business as usual' and progress as a council.
- 3.4 **Recommendation Three – continue discussion with the Peer Team and LGA on the best way to resolve the identified councillor / officer relationship challenges:** These challenges are hindering progress and working relationships in some areas. Peer Team members supported some of your colleagues affected by this during their visit and will continue to do so. This will align with work the LGA is already instigating to assist this. Continue these discussions and work with the Peer Team and LGA to best resolve this and progress positively as a council.
- 3.5 **Recommendation Four – refresh your business planning:** Most, but not all, of your administration's top priorities feature clearly in your latest

Corporate Plan and Executive Business Plan. Resultingly, your Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council cannot be sure their priorities are being sufficiently delivered. They should therefore proactively work with officers in your Policy & Strategy team and other officers to fully articulate and align those top priorities throughout your corporate, service and financial planning processes. This will help ensure everyone understands what will be delivered and how.

- 3.6 **Recommendation Five – Develop plans to address the gap in your Medium-Term Financial Plan:** You have identified budget gaps from 2026-2029, recognise the need for a longer-term strategy and plan to address them. Your Together 24 Programme has identified actions that can assist, and your Savings Board is working to identify new income generation and further efficiency savings. Continue all this and any other work possible to balance your future budgets and enhance your financial sustainability.
- 3.7 **Recommendation Six – design and implement a continuous improvement / change programme:** Your Together 24 Programme has delivered positive change and savings and intends to deliver more. You intend to use this work to develop a more ongoing continuous improvement programme. So consider and agree the purpose and / or outcomes of the latter programme at the earliest opportunity, then robustly prioritise and allocate the resources it needs. This will help you develop and deliver and benefit from this approach fully.
- 3.8 **Recommendation Seven – review the number and frequency of your meetings:** The number of committees, boards, meetings and report requirements are increasing. This is negatively impacting on some officer workloads and raising questions about the value of all this work. So review the number and frequency of your meetings to ensure they are as effective as possible. You may also wish to review the purpose, objectives and other issues related to this work to make the most of this opportunity.
- 3.9 **Recommendation Eight – develop your internal communications to address issues raised throughout our findings:** You are facing notable change, including that of your Management Team, the implications of possible Local Government Reorganisation in Lincolnshire, and the need to identify and realise savings. Staff are concerned about issues like this, impacting on their workload and wellbeing. So enhance your internal communications and engagement, to support them, keep them informed, involved and on side.

4 Progress to Date

- 4.1 Since the Corporate Peer Challenge, under the direction of the Interim Chief Executive, Management Team, and Group Leaders, three priority workstreams are being progressed, each one interlinked and designed to address the majority of the recommendations made by the Peer Team. These three workstreams are set out in greater detail below, and

form the focus of this report, which is intended as an interim update ahead of the full action plan being presented to Council in November 2025 by the new permanent Chief Executive who will oversee its implementation and any follow-up actions arising from a Progress Review.

- 4.2 To ensure continuity and a smooth transition period for staff and members alike, the Interim Chief Executive, Bill Cullen, and the new permanent Chief Executive, Paul Burkinshaw, are already working in partnership to ensure progress against the recommendations is maintained, including through regular discussion with Group Leaders and regular communication with staff.

5 Priority Workstream 1: Corporate Plan Refresh

- 5.1 Updating and refreshing the existing Corporate Plan addresses a number of recommendations, namely: recommendation three (addressing identified Councillor / Officer relationship issues); recommendation four (refreshing our business and corporate planning); and recommendation five (addressing the gaps in the MTFP). Additionally, refreshing the Corporate Plan now allows members to revisit their strategic priorities through the lens of Local Government Reorganisation, ensuring delivery of West Lindsey priorities will already be in progress and ready to be taken on by the new unitary authority as part of its corporate planning.
- 5.2 The new Corporate Plan will be once again driven by the priorities of members, focusing particularly on the aims and objectives of the Corporate Plan; and developing a new shared Values and Behaviours framework for both staff and members.
- 5.3 The working assumption is that priorities will fit broadly within three themes: 'Our People' and 'Our Place', which are well embedded and familiar to members and staff alike, and an enhanced third theme of 'Our Council, Our Future' which expands on the existing theme to include priorities around LGR and preparing for LGR implementation. These themes will be tested as part of planned member and staff engagement.
- 5.4 Staff and member workshops will take place in September to explore member priorities for the district through the lens of LGR and how these can be delivered in a financially sustainable way. The workshops provide an opportunity to explore how the Council can bring together its offer in respect of LGR and the proposals that are in development, supported by case studies and a robust evidence base. Invitations containing full details of these workshops have already been issued and all members are encouraged to attend.
- 5.5 Officers will use the outcome of these sessions to develop the new Corporate Plan which will be presented to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee in December 2025 and onwards for final adoption by Full Council in January 2026. This timeline ensures members consider the 2026/27 Budget in the context of the new Corporate Plan,

and allows the Council to move quickly into delivery as we transition through the remaining stages of LGR implementation.

- 5.6 To ensure members have regular oversight of Corporate Plan performance, the Council's existing Progress and Delivery (P&D) framework will also be refreshed to include performance indicators and information that give an outcome-based overview of performance against the Corporate Plan priorities. The new set of P&D measures will be developed with the P&D Task and Finish Group and key officers and presented to CP&R committee for approval in February 2026, ready for implementation from 2026/27 onwards.

6 Priority Workstream 2: Implementing a new Organisational Structure

- 6.1 To ensure successful delivery of the Corporate Plan; and to address the capacity issues identified by the Peer Team (recommendations one and two); it is necessary to complete work on a new organisational structure as a priority. Doing so will ensure we have the right capacity, in the right places to deliver members priorities and prepare for the implementation of LGR.
- 6.2 Some progress has already been made to address recommendations one and two of the Peer Challenge. The vacant posts on Management Team have been filled and the new permanent Chief Executive, Paul Burkinshaw will take up his post with the authority on 29th September 2025.
- 6.3 The Interim Chief Executive and new permanent Chief Executive are working together with other officers and East Midlands Councils (EMC) to develop proposals for a new organisational structure which will be presented to Chief Officer Employment Committee for decision. The review of the structure will focus initially on tiers one and two (Chief Officer and Deputy Chief Officer level) with any further reviews to follow.
- 6.4 As well as ensuring the Council has the right capacity to deliver, a review at this stage is necessary to place our staff in the best possible position for the transition to LGR. As such, a review of organisational structures, including Terms and Conditions, is usual practice for Councils undergoing reorganisation and is in line with the work taking place across the 21 local authority areas identified for LGR.

7 Priority Workstream 3: Empowering our Staff and Members through streamlined internal governance arrangements

- 7.1 Key to the successful delivery of a Corporate Plan is having the right internal governance and delivery arrangements in place so that staff and members alike are empowered with the right tools and information to deliver the priorities of the Council. The Peer Challenge acknowledges the robust programme management arrangements already in place and makes recommendations for improving these. Further recommendations are made in respect of reducing the number of committees, boards,

meetings and reporting requirements, which have grown in number in recent years. This final priority workstream seeks to address these recommendations, streamlining these requirements to free up capacity for both members and staff to focus on value added work.

- 7.2 In tandem with the Corporate Plan refresh, a review of Programme Boards is currently underway. This will ensure the number of Boards is streamlined and focused on the three key themes of the Corporate Plan and including LGR implementation. A review of current projects is also underway to ensure these are also aligned to delivery of any new Corporate Plan priorities.
- 7.3 Additionally, a review of existing Member Working Groups is taking place to ensure any such group is operating with clear purpose and that the work of these groups is of value to the Council. A review of committee meetings has already taken place which resulted in a more streamlined committee timetable for 2025/26.
- 7.4 These reviews, run in parallel will result in a more streamlined operation for both members and officers, with fewer reporting requirements, improved governance, and greater member oversight of Corporate Plan delivery.

8 Requirement for a Peer Challenge Progress Review

- 8.1 In undertaking the Peer Challenge, it is expected that the Council will commit to a progress review so that the Peer Team can check progress against the recommendations. A Progress Review typically takes the form of a one or two day site visit by members of the original Peer Team, usually the Lead Member Peer and the Chief Executive Peer. An updated Position Statement will be provided to the team who will have the opportunity to meet with a range of staff, members and key partners.
- 8.2 Members are asked to agree for the Council to undertake its Progress Review in the first half of 2026. By this time, the new permanent Chief Executive will be in post, familiar with the organisation and focused on driving forward the priority workstreams set out in this report. Additionally, a new Corporate Plan will be adopted and in delivery; and the new organisational structure will be in place. If members approve this recommendation, officers will begin work with the LGA, Group Leaders and the Management Team to make the necessary arrangements for the Progress Review.

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

West Lindsey District Council

Tuesday 21 to Friday 24 January 2025

Feedback report

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1. Introduction

Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) is a highly valued improvement and assurance tool that is delivered by the sector for the sector. It involves a team of senior local government councillors and officers undertaking a comprehensive review of key finance, performance and governance information and then spending three and a half days at West Lindsey District Council (West Lindsey) to provide robust, strategic, and credible challenge and support.

CPC forms a key part of the improvement and assurance framework for local government. It is underpinned by the principles of sector-led improvement put in place by councils and the Local Government Association (LGA) to support continuous improvement and assurance across the sector. These state that local authorities are: responsible for their own performance, accountable locally not nationally, and have a collective responsibility for the performance of the sector.

CPC assists councils in meeting part of their Best Value duty, with the UK Government expecting all local authorities to have a CPC at least every five years.

Peers remain at the heart of the CPC process and provide a 'practitioner perspective' and 'critical friend' challenge.

This report outlines the key findings of the peer team from its visit, and the recommendations that the council is required to action.

2. Executive summary

West Lindsey is delivering a range of projects with and for its local communities, many through its successful bidding for government funding. Much of this work is down to the council's constant: learning; improving; positive relationship building and work with its partner organisations; and its committed and enthusiastic staff.

The council's good strategic relationships with its registered housing providers for example has allowed them to co-develop their housing strategy, enabling specific accommodation for specific, diverse groups. West Lindsey also has good relationships with its Central Lincolnshire Local Plan partners, leading to good work

across the partnership area and a robust housing supply position.

West Lindsey supports, works with and celebrates the diversity of its communities and staff in various ways. Its recently adopted community consultation and engagement strategy will further strengthen this work but community representatives are unaware of the strategy. The council therefore needs to engage with as many local stakeholders as possible to inform, promote and benefit from the strategy.

Various stakeholders however still perceive the council's work as 'Gainsborough centric'. This could lead to other areas feeling left out of council support or disengaged. West Lindsey should therefore review its external communications, and use its community consultation and engagement strategy, to best promote its work throughout the district to help address this.

West Lindsey also has opportunities to strengthen and streamline its existing engagement with parish councils who want more regular strategic engagement, especially around planning issues. West Lindsey need only build on/review its current community and neighbourhood plans work with its parishes but should ask how best to engage with them to ensure all can work best together.

All the council's work, for and with its communities and partner organisations, is driven by its corporate plan. West Lindsey's administration adopted the plan in June 2023 after the previous month's local elections saw a new political administration for the first time in 15 years. Most, but not all, of the administration's top priorities feature clearly in the council's corporate and executive business (action) plans for various reasons, which is causing some issues. The council's political leadership should work with its Policy and Strategy team and other officers to address this.

West Lindsey's robust, well-communicated and data driven performance management system seems to be working well at corporate and service levels to progress the corporate plan. Not all managers apply the corporate appraisal, 1:1 staff meetings, training and development frameworks though. The council should therefore embed these frameworks and enhance communications around its training and development fund to fully support its staff.

The council's most immediate, challenging issues are its changing Management

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Team, which by June 2025 may only comprise three officers - and may not have two statutory officers, and the implications of possible local government reorganisation in Lincolnshire. So West Lindsey should prioritise the completion of its management structure review, agree a new structure with the administration, and implement it. This will help build the immediate, essential resilience the council needs to maintain 'business as usual' and progress forward.

Councillor/officer relationships are generally good but there are some ongoing challenges, which are hindering some progress and impacting on some staff. The council must address this to ensure the best relationships help the council to progress its priorities. West Lindsey has the opportunity to build on good examples within the council as part of this work.

West Lindsey's councillors have a good training and development programme available to them but not all councillors know much about it and may have limited availability to take up such opportunities. The council should therefore ask its councillors how, where and when they want to learn, and respond accordingly so they make the most of this support to best carry out their roles.

Committees, boards, meetings and report requirements are increasing across the council, impacting negatively on workloads. West Lindsey needs to review at least the number and frequency of these to ensure they work as effectively as possible.

West Lindsey appears to be managing its finances well through good financial governance, and a comprehensive financial planning and monitoring approach with built-in contingencies and reserves. Its Governance and Audit Committee, internal and external auditors have not identified any significant weaknesses but the council has identified budget gaps from 2026/27, which West Lindsey needs to address with its new Savings Board and staff.

The council also has robust, programme management methodologies, especially its service review programme, which is identifying recommendations for implementation. West Lindsey could however spend less time on programme management documentation, and increase its delivery time, for smaller projects. It should also implement its service review recommendations, and complete its remaining service

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reviews once it has refreshed the process, for maximum return. The council can then use the learning from all its service reviews to develop its more ongoing continuous improvement programme with its staff to make the most of their related learning. As part of this latter programme the council should agree its purpose and/or outcomes so it can plan, resource, monitor, manage and celebrate the work towards them.

3. Recommendations

There are a number of observations and suggestions within the main section of the report. The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the council:

- 3.1 Recommendation 1 – review your management structure as a priority –** your Management Team may only comprise three officers by June 2025 and may not include two of your three statutory roles. Staff are concerned about the impacts this could have on their capacity and increased workloads. A gap in the officer structure between services managers and directors is also causing a few issues. So complete your review of, and agree, your management structure with your administration, to enable you to recruit accordingly.
- 3.2 Recommendation 2 - prioritise the filling of your new management structure – especially your Head of Paid Service and Section 151 Officer** – following on from Recommendation 1, appoint on an initial interim basis if necessary to ensure your statutory appointments start work as soon as possible. Prioritising Recommendations 1 and 2 will build your management resilience to maintain 'business as usual' and progress as a council.
- 3.3 Recommendation 3 - continue discussion with the peer team and LGA on the best way to resolve the identified councillor/officer relationships challenges**, which are hindering progress and working relationships in some areas. Peer team members supported some of your colleagues affected by this during their visit and will continue to do so. This will align with work the LGA is already instigating to assist this. Continue these discussions and work with the peer team and LGA to best resolve this and progress positively as a

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council.

- 3.4 Recommendation 4 - refresh your business planning** – most, but not all, of your administration's top priorities feature clearly in your latest corporate and executive business plans. Resultingly, your Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council cannot be sure their priorities are being sufficiently delivered. They should therefore proactively work with officers in your Policy and Strategy team and other officers to fully articulate and align those top priorities throughout your corporate, service and financial planning processes. This will help ensure everyone understands what will be delivered and how.
- 3.5 Recommendation 5 - develop plans to address the gap in your medium-term financial plan** – you have identified budget gaps from 2026-29, recognise the need for a longer-term strategy and plan to address them. Your Together 24 programme has identified actions that can assist, and your Savings Board is working to identify new income generation and further efficiency savings. Continue all this and any other work possible to balance your future budgets and enhance your financial sustainability.
- 3.6 Recommendation 6 - design and implement a new continuous improvement/change programme** – your Together 24 programme has delivered positive change and savings, and intends to deliver more. You intend to use this work to develop a more ongoing continuous improvement programme. So consider and agree the purpose and/or outcomes of the latter programme at the earliest opportunity, then robustly prioritise and allocate the resources it needs. This will help you develop and deliver and benefit from this approach fully.
- 3.7 Recommendation 7 - review the number and frequency of your meetings** - the number of committees, boards, meetings and report requirements are increasing. This is negatively impacting on some officer workloads and raising questions about the value of all this work. So review the number and frequency of your meetings to ensure they are as effective as possible. You may also wish to review the purpose, objectives and other issues related to

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this work to make the most of this opportunity.

- 3.8 Recommendation 8 - develop your internal communications to address issues raised throughout our findings** – you are facing notable change, including that of your Management Team, the implications of possible local government reorganisation in Lincolnshire, and the need to identify and realise savings. Staff are concerned about issues like this, impacting on their workload and wellbeing. So enhance your internal communications and engagement, to support them, keep them informed, involved and on side.

4. Summary of peer challenge approach

4.1 The peer team

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of this peer team reflected the focus of the peer challenge, and the LGA selected peers on the basis of their relevant expertise. The peer team comprised:

- Member Peer - Cllr Wendy Fredericks, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and People Services, North Norfolk District Council (DC)
- Member Peer - Cllr Rory Love OBE, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, Kent County Council
- Chief Executive Officer Peer - Joanne Wagstaffe, Chief Executive, Three Rivers DC
- Serving Officer Peer - Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities, Cherwell DC
- Serving Officer Peer - Liz Barnard, Head of Service, Policy, Projects and Performance, West Suffolk DC
- Shadow Peer – Ethan Norman, Impact Graduate, West Northamptonshire Council
- LGA Peer Challenge Manager – Vicki Goddard
- LGA Programme Support Officer – Suraiya Khatun.

4.2 Scope and focus

The peer team considered the following five themes, which form the core

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components of all CPCs. These areas are critical to councils' performance and improvement. West Lindsey asked the peer team to additionally explore the points in bold within each theme:

- 1. Local priorities and outcomes** - are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the council delivering effectively on its priorities? Is there an organisational-wide approach to continuous improvement, with frequent monitoring, reporting on and updating of performance and improvement plans? **Has the council identified the right priorities for 'Our People' and 'Our Place' within its vision for West Lindsey and other key corporate strategies? How well placed is the council to deliver these priorities now and in future? Is the council effectively engaging with its local communities? Is there collective understanding and ownership of the council's corporate plan at every level of the organisation?**
- 2. Organisational and place leadership** - does the council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities? **How well placed is the council to take advantage of opportunities within and beyond the district's boundaries, particularly the Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production fusion power plant in the Bassetlaw district? How effective is the council's decision-making in relation to planning and delivering its Local Plan? Does the council's organisational structure support delivery of its corporate plan?**
- 3. Governance and culture** - Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of challenge and scrutiny? **Does the council have sound decision-making arrangements? Are councillor/officer relationships constructive and clearly defined? How effective and fit for purpose is the council's committee system, including for the implementation of a Greater Lincolnshire Devolution Deal? Is the council's councillor training and development programme effectively supporting councillors' decision-making? Is the council's Values and Behaviours**

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Framework effective, fit for purpose, and well embedded in the council's culture?

4. **Financial planning and management - Does the council have a grip on its current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a plan to address its financial challenges? What is the relative financial resilience of the council like? Does the council's financial planning successfully ensure long-term financial sustainability? Does its OneFinance system support good financial planning and decision-making? Are the council's strategic priorities reflected in its medium-term financial planning? Is there the right balance of risk in the council's approach to commercial investment and income generation?**
5. **Capacity for improvement - Is the organisation able to bring about the improvements it needs, including delivering on locally identified priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve? Does the council's performance management drive continuous learning? Does the council have sufficient organisational resilience to deliver its strategic priorities and respond to emerging issues, challenges, risks and opportunities? How effective is the council's strategic approach to workforce development?**

As part of the five core elements outlined above, every CPC includes a strong focus on financial sustainability, performance, governance, and assurance. In addition to these themes, the council asked the peer team to provide feedback on:

6. **How can the council as a Local Planning Authority best work with housing and other building developers and partners to show and implement greater consideration of public views?**
7. **How effective has the council's Together 24 Programme been in transforming services? Does the council have the right approach and change support in place to deliver continuous improvement, and the**

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continued delivery of programmes and projects post-Together 24?

4.3 The peer challenge process

Peer challenges are improvement focused; it is important to stress that this was not an inspection. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

The peer team prepared by reviewing a range of documents and information to ensure they were familiar with the council and its challenges. This included a position statement the council prepared in advance of the team's time onsite. This gave the peer team a clear steer on West Lindsey's local context and what the team should focus on. The documents also included a comprehensive LGA finance briefing (using public reports from the council's website) and a LGA performance report outlining benchmarking data for the council across a range of metrics. The latter was produced using the LGA's local area benchmarking tool called LG Inform.

The peer team then spent three and a half days at West Lindsey, during which they:

- gathered evidence, information, and views from more than 42 meetings, in addition to further research and reading
- spoke to more than 87 people including a range of council staff, councillors and external stakeholders.

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. In presenting feedback, they have done so as fellow local government officers and councillors.

5. Feedback

5.1 Local priorities and outcomes

West Lindsey agreed and adopted its Corporate Plan 2023-2027 in June 2023. This followed the council's local elections the month before, which saw a new political administration for the first time in 15 years. The council has based its corporate and

executive business (action) plans on robust, intelligent use of local information. This includes the council's State of the District Report, corporate and service level performance management information.

Consequently, the council is delivering successful projects for its communities, including its most deprived Gainsborough neighbourhoods. The new cinema, Baltic Mill green space and market street renewal units are such examples. West Lindsey's successful use of UK Shared Prosperity and Levelling Up funding has assisted work like this. Much of this is down to West Lindsey's continual relationship building and work with its partner organisations, which many internal and external stakeholders spoke positively about. Evident commitment, enthusiasm and work of the council's staff to deliver the administration's priorities for its communities have also been key.

The council's [LG Inform CPC performance report](#) provides key data including West Lindsey's strengths, especially regarding its key priorities, compared to its Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) nearest neighbours¹:

- 0.32 households per 1000 in temporary accommodation – the third lowest in 2024/25 Quarter 1
- 3850 per 100,000 of its population have a further education qualification or above in the academic year 2023/24 – the third highest
- 3255 per 100,000 of its population have a further education qualification excluding apprenticeships in the academic year 2023/24 – the second highest.

Regarding the council's other key priorities, the LG Inform report also highlights that:

- 56.8 households per 1000 households were on the council's housing waiting list – the highest of its nearest neighbours
- 39.6 per cent of household waste was recycled, reused or composted, and there was 490.9 kilograms of household waste per household in the district in 2022/23 – the fourth lowest
- 39.2 new businesses were registered per 10,000 of the 16 plus year old population – the fifth lowest.

As a result of all this work, the council continues to improve its services to support its

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residents', visitors' and businesses' latest needs.

West Lindsey is supporting, working with and celebrating its diverse communities. Commissioning housing, adopting voice activated technology, providing council materials in different languages, and running community and cultural events and activities for/involving diverse groups - from those with learning needs to different ethnic minority communities – are examples of this. The council's natural, intuitive approach is informing and developing this work well.

West Lindsey's recently adopted community consultation and engagement strategy will further strengthen work with its diverse communities. The council wants this strategy to enable its residents and other stakeholders to continually shape and support its work to enhance the district for all. The peer team heard however that community representatives are unaware of this strategy. The council therefore needs to identify and engage with as many residents, businesses and other community stakeholders as possible to inform the strategy as well as benefit from it.

Various stakeholders perceived the council's work as 'Gainsborough centric': projects visibly happening; councillors lobbying for, deciding on and promoting work; and council press releases focused on the town, rather than work throughout the wider district. The council's last CPC in January 2020 identified this same perception. This is therefore a continuing issue that could lead to other areas of the district feeling left out of council support, disengaged or discontent. West Lindsey should therefore review its external communications to better promote its work throughout the district. The council could also use its community consultation and engagement strategy to address this with its district-wide communities, especially those in rural areas.

The peer team heard that council staff understand the administration's top priorities of markets, active leisure and culture, and are progressing related work. However, most, but not all, of these priorities feature clearly in the council's latest corporate and executive business plans, which the administration has signed-off. The current corporate plan does not mention markets, and whilst the executive business plan references all three priorities, they do not stand out from others. The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council are therefore unsure if West Lindsey is sufficiently delivering their priorities, which is causing them some unease.

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The peer team also heard several times how officers present corporate, service and finance updates to the Leader and Deputy Leader for required decisions who can take time to respond. This delays officers fully progressing their priorities.

The peer team therefore recommends West Lindsey's political leadership proactively works with its senior officers to clearly articulate and agree its priorities and related key work for the corporate plan's duration. This includes strengthening the council's whole business planning process so the corporate plan, executive business plan, financial plan and the performance management framework fully and transparently reflect the administration's priorities at corporate and service level. West Lindsey's Policy and Strategy team can use its current, thorough refresh/stocktake of the council's corporate plan to assist this. Aligning everything this way will help the council most effectively utilise and clarify staff capacity and resources. A transparent approach would also enable better communication across the council, and with external stakeholders. It would additionally help speed up required decision making to best deliver the corporate plan.

5.2 Organisational and place leadership

The peer team was impressed with the passion and commitment from the council's staff in supporting and delivering for local communities. Staff came across as positive, flexible, empowered, and they take on new or additional work/roles as required. They support each other and enjoy working at the council, which is evidenced in some cases by their long service. They also felt their managers trusted and supported them. Councillors also trust and value their staff.

Good working within and across service teams is contributing further to this positive workplace atmosphere. IT and other managers attend each other's service team meetings to find out and respond to what services need to best work together.

This positive culture extends to the council's productive work and relationships with its partner organisations, especially on economic regeneration and community safety. All partner organisations the peer team spoke to said how good the council is to work with; one partner notably said that West Lindsey is "absolutely phenomenal".

The council needs this staff and partner positivity and productivity more than ever to

help address its most immediate, challenging issues – its changing Management Team, and the implications of possible local government reorganisation in Lincolnshire. Staff are understandably concerned about all this and the impact it will have on their capacity, increased workloads and potential activity gaps.

Given current uncertainty around such issues, the peer team recommends that West Lindsey enhances its communications, consultations and engagement with staff, councillors, partners, residents, businesses and visitors as appropriate. This will keep them informed, manage their concerns and expectations, and provide opportunities to work with the council as well as learn about what it is doing.

Three of West Lindsey's Management Team members are due to have left the council by June 2025, two of which are statutory officers. The council needs to address this significant capacity issue and a potential 'point of failure' as a matter of urgency to ensure statutory compliance and the continuity of its work. Any significant delays in making these appointments will result in critical gaps and place extra strain on the remaining three members of the management team.

Furthermore, there is a notable gap in the officer structure between services managers and directors, the outcomes of which include:

- process and confusion stalling decision making at Wider Management Team level, where service teams are conscious of their already stretched Management Team, and so ask this wider team for sign-off/decisions as required
- career progression challenges – the current structure and pay gap makes it difficult for/deters third tier officers to aspire to a director post
- potential staff turnover – where third tier officers see safer and more incremental career opportunities elsewhere.

The peer team therefore recommends West Lindsey urgently and thoroughly completes its review of, and agrees, the council's management structure with the administration. This will help ensure West Lindsey plans the necessary capacity, skills and organisational culture to deliver its priorities and fulfil its statutory duties. This should not stall the appointment of the Head of Paid Service and Section 151 Officer, which the peer team also recommends as a priority task, even if on an initial

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interim basis. Agreeing its management structure and appointing to these critical posts will help build the immediate and essential short- and longer-term resilience the council needs to maintain 'business as usual' and progress forward.

In terms of place leadership, West Lindsey has simple, beneficial opportunities to work more with its parish councils, who want more regular strategic engagement with West Lindsey. The council need only build on/review its current community and neighbourhood plans work with its parishes, and could reinstate its previous District Matters conversation forum with them. Whatever form this engagement takes, West Lindsey should design this with its parish councils. This will help all best collaborate on areas of joint interest, for example planning (portal) matters. There could also be further opportunities, especially though any Lincolnshire local government reorganisation, for the council, parishes and any future councils to plan and deliver work together, for example through asset, finance and/or service transfers.

5.3 Governance and culture

The peer team heard throughout its visit that the council has been constantly improving. As someone summarised, "each iteration [of West Lindsey] has been better". This reflects the council's motto to "strive for the gain of all".

A key reason for this is that West Lindsey is a learning organisation. An illustration of this is its staff flexibly changing roles, undertaking training and supporting others to deliver what the council requires. West Lindsey's corporate performance management team and processes also support and empower service teams to continually identify and address any underperformance via improvement plans.

Whilst process and confusion can stall decision making at Wider Management Team level, this team otherwise feels empowered and is working well. Its open, transparent meetings allow officers to raise anything required, and the team responds as needed.

It was evident to the peer team that there are some ongoing challenges regarding certain councillor/officer relationships. This includes aspects of identified councillors' language and behaviour affecting some staff. Such challenges particularly arise when the councillors in question cannot see sufficient progress in certain work areas, even if work is progressing. The peer team also heard that the noted councillors do

not always clearly articulate the changes they want to see. When instances like this come to a head, officers involved sometimes do not know how to respond. They also fear further meetings with the councillors. This hinders progress, the councillors can then get more frustrated, and this negative cycle can continue.

The peer team heard good examples of these councillors providing robust yet constructive challenge to senior officers. Through their strategic and politically sensitive responsibilities and experience, these officers can respond positively.

The peer team heard however that some staff feel challenges sometimes over-step the line, for example as overly critical views and anger about those in question, their work, what they have or not done. Challenges like this have resulted in upset, anxiety and confusion for staff, who then become unable to work their best. Resultingly, work does not always progress as fast as it could, and some staff's health is being negatively affected. Additionally, the peer team heard how such challenges by the identified councillors may also impact on some councillor/councillor interactions.

The council needs to support its staff and the identified councillors as soon as possible to resolve this and prevent further related issues. West Lindsey can learn from its positive working relationships to help this. These include those outlined at the end of this section between the Governance and Audit Committee, internal and external audit, those within the Wider Management Team mentioned above, and the councillor and service manager focus group mentioned in section 5.5.1. This will help everyone to be as productive, effective and collaborative as possible.

Colleagues from across the council raised this with the peer team in sensitive, constructive ways and vice versa. Members of the peer team supported the councillors and some of those officers affected as part of their visit and will continue to do so. This will align with related work the LGA is already instigating just as sensitively with specific individuals. The peer team recommends West Lindsey colleagues continue their work with the peer team and LGA to resolve these issues.

In terms of councillors working more generally, the May 2023 local elections saw 19 new councillors - just over half the council's seats. West Lindsey officers invested resources to develop an extensive four-year training and development programme

for them. The programme supports new and all councillors in their latest roles.

Not all councillors attend or know about the breadth of support available, despite a re-run of the programme from September 2024. Additionally, their commitments outside their councillor roles may be affecting their availability for such training. They may therefore be missing out on opportunities to help them undertake their roles. The council should therefore ask its councillors how, where and when they want to learn. This will enable West Lindsey to best respond to their needs, so they make the most of this support to carry out their roles.

Councillors need to particularly make the most of this support because the number of committees, boards, meetings and report requirements are increasing. This is impacting on their workloads, and that of officers supporting them. Colleagues are also raising the value of this increasing work and how they could otherwise spend their time delivering West Lindsey's priorities. The peer team therefore recommends the council reviews the number and frequency of its meetings to ensure they are as effective as possible. This review could build on the joint work of West Lindsey's Governance and Audit Committee, internal and external auditors outlined at the end of this section. The council may also want to review the purpose, objectives and other issues related to this work to make the most of this opportunity.

If the council identifies that this work is of value, it should consider if it is adequately resourcing it, and identify any opportunities to improve it. This will ensure officers and councillors can undertake the required work in the time available.

West Lindsey's Governance and Audit Committee, its two independent members, and its external and internal auditors are working positively and supportively together. They welcome and explore each other's views, enabling them to say and address what is needed. The committee is reviewing and implementing the council's latest risk management strategy and fraud policy. It is also improving the frequency and how related strategy and registers are reported. The committee has identified the Management Team changes outlined above as a key risk to address.

5.4 Financial planning and management

The peer team learned before and throughout its visit how West Lindsey manages its

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finances well through good financial governance, and a comprehensive financial planning and monitoring approach, with officers providing clear advice to councillors. As part of this, West Lindsey has paused additional investment to its property portfolio of six properties in light of changes to borrowing rules, and the requirement to set aside minimum revenue provision. The council's latest investment return budget for 2024/25 was £0.651 million, and was forecast to be above budget at £0.907 million due to higher than expected balances. West Lindsey also has a commercial contingency budget and valuation volatility reserve to mitigate any risk of respective rental and capital on disposal losses.

The council's Corporate Policy and Resources Committee of 14 November 2024's report on its 2024/25 budget included the draft revenue forecast outturn position for 2024/2025 as a net contribution (underspend) to reserves of £0.16 million. West Lindsey had also previously held earmarked reserves of £20.047 million at 31 March 2024 of its total usable reserves of £28.486 million to support the ongoing investment in its capital programme, development of services and management of financial risks. Its general fund working balance had been 19 per cent of net operating expenditure, compared to its strategy minimum of 10 per cent. All such work is supporting its budget well.

West Lindsey's Governance and Audit Committee, internal and external auditors did not identify any significant weaknesses in signing off its 2023/24 accounts. In the spirit of continuous improvement though, the external auditors recommended the council update its risk management strategy, which it is addressing as outlined in section 5.3. West Lindsey should also formalise documentation of contract exceptions to ensure greater transparency and compliance with procurement rules.

The council has started planning its 2025/26 budget via its high-level refresh of its medium-term financial plan. This has identified forthcoming budget gaps of: £1.1 million for 2026/27, £1.3 million for 2027/28 and £1.3 million for 2028/29. West Lindsey's reserves can bridge its short-term financial gaps but the council knows it needs a longer-term strategy and plan to address these gaps.

The council's Together 24 service review programme, outlined further in section 5.7, has identified savings West Lindsey can make. The peer team did not see much

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evidence of other savings the council is making, or needs to make, beyond this programme, to address its financial gaps. The new Savings Board, a councillor working group the council established in autumn 2024, is however working collaboratively to identify areas and plans for new income generation and further efficiency savings. The peer team recommends West Lindsey continues all this and other work possible to help the council balance its future budgets and enhance its financial sustainability.

The peer team also recommends the council enhances its communications and engagement with its staff and councillors on West Lindsey's finances and savings plans and activities as they develop. This will help ensure everyone knows what they need to do and when, so they can prepare and action those plans. It will also strengthen corporate/service relationships, and further empower service teams to manage their own budgets and service plans.

5.5 Capacity for improvement

The peer team heard how West Lindsey's staff are productive, welcoming, inclusive and supportive towards colleagues from all backgrounds, especially those from private and retail sectors. All this is helping its staff to work their best.

Various council activities contributing to this healthy environment include: regular equalities updates on the intranet, national campaign days for different community groups, events, staff networks including one on equalities. Staff highlighted more opportunities the council could progress to build on this momentum and success, including a new additional mental health group/staff network.

Given its positive workforce and changing management structure, West Lindsey has an opportunity to develop, communicate and implement staff succession planning across the council. This will keep staff updated on such developments, inform them of and engage them with longer-term internal career opportunities, and manage their related expectations. All this will help retain them, so West Lindsey can make the most of their ever-growing skills and experience to deliver its priorities.

West Lindsey is also continually learning and improvement, due in part to its robust programme management methodologies, especially for its Together 24 service

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review programme. Thorough reviews through this work have identified a range of recommendations for service teams to implement, which will improve their efficiency.

The peer team heard however how officers can spend unnecessary time on programme management documentation for smaller projects. Sometimes smaller plans just need more discussion or action amongst colleagues to progress them. West Lindsey's investment savings reserve already enables some smaller activities to happen. This should expand to realise immediate benefits of other work.

5.5.1 Performance

The peer team saw various evidence of West Lindsey's robust, well-communicated and data driven performance management system at corporate and service levels. This includes the council's annual review of performance measures, targets and their narrative to ensure they best link to corporate and service plans and policies. A councillor and service manager focus group robustly and constructively reviews and challenges each measure's need and target. The group also initiates supportive performance improvement plans for areas under target with service teams, who action the plans. Through this approach, the council has for example reduced its time for answering land charge questions from 42 days to the same day.

The peer team met some service managers who outlined how this process works well as they 'live and breathe' it day to day to manage their delivery against the council's priorities. In light of this whole, successful approach, other councils are approaching West Lindsey to learn from them.

Due to time constraints onsite, the peer team could not robustly ascertain how performance management works more generally and regularly throughout the council. This includes regular service/corporate monitoring by officers, reporting to and engagement with its main policy and overview and scrutiny committees. There are however mentions of related positive work throughout this report about service, financial, risk and other planning and delivery.

West Lindsey has corporate appraisal, 1:1 meetings with line managers, and training and development frameworks. The peer team heard however that not all managers consistently apply them, and appraisals do not always explicitly link to corporate plan objectives. The council is therefore not supporting and developing its staff

consistently and fairly from a performance management point of view to best deliver West Lindsey's priorities. It should therefore fully embed the frameworks, to enable this to happen.

Key to help achieving this is the council's central training and development fund. Staff bid for this funding, and Management Team review and decide which bids to support, but the process and its criteria are not transparent. Staff therefore do not know what makes a successful bid or feel less motivated to apply. Those who bid successfully can feel guilty, which can put them off applying in future.

The peer team therefore recommends the council improves its communications and transparency around this fund. This will help ensure staff understand the system, how to best apply, and enable them to suggest improvements. It will also help increase their motivation, faith in and use of the process, so that all staff have maximum opportunity to increase their skills to deliver the council's objectives.

5.6 How can the council as a Local Planning Authority best work with housing and other building developers and partners to show and implement greater consideration of public views?

West Lindsey has good strategic relationships with its registered housing providers, as evidenced by their exclusively positive comments about the council. This has allowed them to successfully co-develop their housing strategy. Through this strategy, housing associations have delivered needs-led accommodation specific to their communities, from planning to completion on various projects. This includes for example bespoke housing for older people and those with learning difficulties.

West Lindsey also has great relationships with its Central Lincolnshire Local Plan partner authorities, who also spoke positively about the council to the peer team.

The council could however strengthen and streamline its existing engagement with parish councils, as outlined in section 5.2. This includes it notifying parish councils of relevant planning changes, such as those related to Section 106 Agreements (those between local authorities and developers in respect of planning permissions). The local planning portal generated recent difficulties in viewing planning applications when the system was updated without parish council colleagues' knowledge. Parish

councils can care about issues like planning passionately because of the immediate local impact they issues can have. Enhanced joint work of this nature will therefore strengthen relations and work between West Lindsey and its parish councils.

West Lindsey should also explore strengthening a self-service process for residents so they can raise valid planning enforcement enquiries during development. This could save council officers travelling the district to answer such enquiries, enabling them to undertake other beneficial work instead, and improve contact with residents.

5.7 How effective has the council's Together 24 Programme been in transforming services? Does the council have the right approach and change support in place to deliver continuous improvement, and the continued delivery of programmes and projects post-Together 24?

The peer team heard how the council's service review programme Together 24 has successfully delivered change within some areas, including its contact centre and customer services, to become more efficient and effective. As outlined in section 5.4, the programme has identified savings the council can make by carrying out related recommendations from each review.

In delivering reviews, West Lindsey has not had capacity to carry out all the recommendations or the remaining service reviews. The peer team strongly suggests however the council finds ways to implement the backlog of recommendations while they are still relevant to ensure maximum returns. Those returns will then free up other resources to implement further recommendations and reviews.

West Lindsey is refreshing its service review process, learning from its completed reviews, to implement the remaining ones in as streamlined a way and quickly as possible. The council should continue this productive, developing approach to ensure all remaining reviews identify, action and benefit from emerging recommendations.

Once it has completed all its service reviews, West Lindsey wants to develop this work into a more continuous improvement programme. The peer team suggests the council considers and agrees the purpose and/or outcomes of the latter programme at the earliest opportunity. These could for example be financial or time savings, or service improvements – and once its goals are clear, it can plan, monitor and

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Local Government Association company number 11177145 Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number 03675577

Chair: Councillor Louise Gittins

Chief Executive: Joanna Killian

President: Baroness Grey-Thompson

manage and the work towards them. West Lindsey will need to robustly prioritise and allocate resources for this programme to realise the maximum benefits.

As Together 24 developed, more staff engaged with, helped and owned it. So the council should keep working with its staff to make the most of this momentum and shape the work's next stages. Service teams will then benefit from the best future continuous improvement programme, which they will have helped shape and own.

In summarising the above points, the peer team recommends the council designs and implements a new continuous improvement/change programme to seamlessly replace its refined service review programme once that work is complete.

6. Next steps

The LGA recognises that senior political and managerial leadership will want to consider, discuss and reflect on these findings. The LGA will continue to provide on-going support to the council. **Following the council's and LGA's publication of the final CPC report, West Lindsey needs to produce and publish an action plan within five months of the time onsite** to address the peer team's key recommendations outlined above. As part of the CPC, the council is also required to have a progress review and publish the findings from this within 12 months of the CPC. The LGA will also publish the progress review report on its website.

The progress review will provide space for a council's senior leadership to report to peers on the progress made against each of the CPC's recommendations, discuss early impact or learning and receive feedback on the implementation of the CPC action plan. The progress review will usually be delivered on-site over one day. The date for the progress review at West Lindsey is to be confirmed.

Meanwhile, Mark Edgell, Principal Adviser for the East Midlands, Yorkshire and The Humber, and the North East, is the main contact between West Lindsey and the LGA. Mark is available to discuss any further support the council requires via mark.edgell@local.gov.uk.

ⁱ CIPFA maintains a model that generates sets of statistical nearest neighbours. The default model uses 20 factors including demographic variables, deprivation, employment and population density.

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER: WLDC Position Statement

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge 2025



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our latest Position Statement, produced in support of West Lindsey District Council undergoing a Corporate Peer Challenge in January 2025. This is the story of West Lindsey as told by us, the collective voices of members and staff, and we are proud to share it with you.

We look forward to the Peer Challenge as an opportunity to celebrate what we do well; and to learn and grow in those areas where we can improve.

In particular, we see the Peer Challenge as a way to help us sense check our vision for 'Our People' and 'Our Place', supporting our understanding of whether we have the right capacity in the right places to deliver our vision. We welcome the learning opportunities that will flow from this Challenge, and we are committed to building them into our strategic business planning over the coming months to help us move forward with delivering our strategic priorities.

Like all local authorities, West Lindsey is operating in increasingly challenging and uncertain times. Regionally, a Greater Lincolnshire County Combined Authority has been established, based on a [Vision for Greater Lincolnshire 2050](#), which Lincolnshire districts were involved in shaping. Locally, the previous government's decision to mobilise the former RAF Scampton site, located in West Lindsey, as an asylum processing centre placed prolonged and unprecedented pressure on the Council over a two-year period as we sought to appeal the decision, support the local community, and protect the planned investment and regeneration of the site.

Continued uncertainty around local government finance has redoubled our efforts to balance the financial sustainability of the Council with ongoing service delivery and digital transformation. Our efforts are recognised through external audit reports, and we are also taking on board the recommendations. For example, our most recent external audit Value for Money Risk Assessment indicates a need for a more formal Savings Plan given the level of financial challenge over the next two years. This has resulted in the creation of a Financial Sustainability Working Group, which will be known as the Savings Board.

A change of political administration in 2023 for the first time in 15 years marked a new era and a change in focus requiring a period of readjustment for officers and members as we sought to establish new relationships and ways of working that will deliver on the Council's shared priorities. Now almost half-way through the administrative cycle, we continue to work together to strengthen member / officer relationships, and we strive towards delivering the administration's new priorities.

We know that our circumstances are not unique; they are undoubtedly experienced in councils up and down the country. What is special about West Lindsey is how we continue to adapt and respond. That we have navigated challenge and change whilst continuing to deliver our [Corporate Plan](#) alongside our high performing, award winning services is testament to the tenacity, resilience, dedication and passion that runs right to the heart of our organisation.

#TeamWestLindsey is more than just a hashtag, it is an ethos. We are proud of our successes. We are honest about our challenges. We pull together. We support each other. We roll up our sleeves and we deliver.



Ian Knowles
Chief Executive
of the Council



Cllr Trevor Young
Leader of the Council

OUR DISTRICT

West Lindsey covers 1,156 sq km. This is equivalent in size to Greater Manchester.

1156 sq km

Second least densely populated area in the East Midlands. Each resident has the equivalent of two football pitches of space.



West Lindsey is made up of 97 parishes.

97

The Lincolnshire Wolds runs through the district and contains an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



Total population is 97,880 people.

97,880

One of the most rural districts in England.



Three market towns: Gainsborough, Market Rasen and Caistor.

Gainsborough is the administrative centre.



The district is home to 15 Sites of Special Scientific Interest and two nature reserves.

15

There are 46,007 households in the district.

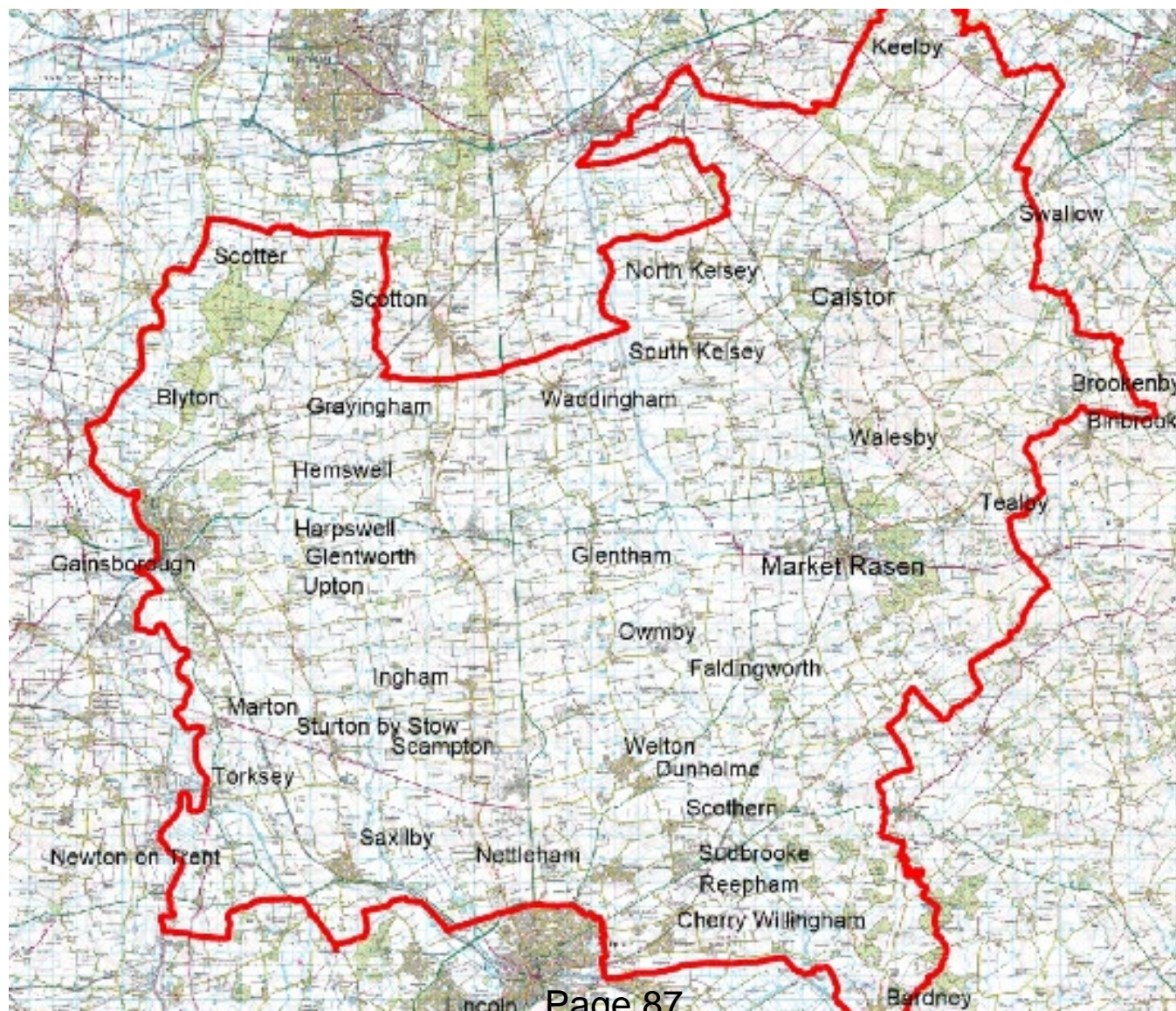
46,007

WEST LINDSEY: THE CONTEXT

To help grow our understanding of the district, each year we produce a [State of the District Report](#) which acts as our strategic evidence base, telling the story of 'Our People' and 'Our Place' through statistical analysis of key themes such as demography, health and wellbeing, the local economy, employment and skills, and housing. Evidence-based decision making is integral to our approach to policy development, business planning and project scoping. The State of the District Report supports our decision-making by aiding our detailed understanding of the issues, challenges and opportunities in the district both now and in the future.

Our ambition is to modernise our strategic evidence base, thus enhancing our overall business intelligence and insight and embedding a 'whole systems' approach both internally across service areas, and externally with key partners.

An ongoing challenge is having the capacity and resources available to progress this ambition at pace and scale. Whilst "the ability to understand and meet current and future need and demand based on evidence and insight" is a stated objective in our Corporate Plan, we do not have a dedicated corporate data, insight and intelligence officer, or an off the shelf software solution to progress this work as quickly as we would like. A decision is needed to enable us to understand where this work fits in the scale of strategic priorities.



Our People:

Our demographic make-up has remained relatively static over time. Our population is increasingly ageing with a current average age of 48.5, eight years above the national average. Our working age population remains static and our birth rates are low, which is an issue in relation to increasing employment levels and growing the local economy in the short and long-term.

The diversity of need across the district is evident when looking at factors such as deprivation, poverty, health and wellbeing. An ongoing challenge is enabling the conditions to support our most deprived neighbourhoods in Gainsborough to thrive and grow whilst at the same time, supporting our rural communities who face unique challenges of their own, including hidden deprivation, fuel poverty and isolation.

Health and Wellbeing:

Taken on average, physical and mental health outcomes are good. Life expectancy is better than average at 83.6 years for women and 79.1 years for men. There is, however, some disparity depending on where you live. Those living in the most deprived neighbourhoods in the district have, on average, a life expectancy nine years lower than those living in the least deprived neighbourhoods. An ongoing priority is to work with local communities in the most deprived areas to unlock growth, drive aspiration and improve health outcomes, particularly in relation to the wider determinants of health.

Levels of physical activity are higher than average and improving. 65% of adults participate in moderate physical activity for at least 150 minutes per week, whilst 50% of children take part in moderate activity for at least 60 minutes per day. Levels of active travel have also seen an increase over the past year. In 2023, we adopted a [Lincolnshire Districts Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#), including five key levers for improving health and wellbeing outcomes within our sphere of influence as a District Council. This Strategy was adopted in partnership with the six other Lincolnshire Districts, bringing together colleagues from across the County as part of a whole systems approach to support delivery of the overarching county-wide [Lincolnshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#).

We are currently developing a [Sport and Active Leisure Strategy](#), the aim of which is to embed a place-based approach to health and wellbeing and drive higher rates of physical activity. We have recently appointed a Sport and Physical Activity Community Officer, who will work with key partners and local communities to embed our new Strategy and support a comprehensive programme of sport and physical activity across the district.

Poverty and Deprivation:

The picture across the district remains mixed. In 2019 (the last time the dataset was updated), West Lindsey was ranked the 123rd most income deprived out of 316 local authority areas on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Of the 52 neighbourhoods in the district, eight are among the 20% most income deprived neighbourhoods in England, with one neighbourhood in the 0.1% most deprived neighbourhoods in England. Conversely, six neighbourhoods are in the 20% least income deprived neighbourhoods, thus highlighting the level of variation across the district, despite a relatively low level of deprivation when looking at the district as a whole.

In the most deprived neighbourhood, 45.3% of people are income deprived.

45.3% 

In the least deprived neighbourhood, just 2% of people are income deprived.

2% 

Since 2015, child poverty in the district has risen 7.1 percentage points. 30.9%, or 5,831 children in West Lindsey are currently living in poverty.

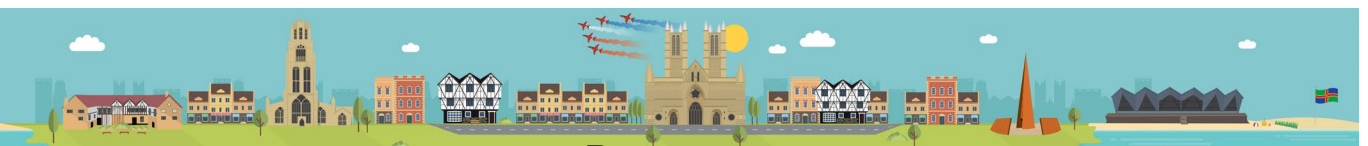
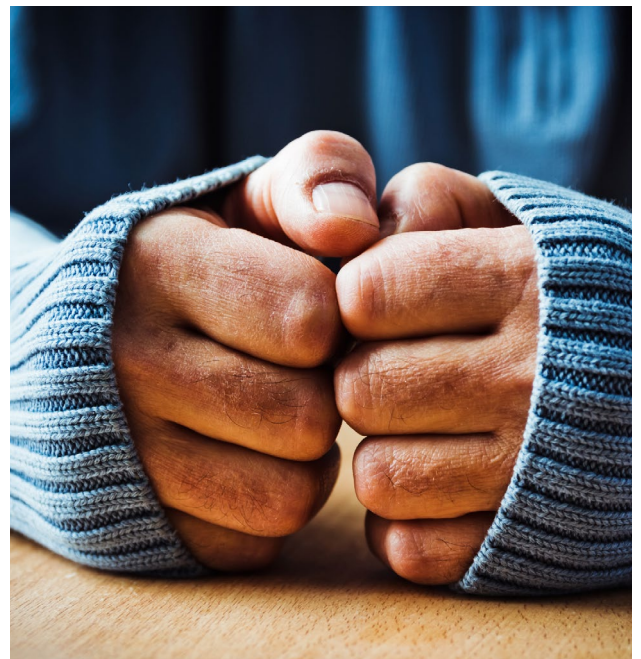
Fuel poverty is also an issue in an area that has a high number of households without a mains gas supply. The latest data shows that 16% of the district's households are in fuel poverty, compared to 13% nationally.

We have a package of measures in place to support our residents with the ongoing challenges of the increased cost of living. In 2022, we held a Cost of Living Summit, bringing together over 30 key stakeholders to identify local challenges and priorities for tackling the cost of living through a partnership approach. Since then, we have led a Cost of Living Officer Working Group, bringing together key colleagues to share intelligence and deliver holistic solutions to support our residents. We have also acted as the lead on the county wide Cost of Living Group.

An ongoing member priority is to ensure our residents are supported with the cost of living through the Household Support Fund. We are proud of our roll-out of these schemes, led by our Benefits Team in collaboration with the Communities Team and in partnership with local food support provision organisations. During this period our high standard in administering our HB processing, VEP, HBAA and Overpayment recovery was recognised by the Department of Work and Pensions, who wrote to commend our Benefits Team for their high standards of performance and good practice.

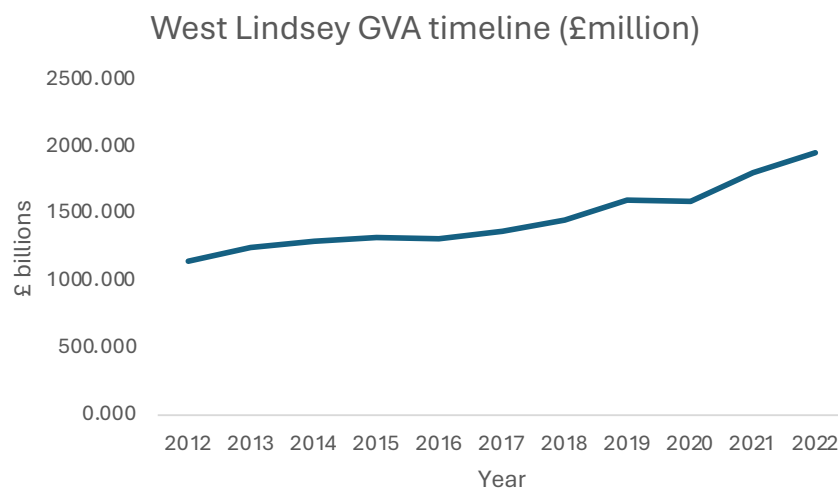
Since the pandemic, there has been an unprecedented increase in demand for support with the cost of living, as well as a substantial increase in the number of people contacting the Council in distress. This has had a notable impact on staff, particularly those working in Revenues, Benefits, Customer Services, and our homelessness service, all of whom have continued to deliver these services to a high standard, and with a customer centric approach. With the cost of living pressures showing little sign of easing, an ongoing priority is to ensure that our residents continue to feel supported, and that we continue to ensure the wellbeing of our staff in the face of continued high demand and stretched capacity.

Help for Households



The Local Economy:

As a rural district, agriculture and farming is key to the local economy. Additionally, the local economy relies more heavily on the manufacturing and construction sectors compared to England as a whole, while the information and communication, and financial and insurance sectors are underrepresented compared to the national picture. The presence of the RAF has left a lasting legacy with economic potential for the growth of a cluster exploiting strengths in defence, air and space. In terms of economic output, Gross Value Added (GVA) is rising following a period of stagnation during the pandemic.



Economic Activity:

Economic activity is lower in West Lindsey compared to the national average. 58.2% of the working age population is currently in employment compared to 75.5% for Great Britain as a whole. Conversely, 4.8% of people are currently unemployed compared to 3.9% nationally. Economic inactivity remains an ongoing challenge which has been exacerbated by the pandemic. A total of 27.3% of 16-64 years olds describe themselves as economically inactive, higher than the national average of 21.4%. This equates to 14,800 people, of which 14,000 state that they do not want paid employment.

We are in the final stages of developing a new Economic Growth Strategy, a medium-term approach to unlocking the district's economic potential, prioritising future growth opportunities arising from the new Greater Lincolnshire Mayoral Combined County Authority, and the wider regional opportunities created by initiatives such as the STEP Fusion site across the border in Bassetlaw. Development of our Economic Growth Strategy, which is due to be adopted in 2025, has been overseen by a Member Working Group and facilitated by our Economic Growth Team.

Educational Attainment:

Lincolnshire operates a selective education system. Additionally, there is no post-16 further education site in Gainsborough, our main population area. Educational attainment remains an ongoing challenge. Across all qualification levels, attainment levels are lower than the national average. 81% of the district's population holds at least an RQF2 qualification, equivalent to GCSE level. This compares to 86.5% nationally. The picture worsens at RQF3 level (equivalent to A Level) with 47.8% of people holding this level of qualification compared to 67.8% nationally. At the undergraduate level, 24.7% of people hold this level of qualification compared to 47.3% nationally.

Employment and Skills:

In 2022, we commissioned a [West Lindsey Employment and Skills Study](#) in partnership with Lincolnshire-based skills consultancy, Skills Reach. The purpose of the study was to enhance our understanding of the local skills landscape, particularly focusing on the balance between skills demand, supply and the local skills provision available in the district.

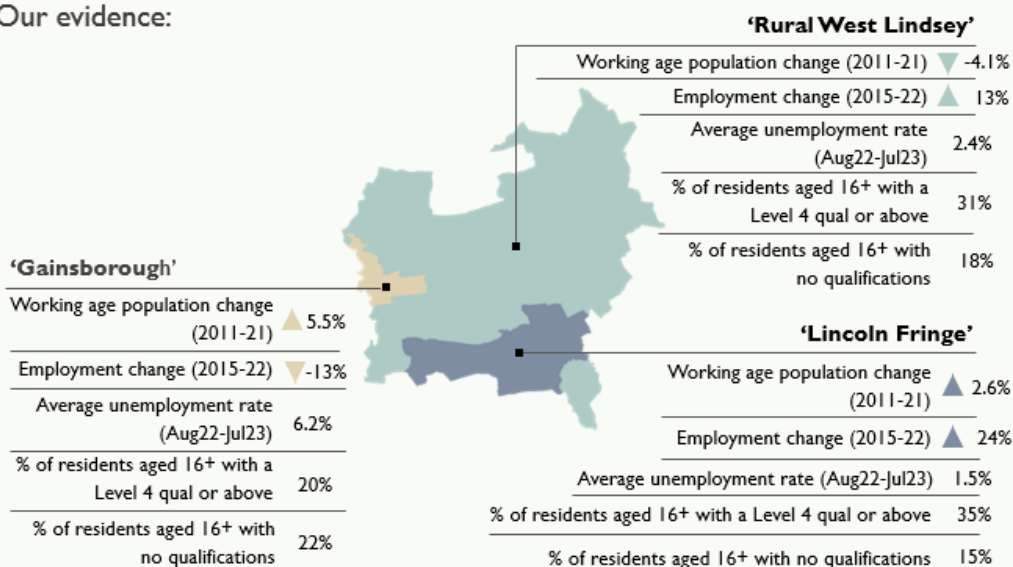
The study found that West Lindsey is a high performing council for employment and skills indicators, highlighting a growing, diverse rural economy with growing potential in locally important employment sectors.

Growth and career opportunities exist within the local economy. Agri-Food remains the largest employment sector. High demand also exists for roles in Health, Care and Wellbeing, Manufacturing and Engineering, and the Visitor Economy. Replacement demand from people leaving the workforce, e.g. through retirement, is a major issue across each sector. The level of vocational education and skills initiatives in the district has reduced over time, which was highlighted as a shared concern amongst employers.

Three distinct employment and skills geographies within West Lindsey with different dynamics and needs

High overall performance particularly from the Lincoln Fringe risks the challenges faced by Gainsborough and Rural West Lindsey being 'under the radar'. Skills planning needs to reflect those differences at a local level.

Our evidence:



Housing:

West Lindsey is a non-stock holding authority. We are committed to housing growth, which is one of the key priorities of our administration. As part of Central Lincolnshire, we continue to plan positively for growth, exceeding expectations for housing allocations. Through our Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, we continue to maintain a healthy housing land supply. There are market challenges due to land values and development viability, and also due to demand impacting on the pace of sales. This has resulted in some national housebuilders not consistently developing in the area. We continue to engage with housebuilders to overcome this challenge and work closely with our SMEs to deliver housing growth within the District .

We have a good track record in the delivery of fully affordable housing schemes across the district, including schemes to meet specific needs such as extra care and over 55 development and work collaboratively with Registered Providers to ensure what is delivered meets identified housing needs. The delivery of Section 106 affordable housing remains a challenge which mirrors challenges across the country, with very few Registered Providers actively seeking S106 opportunities in West Lindsey. First Homes has performed well, providing a first step into home ownership, particularly in the Lincoln Fringe villages. Whilst this does meet a specific need for low-cost home ownership, it does not meet the needs of those on the Housing Register and we are cognisant of ensuring a central government priority for home ownership doesn't hinder our ability to meet the needs of people who are not in a position to own their own home.

Planning and Development :

The planning policy function for the Council is provided as part of a shared service with City of Lincoln and North Kesteven District Council under the banner of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan. The partnership has been established since 2009 and has successfully delivered two Local Plans in that time, most recently adopting a new Local Plan in April 2023. The Plan is positive about sustainable growth, supporting jobs and improved infrastructure. There are more than 34,000 homes being planned to meet housing need (significantly above the nationally derived local housing need figure of 24,244 dwellings).

Our Local Plan also includes ambitious policies that address energy efficiency and adaptation to climate change. The suite of policies are not only some of the farthest-reaching, climate change-related in England, they are also proven to be deliverable.

It is our belief that the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan is an excellent example of what plans can achieve through a positive partnership with ambition and shared vision from members and officers. Having an up-to-date Local Plan, with a healthy 5-year land supply (currently 7.8years) reduces the impact of speculative development on our communities and supports positive decision making by our members and our Development Management Team. A recent study conducted by the industry in August 2024 (<https://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1881874/seven-secrets-councils-best-decision-making-records>) ranked West Lindsey in the top 40 Local Planning Authorities for performance in the country. This included analysis of government data on speed and quality of decision-making, including the number of decisions overturned at appeal. We are always striving to improve the service, particularly for our customers and we have recently implemented a new Development Management system designed to deliver efficiencies in the whole planning process and improve the customer experience.

THEME ONE: LOCAL PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES

The Strategic Framework:

To address the issues and challenges within the district, and to enable us to take advantage of key opportunities, the Council has in place a [Vision for West Lindsey](#) which is our Corporate Plan covering the period 2023-2027.

Adopted in June 2023 following a light-touch refresh of the previous version, the Corporate Plan is our key strategic document that drives everything we do under the three key themes of 'Our People', 'Our Place' and 'Our Council'. Our overarching strategic vision is that:

“West Lindsey is a great place to be where people, business and communities can thrive and reach their potential.”

Our vision is bold in its recognition of the many advantages to living in, working in, or visiting West Lindsey; whilst also recognising the Council has a central enabling and supporting role to play in helping the district to reach its full potential.



Importantly, our Vision is centred around the delivery of a clear set of outcomes, which can be mapped to each strategic aim and objective. Monitoring the delivery of these outcomes is vital to our understanding of how well we are delivering our strategic priorities. We do this through our Executive Business Plan, our Progress and Delivery framework, project and programme management, and our approach to continuous learning and improvement. We have made strides in recent years to mature our approach across all these areas, but we recognise there is more to do, as explained under the following headings.

Strategic Business Planning and the Executive Business Plan:

To ensure strategic alignment across the organisation, Corporate Plan delivery is central to our strategic business planning framework, an established and embedded practice across the Council. Our approach to strategic planning has been matured further via the introduction of a Corporate Policy and Strategy team in 2021, which, as well as oversight of the Corporate Plan and strategic business planning, also has responsibility for the [Central Lincolnshire Local Plan](#) and the [Environment and Sustainability Strategy](#). Establishing this core corporate function has ensured that staff across the organisation are working to deliver a shared vision with clear objectives, as well as supporting members and Management Team with strategic decision-making.

One of the key areas that we are keen to progress is communicating delivery against our Corporate Plan's aims and objectives. Our main vehicle for this currently is our annual Executive Business Plan; a rolling three-year delivery programme which sets the context for the [Medium-Term Financial Plan \(MTFP\)](#). The Executive Business Plan provides members, officers and other key stakeholders with details of what we expect to deliver, which informs decisions on spending levels within the MTFP. Whilst the primary drivers for the Executive Business Plan are growth, efficiencies and financial sustainability, great effort has been made in recent years to ensure that every team can see their work represented in strategic delivery, after this was identified as an area of weakness in our 'Golden Thread' in a 2020 audit of the Corporate Plan. Whether it be collecting refuse, keeping our streets clean, supporting our vulnerable residents, providing a regulatory service, delivering large-scale projects, or keeping the corporate wheels of the organisation turning, we want every member of staff to see and value their role in contributing to the delivery of our Vision for West Lindsey. To that end, the Executive Business Plan, like the Corporate Plan, has been designed to be inclusive of all service areas, recognising that everyone has a vital role to play in delivering our shared vision. Our efforts in this regard resulted in an improved finding of high assurance in a follow-up audit of the Corporate Plan in 2022.

There is a need to take this further and fully develop and embed a clear approach to Corporate Plan monitoring. The Executive Business Plan is a high-level summary and can only provide strategic assurance. For a more holistic understanding of strategic delivery across the Council it is necessary to triangulate the Executive Business Plan with financial and performance reporting, programme and project delivery, and monitoring of risk.

We recognise the need to ensure that members, especially those who are new to the Council, fully understand the Executive Business Plan and its role in shaping the MTFP and strategic delivery in the context of performance, programme delivery and risk. Plans are being developed to introduce a rolling cycle of Portfolio Reviews from May 2025. This will see Directors present the work of their portfolio, based on business plans, to Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Engagement with members and Team Managers will begin in the New Year, ensuring that the final recommendations from our latest Peer Challenge are incorporated into this process.

The Progress and Delivery Framework:

In managing performance, the Council relies on a clearly defined and well-embedded Progress and Delivery (P&D) framework. In recent years, we have invested in a performance management software solution, part of the OneCouncil ERP system. The aim of this system was to modernise and automate our performance reporting function; freeing up capacity within the Change Team to support the organisation with continuous learning and improvement. Progress in rolling out this system to its full functionality has been slower than anticipated and as such, the system has not released the levels of capacity at the rate expected. In spite of this, the Change Team have made much progress in continuing to mature our performance management framework.

We report progress against our P&D measures to members and Management Team on a rolling quarterly basis, with formal scrutiny applied twice a year by both main Policy Committees, and our Overview and Scrutiny Committee. These reports are by exception, focusing on those measures that are either above or below target, based on a 'RAG' rating. To aid understanding of whole-year performance, we also produce an annual performance report, summarising annual performance for each of our P&D measures.

More recently, P&D reports have included Performance Improvement Plans, applied to those performance measures falling below target for two consecutive periods or more. These explain the actions being taken to bring performance back on target. The introduction of these Improvement Plans has been welcomed by members, who have praised officers for the additional level of assurance they bring to our P&D reports. We recognise that there is still progress to be made. A small number of our P&D measures have performed consistently below target for a considerable period of time. Members are keen to ensure that our Improvement Plans are SMART, with a clear set of targeted, specific and time-bound actions. There is also a desire to slim down our P&D reports, making greater use of visual performance reporting and reducing the amount of written commentary.

Work is underway to ensure our P&D measures are mapped to our Corporate Plan objectives so that members can regularly track Corporate Plan delivery at the operational level. This is the first step in transitioning to a set of P&D measures that are outcome focused and strategically aligned to the Corporate Plan. To achieve buy-in, and to ensure our performance measures are SMART with stretching targets, an annual review of our measures and targets is undertaken with our Team Managers, facilitated by the Change Team and overseen by a member Task and Finish Group. The final set of measures and targets is approved in January each year by our Corporate Policy & Resources committee. The ongoing focus is to ensure we have in place a set of performance measures that allows us to consistently track our performance in priority areas and fully embed a cycle of continuous learning and improvement.

Personal Development and Appraisals:

To fully mature our approach to continuous learning and improvement, we recognise the need to embed our performance management framework at the individual level. An ongoing challenge until recently has been reduced capacity in our People Services function to support this aim, which means progress has been limited until recent months. The appointment of a People Services Manager in November 2023 has resulted in a fully staffed service and created capacity in the team to focus on strategic workforce development. One priority is to refresh our appraisal process for 2025, to create linkages between individual performance and delivery of strategic objectives. This refresh will also take on board the recommendations of a recent audit of our appraisal process.

We are proud to retain a corporate training budget at West Lindsey. Personal development is a key benefit to working for the Council, which helps us to attract, develop and retain high quality staff. Maintaining a training budget ensures staff have access to up-to-date learning, particularly important in regulatory service areas where colleagues are responsible for implementing legislation and compliance. More widely, our training budget has been used to support a range of personal development programmes, from enhancing specific technical skills to broader Senior Leadership Apprenticeships for those looking to progress into senior management and to support succession planning.

We are also committed to a wider Apprenticeship Programme; and we are proud to have supported a number of school leavers through Apprenticeships, many of which have resulted in offers of permanent employment at the Council. Since our last Peer Challenge in 2020, we have funded 25 apprenticeships through the Apprenticeship Levy, including some for existing Council employees. In recent times, three of our Apprentices have been finalists in the Lincolnshire Apprentice of the Year Awards, with one going on to win Apprentice Champion of the Year Award 2023 in the Government and Public Services category.



Complementary to our own staff training and development, West Lindsey actively participates in sector wide training and development programmes. For staff, this includes the District Councils Network Staff Development Programme, and New Local's Next Generation Programme. The latter Programme has led to the creation internally of a Staff Mentoring Scheme, championed by a member of staff who was keen to share the benefits of their own experience of the New Local Programme. This has recently been rolled out, with a view to expanding the scheme further.

To ensure learning is brought back into the organisation and retained longer-term is one of the key challenges for us as an employer. Promoting a culture of personal development is key to meeting this challenge and linking this to career progression within the Council's structure remains a priority. As such creating a balanced and progressive senior structure, with a robust Workforce Development Strategy will go some way to achieving this. For details of our Member Training and Development Programme, please refer to page 30.



Theme One Priorities:

- Develop and embed our approach to Corporate Plan monitoring
- Strengthen our Performance Improvement Plans
- Standardise our appraisal process and include clear linkages to our Values and Behaviours framework and the Corporate Plan
- Develop a rolling cycle of portfolio reviews for O&S Committee to highlight ongoing work and priorities within each portfolio

THEME TWO: ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Political Leadership:

The Council consists of 36 District Councillors representing 20 wards. The local elections in 2023 saw a change in political administration for the first time since 2008, with the Liberal Democrats forming an Administration Group with an independent member, giving them a majority of one.

Changes since the May 2023 elections have seen both the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives each lose a member of their group, with both of these members joining together in November 2024 to form a new, Consensus Independent group of two, which is due to be ratified at Full Council in January 2025.

The Council continues to be governed under no overall control, albeit still led by the Administration Group under the leadership of Councillor Trevor Young. The Conservative Party forms the Opposition Group supported by one independent member and led by Councillor Ian Fleetwood. The Lincolnshire Independents form the third political group on the Council, consisting of two members led by Councillor Paul Key. The newest and final group on the Council, the Consensus Independent Group, consists of two members, led by Councillor Trevor Bridgwood. The most recent changes mean that all our elected members are now part of a group. The chairmanship of committees, as agreed at Full Council, means that the Administration Group have the deciding vote on all politically balanced committees.

The political structure of the council, since the local elections in 2019, is set out below:

	Political Party	May 2019	Nov 2019	May 2023	Dec 2024
	Liberal Democrat	12	12	18	17
	Conservative	19	18	14	13
	Independents	1	2	2	2
	Lincolnshire Independents	2	2	2	2
	Consensus Independents	-	-	-	2
	Gainsborough Independents	2	2	-	-

The Council operates a fourth option model, based on a committee structure. Chairmanship of each committee is appointed by Full Council. All committees are chaired by the Administration Group, with the exception of Joint Staff Consultative Committee, which is chaired by a member of the Opposition Group. Councillor Trevor Young is Leader of the Council, supported by Councillor Lesley Rollings as Deputy Leader. Councillor Stephen Bunney is currently serving his second consecutive year as Chairman of the Council, supported by Councillor Matt Boles as Vice-Chairman.

The Council operates two main policy committees, Corporate Policy & Resources Committee, which is chaired by the Leader of the Council, and Prosperous Communities Committee, which is chaired by the Deputy Leader.

Although not mandatory within a committee structure, the Council operates an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which is predominantly focused on scrutinising the decisions of the Policy committees in relation to performance management and outside bodies. Following the recommendations of our last Corporate Peer Challenge in 2020, a number of changes were made to how Overview and Scrutiny operates, which were felt to have improved the overall effectiveness of the Council's scrutiny function. A recent external health check of our Constitution recommended that we further review our Overview and Scrutiny Committee and give consideration to its function, remit and workplan moving forward.

Committee	Chair	Vice-Chair	Chief Officer
Corporate Policy & Resources	Cllr Trevor Young (Leader of the Council)	Cllr Lesley Rollings (Deputy Leader of the Council) Cllr Paul Swift	Chief Executive (HoPS) Director, Corporate Services (S151)
Prosperous Communities	Cllr Lesley Rollings (Deputy Leader of the Council)	Cllr Trevor Young (Leader of the Council) Cllr Emma Bailey	Director, Planning, Regeneration & Communities Director, Change Management, ICT & Regulatory Services
Planning	Cllr Matthew Boles (Vice-Chairman, Council)	Cllr Jim Snee	Director, Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Governance & Audit	Cllr Stephen Bunney (Chairman, Council)	Cllr Baptiste Velan Cllr David Dobbie	Director, Corporate Services (S151) Assistant Director, People & Democratic Services (MO)
Overview & Scrutiny	Cllr Paul Howitt-Cowan	Cllr Jacob Flear Cllr Moira Westley	Director, Change Management, ICT & Regulatory Services
Joint Staff Consultative Committee	Cllr Jackie Brockway	James Deacon (Officer)	Assistant Director, People & Democratic services (MO)
Chief Officer Employment Committee	Cllr Moira Westley	Cllr Mandy Snee	Chief Executive (HoPS)
Licensing	Cllr Jim Snee	Cllr Mandy Snee	Director, Change Management, ICT & Housing and Environmental Enforcement Manager.
Regulatory	Cllr Jim Snee	Cllr Mandy Snee	Director, Change Management, ICT & Housing and Environmental Enforcement Manager.
Standards	Cllr Moira Westley	No vice-chair appointed to this committee.	Assistant Director, People & Democratic Services (MO)

Alongside formal committees, the Council also operates a number of formal working groups. Some of these are long-term in nature, designed to support the strategic aims of the Council, such as the Environment and Sustainability Working Group, or the Leisure, Culture, Economy and Tourism Group (LCET). Others, such as the Progress and Delivery Working Group, or the Economic Growth Strategy Development Group, are time-limited, task and finish groups created to deliver specific pieces of work. Many of our current working groups are new and the number of them has increased significantly since the 2023 elections as officers seek to support members in delivering their priorities.

There is a need to review the number, membership, frequency, and Terms of Reference of our Working Groups to ensure the Council's workplan is manageable, that the groups are operating in line with our governance framework, and that they are focused on delivery. One example of this is the Markets Working Group, established in 2023 under the parentage of Prosperous Communities Committee to oversee delivery of the Markets Action Plan following ongoing member concerns about the performance of our town centre markets. The departure of the Director of Operational and Commercial Services, whose portfolio included markets, means that we do not currently have officer capacity to deliver this Working Group, despite an improved market offering remaining a key member priority. The further development of the market is now integral to the ongoing Levelling Up Programme to create a thriving town centre for Gainsborough. A decision is needed on the priority for Working Groups in line with our strategic objectives so that capacity can be concentrated in these areas and so that members have a balanced and manageable workload.

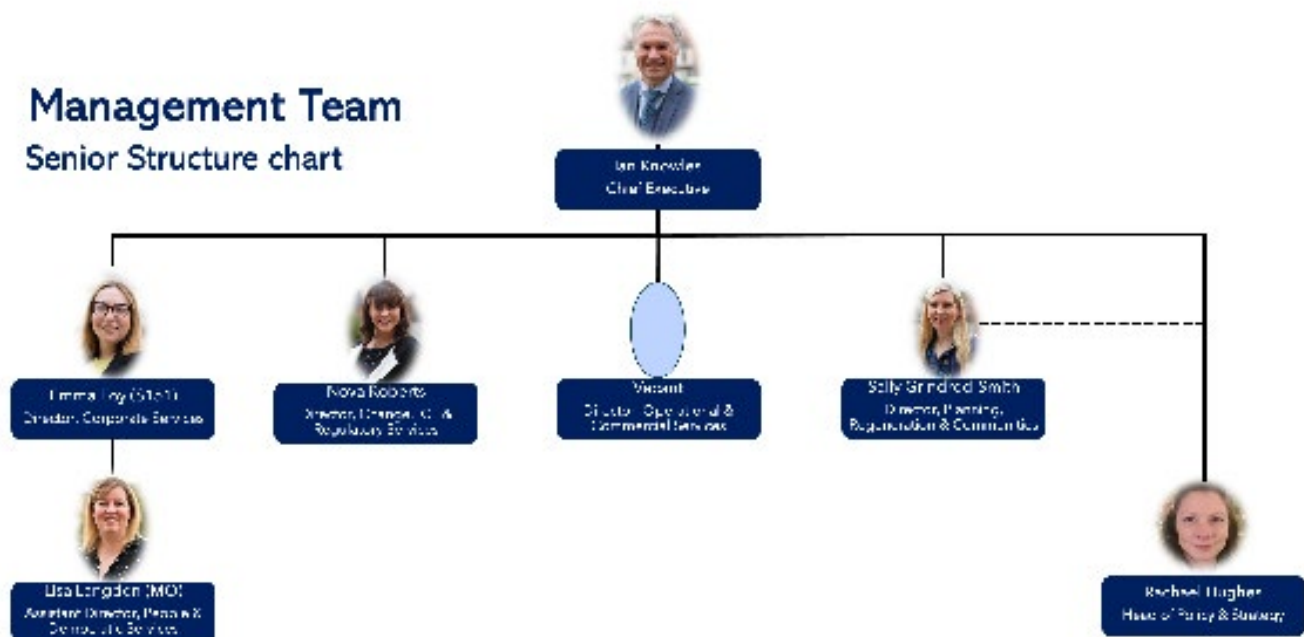
Officer Leadership:

In December 2019, the Council moved from an Executive Director model, with no Chief Executive, to a Chief Executive model. This remains in place today and has provided clarity of direction and purpose over the past five years in respect of strategic leadership. This was particularly important as we navigated through the challenges of the pandemic. Staff surveys were conducted regularly during this period and consistently found that staff felt supported and valued by the Management Team, and that top-down communication was highly effective. Externally, a Chief Executive model has strengthened our regional position and provided clear leadership in shaping and influencing the Greater Lincolnshire devolution deal.

Currently, the Management Team structure is comprised of the Chief Executive, four Directors and one Assistant Director. Management Team holds formally governed meetings once every two weeks to consider strategic issues, governance matters, performance, and finance reports. The Head of Policy and Strategy, and the Corporate Policy and Strategy Officer both attend Management Team in an advisory capacity, providing strategic advice and support, and acting as a strategic link between Management Team, Wider Management Team, elected members, and the wider organisation.

The position of Assistant Director of Homes and Communities has been vacant since 2022, and was deleted from the Establishment List in May 2023. The responsibilities held by this post have since been shared amongst Team Managers within the Planning, Regeneration & Communities portfolio. The Director of Operational and Commercial Services post has been vacant since November 2024. The Director of Corporate Services (and S151 Officer) will also be leaving the authority in February 2025 to take up a new role elsewhere, with interim arrangements to be made in respect of the statutory S151 element of this role. Interim senior management arrangements have been put in place with the senior structure currently set up as follows:

Management Team Senior Structure chart



There has been a high turnover on Management Team in recent years, with seven members of senior management leaving the authority since our last Peer Challenge in 2020 through a mixture of retirement, taking new roles elsewhere, or career progression. Despite this, officer leadership has remained focused on delivery and effectively navigating the authority through constant pressures and change. Management Team are accessible and have an 'open door policy', encouraging colleagues from across the organisation to engage with them on all aspects of working at West Lindsey such that staff generally feel valued and that their opinions are listened to, which has been consistently reflected in the results of staff surveys over the past few years.

The recent departure of the Director for Operational and Commercial Services, a long-serving, experienced and popular colleague, highly valued by staff and members has had a significant impact on the morale and dynamic of Management Team and Wider Management Team. The leadership, perspective and experience that he brought to the team is much missed. Management Team and Team Managers have rallied round to ensure the continued management and service delivery for the teams within this portfolio which includes many of our customer facing, operational and commercial services, and our emergency planning and business continuity function. However, with capacity already stretched, this can only be a temporary arrangement, and it is an organisational priority to address the senior structure to promote stability and to add capacity.

These most recent, and impending, departures at Management Team present an opportunity to reflect on what the senior structure should look like going forward, taking into account the findings of this latest Peer Challenge. There is a need to engage with Chief Officer Employment Committee (COEC) to create a permanent senior structure with clear lines of responsibility and accountability. A structure that is aligned to delivering our Corporate Plan, outwardly focused on leadership of place, and dedicated to delivery of high performing, value for money, modern services with the right capacity in the right places to deliver our shared vision. The Chief Executive has initiated discussions with the Leader and Deputy Leader and will look to establish a meeting of COEC for discussion in due course.

Member and Officer Arrangements:

The tables below sets out our governance arrangements for formal member meetings, key internal officer groups, and internal delivery arrangements for both officers and members.

FORMAL MEMBER ARRANGEMENTS	
Full Council	Group Meetings
Policy Committees	Regulatory Committees

INTERNAL DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS - MEMBERS	
Meeting	Attendees
Committee Chair's Briefings	Chair and Vice-Chair, Lead Officer, and report authors
Leader's Panel	Leader, Deputy Leader, Chairman of Council, Vice-Chair of Council, Administration Group Chief Whip, Chairs and Vice-Chairs of key committees, Management Team, Head of Policy and Strategy, Corporate Policy and Strategy Officer.
Member Working Groups	Various
Ad-hoc Member Briefings	All members, Management Team, other key officers as appropriate

INTERNAL DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS - OFFICERS	
Meeting	Attendees
Management Team (Fortnightly)	Chief Executive, Directors, Assistant Directors, Head of Policy and Strategy*, Corporate Policy and Strategy Officer (Corporate Strategy & Business Planning)* * Advisory capacity only
Management Team 'Big Conversation' (Monthly)	As above
Wider Management Team (Quarterly)	Management Team, Team Managers, Corporate Policy and Strategy Officer (Corporate Strategy & Business Planning), Corporate Policy and Strategy Officer (Environment and Sustainability)
Portfolio Board (bi-monthly)	Director of Change Management, ICT & Regulatory Services (Chair), senior finance representative, Programme Sponsors, members of the Change Team, and other key officers as required
Together 24 Programme Board	Our Programme Boards meet monthly and include Project Sponsor, Project Manager, finance representative, comms representative, subject matter experts
ICT Programme Board	
Commercial Programme Board	
Housing & Wellbeing Programme board	
LUF Programme Board	
UKSPF Programme Board	
Land, Property & Growth Board	

Governance related to programmes and projects has grown significantly in recent years to reflect the high number of projects that the organisation has initiated simultaneously. Whilst necessary to ensure good governance and consistent project management, this has created a heavy administrative burden, stretching the capacity of those responsible for project and programme delivery. This is compounded by the continued scale and pace of delivery, and the high expectations we place upon ourselves as an ambitious organisation.

Whilst our high level of ambition is a positive aspect of the culture at West Lindsey, our capacity and resources are finite. As a small organisation, project sponsors and project managers are usually comprised of members of Management Team and the Wider Management Team. For Management Team, this limits capacity for strategic and place leadership at an important time for the organisation in respect of devolution and other place-based opportunities. For Wider Management Team, acting as both Project Manager and Team Manager adds an extra burden on delivery of services.

That we continue to deliver is testament to the resilience and ethos of our organisation, to our organisational leadership; and to the success of the Change Team. Ask any officer or member within West Lindsey and you will find a strong desire to deliver, grounded in a commitment to public service. There is a high-level of corporate buy-in to our project management framework, but there is a growing recognition of the need for change to ensure workloads are sustainable and focused on delivery.

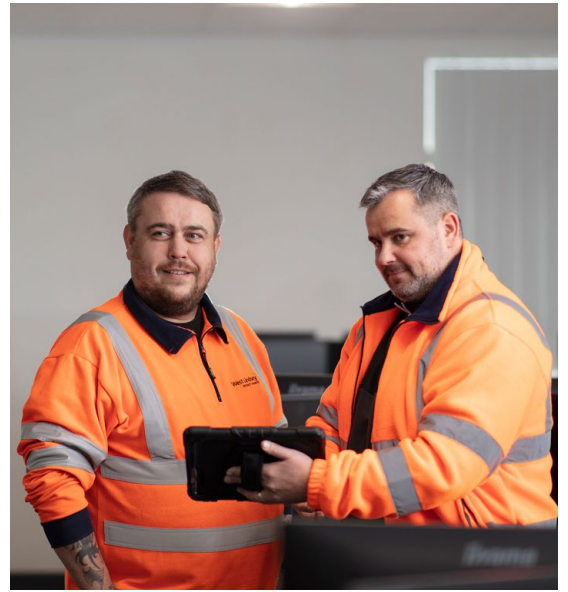
With our Together 24 transformation programme due to end in December 2024, and with new emerging priorities for the Council in respect of financial sustainability, and our role as place leaders, now is an appropriate time to recalibrate our approach to project and programme management. There is a need to explore how we ensure the role and remit of our Programme Boards aligns to our place-based aspirations; our newly agreed Savings Board which is in the process of being established; and our Digital ICT Vision and continued modernisation of services. The Portfolio Board should continue to provide strategic oversight, but there is a need to ensure this is focused on delivering our Executive Business Plan so that our key projects and programmes are closely aligned to delivering strategic priorities.

There is also a need to ensure our members have appropriate strategic oversight of programme delivery. Whilst the strategic priorities of our key programmes is led by members through the Executive Business Plan, and through committee decisions, currently members are not represented on our Programme Boards and such a requirement is not referenced in our Constitution. Members receive annual progress updates for programmes of work, such as UKSPF, and make key decisions on spend and strategic direction at committee, such as decisions related to our LUF Programme, approval of new system purchases, and any expenditure not already in delegated budgets. However, in reviewing our Programme Boards, it is important to consider options for a member presence on these Boards and how this would allow more regular oversight, enhancing strategic understanding across all aspects of delivery.

In summary, exploring options to streamline our Programme Boards, and the wraparound governance arrangements could ensure that members have greater assurance and oversight of Programme delivery, that the Change Team can focus on project delivery and change management; and that senior and managerial capacity is released to focus on strategic and operational delivery.

Organisational Leadership Priorities:

- Review the senior management structure
- Continue to develop our Overview and Scrutiny function
- Ensure the Council's workplan is manageable and review the number, frequency and effectiveness of member working groups
- Simplify our Project and Programme governance arrangements so that capacity is focused on delivery
- Ensure greater alignment between Programme Boards and the strategic priorities of the Council



PLACE LEADERSHIP

Over the last five years our focus has been on delivery of the Council's largest ever capital programme, totalling almost £20 million, funded through a combination of the Levelling Up fund, National Lottery Townscape Heritage grant, private investment and the Council's own investment. Midway through this programme, the adoption by our members of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Investment Plan added a further £2.7m to our investment programme.

By the summer of 2025 the Levelling Up programme of work will have delivered:

- Four screen, state of the art 'Savoy Cinema' and car parking on a redeveloped brownfield town centre site
- New pedestrian connection to the historic heart of the town
- New retail and hospitality space
- Over 2,000m² of improved public realm
- 4,000m² of new and improved green space
- Upgraded bus station and town centre wide CCTV improvements
- 31 new residential units in vacant spaces above shops
- Refurbishment of 40 listed buildings including historic shop fronts

This programme of work has been delivered in house, with external expertise as required, touching almost every team in the organisation and involving constant engagement with members at every stage of the Programme's development. We have seen this as a huge opportunity to develop our skills, and the reporting of two audits with the highest level of assurance for the LUF Programme is testament to the Team West Lindsey ethos required for a programme of this scale.

During this period of intense programme delivery, we have used our place leadership role to ensure that our communities and businesses are engaged in regeneration activity. Our communication strategy has been key, supplemented by our teams regularly engaging with businesses through business breakfasts and our e-brief, with traders on our twice weekly markets and with our communities through regular 'walkabouts' in partnership with other community leaders. Capturing the development of the cinema on a time-lapse has been a particular 'talking point'.

As we work through our growth programme, we continue to integrate and evolve our Consultation and Engagement Strategy. The next phase of this evolution is the development of a Communities Strategy, detail of which is included under theme five (Capacity for Improvement).

Whilst capacity has necessarily been focused on delivery, going hand in hand with our capital regeneration works, we have focused on developing our network of relationships and partnerships across our key growth sectors within the public and private sector. This includes the University of Lincoln, specifically the Lincoln Institute of Agri-tech based at the Riseholme Campus in our district. Our key partnerships also include the Greater Lincolnshire Defence and Security Network, comprised of partners in the RAF and private sector and the Council, and the STEP Strategic Collaboration Group which is leading and shaping the programme with the UK Atomic Energy Authority to deliver the STEP Fusion programme at West Burton.

In developing these key networks, we have also ensured we have the best possible understanding of the economic opportunities, any barriers, and the action required to move forwards.

Work is underway across all three sectors, including an Economic Impact Assessment of the Agricultural Growth Zone (a concept developed by the LEP, University of Lincoln, WLDC and Lincolnshire County Council). This can be recognised within a masterplan and investment proposition for Scampton with a focus on defence, space, education and heritage. We have procured a Development Partner to lead this work.

We are heavily involved in the STEP Fusion work programme, including jointly commissioning and funding the Economic Impact Assessment, being a key partner in the Trent Clean Energy Supercluster Vision and leading work on the development of a 'Skills Collaborative'. We were proud to host the launch of the STEP programme at our very own Trinity Arts Centre in Gainsborough in July of this year ([Gainsborough STEPs forward to fusion energy - GOV.UK](#))

Building on the sector work outlined above, which will drive our growth strategy and future Local Plan development, we recognise that a key component of securing inclusive growth, particularly in Gainsborough, is to develop our response to the STEP Economic Impact Assessment and Trent Valley Clean Energy Super Cluster vision.

The STEP Fusion programme is an incredibly unique opportunity on an unprecedented scale. This is a priority for our administration who have been clear that we should seek to maximise the opportunities for skills development and learning as a direct result of the STEP programme.

STEP Fusion also offers many wider opportunities for Gainsborough and West Lindsey in terms of supply chain, employment opportunities, residential growth, investment in infrastructure, and town centre regeneration. During 2025 it will be necessary for the Council to develop a masterplan for Gainsborough and the wider area to respond to the opportunities of the STEP programme, guided by the priorities of the Council and in collaboration with key stakeholders to ensure that the full growth potential is harnessed, for the benefit of the district and that it is well planned, sustainable and inclusive.

We recognise that as we move into a new era of regional working, the articulation of our priorities for growth, as well as ensuring that we have the tools for delivery will be at the heart of our success. In readiness, we continue to explore our ambitions for place-based delivery, working with members to understand their strategic priorities for growth; and bringing together officers from across the Council to drive these priorities forward through partnership working at a place-based level.

Preparations are underway to implement a new Greater Lincolnshire Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA), bringing together the county of Lincolnshire, and the unitary authorities of North and North-East Lincolnshire into a devolved agreement worth £720m over the next 30 years. As a non-constituent member of the CCA and MCCA, we are determined that the interests of Our People and Our Place are represented in all aspects of devolved decision-making, so that we are able to take advantage of the opportunities a new devolution deal brings. Having a clear and deliverable strategic vision for West Lindsey grounded in emerging economic growth opportunities and supported by robust data will allow the Council to lead this agenda, and is key to our district's success in this new era for Greater Lincolnshire.

To support our ambitions, we recognise the need for a wholesale review of our next Corporate Plan, with our role as place leaders at the heart of this. Our approach going forward will include a clear emphasis on partnership working and public and stakeholder engagement, which was not in the remit for the most recent Corporate Plan refresh. In line with member priorities, and in keeping with the principles set out in our recently adopted [Consultation and Community Engagement Strategy](#), we are committed to co-designing our next Corporate Plan with residents, communities, businesses, partner organisations and the voluntary sector so that it more closely reflects shared priorities and ambitions.

Recognising the changing local government landscape, we will continue to develop our place-based approach, strengthening and embedding it further to ensure the interests of Our People and Our Place are strongly represented in devolved decision-making. To ensure the success of this approach, we recognise the need to equip members and officers with the right knowledge and skills to act as 'Place Champions' for the district. How successful we are in this endeavour will depend on key factors including collective buy-in to a shared vision; political and managerial leadership; our approach to change management, project management and continuous improvement; our plans for workforce development; our financial resilience; and our approach to risk management. At this early stage in developing a long-term, place-based vision, we are keen for this Peer Challenge to explore: a) our effectiveness as a place leader; and b) our readiness and capacity as an organisation to deliver such a vision through the evolution of our Corporate Plan.

Communicating our Challenges and Ambitions:

Our Communications Team is highly valued by officers and members alike. The strategic importance of this function has grown significantly in the last two years both internally and externally as we have navigated our way through the complex legal proceedings relating to RAF Scampton, responded to repeated flooding emergencies, and found new and innovative ways to manage multiple layers of demand created by different social media channels. The need for clear, consistent and engaging comms has never been greater.

Externally, we have a presence on Facebook, X, Instagram and LinkedIn. News stories are pushed from our own website onto these channels to ensure one line of consistent messaging. Comments and private messages through social media channels are monitored daily to ensure our customers receive a timely response, and that casework is passed to the appropriate team or ward member. Members of the public are encouraged to sign up to our digital Council newsletter. In addition, we produce a monthly parish newsletter, and a regular business e-brief to ensure our Parish Councils and local businesses are kept informed of key developments and future plans.

We operate a communications strategy that is based on our strategic priorities, supported by a communications grid which is updated on a weekly basis and accessible by the Leader of the Council to support his role as a place leader and figurehead for the Council and district.

We have a strong and positive influence within our Local Resilience Forum (LRF), with our Communications Manager chairing the LRF's Warn and Inform Cell in 2022-2023. Through our experience with RAF Scampton, we have nurtured positive relationships with communications counterparts in the Home Office, and have established a national news presence, firmly placing West Lindsey on the map and creating avenues for West Lindsey news stories in respect of other priority areas for the Council, such as STEP Fusion, or areas of challenge, such as solar farm development.

Importantly, our Consultation function forms part of our Communications Team, further establishing our connections with local communities. We have recently adopted a new and ambitious [Consultation and Engagement Strategy](#), which was developed based on the member priorities expressed at our annual Strategic Away Day. This event included industry experts from New Local, the Institute for Local Government Studies (INLOGOV) and Local Trust and allowed members to explore their priorities in relation to consultation and community engagement. The resulting strategy is closely linked to our communications strategy and ensures a feedback loop between consultation exercises and how the results of these are communicated. A recent example of this is our garden waste consultation exercise, which received over 9,000 responses and informed our Garden Waste Service Business Plan going forward.

Our approach to communication was recently recognised nationally by the sector. In October 2024, we were invited, along with our counterparts from Braintree and Dorset Councils, to run a workshop at the LGComms Academy's 'Back to the Future' Conference, sharing our insight with other comms professionals on navigating the emotive and complex issues of immigration, community cohesion and the power of partnership in communication. Our strength in our communications function lies in collaborative working across teams, bringing together key officers to promote and support community cohesion and working effectively with members to support them in their role as place leaders.

Internally, we engage and communicate regularly with staff. What started out as a daily all-staff email to disseminate key messages during the emergency phase of the pandemic has evolved into a weekly all-staff message that is used to share important information, updates, events and key decisions. These have been positively received by staff who broadly welcome the regular connection with Management Team. Now that we have settled into an established, post-pandemic way of working, making use of MS Teams to connect and seeing more staff return to the office, there is a need to review whether or not we continue with a weekly message, depending on the wishes of staff who will be consulted on this decision.

In addition to the weekly message, we hold quarterly Corporate Updates to which all staff, including our depot staff, are invited to learn more about key developments and future plan based on the themes of 'Our Council', 'Our People' and 'Our Place'. We also make use of Minerva, our staff intranet where we have a rolling news carousel on a variety of topics, as well as a staff messaging channel. While the quantity of internal communication is high, there is a need to ensure how we engage with colleagues in and across the organisation is effective, and that messages from senior management are consistent, considered and timely.

More formal staff engagement takes place through our Joint Staff Consultative Committee (JSCC), comprised of members and staff representatives. This committee meets regularly to consider and monitor internal employee related policies and issues, before they proceed to Corporate Policy and Resources as the parent committee. Recently, JSCC considered the Agile Working Policy which sets out expectations for staff on ways of working. The committee will also soon consider the results of our most recent annual Staff Satisfaction Survey, exploring any issues of note and examples of good practice.



Place Leadership Priorities:

- Consider how we shape our next Corporate Plan through our role as place leaders
- Ensure members are appropriately supported in their decision-making role as place leaders, particularly in the context of the new Greater Lincolnshire MCCA
- Ensure we have the right skills, capacity, resources and governance frameworks in place to deliver a longer-term place-based vision.
- Ensure our programmes of work are aligned with the emerging regional agenda
- Ensure the authority maximises the benefits to communities, residents and businesses of the development of STEP Fusion and ex-RAF Scampton

THEME THREE: GOVERNANCE AND CULTURE

Each year, we internally review and update our [Constitution](#), paying particular attention to instances where our constitutional arrangements have been tested or flexed during the year, either by Council activities, or by responding to legislative or internal procedural or structural change. Similarly, the Council's Contract Procedure Rules are reviewed annually. Both reviews are overseen by the Monitoring Officer and referred to the Governance and Audit Committee prior to the Council AGM each May. For our most recent review, we commissioned an external health check of our Constitution, recognising the length of time that has passed since this was last carried out. The findings of this review have recently been submitted for consideration. Taking this work forward through to the Council AGM in May 2025 will involve two key stages. Firstly collating, for approval, the required changes that must be made to ensure our Constitution is fully compliant with legislation. Secondly, an all-member briefing is planned for early January 2025 to explore the discretionary elements of the Constitutional Review and the member appetite for taking each of these elements forward. A future decision will be needed on whether the external health check is sufficient, or whether a full and formal Constitution Review is required.

Our most recent [Annual Governance Statement \(AGS\)](#) was considered by the Governance and Audit Committee in September 2024 and approved for inclusion in our 2023-2024 Financial Statements. Our AGS is prepared by the Monitoring Officer (our Assistant Director for People and Democratic Services) and collates sources of information including the Combined Assurance Report, the Internal Audit Annual Report, internal Audit reports, the External Audit Annual Audit Letter, consultation results, any Ombudsman investigations, a review of whistleblowing activity, and an annual review of fraud. The AGS includes a review of the performance and effectiveness of our governance arrangements during the year, including a summary of any planned changes for the coming year following assessment by external bodies.

Corporate Risk Management:

Our approach to risk management is defined in our [Risk Management Strategy 2019-2023](#), which was developed around our previous Corporate Plan. Work has commenced to update this key strategy, with the most recent activity being a risk appetite survey of officers and members, which will inform the level of risk that is considered acceptable to the Council.

In the meantime, our Strategic Risk Register, which is owned by the Management Team, has been updated to reflect the aims and objectives of our new Corporate Plan. Recognising the increasing number of challenges, pressures and risks faced by the Council, in 2023 we increased the frequency of strategic risk reporting. Management Team considers the Strategic Risk Register on a monthly basis, receiving formal reports once a quarter. For members, the frequency of reporting to Governance and Audit Committee has increased from twice yearly, to quarterly. Increased monitoring and management of risk allows early identification of any emerging risks, ensuring timely action can be taken to mitigate the impact of these.

At the operational level, our Service Risk Register is updated annually with Team Managers. These are related to the delivery of day-to-day business activity and kept on our Minerva intranet site as well as being recorded in business plans. A separate register of Project and Programme risks is maintained by the Change Team and monitored at the appropriate Programme Board.

As a priority, there is a need to progress the development, adoption and implementation of a new Risk Management Strategy, including engagement with key officers and members, to ensure that our corporate approach to risk management is understood across the different strands of risk. It is also important that our approach to risk is understood in the context of the new Savings Board, commercial investment, performance and programme management, and strategic delivery. This new Risk Management Strategy will need to be supported with a comprehensive comms roll-out and training so that officers and members have the right skills and tools to embed our corporate approach and effectively manage risk.

Closely aligned to our approach to risk is our Commercial Investment Strategy. Reviewing our approach to commercial investment is a key priority of the administration and we have committed to updating our Strategy which is a key element of our Medium-Term Financial Plan. It has been essential to understand commercial investment in the context of external financial regulations. Work to develop a new Commercial Investment Strategy commenced in 2023, with feedback sought from members on risk appetite and priorities. A new Commercial Investment Strategy is not yet in place but remains a priority. There is a need for the new Strategy to be adopted so that our approaches to commercial investment, and risk management are understood by the Savings Board, and so that members of the Board have the right toolkit in place to support their work to identify savings, efficiencies and new income generating opportunities.

Member / Officer Relationships:

The local elections in 2023 heralded an era of change under a new Administration who have been keen to implement the manifesto on which they were elected. All of our elected members are ambitious for our place, with the administration having a particular focus on job creation, skills, growth, culture, sport and leisure, and reducing antisocial behaviour and fly tipping. The new Corporate Plan, adopted immediately post elections, presented an opportunity for the Administration Group to shape how we will deliver this based on their priorities over the next four years. Collectively, our members and officers are passionate advocates for West Lindsey with strong ambitions for future growth and high standards of service delivery.

The new administration took political control at a mid-point in the development and implementation of a number of key strategies and programmes, such as our [Cultural Strategy](#), our Levelling Up Programme, and our work to support improving conditions in the private housing market. This created some tensions in member / officer relationships as we sought to understand and respect each other's perspectives. Members of the Administration Group were keen to see that their priorities were reflected in driving these strategies and programmes forward. With significant complex programmes of work already in delivery for some three years or more, officers were keen to integrate the new administration's priorities into those programmes.

Great effort has been made to overcome these barriers and ensure that members and officers find common goals and a shared understanding anchored in delivery. We continue to work together, building our relationships to ensure issues are addressed and resolved such that opportunities can be explored together. A good example of this is our work relating to RAF Scampton which saw officers and members from across the Council work in partnership to challenge the Home Office and progress our redevelopment plans for the site.

Most recently, we have worked with members to establish a new Savings Board with a focus on the financial sustainability of the Council based on the steer of Corporate Policy and Resources Committee. It is an ongoing priority for members and officers to continue to build on these relationships as we move towards the half-way point in our administrative cycle.

To continue the development of member / officer relationships, we have increased the frequency of Leader's Panel, which now meets monthly. The Leader's Panel consists of the Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader, Chairman of Council, Vice-Chair of Council, and chairs and vice-chairs of key committees. It is an informal forum with no decision-making powers; the purpose of which is to bring together senior members and officers to discuss matters of policy, finance, the strategic direction of the Council, and any other matters relating to Council business. Ideas are often explored and tested at an early stage in this forum before proceeding through formal governance. Holding more frequent meetings of Leader's Panel over the past 19 months has helped to build regular dialogue between senior officers and members. With the Administration Group now into their second year, and with regular channels of communication happening naturally in other ways, now is an appropriate time to review the format and frequency going forward to ensure the Panel remains an effective forum focused on strategic matters.

For our 19 new members, just over half of the Council, significant time has been invested to support them in their new role and help them navigate the complex world of governance and decision-making that comes with being a councillor. We have in place a robust, four-year Member Training and Development Programme, overseen by a member working group to ensure it meets the needs of new and returning Councillors. This includes a mixture of internal and external training, support and development and is designed to be flexible and adaptable to the ongoing needs of members.

We produce a monthly Members Newsletter, which is used to share key information and updates outside formal committee meetings with all members. Plans are in place to refresh this in the New Year so that it remains an effective source of information for members.

Roll-out of the induction and training programme began immediately after the elections in line with previous practice. For the first time, we held a Members Fayre, which was a positive experience both for our members who were able to meet staff from across the Council, and for staff who were pleased to showcase their services and meet with Councillors. The substantive induction programme began the week after the elections with a full programme of induction and training sessions. Members expressed the challenges in managing a full programme so soon after the election period, and alongside their work and caring commitments. We have taken this feedback on board, noting the significant increase in Councillors with additional responsibilities outside the Council, and we have committed to work with the Member Training and Development Group to design an induction programme for 2027 onwards that better accounts for members broader schedules and responsibilities.

Theme Three Priorities:

- Continue to develop and strengthen our member / officer relations
- Consider a review of Leader's Panel to ensure it remains an effective forum
- Ensure our Member Training and Development offer remains purposeful, accessible and is well-attended
- Adopt and implement a new Commercial Investment Strategy
- Adopt and implement a new Risk Management Strategy
- Ensure members of the Savings Board understand the approaches set out in these key strategies, and those already adopted, to ensure that their work to identify savings, efficiencies and new income generating opportunities is aligned with the priorities of the Council.
- Consider the recommendations of the recent constitution health check



THEME FOUR: FINANCIAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

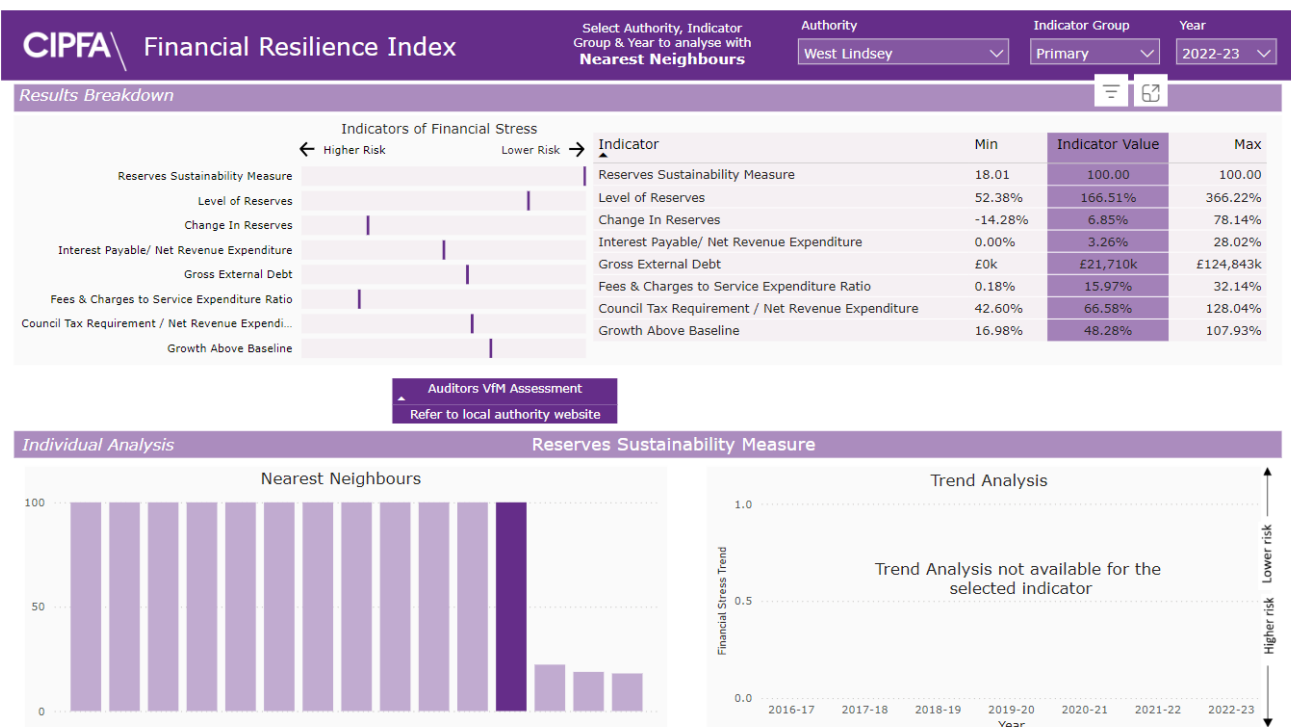
At the time of our last Position Statement in 2020, we considered ourselves to be in a good position in relation to our financial standing, resilience and future sustainability. Whilst Central Government funding has fallen since, we have continued to be able to set a balanced budget each year, without reductions to services or staff.

We use fixed term resources to support grant funded projects and programme delivery to minimise future funding pressures and through improved budget monitoring and reporting, we have reduced the risk of unnecessary spend.

Successful grant applications have enabled us to decarbonise assets and regenerate our towns. A new leisure facility has been provided in Market Rasen and a new depot delivered for our refuse and street cleansing service. Members continue to have small grants available to them which they can spend in their wards as they choose. We have maintained a training budget for staff to utilise, funded new IT for Members, and in the last 12 months, two significant new software systems have been funded.

The new Government's publication of the Local Government Finance Policy Statement in November 2024, which headlined with a 3.2% increase in local government core spending power, presents additional challenges for district councils such as West Lindsey, as the settlement is expected to be weighted towards social care and education. On receipt of the settlement on the 18th December 2024, we received a 0% increase in core spending power. We remain committed to working with staff and members to balance future budgets. Our budget volatility reserve for both revenue and business rate purposes in addition to our General Fund Reserve is sufficient to provide for a thoughtful and thorough implementation of efficiencies and income regeneration.

The Council has set the following resilience indicators, as presented in our MTFP:



Our Current Financial Position:

The Council has delivered reducing underspends in the period since the last peer challenge. Where possible these underspends are utilised to top up earmarked reserves which face continued demand.

RESERVE	ESTIMATED YEAR END 2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
General Fund Working Balance	2,525,079	2,231,879	2,111,179	2,111,179	2,111,179	2,111,179
Earmarked Reserves	11,437,511	10,311,282	10,787,382	10,858,582	10,748,282	11,261,082
Capital Receipts	5,617,736	5,728,264	5,854,967	5,883,687	5,913,061	5,923,061
TOTAL						

The General Fund balance sits at between 10-15% of annual net revenue expenditure as recommended. The Council also holds specific reserves for budget volatility, Business Rates volatility, and volatility of Commercial Asset valuations. Annual contingencies are also in place to protect against any changes in property asset rental income.

Our earmarked reserves are categorised as follows as at 3rd of December 2024:

EARMARKED RESERVE	ESTIMATED YEAR END 2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	MTFP 2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Service Investment / Renewals	3,070,390	2,683,625	3,464,525	3,560,225	3,449,925	3,962,725
Contingency / Risk	5,750,634	5,322,734	5,107,234	5,082,734	5,082,734	5,082,734
Investment for Priorities	2,616,487	2,304,923	2,215,623	2,215,623	2,215,623	2,215,623
TOTAL	11,437,511	10,311,282	10,787,382	10,858,582	10,748,282	11,261,082

The above table assumes that £4.75m will be invested from the Growth and Investment Reserve to purchase RAF Scampton. It is anticipated that a significant proportion of New Homes Bonus will be available to top up the Growth and Investment Reserve further for 2025-26 although this is subject to the outcome of the Local Government Financial Settlement.

The focus of the Council in recent years has not been to deliver savings, a detailed review of all budgets takes place each August and salaries are zero based with an adjustment for salary drift. This exercise has previously enabled the Council to deliver balanced budgets without any formal savings plans.

However, it is recognised that post 2026 this will not be possible and medium to long term financial sustainability is a key risk on our Strategic Risk Register. This point is explored in more detail in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy section below.

The Council has six Commercial properties funded from a combination of PWLB and internal borrowing, four of which are outside the district's boundaries. All properties have credible tenants and rent payments are up to date. The Council also holds properties for regeneration purposes which include commercial and regeneration properties that are let within the Council's boundaries.

The Council continues to explore opportunities for alternative delivery models and shared services and is currently reviewing the option for a shared building control service.

In-Year Budget Monitoring and Financial Management Processes:

We have invested significantly in building our Finance and Business Support function in recent years, implementing a financial system and wherever possible ensuring a fully staffed and appropriately structured team that includes dedicated Finance Business Partners for each budget holder. The recruitment and retention of technical financial accountants is a challenge for the Council as it is for many Councils but through the use of limited agency staffing, we have also met the publication deadlines for draft financial statements. Our auditors KPMG have completed their audit of the 2023-24 financial statements and value for money narrative, and we look forward to an unqualified opinion in January 2025.

In 2022 we implemented a new One Council Finance system to modernise our service and replace our legacy system. Both the restructure of the team, and the implementation of the new system have contributed to improved financial insight, decision-making and performance; one of the key outcomes in our Corporate Plan. Finance Business Partners hold monthly meetings with their budget holders and monthly revenue budget summaries are provided to the Chief Executive and S.151 Officer. Quarterly budget monitoring reports are provided to Management Team and Corporate Policy and Resources Committee which contained detailed reporting on Capital Programme and Treasury Management performance. The next stage is for our Finance team to fully implement interactive dashboards for all budget holders which will be delivered by March 2025. The Council implemented a no-PO no-Pay policy in October 2024 and despite this has maintained invoice payment performance of 99.73% within terms. The Council continues to derive value from the Finance system and has made further changes in the last 12 months, fully utilising the fixed assets functionality and planning to implement the cash receipting module.

The Council projects an underspend of £118k for 2024-25 after requested carry forwards.

Each corporate update and quarterly Wider Management Team meeting contain a dedicated update on both in year financial performance and the Medium-Term Financial position. Wider Management Teams are used to introduce new functionality within the system or new controls such as no PO no Pay,

With many new members on the Council, we are mindful of the need to provide comprehensive training and support to ensure members are supported in their understanding of complex financial reports and can carry out their decision-making role effectively. This is especially important in a committee structure where all members are responsible for agreeing the budget. In addition to the member induction programme, we provide monthly budget updates to the Leader's Panel so that senior members receive regular financial updates to support them in their role as committee chairs and vice-chairs. More recently, we have run a series of all member briefings dedicated to our budget position in readiness for the next MTFP. There is also a dedicated all-Member briefing on the budget consultation process and Members are encouraged to attend budget consultation events which are held in Gainsborough, Nettleham, Market Rasen and Caistor. We use the Members newsletter to provide draft papers and policies in advance of Committee seeing them and recently have used this to carry out an All-Member Risk questionnaire to assess risk appetite in advance of Members approving a new Commercial Strategy and Risk Management strategy.

2025-26 Budget and beyond (Medium Term Financial Plan):

In December 2023, as part of the Annual Review of reserves, we established a Budget Volatility Reserve to provide us with time to identify and deliver the cashable savings required to balance future budgets. As of December 2024, the Budget Volatility Reserve sits at £1.951 million.

Further anticipated cuts to funding bring additional challenges for us. Whilst we have not absorbed all of the New Homes Bonus into the Revenue Budget, and have used it to fund Growth and Investment projects, there are concerns regarding our ability to deliver these projects in future. The Reset of Business rates will cause an estimated £1m gap to our annual revenue budget. We do not receive revenue protection for the Internal Drainage Board Levies we are required to pay out and the reallocation of rural support grant may have a further adverse effect, depending on the financial settlement. Council Tax Collection targets remain challenging but increased residential development has assisted in providing a buffer which has protected our Collection Fund balance. As such any surpluses from the collection fund have been removed. Domestic food waste will be implemented in 2026 and there remains uncertainty about new burdens funding, therefore the pressures are fully recorded in our MTFP. We understand, and have accepted our responsibilities for medium term financial sustainability, having successfully accommodated Local Government funding cuts in 2010.

An updated Medium-Term Financial Plan was presented to Members in March 2024 and is detailed below:

	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £
MTFP FUNDING GAP B/FWD	326,000	1,584,900	1,567,900	1,552,100	1,572,700
Establishment	795,900	1,016,000	1,155,500	1,248,300	1,356,700
Pressures	101,100	129,100	161,400	203,900	195,900
Income Loss	76,700	78,700	80,700	40,200	32,400
Savings	(444,100)	(531,400)	(564,500)	(511,600)	(511,600)
Income Gain	(411,300)	(373,200)	(338,700)	(367,500)	(461,100)
Inflation	60,400	64,500	72,400	97,900	180,200
Contribution to Reserves	180,000	115,000	115,000	115,000	115,000
Increase MRP	46,000	71,600	71,600	71,600	68,300
Contribution to Revenue Contingency Budgets	254,200	251,700	260,800	267,100	273,600
In Year Surplus - transfer to budget stability reserve	157,400	(157,400)	0	0	0
Movement in Funding:					
Council Tax Surplus	(290,000)	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Yield	18,900	19,500	20,300	20,900	21,700
Other Government Grants	(441,100)	(103,700)	(103,700)	(103,700)	(103,700)
Business Rates	(430,100)	(1,446,100)	(1,400,000)	(1,375,500)	(1,434,000)
MTFP FUNDING GAP	0	719,200	1,098,700	1,258,700	1,306,100

At the September meeting of CP&R Committee, in considering a High-Level MTFP and Budget Consultation paper, members tasked officers with bringing back options for the creation of a member/officer working group for the purpose of identifying further income generating opportunities, efficiencies and savings in pursuit of a balanced budget. At the October meeting, CP&R Committee subsequently approved the establishment of a Savings Board comprised of six cross-party members, Management Team, and other officers to provide technical advice as required. The remit of the Board is to provide oversight of MTFP delivery, provide input into identification of cashable savings and income generation, and to prepare responses to government consultations on funding reform. More generally, the Board is an opportunity to develop members understanding of the budget and financial decision-making processes.

We are already working on some key themes of savings which are centred around:

Management Team structure
HR System
Single Land Based service
Street Cleansing

With the Board due to begin meeting in January, it is important that members are supported to embark on this programme of work with a full, clear and accurate understanding of the current financial position, and considering the content of the draft settlement. Members will also receive updates on the internal work that has already been undertaken to identify efficiencies, savings and income generating opportunities.

In our 2023/24 Value for Money Risk Assessment provided by KPMG to Governance and Audit Committee, it was noted that the Council did not have a formal process regarding identification and development of savings plans. To address future savings requirements, and whilst the Budget Volatility reserve would provide short-term protection, further work should be done to ensure longer-term sustainability. This Savings Board will help to address the improvement observation noted by our External Auditors.

Financial Decision-Making:

The governance requirements for financial decision-making are set out the constitution, with finance regulations and embedded within our Finance and HR systems. Our updated Financial Regulations will be drafted and presented to Management Team in February 2025 and are due to be presented to Full Council in May 2025 with the updated constitution.

In 2023-24 we received an assurance rating of satisfactory within our Internal Audit opinion with no specific areas of weakness noted. We are up to date with unqualified external audit opinions on our Statement of Accounts, with an unqualified opinion on the 2023-24 accounts due to be issued to Governance and Audit Committee in January 2025. We have always received unqualified value for money opinions and our Housing Benefits audit opinions are up to date.

Our Governance and Audit Committee includes independent members and meets regularly. In the last twelve months members of the committee have received training on risk management, Statement of Accounts and Treasury Management and Members cannot vote on the final approval of the Statement of Accounts if they have not received the most recent training. Internal Audit services are provided by RSM and in 2024/25 an independent fraud risk assessment was carried out providing a Fraud Risk improvement plan which is being implemented. Progress against this plan is monitored by the Governance and Audit Committee.

We have recently undertaken a consultation exercise with members and officers on risk appetite. The results of this will be used to inform our new Risk Management Strategy, which will be drafted and brought to Governance and Audit Committee for adoption. Funding will be drawn down from the training budget to provide further risk management training to Wider Management Team and Members.

Equality Impact Assessments are carried out for all significant financial decisions as needed and a nine-week budget consultation process takes place each year. In addition, consultation takes place on any potential decisions to the local Council Tax scheme.

Capital Programme and Investment Plans:

Since the previous peer challenge we have delivered a crematorium, a new leisure centre at Market Rasen, and a new refuse and street cleansing depot at Caenby Corner. In recent years our capital investment plans have been largely focussed on grant funded projects which have included £10.2 million of LUF expenditure, and £1.2 million of funding for Townscape Heritage Schemes which have improved 32 shop fronts and created a number of dwellings above existing shops. Through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund, we have supported our communities and parish councils in delivering £3.5 million in further capital improvements. Since 2023, we have been successful in capital grant applications consisting of £400K for Solar panels through the Swimming Pool Support Scheme, £1.3 million from the Local Authority Housing Scheme and £800k for Home Energy Improvement across the district. CP&R Committee agreed to acquire the remaining share in a retail and residential private sector joint venture providing continuity of landlord for three retail units and four residential units in Gainsborough Town Centre.

Financial support has also been provided to the decision making and procurement of a development partner for RAF Scampton. External consultants 31ten were engaged to ensure robust due diligence was carried out on prospective development partners and continues to take place.

The Capital Strategy, Treasury Management policy and MRP policy are presented annually to full Council for approval. We have not breached any prudential indicators in the period since the last peer challenge and annual Treasury Management training is provided to Members of Governance and Audit Committee in advance of them approving the Annual Treasury Management strategy and recommending this to Full Council. We have a prudent MRP policy, and all borrowing is fully provided for over asset life.

Theme Four Priorities:

- Ensure Members are supported in their understanding of the financial position
- Adopt a new Commercial Investment Strategy
- Ensure the role of the Savings Board is clear and well-defined, and that its aims and objectives are clearly communicated and understood by both staff and members

THEME FIVE: CAPACITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

Like all Councils, we are used to the need to adapt and learn, and we are always striving to improve how we deliver our services. We approach this in a number of ways as outlined below:

Corporate Capacity to Deliver:

As a small organisation in a rural district, attracting new staff with the skills, professional qualifications and experience necessary to deliver high quality services is a challenge. We currently have a vacancy factor of 8%. Our current workforce profile is summarised thus:

289 employees which equates to 268.06 FTEs. 26 of these are on fixed-term contracts. We also employ 13 casual workers.

268.06 FTEs

43.9% of staff define themselves as male and 56.1% define themselves as female.

43.9%



56.1%

At 3.5%, staff turnover is low. 189 employees are paid at the top of their band and the average length of service is 9 years

3.5%



At an average of 0.82 days per FTE, sickness absence is increasing which can be explained by a rise in long-term absence

0.82 days per

Each year, we carry out a staff survey, the findings of which are reported to Management Team and JSCC Committee, as well as being shared with Wider Management Team, and staff at our Corporate Updates. The findings over recent years have been positive. This broadly remains the case in 2024, with staff reporting a majority positive response across all categories. Staff reported particular satisfaction in relation to knowing what is expected of them at work, working arrangements, and levels of motivation to do well in their jobs. Staff also remain able to cope with the demands of the job at similar levels to last year. There have, however, been some notable changes, which are summarised below:

While staff are satisfied overall with their jobs, the level has fallen from 88% in 2023 to 64% in 2024. 12% remain dissatisfied with their job, the same as in 2023. The remaining 24% reported being neither satisfied or dissatisfied.

At 80%, levels of motivation remain high, but they have fallen 10% on the previous year.

In considering the statement “I feel valued and recognised for the work I do,” 58% of staff gave a positive response compared to 81% last year. 21% do not feel valued and recognised, while the remaining 21% neither agreed, nor disagreed with the statement.

63% of staff feel that the Council communicates well with them compared to 86% last year. 17% responded that the Council does not communicate well, broadly similar to last year, while 21% neither agreed or disagreed with the question.

In considering the question “my opinion at work seems to count,” 59% responded positively to this question compared to 89% last year. 15% disagreed or disagreed strongly with this statement compared to 11% in the previous year, whilst the remaining 25% neither agreed or disagreed.

N.B. For the 2024 survey, we reintroduced a “neither agree nor disagree” option for each question at the request of staff.

75% of staff would recommend West Lindsey as a good place to work.



What these results show is that, overall, staff have a positive view of working at West Lindsey, consistent with previous surveys, which is encouraging. However, the results also tell us that there has been a shift in how staff feel since the last survey was carried out in 2023. Some of this can be explained by changes in the methodology of the survey. At the request of staff, we reinstated “neither agree nor disagree” as a response option to each of the questions, after this option was omitted from our 2023 survey. The proportion of people responding ‘disagree’ or ‘disagree strongly’ remains low and broadly unchanged since last year, but many of the positive responses from 2023 have shifted to the more neutral response of “neither / nor.” There is a need to dive deeper into these results to understand the reasons behind this shift, paying particular attention to those areas where positive responses have slipped the most. This is particularly important as we embark on a senior management restructure and prepare ourselves for a new wave of change that devolution will bring to the organisation.

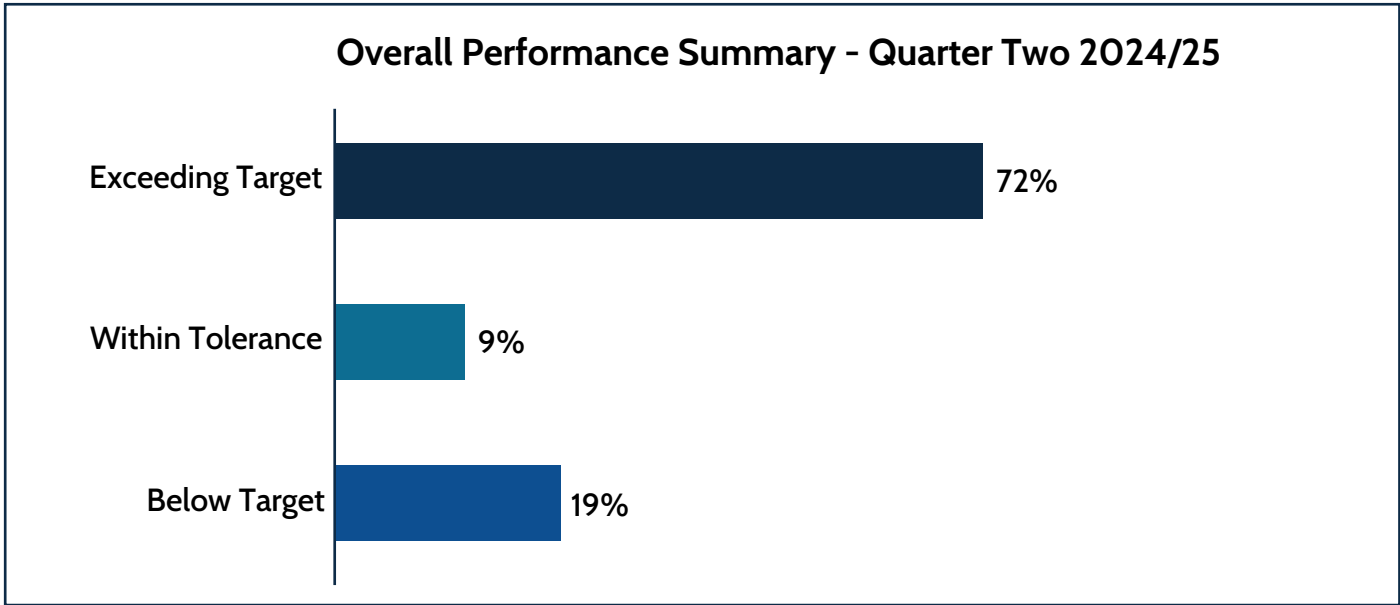
Organisational Development:

In November 2022, we appointed a People Services Manager to oversee HR, payroll, corporate Health and Safety, and organisational and workforce development. This brought much needed capacity to the team following a longstanding vacancy in this role, during which time the team’s senior officer picked up the team management responsibilities in addition to carrying out their existing role.

A fully-staffed People Services team has provided capacity to think about the more strategic aspects of organisational and workforce development. This is taking a phased approach. Firstly, we have recently introduced an Agile Working Policy, developed with staff and members to set out our expectations in respect of working arrangements. To understand our baseline position, People Services have also audited the workforce data we hold, updating this where necessary. Some of this data is now reported to Management Team on a quarterly basis so that senior management has a regular strategic oversight of the ‘health’ of the organisation. The next phase will be to produce a new Workforce Development Strategy which will identify the skills and capabilities needed to deliver our strategic priorities now and in the future. Our last Corporate Peer Challenge identified single points of failure within the Council, meaning that knowledge and skills for some roles often sat with one single person, which were then lost to the organisation if that person left or was absent. Whilst the number of these single points of failure have reduced, it does remain a concern given we have a low-turnover rate and an ageing workforce. The new Workforce Development Strategy must tackle this issue if we are to strengthen our capacity, skills and succession planning. The current government have announced a series of employment legislation changes as part of its ‘Plan to Make Work Pay.’ We will work to update our employment policies and procedures to reflect these changes and communicate them with staff and members as appropriate.

A Summary of Current Performance:

We currently report performance against 54 key performance indicators (KPIs) corporately to Management Team, both Policy Committees and our Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Our latest Progress and Delivery Report, published at the end of quarter two, shows that 72% of our key performance indicators are performing better than target. 19% are currently below target, while the remaining 9% are within agreed tolerance levels.




Our P&D reports include a basket of measures designed to monitor the overall corporate health of the organisation. Our latest position is as follows:

Our overall budget forecast outturn is -0.87%, which is better than target

-0.87%

99% of our invoices are paid on time


99% 

At 85%, our customer satisfaction rating is better than target

85%

We take on average 7 days to resolve complaints, better than target

7 days



The Council was determined to be at fault for 17% of overall complaints, better than target

17%

There have been 0 data breaches requiring action from the ICO

Our ICT system and server availability is 100%, better than target

91% of Freedom of Information requests were completed within 20 working days, which is below target

£370,750 of savings have been identified through Together 24, which is higher than target

£94,600 of savings have been delivered to date through Together 24, which is below target

£94,600

Our Approach to Transformation and Service Design:

Whilst our approach to performance management and programme management has been outlined in earlier sections, it is important to acknowledge more specifically our Together 24 Transformation Programme and its impact on the organisation. T24 replaced our previous Customer First Programme, and was launched in August 2020 with five key objectives:

1 All Council services have been reviewed redesigned with approved recommendations implemented by Dec-24

2 Customer requirements are identified and factored into service redesigns

3 Maintain and or improve levels of customer and officer satisfaction

4 Ensure that officers have the right levels of skills, behaviours and have the right tools to do their job

5 Efficiencies totalling a minimum of £300k are realised by December 2024



Together 24

The Programme's central vision is that "together, through our staff and technology, we will excel in meeting the needs of our customers through service delivery." Recognising the challenges of Customer First, people-led change has been at the core of Together 24's ethos from the start. We put in place a number of Change Support Officers, part of the Change, Performance and Programmes Team to ensure service re-designs were done with, not to, the teams involved. Change Support Officers released the subject matter experts to be part of programme implementation and thus retained the development knowledge within the organisation. In this regard, the Programme has been successful, with the teams who have been through the Programme broadly positive about their experience and the outcomes for service delivery with very little impact on business as usual.

The overarching objective of the Programme was for all Council services to have been re-designed by December 2024. This was an ambitious target that will not be met. A total of 15 service reviews have been completed through the Programme. No further reviews are planned whilst the Council's Project Management Office works to deliver the identified recommendations and savings. Looking ahead, it is important that a plan is in place to ensure our remaining services yet to go through a service review are supported with modernisation following the same people-led change approach that has been characteristic of Together 24.

Whilst Together 24 was not designed to be a savings programme, one of the five key objectives was to deliver cashable savings of £300k by December 2024. This objective became more of a priority mid-way through the Programme as the need for Together 24 to deliver savings and contribute to reducing the Council's budget gap became more of a priority. To date, £370,750 worth of savings have been identified, however, only £94,600k have materialised, meaning that the financial objectives will not be achieved by the end of the Programme. Additional savings separate to these figures have been identified that have been re-invested in the services. In recognising the need for financial sustainability, it is important the evolution of Together 24 places a stronger emphasis on savings and efficiencies, to align with the aims and objectives of our new Savings Board. As a result of our Transformation Programme, we are now looking at further savings that may be achieved through efficiencies within our land-based administrative support function.

Looking immediately ahead, the challenge for the Council is balancing the need for financial savings against the need to modernise, and to deliver our strategic objectives. It is important that key officers work together to evolve Together 24 into a new programme of work that can successfully achieve these objectives.

Our Digital ICT Vision:

Closely aligned to the Together 24 Programme is our [Digital ICT Vision](#), adopted in 2023. This sets the focus, framework and plan to deliver the required digital and ICT service improvements identified through Together 24 and through our annual business planning exercise. The Vision is aligned to our Corporate Plan and focuses on improving the customer experience through modernising our service delivery, underpinned by six guiding principles. Since 2020, we have implemented five new software systems, including a finance system, a CRM system, and most recently a Development Management System. The successful implementation of these systems has been achieved through our change management approach, and by staff working collaboratively across teams to ensure no loss of service to our customers.

As with our Together 24 Programme, the challenge for the Council is to modernise our service delivery in a financially sustainable way, ensuring efficient, value for money services in line with the principles of our new Savings Board.

Procurement:

Our Procurement function is delivered as part of a county wide framework known as Procurement Lincs. Internally, this is supported by our Contracts and Procurement Business Development Officer. To support our staff with implementing the new requirements of the Procurement Act 2023, we have recently rolled-out a training package, as well as briefing members on the key changes. This training is ongoing to ensure the new procurement rules are correctly adhered to. Our approach to procurement is currently under review as we recognise a need to improve the knowledge and understanding of all those involved in the procurement process.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:

Responsibility for our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) umbrella of work sits within our Communications and Corporate Governance Team. Positive steps have been made in this regard over the past 12 months, but we recognise the need to do more. In 2023, following a suggestion from a member of staff, we established an EDI staff forum which meets monthly and to which all staff are encouraged to join if they wish to. We regularly promote EDI news stories on our staff intranet, and staff are encouraged to include their pronouns on email signatures, although this has not yet been widely adopted. [Our Equalities Strategy](#) is due to be refreshed in 2024/25.

All staff are required to complete an annual EDI staff training module on our Learning Platform. To ensure EDI is considered in our decision-making, our covering reports include a requirement to demonstrate that an Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed for all new strategies, projects, and other key decisions. This is not always applied consistently across the organisation and there is a need to provide refresher training for Wider Management Team and other key officers.

Our Approach to tackling Climate Change:

In 2024, we refreshed our [Environment and Sustainability Strategy](#), which was first adopted in June 2021. This sets out our core commitment to West Lindsey becoming a carbon net zero Council and district by 2050. Strategic oversight of this work area sits within the Corporate Policy and Strategy team to ensure alignment with our Corporate Plan and the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan.

Internally, our focus is on “getting our house in order” by delivering a green thread of activity across all aspects of the Council’s operations to ensure we are playing our part. Officers are supported to identify new projects or different ways of working that will reduce our carbon footprint. Our committee reports include a Climate, Environment and Sustainability Impact Assessment (CESIA) so that members are supported in considering the impact key decisions will have on the environment. Our Corporate Plan embeds the concept of the ‘green thread’ by containing a number of climate related objectives across each of the three main themes. In 2024, members adopted a new Fleet Decarbonisation Strategy which sets out a framework for the decarbonisation of our fleet vehicles. We continue to apply for funding opportunities that will support our aims, such as the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund. One of our challenges is the often tight deadlines for submitting a funding application, which does not always align with our governance cycles. We have put mitigations in place to address this, with support from the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee. Member oversight of our Strategy and associated Action Plan sits with the Environment and Sustainability Member Working Group which meets monthly. We are conscious that carbon reducing projects are not progressing as quickly as we would like. We will seek to improve the speed of carbon reduction as we move forward.

Externally our focus is on supporting communities vulnerable to the effects of climate change and enabling our communities and businesses to take steps to reduce their own carbon footprints. Our Home Energy Efficiency Team has a highly visible presence across the District, supporting residents with home energy advice. Our Growth Team supports businesses to nurture a circular local economy. Our supporting communications campaign “Small Steps, Big Impact” is rolled out across all our social media channels to highlight the steps our residents can take to reduce carbon emissions.

To become net zero by 2050 is ambitious and can only be achieved by working together as a Council and as a district. We do not underestimate the scale of the challenge, particularly for a district vulnerable to the effects of extreme weather events on sustainable food production and flooding.

Community Capacity:

Our Communities Team is integral to the delivery of the 'Our People' aims and objectives of our Corporate Plan, supporting some of our most vulnerable communities and playing a key role in improving outcomes related to health and wellbeing, employment and skills, community cohesion, and rural issues. Following the recent adoption of our Consultation and Engagement Strategy, which included a focus on 'empowering community voices,' the Communities team are taking this principle and applying it to a new Communities Strategy, which will set out how we will deliver this aim over the short, medium and long-term. This Strategy will be developed with member engagement, based on their priorities, in 2025.

Theme Five Priorities:

- Identify a methodology for supporting modernisation of those services who did not go through a Together 24 service review.
- Identify and agree an approach to continuous learning and improvement in place of the Together 24 Programme
- Ensure the principles and priorities of our Digital ICT Vision, our approach to continuous learning and improvement, and our Savings Board are not competing with each other, and are all aligned towards delivering the shared vision of our Corporate Plan
- Update our Equalities Strategy, and ensure the principles are communicated to staff and members to promote our commitment to EDI.
- Continue to promote our climate change and sustainability objectives so that these become embedded across all areas of Council activity.
- Update and modernise our HR policies.
- Review and improve our procurement processes in light of the recent changes to Procurement legislation.
- Embed the principles of our Consultation and Engagement Strategy within all service areas

SUMMARY

In sharing our Position Statement, we set out to demonstrate what we think we do well, and where we think we could improve. Reflecting on our progress since our last Corporate Peer Challenge in 2020, we are proud of the progress we have made and of how far we have come. But we are not complacent. We know that there is always more to do, and we look forward to the learning opportunities the Peer Challenge presents. How we progress from here will be shaped by our priorities, our capacity to deliver, and through collaborative working so that we are in the strongest position possible to move forward together.



Agenda Item 12g



Council

**Monday, 8th September
2025**

Subject: Local Government Reorganisation Update

Report by:

Bill Cullen
Interim Chief Executive
bill.cullen@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To provide an update to Council on the latest position regarding progress with plans for Local Government Reorganisation in Greater Lincolnshire.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council receives the latest update on plans for Local Government Reorganisation in Greater Lincolnshire, particularly noting the current position in respect of:

- i) Latest Government guidance, correspondence and timelines
- ii) West Lindsey engagement and collaboration in the development of final proposals across Greater Lincolnshire
- iii) Public engagement across Greater Lincolnshire, including early findings from West Lindsey's engagement exercise

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

On 16th December 2024, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government presented the English Devolution White Paper to Parliament. The overarching intention of the White Paper is for Devolution to become the universal position across England, accompanied by a large-scale, England wide programme of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). In respect of Devolution, a Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) has already been established in Greater Lincolnshire, with a new Mayor elected in May 2025. The focus of this paper is purely on the Local Government Reorganisation element of the White Paper.

In respect of LGR, the White Paper sets out the intention to facilitate a programme of reorganisation for all two tier areas in England, and for unitary councils where there is evidence of failure or where the size or boundary may be hindering their ability to deliver sustainable and high-quality public services.

The legal framework for unitarisation is provided by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. Under the legislation, the Secretary of State may invite a principal authority to propose single tier local government arrangements, and then consult upon these proposals before making a decision under this legislation.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, sets out the various different options for restructuring that can be put forward. The options as drafted in the Act does not currently include a scenario where two existing unitary councils, like North and North East Lincolnshire Councils may be merged together in isolation. This means that currently any proposal that suggests this must instead leave those two councils as separate unitaries.

Any proposal which suggests an existing unitary council merges with a district council is permissible under the current operating legislation and therefore can remain unchanged.

However, some of the proposals previously being promoted by Lincolnshire Councils included proposals to merge the two unitary councils in North Lincolnshire and North-East Lincolnshire. To reflect the legal stipulation of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, these proposals have had to be amended which has resulted in an increase in the number of unitary councils being proposed for Greater Lincolnshire.

Following the publication of the White Paper, on 5th February 2025, the Minister for Local Government and English Devolution issued a statutory invitation to Council Leaders in two-tier areas inviting them to develop proposals for reorganisation. The Council submitted its interim proposal on 21st March 2025, with initial feedback received via a government letter to Lincolnshire Leaders on 3rd June. Any final proposals must be submitted by 28th November 2025.

On current government timelines, it is expected that new unitary authorities in Greater Lincolnshire will become operational on 1st April 2028, known as Vesting Day. Elections to the new Shadow Authority are expected to take place in May 2027.

Financial : FIN/66/26/MT/SL

In June 2025, the Minister announced funding to support the development of final LGR proposals; Greater Lincolnshire's allocation being £357,246. It was agreed by Chief Executives that this funding would be allocated to Lincolnshire County Council who would disseminate the funding to those Councils developing a final proposal as required.

The Interim Plan Feedback letter and the funding allocation letter make it clear that collaboration across areas is required, specifically in relation to information and data sharing. As such, some of this money is being used to develop a shared data baseline, with the remaining monies allocated to specific proposal development. This ensures a fair share of monies and also accounts for any local authorities that have chosen not to engage in the broader LGR programme.

On the 7th July 2025 Council acknowledged that there are resource implications as a result of LGR both in the short and longer term. Due to the scale of evidence, resource and financial implications had not at that time been fully developed and as such it was acknowledged that a sum of up to £50,000 can be drawn down through existing delegation from reserves or contingencies to support and facilitate the Council's involvement during the summer.

A further paper will be presented to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee on 25th September which will provide a more comprehensive overview of the resource and financial implications of developing the Council's position in relation to the Government's ambitions for LGR and the implications on West Lindsey of the various proposals being drawn up by other Local Authorities across Greater Lincolnshire.

It is anticipated that following the submission of proposals in November 2025 and the Government's statutory consultation and decision making processes that a further paper on broader financial implications in relation to supporting the transformation and transition arrangements into a new unitary Council will be required.

Staffing :

LGR is a new priority workstream for all Councils undergoing LGR which will, by its nature, put pressure on the capacity and resources of some corporate and other service areas who will be required to respond to the different elements of the LGR process. At West Lindsey, this includes, but is not limited to, input from the Policy & Strategy Team, Finance Team, People Services, Change, Performance and Programmes Team, Communications Team, and Senior Management Team.

Whilst an initial allowance of up to £50,000 provides support to enable some work to be carried out over the summer to deliver a position for the Final Submission date of 28th November 2025. Following that date there will be more significant implications for the Council's own resources to facilitate and enable to transition into a new unitary Council. This will need to be considered as part of the broader staffing structure and considered in a future paper.

Council staff are being kept informed of key developments relating to LGR via a dedicated page on the Council's intranet, through weekly staff messages, and all staff updates as required. This will continue throughout the next stages of the indicative LGR timeline.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:

High-level consideration has been given to Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications and more detailed considerations will be undertaken over the course of the summer, as part of the Council's options appraisal of the final proposals that are in development.

Data Protection Implications:

Effective collaboration through the development of shared assumptions and datasets is a key requirement within the government's assessment criteria. It is therefore expected that councils will openly and effectively share data and information, with government prepared to intervene where this is not the case.

In Greater Lincolnshire, a shared data agreement is in place, facilitated through a secure shared data portal where individual councils can upload their data and information. Much of this is open-source data, however, the data sharing agreement includes provisions to safeguard and ensure handling of data is GDPR compliant and that high standards of data management are adhered to at all times.

A shared financial and demand baseline is also in development which will allow all bids put forward on behalf of Greater Lincolnshire to be based on the same principles, and allowing for alternative forecasting and assumptions to be tested in support of the variety of models being developed.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

None arising from this report

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

None arising from this report

Health Implications:

None arising from this report

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :

[English Devolution White Paper 2024](#)

[Statutory Invitation from the Minister for Local Government & English Devolution to Greater Lincolnshire Council Leaders - 05.02.2025.](#)

[Local Government Boundary Commission for England LGR FAQs](#)

[WLDC LGR Interim Proposal Report to Full Council 18.03.2025](#)

[MHCLG: Summary of Feedback on Interim Plans - 03.06.2025](#)

[WLDC LGR Update Paper to Full Council - 07.07.2025](#)

Risk Assessment :

The Government has stated its intention to reorganise all two-tier local authority areas within this Parliament.

Within the criteria, Government has been clear that Councils should work together to develop a single proposal for the area. It is therefore important that all Councils engage in the process to ensure their area is appropriately represented in discussions and decisions.

Not engaging in the discussions creates a risk that any future decisions regarding local government structures in Lincolnshire do not represent the best interests of West Lindsey. Likewise, not submitting or supporting a final proposal on 28th November 2025 risks West Lindsey's priorities and interests not being taken into consideration by MHCLG when undertaking their assessments and making any final decisions. These risks are mitigated by regular and consistent engagement in LGR discussions at the local, regional and national level by both members and senior officers.

Where agreement has not been possible, government has stipulated that Councils can submit individual proposals if they wish, but that these should be limited to one option per council.

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

☐

No

x

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

☐

No

x

Executive Summary

On 7th July, Council resolved to undertake supportive engagement with other local authorities in developing proposals for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Greater Lincolnshire. At that point in time there were four proposals in development for the area. Since then, the number of proposals in development has increased. All final proposals are due to be submitted to Government no later than 28th November 2025.

This paper provides members with the latest update as work continues across Greater Lincolnshire to prepare for LGR. The update primarily focuses on three areas:

1. Latest Government communication and guidance
2. Engagement with other local authorities and public sector partners
3. Public engagement, including early findings from the Council's own ongoing engagement exercise

Providing an update at this point ensures members have all the latest information available to support ongoing consideration of which of the proposals currently in development best meets the needs of West Lindsey residents and businesses, based on the criteria set out in the Statutory Invitation, which can be summarised as:

- A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.
- Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.
- Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.
- Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.
- New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements
- New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

Final proposals must be submitted to Government for consideration no later than 28th November. A further paper will be presented to Council on 10th November for decision on West Lindsey's position ahead of this key deadline.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Local authorities in all 21 two-tier areas across England continue to prepare for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in line with Government timelines. The next key milestone is 28th November 2025, when councils in each of these areas must submit their final LGR proposals for consideration.
- 1.2 At its last meeting on 7th July 2025, Council resolved to undertake “supportive engagement working across all final proposals being developed for Greater Lincolnshire, with further assessment and decision-making opportunities for members at a future Council meeting.”
- 1.3 Following the decision in July, officers have acted on the mandate from Council, proactively engaging with other councils and public sector partners, working collaboratively to progress the work required up to 28th November, and regularly keeping staff and members informed of key developments. This work will continue in the lead up to November’s deadline, after which the focus will shift to LGR implementation.
- 1.4 Additionally, the Minister for Local Government and English Devolution (“the Minister”), and representatives from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have issued further updates and communication over the summer for consideration by local authorities when developing final LGR proposals.
- 1.5 This paper acts as a progress report, bringing together key updates on government communication and engagement activity, including public engagement currently underway across Greater Lincolnshire. Updating Council at this point ensures members continue to receive the latest information ahead of a decision point at the next meeting of Council on 10th November 2025.

2 Latest Government Guidance, Correspondence and Timelines

- 2.1 On 24th July 2025, the Minister wrote to all councils in two-tier areas with an update on LGR, accompanied by three advice notes covering the LGR process and timeline, financial decisions before LGR, and partnership working in social care in new unitary councils. Copies of these letters are attached to this report as Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively.
- 2.2 Additionally, meetings have taken place between Chief Executives and the designated MHCLG representative for Greater Lincolnshire who continues to offer advice, guidance and support in developing final proposals. Such meetings will continue throughout the LGR timeline.
- 2.3 In updating local authorities on the LGR process and timeline, the Minister set out a seven-stage process which is summarised in fig.1 below. Councils are currently at stage two: submission of formal unitary proposals.

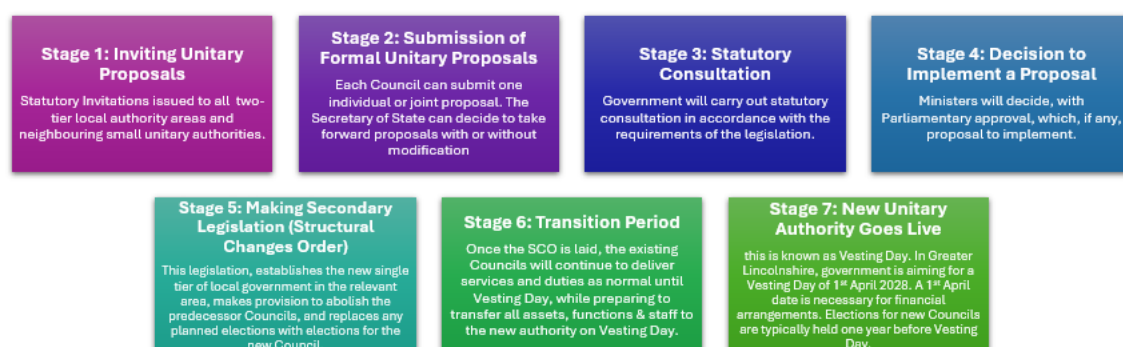


Fig.1 MHCLG Seven Stage LGR Process

- 2.4 The letter re-stated that Councils may only submit one proposal for unitary local government, which can be either an individual submission or a joint submission with other councils that were invited to do so. Any proposals must be for the whole area concerned, in this case the ten administrative areas covering Greater Lincolnshire, and proposals must meet the criteria set out in the original [Statutory Invitation letter](#). An updated copy of the timeline is included below (fig.2). Members will be kept updated of any changes to this timeline, which remains indicative at this stage.

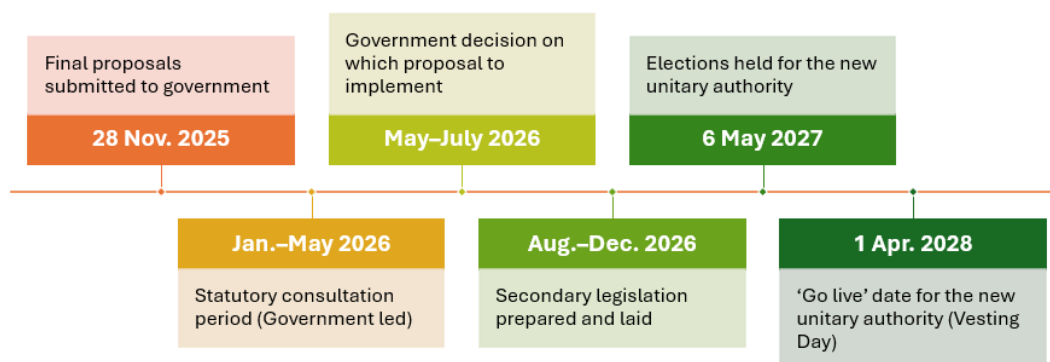


Fig.2 Indicative MHCLG Timeline for LGR Implementation in Greater Lincolnshire

3 Financial Decisions Ahead of LGR

- 3.1 For the first time since the announcement was made on LGR, further detail has been provided to Councils on financial decision-making and requirements leading up to Vesting Day. In his explanatory note (Appendix 3), the Minister emphasised that the Best Value Duty upon local authorities to set a balanced budget remains unchanged; and that financial decisions regarding ongoing service delivery and the medium-term financial strategy of existing councils must not compromise the future sustainability of new councils.

- 3.2 The letter reminds Councils that any financial decisions taken now could impact future decisions of the new unitary authority and implores existing councils to act accordingly in their decision-making. Examples of such decisions include, but are not limited to, sale and purchase of significant assets; transfer of local assets; entering into new contracts for service delivery including ICT procurement, major organisational restructures and changes to staff terms & conditions; establishing companies; undertaking job evaluation; permanent appointments to senior positions; changes to unplanned borrowing and the spending of reserves; and major changes to arrangements such as the local council tax support scheme and council tax exemption scheme.
- 3.3 On all of these matters, Councils are encouraged to take active steps at the appropriate times to align services with neighbouring councils to ensure a smooth transition to the new unitary authority; and to continue to operate in accordance with their agreed Medium-Term Financial Plan.
- 3.4 The letter also confirms the Government's intention to use Section 24 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to specify "a person to give consent for all relevant matters and how that power is to be exercised." This will take effect once Structural Orders have been made (Stage 5 of the LGR process, which is currently anticipated to be between August and December 2026) and means that written consent from the successor Council (i.e. the new unitary authority) will be required for:
- Land disposals over £100,000
 - Entering capital contracts worth more than £1,000,000
 - Entering non-capital contracts worth more than £100,000 (whole life costs)
- 3.5 Use of Section 24 in this way follows precedent set in previous examples of Local Government Reorganisation and is designed to ensure decisions are made in the best interests of residents of those areas being reorganised, and to ensure the sound financial position of the new unitary council.
- 3.6 On current timelines, any directives under Section 24 of the 2007 Act are anticipated to come into effect between August and December 2026 onwards, once the Structural Changes Order has been made.

4 Public Engagement Across Greater Lincolnshire

- 4.1 In developing any final proposal, one of the key requirements is for public engagement across the whole area concerned. Whilst West Lindsey is not developing its own LGR proposal, at a meeting of Corporate Policy & Resources Committee on 24th July 2025, members approved a West Lindsey engagement exercise to run alongside the Council's Budget Consultation over a six-week period from 25th July – 15th September.
- 4.2 The Council's public engagement on LGR takes the form of a ["Have Your Say on the Future of West Lindsey"](#) survey (copy also attached as

Appendix 5) which is currently live on the Council's website, promoted across all social media channels and delivered in person at the Budget Consultation events in Caistor, Market Rasen and Gainsborough. The questions are designed to aid understanding of what is important to West Lindsey residents in respect of place identity and future priorities for how local services are delivered.

- 4.3 The results of this exercise will be used to support members assessment of and ultimate decision-making on which, if any of the LGR proposals currently in development best meet the future needs and aspirations of West Lindsey residents, businesses and stakeholders and delivery against the district's priorities.
- 4.4 At the time of writing this report, a total of 231 survey responses have been received. When asked to identify which area people feel most part of, 46% stated that their local area compared to 24% for the district of West Lindsey and 21% for the county of Lincolnshire. A full breakdown of the responses received so far for this question are included in fig.3 below:

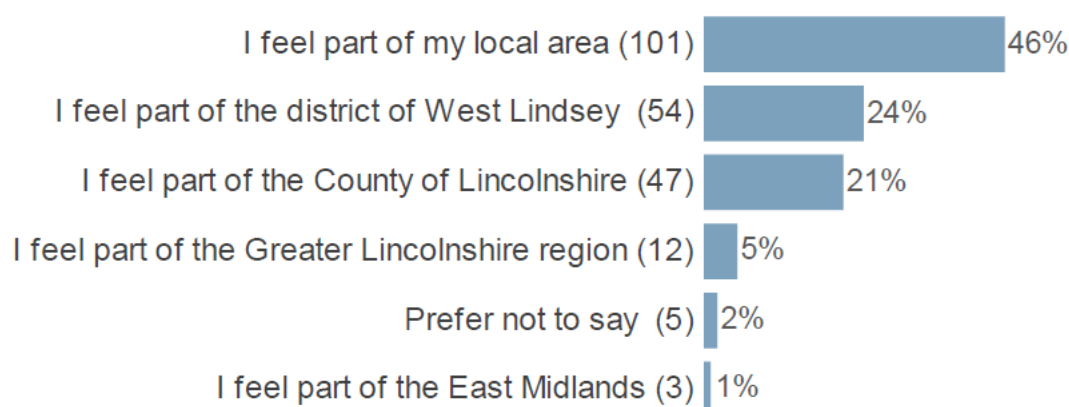


Fig.3 WLDC public engagement survey response

- 4.5 When asked "what do you value most about your local area?" the majority of respondents referenced the safe and friendly environment (63%) and the natural environment (62%) and the proximity to their local town (51%). A full breakdown of the responses received for this question to date are provided in fig.4 below.

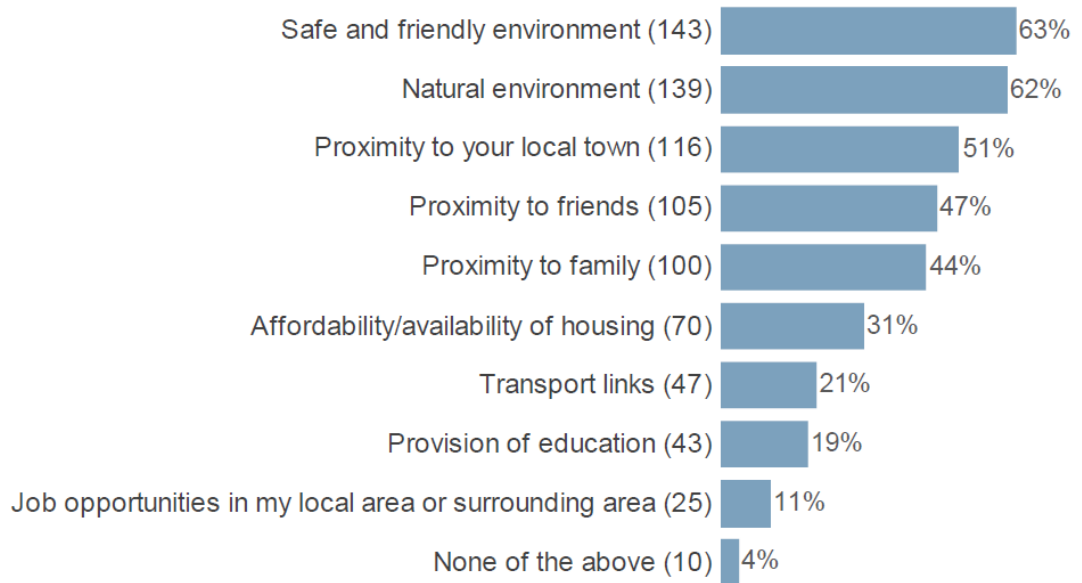
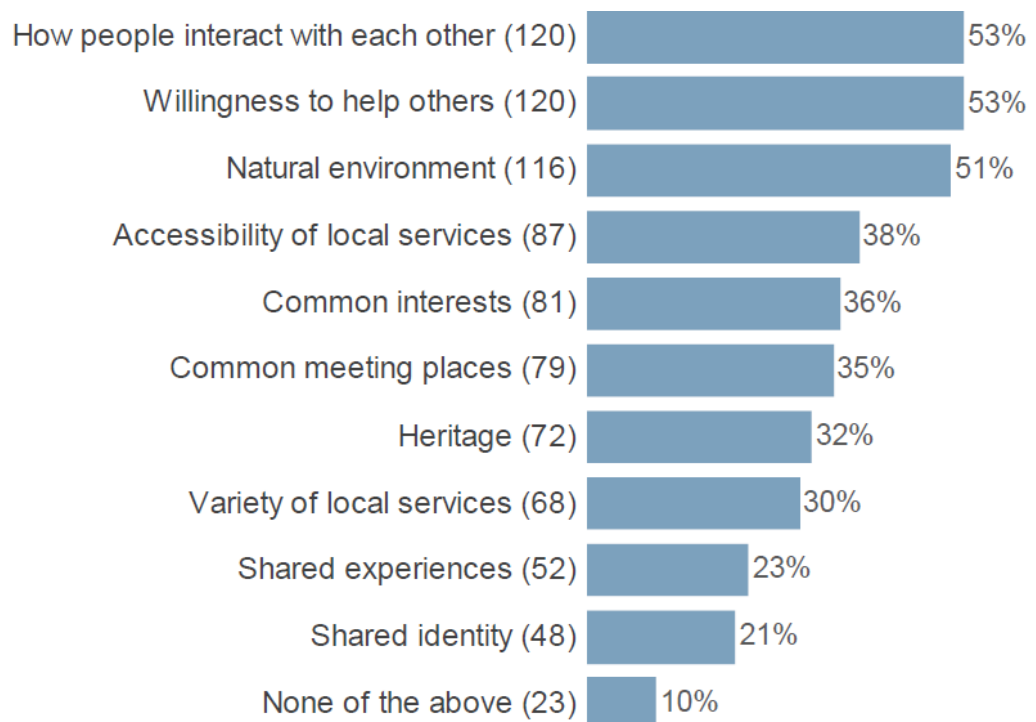


Fig.4 Responses to the question “what do you value most about your local area?”

- 4.6 When asked “what ties your local community together?” the following responses were received.



- 4.7 Respondents were asked to identify which town centre they visited most frequently. The majority stated Gainsborough (38%) and Lincoln (37%) with a full breakdown included below.

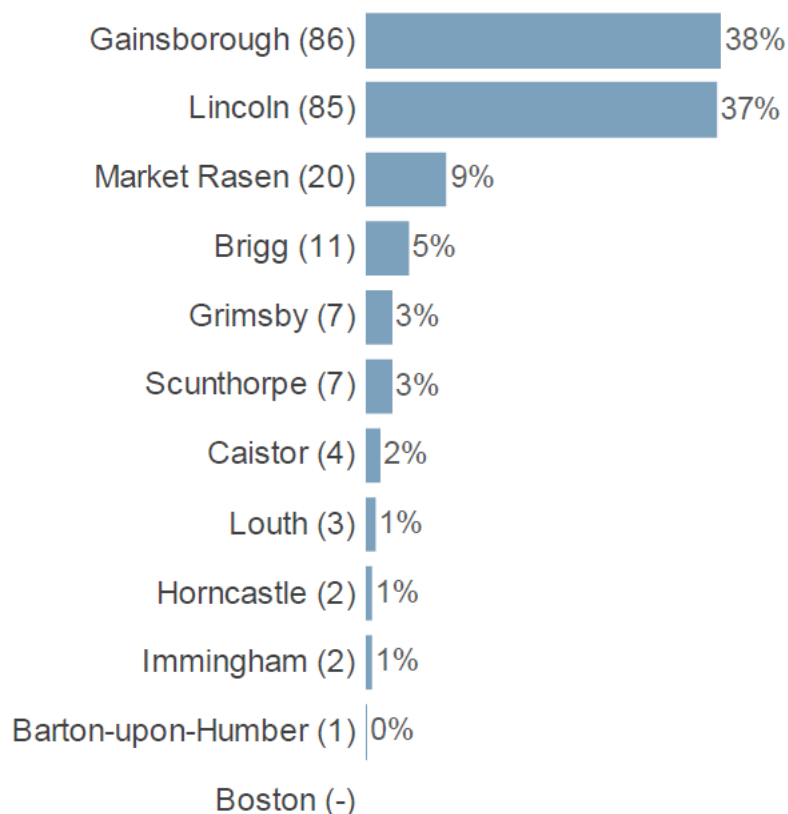
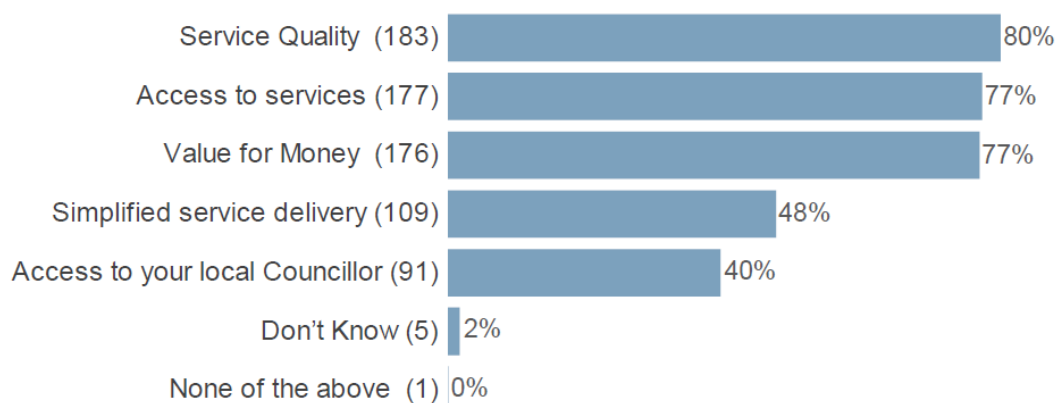


Fig.5 responses to the question “which town centre do you visit most frequently?”

- 4.8 In considering service delivery within a new unitary authority, respondents were asked to identify which services are of most importance. Supporting the local economy and creating job opportunities ranked highest at 23%, followed by protecting the environment and keeping it clean, and rubbish collection, both scoring 21% respectively. The full, ranked list of responses received for this question to date are included below:

“Which services are a priority to you?”	
Service	Ranking
Supporting the local economy, including creating job opportunities	1 (23%)
Rubbish collection	2 (21%)
Protecting the environment and keeping it clean	3 (20%)
Helping people stay healthy and safe	4 (13%)
Availability of affordable housing, including provision of homelessness services	5 (6%)
Open spaces including parks and play areas	6 (5%)
Building related services such as planning applications, enforcement, Building Control, protecting our heritage	6 (5%)
Local facilities like public toilets and leisure centres	7 (4%)
Working to mitigate the impact of climate change	8 (2%)
Support for housing needs, Council Tax and Benefits	9 (1%)

- 4.9 When asked to consider what the priorities should be for local government reorganisation in Lincolnshire, the following responses were received. Of most importance to people is service quality (80%), access to services (77%) and value for money (77%).



- 4.10 Analysis of the full and final results will be shared with members following the close of the survey in September. Results will also shared publicly in the usual way through social media channels, the Council's website, and all available newsletters.
- 4.11 Elsewhere in Greater Lincolnshire, there are a number of separate engagement activities taking place on the other LGR proposals that are currently being developed.
- 4.12 East Lindsey and South Holland, backed by Boston, are running public events across the area under the banner ["A Greater Lincolnshire for All."](#) This included a public event which took place in Market Rasen on 18th August.
- 4.13 Lincolnshire County Council are running an online survey called ["Your Lincolnshire: Strengthen. Simplify. Save"](#) which is open until 29th September. This is supplemented by public events including ones at Gainsborough Library and Caistor Library, both on the 19th September.
- 4.14 North Lincolnshire are distributing a survey to all households, businesses and voluntary organisations called ["Your Services, Your Say, Your Future"](#) which is also available online until 18th September. The survey seeks to understand people's views on the principle of Local Government Reorganisation, rather than views on any particular proposal.
- 4.15 North Kesteven are running an [online survey](#) which is open until the end of September for people to share their views.
- 4.16 Finally, North East Lincolnshire have recently launched their webpages [Your Council, Your Future](#) which also includes an online survey.

5 Engagement with Greater Lincolnshire Councils and other Public Sector Partners to date

- 5.1 Acting on the mandate given by Council, supportive engagement continues across Greater Lincolnshire, and with other public sector partners. This primarily includes regular Chief Executive meetings and weekly Heads of Policy meetings as well as Heads of Communications

meetings, Heads of Human Resources meetings, and Chief Finance Officer meetings.

- 5.2 Other officers are engaged in specific service-based forums at which LGR forms part of the agenda. Additionally, officers continue to attend national and regional briefings from organisations such as MHCLG, the Local Government Association (LGA) and District Councils Network (DCN) in order to share knowledge and to keep up to date with the latest developments. This is also supplemented by intelligence fed back by the Interim Chief Executive via fortnightly DCN Chief Executive Board meetings.
- 5.3 Following meetings with the Chief Executive leads for the LGR proposals that are progressing in Greater Lincolnshire, agreement has been reached with the majority to engage key officers from West Lindsey District Council in contributing to the development of the bids.
- 5.4 This will assist in cementing relationships with the various Lincolnshire local authority bid teams and may provide opportunities for including key information around the opportunities and challenges that exist in West Lindsey in the final proposals.
- 5.5 As part of this approach to collaborative working across Greater Lincolnshire, Heads of Policy have developed and adopted an information sharing agreement to allow data to be shared across the area to support the development of Final Submission proposals.
- 5.6 Heads of Communication have also agreed a communication framework across all of the Councils to ensure a positive approach to communication is adopted by all. This includes advance warning of key decisions and the launch of new engagement activities. The fundamental principle is to ensure that, as far as possible, messaging around LGR is as consistent as possible for our residents across Greater Lincolnshire.
- 5.7 It is considered that, following the final submission of proposals, a more formal arrangement for engagement between key teams from all of the local authorities will be adopted.

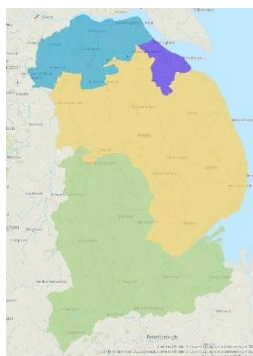
6 Update on LGR Proposals currently in development

- 6.1 At Full Council on 7th July there were four proposals in development for Greater Lincolnshire. Since then, additional proposals have emerged.
- 6.2 As such, for transparency and to ensure that the position of each Council is appropriately and fairly represented in this report, each authority or group of authorities has been asked to provide a factual summary of their position and LGR proposal based on the following questions.
 - What is the position of your Council/Councils?
 - What is your LGR proposal?
 - Mapped area of proposal (if available)

- Overview & Key dates for engagement (if available)
 - Link to your LGR webpages (where available)
- 6.3 An update on the latest position for each proposal is outlined below, including narrative and a map from each Council, or group of councils, in their own words where this has been provided.
- 6.4 **Proposal One: Developed by North Kesteven and South Kesteven District Councils**
 “North Kesteven DC and South Kesteven DC are partnered to develop an LGR proposal. The current developing proposal is an evolution of the Interim Proposal submitted in March 2025:
- Unitary 1 – North Kesteven DC, South Holland DC, South Kesteven DC and Rutland CC – Total population (mid-year estimate 2024) 410,360
 - Unitary 2 – Boston BC, City of Lincoln, East Lindsey DC, West Lindsey DC – Total population (mid-year estimate 2024) 420,585
 - Unitary 3 – North-East Lincolnshire Council
 - Unitary 4 – North Lincolnshire Council

The preference of the Kesteven proposal remains to merge North-East Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire in order to deliver on MHCLG’s policy ambitions for a consolidated local government. However, there is significant legal uncertainty over whether the Secretary of State currently has the power to merge two unitary councils. Therefore, the final Kesteven proposal will likely not formally propose to merge the two northern unitaries, but instead include a recommendation to that effect to MHCLG.

Rutland CC has significant economic alignment with South Lincolnshire. MHCLG have consistently communicated an openness to cross Invitation Area boundary proposals, presuming that there is a strong rationale and the impacts on the neighbouring Invitation Area are taken into account.”



Proposal 1: Four Unitary Model		
Proposed By	Model	Population
North Kesteven South Kesteven	Unitary 1: North Kesteven, South Kesteven, South Holland, Rutland,	410,360
	Unitary 2: West Lindsey, Boston, Lincoln, East Lindsey	420,585
	Unitary 3: North Lincolnshire	171,336
	Unitary 4: North-East Lincolnshire	159,911

6.5 Proposal Two Update: Developed by City of Lincoln Council

Proposal 2: Final Details to be confirmed		
Proposed By	Model	Population
City of Lincoln	Unitary 1: City of Lincoln geography incorporating parts of West Lindsey and North Kesteven districts. Exact boundaries and population to be confirmed	TBC
	Rest of Greater Lincolnshire geography: to be confirmed	TBC

6.6 Proposal Three Update: Developed by the South-East Lincolnshire Partnership

“The South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership – Boston Borough, East Lindsey and South Holland - are jointly developing ‘A Greater Lincolnshire for All’. This proposal was formally launched on July 10th 2025 in Lincoln. The proposal meets all Government criteria. The mapped area is for two unitary authorities of similar size and economic scale:

- Northern Lincolnshire Unitary Council – covering North Lincolnshire, North-East Lincolnshire, West Lindsey and the City of Lincoln. Population: 531,000
- Southern Lincolnshire Unitary Council – covering North Kesteven, South Kesteven, Boston, South Holland and East Lindsey. Population: 574,000.

More information can be found here: www.greaterlincolnshireforall.org/

An engagement survey is available here for people to have a say: www.greaterlincolnshireforall.org/getinvolved

Engagement includes a comprehensive schedule of in-person and virtual engagement events, including briefings with key stakeholders in Greater Lincolnshire and town and parish councils. Engagement events have already taken place virtually with the public, town and parish councils (virtual and at the LALC conference), in Sleaford and Market Rasen.

Upcoming engagement events include Horncastle, Spalding, Lincoln, Mablethorpe, Boston as well as a virtual session. Louth and Skegness events are being arranged. More information here: www.greaterlincolnshireforall.org/events-1

For more information on A Greater Lincolnshire for All, visit: www.greaterlincolnshireforall.org/”



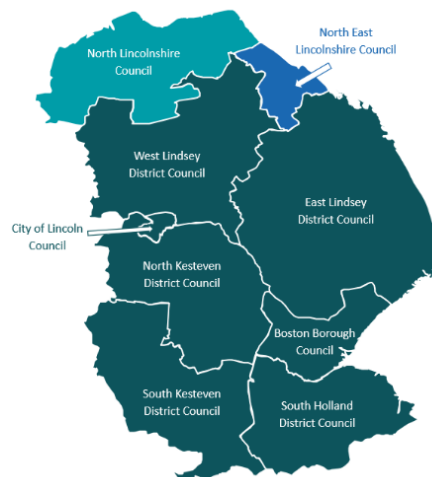
Proposal 3: Two Unitary Model		
Proposed By	Model	Population
Boston East Lindsey South Holland (the South-East Lincolnshire Partnership)	Unitary 1: West Lindsey, City of Lincoln, North Lincolnshire, North-East Lincolnshire	531,000
	Unitary 2: North Kesteven, South Kesteven, Boston, South Holland, East Lindsey	574,000

6.7 Proposal Four Update: Developed by Lincolnshire County Council

“Lincolnshire County Council’s proposal covers the existing Lincolnshire geography with North and North East Lincolnshire remaining unchanged.

Information around the proposal can be found here - [Your Lincolnshire – Lincolnshire County Council](#)

Public engagement is underway with a survey open until 29 September and public engagement events scheduled throughout September.”



Proposal 4: Three Unitary Model		
Proposed By	Model	Population
Lincolnshire County Council	Unitary 1: existing Lincolnshire County geography	789,502
	Unitary 2: North Lincolnshire	171,336
	Unitary 3: North-East Lincolnshire	159,911

6.8 Proposal Five Update: Developed by North-East Lincolnshire Council

“At Full Council on 24th July 2025, NELC Elected Members considered a report on Local Government Reorganisation and unanimously resolved:

1. That the contents of the report now submitted, including the contents of both appendices, be noted.
2. That the following in principle positions be supported:
 - a. That the preference is for North-East Lincolnshire to remain within its current administrative boundaries;
 - b. That this option is promoted across Greater Lincolnshire; and
 - c. Continue to explore opportunities to work closely with North Lincolnshire and Lincolnshire County Councils on any Greater Lincolnshire submissions to government.
3. That, in furtherance of the above, authority be delegated to the Chief Executive to oversee the continuation of the Local Government Reorganisation Working Group and to consult and collaborate with neighbouring authorities, with a view to building the requisite level of detail around the above in principle positions so as to enable submission of a coherent and compliant business case to government at the appropriate time.
4. That the Chief Executive be authorised to engage with authorities across Greater Lincolnshire together with appropriate stakeholders

(including residents at the appropriate time) regarding matters pertinent to Local Government Re-organisation, with a view to realising the aims of this report.

5. That the Chief Executive be instructed to bring a further report to Council prior to submission of the final business case to government.

Link to report: [Council | NELC](#)

Beyond wishing to retain a council on the current administrative boundary of North-East Lincolnshire Council, Elected Members have not yet made a formal decision in relation to proposals for the wider Greater Lincolnshire area.

Engagement with residents, businesses and other stakeholders began on Wednesday, 20th August 2025. The survey will run for four weeks, concluding on 17th September 2025.

The survey has been promoted in family hubs and council premises, community spaces, leisure facilities and GP practices across North-East Lincolnshire. Business sector, parish councils, and voluntary and community sector representatives have been contacted and asked to support the survey.”

The link to the engagement survey is: [Local Government Reorganisation 2025 - This survey is created by QuestionPro | QuestionPro Survey](#)

The link to the North East Lincolnshire Council webpage on local government reorganisation is: [Local Government Reorganisation \(LGR\) | NELC](#)

Proposal 5: Final Proposal still to be confirmed		
Proposed By	Model	Population
North-East Lincolnshire Council	Unitary 1: existing North-East Lincolnshire geography	159,911
	Rest of Greater Lincolnshire: To be confirmed	TBC

6.9 Position Update: North Lincolnshire Council

“North Lincolnshire Council will be taking forward a proposal for submission. The Council is currently undertaking a public engagement exercise, ending on the 18th September, and this has already seen a considerable response (some 3,000 responses at the time of writing this report). The Council will then respond to the community’s preferences and develop a bid in alignment with them.

In the meantime, preparatory work has started on a baseline proposal which can then be fully progressed once the outcome of the public engagement is known.”

7 Next Steps

- 7.1 Ahead of a decision-making point for Council on 10th November, staff and member workshops have been convened in September. Invites have been sent containing the full details and all members are encouraged to attend.

- 7.2 The workshops serve the dual purpose of exploring member priorities for the new Corporate Plan through the lens of LGR. At these workshops, members will be asked to consider priorities for LGR based on the key criteria outlined in the Statutory Invitation, these being:
- A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.
 - Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.
 - Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.
 - Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.
 - New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements
 - New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.
- 7.3 The outcome of these workshops will be fed into a further LGR paper which will be presented to Council for decision on 10th November ahead of the final submission date of 28th November.
- 7.4 Additionally, supportive engagement will continue across Greater Lincolnshire, with further planned meetings scheduled regularly during the Autumn. Members and staff will continue to be involved and informed of key developments throughout this period.



Jim McMahon OBE MP

Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Leaders of the councils in the 21 areas invited to submit proposals for unitary local government

24 July 2025

Dear Leader,

Local Government Reorganisation is a key part of the Government's mission to fix the foundations of local government, and build a system which is fit, legal and decent. I want to reiterate my commitment to continue working closely with you and to thank you for your ongoing dedication to delivering a single tier of local government. Together we will create clearer, more sustainable local government structures that unlock crucial efficiency savings and ensure more resources are directed to the frontline.

Reorganisation will be a test bed for public service reform, where new ways of working become mainstream. It creates a huge opportunity to rethink how services are delivered, so they join up around residents and focus on prevention, and we are grateful to you for all the work you have done to take advantage of that opportunity. As just one example, we are asking areas to consider partnership options for joint working across the new unitary authorities for the delivery of social care. We have heard from areas and stakeholders that they would appreciate further details on this; I am pleased to share the attached document *Local Government Reorganisation: Considerations for partnership working in social care for new unitary authorities*.

I also wanted to share further information on the process once final proposals have been submitted, and our expected timelines, which can be found in the attached document *Summary of the Local Government Reorganisation Process*. I am also sharing an explanatory note on *Financial decisions before local government reorganisation*, which I urge you to consider and share with Members across your councils. It is essential that decisions regarding ongoing service delivery and the medium term financial strategy of existing councils do not compromise the future sustainability of new councils.

I have been clear in my invitation letters that we expect councils to make every effort to work together within an area on the development of their final proposals. Where this is not happening, I will take action. I encourage you to continue to build strong

relationships and agree ways of working, including around effective data sharing to support the development of a robust evidence base. Where possible, all final proposals within an area should use the same assumptions and data sets, or be clear where – and why – there is a difference.


I continue to be asked about population size. I know that proposals are being developed with a population size of more than 500,000, and for a population size of less than 500,000, and it is right that areas have the flexibility to put forward proposals that they believe are right for their area. We have asked that all proposals, whether they are at the guided level, above it, or below it, should set out the rationale for the proposed approach clearly.

We will continue to work closely with you, the LGA and other sector bodies. I recommend you make use of the wealth of information on the [LGA hub](#), which includes recent updates to the FAQs. My officials are in place to support areas in developing their LGR proposals over the summer and going forwards, as we are doing with councils in Surrey as the statutory consultation progresses.

Thank you again for your continued hard work and support delivering this ambitious programme to reform the public services our residents rely on. I look forward to speaking to you again soon.

I am copying this letter to your Chief Executives. I am also copying this letter to local MPs, Mayors and Police and Crime Commissioners and will be publishing it on [gov.uk](#).

Yours sincerely



JIM MCMAHON OBE MP

Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution



Local Government Reorganisation: Considerations for partnership working in social care for new unitary authorities

1. Introduction

1.1 On 5 February 2025 Jim McMahon OBE MP, Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, wrote to council leaders across 21 two-tier areas to formally invite them to work with other council leaders in their area to develop a proposal for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). The invitation included statutory guidance with criteria for unitary local government. Criterion 3 specifies that “unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens, and that consideration should be given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children’s services, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety.”

1.2 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) asked for interim plans to be submitted by councils on or before 21 March 2025. Local areas have all received written feedback and met with officials to discuss it further; a summary of feedback was published on 3 June. This feedback also reminded areas of the need to consider “the crucial services such as social care¹, children’s services, SEND and homelessness” as per Criterion 3(c) in February’s statutory invitation letters.

1.3 In the written feedback, we asked areas to consider options for partnership working across the new geographic boundaries. We know that areas will need to work together across all services and boundaries throughout the implementation period and beyond vesting day. In the case of social care services, we know some market and strategic challenges will be larger than the new unitary authorities or cross over the new geographic boundaries, making partnership working essential for social care service delivery for residents.

¹ For the purpose of this note, Children’s Social Care is defined as all social care services delivered to children up to the age of 18 years whether living with their families, in the care of the local authority, or living independently, and care leavers up to the age of 25. This also includes targeted family help activity and allied services which support children and families. Adult’s social care is the provision of care and support services that help people over the age of 18 years achieve the outcomes that matter most to them, such as maintaining independence, having control over daily life, and participating in society.

1.4 LGR is an ambitious programme of work to create simpler structures, improved accountability mechanisms, and efficiencies in local government. For social care, which takes up the majority of local authority expenditure, we anticipate that bringing services together in one layer of local government will be beneficial both for creating financially sustainable services and improving outcomes for children, young people and families who need help and adults who draw on care and support.

1.5 Following consultation on final proposals, a decision will be made by Ministers on which proposal, if any, to implement. Decisions on the most appropriate option for each area will be judgements in the round, having regard to the guidance and the available evidence, including all representations received to the consultation, and to all other relevant information available. The criteria are not weighted.

1.6 We understand that LGR proposals are being designed in parallel with other public service reforms, including a £2bn reform programme across children's social care during this Spending Review period, and we recognise this presents challenges to local authorities. We also acknowledge the sector's concern about the risks of disruption associated with service aggregation or disaggregation. We will continue to work with the sector and across government to ensure councils are supported through the LGR process, into the implementation period and beyond.

1.7 Local government has a strong track record of collaborative and partnership-based working across local geographies to commission and deliver a wide range of services, along with upholding statutory responsibilities that require collaboration between agencies such as for safeguarding. There are numerous examples of where this has improved service delivery, driven better outcomes, and delivered greater value for money. We have included some case studies on good partnership working in this note.

1.8 We envisage partnership working between new unitary authorities could support authorities in managing the continuity of adult social care and children's social care services during the reorganisation process. It could also maximise opportunities for future collaboration at a strategic level, such as on health and care integration and with other public services. We are interested in the range of approaches that new unitary authorities may use to work across boundaries on social care services. The Government is not suggesting that partnership working is the mitigation for all risks of aggregation or disaggregation. We anticipate that authorities will be considering mitigations to these risks separately as they develop their proposals. Government is also not suggesting that partnership working necessarily means sharing services or leadership between authorities.

1.9 Government does not plan to define or mandate a particular partnership model for local authorities. We recognise there is not a singular one-size-fits-all approach that is appropriate for all authorities undergoing reorganisation. Each area will know how their geography, demographics, and services might benefit from partnership working above the new unitary level, and how best to design partnership working arrangements for their local needs.

1.10 This note provides further detail on the ask to areas to consider options for partnership working in social care across new unitary boundaries. It outlines some key considerations that may support authorities in developing plans for key services in

their proposals and beyond. The considerations in this note are intended to inform final proposals for LGR, and the development of implementation plans in due course.

2. Prioritising Service Continuity

2.1 The continuity of high quality and sustainable services for those in receipt of support through adult and children's social care should be a priority for all areas throughout the LGR process.

2.2 New unitary councils will take over statutory responsibility for service delivery, including social care responsibilities which will continue to sit with the Director of Children's Services (DCS) and Director of Adult Social Services (DASS).

2.3 New unitary councils should consider how they will continue to deliver on their statutory responsibilities to ensure all services are safe and legal on vesting day, whilst maintaining a focus on continuous improvement of outcomes for local residents. This will require collaboration between councils in an LGR area in planning for the continuity of social care services.

2.4 Where disaggregation or aggregation is proposed, we expect proposals to include how either option will be safely managed so that local residents receiving social care services continue to access the help and support they need. In line with criterion 3b, we expect areas to include detail on how partnership working could lead to better value for money and financial sustainability.

2.5 Whilst leadership in local areas are responsible for, and best placed to, identify the most beneficial ways of partnership working, the Government considers that an independent trust model for partnership working is untested outside the context of local authority intervention. On balance, this model is not considered appropriate for delivering high-quality outcomes in social care services in the context of LGR, and funding would not be made available to support the establishment of a Trust in this context. More information on this is in the [LGR social care FAQs](#).

3. Partnership Working

3.1 We encourage areas to consider where partnership working presents opportunities that are specific to the needs of your local residents. LGR and wider social care service reforms are a significant undertaking, and authorities will naturally want to collaborate to share knowledge, expertise and learning to maintain a focus on improving service delivery and supporting innovation.

3.2 LGR and other reforms also create opportunities to consider longer term improvements to service delivery for local residents. For social care services especially, these opportunities provide significant potential at a time when these services are undergoing other reforms. We encourage areas to build on existing structures for collaboration, such as partnerships with Integrated Care Boards and Regional Improvement and Innovation Alliances. We also expect new unitaries to continue to work together and with partners on integrated service delivery, such as

through Family Hubs, Discharge and Transfer of Care Hubs, and the development of Neighbourhood Health Services.

3.3 We encourage leaders to carefully consider the benefits of collaboration and partnership working from proposal development and beyond. Areas may wish to think creatively about their engagement with local residents, including those who are seldom heard, care providers, the social care workforce, and the voluntary sector to ensure community and partner input is included as proposals are developed and services are delivered in the longer term. Consideration at the start of the LGR process will ensure community collaboration and partnership working is embedded early on so that its benefits can be maximised further down the line. Feedback from previous reorganisations demonstrates that considering future service design at the transitional stage provides the opportunity to build-in service improvement and the delivery of better outcomes.

3.4 It may be useful for areas to consider how partnership working could be used to focus on a single theme common to all authorities, such as improving dementia support or efficiencies in children's residential care provision for example. We have set out below some further suggested areas for consideration in partnership working, drawn from potential issues associated with the aggregation or disaggregation of services, and common questions and feedback from areas that have already undertaken LGR.

3.5 Leadership and Workforce

Leadership and workforce capability will be critical to the continuity of social care services, including leaders' understanding of different organisational cultures and values, and how to bring those together. A collaborative approach between leaders in different authorities presents an opportunity to create a more stable, sustainable and effective market across a wider geographical area. This could be achieved through joint conversations to address challenges of competition between neighbouring unitary authorities, particularly in the transition period. Particular considerations for this include:

- Leadership transition planning in relation to key statutory roles, such as the DASS and DCS.
- Workforce planning including building a talent pipeline for leadership and other key professional roles.
- Shared approaches to the recruitment and retention of social care staff, including regulated professionals such as social workers.

3.6 Service Planning and Delivery

Authorities may benefit from collaborating on the planning and delivery of services where there are particular provision challenges, or they reach a wider geographical area, for example:

- Development, location and operation of specialist services such as secure children's homes and complex mental health provision.

- Development, location and operation of out-of-area placements where specialist or mainstream provision is unavailable locally, including operational protocols and information sharing.
- Location, stability and reach of community stores and services such as enabled living equipment, aids and adaptations.
- Better use of data and technology to plan and deliver services, including building a shared understanding of existing data analysis and data sharing between authorities and partners which should be established during the 'shadow' period to prevent any gaps in data.
- Consideration of the distribution of assets, such as children's homes and community centres, with possible sharing arrangements in the short-term.
- Considering ways to integrate service delivery with existing and new infrastructure including Family Hubs, community centres and local voluntary and community service provision as part of Neighbourhood Health.
- Coordination and management of frontline service 'front doors' where appropriate, particularly in the transition period to minimise disruption.

3.7 Collaborative Commissioning Arrangements

Collaboration on commissioning presents an opportunity to improve value for money in difficult market conditions, by combining negotiating capability and providing greater resilience against market shocks. Partnership approaches may be particularly helpful for:

- Working together on market shaping and capacity, commissioning, and contract management.
- Commissioning of specialist services such as out of hours emergency teams, complex mental health services.
- Using data to understand population needs to effectively shape the care market and drive improvements to the quality of care.

3.8 We recognise that in some areas, conversations will already be underway regarding children's social care and the formation of Regional Care Cooperatives. Regional Care Cooperatives will harness the collective buying power of individual local authorities. Their role will include analysing future accommodation needs for looked after children across the region, publishing sufficiency strategies, recruiting and supporting foster parents, and commissioning care places for looked after children.

3.9 Strategic Collaboration Across a Larger Footprint

The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill will create the infrastructure to enable a unified strategic conversation about shared issues across new unitary authorities, and Strategic Authorities, when they are in place. Strong partnership working between new unitary authorities will enable strategic leadership and facilitate engagement at this level. This is especially relevant for aligning approaches to working with statutory, multi-agency and other key local partners, particularly where these are shared and across a county or regional footprint. It will also be beneficial in establishing better partnerships with Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and delivering their Population Health Improvement Plans.

4. Support

4.1 We are committed to working with the Local Government Association (LGA) and its Sector Support Steering Group to ensure councils have the information, tools and expertise to develop the solutions that are right for their area, so new authorities are set up for success. The LGA Devolution and Reorganisation Hub is a central repository for practical advice and support, and the FAQs contain more detail on specific aspects of LGR, including social care and partnership working.

4.2 Under the LGR programme, £7.6 million has been made available in the form of “Proposal Development Contributions”, split across the 21 areas that have been invited to submit proposals for unitary local government. This is the first time that such funding has been made available to assist areas with the costs of developing their proposals. In addition to this, every area has a named official to provide a direct link to MHCLG. Feedback has also been provided to areas on their interim plans to help them develop more robust proposals.

4.3 The Department for Education’s (DfE) Regional Directors and their teams play an important role in overseeing the delivery of the Opportunity Mission in their respective regions. They serve as the first point of contact for issues related to children’s social care services and are ready to support areas during the transition of children’s social care services. Local areas should continue to engage with their DfE regional team to discuss the children’s social care specific opportunities and challenges related to LGR. DfE’s improvement and intervention programmes for children’s social care are also available to support local authorities as needed. Engaging with the Regional Improvement and Innovation Alliances can also be beneficial for updating and consulting on plans that may impact service provision in the wider area.

4.4 The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) funds a national improvement offer to help authorities in their delivery of statutory duties and tackle operational challenges and changes such as LGR. This includes ‘Partners in Care and Health’ delivered by the LGA, ADASS and the Social Care Institute for Excellence. This wide-ranging programme provides practical toolkits and tailored support to leaders and managers, including how the DASS and Adult’s Social Care Senior Management Team can contribute to the corporate priorities of the council, collaborate with peers nationally to identify improvement priorities, support operational challenges and find solutions, and play an effective role with a range of partners and stakeholders within the local health and social care system. This support is currently prioritised for councils undergoing LGR.

5. Case Studies

5.1 Regional Care Cooperatives

In the November 2024 policy paper 'Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive', government set out its intention to introduce a regional model for providing placements for children in care. The ambition for Regional Care Cooperatives (RCCs) is to plan, commission and deliver children's care places in fostering, children's homes, secure children's homes and supported accommodation. RCCs will tackle the challenges facing the children's social care market, including sufficiency of placement. Government is currently working with Greater Manchester and the South East to trial and support the delivery of this regional approach. Greater Manchester and the South East have been working closely with the Integrated Care Boards, youth justice partners, and others in their area to deliver the set minimum requirements. The Greater Manchester Regional Care Cooperative has been operational from April 2025 and the South East Regional Care Cooperative from July 2025.

As part of the South East (SE) Regional Care Co-operative (RCC), local authorities across the SE have established a commissioning partnership group and agreed the novation of the South-Central framework to the RCC. This will be used alongside assessment tools to both improve understanding of children's needs and provide transparency around costs of placements, allowing for a regional needs-led commissioning approach.

Greater Manchester (GM) RCC's collaborative commissioning approach focuses on the development of a GM wide data and demand forecasting platform tool, with a commitment to carry out regional data analysis and forecasting the future needs of homes required for children in care. This is in partnership with health and justice, aimed at developing and publishing a regional sufficiency strategy setting out current provision and action to fill gaps. GM partnered with Social Finance to create a new demand modelling platform for Placements North West (PNW), which integrates Census data, 903 Returns, and child and adolescent needs and strengths (CANS) assessments to ensure datasets are live, accurate, and clear. The platform will also include data feeds covering demand and referrals, child needs, and placements.

5.2 The North West Regional Improvement Plan Pilot

The North West Regional Improvement Plan Pilot (NW RIPP) is a collaborative initiative between the Department for Education and regional partners aimed at improving children's social care in the North West. It tests new, locally led strategies to address systemic challenges, focusing on four areas: Partnerships, Workforce, Sufficiency, and Social Work Innovation and Reform.

As part of the Partnerships workstream and in response to high levels of deprivation, rising demand, and increasing pressures on safeguarding systems, a strategic safeguarding conference was held. At the conference the region's safeguarding leaders, including Delegated Safeguarding Partners and Lead Safeguarding Partners committed to developing a shared Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This was then developed and co-produced with all the region's 24 local authorities and strategic

partners – health (three ICBs), police (five police forces) and education (maintained schools, MATs, etc). The MoU sets out a shared vision and principles for multi-agency collaboration and underpins the creation of a multi-agency region-wide Safeguarding Learning and Support Hub.

The hub, staffed by five full-time employees, offers shared training, peer reviews, and independent scrutiny to reduce duplication, improve practice, and prepare for national reforms. By co-commissioning and jointly delivering services, this approach enhances planning, funding, delivery, and evaluation of safeguarding services. Pooling resources and working collectively is expected to improve service delivery, sustainability, and value for money.

5.3 Leicestershire and Rutland – managing out of hours Adult Social Care services

Leicestershire County Council and Rutland County Council take a pragmatic approach to managing in and out of hours services, with different arrangements to deliver best quality of service to local residents.

A formal delegation arrangement is in place whereby Leicestershire County Council provide mental health services on behalf of Rutland County Council. The delegation covers statutory functions under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014 and Section 13 of the Mental Health Act 1983, to undertake mental health assessments alongside Care Act 2014 assessments and support for people with mental ill health. This effectively covers Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) assessments during working hours and Care Act assessments, support planning and review for people with mental ill health. Rutland County Council, Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council also have a joint out of hours service for AMHP referrals operated by Leicester City Council.

A separate partnership agreement is also in place with Leicestershire County Council providing Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) assessments on behalf of Rutland County Council. Rutland County Council act as a supervisory body responsible for authorisations of DoLS and they provide funding for Leicestershire County Council to provide these services on their behalf. These arrangements are in place to ensure resilience, cost effective service delivery and statutory delivery.

5.4 Staffordshire and Stoke Adult Safeguarding Partnership

Staffordshire and Stoke Adult Safeguarding Partnership is the joint statutory safeguarding adults board fulfilling the duties of both Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council. By having a shared board, both councils save money in the set up and running costs of the board. These savings are shared with the statutory partners. Lost opportunity costs are reduced for council staff (and partners) by not needing to attend two sets of meetings. The learning opportunities across two board areas means that improvements are more readily identified and introduced.

As many partner services, including police and NHS, are shared across the two council areas, it is sensible to try to maintain similar policies, procedures, signposting, thresholds and access points across the area. Having a single board facilitates and supports this, allowing the two councils to work closely together. The board also offers opportunities for collaboration through its sub-groups, for example in its approach to rough-sleeping. Where necessary, the board is able to flex to support the needs of each council; attending both Health and Wellbeing Boards and councillor scrutiny committees, as well as undertaking separate Care Quality Commission inspection interviews for each council area.

Overall, the joint board achieves financial and resource savings, offers efficiency within processes and meeting attendance, whilst still being flexible and supportive of differing needs when required.



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Summary of the Local Government Reorganisation Process

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the 2007 Act) provides the statutory process for making structural changes to councils. This document explains how this process works with specific reference to the current invitation to all councils in two-tier areas and small neighbouring unitary authorities to develop proposals for unitary local government. Broadly, the stages are:

1. **Stage one: Inviting unitary proposals.** [Invitations](#) went to the 21 two-tier areas and their neighbouring small unitary authorities and included statutory guidance pursuant to the 2007 Act, specifying criteria for establishing new unitary authorities and matters that should be taken into account. Councils must have regard to the criteria and guidance, including the specified deadline for proposals.
2. **Stage two: Submission of formal unitary proposals.** As specified in the invitation, each council can only make one formal proposal for unitary local government, and a proposal can either be submitted individually by a council or jointly with other councils that were invited. To meet the terms of the invitation, the proposal must be for the whole of the area concerned and provide the information requested in the invitation. The Secretary of State can decide to take forward proposals that are submitted by areas with or without modification. If councils within an area cannot agree on a single proposal and want to submit separate proposals, our preference is for these to be submitted together, as a single submission for the area, which includes all proposals being put forward by councils, and is supported by a shared evidence base used by all proposals. This ensures all proposals are underpinned by the same robust evidence and analysis.
3. **Stage three: Statutory consultation.** The Government will carry out a statutory consultation in accordance with the requirements of the legislation, which is that the Secretary of State must first consult any council affected that has not submitted the proposal, as well as any other persons considered appropriate, before a proposal can be implemented. For Surrey, where proposals have already been submitted, the statutory consultation is published and accessible on gov.uk, alongside a list of the statutory consultees for that area and links to the proposals. The consultation is also clear that the views of any persons or bodies interested in these proposals are welcome.

4. **Stage four: Decision to implement a proposal.** Once a statutory consultation is concluded, Ministers will decide, subject to Parliamentary approval, which, if any, proposal is to be implemented, with or without modification. In taking these decisions, Ministers will judge proposals in the round against the criteria. In making a decision, Ministers will have regard to all the representations that were received, including the consultation responses, and any other relevant information available to Ministers. The decision taken by Ministers will be subject to collective agreement across Government.

5. **Stage five: Making secondary legislation – the Structural Changes Order (SCO).** Once a decision is taken on which proposal to implement, the Department will prepare the necessary legislation (the SCO) for Parliamentary approval. The SCO establishes the new single tier of local government in the relevant area and makes provision to abolish the predecessor councils. It will replace any currently planned elections with new elections for the new councils with appropriate wards/divisions for these new elections, amend the terms of office of current councillors as required, and give any preparatory functions needed. This means, for example, any councillors elected in local elections in May 2026 will be elected for a normal term but, if the council is abolished during that term through the reorganisation process, their terms would be reduced in this legislation. The Department will work with the current councils during the preparation of the legislation, seeking input on specific matters which might include names of the new councils, transitional arrangements and electoral arrangements:
 - a. **The Order:** will specify arrangements for the first elections for the new unitary council/s, councillor numbers, the functions the new council has in the transition period and establish suitable governance arrangements for the transition period before new councils go live, by giving powers to the relevant executive or joint committee overseeing the transition. The Order is subject to the affirmative procedure and usually takes six to nine months to prepare and take through Parliament, depending on the complexity of the Order, provision of necessary information by the councils and recess periods.
 - b. **Elections:** Typically, the first elections to new unitary councils take place on electoral arrangements specified in the SCO, and which are built using a mixture of existing wards, divisions or, in some cases, parishes. The names of wards/divisions and the numbers of councillors to be elected are also specified in the legislation. After the first elections, it is usual for the LGBCE to undertake an electoral review to put in place longer-term arrangements. A councillor can stand in elections for the new unitary authority at the same time as serving their term in the existing council. If elected to the new unitary council, this will be for a new term as set out in the SCO. They can simultaneously serve out the remainder of their term as a councillor for the existing local authority until such time as the existing local authority is abolished – this may be a reduced term, or in some cases their term may be extended to provide for the transition.

- c. **Transition period arrangements:** The SCO will specify the governance arrangements for the new unitary councils in the transition period i.e. what sort of transition body will be in place during the transition period until predecessor councils are abolished and new unitary councils go live.
6. **Stage six: Transition period:** Once the SCO has been made, the existing councils carry on delivering services and fulfilling their duties until vesting day, while preparing to transfer all assets, functions and staff on vesting day when the predecessor councils are dissolved and the new unitary authority takes on the legal duties and powers for providing local government to the area. The relevant transition body will focus on getting ready for the go-live day for the new unitary authority and will be responsible for taking any decisions relating to the preparation for new unitary authority to be safe and legal on day one. MHCLG will require an Implementation Plan from the relevant transition body, which will set out what steps and decisions the body needs to take in order for the new unitary council to be ready for vesting day.

Key implementation issues likely to be included in the Implementation Plan include council tax harmonisation and preparing for the aggregation (and potentially disaggregation) of services. Generally applicable regulations are in force that provide a framework for implementation matters, including financial issues such as council tax harmonisation, staffing, disputes and continuity between existing and new councils. Additional secondary legislation will likely be necessary during this period, known as 'mop up' legislation, to make any area specific amendments in legislation that are identified in the implementation due diligence process as areas prepare for vesting day. This could include amending board memberships, pensions legislation, setting a new Housing Revenue Account and ceremonial arrangements. During the transition period, the Minister can also decide to direct the new authority to give them a role in decision taking in the predecessor councils (a section 24 direction).

7. **Stage seven: New unitary authority goes live.** This is vesting day. While preparatory work may start with the development of proposals and continue through the process, a minimum of around a year is allowed to enable safe and legal transfer of key services from the point the legislation is made, to when the new unitary council/s goes live. Elections to the new unitary councils, in the transition year ahead of vesting day, aid a safe and legal transition by ensuring those who will be responsible for governing the new authority/ies are accountable for decisions on transition arrangements. We are aiming for new authorities to go live on 1 April 2027 (for Surrey) and 1 April 2028 (for other areas) depending on the proposals received – 1 April start dates are necessary for financial arrangements.

Timetable

8. An indicative timetable for Local Government Reorganisation is as follows. This is subject to a number of external factors. The Government remains committed to ending two-tier local government in England in this Parliament, and to move to new structures as soon as practicable.
9. For Surrey, we anticipate that a decision on which proposal to implement could be announced after the House returns from the Conference Recess in October. This would allow the necessary secondary legislation to be finalised in the autumn, so as to be laid in the House in the New Year, and then made in March, subject to Parliamentary approval. This would allow for elections to the new unitary authorities on 7 May 2026, and for those elections to be the only elections in Surrey. The new authorities would then go live on 1 April 2027.
10. For the six areas in the Devolution Priority Programme, we anticipate that following final proposals being submitted at the end of September, a consultation could be launched in November, to close in the New Year. Following this, decisions on which proposal to implement could be announced by March, before the period of sensitivity for the May local elections. Secondary legislation would then be prepared, to be laid in the House, ideally before the summer recess. The legislation could then be made in the autumn, subject to Parliamentary approval. This would allow for elections to the new unitary authorities on 6 May 2027. The new authorities would then go live on 1 April 2028.
11. For the remaining 14 areas, we anticipate that following final proposals being submitted at the end of November, a consultation could be launched in the New Year, and it would likely close after the local elections in May. Following this, decisions on which proposal to implement could be announced before the summer recess. Secondary legislation would then be prepared, to be laid in the House after the summer recess. The legislation could then be made, subject to Parliamentary approval. This would allow for elections to the new unitary authorities on 6 May 2027. The new authorities would then go live on 1 April 2028.



Financial decisions before local government reorganisation

1. This explanatory note is for all councils who were invited on 5 February 2025 to submit proposals for unitary local government under section 2 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the 2007 Act).
2. The Government recognises that councils are continuing to deliver essential services and that statutory duties such as those relating to the Best Value Duty and setting a balanced budget remain unchanged. However, given reorganisation is a once in a generation opportunity to work together to put local government on a more sustainable footing, creating simpler structures that will deliver the services that local people and businesses need and deserve, it is essential that decisions regarding ongoing service delivery and the medium term financial strategy of existing councils do not compromise the future sustainability of new councils.
3. In the invitation issued on 5 February 2025, councils were asked to set out in their interim plans any voluntary arrangements that have been agreed to keep all councils involved in discussions as this work moves forward and to help balance the decisions needed now to maintain service delivery and ensure value for money for council taxpayers with those key decisions that will affect the future success of any new councils in the area. Regardless of whether voluntary arrangements are now in place, it is essential that all involved are cognisant that decisions taken now by existing councils could fetter the future decisions of new councils and act accordingly.
4. Examples of those decisions include but are not limited to the sale and purchase of significant assets, transfer of local assets, entering into new contracts for service delivery including IT procurement, major organisational restructures and changes to staff terms and conditions, establishing companies, undertaking job evaluation, permanent appointments to senior positions, changes to unplanned borrowing and the spending of reserves, and major changes to arrangements such as the local council tax support scheme and council tax exemption scheme.
5. We continue to encourage local communication on decisions and for councils to actively take steps at appropriate times to align services with neighbouring councils to smooth the transition to service delivery in any new unitary. The expectation is that councils continue to operate in accordance with their agreed medium term financial plans and planned actions for the period and defer the

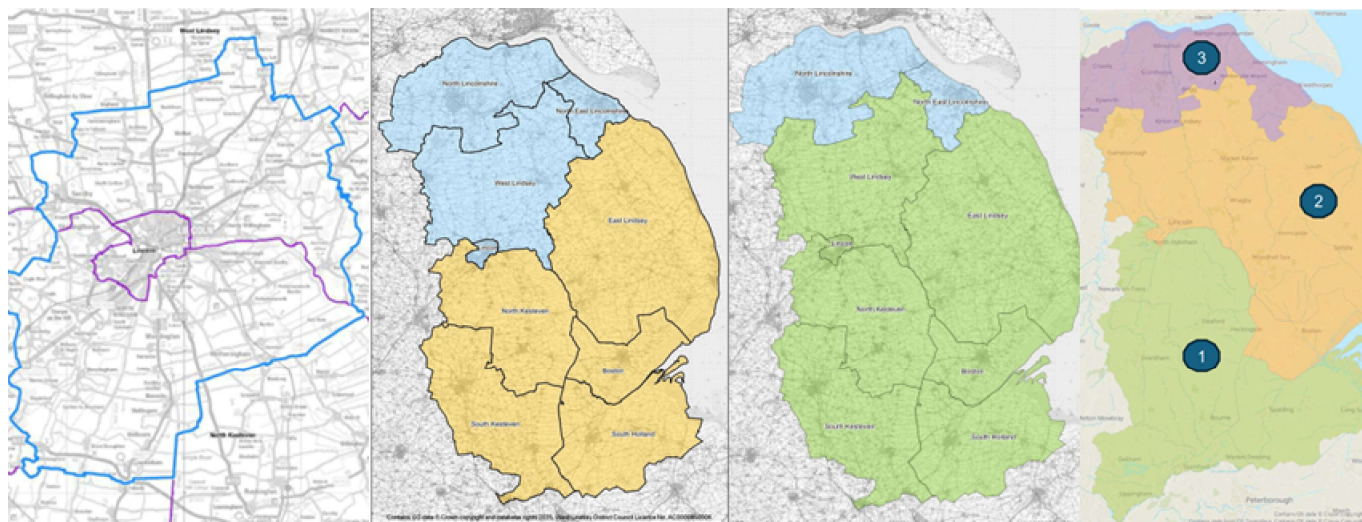
implementation of any significant changes to service delivery other than where this would cause a gap or cessation of a key service. Decisions that are necessary to ensure service delivery should not be delayed.

6. In previous rounds of local government reorganisation, directions have been issued under section 24 of the 2007 Act to those councils being reorganised to ensure new agreements will be in the best interests of the new council(s) or the residents of the area, and do not undermine or diminish the benefits or savings anticipated as a result of unitarisation, or which may have an effect on the financial position of the new council/s.
7. The Government intends again to issue directions under section 24 of the 2007 Act, once Structural Changes Orders have been made, to specify a person to give consent for all relevant matters and how that power is to be exercised. We anticipate that these directions will follow the precedents previously set, namely that written consent from the successor council will be required for land disposals worth more than £100,000, entering contracts of more than £1,000,000 for capital and entering contracts of more than £100,000 for non-capital (whole life costs).
8. In the meantime, the Government expects councillors and statutory officers to be mindful of their responsibilities. Councils should maintain strong accounting and governance disciplines, prepare their accounts on a timely basis, and work closely with their auditors to rebuild assurance where accounts have been disclaimed and to ensure that all assets, liabilities and key risks are correctly identified and reported. We expect all councils in an area to work together in sharing information and making decisions that are in the best interests of the whole area.

Have your say on the future of West Lindsey

The future of your Council is changing. Earlier this year, the government announced plans to reorganise the way local government services are delivered to local people. Currently, Lincolnshire exists in a 'two-tier' system with some services, such as waste collection, planning and street cleaning delivered by your district council while other services, such as waste disposal, social care and highways delivered by Lincolnshire County Council. Under the government's plans, the two-tier system will be replaced with unitary councils which will deliver all local government services in one place. You can find out more about Local Government Reorganisation and how this may affect you at <https://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/council-democracy/local-government-reorganisation>

Some councils across Greater Lincolnshire are currently working up final proposals for what the future of local government services should look like for the area. There are currently four proposals being worked on, which may still be subject to change. These are:



To help shape these plans, we would like to hear your views on what is important to you in terms of place identity, and how you access local services. Please fill out the short survey below, which will take no more than 10 minutes to complete, to have your say on the future of local government in your area.

The survey will close on 15 September 2025 at 9am. If you have any questions, or if you would like to request a copy of this survey in an alternative format, please email corporate.plan@west-lindsey.gov.uk or contact Customer Services on 01427 676 676. Thank you.

1. Are you responding as: **Please tick all that apply**

- ☐ a resident
- ☐ a Parish or Town Councillor
- ☐ a WLDC Councillor
- ☐ a County Councillor
- ☐ on behalf of a business
- ☐ a community representative
- ☐ WLDC Staff
- ☐ non West Lindsey resident

2. Where do you live? **Please tick one box only**

- ☐ Bardney
- ☐ Caistor and Yarborough
- ☐ Cherry Willingham
- ☐ Dunholme and Welton
- ☐ Gainsborough
- ☐ Hemswell
- ☐ Kelsey Wold
- ☐ Lea
- ☐ Market Rasen
- ☐ Nettleham
- ☐ Saxilby
- ☐ Scampton
- ☐ Scotter and Blyton
- ☐ Stow
- ☐ Sudbrooke
- ☐ Torksey
- ☐ Waddingham and Spital
- ☐ Wold View

Other - Please specify:

3. The following two questions help us to understand what you value most about your local area. Which of the following statements is most applicable to you? **Please tick one box only**

- ☐ I feel part of my local area
- ☐ I feel part of the district of West Lindsey
- ☐ I feel part of the County of Lincolnshire
- ☐ I feel part of the Greater Lincolnshire region
- ☐ I feel part of the East Midlands
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Other - Please specify:

4. What do you value about your local area? **Please tick all that apply**

- ☐ Job opportunities in my local area or surrounding area
- ☐ Proximity to family
- ☐ Proximity to friends
- ☐ Proximity to your local town
- ☐ Affordability/availability of housing
- ☐ Safe and friendly environment
- ☐ Provision of education
- ☐ Natural environment
- ☐ Transport links
- ☐ None of the above

Other - Please specify:

5. What ties your local community together? **Please tick all that apply**

- ☐ Accessibility of local services
- ☐ Variety of local services
- ☐ Common interests
- ☐ Common meeting places
- ☐ How people interact with each other
- ☐ Natural environment
- ☐ Shared experiences
- ☐ Shared identity
- ☐ Willingness to help others
- ☐ Heritage
- ☐ None of the above

Other - Please specify:

6. Which town centre do you visit most frequently? **Please tick one box only**

- ☐ Barton-upon-Humber
- ☐ Boston
- ☐ Bourne
- ☐ Brigg
- ☐ Caistor
- ☐ Cleethorpes
- ☐ Gainsborough
- ☐ Grantham
- ☐ Grimsby
- ☐ Holbeach
- ☐ Horncastle
- ☐ Immingham
- ☐ Kirton-in-Lindsey
- ☐ Lincoln
- ☐ Louth
- ☐ Mablethorpe
- ☐ Market Rasen
- ☐ Scunthorpe
- ☐ Skegness
- ☐ Sleaford
- ☐ Spalding
- ☐ Stamford

Other - Please specify:

7. District Councils deliver a number of services including housing, planning, leisure, waste collection and car parking. Under the government's plans, district and county councils will be abolished and replaced with larger unitary councils which will provide all local government services in a given area.

As part of the creation of a new unitary, please rank which district services are a priority to you? **Please tick one box per row to list the following of order of priority to you with 1st being highest priority and 10th being lowest priority**

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th
Supporting the local economy including creating job opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local facilities like public toilets and leisure's centres	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Protecting the environment and keeping it clean	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Open spaces including parks and play areas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rubbish collection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Building related services such as planning applications, enforcement, building control, protecting our heritage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Availability of affordable housing, including provision of homelessness services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support for housing needs, council tax and benefits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helping people stay healthy and safe	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working to mitigate the impact of climate change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

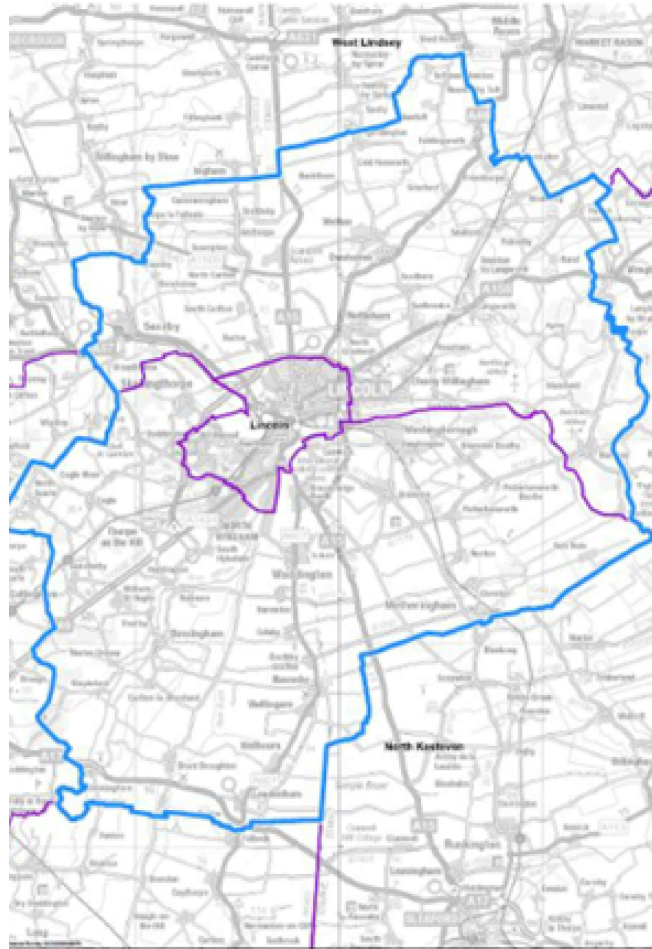
8. What are your main concerns about council services being delivered by single, larger unitary councils?

9. Please list any specific services that are currently provided by the council which you feel should be locally assessable to the community they serve?

10. When thinking about proposals for local government reorganisation in Lincolnshire, what should the priority be? **Please tick all that apply**

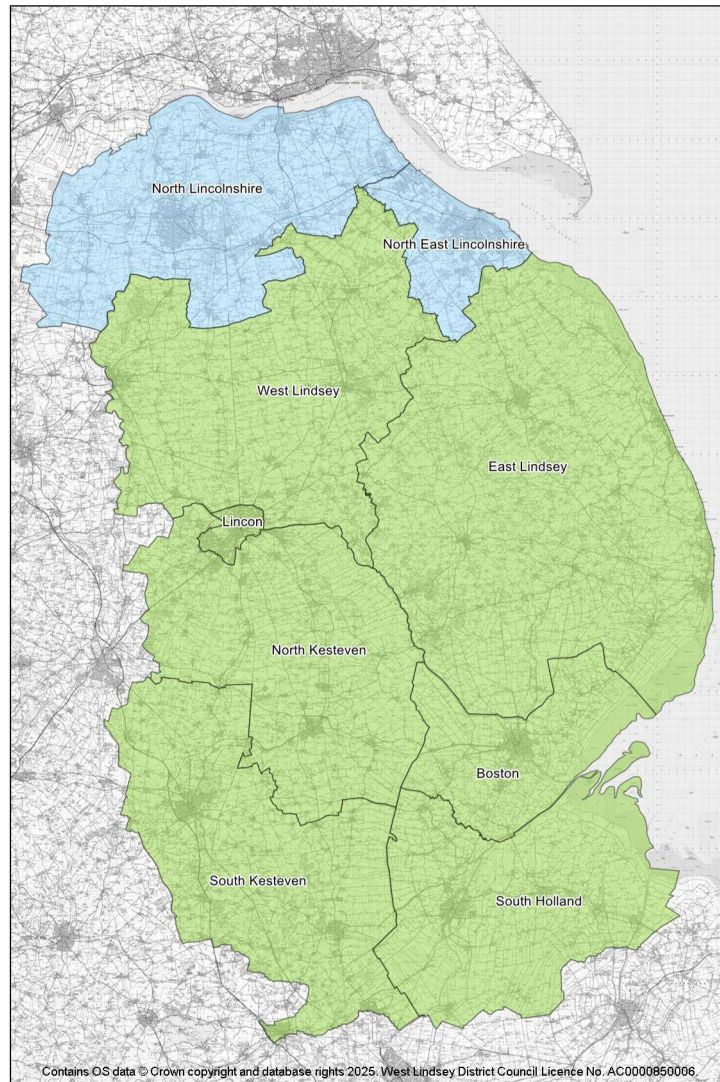
- ☐ Access to services
- ☐ Access to your local Councillor
- ☐ Simplified service delivery
- ☐ Service Quality
- ☐ Value for Money
- ☐ Don't Know
- ☐ None of the above

Other - Please specify:



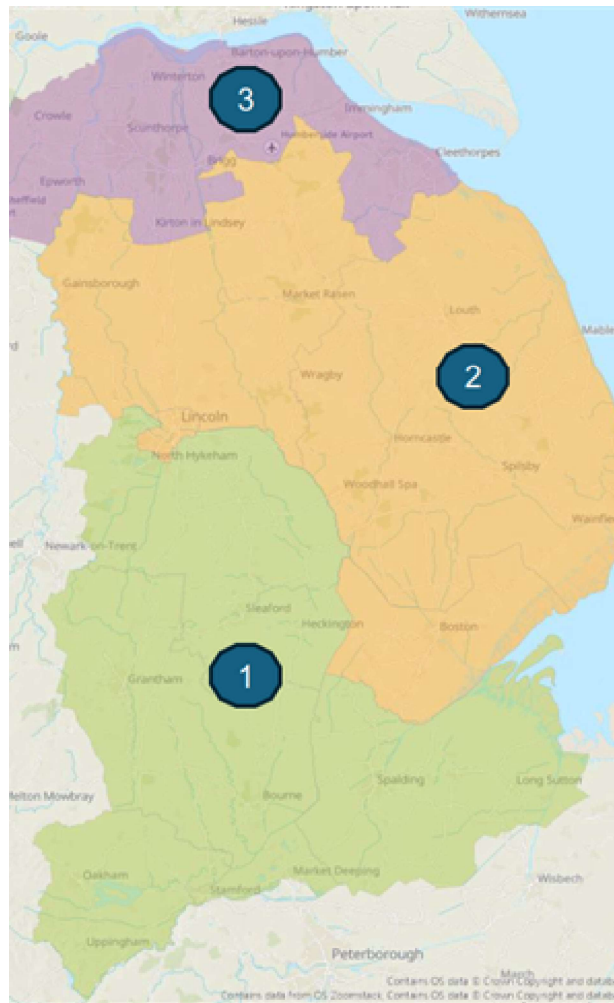
Proposal of an expanded City of Lincoln which includes wards from North Kesteven and West Lindsey with then possible north and south unitaries

11. Looking at this proposal outlined in the map above, do you have any comments on any possible impacts to West Lindsey?



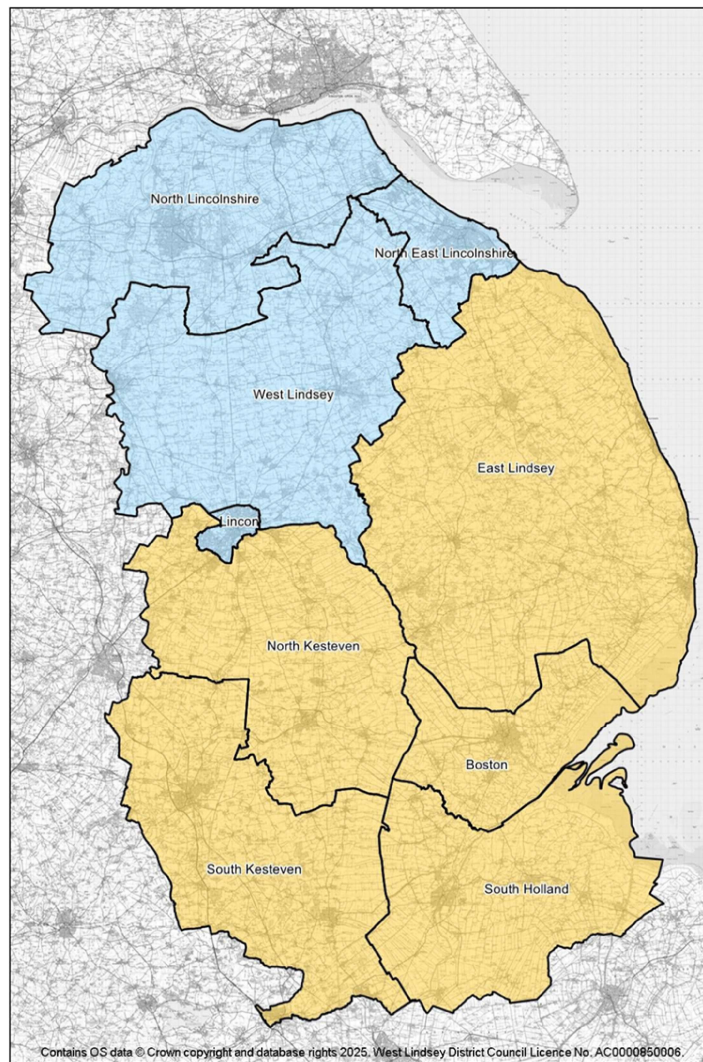
Proposal of a 2 unitary model based on existing County boundary with a merger of North and North East Lincolnshire

12. Looking at this proposal outlined in the map above, do you have any comments on any possible impacts to West Lindsey?



Proposal of 3 unitaries including Rutland. West Lindsey grouped with Boston, Lincoln and East Lindsey.

13. Looking at this proposal outlined in the map above, do you have any comments on any possible impacts to West Lindsey?



Proposal of 2 unitaries with West Lindsey grouped with City of Lincoln, North Lincolnshire and North-East Lincolnshire

14. Looking at this proposal outlined in the map above, do you have any comments on any possible impacts to West Lindsey?

15. Please share any views or concerns you may have about local government reorganisation:

Equalities questionnaire

By answering the equalities questions you will help us to understand how different groups of people from different areas feel about this engagement. All responses are anonymised and you do not have to answer these to take part in the survey.

16. Are you willing to answer these questions?

- ☐ Yes - Please go to question 17
- ☐ No - Please go to the end of the survey

17. Are you?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Transgender
- ☐ Non-Binary
- ☐ Any other gender
- ☐ Prefer not to say

18. Do you have any long term illness, health problems or disability which limits your daily activities or the work that you do?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

19. What age are you?

- ☐ 16-25
- ☐ 26-35
- ☐ 36-45
- ☐ 46-55
- ☐ 56-65
- ☐ 66-75
- ☐ 76 or over
- ☐ Prefer not to say

20. Which of these ethnic groups do you consider you belong?

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
- ☐ Asian or Asian British
- ☐ Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- ☐ Any other ethnic group
- ☐ Prefer not to say

21. Which of the following best describes your faith/religion/belief?

- ☐ No religion
- ☐ Christian (all denominations)
- ☐ Muslim
- ☐ Buddhist
- ☐ Sikh
- ☐ Hindu
- ☐ Jewish
- ☐ Any other religion/faith/belief
- ☐ Prefer not to say

22. Which of the following statements best describes your sexuality?

- ☐ Heterosexual/Straight
- ☐ Lesbian/Gay
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Any other sexual orientation
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Thank you for taking part in this engagement

Agenda Item 12h



Council

Monday, 8 September 2025

Subject: Recommendation from Corporate Policy and Resources Committee – 24th July 2025 – New Fee relative to Markets for 2025/26

Report by:	Director of Finance and Assets (S151 Officer)
Contact Officer:	Sue Leversedge Business Support Team Leader sue.leversedge@west-lindsey.gov.uk
Purpose / Summary:	To introduce one new fee relative to the Markets following recommendation from Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council accept the recommendation from the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee and approve the new fee (paragraph 1.2) for immediate implementation.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: None arising as a result in this report.

Financial : FIN/62/26/CL/SL

One new fee line is proposed to be added to the fees and charges schedule for the Markets **with immediate effect**.

- Event Pitch / Stall Fee £50.00 for event traders only

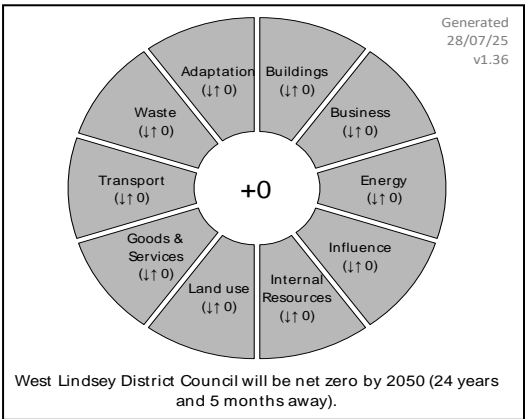
The amendment to the fees and charges schedule for the Markets will have a minimal impact on the income received for that service during 2025/2026.

Staffing : None arising as a result in this report.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights : None arising as a result in this report.

Data Protection Implications : None arising as a result in this report.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities: None arising as a result in this report.



Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations: None arising as a result in this report.

Health Implications: None arising as a result in this report.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :

N/A

Risk Assessment :

N/A

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

☐

No

X

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

☐

No

X

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Corporate Policy and Resources Committee at their meeting on 24th July 2025 considered a report entitled Budget and Treasury Monitoring - Quarter 1 2025/2026 (1st April 2025 to 31st May 2025).
- 1.2 Section 2.3.2 of that report detailed proposals for the introduction of one new fee relative to the Markets, namely: -

Markets

A new fee is proposed for inclusion in the 2025/2026 fees and charges schedule for markets.

- Event Pitch / Stall Fee £50.00 for event traders only

Any registered or casual traders that attend our weekly markets will pay the standard fee on event days (see below), traders who only attend events (who come from all over the UK) will be charged the new event rate.

This reflects the cost of promoting and organising the events, and the benefits of the increased footfall. We also include power, security and a stall if the stall holder doesn't have their own. The fee remains competitive but reflects the space as premium for special events.

The proposed fee is benchmarked against a competitor who currently charges £100 for event pitches.

For information, the average fee for 1 stall/pitch for a registered/casual trader is currently £18.00 (range between £10.00 and £23.50).

We currently charge £20.00 per pitch/stall to event traders, being the casual trader rate for a Saturday market currently within the fees and charges schedule.

- 1.3 The relevant resolution passed is set out below: -

RESOLVED that:

- (d) the amendments to the fees and charges schedules for 2025/2026 (paragraph 2.3.2) be approved and recommended to Council that any new Fees and Charges be implemented.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Council are therefore asked to accept the recommendation from the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee and approve the new fee (paragraph 1.2 above) for immediate implementation.

Agenda Item 12i



Council

**Monday, 8th September
2025**

**Subject: Recommendation from Corporate Policy and Resources
Committee – Annual Treasury Management Report 2024/25**

Report by:

Director of Finance and Assets (S151)

Contact Officer:

Comie Campbell
Interim Financial Services Manager (Deputy
S151)

comie.campbell@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Purpose / Summary:

To report on the Annual Treasury Management
activities and prudential indicators for 2024/25 in
accordance with the Local Government Act 2003

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. Full Council approve the Annual Treasury Management Report and actual Prudential Indicators 2024/25.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: None from this report

Financial: FIN/29/26/MT/CC

Treasury Investment activities have generated £1.166m of investment interest at an average rate of 5.01%.

Non-Treasury investments (Investment Property Portfolio) have generated £1.691m income which is a gross yield of 7.01%

Financing activities has resulted in a total of £24.0m of external borrowing at a cost in year of £0.760m.

Staffing : None from this report

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights : None from this report

Data Protection Implications : None from this report

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities: None from this report

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations: None from this report

Health Implications: None from this report

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :

The Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25

Risk Assessment :

The Treasury Management Strategy sets out an assessment of treasury risks.

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

☐

No

X

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

☐

No

X

1. Executive Summary

The Council are required to receive as a minimum the following reports;

- an annual treasury strategy in advance of the year (March 2024)
- a mid-year, (minimum), treasury update report (January 2025)
- an annual review following the end of the year describing the activity compared to the strategy, (this report)

In addition, this Corporate Policy and Resources Committee has received quarterly treasury management update reports.

The regulatory environment places responsibility on members for the review and scrutiny of treasury management policy and activities. This report is, therefore, important in that respect, as it provides details of the outturn position for treasury activities and highlights compliance with the Council's policies previously approved by members.

This Council confirms that it has complied with the requirement under the Code to give prior scrutiny to all of the above treasury management reports by either the Governance and Audit Committee who provide scrutiny of the Treasury Management Strategy and the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee who monitor in year performance and mid-year updates. Member training on treasury management issues was undertaken during the year in order to support members' scrutiny role.

During 2024/25, the Council complied with its legislative and regulatory requirements. The key actual prudential and treasury indicators detailing the impact of capital expenditure activities during the year, with comparators, are as follows:

Prudential and treasury indicators	2023/24 Actual £000	2024/25 Original £000	2024/25 Actual £000
Capital expenditure	5,303	30,716	17,398
Capital Financing Requirement:	37,022	36,340	36,070
Of which – Investment Properties	19,536	19,099	19,099
Gross borrowing (External)	24,000	19,155	24,000
Finance Lease	0	0	0
Investments			
• Longer than 1 year	2,000	3,000	2,000
• Under 1 year	18,210	10,000	19,780
• Total	20,210	13,000	21,780
Net borrowing	3,790	6,155	2,220

Other prudential and treasury indicators are to be found in the main body of this report. The Director of Finance and Assets (S151 Officer) also confirms that borrowing was only undertaken for a capital purpose and the statutory borrowing limit, (the authorised limit), was not breached.

The financial year 2024/25 was a challenging investment environment due to the uncertainty if interest rates were due to be reduced or not by the Bank of England. This meant that locking in longer term investments was hard to do because of concern over the possible increase or decrease of the return over time. With this in mind shorter term investments were made so as not to lose potential returns if rates went up. Conversely debt then became more expensive and so it was a fine balancing act.

This report summarises the following:-

- Capital activity during the year;
- Impact of this activity on the Council's underlying indebtedness, (the Capital Financing Requirement);
- The actual prudential and treasury indicators;
- Overall treasury position identifying how the Council has borrowed in relation to this indebtedness, and the impact on investment balances;
- Summary of interest rate movements in the year;
- Detailed debt activity; and
- Detailed investment activity.

2. Capital Expenditure and Financing

The Council undertakes capital expenditure on long-term assets. These activities may either be:

- Financed immediately through the application of capital or revenue resources (capital receipts, capital grants, revenue contributions etc.), which has no resultant impact on the Council's borrowing need; or
- If insufficient financing is available, or a decision is taken not to apply resources, the capital expenditure will give rise to a borrowing need.

The actual capital expenditure forms one of the required prudential indicators. The table below shows the actual capital expenditure and how this was funded.

Capital and Financing	2023/24 Actual £000's	2024/25 Original Budget £000's	2024/25 Actual £000's
Capital expenditure	5,303	30,716	17,398
Financed in year by:			
Capital Receipts	324	451	119
Capital grants/contributions	4,142	19,525	16,827
Revenue	776	9,393	18

Leases	0	0	0
S106	797	1,204	434
Prudential Borrowing	(736)	143	0

3. The Council's overall borrowing need

The Council's underlying need to borrow for capital expenditure is termed the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). This figure is a gauge of the Council's indebtedness. The CFR results from the capital activity of the Council and resources used to pay for the capital spend. It represents the 2024/25 unfinanced capital expenditure (see above table), and prior years' net or unfinanced capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for by revenue or other resources.

Part of the Council's treasury activities is to address the funding requirements for this borrowing need. Depending on the capital expenditure programme, the treasury service organises the Council's cash position to ensure that sufficient cash is available to meet the capital plans and cash flow requirements. This may be sourced through borrowing from external bodies, (such as the Government, through the Public Works Loan Board [PWLb], or the money markets), or utilising temporary cash resources within the Council.

Reducing the CFR – the Council's underlying borrowing need (CFR) is not allowed to rise indefinitely. Statutory controls are in place to ensure that capital assets are broadly charged to revenue over the life of the asset. The Council is required to make an annual revenue charge, called the Minimum Revenue Provision – MRP, to reduce the CFR. This is effectively a repayment of the borrowing need. This differs from the treasury management arrangements which ensure that cash is available to meet capital commitments. External debt can also be borrowed or repaid at any time, but this does not change the CFR.

The total CFR can also be reduced by:

- the application of additional capital financing resources, (such as unapplied capital receipts); or
- charging more than the statutory revenue charge (MRP) each year through a Voluntary Revenue Provision (VRP).

The Council's 2024/25 MRP Policy, (as required by DLUHC Guidance), was approved as part of the Treasury Management Strategy Report for 2024/25 on 4th March 2024.

The Council has retained a Valuation Volatility Reserve with a minimum balance of 3% of purchase price of the investment property portfolio. This Reserve will be utilised to mitigate any loss on the investment upon sale of the assets if the capital receipt does not meet the debt outstanding. With the introduction of MRP for 2022/23, this reserve and minimum balance will be

reviewed on an annual basis. This is considered a prudent approach for these specific assets.

The Council's CFR for the year is shown below, and represents a key prudential indicator.

Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	31 March 2024 Actual £000's	31 March 2025 Actual £000's
Opening balance	39,438	37,022
Add adjustment for Prudential Borrowing	(736)	0
Less MRP/Finance Lease Repayments	(1,680)	(952)
Less VRP	0	0
Closing balance	37,022	36,070
<i>Movement on CFR</i>	<i>(2,416)</i>	<i>(952)</i>

Borrowing activity is constrained by prudential indicators for gross borrowing and the CFR, and by the authorised limit.

Gross borrowing and the CFR - in order to ensure that borrowing levels are prudent over the medium term and only for a capital purpose, the Council ensures that its gross external borrowing does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the capital financing requirement in the preceding year (2023/24) plus the estimates of any additional capital financing requirement for the current (2024/25) and next two financial years. This essentially means that the Council is not borrowing to support revenue expenditure. This indicator allowed the Council some flexibility to borrow in advance of its immediate capital needs in 2024/25. The table below highlights the Council's gross borrowing position against the CFR. The Council has complied with this prudential indicator.

	31 March 2024 Actual £000's	2024/25 Budget £000's	31 March 2025 Actual £000's
Gross Borrowing Position	24,000	19,155	24,000
CFR	37,022	36,340	36,070
(Under)/Over Funding of CFR	(13,022)	(17,185)	(12,070)

The Authorised Limit - the authorised limit is the "affordable borrowing limit" required by s3 of the Local Government Act 2003. Once this has been set, the

Council does not have the power to borrow above this level. The table below demonstrates that during 2024/25 the Council has maintained gross borrowing within its authorised limit.

The Operational Boundary – the operational boundary is the expected borrowing position of the Council during the year. Periods where the actual position is either below or over the boundary are acceptable subject to the authorised limit not being breached.

Actual financing costs as a proportion of net revenue stream - this indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital, (borrowing and other long term obligation costs net of investment income), against the net revenue stream.

	2024/25 £000's
Authorised limit	29,155
Operational boundary	24,155
Financing costs as a proportion of net revenue stream	10.12%

4. Treasury Position as at 31 March 2025

The Council's debt and investment position is organised by the treasury management service in order to ensure adequate liquidity for revenue and capital activities, security for investments and to manage risks within all treasury management activities. Procedures and controls to achieve these objectives are well established both through member reporting detailed in the summary, and through officer activity detailed in the Council's Treasury Management Practices. At the end of 2024/25 the Council's treasury, (excluding borrowing and finance leases), position was as follows:

TABLE 1	31 March 2024 Principal £000's	Rate/ Return	Average Life yrs.	31 March 2025 Principal £000's	Average Rate/ Return	Average Life yrs.
Fixed rate funding:						
-PWLB	14,000	2.25%	27	14,000	2.25%	26
-Other LA	10,000	5.78%	0.3	10,000	5.25%	0.2
Total debt	24,000		27.3	24,000		26.2
CFR	37,022		-	36,070		
Over / (under) borrowing	(13,022)	-	-	(12,070)		
Investments:						
	20,210		-	21,780		
Total investments	20,210		-	21,780		
Net debt	3,790	-	-	2,220		

Under borrowing reflects Internal Borrowing from the Council's cash balances.

The maturity structure of the debt portfolio was as follows:

	31 March 2024 Actual £000's	31 March 2025 Actual £000's	% Portfolio
Less than 5 years	13,000	13,000	54%
5 years and within 10 years	0	0	0
10 years and within 20 years	0	0	0
20 years and within 30 years	2,500	2,500	10%
30 years and within 40 years	0	0	0
40 years and within 60 years	8,500	8,500	36%

£14.0m of loans have been undertaken with the Public Works Loans Board at fixed rates on a maturity basis as detailed above.

Borrowing in advance of need

The Council has not borrowed more than, or in advance of its needs, purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed.

The Council's capital investments and their subsequent financing costs as a % of the Net Revenue Stream is detailed below along with the impact on Council

Tax (all other things being equal). The indicators reflect the Borrowing Strategy, that the Council will only borrow where schemes are able to provide sustained support for the costs of borrowing and reflect new income generated is in excess of the cost of borrowing.

	31 March 2024 Actual	31 March 2025 Actual
Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream	11.15%	10.12%
Increase/(Reduction) in Council Tax	£25.75	£26.37

Investments

Investment Policy – the Council's investment policy is governed by DLUHC investment guidance, which has been implemented in the annual investment strategy approved by the Council on 4th March 2024. This policy sets out the approach for choosing investment counterparties and is based on credit ratings provided by the three main credit rating agencies, supplemented by additional market data, (such as rating outlooks, credit default swaps, bank share prices etc.).

The investment activity during the year conformed to the approved strategy, and the Council had no liquidity difficulties.

Resources – the Council's cash balances comprise revenue and capital resources and cash flow monies. The Council's core cash resources comprised as follows:

Balance Sheet Resources*	31 March 2024 £000's	31 March 2025 £000's
General Fund Balance	3,328	3,495
Earmarked reserves	20,047	19,558
Provisions	378	0
Usable capital receipts	1,460	1,460
Capital Grants Unapplied	3,577	3,070
Total	28,849	27,603

*Subject to external audit of the 2024/25 accounts

Investments held by the Council

- The Council maintained an average balance of £21.283m of internally managed funds.
- The internally managed funds earned an average rate of return of 5.01%.

- The comparable performance indicator is the Sterling Overnight Index Average (SONIA) which was a rate of 4.91% as at 31 March 2025.
- Total investment income was £1.166m compared to a budget of £0.651m.

Types of investments	31 March 2024 Actual £000	31 March 2025 Actual £000
Deposits with banks and building societies	1,995	500
Money Market Funds	16,710	19,280
Other Local Authorities	1,000	0
Property funds	2,000	2,000
TOTAL TREASURY INVESTMENTS	20,210	21,780

Non-Treasury Investments

YEAR OF ACQUISITION	Commercial Property Portfolio	Sector	Total Acquisition Cost £'m
2017/18	Bradford Road, Keighley	Hotel	2.490
2018/19	43 Penistone Road, Sheffield	Leisure	2.700
2018/19	Unit 7 Drake House, Sheffield	Manufacturing	3.175
2018/19	5 Sandars Road, Gainsborough	Manufacturing	6.470
2018/19	Heaton Street, Gainsborough	Retail	1.150
2019/20	Wheatley Road, Doncaster	Commercial Unit	5.681
	TOTAL PORTFOLIO		21.666

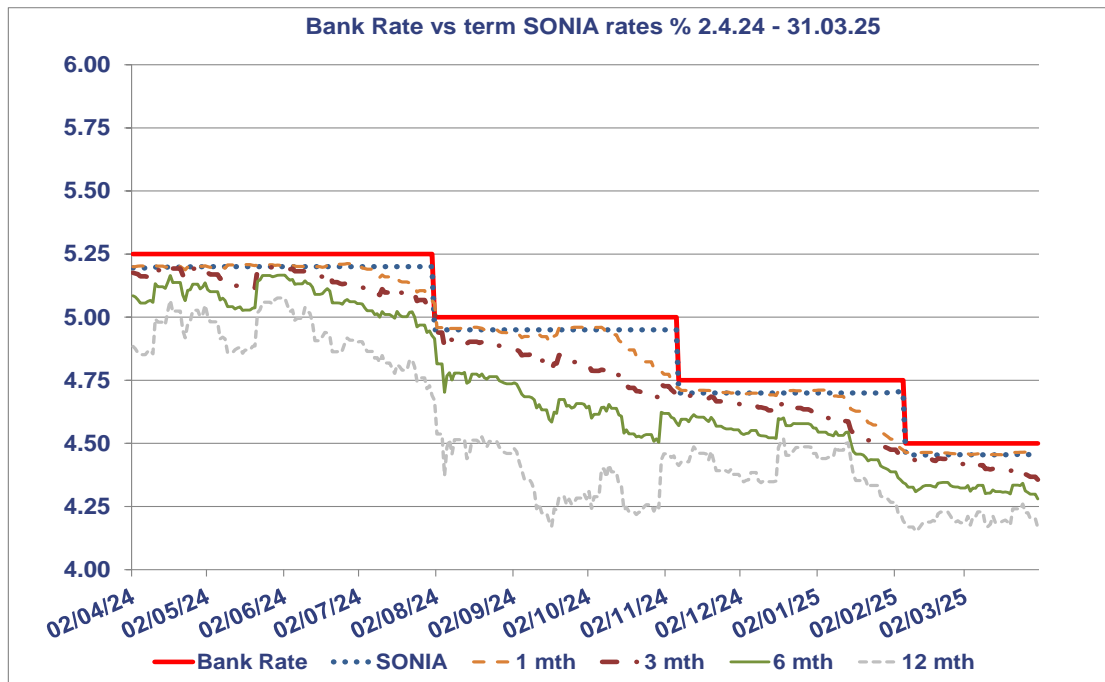
The investments are held on the balance sheet at their Fair Value (*the price expected to be received in current market conditions*). The Fair Value as at 31 March 2025 for the Commercial Property Portfolio is £22.952m.

This investment portfolio is generating a gross yield of 7.01% and £1.691m in income relevant to the financial year.

The Council mitigates any loss on investment by holding a Valuation Volatility Reserve at a minimum of 3% of the purchase price of properties. The balance on this reserve as at 31 March 2025 is £0.850m.

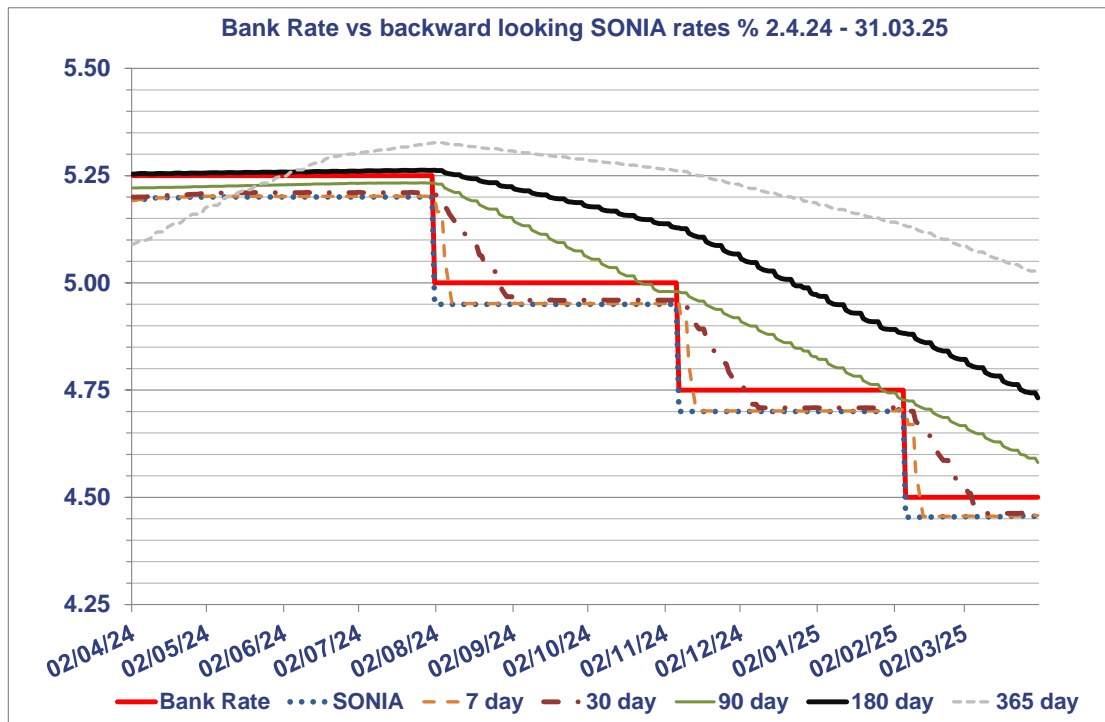
5. The Strategy for 2024/25 (Information supplied by MUFG)

Investment strategy and control of interest rate risk



FINANCIAL YEAR TO QUARTER ENDED 31/03/2025						
	Bank Rate	SONIA	1 mth	3 mth	6 mth	12 mth
High	5.25	5.20	5.21	5.20	5.17	5.08
High Date	02/04/2024	03/05/2024	27/06/2024	17/04/2024	31/05/2024	30/05/2024
Low	4.50	4.45	4.45	4.36	4.28	4.15
Low Date	06/02/2025	12/02/2025	04/03/2025	31/03/2025	31/03/2025	10/02/2025
Average	4.95	4.90	4.88	4.82	4.72	4.54
Spread	0.75	0.75	0.76	0.85	0.89	0.93

Investment Benchmarking Data – Sterling Overnight Index Averages (Backward-looking) 2024/25



FINANCIAL YEAR TO QUARTER ENDED 31/03/2025							
	Bank Rate	SONIA	7 day	30 day	90 day	180 day	365 day
High	5.25	5.20	5.20	5.21	5.23	5.26	5.33
High Date	02/04/2024	03/05/2024	13/05/2024	26/06/2024	26/07/2024	26/07/2024	01/08/2024
Low	4.50	4.45	4.46	4.46	4.58	4.73	5.02
Low Date	06/02/2025	12/02/2025	13/02/2025	12/03/2025	31/03/2025	31/03/2025	31/03/2025
Average	4.95	4.90	4.91	4.94	5.02	5.11	5.22
Spread	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.65	0.53	0.30

Investment returns remained robust throughout 2024/25 with Bank Rate reducing steadily through the course of the financial year (three 0.25% rate cuts in total), and even at the end of March the yield curve was still relatively flat, which might be considered unusual as further Bank Rate cuts were expected in 2025/26.

Bank Rate reductions of 0.25% occurred in August, November and February, bringing the headline rate down from 5.25% to 4.5%. Each of the Bank Rate cuts occurred in the same month as the Bank of England publishes its Quarterly Monetary Policy Report, therein providing a clarity over the timing of potential future rate cuts.

As of early April 2025, market sentiment has been heavily influenced of late by President Trump's wide-ranging trade tariffs policy. Commentators anticipate a growing risk of a US recession, whilst UK GDP is projected by the Office for Budget Responsibility to remain tepid, perhaps achieving 1% GDP growth in 2025/26.

Looking back to 2024/25, investors were able to achieve returns in excess of 5% for all periods ranging from 1 month to 12 months in the spring of 2024 but

by March 2025 deposit rates were some 0.75% - 1% lower. Where liquidity requirements were not a drain on day-to-day investment choices, extending duration through the use of “laddered investments” paid off.

That is not to say that investment choices were straight-forward. Concerns over rising inflation after the Autumn Statement in October led to reduced expectations for Bank Rate to fall. Indeed, the CPI measure of inflation is expected to reach c3.75% by the autumn of 2025, which could provide for some presentational issues for a Bank whose primary mandate is to ensure inflation is close to 2% on a two-to-three-year timeframe. At the end of March, only two further rate cuts were priced into the market for 2025 (4% at December 2025). A week later and sentiment has changed dramatically in the wake of the equity market sell-off to the extent that markets now expect three Bank Rate reductions between May and December 2025 (Bank Rate to fall to 3.75%).

Borrowing strategy and control of interest rate risk

During 2024/25, the Authority maintained an under-borrowed position. This meant that the capital borrowing need, (the Capital Financing Requirement), was not fully funded with loan debt as cash supporting the Authority’s reserves, balances and cash flow was used as an interim measure. This strategy was prudent as although near-term investment rates were equal to, and sometimes higher than, long-term borrowing costs, the latter are expected to fall back through 2025 and 2026 in the light of economic growth concerns and the eventual dampening of inflation. The Authority has sought to minimise the taking on of long-term borrowing at elevated levels and has focused on a policy of internal and temporary borrowing, supplemented by short-dated borrowing as appropriate.

Against this background and the risks within the economic forecast, caution was adopted with the treasury operations. The Section 151 Officer therefore monitored interest rates in financial markets and adopted a pragmatic strategy based upon the following principles to manage interest rate risks:

- if it had been felt that there was a significant risk of a sharp FALL in long and short-term rates, (e.g., due to a marked increase of risks around a relapse into recession or of risks of deflation), then long term borrowings would have been postponed, and potential rescheduling from fixed rate funding into short term borrowing would have been considered.
- if it had been felt that there was a significant risk of a much sharper RISE in long and short-term rates than initially expected, perhaps arising from the stickiness of inflation in the major developed economies, then the portfolio position would have been re-appraised. Most likely, fixed rate funding would have been drawn whilst interest rates were lower than they were projected to be in the next few years.

Interest rate forecasts initially suggested gradual reductions in short, medium and longer-term fixed borrowing rates during 2024/25. Bank Rate did peak at 5.25% as anticipated, but the initial expectation of significant rate reductions did

not transpire, primarily because inflation concerns remained elevated. Forecasts were too optimistic from a rate reduction perspective, but more recently the forecasts, updated from November 2024 onwards, look more realistic.

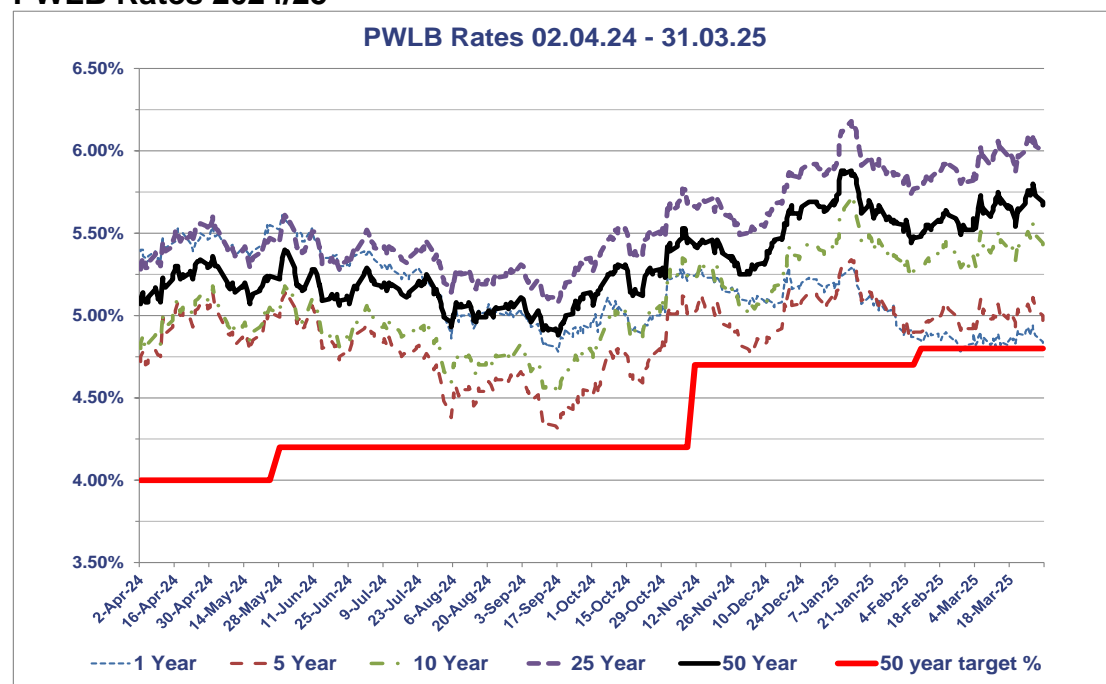
At the start of April 2025, following the introduction of President Trump's trade tariffs policies, the market now expects Bank Rate to fall to 3.75% by the end of December 2025, pulling down the 5- and 10-year parts of the curve too.

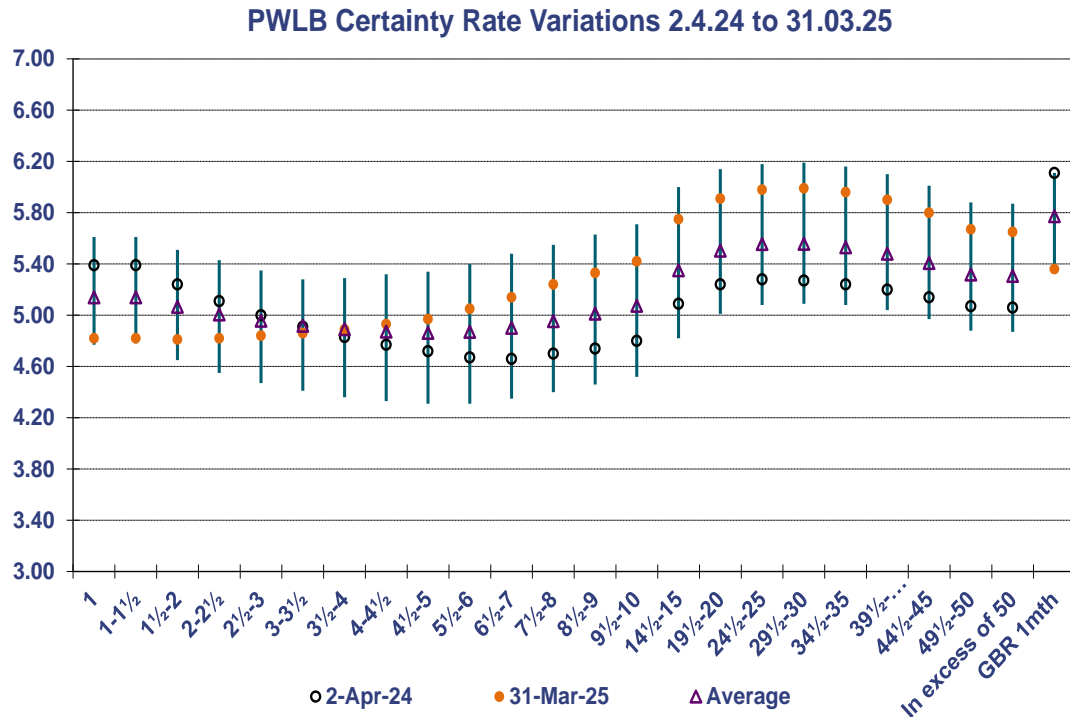
This should provide an opportunity for greater certainty to be added to the debt portfolio, although a significant fall in inflation will be required to underpin any material movement lower in the longer part of the curve.

Forecasts at the time of approval of the treasury management strategy report for 2024/25 were as follows:-

MUFG Corporate Markets Interest Rate View 05.02.24													
	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27
BANK RATE	5.25	5.25	4.75	4.25	3.75	3.25	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
3 month ave earnings	5.30	5.30	4.80	4.30	3.80	3.30	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
6 month ave earnings	5.20	5.10	4.60	4.10	3.70	3.30	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.10
12 month ave earnings	5.00	4.90	4.40	3.90	3.60	3.20	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.20	3.20
5 yr PWLB	4.50	4.40	4.30	4.20	4.10	4.00	3.80	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.50	3.50	3.50
10 yr PWLB	4.70	4.50	4.40	4.30	4.20	4.10	4.00	3.90	3.80	3.70	3.70	3.70	3.70
25 yr PWLB	5.20	5.10	4.90	4.80	4.60	4.40	4.30	4.20	4.20	4.10	4.10	4.10	4.10
50 yr PWLB	5.00	4.90	4.70	4.60	4.40	4.20	4.10	4.00	4.00	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90

PWLB Rates 2024/25





High/Low/Average PWLB Rates for 2024/25

	1 Year	5 Year	10 Year	25 Year	50 Year
Low	4.77%	4.31%	4.52%	5.08%	4.88%
Date	26/02/2025	17/09/2024	17/09/2024	17/09/2024	17/09/2024
High	5.61%	5.34%	5.71%	6.18%	5.88%
Date	29/05/2024	13/01/2025	13/01/2025	13/01/2025	09/01/2025
Average	5.14%	4.86%	5.07%	5.56%	5.32%
Spread	0.84%	1.03%	1.19%	1.10%	1.00%

PWLB rates are based on gilt (UK Government bonds) yields through HM Treasury determining a specified margin to add to gilt yields. The main influences on gilt yields are Bank Rate, inflation expectations and movements in US treasury yields. Inflation targeting by the major central banks has been successful over the last 30 years in lowering inflation and the real equilibrium rate for central rates has fallen considerably due to the high level of borrowing by consumers: this means that central banks do not need to raise rates as much now to have a major impact on consumer spending, inflation, etc. This has pulled down the overall level of interest rates and bond yields in financial markets over the last 30 years. Indeed, in recent years many bond yields up to 10 years in the Eurozone turned negative on expectations that the EU would struggle to get growth rates and inflation up from low levels. In addition, there has, at times, been an inversion of bond yields in the US whereby 10-year yields have fallen below shorter-term yields. In the past, this has been a precursor of a recession.

However, since early 2022, yields have risen dramatically in all the major developed economies, first as economies opened post-Covid; then because of the inflationary impact of the war in Ukraine in respect of the supply side of

many goods. In particular, rising cost pressures emanating from shortages of energy and some food categories have been central to inflation rising rapidly. Furthermore, at present the Fed, ECB and Bank of England are all being challenged by levels of persistent inflation that are exacerbated by tight labour markets and high wage increases relative to what central banks believe to be sustainable.

UK gilt yields

Gilt yields have been volatile through 2024/25. Indeed, the low point for the financial year for many periods was reached in September 2024. Thereafter, and especially following the Autumn Statement, PWLB Certainty rates have remained elevated at between c5% - 6% with the exception of the slightly cheaper shorter dates.

At the close of 31 March 2025, the 1-year PWLB Certainty rate was 4.82% whilst the 25-year rate was 5.98% and the 50-year rate was 5.67%.

Regarding PWLB borrowing rates, the various margins attributed to their pricing are as follows: -

- **PWLB Standard Rate** is gilt plus 100 basis points (G+100bps)
- **PWLB Certainty Rate** is gilt plus 80 basis points (G+80bps)
- **Local Infrastructure Rate** is gilt plus 60 basis points (G+60bps)
- **HRA Borrowing rate** is gilt plus 40 basis points (G+40bps)

There is likely to be a fall in gilt yields and PWLB rates across the whole curve over the next one to two years as Bank Rate falls and inflation (on the Consumer Price Index measure) moves lower.

As a general rule, short-dated gilt yields will reflect expected movements in Bank Rate, whilst medium to long-dated yields are driven primarily by the inflation outlook.

The Bank of England is also continuing on a process of Quantitative Tightening. The Bank's original £895bn stock of gilt and corporate bonds will gradually be sold back into the market over several years (currently c£623bn). The impact this policy will have on the market pricing of gilts, while issuance is still markedly increasing, and very high in historic terms, is an unknown at the time of writing.

6. Other Issues

Counterparty Limits

There have been no breaches of Prudential Indicators.



Full Council

8 September 2025

Subject: Dispensation for Councillor Attendance – Councillor Liz Clews

Report by:

Monitoring Officer

Contact Officer:

Katie Storr
Democratic and Elections Team Manager
Katie.storr@west-lindsey.gov.uk
01427 676594

Purpose / Summary:

To consider a dispensation under the Local Government Act 1972 to excuse the non-attendance of Councillor Liz Clews at a meeting within a six-month period.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

The Council is asked to approve Councillor Clews' non-attendance at meetings of the Authority due to ill health for a six-month period and grant a dispensation for a further six months (up to 12 May 2026), pursuant to Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972, to avoid her disqualification as a Member of West Lindsey District Council.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

Contained with the report.

Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act, gives Local Authorities this power, subject to Council approval, before the six months expires.

Financial :

No additional financial costs.

Allowances continue to be payable in a members absence. Allowances stop being payable when a members resigns, loses offices, or chooses to forgo them.

Staffing :

N/A

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

N/A

Data Protection Implications :

None

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

None

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

None

Health Implications:

None

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :**Risk Assessment :**

n/a

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

☐

No

☐

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

☐

No

☐

1. Background and Introduction

- 1.1 Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 requires a member of a Local Authority to attend at least one meeting of that Authority within a six-month consecutive period, in order to avoid being disqualified as a Councillor.
- 1.2 Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 states that “if a member of a Local Authority fails, throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of their last attendance, to attend any meeting of the Authority they will, unless the failure was due to some good reason approved by the Authority (a dispensation) before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the Authority.”
- 1.3 Attendance can be at any committee or sub-committee, or any joint committee, joint board or other body where the functions of the Authority are discharged or who were appointed to advise the Authority on any matter relating to the discharge of their functions (substituting would meet the requirements)
- 1.4 This requirement can be waived and the time limit extended if any failure to attend was due to a reason approved by the Authority, in advance of the six-month period expiring.

2 Request Received

- 2.1 Unfortunately, due to ongoing illness Councillor Liz Clews, Scotter and Blyton Ward Member, has not been able to attend any Council or Committee meetings, since the Annual Council Meeting held on 12 May 2025.
- 2.2 The Monitoring Officer has received a request for the Council to consider approving an extension to the usual six-month attendance rule enabling her to remain in office to allow her further time to be able to resume normal duties.
- 2.3 A formal request is therefore made to Council that an extension to the six-month rule be granted for Councillor Clews due to ill health.

3. Legal Position

- 3.1 Council can only consider approval of any reasons for non-attendance before the end of the relevant six-month period, which will be 11 November 2025.
- 3.2 Councillor Clews is unlikely to be able attend Council meetings before that date or for the foreseeable future, whilst she awaits further medical intervention.
- 3.3 Once any councillor loses office, through failure to attend for the six-month period, the disqualification cannot be overcome by the councillor

subsequently resuming attendance nor can retrospective approval of the Council be sought for an extension in time.

- 3.4 If the Council decided not to approve the dispensation, subject to continued non-attendance, a casual vacancy would arise on the Authority on 12 November 2025, and Councillor Clews' term of public office would end due to disqualification.

4 Recommendation

- 4.1 The Council is asked to approve Councillor Clews' non-attendance at meetings of the Authority due to ill health for a six month period and grant a dispensation for a further six months (from 12 November 2025 up to 12 May 2026), pursuant to Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972, to avoid her disqualification as a Member of West Lindsey District Council.
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