

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 factions 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