WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Thriving Council Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA on 25 June 2026 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present:	Councillor Owen Bierley (Chairman)
	Councillor Matthew Boles
	Councillor Karen Carless
	Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
	Councillor Stephen Bunney
	Councillor Maureen Palmer
In Attendance:	
Peter Davy	Director Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer)
Lisa Langdon	Assistant Chief Executive - Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Sue Leversedge	Head of Finance (Deputy Section 151)
Sarah Scully	Finance Business Support Team Leader
Grant White	Head of Localities and Community Services
Angela Matthews	Benefits Manager
Luke Matthews	Senior Building and Projects Officer
Ele Snow	Senior Democratic and Civic Officer
Apologies:	Councillor Paul Swift
	Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Membership:	Councillor M. Palmer was appointed substitute for Councillor I Fleetwood
	Councillor S. Bunney was appointed substitute for Councillor P. Swift

1 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING(S)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held on Thursday, 16 April 2026 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

4 REFURBISHMENT OF PUBLIC TOILET FACILITIES - CAISTOR, MARKET RASEN AND GAINSBOROUGH

The Committee gave consideration to the first report of the evening, presented by the Senior Building and Projects Officer. It was explained that West Lindsey District Council's three public toilet facilities in Caistor, Market Rasen and Gainsborough required significant refurbishment due to ageing infrastructure, declining accessibility standards, and increasing maintenance issues. These facilities played an important role in supporting town centre use, public health and overall user experience.

Three options had been assessed, ranging from doing nothing to undertaking a full refurbishment, with the recommendation being for the latter. It was explained that this would provide a 15–20-year asset life extension, ensure compliance with modern accessibility and safety standards, reduce maintenance costs, improve energy efficiency, and deliver a consistent, high-quality user experience across all sites.

It was noted that this option provided the best long-term value, environmental benefits, and alignment with the Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan, and as such approval was sought for the drawdown of £190k to proceed with full refurbishment works in 2026/27.

Members of the Committee were fully supportive of the proposals, however enquired as to the impact of the closures whilst work was undertaken. It was confirmed that temporary facilities would be in place for the duration of the closures and the cost of this provision was included in the total amount requested. Members also enquired as to the options regarding the transfer of assets to the town councils, to which it was confirmed that this would be a feasible option in the future.

Members commented on the importance of maintaining the high standard of provision once works were completed, particularly with a view to avoiding vandalism and wilful damage, with Officers explaining there would be a number of ways this could be achieved such as increased patrols, and use of CCTV. In response to a question regarding the potential to use solar panels on the premises, it was explained that whilst the use of panels may not be feasible, the designs did introduce sun tubes, which would reduce the reliance on artificial lighting.

The Chairman brought the debate to a conclusion, thanking the Officer for his comprehensive report and supporting the positive comments from Committee Members. He confirmed that, of the options provided, the first option of full refurbishment had been proposed and seconded, alongside the subsequent recommendations in the report.

On taking the vote, it was

RESOLVED that

a) the draw down of £190k from the Maintenance of Facilities Reserve to fully refurbish all 3 public conveniences across the district be approved; and

b) an amendment to the capital programme for 2026/27 to create a new capital scheme for 'Refurbishment of Public Toilet Facilities' with a total scheme cost of £190k be approved; and

c) the council actively engage with the three town councils to explore the appetite for transfer of the assets post the improvement works, in line with the council's new community asset transfer and in light of pending Local Government Reorganisation.

5 WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL PARKING STRATEGY 2026-2031

The Committee heard from the Senior Building & Projects Officer who explained that the council had commissioned a new Parking Strategy to ensure the parking service continued to support thriving town centres, sustainable transport, regeneration, and financial resilience across Gainsborough and Market Rasen. The strategy responded to changing travel habits, hybrid working, local growth, and environmental priorities, while building on earlier reviews in 2015, 2017, 2022 and 2024.

It was explained that the Parking Strategy 2026–2031 set out a comprehensive, evidence-led plan to ensure parking provision across Gainsborough and Market Rasen remained accessible, financially sustainable, safe, and aligned with the district's long-term economic, environmental, and technological objectives. Members were directed to the five main themes of the strategy, which included aspects such as modernising systems through contactless payments, digital permits, enhanced data insights, and integration with the National Parking Platform; improving the overall estate quality; and optimising capacity.

Members were supportive of the strategy and appreciated the parity of approach across the district. The introduction of contactless payment options was queried, citing the high percentage of cash payments, in response it was emphasised that this would be in addition to existing payment methods rather than instead of.

With regard to the extension of the free parking in Gainsborough, Members of the Committee highlighted informal feedback they had received from businesses in the town centre which supported and praised the free parking initiative. Officers explained that the proposed extension would enable a full 12 months of data to be collected, after which the balanced picture would be presented to Members for decision.

During the course of the debate, Members also enquired as to resident parking schemes, which was explained to be under the control of Lincolnshire County Council, however it was recognised that such issues were relevant across the district.

With thanks to Officers and praise for the merits of the strategy, having been moved, seconded, and voted upon, it was

RESOLVED that

a) the draft Parking Strategy and Action Plan be approved; and

b) the Strategy be refreshed in 5 years (2031-32); and

c) the findings to date from the 2-hour free parking trial in Gainsborough be noted, and that approval be given to extend the trial for a further six months, until 31 January 2027, in order to allow sufficient time for a decision relating to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), to support continued engagement with local businesses, and to enable the collection of additional data to inform a final assessment; and

d) the use of the Investment for Growth Reserve to the value of £24,300 to mitigate the forecast loss of car parking income be approved.

6 CRISIS & RESILIENCE FUND 2026-27

The Committee gave consideration to a report presented by the Benefits Manager regarding the Crisis and Resilience Fund 2026-27. It was explained that the report outlined the Council's approach to the implementation of the Government's Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF), a new three-year, Government-funded DWP programme. It replaced the Household Support Fund (HSF) and aimed to provide crisis support for low-income households and build financial resilience across the district. Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) had been awarded £9.9m per year for three years and had invited the seven district councils to be involved in the delivery of the fund. West Lindsey had been allocated an amount for 2026-27, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) provided guidance for the spend and Members were asked to approve the recommendation for the local delivery plan.

Members were fully supportive of the proposals, particularly the emphasis on building resilience for users as well as simply assisting in crisis situations. Following a request from the Committee, it was agreed that a progress update report would be provided to the Committee to include usage statistics as well as demonstrable benefits and outcomes.

The suggestion to partner with organisations who were already providing such services as would be required under the fund guidelines was welcomed, with Members acknowledging the work which was already underway.

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

RESOLVED that

a) the recommended delivery method for the West Lindsey financial allocation be approved; and

b) the use of the named provider, by way of procurement exception as detailed in Appendix 1, be approved; and

c) authority be delegated to the Director of Corporate Services, following consultation with the Chairman of Thriving Council Committee, to make minor changes to the scheme resulting from decisions and / or requirements determined by the governing body or the scheme administrator.

Note: Councillor P. Howitt-Cowan left the Chamber at 7.45pm

7 BUDGET AND TREASURY MONITORING - FINAL OUTTURN 2025/2026

The Committee gave consideration to a report presented by the Head of Finance (Deputy S151) regarding the Budget and Treasury Monitoring - Final Outturn 2025/2026. It was explained that against revenue budgets the Council was reporting a net revenue underspend of £1.488m which reflected strong budget control in the main with one off variances in year, rather than ongoing savings for future years. The outturn variance was summarised, with Members directed to section two of the report for full details. The Committee was also advised of the proposed allocation of the surplus, with approval sought for this.

Note: Councillor P. Howitt-Cowan returned to the Chamber at 7.48pm

Committee Members were directed to section 2.5.1 of the report, seeking approval for the use of reserves greater than £50,000, and also section 2.4.2 regarding amendments to the fees and charges schedules for 2026/27, which were to be recommended to Full Council for approval. These were the specifically the introduction of a Building Safety Levy introduced under the Building Safety Levy Act 2022 from October, and the planning application fees published by Government at the end of February.

In relation to the capital programme, Members heard there was a final underspend against budget of £7.118m, with £1.698m requested as carry forward in to 2026/27. The report also included details of balances held on usable reserves at year end 2025/26 and forecast balances as at year end 2031/32. This summary would be provided as part of the quarterly monitoring reports throughout 2026/27 to provide Members with the latest position.

It was explained that the forecast balance on reserves only included approved movements to and from reserves but did not take account of the full £8m identified for reprioritisation. Other use of reserves in the pipeline would be included as they were approved. Further use of reserves may be identified in the future. It was highlighted that the balance in the final column also included annual contributions to several reserves, which would be reviewed through the MTFS and, if reduced, would lower the forecast reserve balance and also be a gain for the revenue accounts.

Members were advised that, in addition to the quarterly update to this committee, there would be a separate review of reserves report presented in November as part of the budget setting process.

The Committee thanked the Finance Team for their work, acknowledging the challenges faced. With regard to the project reserve for Local Government Reorganisation, it was explained that there would be significant work required to ready the council for reorganisation, with there also being a transition fund with other authorities. Members commented on the costs involved and questioned the government's rationale of LGR being a money-saving process. It was acknowledged that the decision outcome was expected imminently.

The Chairman highlighted the benefits of building reserves up, and again thanked the Finance Team for their diligence.

With no further questions or comments, and having been proposed, seconded, and voted upon, it was

RESOLVED that

a) the DRAFT out-turn position of a £2.117m gross contribution to reserves against the revised budget for 2025/2026, which includes £0.629m of approved revenue carry forwards into 2026/2027, be accepted. The remaining balance being a net underspend and contribution to reserves of £1.488m; and

b) the creation of a new earmarked reserve 'Planning Fee Reserve' be approved; and

c) the balance of £1.488m be approved to be transferred as follows (2.2):
- £0.200m contribution to the Maintenance of Facilities Reserve
- £0.150m contribution to the Health and Wellbeing Reserve – Temporary Accommodation
- £0.370m contribution to a new Planning Fee Reserve
- £0.088m contribution to the Business Rates Volatility Reserve
- £0.645m contribution to the Project Investment Reserve (LGR)
- £0.035m Transfer to the Business Planning Contingency budget

d) the use of Earmarked Reserves - £0.303m (2.5.1) be approved; and

e) the use of Earmarked Reserves approved by the Chief Finance Officer using Delegated powers (2.5.2) be accepted; and

f) the contributions to Earmarked Reserves - £0.073m (2.5.3) be approved; and

g) the contributions to Earmarked Reserves approved by the Chief Finance Officer using Delegated powers (Section 2.5.4) be accepted; and

h) the amendments to the statutory fees and charges be included in the schedules for 2026/2027 (2.4.2) and recommended to Council for approval.

CAPITAL

i) the final Capital Outturn position of £7.206m (Section 3) be accepted; and

j) the amendments to the Capital Schemes 2025/2026 as detailed in 3.2.1 to 3.2.2 be approved; and

k) the amendments to the Capital Schemes 2026/2027 as detailed in 3.2.3 and 3.3.4 be approved.

TREASURY

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

8 ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT 2025/26

Members heard from the Head of Finance (Deputy S151) regarding the Annual Treasury Management Report for 2025/26. It was explained that the report updated Councillors on progress against the treasury strategy which was approved by Council in March 2025. The report was required to comply with the CIPFA code of practice on treasury management and also to keep members updated with the current position.

The report showed that interest rates had been above those expected when the original strategy was written and therefore the Council had benefited from increased interest rates on its investments, as reported in the previous budget outturn report, with an average rate achieved of 4.047%. The interest rates had remained high into the new financial year and it was expected to achieve higher returns against budget for at least part of 2026/27, with an average rate of 4.186% as at quarter one.

Through closely monitoring cashflow and also due to the capital programme underspending in year, external borrowing had been kept to a minimum, reducing exposure to increased interest costs payable. The treasury management indicators were detailed throughout the report and it was confirmed there had been no breaches of the prudential indicators during 2025/26.

It was highlighted that the final part of the report was an economics update which had been supplied by the treasury advisors and was useful to help understand the national and international context the Council operates within when undertaking its treasury activities. Members heard that the results for the year were positive against the original treasury strategy.

Members of the Committee thanked the Officer and her team, and, having been proposed, seconded, and voted upon, it was

> **RESOLVED** that the Annual Treasury Management Report and actual Prudential Indicators 2025/26 be **recommended** to Full Council for approval.

9 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

The Senior Democratic Services Officer advised Members there was to be a concurrent meeting of the Committee with the Thriving People Committee to consider the next steps of the leisure project. A Member of the Committee noted the work plan indicated a busier meeting planned for July than in September, Officers assured Members the agenda planning would be monitored as required.

With no further comments or questions, the committee work plan was **DULY NOTED**.

The meeting concluded at 8.01 pm.

Chairman