

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA on 9 January 2025 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Trevor Young (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Paul Swift (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Owen Bierley
Councillor Matthew Boles
Councillor Frazer Brown
Councillor Stephen Bunney
Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee
Councillor John Barrett

In Attendance:
Ian Knowles Chief Executive
Emma Foy Director of Corporate Services and Section 151
Peter Davy Financial Services Manager (Deputy Section 151 Officer)
Darren Mellors Performance & Programme Manager
Claire Bailey Change, Projects and Performance Officer
Ele Snow Senior Democratic and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Paul Key
Councillor Tom Smith

Membership: Councillor John Barrett was appointed substitute for
Councillor Tom Smith

90 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

91 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held on 12 December 2024 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

92 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations made at this point of the meeting.

93 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

There were no outstanding matters arising for consideration.

94 2025/26 MEASURE AND TARGET SETTING FOR PROGRESS AND DELIVERY

Members gave consideration to a report regarding the Measure and Target Setting for Progress and Delivery reporting for 2025/26. The Change, Projects and Performance Officer provided Members with a comprehensive break down of the proposed changes for 2025/26, detailing those changes which involved new measures or targets, previous measures or targets which were proposed for removal, and also those which were being updated or amended. The reasoning behind each addition, removal, or amendment was explained, with assurance that some aspects would be repeated in the narrative of the quarterly Progress and Delivery reporting.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for her presentation, and those Members who had been involved in the process. In opening to questions from the Committee, further thanks were expressed to Officers for the work involved.

A Member of the Committee enquired as to what was considered a recordable complaint in terms of the leisure centres, stating that verbal comments should be recorded as well. Additionally, it was enquired whether the figures relating to fly-tipping covered any and all reports to the council. Officers confirmed that any report of fly-tipping would be included in those figures, regardless of how it was reported. In response to the query about complaints to the leisure centres, Officers undertook to clarify details which would be included in subsequent reports.

The continued engagement with the West Lindsey lottery was highlighted and welcomed, and it was enquired as to whether the number of grants awarded could be shown per area, as that would demonstrate the benefits to the entire district. It was explained this narrative could be included in future quarterly reports.

With further thanks to all involved, and having been moved, seconded and voted upon, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the 2025/26 Progress & Delivery measure set be approved.

95 HIGH LEVEL MTFP UPDATE POST-DRAFT LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL SETTLEMENT

Members heard from the Director of Corporate Services and Section 151 Officer who presented the forecast Medium Term Financial Plan following the receipt of the Local Government Financial Settlement, and updated Members on the consultation process with Central Government. It was highlighted that following receipt of the draft Local Government Financial Settlement, an updated MTFP had been prepared and was contained within Section 1.10 of the report.

It was explained that the presented MTFP was based on officers' best forecasts as at 30 December 2024, and might be subject to change should any amendments to funding be issued by Central Government, or amendments to net expenditure be identified by Officers. It was highlighted that, with the latest business rates position only confirmed on 8 January 2025, it was anticipated that the 2025-26 budget would be brought into a balanced position.

In relation to the consultation process with Central Government, Members heard that the questions and possible responses had been discussed in detail at the first meeting of the Savings Board, which was held earlier that day. The primary response was one of disappointment that not only was there no increase in core spending powers but also there was no contribution to rural services. Additionally, it would be highlighted that council tax flexibility remained low. It was confirmed that the draft response would be shared with the Committee before it was submitted.

Members of the Committee echoed the disappointment with the settlement and particularly the lack of rural funding. It was enquired as to whether there could be a press release undertaken to express the Council's recognition of the challenges faced across the district, especially in the rural communities, highlighting the disparity between rural and urban councils.

In addition to supporting the approach to the consultation process, Members noted the success of the S151 Officer and her team in attaining a balanced budget given the financial constraints, and expressed their thanks.

Having been moved, seconded, and voted upon, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

- a) the latest current estimated level of savings the Council is required to deliver in the period from 2025-26 to 2027-28 be noted; and
- b) the process to provide a consultation response to Government be noted; and
- c) the verbal update following the meeting of the Savings Board on 9 January 2025, summarising key areas of the consultation response to be contained in the Council's response to Government, be accepted.

96 REVIEW OF EARMARKED RESERVES

The Committee gave consideration to a report presented by the Financial Services Manager detailing the annual review of earmarked reserves in advance of the formal Section 25 report (Section 151 Review of Robustness of Reserves) being presented to Full Council on 3 March 2025. It was highlighted that as at 31 March 2024, earmarked reserves totalled £20.047m. After taking account of all approved movements, the forecast balance at 31 March 2025 was £21.349m. Members were advised that the review proposed to reduce the number of reserves, by deleting those which were no longer required; to create a new reserve for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) obligations; and to consider the level of General Fund Balance.

Members expressed their support for the proposed approach and thanked Officers for their diligence, and clear presentation of the financials. The creation of the new reserve for EPR was considered particularly sensible.

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

RESOLVED that

- a) the nil balance earmarked reserves as outlined at section 3 of the report be deleted; and
- b) a new reserve for any government funding allocated to the Council for Extended Producer Responsibility Obligations be created; and
- c) a minimum general fund balance of between £2.0m - £2.5m be maintained; and
- d) the reserves retained by the Council, and their levels, had been considered as detailed in Appendix A.

97 AMENDMENTS TO THE APPROVED COMMITTEE TIMETABLE: CHANGE OF MEETING DATE – CORPORATE POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE, MARCH 2025

The Committee heard from the Senior Democratic and Civic Officer who explained that the District Councils' Network (DCN) Annual Conference was taking place on 13 and 14 March 2025. The attendance of Councillors and Senior Officers was particularly prudent at this time owing to the recent announcement of proposals for local government reorganisation. In order to facilitate attendance at the conference, whilst not having an impact on scheduled business, it was suggested that the meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee in March 2025 be brought forward by two days, from Thursday 13 March to Tuesday 11 March.

Members of the Committee wholeheartedly agreed with the importance of having clear representation at the DCN Annual Conference and the requirement to amend the scheduled meeting date.

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

RESOLVED that, for reasons of availability, the following change to the 2024/25 Committee Timetable be approved:

- a) the meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee scheduled for Thursday, 13 March 2025, be moved to Tuesday, 11 March 2025.

98 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

With no comments or questions, the Committee Work Plan was **DULY NOTED**.

99 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 involved 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 7.13pm

100 BANKING AND MERCHANT ACQUIRING CONTRACTS

The Committee gave consideration to a report seeking approval of procurement exceptions for a new banking contract and a new Merchant Acquiring Service contract.

Note: Councillor I. Fleetwood declared a personal non-pecuniary interest and stated he would not partake in the vote.

The specifics of the contracts were explained, the benefits of remaining with the existing provider, as well as the risks involved with sourcing a new provider should Members wish to change.

In response to a question regarding the length of the contract and whether planned local government reorganisation might have an impact, it was confirmed that, as there was no confirmed reorganisation, nor associated timeframes, it was important for the council to continue with business as usual, with the risks of not doing so far higher.

With Members content with the procurement exceptions as presented, and on moving, seconding, and voting upon the written recommendations, it was

RESOLVED that

- a) the procurement exception at Appendix 5 for a contract for Banking Services with Lloyds Bank for a period of seven years plus the option to extend for a further three years starting on 1st April 2025 be approved; and
- b) the procurement exception at Appendix 6 for a contract for Merchant Acquiring Services with Lloyds Bank for a period of seven years plus the option to extend a further three years starting on 1st April 2025 be approved.

The meeting concluded at 7.19 pm.

Chairman