

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 30 July 2026 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Owen Bierley (Chairman)
Councillor Paul Swift (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Matthew Boles
Councillor Karen Carless
Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
Councillor Paul Key

Also Present: Councillor S Bunney

In Attendance:

Paul Burkinshaw	Chief Executive
Peter Davy	Director Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer)
Sally Grindrod-Smith	Director Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Natalie Kostiuik	Customer Experience Officer
Grant White	Head of Localities and Community Services
Sue Leversedge	Head of Finance (Deputy Section 151)
Sarah Scully	Finance Business Support Team Leader
Sarah Elvin	Head of Housing, Health and Wellbeing
Ele Snow	Senior Democratic and Civic Officer

10 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

11 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING(S)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held on Thursday, 25 June 2026 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

13 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

With no comments the Matters Arising Schedule was **DULY NOTED**.

14 ANNUAL VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER REPORT 2025/26

The Customer Experience Manager presented the Annual Voice of the Customer Report 2025/26, which provided an overview of customer feedback, satisfaction levels and demand across the Council's main access channels.

Members were advised that complaint volumes had increased slightly during the year, largely attributable to the introduction of the new waste service, whilst complaint handling performance had remained strong. It was reported that customer satisfaction had reduced slightly, with feedback relating to the introduction and communication of the food waste service contributing to this trend.

The Committee heard that customer demand remained high, with online forms and telephone contact continuing to be the main methods through which customers accessed services. Waste services continued to generate the highest volume of customer contact and feedback.

Reference was made to service improvements implemented because of customer feedback, including updates to waste policies, improvements to information sharing processes, and officer development. Members were advised that further changes to waste services and the introduction of a revised complaints procedure may influence future reporting.

During the debate a Member of the Committee commented on changing customer expectations and communication behaviours and thanked the Customer Experience Manager for her work in responding to customer feedback and complaints.

A Member sought assurance regarding the monitoring and implementation of service improvements identified through complaints. In response, the Customer Experience Manager advised that actions arising from complaints were monitored through an improvement action process, with follow up arrangements in place to ensure actions were completed and issues resolved.

Further discussion took place regarding the nature of complaints received and whether repeat complaints were received from the same individuals. Members were advised that whilst some customers submitted multiple complaints, no consistent group of repeat complainants had been identified.

The Chief Executive provided additional context regarding waste service complaints, noting the operational challenges associated with the introduction of the food waste collection service, workforce growth, and staff recruitment. Members were advised that further improvements were being developed to support service delivery, including proposed technology enhancements and the appointment of a new Director.

Members also expressed their appreciation for frontline waste service staff and recognised their efforts in continuing to deliver services during periods of adverse weather conditions.

Clarification was sought regarding complaints relating to staff behaviour. Members were advised that such matters were addressed through the Council's established procedures, with appropriate action taken where required.

With no further comments, having been proposed and seconded, the Chairman took the vote and it was

RESOLVED that that the contents of the Annual Voice of the Customer Report 2025/26 be received and the progress made by the Council in improving customer experience over the previous 12 months be noted.

15 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN (LGSCO) ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER REPORT 2025/26

The Customer Experience Manager presented the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter Report 2025/26, providing an overview of complaints referred to, considered by and upheld by the Ombudsman during the year.

Members were advised that 18 complaints had been referred to the Ombudsman during the reporting period, with planning related matters continuing to generate the highest number of referrals. Of the complaints considered, one complaint had been upheld and related to the suitability of temporary accommodation provided as part of a homelessness case. It was reported that the Council had fully complied with the Ombudsman's recommendations and had undertaken work to increase the availability of suitable temporary accommodation within the district.

Reference was also made to benchmarking data comparing West Lindsey District Council's performance with that of similar district councils. Members were advised that the report provided assurance that the Council's complaint handling arrangements were operating effectively whilst continuing to identify opportunities for service improvement.

During the debate, a Member of the Committee welcomed the benchmarking information contained within the report and sought assurance that learning from complaints and Ombudsman investigations was used to inform service improvements. In response, the Customer Experience Manager confirmed that complaint outcomes were regularly reviewed and used to identify policy, procedural and service improvements where appropriate.

Reference was made to the number of planning related complaints received by the Ombudsman. A Member noted the nature of planning decisions and welcomed the independent oversight provided by the Ombudsman process.

Members sought clarification regarding the financial remedy awarded in relation to the upheld homelessness complaint and the provision of temporary accommodation. Officers outlined the Ombudsman's approach to calculating remedies and provided an update on work being undertaken to increase the supply of suitable temporary accommodation within the district.

In further discussion, Members welcomed the Council's overall performance and the positive

commentary contained within the Ombudsman's review regarding the Council's complaint handling arrangements.

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

RESOLVED that the Committee receive the report and, having considered its contents, be assured that the current complaint handling procedures were functioning adequately.

16 RECOMMENDATION FROM THE THRIVING PEOPLE COMMITTEE: COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAMME 2026-2028

The Head of Localities and Community Services presented a report referred from the Thriving People Committee seeking approval of the budget allocations required to deliver the Community Grants Programme between 2026/27 and 2027/28.

Members were advised that the proposed programme would bring together a range of grant funding opportunities to support community projects across the district. Approval was sought for the allocation of funding from the Reprioritisation (Investment for Growth) Reserve and the Community Grant Scheme Reserve to support both grant awards and programme delivery. It was noted that a formal review of the programme would be undertaken once £2 million had been awarded, or during Quarter One of 2027/28, whichever occurred sooner.

During the debate, Members welcomed the proposed programme and highlighted the positive impact that grant funding could have in supporting community organisations, local initiatives and projects across the district. Reference was made to the importance of ensuring funding was distributed and awarded within the remaining timeframe available before local government reorganisation.

Members emphasised the importance of ensuring equitable access to funding across all parts of the district, and sought assurance that smaller organisations with limited experience of grant applications would be supported through the process. In response, officers advised that support and guidance would be available to applicants throughout both the application and project delivery stages.

Further discussion took place regarding the promotion of the programme and engagement with community organisations, parish councils and town councils. Officers outlined the communications and support arrangements that would be implemented to maximise awareness and encourage applications from across the district.

Members also reflected on the positive outcomes delivered through previous grant programmes and the value of supporting projects that benefitted local communities.

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

RESOLVED that

- a) 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 approved; and

- b) authority to approve expenditure from the £4,000,000 allocation be delegated to the Thriving People Committee, with a formal review to be undertaken when £2,000,000 had been awarded or during Quarter One of 2027/28, whichever occurred sooner; and
- c) 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 approved.

17 GUILDHALL BOILER REPLACEMENT

Members heard from the Section 151 Officer who presented a report seeking approval for the replacement of the Guildhall's existing boiler system, which had exceeded its expected operational lifespan and was becoming increasingly unreliable and costly to maintain.

Members were advised that two options had been considered. Option One, the recommended option, proposed a like for like replacement with modern high efficiency gas boilers together with upgrades to the existing rooftop photovoltaic array. Option Two proposed the installation of a hybrid heating system incorporating air source heat pumps alongside gas boilers and upgrades to the photovoltaic array. It was noted that whilst Option Two would provide greater carbon reduction benefits, it would involve higher capital costs and greater technical complexity.

During the debate, Members expressed support for the officer recommendation and acknowledged the work undertaken to evaluate the available options. Reference was made to the financial and operational advantages of Option One and its lower delivery risk when compared with the alternative proposal.

With no further comments or indications to speak, and having been proposed and seconded, the Chairman took the vote. It was

RESOLVED that

- a) the drawdown of £145k including contingency (Recommended option 1) for gas for gas replacement of the existing boilers alongside additionally replacing and upgrading the existing rooftop photovoltaic array, be approved, with the drawdown to be funded as £70k Maintenance of Facilities reserve for the boiler replacement and £75k from the Climate Change Reserve; and
- b) an amendment to the capital programme for 2026/27 to create a new capital scheme for 'Guildhall Boiler Replacement' with a total scheme cost of £145k be approved.

18 BUDGET CONSULTATION 2026

The Head of Finance (Deputy Section 151 Officer) presented the report, which outlined the proposed approach, timeline and questionnaire for the Council's 2026 budget consultation process.

Members were advised that the consultation would seek the views of residents, businesses, and stakeholders through a range of engagement methods, including online and paper questionnaires, market stall events, and direct stakeholder engagement. It was noted that the results of the consultation would be used to inform the Council's 2027/28 budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

During the debate, Members welcomed the proposed consultation process and the continued use of a well-established approach to gathering stakeholder views. A Member highlighted the value of obtaining meaningful feedback from residents and stakeholders, and sought assurance that detailed responses and suggestions received through the consultation process were considered and responded to where appropriate. Officers confirmed that written submissions received from consultees would receive a direct response.

Discussion took place regarding the proposed question relating to car parking. Members and a Visiting Member raised concerns that the accompanying explanatory wording could cause confusion regarding the scope of the question. Following discussion, it was agreed that the wording would be amended to ensure the question sought views on car parking provision across the district and did not unintentionally focus on a specific location.

Members also highlighted the importance of promoting the consultation widely and ensuring opportunities were available for residents from across the district to participate.

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

RESOLVED that the proposed budget consultation process, timeline and questionnaire for 2026 be approved, subject to amendments to the wording of the car parking consultation question as discussed at the meeting.

19 BUDGET AND TREASURY MONITORING - QUARTER 1 2026/27

The Committee gave consideration to the Budget and Treasury Monitoring Report for Quarter One 2026/27, presented by the Finance Business Support Team Leader.

Members were advised that the forecast revenue outturn position indicated a net pressure of £0.073m against budget as at 31 May 2026. Reference was made to pressures arising from fuel costs, whilst it was noted that grant income relating to Internal Drainage Board levy support was higher than originally anticipated. Members were also advised of proposed budget amendments required to support the delivery of externally funded projects.

In relation to capital expenditure, Members were advised of the current projected capital outturn position and the proposed amendment to the CCTV Expansion Scheme, funded from the Community at Risk Reserve.

The Committee heard that treasury management activity remained within approved limits, with no breaches of treasury or prudential indicators reported during the period.

Attention was drawn to appendix three, which detailed the forecast balance on reserves including all approved movements in reserves as at 31 May 2026. This also included the £8m previously allocated for reprioritisation. It was noted that a separate review of reserves report would be presented to the committee in November 2026 as part of the budget setting process.

Members were advised that the council had been successful in securing Growth Development Fund support for three local projects, and were asked to approve the creation of the revenue income and expenditure budgets to support the delivery of these projects, and to approve the use of £10,000 from reserves as match funding for one project.

During the debate, a Member of the Committee sought clarification regarding the volatility of fuel prices and whether alternative procurement arrangements could mitigate future fluctuations. In response, officers outlined the challenges associated with fuel procurement and the impact of market conditions on operating costs, particularly following the introduction of the food waste collection service.

Members acknowledged the influence of wider economic and international factors on fuel prices and welcomed the overall financial position reported. Praise was also expressed for the clarity and presentation of the report and the work undertaken by officers in managing the Council's finances.

With no further comments, and having been proposed and seconded, the Chairman took the vote. It was

RESOLVED that

REVENUE

- a) the forecast out-turn position of a £0.073m net contribution from reserves as of 31st May 2026 (see Section 1) relating to revenue activity be accepted; and
- b) the creation of revenue income and expenditure budgets to support delivery of the three projects detailed at 1.3.2 be approved, and the match funding of £0.01m from the Feasibility Reserve be approved.

CAPITAL

- c) the current projected Capital Outturn position of £5.713m (Section 2) be accepted; and
- d) the amendments to the Capital Schemes as detailed in 2.2 be approved with any amendments to be actioned at Qtr. 2.

TREASURY

- e) the report, the treasury activity and the prudential indicators (Section 3) be accepted.

20 THRIVING COUNCIL THEMATIC BUSINESS PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

Members heard again from the Section 151 Officer, who presented the Quarter One Thriving Council Thematic Business Plan Progress Report for 2026/27.

Members were advised that the report provided an update on performance, delivery of key priorities, and strategic risks associated with the Thriving Council theme of the Corporate Plan. It was noted that the new reporting format brought together performance measures, deliverables and risks into a single report and incorporated trend data to assist Members in assessing performance over time.

The Committee heard that overall performance remained positive, with most key performance indicators achieving target. Strengths were reported across financial services, digital services, information governance, and technology. Reference was made to customer satisfaction and complaints performance, which had been affected by the introduction of the food waste collection service, although complaint response times remained within target.

Members were also advised that several key projects had been completed and were recommended for removal from future reporting, including the food waste collection project, depot electrification feasibility study, Community Asset Transfer Policy and Workforce Plan.

During the debate, Members welcomed the report and the strong overall performance position reflected within the indicators. Whilst noting the small number of indicators reporting below target, it was acknowledged that these were linked to operational pressures previously discussed elsewhere on the agenda.

A Member sought assurance regarding the monitoring of workforce wellbeing and organisational resilience considering preparations for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). In response, the Chief Executive outlined the measures in place to support staff, including engagement activities, staff focus groups, leadership development, workforce planning, and regular monitoring through the thematic business plan framework. Assurance was provided that the impact of LGR on staff would continue to be closely monitored and reported.

Members welcomed the new reporting format and the inclusion of trend data, which was considered to provide greater clarity when assessing performance.

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

RESOLVED that

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

- b) the Quarter One Thriving Council Thematic Business Plan Progress Report be approved.

21 MEMBER ATTENDANCE AT THE LOCAL COUNCILS' NETWORK (LCN) CONFERENCE 2027 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (LGA) ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2027

The Committee gave consideration to a report seeking approval for increased Member attendance at the Local Councils' Network Conference 2027 and the Local Government Association Annual Conference 2027.

Members were advised that the proposal would increase the number of places available for attendance at each conference to a maximum of five Members and would delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to determine attendance.

During the debate, Members recognised the value of both conferences in supporting Member development, networking and engagement with wider local government matters, particularly in the context of local government reorganisation.

With no further comments or indications to speak, and with the recommendation having been proposed and seconded, on taking the vote, it was

RESOLVED that a total of up to five Member spaces be reserved at both the Local Councils' Network Conference and the Local Government Association Annual Conference, and authority be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council to determine Member attendance.

22 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

Members were advised that additional items had been added to the Work Plan since publication of the agenda, including reports scheduled for the September and November meetings. The Chairman noted the evolving nature of the Work Plan considering ongoing preparations for Local Government Reorganisation.

With no comments, questions, or requirement for a vote, the Work Plan was **DULY NOTED**.

23 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 items of business on the grounds that they involve 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 8.04pm

24 MARKET STREET RENEWAL LTD - 2026/2027 BUSINESS PLAN

Members heard from the Director of Planning, Regeneration & Communities regarding the 2026/27 Business Plan for Market Street Renewal Ltd. She provided a summary of the company's performance over 2025/26, and the business plan forecasts through to 2028/29.

It was explained there was a vacant Director role on the board of the company, with the Committee being asked to approve the appointment of the soon-to-be appointed Director of Environmental and Cultural Services into the vacancy.

Members voiced their support for, and pleasure at, the regeneration within Gainsborough town centre, stating the area had been transformed.

Having been proposed and seconded, and with no further indications to speak, the Chairman took the vote and it was

RESOLVED that

- a) the Market Street Renewal Limited Business Plan be noted; and
- b) the vacant company director role be filled by the Director of Environmental and Cultural Services once appointed.

25 BROWNFIELD LAND FUND

The Committee heard from the Head of Housing, Health and Well-being regarding a report seeking approval to submit applications to the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority's Brownfield Housing Fund for three priority brownfield sites. It was explained that the fund provided an opportunity to secure external investment to address viability, remediation and infrastructure constraints that were currently limiting the delivery of new housing on the identified sites. Furthermore, the proposed applications would build upon the evidence and site assessments undertaken through the West Lindsey Housing Pipeline project, and aligned with both local and regional housing and regeneration objectives.

The approval sought was to enable officers to submit funding bids within the 9 August 2026 deadline, with successful schemes expected to be announced later in 2026. Securing funding would help accelerate housing delivery, and support brownfield regeneration.

During the course of significant debate, Members raised concerns regarding the wider infrastructure improvements required, the need to secure funding from developers for additional works, alongside the desire for mixed use sites as opposed to solely housing developments.

It was explained that, should the applications be successful, there would be legal processes to work through, as well as planning policy to be adhered to, all of which would address concerns such as the mix of affordable housing, and consideration of liability during the

house building phase.

Members noted the tight timeframe and welcomed the opportunity to apply to the fund, whilst recognising genuine concerns around infrastructure. Officers highlighted that the approval to apply to the fund would place the council at the forefront of the opportunities offered.

In bringing debate to a close, the Chairman confirmed the recommendations had been proposed and seconded, and duly took the vote. It was

RESOLVED that

- a) funding applications for the three sites identified be submitted to the Brownfield Housing Fund; and
- b) authority for submission of the bids be delegated to the Director for Planning, Regeneration and Housing in consultation with the Chair of Thriving Council Committee; and
- c) an update on the sites be presented to the Committee should the applications for funding be successful.

Note: Councillor P. Key requested that his vote against be recorded in the minutes.

The meeting concluded at 8.40 pm.

Chairman