

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 13 February 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 Trevor Bridgwood
Councillor Frazer Brown
Councillor Stephen Bunney
Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor Paul Key
Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Tom Smith
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee
Councillor Baptiste Velan

In Attendance:
Sally Grindrod-Smith Director Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Nova Roberts Director of Change Management, ICT & Regulatory Services
Lisa Langdon Assistant Director People and Democratic (Monitoring Officer)
Peter Davy Financial Services Manager (Deputy Section 151 Officer)
Rachael Hughes Head of Policy and Strategy
Ele Snow Senior Democratic and Civic Officer

101 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

102 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING/S

The Chairman explained there were two sets of minutes, one for approving and one for noting.

Having been moved and seconded it was

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held on 9 January 2025 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

With regard to the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee, held on 23 January 2025, a Member of the Committee enquired as to what level of support and information sharing was in place for staff, in relation to the proposed Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). It was explained that as well as regular email bulletins being shared with staff, there was a dedicated LGR page on the council intranet staff, where updates were collated as and when received.

With thanks to Officers for the assurance, and no further comments or questions, the minutes of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee, were **NOTED**.

103 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor M. Snee made a personal declaration in relation to agenda item 6b, Budget and Treasury Management Quarter Three 2024/2025, in that decisions to be taken would impact on a close family member. She advised she would therefore not participate in the item and would leave the Chamber for the duration of the debate.

104 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

There were no outstanding matters arising for consideration.

105 RECRUITMENT CONTROLS DISCUSSION PAPER

Members heard from the Assistant Director – People and Democratic Services / Monitoring Officer who presented existing recruitment controls in place at West Lindsey District Council as set out in HR policy, Financial Regulations and the Constitutional Scheme of Delegation. It was highlighted that the report had been presented to the Savings Board and was brought to the Committee for noting.

Members of the Committee who had been present at the meeting of the Savings Board reiterated their satisfaction with the recruitment controls already in place and confirmed they had been suitably assured by the information presented to them. Members requested clarification regarding the data around staff leaving the Council, whether there was an increased turnover in Operational Services and whether the data included those who may have left one role but remained employed by the Council. It was confirmed this information would be shared outside of the meeting.

The Chairman highlighted that the recent peer review had noted and praised the low turnover of staff at the Council.

With the Committee confirming satisfaction with the contents of the report, and no requirement for a vote, the Recruitment Controls Discussion Paper was **DULY NOTED**.

106 BUDGET AND TREASURY MONITORING QTR. 3 2024/2025

Note: Councillor M. Snee left the Chamber at 7.08pm

The Committee gave consideration to a paper presented by the Deputy S151 Officer detailing the Quarter Three Budget Monitoring report for 2024/25, based on the forecast outturn as of 31 December 2024. The following details were highlighted.

Revenue

In relation to revenue budgets, the forecast outturn position was a net contribution to reserves of £536,000, which was an increase of £376,000 from the forecast position reported at quarter two. The increase was mainly due to uncommitted revenue contingency budgets of £367,000. It was proposed that £250,000 of this be transferred to an earmarked reserve to support the ongoing maintenance of new capital assets. The details of this would be presented to the Committee for approval as part of the final outturn report for 2024/25, alongside other recommendations for use of the final outturn surplus to be discussed with Members and Officers before year end.

It was explained that there was also an increase in net interest receivable of £67,000 due to the current base rate being higher than the peak expected when the budget was set. Forecast pressure for housing benefits subsidy of £133,000 and NSIP £111,000 consultancy costs were provided as a worst case scenario and Officers were looking to reduce those pressures before the end of the year.

Members heard that, at quarter three, Officers were able to more accurately reflect forecast income for fee generating services and there were several new variances reported including gains for bulky waste collections and the big bin hire service and green waste subscriptions, offset by forecast shortfalls against income budgets for the crematorium, and street naming and numbering.

Capital

In relation to capital, it was noted that schemes were reporting a net £5.571m underspend against the revised budget. £5.379m was requested to be slipped into 2024/25, with the largest of those being £4.75m for the purchase of Scampton. Members were asked to approve the revised capital budget of £22.842m which included the amendments to the capital programme detailed at section 3.2 of the report. The full capital monitoring table was included at Appendix 1.

Fees and Charges

Members heard there were two new fees proposed for the crematorium from April 25, in relation to digital downloads of service. Notification of the statutory planning fees for 2025/26 had also been received, with the full schedule included within the report at Appendix 5. The majority of fees were increased in line with the assumptions applied to the income budgets for planning within the medium-term financial plan. Those fees proposed above an inflationary increase were subject to parliamentary approval and any amendments would be reported to Members.

Reserves

Following an amendment to the statement of accounts for 2023/24 Members were asked to approve an additional movement of £76,000 to the budget stability reserve.

Revenue Carry Forwards

It was highlighted that included in the report at section 2.5 there was a request for Members to approve the carry forward of underspend in revenue budget into 2025/26:

1. to support the backfill and interim arrangements of the management structure, with the underspend from vacancies forecast to be around £150,000,
2. to extend two LUF officer posts for a further six months, to the end of December 2025 at a cost of £68,000, and
3. to extend the Cultural Events and Marketing Officer post for three months to the end of June 2025, at a cost of £13,000.

The forecast outturn position reported at quarter three included these carry forward amounts, pending approval.

To conclude, it was summarised that Members were asked to approve:

1. The contribution to earmarked reserves for 2023/24 of £0.76m (section 2.4.1)
2. The amendments to fees and charges – at 2.4.2
3. The revenue carry forwards into 2025/26 listed at 2.5, and
4. The revised capital budget of £22.842m

Members thanked the Officer for a thorough presentation of the report. With regard to the extension of the Officer positions delivering the Levelling Up Fund project work, it was enquired as to whether Members could be provided with additional information relating to the progress and transition work. With this in mind, the following amendment to recommendation (e) was proposed:

“Members approve the revenue budget carry forwards into 2025/2026 (2.5) however, on the grounds of due diligence and good governance, a decision on the extension of the LUF contracts as outlined in paragraph 2.5.2 of the report be delayed until further clarification for the need of the extensions be presented to, and agreed between, the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities, and the Chairman of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee”

The proposal was duly seconded. It was then enquired as to whether the proposed three month extension of the Cultural Officer role was sufficient given the ongoing work within that area.

It was explained that the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) project work was progressing well, however there had been previous delays which had been communicated with the Committee at the time. It was confirmed that the document which had been created regarding the transition of LUF work over the coming months would be shared with the Committee. It was also confirmed that a three month extension within the cultural team would not be sufficient, however it would enable the team to further develop the cultural work programme. In response to a question relating to future extensions, it was explained that the term of

employment could be reviewed and extended again in the future.

The Chairman noted that there had been a recent announcement of UKSPF monies, and the newly appointed Arts Officer post would increase capacity within the team.

With the proposed amendment having been seconded, the Chairman took the vote, and it was

RESOLVED that recommendation (e) be amended to read as follows:

"Members approve the revenue budget carry forwards into 2025/2026 (as detailed in sections 2.5.1 and 2.5.3 of the report), however, on the grounds of due diligence and good governance, a decision on the extension of the LUF contracts as outlined in paragraph 2.5.2 of the report be delayed until further clarification for the need of the extensions be presented to, and agreed between, the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities, and the Chairman of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee"

With no further questions or comments, the Chairman summarised the recommendations as printed, with the amendment as detailed above. Having been proposed, seconded, and voted upon, it was

RESOLVED that

REVENUE

- a) the forecast out-turn position of a £0.536m net contribution to reserves as of 31 December 2024 (see Section 2) relating to revenue activity, be accepted; and
- b) the contribution to Earmarked Reserves 2023/2024 - £0.076m (2.4.1), be approved; and
- c) the use of Earmarked Reserves approved by the Chief Finance Officer using Delegated powers (2.4.2), be accepted; and
- d) the amendments to the fees and charges schedules for 2024/2025 (2.3.2), be approved; and
- e) the revenue budget carry forwards into 2025/2026 (as detailed in sections 2.5.1 and 2.5.3 of the report) be approved, however, on the grounds of due diligence and good governance, a decision on the extension of the LUF contracts as outlined in paragraph 2.5.2 of the report be delayed until further clarification for the need of the extensions be presented to, and agreed between, the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities, and the Chairman of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

CAPITAL

- f) the current projected Capital Outturn position of £22.842m (Section 3), be

accepted; and

- g) the amendments to the Capital Schemes as detailed in 3.2 be approved.

TREASURY

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

Note: Councillor M. Snee returned to the Chamber at 7.26pm

107 CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE DRAFT BUDGET 2025/2026 AND ESTIMATES TO 2029/2030.

The Committee heard again from the Deputy S151 Officer, who explained that the report detailed the draft controllable service budgets for 2025/26, and estimates for the following four years for the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee, and those recommended by Prosperous Communities Committee in January 2025.

It was explained that the net base budget for services within the Committee, had increased from 2024/25 by £225,000. £77,000 of this movement was a decrease in approved use of earmarked reserves which related to the end of fixed term contracts. Of the remaining increase, £248,000 was against salary budgets which had been affected by several factors, including, an assumed pay award of 3% for 2025/26 and changes to employers' national insurance. The Council had received confirmation of the NI Compensation Grant from Government which equated to 52% of the Council's budgeted figure for national insurance.

Additionally, it was explained there had been an increase in contractual software expenditure of £54,000, as new modules and developments of systems were implemented across the council, and external audit fees had increased by £23,000 which reflected a national increase in external audit contracts.

Revenue contingency budgets had seen a net decrease of £19,000, which included a reduction in the commercial contingency budget to £100,000 per year, with an increase in the budget pressure contingency budget to make provision for revenue costs to support the delivery of the food waste collection service from 2026/27.

Officers were able to report that the proposed budgets for this committee contributed towards a balanced budget for 2025/26 and Members were asked to recommend the budget to Council for inclusion in the medium-term financial plan.

It was recognised there was certain fluidity regarding the future of the Council, in relation to the Local Government Reorganisation, and Members were content with the budget and estimates as presented.

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

RESOLVED that

- a) the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee budget 2025/2026 be accepted and **recommended** to Council for inclusion in the overall Council budget 2025/2026; and
- b) the Prosperous Communities Committee Budget 2025/2026 be accepted and **recommended** to Council for inclusion in the overall Council budget for 2025/2026; and
- c) any minor changes be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Chairperson of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee; and
- d) the 2026/2027 to 2029/2030 estimates for both this Committee and those of Prosperous Communities Committee be **recommended** to Council for inclusion in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2025/2026 to 2029/2030 (as amended by any decisions taken on this agenda).

108 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025/26

The Committee considered the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2025/26 to 2029/30, the Budget 2025/26, and the Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2029/30. It was explained that the purpose of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) was to set a robust overall framework for the Council's Financial Strategy and spending plans over the next five years in support of delivering the Corporate Plan. Members heard that the report set out the revised financial plans within the Financial Analysis for changes in Government Funding, the economic environment, local engagement and the priorities for the Council. The plan reflected the revisions to previous estimates and covered the period 2025/26 to 2029/30. Additionally, it was highlighted that the Financial Analysis included the draft budget for 2025/26 for scrutiny and consideration prior to recommending to Council.

A Member of the Committee recorded his thanks to all Officers involved in the work relating to the Council's finances, naming Emma Foy, the Director of Corporate Services and Section 151 Officer, Peter Davy, Financial Services Manager and Deputy S151 Officer, and Sue Leversedge, the Business Support Team Leader. He recognised the pressure on them to deliver a successful budget, referencing the current financial strain experienced by councils across the country, expressing concern for how to safeguard against future constraints for the district.

The Chairman noted the unexpected announcement of the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the challenges presented by it. In response to a query as to the Executive Business Plan, which in previous years had been included with the paper under consideration, it was noted that, following comments from the recent peer review and also in light of the LGR and changing political scene, the Executive Business Plan was under initial review to ensure it was as robust as possible whilst being reflective of the changing times.

Members of the Committee echoed thanks to the Finance Officers, and recognised the challenges being faced by them and the Council. There was further discussion regarding the Executive Business Plan, with Members offered assurance that it would proceed through the

Committee system as normal, however it was under review and therefore slightly delayed compared to previous presentations.

With no further questions or comments, and with the written recommendations having been proposed, seconded, and voted on, it was

RESOLVED that

- a) the approval of the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2025/26 – 2029/30 be **recommended** to Council; and
- b) the review of Reserves and the proposed use and contributions to both the General Fund Balance and Earmarked Reserves as detailed at 2.8 within the Medium-Term Financial Plan be approved; and
- c) a balanced Revenue Budget for 2025/26 (Appendix 1), having been considered, be **recommended** to Council; and
- d) the Capital Programme 2025/26 – 2029/30 (Appendix 4), having been considered, be **recommended** to Council; and
- e) the Statement of the Chief Finance Officer on the Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves be accepted; and
- f) the Pay Policy Statement (Appendix 6), having been considered, be **recommended** to Council; and
- g) the creation of a new earmarked reserve for Public Realm schemes be approved; and
- h) any housekeeping or changes required, due to the final financial settlement and any approvals elsewhere on this agenda, to the Medium-Term Financial Plan, be delegated to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Chairman of this Committee prior to the final consideration by Council on 3 March 2025.

**109 RECOMMENDATION FROM THE JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE:
REVIEW OF THE WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

Members heard from the Assistant Director People and Democratic Services who presented the revised Whistleblowing Policy for consideration. It was explained that the policy had not required many changes, however, a notable change was the name of the policy itself. It was suggested the policy be retitled “Reporting a Concern (Whistleblowing) Policy”, highlighting it was appropriate that the term “Whistleblowing” remain in the title as it differentiated the policy from other complaint and grievance policies.

Members expressed their contentment with the amendments to the policy, and, subject to the correction of some typing errors, were happy to support the policy. The involvement of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee was welcomed, recognising that it had been

thoroughly debated with suggestions made which had then been incorporated into the policy.

Having been moved and seconded, the Chairman took the vote, and it was

RESOLVED that the revised and renamed 'Reporting a Concern (Whistleblowing) Policy' be approved.

110 REVIEW OF CIVIC CAR

Members were invited to consider options presented to them regarding the provision of a car for use by the Chairman for civic events. It was explained the by Deputy S151 Officer that in February 2024, an options report was brought to this Committee to request a decision on whether to replace the car, dispose of it, or to maintain the existing vehicle with the decision to be brought back to Members to reconsider no later than 28 February 2025. The Committee chose to maintain the existing vehicle for 12 months and to reconsider in February 2025. It was highlighted that the options remained the same.

Councillor S. Bunney, as Chairman of the Council, explained to his colleagues that he had not seen much use for the car, choosing instead to travel himself to events where necessary. His suggestion was for the car to be sold, but for the money to be held for future use if needed.

Another Member of the Committee spoke as a past Chairman, and noted that there were occasions when the use of the car was essential, and that to not have it as an option would preclude some Members from being offered the role of Chairman, if they could not transport themselves around the district and wider area. He suggested that the use of the car could be extended, rather than it being used solely for the Chairman or Vice Chairman whilst undertaking their civic duties. He proposed that the existing car be maintained (option a), with further consideration given to extending the use.

The proposal of option a was seconded, with debate amongst Members focusing on, not only the need to enable anyone to hold the role of Chairman, regardless of ability to provide own transport or not, but also on the financial sense of retaining an existing vehicle rather than needing to spend money on, for example, taxi fares. The suggestion to extend the use of the vehicle was also supported. It was further noted that whilst the terminology of a 'civic car' sounded grand, the vehicle in question was an economic option, not a high-spec status car.

With regard to the use of public monies, it was enquired whether there had ever been any public consultation on the matter. It was confirmed there had not been, however Members were keen to make a decision which made financial sense given the current financial situation.

Further comments highlighted the importance of the role of the Chairman, and the security which came with a dedicated vehicle, not only for the person holding the role, but also for the associated regalia. Insurance policies for such regalia often required appropriate security steps to be taken, which were adhered to by using the civic car.

The Chairman summarised the debate, and noted the proposal of option a, to retain the existing vehicle. In hearing the summary of the debate, a Member of the Committee proposed that the item be deferred, in order for further information to be provided regarding options such as extending the use of the car beyond the civic use. This proposal was duly seconded, and, expressing their agreement for the deferral, the original proposal was withdrawn by proposer and seconder.

On taking the vote, it was

RESOLVED that the paper be deferred until a later date for further details to be provided.

111 COMMITTEE TIMETABLE 2025/26 FOR APPROVAL AND DRAFT TIMETABLE FOR 2026/27 FOR NOTING

The Senior Democratic and Civic Officer introduced the annual Committee Timetable report for consideration, and explained it was for Members to consider and approve the timetable for the 2025/26 civic year, and note the early indicated dates for 2026/27. She drew Members' attention to section two of the report, where there were a number of changes detailed which had been incorporated into the timetable for approval. Members were specifically asked to consider the suggested change for Annual Council to move to 19 May 2025 (from 12 May), accepting that the predominant reason for this change was no longer valid.

Members of the Committee expressed their support for the proposed timetable, including the amendments provided in section two. With regard to the date of Annual Council in May 2025, it was requested that the original date of 12 May 2025 be kept, as several smaller councils had arranged their annual meetings around the previously published West Lindsey District Council timetable. The Committee expressed their collective agreement with this.

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

RESOLVED that

- a) the timetable for the 2025/26 civic year, with Annual Council to be held on 12 May 2025, be approved, and the indicative committee dates for the year 2026/27 be noted; and
- b) indicative committee dates be presented annually for approval, with each subsequent report noting any changes proposed from the previous version noted.

112 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

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

113 CLOSING COMMENTS AND THANKS

Members requested for it to be put on record their thanks be extended to Emma Foy, the outgoing Director of Corporate Services. She had been unable to attend the meeting however her hard work and dedication over the previous years had been much appreciated and the Committee wished her well for her future endeavours.

To rounds of ‘hear hear’, the meeting was brought to a close.

The meeting concluded at 8.14 pm.

Chairman