WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Thriving People Committee held in the Council Chamber – The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA on 16 July 2026 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present:	Councillor Stephen Bunney (Chairman)
	Councillor Tom Smith (Vice-Chairman)
	Councillor Owen Bierley
	Councillor Frazer Brown
	Councillor Jeanette McGhee
	Councillor Moira Westley
	Councillor Trevor Young
Also Present:	Councillor K Carless
	Councillor L Rollings

In Attendance:

Rachael Hughes	Assistant Chief Executive - Policy, Strategy and Performance
Sally Grindrod-Smith	Director Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Sarah Elvin	Head of Housing, Health and Wellbeing
Amanda Bouttell	Senior Project and Growth Officer
Grant White	Head of Localities and Community Services
Matthew Snee	Corporate Projects Manager
Ele Snow	Senior Democratic and Civic Officer

1 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Prosperous Communities Committee meeting held on 28 April 2026 be approved and signed as a correct record.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

4 SQUADDIE BOX

The Chairman introduced the report and advised that, since publication of the meeting papers, the Administration Group had revisited the proposal and as a result of those discussions, he tabled an alternative proposal to that contained within the report. He proposed, firstly, approval of the implementation of a two-year Squaddie Box Pilot scheme in West Lindsey, with the location to be determined in consultation with the Armed Forces Member Champion; secondly, that Officers be requested to seek out possible options for match-funding or grants opportunities to assist with the cost; and finally, that it be recommended to the Thriving Council Committee to approve the use of reserves to fund the project.

Visiting Member Councillor Carless, in her capacity as the Council's Armed Forces Member Champion, was then invited to address the Committee. Reference was made to the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and the potential benefits of the Squaddie Box scheme in providing a secure proxy address and support network for veterans and vulnerable individuals. Councillor Carless highlighted that West Lindsey had one of the highest veteran populations in Lincolnshire and suggested that implementation of the scheme would further strengthen the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces community. Reference was also made to a recent veteran support case brought to her attention by Councillor Bridgwood, where difficulties accessing post had created additional challenges for the individual concerned.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Carless for her words, sought a seconder for the tabled proposal, and opened the floor to questions and debate.

During the course of discussions, the quality of homelessness services operating within West Lindsey and Lincolnshire was recognised, and clarification was sought regarding the evidence of demand for the scheme, with Members noting the conclusions set out in the officer report were contrary to the tabled proposal.

In response, the Homes and Health Team Manager advised that officers had presented Members with the evidence available to the Council, however, demand for the service was difficult to quantify due to the absence of an existing scheme locally. It was further explained that the relationship between homelessness prevention and the provision of a secure postal address was difficult to evidence, although it was acknowledged that unmet need may exist which was not currently visible through existing service provision.

The Chairman reiterated that the proposal was not intended to replace or undermine existing homelessness support services and noted that the funding proposed would be separate from existing service budgets. He further explained that the proposed two-year pilot would provide an opportunity to gather evidence before any longer-term commitment was considered.

The Vice-Chairman expressed support for the proposal and, drawing on his experience of working with veterans, advised that demand for such support services was often difficult to identify as veterans could be reluctant to engage with statutory services. It was considered that the pilot scheme would assist in understanding local need and provide an additional source of support for veterans experiencing difficulties.

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

RESOLVED that

a) a two-year Squaddie Box pilot scheme be implemented in West Lindsey, with the location to be determined in consultation with the Armed Forces Member Champion; and

b) officers be requested to seek out possible match funding or grant opportunities to assist with the cost of the scheme; and

c) Thriving Council Committee be recommended to approve the use of reserves to fund the project.

5 DOMESTIC ABUSE RESIDENT POLICY

The Head of Housing, Health and Wellbeing presented the report, seeking approval of the Domestic Abuse Residents Policy.

Members were advised that the policy had been developed as part of the Council's work towards Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation and was intended to ensure a consistent and robust response across all Council services where domestic abuse was disclosed. It was explained that the policy formalised existing good practice and would assist the Council in meeting its statutory duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Members were further advised that the policy would be kept under review and updated as required to reflect changes in legislation or guidance.

During the debate, a Member of the Committee welcomed the proposed policy, expressing support for its objectives and the approach taken. Reference was made to the importance of recognising all forms of domestic abuse, including coercive and controlling behaviour, and the value of having a clear policy that could be used to support residents experiencing such issues.

The Chairman welcomed the work undertaken by officers and encouraged Members to familiarise themselves with the policy and the support available to residents.

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

RESOLVED that

a) the Domestic Abuse Residents Policy be adopted;

b) authority be delegated to the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities, in consultation with the Chairman of the Thriving People Committee, to approve minor amendments to the policy should they be required; and

c) the ongoing statutory duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 be noted.

6 EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The Senior Project Officer for Employment and Skills presented the Employment and Skills Strategy and Delivery Plan. Members were advised that the strategy aligned with the Council's Corporate Plan, Growth Strategy and wider Lincolnshire employment and skills priorities, and had been developed using labour market intelligence, economic data and stakeholder engagement.

During the debate, Members welcomed the strategy and discussed the challenges facing residents seeking employment, particularly young people, with comments referencing the national difficulties as well as local. Reference was made to the importance of supporting employability, skills development and training opportunities, as well as ensuring local businesses could access and retain a skilled workforce.

Discussion also took place regarding the availability of employment opportunities, engagement with employers, support available through partner organisations and the importance of strengthening relationships with education and training providers both within and beyond Lincolnshire, for example in Scunthorpe, Doncaster, or Grimsby.

In response, officers advised that supporting young people remained a key priority within the strategy and highlighted the role of partnership working, employer engagement and external funding opportunities in delivering its objectives. It was confirmed that engagement had begun with North Lindsey College in Scunthorpe, and through Local Government Reorganisation there would be a focus on strengthening those cross-boundary partnerships.

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

RESOLVED that

a) the Employment and Skills Strategy be approved as the Council's framework for supporting skills development, employability and employer engagement across West Lindsey; and

b) the Delivery Plan be endorsed as the supporting implementation framework for the Strategy; and

c) authority be delegated to the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities, following consultation with the Chairman of the Thriving People Committee, to make final presentational, factual and typographical amendments prior to publication.

7 COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAMME 2026-2028

Members heard from the Head of Localities and Community Services who presented a report seeking approval to establish a Community Grants Programme for 2026/27 and 2027/28. Members were advised that the programme would build upon the Council's existing grant activity and provide four funding streams comprising the Councillor Initiative Fund, Community Action Fund, Community Facilities Fund, and Community Environment Fund. It was noted that a formal review of the programme would be undertaken once £2,000,000 had been awarded, or during Quarter One of 2027/28, whichever occurred sooner.

During the debate, a Member of the Committee welcomed the report, however, based on changed circumstances since the publication of the report, she proposed amendments which related to details contained within the report, those being:

- Section 2.4 (Community Facilities Fund) be amended to increase the maximum grant available for strategically important projects considered by exception from £100,000 to £150,000;
- Section 3.6 be amended to increase the maximum grant available for strategically important projects considered by exception from £100,000 to £150,000; and
- Section 6.1 be amended to remove reference to the Community Action Fund from the geographic scope provision.

Officers confirmed that whilst the proposed amendments would not alter the recommendations before the Committee, it would be necessary for the amendments to be detailed within any final decision made as they related to the detail referenced within recommendation one of the report.

A Member sought assurance that the proposed allocation of funding would not impact upon the Council's ambitions for the Gainsborough Leisure Centre project and raised questions regarding the allocation of responsibilities between committees. In response, the Deputy Leader of the Council reaffirmed the Administration's commitment to delivering improvements at the Leisure Centre and advised that a review point had been built into the programme to allow further consideration of funding priorities. The Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities explained that committee responsibilities were aligned to the themes of the Corporate Plan.

Further discussion took place regarding the distribution of grant funding across the district. Concerns were raised regarding ensuring equitable access to funding and avoiding disproportionate allocation to areas or organisations. The Chairman emphasised the importance of ensuring that new and existing community groups across the district were made aware of the funding opportunities and had equal opportunity to apply.

A Member clarified that the proposed amendment to the Community Action Fund was intended to ensure that revenue funding remained available to community organisations within Gainsborough, whilst recognising other investment programmes already operating within the town.

With no further comments or indications to speak, the Chairman confirmed the recommendations as printed had been proposed and seconded. He requested the amendments which were relevant to recommendation be repeated, and, having confirmed with the Committee there was no dissent, he called the vote, and it was

RESOLVED that

a) the delivery of a Community Grants Programme be approved as detailed within the report, subject to the following amendments:

- Section 2.4 (Community Facilities Fund) be amended to increase the maximum grant available for strategically important projects considered by exception from £100,000 to £150,000;
- Section 3.6 be amended to increase the maximum grant available for strategically important projects considered by exception from £100,000 to £150,000; and
- Section 6.1 be amended to remove reference to the Community Action Fund from the geographic scope provision.

b) the allocation of up to £4,000,000 from the Reprioritisation (Investment for Growth) Reserve to deliver the Community Grants Programme across 2026/27 and 2027/28 be **recommended** to the Thriving Council Committee for approval; and

c) the delegation of authority to the Thriving People Committee to approve expenditure from the £4,000,000 allocation, with a formal review to be undertaken when £2,000,000 had been awarded or during Quarter One of 2027/28, whichever occurred sooner, be **recommended** to the Thriving Council Committee for approval; and

d) the continuation of the Councillor Initiative Fund in 2027/28 be approved, with £36,000 from the Community Grant Scheme Reserve to be approved under delegated authority by the Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer); and

e) the delivery of the Community Environment Fund be approved, with £50,000 from the Environment and Climate Change Reserve to be approved under delegated authority by the Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer); and

f) the allocation of up to £86,400 from the Community Grant Scheme Reserve for staff costs associated with delivering the Community Grants Programme across 2026/27 and 2027/28 be **recommended** to the Thriving Council Committee for approval.

Note: Councillor T. Young requested that his abstention from the vote be recorded in the minutes.

8 THRIVING PEOPLE THEMATIC BUSINESS PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

Members gave consideration to the Quarter One Thriving People Thematic Business Plan Progress Report presented by the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Strategy). Members were advised that the report provided an update on performance, key deliverables and strategic risks aligned to the Thriving People theme of the Corporate Plan. Reference was made to performance measures relating to temporary accommodation, Disabled Facilities Grants and the introduction of new measures relating to audience satisfaction and attendance at cultural events.

During the debate, a Member of the Committee sought clarification regarding performance relating to housing benefit and council tax support claims. Officers advised that performance remained within tolerance, with a small number of more complex cases taking longer to process.

Further discussion took place regarding temporary accommodation provision. Members sought assurance regarding the impact of newly acquired accommodation units and the level of support available to residents. Members were advised that properties had recently been handed over and it was too early to assess their full impact on performance indicators. It was noted that support arrangements formed part of the accommodation model and would continue to be monitored.

A Member of Committee highlighted the importance of reviewing the adequacy of temporary accommodation provision as further evidence became available and welcomed the inclusion of support arrangements for residents.

Discussion also took place regarding the Leisure Centre feasibility project and its relationship to the Committee structure. Officers advised that, whilst the project was aligned to the Thriving People theme within the Corporate Plan, efforts would continue to be made to engage all Members in the development of proposals.

Clarification was sought regarding performance relating to Disabled Facilities Grants. Members welcomed the improvement achieved and queried whether targets remained appropriate. Officers advised that current performance was above target, although the measure remained subject to funding pressures and future demand.

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

RESOLVED that

a) the aligned deliverables, performance and strategic risks associated with the Thriving People aim of the Corporate Plan had been assessed; and

b) the Quarter One Thematic Business Plan Report be approved.

9 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

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

10 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Note: The meeting entered closed session at 8.03pm

11 HEALTH FACILITIES FEASIBILITY REPORT

The Committee gave consideration to Health Facilities Feasibility report.

During the debate, Members expressed broad support for the work undertaken to date and the potential benefits associated with progressing the project. Reference was made to the importance of developing a robust business case to inform future decision making and ensure the long term viability of any proposed development.

Members also discussed the importance of understanding funding arrangements, delivery options and future operational requirements before any final decisions were taken. Officers advised that the next stage of work would provide the necessary evidence to support consideration of these matters.

With no further comments, having been proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED that

a) the outcome and recommendations of the Feasibility Report at Appendix 1 be noted; and

b) the Health Centre project be progressed through the commissioning of a full business case which will determine options for funding, delivery and long term operation; and

c) the recommendation that the £48,000 funding required for the delivery of the Full Business Case be funded from the Project Investment Reserve through the Section 151 Officer’s delegation, be noted; and

d) Progress of the Full Business Case be monitored through the Strategic Delivery Panels and decisions made through the subsequent committees as a deliverable (PPL-D01) on the Thematic Business Plans.

The meeting concluded at 8.19 pm.

Chairman