

BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

At the meeting of Boston Borough Council held in the Online: Members of the public can register to view the meeting at <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/9147455564216645135>, on Wednesday, 10th June, 2020 at 6.30 pm

Present:

The Mayor (Councillor Anton Dani), in the Chair
Councillors Deborah Evans, Tracey Abbott, Tom Ashton, Alison Austin, Richard Austin BEM, Alan Bell, Peter Bedford, Michael Cooper, George Cornah, Anne Dorrian, Viven Edge, Paul Goodale, Martin Griggs, Neill Hastie, Jonathan Noble, Frank Pickett, Brian Rush, Chelcei Sharman, Judith Skinner, Paul Skinner, Aaron Spencer, Yvonne Stevens, Peter Watson, Judith Welbourn, Nigel Welton, Colin Woodcock and Stephen Woodliffe

Officers –

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive (Monitoring Officer), Chief Finance Officer and S151 Officer, Democratic Services Manager, Senior Democratic Services Officer and Democratic Services Officer

12 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 2 March 2020, were taken as read and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

13 APOLOGIES

No apologies for absence were received.

14 COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications.

15 QUESTIONS FROM ELECTED MEMBERS

The Chief Executive reported there were questions from Councillors Tom Ashton, George Cornah, Jonathan Noble, Tracey Abbott and Judith Skinner.

Question asked by Councillor Tom Ashton pursuant to paragraph 11 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution.

“Taking note of the County Council’s bid for a ‘devolution deal’ which envisages reorganizing the structures of local government in this County, would Councillor Welton update the Council on whether he would support the creation of a Boston Town Council in the event of such reorganization extinguishing this esteemed Borough Council?”

Response by Councillor Nigel Welton

“I thank Councillor Ashton for his question

I wholeheartedly support the creation of a town council for Boston.

Protection of Boston as a town is of great importance to me and I will do whatever is in my power to protect the future status of our town.

Following the recent manoeuvres to reopen the debate on devolution in Lincolnshire our priority must be to protect Boston's unique identity, history and heritage.

We must all stand together to ensure Boston doesn't become a forgotten corner of Lincolnshire in any future carve up of the county."

Supplemental question asked by Councillor Ashton pursuant to paragraph 11.6 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution:-

"Would you agree to work with me to bring forward a motion to this Council, which would secure a Town Council and safeguard the civic privileges and property, which rightfully belong to the people of Boston in the event of the Council's demise?"

Response by Councillor Welton

"I will work you and any other person on this planet if it means we can protect the unique status of our town."

Question asked by Councillor George Cornah pursuant to paragraph 11 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution.

"At Cabinet on 20th May it was agreed that the Council would purchase or lease a temporary replacement cremator while seeking a long-term solution. Could the Portfolio Holder reassure this Council and our residents that Boston Crematorium remains fit for purpose, and the measures agreed at Cabinet are sufficient to prevent a major or prolonged failure of this vital local service?"

Response by Councillor Yvonne Stevens

"May I thank Councillor Cornah for his question concerning the crematorium. Cabinet agreed to the purchase of a temporary cremator and I can confirm that the order has been placed with the supplier with delivery anticipated on 1st August. The new cremator is a robust, efficient and modern design and will be supplied with a manufacturer's warranty. The cremator will be installed immediately adjacent to the crematorium building, inside a weather-proof enclosure and the cremator will benefit from an all-inclusive maintenance contract.

"Whilst we await delivery, our two existing cremators will continue to be managed as serviceable by the excellent team at the crematorium, as has indeed been the case since the previous maintenance company entered administration, albeit with necessary limitations being applied to capacity and concurrent use, so as to preserve our current operations.

"Long term, Members will be aware of my ambitions to investigate a new build Crematorium for Boston due to the limitations of the existing site"

Supplemental question asked by Councillor Cornah pursuant to paragraph 11.6 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution:-

“I have no further question – it is reassuring to hear the crematorium is in good working order and servicing the needs of the people of Boston.”

Question asked by Councillor Jonathan Noble pursuant to paragraph 11 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution.

“How much Central Government money has Boston Borough Council received to date to provide financial support for itself and local businesses adversely affected by the economic effects of the Government’s ‘lockdown’?”

Response by Councillor Martin Howard

“The Council has received £16.768m under the Small Business Grant, and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants, and the more recently announced Discretionary Business Grant, schemes.

“In addition, £9.3m has been received as a consequence of the Expanded Retail and other business rate reliefs that apply in 2020/21.

“With regard to Government money to help with the day-to-day finances, the Council has received £0.7m (i.e. £750,000) from the Government in recognition of the impacts of Covid-19 on its finances. This was distributed as part of two £1.6bn nationwide tranches announced in April and May. Lobbying for further funding is continuing, led by the Local Government Association. Cash flow monies have also been approved to support the Council as a consequence of other decisions and the sum of £62,811 has also been distributed to the Council to support the reopening of the high streets.”

Supplemental question asked by Councillor Noble pursuant to paragraph 11.6 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution:-

“Is it not seemly, fitting and appropriate that Central Government should provide financial support to the Council and Boston borough businesses for the economic damage inflicted on them as a result of the Government’s ‘lockdown’?”

Response by Councillor Howard

“Yes, I totally agree with you and, as I said earlier, lobbying is going on and we need as much support as we can possibly get from the Government to keep local businesses going, to keep the finances going and it is certainly something that I am in regular contact with Mr Paul Julian regarding this and, obviously, as new information comes through, and details, I will be the first to update you.”

Question asked by Councillor Tracey Abbott pursuant to paragraph 11 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution.

“Taking into account of the impact of Covid-19 on the Council’s finances, could Councillor Howard give an update on the position of the Revenue and Reserves against budget, and the current projections over the next three months?”

Response by Councillor Martin Howard

“As reported to Cabinet on 20 May, the Council is projecting the net revenue impact of Covid-19 for the current year, and it is a fluid situation, to be in the region of £1.75m.

“The Government has provided £750,000 grant already to help support this reduction, but obviously this is not enough and lobbying continues for further monies to close the remaining projected gap.

“To date, the complete closure of the Geoff Moulder Leisure Centre, the cessation of charging for car parks and reduced volumes elsewhere has reduced expected income significantly, by approximately £500,000.

“Assuming that there is no return to full lockdown, and that social distancing measures mean that capacities are revised downwards, a further reduction against budget of £500,000 is estimated over the next three months.

“Regular reports will be presented to members through the year to update the position both in respect of projected losses and further Government responses.

“Regarding Revenue and Reserves against budget for the next three months, the situation is very fluid, and until we come out of Covid-19 with all the facts and figures it is impossible really to give an accurate forecast of this.

“I would just like to add that it is going to be extremely difficult to balance our budget and provide existing services to our public over the coming months and years due to the current situation. It would be remiss of me to try and guess and estimate Revenue and Reserves against budget in the current situation and give figures because it is so fluid at the moment. All I can really do is state that as soon as I get the information and any more details I will report back to all members.”

Supplemental question asked by Councillor Abbott pursuant to paragraph 11.6 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution:-

“On these figures, in your assessment, how many years has this Council got before it cannot balance the budget without running down reserves or cutting frontline services?”

Response by Councillor Howard

“My answer is similar to my answer about Revenue and Reserves. It is difficult to predict anything going forward at the moment. The only thing I do have confidence in is our S151 Officer, Mr Paul Julian, and his team; they have a proven track-record in balancing budgets, particularly in austerity. My own belief is that we are in for a very severe recession, but, again, I can't give you an exact answer as to how many years we can carry on balancing the budget, it is such a fluid situation, but I will take your question further and forward to Mr Julian and attempt to get some sort of indication. None of us has ever experienced this before, we are not the only council in this situation, it is every council across the country. Again, when we get some figures that we can confidently predict, I will come back to all members.”

Question asked by Councillor Judith Skinner pursuant to paragraph 11 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution.

“Would the Leader agree with me that our staff have been brilliant at swapping roles to help as we face the trials of Covid-19. Will he join me in thanking them all for maintaining our essential services at this time.”

Response by the Leader

“Recent times have tested all of us. I am proud of Boston Borough Council staff, they have risen to the challenge, worked from home to continue our services, trained on other jobs to fill those essential roles left vacant by those that are shielding or live with those shielding. Our leisure services have gone beyond developing on-line classes to help the health and wellbeing of all. A big thank you to all.”

Supplemental question asked by Councillor Skinner pursuant to paragraph 11.6 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution:-

“Would the Leader also agree that this shows how versatile our staff are and that they will be able to step up to face any proposed changes in the future?”

Response by the Leader

“Yes, I am sure they will. They have done very well in response to the recent test. In fact, I am sure they have the skills and enthusiasm to take us on in any challenge we present.”

16 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Question asked by Mr Darron Abbott pursuant to paragraph 10 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution. In accordance with the rules for remote meetings, this was read out by the Mayor.

“At a time when you are trying to save any penny you can combined with warnings from local water authorities that hose pipe bans and restrictions will soon be imposed how can you and the Council justify the watering of football pitches that have not been used since December for the last six weeks at a cost of approximately £1.50 per hour. And by my rough calculations around a total of £1400.”

Response by Councillor Martin Howard

“The annual licence fee paid by each of the two clubs that are licensed by the Council to use Garfits Playing Field are deemed to include the cost of utilities, such as water. The utilities charge for water usage for the site for 2019/20 was £457.58. If and when water restrictions are imposed by the water company, the clubs will be responsible for abiding by the restrictions.”

Supplemental question asked by Mr Darron Abbott pursuant to paragraph 10.8 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution:-

“Is this expenditure justified, please could you just answer yes or no?”

Response by the Councillor Howard

“No, we cannot justify this spend. It is something that I am looking at it very closely. I have actually asked for meter readings to be taken so we can confirm the cost of the water that has been used against last year’s and then we can take action regarding that. We need to do some investigations to find out what the cost is.”

17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Tom Ashton declared that, with respect to the item on the Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council Strategic Alliance that he was a Member of East Lindsey District Council. However, he had sought advice from the Monitoring Officer in respect of this item and could confirm that, as he approached this issue as a Member of Boston Borough Council and his mind was entirely on what was best of Boston Borough Council, he was able to take part in this item and take part in the debate and vote.

In response to a Member’s questions, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that Councillor Ashton did not have two votes on the matter. He was attending the Boston Borough Council meeting, not the East Lindsey meeting. East Lindsey District Council was meeting simultaneously with Boston Borough Council; therefore Councillor Ashton was only exercising one vote on this item.

The Chief Executive declared that he and the other two Statutory Officers, the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer, had an interest in the report, Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council Strategic Alliance, as it affected their employment. They all confirmed that they had not provided any professional advice to the Council in respect of the matters contained within the report and they would leave the meeting prior to that item’s consideration.

18 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Councillor Jonathan Noble introduced the confirmed minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 27 January 2020, highlighting the key matters considered by the Committee.

It was moved by Councillor Jonathan Noble and seconded by Councillor Tom Ashton and

<p>RESOLVED that the confirmed minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 27 January 2020 be received.</p>
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19 ANNUAL MEETING 2020-21

The Chief Executive presented a report seeking consideration of not holding an Annual General Meeting in the municipal year 2020/21 in accordance with the provisions of the

Local Authorities Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

The report stated that the Regulations applied to local authority meetings that were required to be held, or held, before 7 May 2020¹, and drafted to enable local authorities to properly function during the coronavirus crisis.

The Local Government Act 1972 required local authorities to hold their AGM's in either March, April or May of each year. Part 6 of the Regulations enabled authorities to dis-apply that requirement which meant that the Council had no obligation to hold an AGM until May 2021.

It was not considered feasible, or entirely fair to the incoming Mayor, to hold the AGM remotely as it was a ceremonial meeting involving a number of persons required to be in close contact.

Similarly, holding the meeting date in abeyance until the crisis was over was not considered to be an ideal arrangement as the incoming Mayor's year of office would be considerably shorter than expected and, due to Covid-19 restrictions, it was unlikely that he would be able to undertake the expected range of duties and attendance at events.

The incoming Mayor had confirmed his agreement to defer his Mayoralty for one year and the current Mayor's appointment would continue until May 2021.

The report also proposed to review the appointments of Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen and constitution of committees in September 2020.

It was proposed by Councillor Paul Skinner, and seconded by Councillor Nigel Welton

- 1. That the Council determines not to hold the Annual General Meeting in the municipal year 202/21 and for the Mayor to continue in office until the AGM May 2021.**
- 2. That all current appointments of Chairmen and constitution of Committees be reviewed in September 2020.**

Members expressed sympathy for the existing Mayor and the Mayor Elect for the interruption of their tenure of office. However, there was a difference of opinion as to whether the AGM should be delayed until May 2021.

There was a view that there was no reason to defer the AGM and that it should be held in September, at the same time that the current appointments of Chairmen and constitution of committees were to be reviewed. Other larger authorities had managed to continue to hold their AGMs as normal and the technology to hold meetings virtually was working well.

However, there was another view that a virtual meeting would not be appropriate to the dignity of the installation of the new Mayor, who would then have a short term of office, and that it would be both safer and fairer to delay the AGM until May 2021.

An amendment was moved by Councillor Anne Dorrian and seconded by Councillor Neill Hastie, that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor redirect the Mayoral Allowances for 2020/21 to the Mayor's nominated charities.

However, it was explained that this was not an amendment pursuant to paragraph 17.6 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution.

An amendment was moved by Councillor Anne Dorrian and seconded by Councillor Neill Hastie:-

- 1. That the Council determines not to hold the Annual General Meeting in the municipal year 202/21 and for the Mayor to continue in office until the AGM May 2021, and that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor redirect their Mayoral Allowances for 2020/21 to the Mayor's nominated charities.**
- 2. That all current appointments of Chairmen and constitution of Committees be reviewed in September 2020.**

However, the Mayor then explained that the unspent money from the 2019/20 Mayoral budget had been returned to the Council's funds and the same would happen in the current year.

The proposer and seconder then withdrew the amendment, though it was requested that unspent monies be diverted to the Mayor's charity instead of the Council's funds in future.

The substantive motion was then put to the vote and

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Council's Annual General Meeting not be held in the municipal year 2020/21 and the Mayor to continue in office until the AGM May 2021.**
- 2. That all current appointments of Chairmen and constitution of Committees be reviewed in September 2020.**

20 EXTENSION OF SIX MONTH ATTENDANCE RULE

The Monitoring Officer presented a report, which asked Members to consider the granting of an extension to the six-month attendance rule to prevent Councillors ceasing to be a Member of the authority under section 85 at the Local Government Act 1972. The rule meant that a Member who had not attended a meeting for a six-month consecutive period was disqualified from holding office as a Member of the Council.

An extension of three months would prevent any Member losing their seat through failure to attend a meeting because of the coronavirus pandemic. This would extend the attendance rule to nine months, with any further requests for dispensation to be delegated to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Group Leaders.

Members commented that virtual meetings had proved to be easily accessible, even allowing Members to participate by telephone, therefore there was no need for a three-month extension.

It was moved by Councillor Paul Skinner, seconded by Councillor Nigel Welton and

RESOLVED

- 1. That a dispensation be approved for all Members to agree an extension to the six-month attendance rule in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.**
- 2. That any requested dispensations be discussed by the Group Leaders in consultation with the Monitoring Officer to make full use of the usual procedures for considering an extension in advance of the expiry period contained within Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.**

[The three Statutory Officers left the meeting at this point and a short comfort break followed.]

It was then moved by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Anne Dorrian and

RESOLVED that the meeting continue beyond three hours in accordance with paragraph 9 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution.

21 BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL AND EAST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL STRATEGIC ALLIANCE

Councillor Nigel Welton presented a report, which set out the case for the creation of a strategic alliance between Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey district Council, including the sharing of statutory officers, the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer, and set out the substantial benefits that would accrue from an alliance.

Each council would retain its distinct and special identity, decision-making powers and accountability. The talent and experience of each authority's officers would be combined to build capacity and deploy resources necessary to transform service quality across the board.

The goal was to deliver better outcomes for local people at a significantly lower cost than that which could be achieved if the authorities were to continue to operate separately. Joint working on the planning and delivery of services would also mitigate pressure on the Council's budgets and command greater influence in the allocation of resources from Central Government, the Lincolnshire Enterprise Partnership and others.

Joint working would also give the councils a stronger voice in any process to reshape local government in Lincolnshire, promoting a common agenda with a single voice. They would gain experience of managing strategic change quickly and effectively and there could also be a longer term possibility for the strategic alliance to grow in numbers, giving rise to promote a significant part of Lincolnshire, should the future bring consideration of alternative structures.

Both councils had a relatively small officer corps with limited revenue and capital resources to tackle the multitude of challenges each faced. The financial pressures facing local government were significant, with cuts in Central Government Grants and limited opportunities to offset pressures, combined with increased demands for key services. This pressure was likely to become more acute in the short-term due to the loss of revenue and additional unplanned expenditure caused by the need to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic.

One of the consequences of the financial structure imposed on councils was the pressure from Government to scale up by adopting countywide unitary and mayoral structures. Past experience in Lincolnshire suggested this would be difficult to achieve, and a better approach would be to build alliances from the 'bottom up'. This would allow resources to be shared quickly and effectively, reducing pressure on budgets, and giving those partners a stronger voice in the allocation of scarce resources from central government and the shaping of new unitary structures.

The proposal was set out clearly within the report and the details of how it would work were set out in the memorandum of understanding. The proposals had been subject to in-depth discussions in which Councillor Welton had been involved since May 2019. The Leader and Deputy Leader of both authorities had met to discuss the finer points of the proposal and draft the report, which had been extensively amended to suit both authorities.

The finances of the proposal were set out in the appendix, indicating prudent figures of year-on-year savings. There was total confidence that exit costs would be contained within the figures given. Independent financial advice and independent legal advice had been sought and were set out in the appendices.

The proposed alliance sought to protect the town, its funds, heritage, history and future. The final shape of joint working and the pace of service transformation would be subject to agreement by both councils. Members were invited to agree that the transformation should begin now, with the establishment of a Joint Statutory Officer team to advise and assist both authorities on how to 'kick start' change and merge workforces.

It was moved by Councillor Nigel Welton and seconded by Councillor Paul Skinner:-

- (1) To agree to enter into a Strategic Alliance for the purposes set out in Section [1.12] of this report, effective from 1st July 2020, for the purposes and under the terms described in this report and set out more particularly in the draft Memorandum of Agreement attached to it.**

- (2) That the Strategic Alliance will be supported by a single merged workforce. This will be overseen and implemented by the Joint Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service.
- (3) That the savings of £15.4m (BBC £5.1M, ELDC £10.3M) identified in the Financial Business Case are built into the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- (4) That Robert Barlow becomes Joint Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service of East Lindsey District Council and Boston Borough Council. East Lindsey District Council shall formally employ Mr Barlow, who shall, for the purpose of facilitating the Strategic Alliance, be seconded to Boston Borough Council as Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service under Section 113 of the Local Government Act 1972, effective from 1st July 2020. Thereafter, East Lindsey District Council will contribute 67 per cent of the cost of Mr Barlow's remuneration and Boston Borough Council will contribute 33 per cent of the same. Consultation should commence immediately.
- (5) That Michelle Sacks becomes Joint Monitoring Officer of East Lindsey District Council and Boston Borough Council. Boston Borough Council shall formally employ Ms Sacks, who shall, for the purpose of facilitating the Strategic Alliance, be seconded to East Lindsey District Council as Monitoring Officer under Section 113 of the Local Government Act 1972, effective from 1st July 2020. Thereafter, East Lindsey District Council will contribute 67 per cent of the cost of Ms Sack's remuneration and Boston Borough Council will contribute 33 per cent of the same. Consultation should commence immediately.
- (6) That Paul Julian becomes Joint S151 Officer of East Lindsey District Council and Boston Borough Council. Boston Borough Council shall formally employ Mr Julian, who shall, for the purpose of facilitating the Strategic Alliance, be seconded to East Lindsey District Council as S151 Officer under Section 113 of the Local Government Act 1972, effective from 1st July 2020. Thereafter, East Lindsey District Council will contribute 67 per cent of the cost of Mr Julian's remuneration and Boston Borough Council will contribute 33 per cent of the same. Consultation should commence immediately.
- (7) That Michelle Sacks be appointed as Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer for Boston Borough Council.
- (8) That the exit costs are charged to the reorganisation budget shown in the financial business case. The costs of the departing Statutory Officers shall be met by both authorities. East Lindsey District Council will contribute 67 per cent of the cost. Boston Borough Council will contribute 33 per cent. These exit costs will be recovered quickly from savings achieved through the operation of the Strategic Alliance and as modelled in the Financial Business Plan. Consultation with both Officers should commence immediately to start redundancy proceedings.

Councillor Skinner commented that these were uncertain times and the proposal would maximise the Council's opportunities. All legal and due diligence processes had been followed confirming that the proposal was deliverable. Some details could not be shared at this stage due to employment law and it was inappropriate for them to be requested.

Councillor Richard Austin commented that the Council had been co-operating with other local authorities for years and there was merit in the proposal. However, the proposal had been announced suddenly and with little time in order to consider what was a historic decision.

There needed to be proper consultation and all Councillors should be given time to consider the arrangements to ensure their soundness. In addition, Members needed to be provided with details of the costs of outgoing Statutory Officers and the opportunity to interview the proposed Joint Chief Executive.

In conclusion, Councillor Austin stated that Members needed to identify the best alliance for the Council, which he felt would be with South Holland District Council in terms of its geography, history, population and size. The proposal should not be progressed at this stage, further options should be explored with Scrutiny Members involved and all Councillors and residents should be consulted.

The Leader asserted that delaying the proposal for six months would prolong uncertainty for staff.

During debate, the following comments were made:-

Key concerns included the excessive speed of the process and lack of consultation. The Council was not at a crisis point; it was well-run, had adequate resources and would be recompensed by the Government for losses caused by the lockdown. Other authorities had allowed a longer period for proposals to be considered; a three-week consultation period was not sufficient. Elsewhere, auditors had stated that ambitious proposals had to be adequately planned and resourced especially when driven by a date. The alliance of Broadland and South Norfolk Councils had been based on a feasibility study, with full details of the proposal enabling Members to make a well-informed decision.

The proposals had not been formulated openly; opposition Members should have been involved in the process. Unions should have been consulted; staff deserved to have their rights considered. There would be advantages to the alliance, but full details should be provided. There should be a six-month process with all Members involved, allowing them to take ownership of it, which was the only way to succeed.

The proper scrutiny process should be followed and all potential partners assessed. The proposal need a balanced assessment, which meant considering the negatives as well as the positives. The proposal had been written exclusively by East Lindsey.

With respect to the proposed financial business case, there was doubt that the proposed amount of savings would be achieved, as the figures were not borne out by the business case. It was accepted that the Council needed to make significant savings; however, the amount of savings proposed would mean job losses, possibly 36 full-time positions.

The report did not rule out compulsory redundancies and lower-graded officers could be affected. The size of the pension contributions and the cost of outgoing officers were significant concerns.

There were also concerns regarding the proposed secondment of East Lindsey's Chief Executive to the position of Joint Chief Executive. Councillors could not appoint a Joint Chief Executive without knowing the officer concerned. The position of Joint Chief Executive needed to be subject of a national recruitment campaign in order to secure the highest quality candidate. Broadland and South Norfolk Councils had appointed the managing director through open competition.

Further concerns included foreseeing problems with the proposed agreement, particularly with respect to the resolution of disputes and the powers of the Joint Chief Executive, and a perceived loss of status for the borough.

The proposal was to share costs and savings in a 33/67% proportion; however, this meant that the Council might have to run on a 33% share of officers' time.

When bidding for infrastructure funding, it was unclear what they would bid for, as Boston needed a bypass, and in terms of flood defences, Boston's was nearly completed and funded.

In response to a question, Councillor Welton confirmed that if Members were not satisfied with the performance of the Joint Chief Executive, or there was a dispute within the alliance, the partnership could be dissolved within 12 months. Any disputes with respect to Statutory Officers could be dealt with Joint Board or the Joint Officer Appeals Panel. In addition, there was legislation relating to performance management and councils had authority to dismiss officers if there were legal and justifiable causes.

In response the following comments were made:-

The delay of six months would put an end to the proposal or at least cause six months of uncertainty for staff; it was imperative to proceed. East Lindsey District Council might withdraw and others may not wish to work with the Council.

The process had been followed by many other authorities and examined and was not something new and unknown. If the Council had taken such a decision when there was opportunity 13 years previously, the Council could have benefited from significant savings and improvements.

This was an extremely important decision and all Members needed to be comfortable that they were making the right one. However, Group Leaders had been informed about briefings for Members to receive the details of the proposal and they should have ensured this message was passed on. It was normal practice for negotiations to be held at the level of Leader and Deputy Leader. The correct process had been followed; it was for the Scrutiny Chairman to call a scrutiny meeting and the Leader had welcomed the Chairman's call for a scrutiny meeting. This was a proposal; if it was approved there would be further negotiations and all Members would be involved.

If the statutory officer positions were taken to open tender it could significantly increase redundancy costs. East Lindsey had recruited its Chief Executive 12 months previously and had secured the best candidate.

The proposal would provide capacity in order to be in a better position to provide essential services. The peer review had highlighted the Council's limited capacity and the alliance would remedy that.

Members had been assured that the figures in the report were accurate. The Council had had to carry out services with ever-decreasing budgets due to the savings that had to be achieved. If a decision was not made within three years the Council's reserves would be diminished and frontline services would be cut.

In summing up, Councillor Welton urged Members who believed in the alliance in principle to vote for the substantive motion, as the amendment would spell the end for the alliance.

An amendment was moved by Councillor Stephen Woodliffe and seconded by Councillor Richard Austin:-

To agree to begin a six-month consultation period on the strategic alliance with East Lindsey District Council for the purposes set out in the report involving Members, staff, scrutiny and all appropriate bodies and that there be no staff appointments until approved by full Council.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost on the Mayor's casting vote. (14 in favour, 14 against and 1 abstention.)

A further amendment was moved by Councillor Paul Goodale and seconded by Councillor Alan Bell that:-

That recommendation 4 be amended to make the appointment of the Joint Chief Executive an interim appointment so that Mr Barlow would be employed for 12 months, i.e. until July 2021, in order that Members would have the opportunity to review his performance.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

It was then asserted that Councillor Edge had been unable to place her vote on the first amendment due to technical difficulties and that the vote should be re-taken, particularly as it had fallen on the Mayor's casting vote. However, the Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed that the vote could not be re-taken.

A further amendment was proposed by Councillor Anne Dorrian and seconded by Councillor Michael Cooper:

To agree to begin a seven-month consultation period on the strategic alliance with East Lindsey District Council for the purposes set out in the report involving Members, staff, scrutiny and all appropriate bodies and that there be no staff appointments until approved by full Council.

On being put to the vote the amendment was carried by 15 votes to 14 with 1 abstention, and became the substantive motion.

However, before the substantive motion was put to the vote, Councillor Welton asked that the item be withdrawn. In accordance with the provisions of the constitution, and with the consent of the Proposer, Seconder and of the meeting the item was withdrawn.

(The meeting ended at 11.15 pm)