

## WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA on 2 March 2026 at 7.00 pm.

**Present:** Councillor Matthew Boles (Chairman)  
Councillor John Barrett (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Emma Bailey	Councillor Owen Bierley
Councillor Trevor Bridgwood	Councillor Mrs Jackie Brockway
Councillor Frazer Brown	Councillor Stephen Bunney
Councillor Karen Carless	Councillor David Dobbie
Councillor Adam Duguid	Councillor Jacob Flear
Councillor Ian Fleetwood	Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
Councillor Paul Key	Councillor Mrs Angela Lawrence
Councillor Paul Lee	Councillor Peter Morris
Councillor Lynda Mullally	Councillor Maureen Palmer
Councillor Roger Pilgrim	Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings
Councillor Tom Smith	Councillor Jim Snee
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee	Councillor Baptiste Velan
Councillor Moira Westley	Councillor Trevor Young

**In Attendance:**

Paul Burkinshaw	Chief Executive
Peter Davy	Director of Finance and Assets (Section 151 Officer)
Lisa Langdon	Assistant Director People and Democratic (Monitoring Officer)
Katie Storr	Democratic Services & Elections Team Manager
Rachael Hughes	Head of Policy and Strategy
Ellen King	Policy & Strategy Officer – Corporate Strategy & Business Planning
Sally Grindrod-Smith	Director Planning, Regeneration & Communities

**Also Present:** 2 Members of the Public  
1 Member of the Press  
Mrs Katie Barry and Guest

**Apologies**

Councillor Eve Bennett  
Councillor Liz Clews  
Councillor Sabastian Hague  
Councillor Jeanette McGhee  
Councillor Roger Patterson  
Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers  
Councillor Paul Swift

## **82 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME**

The Chairman welcomed all Members, Officers and Members of the Public to the meeting, with a special welcome extended to Katie Barry, Head Teacher of St Georges School in Gainsborough, who the Chairman would be formally recognising, later in proceedings, for her contribution towards the lives of young people in the town.

## **83 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

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

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council held on 26 January 2026 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

## **84 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

## **85 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**.

## **86 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Chairman**

The Chairman addressed Council indicating he wished to use his announcements this evening to "recognise one of those that make outstanding contributions to our communities - above and beyond" - something he had sought to do throughout his term of office.

He again welcomed Mrs Katie Barry, Headteacher of St George's School in Gainsborough, who was due to shortly to finish her position with school. The Chairman read aloud to the Chamber the achievements of Mrs Barry.

"Mrs Barry who has served as Headteacher of St George's since 2006. For nearly 20 years Katie has led the school with exceptional dedication, compassion and unwavering commitment to its pupils, staff and wider community. Under her leadership the school has achieved an excellent Ofsted outcome, reflecting a clear vision and the strong team she has championed throughout her tenure. Beyond the school gates, Katie has made a profound difference to local families, establishing food banks, securing vital grants and ensuring that no child or

parent in need went unsupported. Her impact on education and on the well-being of our community has been truly remarkable and her legacy will endure for many years to come. It is a privilege to present her with a certificate and recognition of her outstanding service”

The Chairman then presented Mrs Barry with a certificate and flowers and Members showed their appreciation with a round of applause with several paying their own tributes to Mrs Barry.

Mrs Barry in return expressed her thanks, paid tribute to her wider team at the School and spoke of the honour and privilege it had been to serve the Gainsborough community, its young people both of which she was very proud of.

With a further round of applause, Mrs Barry left the meeting and announcements continued.

The Chairman firstly reminded Members that they could make recommendations to the civic team for any “above and beyond- community recognition” awards, before outlining some of the events he had had the privilege to attend.

Events highlighted were the Lincolnshire Construction and Property Awards alongside Officer and teams from Gelder’s and the Savoy, as the cinema project had been nominated for an award, receiving a special recognition award for the building. Operators had also reported the cinema continued to be busy and well used which was pleasing.

The second event being the Council led Illuminate Event, at which the Chairman had had the honour of leading the parade. He spoke of his delight and seeing so many people engaged in the event and about during the event. He also thanked all those involved in hosting and preparing the event, including the school workshops, stewarding and pre-planning activities, acknowledging the key role many volunteers played on the day. He asked that a formal thank you, from him on behalf of all Members be sent to those Officers involved.

### **Leader of the Council**

The Leader of the Council made the following address to Council: -

“Since the last Full council I have been able to attend a number of meetings and events on our collective behalf. Without doubt, the only event I can possibly start with tonight is the wonderful Illuminate Festival which filled central Gainsborough with happy people, colourful costumes, a lively projection on the Old Hall and a spectacular Fire Garden. We owe significant thanks to the Officers who generously gave of their time and effort to support this event, with particular praise going to Cara Markham and her team for their dedication and imagination.

I drove to Humberside Airport to attend the inaugural meeting of Transport for Greater Lincolnshire, run by the Mayor, Dame Andrea Jenkyns. This gave me the opportunity to discuss local and county transport issues with other Councils, with representatives from County-wide transport companies and representatives from the Department for Transport. This will be reported on when more information comes back to this Council.

The Deputy Leader and I have spent time this month looking in some detail at prominent buildings and other assets in and around Gainsborough and have held initial talks with people involved in running those assets, to see how best to rationalise and use them to best effect. This work is ongoing.

Along with Officers I regularly attend the District Joint Committee meetings, as well as the Transport and Education and Skills committees of the GLCCA. District Leaders update each other about all the GLCCA Committees so that we have a collective understanding of the progress of the new Combined Authority.

Three further delightful events came my way this month: The first was a trip to the Gelder site in Sturton where, amongst other things, I took a look at environmental initiatives and work being done with apprentices. Perhaps the best bit of that visit was seeing a group of small children having huge fun in the mud and rain before retreating to a tepee to eat their lunches with leaders from Wild in the Wood. I visited Gainsborough Academy to join pupils in an English class where they are studying a Steampunk novel. I took my costumes along and we had fun dressing up and taking photos, while learning about Steampunk and its association with the Victorian fantasy novel. I was also invited on our behalf to go along to a Rock Gospel event in Carholme Road, Lincoln, where I enjoyed a noisy, lively and friendly session of Gospel music.

All in all, Chairman, a very busy and enjoyable month”

### **Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service**

In addressing the Chamber, the Chief Executive advised of two matters he wished to bring to Council's attention. The first; Members were formally advised that the Government's consultation on proposals for Local Government Re-organisation, across Greater Lincolnshire, had formally been launched on 5 February. Members had received a briefing on 11 February and Officers had also held a session for town and parish councils across the District.

As of early February a Greater Lincolnshire Local Government Reorganisation website, shared across all local authorities in Lincolnshire, hosted by WLDC had been established and in the first few weeks there had been over 7,000 visits to that website. An Extraordinary Council meeting had been called to allow Members to debate the council's response to the Government consultation and would be held on Monday the 16 of March 2026.

The Chief Executive was also pleased to share that Cliff Dean, who led the ICT partnership across West Lindsey and North Kesteven District Councils, had been shortlisted for the Cyber Security Advocate and Educator of the Year at the Computing Security Excellence Award. The award recognised individuals who strengthened the national cyber community through leadership, collaboration, and the sharing of good practise. He and Members wished Cliff the best of luck at the Awards.

## **87 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

## **88 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 9**

The Chairman advised the meeting that five questions had been received pursuant to Procedure Rule No.9, The questions had been circulated to all Members, separately to the agenda, and published on the website.

The Chairman invited Councillor Velan to put his question to the Chairman of Prosperous Communities Committee, Councillor Emma Bailey, as follows:-

“There has been a clear and ongoing increase in rubbish and litter on road verges across West Lindsey, which is damaging the appearance of the district and raising concerns about environmental harm and public perception. Given the scale and persistence of the problem, can you as the Chairman of Prosperous Communities Committee set out what specific actions the Council is currently taking, how frequently verge clearance is being carried out, what enforcement measures are in place, and whether the Council considers current resources and arrangements to be adequate?. Furthermore, what measurable improvements and timescales can residents expect to see?”

The Chairman of the Prosperous Communities responded as follows:

Thank you for your question and I would agree that there is rubbish and litter on verges across West Lindsey. I am not sure that there is an ongoing increase as WLDC do not weigh their rubbish that is collected currently for a comparison year on year. The worse reported areas are the A46 and A57 both of which are high speed roads.

Litter anywhere is an eyesore and the most common places for high volumes of litter is along high-speed roads. It amazes me with the number of bins that each household has that people still throw things out of windows and on the floor rather than disposing it properly at home or in roadside bins.

I regularly litter pick in my area and have helped to organise several group litter picks in my ward over the years. WLDC provide bags, sticks, gloves, hi vis and risk assessments and then collect the rubbish. I appreciate that the H & S involved in having crews working along the verges is complicated and potentially dangerous should there be an accident. This is one of the reasons why these clearances only happen twice a year in line with other maintenance of verges in high-speed areas, (dual carriage ways) . I have also approached probation to see if community payback could also apply to these jobs but unfortunately this is not the case.

We have recently promoted a young person called Reggie, who has been doing a fabulous job in his local area!

Some towns in the district have dedicated litter pickers in them (Mkt Rasen and Caistor have ones paid and managed through the town councils, WLDC say what they are to do and fund 20 hours per week).

The mobile street cleaning teams cover the whole district every week (some areas more frequent, dependant on the need), they will empty all dog/litter bins and if there are any places that are bad within the 30mph, litter pick those.

During 2025 the following FPNs were issued 34 FPNs (2 x breach of PSPO, 12 fly-tipping duty of care, 14 fly-tipping, 4 littering, 2 SWW Waste). I have spoken to the enforcement team about how we should publicise more when we have had been successful and issued FPNs, we WLDC do not do that currently.

Whilst there have been no concerns regarding environmental harm specifically raised with WLDC, the appearance and the public perception is something that WLDC is aware of that needs improving. This is why the council is currently undertaking a full cost analysis of the section of the A57, this is to include permit gaining, traffic management, operational costs, time taken to undertake the set length of road, pictures before, during and after and the weight of litter collected. This data will be put in a report for members to understand all aspects of the high-speed road cleaning and then discussions about setting budgets accordingly. This paper should be available after 16th March when it will commence.

This obviously highlights that the council does not think that the current resources and arrangements are adequate or the report due would not be taking place, finding a balance that does not put further financial pressures on residents is difficult.

As an example the A57 clearing is going to cost around £7k, some roads that WLDC clear would have issues getting permits for, (A15 & parts A46). The average cost is about £10k per week for a stretch of road (some roads would cost more for traffic management to be in place). This would mean a dramatic increase in council tax.

This report will provide the detail for having more measurable improvements within a short timescale. Thank you for highlighting this and allowing further discussion on the important job that our waste team does in difficult budget restraints and to give thanks to all the residents that frequently take part in litter picking in their area.

The Chairman invited Councillor Young to put his question to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jackie Brockway, as follows:-

“The development adjacent to the old Lea Road School in Gainsborough has been left incomplete and abandoned by the developer for over two years. This derelict site is a significant eyesore, adversely affecting local residents and deterring further investment in the town.

Given the Council's powers under planning and enforcement legislation, why has this situation been allowed to persist for so long, and what enforcement actions or interventions are being pursued to ensure that the developer either completes the development or that the site is remediated without further delay?"

The Leader of the Council responded as follows:

The Council also shares the concerns raised about the site on the corner of Lea Road and Carr Lane and has been making efforts to resolve the situation. The site at Carr Lane and the Old School site are both subject to Section 215 notices which require clearance of the land and the overgrown vegetation on and around the school building. Some initial clearance work was undertaken on the site in August 2025; however, clearance of the surrounding land remains incomplete. The Council also issued a Community Protection Notice Warning in October 2024, to ensure that the persistent fly-tipping that was occurring at the entrance to the site was dealt with and this waste has also been cleared as a result. The site was also an initial focus of our out of hours ASB hotspot patrolling as a result of the fly-tipping and it has continued to be one that we monitor to ensure that it remains secure and free from any additional waste.

We have consistently attempted to engage with the owners of the site and the enforcement position is regularly under review. A recent check of the Land Registry identified a pending application against the land surrounding the school and it was very recently listed for auction by a receiver, but the lot was withdrawn on the day of the auction. We are therefore seeking to establish whether there is a new owner of the site. Once we understand whether there is a new owner, we will engage with them to understand their objectives and make them aware of what we require them to do in regard to the land and the notices served upon it.

I think we all agree that the development of this site would bring great benefit to the immediate and surrounding area and we hope that a change in ownership may be the catalyst for this. I hope that this also provides reassurance that the Council seeking to utilise the relevant tools and powers to improve the situation."

With the permission of the Chairman, Councillor Young posed a supplementary question, indicating whilst pleased with the action taken thus far, he sought to understand what would happen if the action did not deliver the desired outcome, would or could the Council use its Compulsory Purchase powers?

The Chief Executive addressed the supplementary question advising as outlined in the Leaders response, the Council were hopeful the possible change in ownership would be a catalyst. If this was not the case, then the Council would have to reassess the powers at its disposal and determine which powers it may wish to use to achieve the actions that had been raised in the question and which the Leader had also recognised needed to be addressed.

The Chairman invited Councillor Dobbie to put his question to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Brockway, as follows:

"Leader, while the Council has invested millions of pounds of public money into

improving the physical fabric of Gainsborough Town Centre, many residents remain concerned that bricks and mortar alone will not revive the high street. Empty units persist, national retailers are absent, and footfall remains fragile.

Regeneration must be about economic delivery, not just capital spend.

Given this, can you explain:

- Why the authority has not yet appointed a dedicated, specialist officer focused solely on attracting high street retailers and more inward investment into Gainsborough?
- What proactive, targeted strategy the Council is using to compete with neighbouring towns for retail operators?
- What measurable outcomes and timelines residents can expect to see as a return on the significant public investment already made?
- If the Administration believes the current approach is sufficient, on what evidence does it base that confidence?"

The Leader of the Council responded as follows:

"Thank you Councillor Dobbie for your question. Reviving our high streets is a challenge we have embraced. Retail consolidation, bank closures and the shift to online shopping have all contributed to rising vacancy rates. Collectively we have been working to reverse this trend and counteract the negative impacts events such as Covid and the Cost of Living Crisis have had on shopping habits and local footfall.

Our commercial specialist partner Eddisons, appointed in mid-2025, has worked with us to benchmark against competitor towns, engage with agents and work with vacant property owners in order to tackle long term vacancies and develop a more balanced tenant mix. They have also engaged with a large volume of local and regional investors as well as national retail groups to promote Gainsborough's investment potential. We have developed action plans for vacant properties, provided retail business support, enhanced free parking, developed a footfall-generating events programme, provided grant funding to improve shop frontages and continue to review progress via our town centre vacancy audits and newly established town centre business group.

We must acknowledge that although there is no measurable 'quick fix' to decades of retail decline, these interventions – as well as our Levelling-Up programme, mean Gainsborough now has the built infrastructure, pedestrian connectivity and a cinema led leisure offer to compete more effectively for investment. We remain focused on attracting operators that will strengthen footfall, retail mix and town centre vibrancy - ensuring residents (and visitors) can experience a flourishing Gainsborough over the coming years.

With the permission of the Chairman, Councillor Dobbie posed a supplementary question which sought to understand whether the Council was investigating introducing a safety zone, similar to Retford and Worksop, as way of supporting a desire to increase the night time economy within Gainsborough town centre.

In responding the Leader outlined the various organisations she and the wider Council had been engaging with to understand the night time economy and any barriers to access. It was also hoped the work of the Greater Lincolnshire County Combined Authority through its emerging Transport Plan, would increase access for wider groups. Boosting the the night-time economy and ensuring participation in it was available to more sections of the community remained a focus.

The Chairman invited Councillor Rollings to put her question to Councillor Bailey, Chairman of Prosperous Communities Committee, as follows:-

“In light of the significant role the Indoor Bowls Club plays within our district, supporting not only sport but also the physical health, mental wellbeing and social inclusion of many residents, as Chairman of Prosperous Communities Committee can you please confirm the Council’s continued commitment to investing in and delivering a new indoor bowls facility?

Furthermore, can you as the Chairman of Prosperous Communities Committee provide an update on the proposed timeline and next steps to ensure this important community asset is progressed without delay?”

The Chairman of the Prosperous Communities Committee responded as follows:

Thank you for your question.

The previous Leader of the Council did announce at Full Council last year a commitment to invest in indoor bowls in the District, however I think it is important to be clear that this was not underpinned by any formal council decision or allocation of any funding for such a project and as such no formal and actual commitment to back this up.

Without borrowing, and also with constraints on borrowing arising from the recent Government Financial Settlement, you are fully aware of the restraints on funding available for large projects. As a result of this when deciding on where funding should be directed the council and members need to decide on what is best value.

Given the time constraints that are now upon us due to Local Government Reorganisation, and the financial controls that will be put on the council as part of that process, it is important that we also look at what can be achieved in that timeframe with the money available to the council that benefits the whole of the district.

I have done much research and had various communications not only with the Bowls Club representative but also the Bowls Sports development officer and also the Indoor Bowls Association. I have fed this back to officers and other councillors so that informed decisions can be made regarding bowls and any provision.

This Administration is however committed to, and progressing proposals for

enhancements to sports and leisure provision as set out in the Corporate Plan and Thematic Business Plans that we will consider shortly, and the Prosperous Communities Committee will be asked to approve and adopt a new Sports and Physical Activity Strategy later this month.

The Council is already progressing a number of objectives set out in this strategy and assessing the scope and opportunities for enhancement of leisure and sports facilities. This includes improvements to West Lindsey Leisure Centre in Gainsborough as well as other facilities and opportunities.

Following the All-Member Briefing regarding the leisure centre held on 26th February at which you attended, it is planned that a report will be brought forward to Members in April to approve progressing this project to the next stage which is an exciting development.

This work will involve engaging with stakeholders, including the bowls community, and considering the facilities the council is able to provide with a report back to Members later this year, hopefully in the summer. As Members will appreciate, this specific work and assessment of other options to enhance sports and leisure facilities will need to have regard to the budget and financial resources available to the Council. As we will discuss later the recent Government Financial Settlement has not been a positive one that we would have hoped for and one which would have enabled us to invest even more.

On hearing the response, the former Leader of the Council called for a Point of Order. With the Chairman ruling the point of order out of order, there ensued heated exchange regarding the interpretation of Standing Orders and a warning regarding conduct being issued. The Chairman advised the former Leader he would allow a point of personal explanation, during which he disputed the opening statement, suggesting the Indoor Bowls Plan was supported, had been costed and could have been delivered.

With a further warning to abide by the Chairman's ruling, Councillor Rollings was permitted to pose a supplementary question during which she raised the lack of direct reference to providing an indoor bowls facility in both the Corporate Plan and the Member Leisure Workshop, and sought to understand where the Chairman of the Prosperous Communities personally stood on re-introducing an indoor bowling offer.

The Chairman of Prosperous Communities responded directly, outlining previous challenge she had offered when serving in the previous Administration and reminded the questioner that the decision would be one for the Committee as a whole and of the collective ethos of the current Administration.

The Chairman invited Councillor Howitt-Cowan to put his question to Councillor Brockway, Leader of the Council as follows:

“Given the tight timescales for Local Government Reorganisation, many residents are concerned that insufficient progress has been made on asset transfer to parish and town councils. What specific steps is the Council taking

now to ensure these transfers are completed in time, and what contingency plans are in place if deadlines are not met?”

The Leader of the Council responded as follows:-

“Thank you Councillor Howitt-Cowan for your question.

The Council is currently designing a Community Asset Transfer Policy, as it currently does not have one, this will be presented to Corporate Policy and Resources committee in due course.

Once approved this will allow Officers to be able to progress any expressions of interests received from town and parish councils or groups from the community and voluntary sector and assess whether any assets can be transferred.

This will take into account things like the suitability of the applicant, how the asset will be safeguarded in the future and the means of transfer amongst other criteria. It is envisaged any expressions of interest will be dealt with in a timely manner to ensure the process is timely and transparent.”

With the permission of the Chairman, Councillor Howitt-Cowan posed a supplementary question which sought to understand what consultation was being undertaken with local councils and local councillors regarding asset transfers, where they been engaged in decision making.

In responding the Leader confirmed local councils would be consulted in due course but outlined the work the Council needed to undertake in the first instance at pace. It was important that asset transfers were undertaken in a timely manner but also in the best interest and that a balance was struck, providing security for the wider district into the future.

This brought Rule No.9 questions to an end.

## **89 MOTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10**

The Chairman advised the meeting that motions under Council Procedure Rule 10 had been received.

## **90 WLDC CORPORATE PLAN**

Councillor Bierley, Chair of Corporate Policy and Resources Committee, introduced the report and in doing so explained that approval was being sought for a new Corporate Plan covering the period 2026 to 2030 and the corresponding thematic business plans which set out how the council intended to deliver the plan in the coming years.

He highlighted the background to the Plans development noting that in January 2025, the Council had participated in a Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge which had recommended that the Council refreshes its Corporate Plan and business

planning arrangements to ensure the Administration's priorities were clearly reflected in both strategy and delivery.

Additionally, the Government's announcement on Local Government Reorganisation, and new political and officer leadership for the Council had provided an appropriate opportunity for a review and refresh of strategic priorities and delivery arrangements, building on already strong foundations.

The new Corporate Plan focused on the delivery of well-managed, forward-thinking local government services that were grounded in good governance and committed to enhancing our places and improving the lives of people across the District.

To ensure effective and focused delivery of the Corporate Plan, Corporate Policy and Resources Committee had been advised of new internal governance arrangements that have been developed, and which were set out clearly in the report before Members.

Importantly, work to develop the Corporate Plan had been closely linked to development of the latest Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan, ensuring the Corporate Plan was appropriately financed and resourced and had enabled a balanced budget to be presented to Council for consideration later in the evening.

Councillor Bierley thanked Officers for their work and collaboration over recent months to produce a Corporate Plan and delivery programme before moving the recommendations.

The Leader of the Council, seconded the recommendations and addressed the Council on behalf of the Administration, indicating she believed the Plan was strong and ambitious and clearly set out not only the priorities of the new Administration, but also the key principles, values and behaviours that would guide working together to deliver in the years ahead.

Referring to the 10 Point Plan, the Leader had previously presented to Full Council which had set out a clear commitment from the new Administration to embed a new way of working, reflecting on the recommendations of the Peer Challenge; she believed the new Corporate Plan delivered on that commitment.

The Plan aimed to deliver for the whole of the district, in the best interests of the residents. Working closely with local communities, introducing initiatives to reduce deprivation, supporting the delivery of key strategic programmes such as STEP Fusion and the redevelopment of RAF Scampton were key priorities.

Engaging with employers to create new opportunities and remove barriers to local employment, delivering the Pride in Place programme, supporting and working with parish and town councils and working with the Greater Lincolnshire Mayor to drive economic regeneration across the region were also key.

Councillor Brockway fully endorsed the Corporate Plan and seconded the recommendations.

The Deputy Leader addressed the Chamber and spoke of how the Plan would enable over the next years, projects which could be delivered at the very heart of communities, aimed at addressing the issues of social isolation and lack of youth provision, particularly within our

rural areas. The Plan aimed to ensure the Council worked closely with its communities to identify and provide the infrastructure required for them to develop and thrive into the future. She commended the draft Plan and the work undertaken in its development.

Opposition Members did not support the proposals. The considerable work undertaken by Officers was recognised, however it was considered that the plan lacked ambition, a clear direction and represented a missed opportunity to deliver meaningful results in the last couple of years as a district council. It was questioned whether it would make a difference for people living across the district. The forthcoming peer challenge was highlighted and it was suggested that the proposals were rushed and did not give a strong base once Local Government Reorganisation was resolved.

In response it was emphasised that the Corporate Plan was a strategic document and delivery of the aims would follow. Specifics were highlighted to counter the points made by the Opposition. Furthermore it was suggested that Local Government Reorganisation was still unclear and as such it was important to continue with priorities for the District.

Some Opposition Members suggested there should be more focus on addressing the 24.4 % economic inactivity in the district, which was higher than the national average, and to address the issues faced by 19.6 % of children who were living in poverty.

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

**RESOLVED** that:

- (a) the Council's Corporate Plan for 2026-2030, 'Our West Lindsey, Our Future', (Appendix 1) be adopted;
- (b) the three corresponding Thematic Business Plans, which set out key deliverables and key performance indicators assigned to each Corporate Plan theme (Appendices 2 – 4) be approved;
- (c) the Corporate Plan and Thematic Business Plans be subject to annual review and approval by Council alongside the annual budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan each year; and
- (d) the new governance arrangements as outlined in para. 5 of the report, which ensure effective and efficient delivery of the council's priorities be noted.

**Note:** Councillors Dobbie, Young, Rollings and Howitt-Cowan requested that their vote against the above decisions be recorded in the minutes.

## **91 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 27/28-31/32, THE BUDGET 27/28, CAPITAL PROGRAMME 27/28 TO 31/32**

Members gave consideration to a report which presented the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2026/27 onwards, alongside the 2026/27 Budget and the Capital Programme from 2026/27 to 2031/32.

Councillor Bierley, as Chairman of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee presented the report, advising the MTFPs purpose was to set a robust overall framework for the Council's Financial Strategy and spending plans over the next five years in support of delivering the Corporate Plan.

The report set out the revised financial plans within the financial analysis for changes in Government Funding, the economic environment, local engagement and the priorities of the Council. The Plan reflected revisions to previous estimates and covered the period 2026/27 to 2030/31.

A balanced budget for 2026/27 was proposed, without the requirement to support it with funds from the general fund balance. The final local government finance settlement had been delivered in February and had set funding allocations for the next three years. This had encompassed a reset of Business Rates and a wider review of local government funding.

For 2026/27 the West Lindsey part of Council Tax was proposed to increase by 2.97% which equated to a rise of £7.38p per week for a band D property. The 2026/27 Budget totalled £21.414m, was fully funded and represented a balanced budget within the requirements.

Councillor Bierley moved the recommendations before handing over to the Leader who seconded the recommendations before making the following budget speech.

“On behalf of the West Lindsey Administration Group, I am delighted to second the recommendations in this paper.

Building on what Councillor Bierley has outlined, it is a busy time for the Council at the moment and this budget provides us with a stable base to continue to deliver award winning and highly efficient services whilst also working on a number of initiatives.

We are currently rolling out the food waste service which is the biggest new service the Council has delivered in many years and thanks go to not only the waste team but also teams across the Council in helping to roll out this service to residents.

The future of the former RAF Scampton site will hopefully be resolved during this year with the Council hoping to successfully bid for the site and together with Scampton Holdings deliver a once in a generation regeneration scheme. This will regenerate the site and create jobs and bring visitors to the area in what will be a landmark scheme for the area.

Part of Gainsborough has been awarded Pride in Place funding which will be up to £20m over a ten year period. The Council will look to work with the Pride in Place neighbourhood board when it is established to help to deliver long term improvements that matter to local people.

With Local Government Reorganisation on the horizon work has already started within the Council on ensuring we are in best shape we can be whilst also ensuring residents' voices are heard when shaping any new authority.

With the new Corporate Plan (having been approved tonight) we as an Administration are looking to deliver on our bold ambitions across the district. These being to improve leisure and recreational facilities, making best use of our assets and ensuring that residents' needs are being met.

All of these are being delivered whilst we continue with business as usual for our residents and working together with our partners.

Although the Local Government finance settlement could have been better for us we knew that reductions in funding would come at some point and therefore the medium term financial plan has been carefully planned to avoid the need to reduce service levels. Due to the change between the provisional and final settlements we have planned for a small drawdown of reserves in year three to balance over the medium term. We will continue however to lobby Government for a fairer settlement for rural districts such as ours which takes into account the challenges of delivering services in our area. It is hoped therefore that by year three we may not need to draw on reserves at all."

In opening the matter of the debate the Chairman reminded Members that in accordance with the statutory requirements, any and all votes taken in relation to the item would automatically be a recorded vote, and the way in which a Member voted would be recorded in the minutes.

The Leader of the Opposition was first to address the Chamber and suggested the increase in council tax, was not a considered position but rather a default position, suggesting that the rise could have been lower, without impacting the Council budget too much. It was suggested there should have been more consideration for the difficulties residents were facing in respect of the cost of living and that not enough had been done to find efficiencies, noting the Savings Boards had not met.

Councillor Young then proposed an amendment; -

"that the Council increase the council tax by 2%"

Members were advised this equated to identifying savings of £80,000 which Councillor Young was of the view was deliverable and would not impact the Council's delivery plans to a great degree.

With the amendment seconded, Members then debated the amendment.

The relevance of the Savings Board was disputed, with the Administration advising efficiencies were always being and continued to be found and this work did not need to go through a savings board. Savings Boards in other authorities, which had been referred to had actually been cutting services, and still increasing Council tax. The budget proposed, ensured residents continued to receive all services and to a quality level.

It was also suggested that Opposition Members should have presented their revised proposals in advance of the meeting and worked with the Administration in contributing to achieving a balanced budget.

At the request of the Opposition, the Monitoring Officer advised it was constitutionally acceptable to table amendments on the night of the debate. The Leader clarified her comment.

Opposition Members suggested more work should be being undertaken to transfer assets which would in turn reduce the District Council's budget. In responding Administration Members outlined the exploratory and preparatory work being undertaken regarding assets transfer and were mindful that asset transfers need to be undertaken in responsible manner, to ensure those taking on assets were in a position to do so, if assets were to be safeguarded in the future. Some assets generated incomes which supported the budget, all factors needed to be considered in a responsible way.

Members were reminded that points raised should be related to the amendment. With no further speakers indicating, the amendment was put to a recorded vote, with votes being cast as follows: -

**For:** Councillors Dobbie Howitt-Cowan, Rollings, Velan and Young (5)

**Against:** Councillors Bailey, Barrett, Bierley, Boles, Brockway, Bridgwood, Brown, Bunney, Carless, Duguid, Flear, Fleetwood, Key, Lawrence, Lee, Morris, Mullally, Palmer, Pilgrim, Smith, Snee M, Snee J, and Westley (23)

**Abstentions:** (0)

With a total of 5 votes cast for the amendment and 23 votes against, the amendment was declared **LOST**.

Debate continued with Opposition Members wishing to bring to the attention of the Chamber that post LGR, Council tax levels would need to be harmonised and his understanding was that taxes would rise to match that set by the highest charging authority. He urged that work be undertaken to both increase Members' understanding of these matters and cushion residents from any sharp future increases.

Bringing comments to a close, with the recommendations proposed and seconded, in accordance with Procedure Rule 14.4 and as required by regulations, the motion was put to a recorded vote, with votes cast in the following manner: -

**For:** Councillors Bailey, Barrett, Bierley, Boles, Brockway, Bridgwood, Brown, Bunney, Carless, Duguid, Flear, Fleetwood, Key, Lawrence, Lee, Morris, Mullally, Palmer, Pilgrim, Smith, Snee M, Snee J, and Westley (23)

**Against:** Councillors Howitt-Cowan, Rollings, Velan and Young (4)

**Abstentions:** Councillor Dobbie (1)

With a total of 23 votes cast in favour, 4 against and 1 abstention, the motion was declared carried and it was

**RESOLVED** that:-

- (a) the external environment and the financial challenges which the Council could face in the medium to longer term depending on the outcome of future government policy and the outcome of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) be formally recognised;
- (b) the Statement of the Director of Finance and Assets (Section 151 Officer) on the Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves at paragraph 1.10 be accepted;
- (c) the Medium Term Financial Plan 2026/27 to 2030/31 be accepted along with the risks associated as detailed at Appendix 2.
- (d) the formal Council Tax resolution as detailed in Appendix 8, which proposed a Band D equivalent amount of £256.14, be accepted;
- (e) the Revenue budget 2026/27 detailed at paragraph 1.4 be approved;
- (f) the movement in earmarked reserves detailed at paragraph 1.6 be approved;
- (g) the level of fees and charges for 2026/27 as detailed at Appendix 3, be approved;
- (h) the Capital Investment Strategy at Appendix 4, be approved;
- (i) the capital Programme 2026/27 – 2030/31 and financing as detailed at Appendices 5 and 6 be approved;
- (j) the Treasury Management Strategy 2026/27 be approved and the Treasury Investment Strategy, the Borrowing Strategy, the Treasury and Borrowing Prudential Indicators and the Treasury Management Practices detailed at Appendix 7 be adopted;
- (k) the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy as contained in the Treasury Management Strategy at Appendix 7 be approved;
- (l) the 2026/27 Pay Policy Statement at Appendix 13 be approved; and
- (m) delegation be granted to the Corporate Policy and Resources committee to approve any change to an existing Fees and Charges required during the year, which are required after the budget is set.

**92 SCAMPTON EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**

Members considered a report which sought approval for the submission of an expression of interest for the purchase of former RAF Scampton in partnership with the Council's development partner 'Scampton Holdings Limited'.

Securing a positive future for the community at Scampton and maximising the economic and social potential of regenerating the key site had been a priority for the council for many years now. There was a much clearer understanding of the Government's disposal strategy and some of the associated time scales. It was considered the marketing materials reflected the Council's work to-date, particularly in creating a planning framework for the site and in setting out the priority and opportunity for investment in the defence sector, as well as the utilisation of key assets on the site, including the runway and the technical buildings. The hugely significant heritage of the site had also clearly been articulated and the need for it be incorporated in future plans.

The paper before Members included a short options appraisal, which considered the Council's options going forward, along with an updated risk register, included at Appendix 2.

At this stage of the process, interested parties were only required to submit an outline of their plans and outline details of how these would be taken forward.

Following submission of the EOI, shortlisted parties would be invited to submit a site proposal, summary business plan, financial offer and evidence of funding.

The District Valuation Office were completing a refreshed site valuation, which had been jointly commissioned by the Home Office and West Lindsey District Council, to help inform any future financial offer. Work continued to finalise the details of the legal agreements between the Council and Scampton Holdings and Officers outlined how the acquisition transfer to Scampton Holdings would be implemented and safeguards which would be put in place to ensure the site was delivered in alignment with the proposed master plan. If the Council's EOI advanced to Phase 2, this would be the subject of further Committee decisions.

Debate ensued and Members across the Chamber wholeheartedly supported the submission of the EOI. They spoke passionately of the work and efforts, and the highs and lows of the Scampton journey, thanking Officers for continuing to press for the best outcome for the District. In the context of LGR this could be the District's legacy. The Plan for the site had the ability to transform Lincolnshire and its economy and have long lasting positive implications for the people of Lincolnshire. Members were encouraged by the information they had heard in the All Member Briefing.

In response to questions, it was confirmed, in the context of LGR, that should Lincoln City's proposals for re-organisation be successful, the site would sit outside of the current District. Others spoke of how the master plan complemented the work and wider aspirations of the GLCCA. At the request of Members, Officers outlined the specialist nature of the site, the unique facilities and opportunities it presented, its significance in UK operations both historically and potentially in the future. This site was not about housing, this site offered so much more and risked a lot more being lost.

Members were thoroughly committed to the Master Plan, the partnership with Scampton Holdings Limited and the desire to deliver something unique and ground-breaking on the site, bringing technologies and industries not currently hosted in the UK.

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

**RESOLVED** that - the submission of the Expression of Interest with Scampton Holdings Limited be approved and final completion of the expression of interest documentation be delegated to the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

The meeting concluded at 8.52 pm.

Chairman