

Boston Borough Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Full Council** held in the Council Chamber - Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston, PE21 8QR on Monday, 16th September, 2024 at 6.30 pm.

Present:

The Mayor Councillor Helen Staples, in the Chair.
Councillors Suzanne Welberry (Deputy Mayor), Alison Austin, Richard Austin BEM, John Baxter, Peter Bedford, David Brown, Dale Broughton, Callum Butler, James Cantwell, Anton Dani, Anne Dorrian, Neil Drayton, Stuart Evans, Sandeep Ghosh, Mike Gilbert, Paul Gleeson, Patricia Marson, David Middleton, Barrie Pierpoint, Claire Rylott, Lina Savickiene, David Scoot, Sarah Sharpe and Stephen Woodliffe.

Officers:

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive - Communities, Legal Advisor - Information Management, Democratic Services Team Leader and Democratic Services Officer.

24 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jyothi Arayambath, Emma Cresswell, Andy Izard, Chris Mountain and Ralph Pryke.

25 Declarations of Interest

Councillors Stephen Woodliffe, Paul Gleeson, Richard Austin, Alison Austin and Peter Bedford all declared an interest in respect of the Motion on Changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance and Protecting Pensioners from Fuel Poverty, as they had previously been recipients of that allowance. They advised that they would be withdrawing from the meeting for the consideration of that item.

Councillor Paul Gleeson also declared an interest in respect of any matters potentially to be discussed during the meeting relating to PSPSL, as he was a Non Executive Director of PSPSL.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that Members in receipt of the Winter Fuel Allowance were not considered to have a disclosable pecuniary interest as it was excluded under the regulations. Members were therefore not required to leave the meeting unless they wished to.

26 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 15th July 2024 were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

27 Communications

The Chief Executive confirmed that there were no communications.

28 Deputations and Petitions

The Chief Executive confirmed that no deputations or petitions had been received.

29 Questions from Elected Members

The Chief Executive advised that the following questions had been received:

Question to Councillor Anne Dorrian from Councillor Mike Gilbert

In the last ten weeks Boston has acquired a new MP, and Britain has been convulsed by riots, associated with a vague agglomeration of people described by Westminster politicians and the media as ‘the far right’. In respect of the former we have read about Boston quite a lot in the national press, and what has been said whilst broadly an accurate description of our town, lacked any insight into what has happened to Boston over the last 30 years and why, and moreover what is to be done about it.

Likewise, whilst Boston thankfully didn’t suffer with local social disturbance, the issue of immigration was cited as its cause nationally, following the killing of three small girls at a dance party.

It seems to me that Boston is a Borough ideally placed to gain a mature grasp of the issue of immigration and the various challenges associated with it? In respect of the challenges, these are from my experience as a town centre resident markedly different from the challenges associated with inward migration in 2010.

We have a precedent for such an approach in that we have in the past prepared an award-winning report on the impact of immigration on our Borough and we are now once again fortunate to have the vice chairman of the committee that prepared that report, Cllr Paul Gleeson back on this council.

My question for the leader Cllr Dorrian is this, would you and your cabinet fully endorse and resource the preparation of such a report? Evidence could be taken from public and private organisations, such as health providers and the management of Boston’s cultural offer, plus police, education providers the Civil Service, employers and of course the public. By contrasting it with our earlier report we would be able to see what Boston got right in the past, or what things changed which were beyond our control.

Boston needs this council to work together across group affiliations so we can better understand our town and the challenges that face us, so in respect of the specific issue of immigration, we have the evidence to take to government ourselves rather than do as we have done previously and rely on our MP to speak.

Response from Councillor Anne Dorrian

I thank Councillor Gilbert for notice of his question.

I don’t entirely agree with every single point which you’ve made here, however, the gist of what you’ve said does resonate with me.

Firstly, I would like to comment on the report which you’ve mentioned, which, at the time, was universally accepted as an exemplar scrutiny report and I commend the authors for their dedication to the task.

I am pleased to confirm that I have already begun work in this arena and to that end, I met with our Senior Immigration Officers on 22nd July 2024 to get a better understanding of the issues in our Borough. In tandem with that meeting, I asked our Officers to look at many of the various issues and challenges that you describe, which we have also identified as barriers to integration. Officers from within the Communities Directorate are currently collating up-to-date qualitative and quantitative data from a variety of sources and partners, so we may better understand the current context and how this impacts Boston. An officer working group has been created to understand what the data is telling us so we may decide what we can do to further support all our communities and formulate a plan as appropriate. Further updates will be forthcoming.

Supplementary question from Councillor Mike Gilbert to Councillor Anne Dorrian

I'm very heartened to hear that and very pleased that the Leaders' taken this issue very seriously it does affect everybody in the town and the Borough. In respect of further updates, I just wonder whether the Leader could clarify how those further updates will be delivered to Elected Members, thank you.

Response from Councillor Anne Dorrian

I guess it will really depend on what comes forward, Cllr Gilbert. The information that comes forward from the officer Working Group, that qualitative and quantitative data is going to be really important for us to decide how we're going to move this forward. I'm extremely conscious that the good work that Councillor Gleeson did in 2012, I think it was round about that time, was then kind of left on the shelf. A number, 28 recommendations were made, which were based on a local, regional, National and European level were then not taken forward. I think the previous administration, or the previous-previous administration thought it was too expensive. I don't want to set hairs running, if you will, and get people's hopes up. I want to manage expectations because we're very conscious of the budget constraints that we're working within. So to how and when we're going to update you I can't honestly say at this moment in time, but I can assure you that everything relevant will come through to you in an appropriate way either through a scrutiny paper perhaps, or feedback to this Full Council if that's okay. Thank you.

Question to Councillor Callum Butler from Councillor James Cantwell

Our waste and cleaning teams do a fantastic job in the Borough however recently Parish Council's in the Five Villages Ward have complained to me about mud building up between pavement curbs and the road, how often is this cleaned by the council?

Response from Councillor Callum Butler

I thank Councillor Cantwell for notice of his question.

We are classed as the Principal Litter Authority under section 89 Environmental Protection Act 1990 and we have a duty to deal with litter and refuse on the highway. My assumption is that you are referring to detritus, rather than mud and I can therefore confirm that for litter, refuse and detritus located between a curb edge and the road, our mechanical sweepers are deployed regularly throughout the Borough and we sweep villages once per quarter.

However, if you are referring to mud on a road then that does not fall within this category. As a council we are not responsible for the clean-up. This sits with Lincolnshire County Council as the Highways Authority and further details can be found using the following link: <https://www.boston.gov.uk/mudonroads>

Supplementary question from Councillor James Cantwell to Councillor Callum Butler

On the 15th of May I contacted officers regarding the buildup of detritus in Sutterton Village. I asked “is there a rota of when villages usually have their cleaning each quarter that I can pass on to my Parish Councils, and also does our cleaning align with Lincolnshire County Council spraying the reeds along roads?”. The answer from the officers was “we didn't have a rota which we can provide to Parish Councillors and sweeping does not align with Lincolnshire County Council spraying the reeds”. Is this still true and, if so, can we develop a rota to give to Parish Councils to provide certainty and coordinate with Lincolnshire County Council going forward?

Response from Councillor Callum Butler

Thank you again Councillor Chantwell. I don't have the information on the top of my head, but I will find that out for you and get back to you in due course. Thank you.

[A copy of the written response is appended to the Minutes.]

Question to Councillor Anne Dorrian from Councillor James Cantwell

Can the Leader please update us on the work the council is doing to address Anti-Social Behaviour in the Town?

Response from Councillor Anne Dorrian

I thank Cllr Cantwell for notice of his question.

Within the Community Safety Team of the Council we have a number of measures and activities to address anti-social behaviour issues in the Town Centre.

- Paul Carville is the Anti-Social Behaviour Officer for the Council and works closely with a number of partner agencies including Lincolnshire Police Neighbourhood Policing Team, Housing Associations, Families Working Together, Drug and Alcohol Teams and many others to address any ASB issues reported to either the Council ASB team directly or via Lincolnshire Police. The Council adhere to the County Wide Incremental Approach in dealing with ASB Policy and Procedures and administer on behalf of both the Council and Police a number of enforcement measures which include - ASB Advice Letters / ASB Warning Letters / Acceptable Behaviour Agreements for young people / Community Protection Notices and Civil Injunctions heard at Court.
- CCTV also plays a key an important part of addressing both ASB and Crime within the Town Centre, or any area covered by our local authority cctv cameras, and provide excellent intelligence and evidence of what is happening and who is doing what - both day and night. This intelligence and evidence is used by Paul and Policing colleagues to increase hotspot patrolling in key areas and deal with individuals / groups causing issues within our Town.

- We also currently have two Community Rangers providing high-visibility patrols within the Town Centre every afternoon/evening between Tuesday and Saturday, providing a visible presence for our residents and visitors and to deal with any ASB they come across or are directed to deal with via our CCTV Colleagues. The Rangers are also dealing with any issues relating to the consumption of alcohol within the designated zone of the Council's Public Space Protection Order, there are a number of enforcement actions (similar to the ASB incremental approach actions) that the Rangers - supported by Paul - deal with on behalf of the council. They have already proven in the short time they have been patrolling the Town Centre that they are really making a difference.
- Every year the Community Safety Manager / CCTV Manager and Local Police Inspector produce an annual crime and disorder scrutiny report which highlights all the work completed in the previous financial year, which includes statistics and updates on ASB Enforcement Letters / CCTV Stats / PSPO Alcohol enforcement and our recently-adopted new process for dealing with issues relating to Residential Noxious Odours, I would recommend the Elected Member find this year's Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Report to update themselves on the work of our Community Safety team.
- Importantly though we can only help to address issues of ASB if they are reported to either us or the police and we encourage any Elected Member or Resident to report any issues. We can only help if we are first made aware of any issues.

Question to Councillor Anne Dorrian from Councillor Claire Rylott

Are the BBC making a presentation to Mr Neil Kempster in recognition for his services as Chairman of Boston Town Deal over the last 4 years?

Response from Councillor Anne Dorrian

I thank Cllr Rylott for notice of her question.

No.

Question to Councillor Anne Dorrian from Councillor Claire Rylott

What is your view on the Pylon Proposal that will have a massive impact on our countryside?

Response from Councillor Anne Dorrian

I thank Cllr Rylott for notice of her question.

The administration recognises the national importance of major energy projects like this to help improve our infrastructure and tackle the energy crisis we are currently seeing, as well as to create greater grid capacity and investment opportunities in our own sub-region.

The major impact these plans could have on our communities and environment, however, cannot be ignored, and we are pleased to see consultation taking place in these early stages to receive feedback before any further steps are taken.

“We hope that we can continue to be actively involved in any future plans, and that all possible alternative options and views are considered, including the possibility of underground installation. The greater cost of this compared to overhead pylons must be weighed by National Grid against the need to protect our environment, the amenity of our residents and communities, and the devastating impact the proposals threaten to have on a £500 million local tourism industry.

“It is important that all available steps are taken to help minimise the impact on our residents and businesses and protect the unique character of South and East Lincolnshire. Most importantly, we would encourage everyone with an interest or an opinion to get involved, make sure they attend the online or in-person events, and provide their thoughts to ensure that our voice is heard on this significant project.

Supplementary question from Councillor Claire Rylott to Councillor Anne Dorrian

Thank you Madam Leader. My Joint Scrutiny meeting has failed. National Grid appear to have gone to the ground, metaphorically speaking. I persistently received correspondence from concerned residents over the pylon proposal.

National Grids proposal to erect 420 pylons around 50m high through the Lincolnshire countryside to feed other counties with electricity will have a massive detrimental impact on our Countryside not only putting Farmland under strain but also down valuing residential properties within the vicinity of one of these pylons. 7,300 responses have been received from the non-statutory consultation. I wonder how many of these were positive.

Lincs County Council have expressed their concerns over the proposal. They are now objecting to the way the scoping consultation has been carried out and say a legal challenge is more likely than ever. Planning at B2024 0316 EI scoping notification and consultation, 2 p.m. today, eight Parish Councils and four Borough Councillors have commented online.

It has been muted that Boston Borough Council have been very quiet on the matter, when it will have a massive impact on our Borough. Do you not think collectively we should be more vociferous on this matter?

Response from Councillor Anne Dorrian

I don't know where you're getting your information from, Councillor Rylott, but this Administration released a public statement, we sent it to the National Grid, we were very vociferous in our concerns around their plans. So, I don't know where you're getting your information from. I would caution you not to listen to rumour and speculation. If you want to know the answer just come and ask me.

Could we be more vociferous? We will take every opportunity at every turn to engage with National Grid. I appreciate the fact that you're upset and angered, as you should be, that they've refused to come to your scrutiny meeting. However, I have reached out to them as Leader of the Council and believe that they are willing to engage in an all member briefing which, whilst isn't specifically an opportunity to scrutinise their plans in public, is better than nothing at this early stage.

I think we've got a long way to go, and I think we also have to recognise that at the end of the day, vociferous as we may be, it is Government who are going to make this decision and their early start out the door isn't looking particularly positive for National infrastructure projects, I'm sad to say.

Question to Councillor John Baxter from Councillor David Brown

Would you please clarify the situation regarding the homeless in Boston and surrounding areas. Given that the Government is releasing early prisoners will this now make the situation worse?

Response from Councillor John Baxter

I thank Councillor Brown for notice of his question.

There are not expected to be many prisoners released early who will be returning to Boston without anywhere to live.

The Council's Housing Service works closely with the Prison and Probation service who will inform the Council of anyone who is likely to be homeless upon release including early releases. Such cases would also be discussed at the fortnightly multi-agency meetings which are attended by the Council.

Releasing people early could potentially reduce the amount of time available to find them somewhere to live, however, the prison and probation service does have access to some accommodation that can be accessed straight from prison. If any rooms were available, this would then provide more time for the Council to find a longer-term housing solution.

The Council will provide advice and assistance to prison leavers about their housing options such as social housing, private rented and hostel accommodation. The Council would only have a duty to provide temporary accommodation upon release if the prison leaver was classed to be in priority need under homelessness legislation. This could be where they are considered less able to cope with being homeless than the average person. If they were not entitled to temporary accommodation, they would need to try and stay with family and friends temporarily.

If a prison leaver did find themselves having to sleep rough, the Council's Rough Sleeping team would support them to access services and accommodation.

It is important to note that not all prisoners were automatically eligible for release under this new legislation and a number of offences were excluded from the 40% tariff meaning that prisoners would need to serve a minimum of 50% of their sentence. I will send a full list in an email, but in summary, the following offences are excluded;

Sexual offences, violent offences (which have attracted 4 years or more sentence), stalking offences, coercive & controlling behaviour offences, domestic violence offences and terrorism offences.

Supplementary question from Councillor David Brown to Councillor John Baxter

Councillor Baxter, thank you for answering my question. What would you do in the case of some of these homeless people are stubborn, they won't move, they're fiercely independent. What will you do in that case?

Response from Councillor John Baxter

Thanks Councillor Brown for the supplementary question. I presume then when you say homeless people you mean people who are sleeping rough, yeah. If I could just mention obviously this has recently been very topical answering my emails to members and also Communications on the BB site. Hopefully you understand it can be very difficult. We don't operate the Vacancy Act anymore in this country. What happens though is obviously these people, I'll give you an example. The lady who was in the William Brown estate agents window, and Rebos. She didn't want to cooperate and want consent to share but our Outreach team visited every day made sure she was okay, talked to the NHS staff, the Police and gradually she was persuaded to move.

Often these people have addiction problems and obviously, sometimes, have mental illnesses where we have to work very hard. I would say that the Outreach Team are very patient. We talk to the Police if there was an antisocial behaviour problem but obviously eventually the lady got moved and also the gentleman from Rebos doorway, so thank you for your question.

Question to Councillor John Baxter from Councillor Stephen Woodliffe

I am sure that most of our residents and visitors to our Borough will be pleased to see that the Borough Council is planning to tackle the bird menace in the town centre. The mess created by the pigeon population, in particular, undermines the efforts of this Council to attract visitors to our town centre. However, vagrancy within our town centre presents a more serious issue. What action do you intend to take to rid the town centre of people sleeping in doorways and others who accost shoppers demanding money to feed themselves?

Response from Councillor John Baxter

I thank Councillor Woodliffe for notice of his question.

The Council's Rough Sleeping team regularly engage with people who are sleeping rough in Boston with the aim of helping them into accommodation. This does require engagement from the rough sleeper, but some continually refuse making it very difficult to help them. In some cases, these people have complex needs, mental health issues or difficulties with substance abuse so our officers are not just resolving what could be considered to be straightforward housing matters, The Council will continue to encourage them to engage and ensure they know how to access help when ready to do so.

Any unacceptable behaviour associated with rough sleeping will be dealt with jointly by the Council, Police and other partner agencies. This could include issuing ASB warning letters, Community Protection notices and civil injunctions as well as trying to overcome the core reason for the unacceptable behaviour. Not all people who beg are rough sleepers and any such activity should be reported to the Police.

I am sorry to report that Rough Sleeping is increasing both in Boston and nationally; and without significant Government investment, people will continue to sleep rough in our town.

Supplementary question from Councillor Stephen Woodliffe to Councillor John Baxter

As part of Operation Plotting, which has been initiated by the Neighbourhood Policing Team and Boston Borough Council and which aims to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour and the fear of crime, two Community Wardens have been employed at Boston Council to enhance the visibility of the hotspot locations tackling SB. This comes by the way from the delivery of the Police and Crime Panel, which actually is in discussion with the Police and Crime commissioner. Apparently, there is an effective partnership in place with Boston Borough Council around tackling antisocial behaviour and criminality in the hotspots. The PCC, Mark Jones, has received a million pounds from the home office funding provide additional hybrid stability, hotspot patrols on foot. Purpose is to tackle antisocial behaviour and serious violence and engage and reassure the public in 12 identified hotspots across Lincolnshire including Boston. In mid-July there have been over 200 hours of patrolling but only four arrests, four stopped and searches, one use of ASB.

The question is, do you believe that our residents are satisfied that the police are doing all they can to support our Borough Council in tackling antisocial behaviour and vagrancy in particular?

Response from Councillor John Baxter

Thank you Councillor Woodliffe for your supplementary question. I think we've already answered some of the points that you raised and especially Councillor Dorrian, on question three she covered the measures and activities to address antisocial behaviour in the Town Centre. I feel, as a Council, we have excellent communications with our local Police. As you say, our Community Wardens work in partnership with the Police, and I think they provide visibility in hotspot patrols on foot. I appreciate the statistics you quote, they seem quite low, but in my opinion they don't necessarily show the full picture. By walking around the Police and the wardens hopefully prevent the antisocial behaviour actually happening. Also just to mention this scheme has been in operation for a while and obviously will be reviewed. So, as I mentioned before, I hope the recent posts on the BBC Facebook site and my emails to all members have explained the complexities of dealing with people sleeping rough and moving them on. Thank you.

Question to Councillor Anne Dorrian from Councillor Stephen Woodliffe

Last year, a group of travellers arrived in our town centre, taking over the car park on Tunnard Street. We saw on television a shop being robbed of its stock and we know that the Council had to pay for the clear-up after they departed. To quote our Council's website, "Lincolnshire Police received several reports on the evening of Tuesday 22 August 2023 that people were causing issues with businesses and in and around the town centre. The majority of these reports were around harassment and verbal abuse." At the time, the Police said that they would pursue charges and prosecute but we have heard nothing since. What actions have you taken to pursue both the Police and Lincolnshire County Council to hold those members of the travelling community responsible for criminal behaviour to account?

Response from Councillor Anne Dorrian

I thank Cllr Woodliffe for notice of his question.

As Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, I was in regular dialogue with our Community Safety Officers, our Senior Leadership Team and Police Officers throughout the illegal encampment on Tunnard Street Car Park last August. Through effective joint working, the illegal encampment was moved on within 48 hours of the first report received. Council Officers, in collaboration with the local Policing Team, used all of their available legal powers to deal swiftly with the incident with mutual aid provided by Police forces in the East Midlands.

When this same Group landed in Peterborough, the week before the incident in Boston, it took Peterborough City Council and the Police 6 days to move them on. When we moved the Group on from Tunnard Street Car Park, they were served a County Wide Order to leave Lincolnshire and were escorted by the police to the Lincolnshire border. The Car Park was restored to full working order within 90 minutes of the travellers leaving the site. Our objective and overriding priority was to remove this Group from our community as soon as physically possible.

Following this incursion, I had a debriefing session with Superintendent Pat Coates, along with our senior officers, where we had a frank and forthright discussion and a sharing of views. It is extremely important that we support our partner organisations and I was delighted with their swift issuing of the Section 61 notice at that time because it had a major impact in resolving the matter quickly.

Supplementary question from Councillor Stephen Woodliffe to Councillor Anne Dorrian

I've already supplied it to Councillor Dorrian anyway, but I want to make a slight alteration. I think it's a very good answer a thorough answer, but I'm concerned about the shopkeepers and the people who suffered as a result, and moving them on it's one issue, and my question to Councillor Dorrian is do you agree with me that prevention of further incidents is closely linked to timely prosecutions? I'm thinking particularly the people who robbed the shops, thank you.

Response from Councillor Anne Dorrian

Thank you, Councillor Woodliffe for giving me notice of your supplementary. It is a kind gesture that not many elected members replicate, but I appreciated it. However, my answer is no I don't necessarily agree with you that further incidents are linked to timely prosecutions. And I say that for two reasons the first reason is that we've had no further incidents regardless of what prosecutions did or did not take place of the people involved. And secondly, and this is anecdotal it's not based on any real fact or data that I have at my fingertips, but anecdotally we were made aware at the time that the kind of modus operandi, if you will, the MO of that Community was to send children into wreak havoc in most of these business premises. And as we know from our work in other arenas, the Police are quite rightly very, very, reluctant to lock up children, to put children in cells, to arrest children, fingerprint children, take mug shots of children and then lock them up, because it's very, very, difficult to take that process through to its conclusion. And I know that a number of children were then de-arrested very quickly after being arrested.

So I'm not sure there's anything to gain in all honesty with you, Councillor Woodliffe, in the prosecution of children. I think there are better and other ways that we can hope to rehabilitate those members of that Community.

Question to Councillor Anne Dorrian from Councillor Stephen Woodliffe

Under the previous Conservative Party Government, a highly controversial devolution deal was agreed between the Leaders of the County Council and the two adjoining Greater Lincolnshire unitary councils which effectively excluded the District Councils from participating in the initiative. However, the General Election stalled the approval process. Given the lack of public support for the deal and given the new Government's intentions to revise the process, what actions are you planning to take to improve Boston's influence on any revision of the deal?

Response from Councillor Anne Dorrian

I thank Councillor Woodliffe for notice of his question.

In August, along with the Leaders of Lincolnshire's District Councils, I wrote to the Deputy Prime Minister to make two points:

1 - to request that in the emerging English Devolution Bill it is made a requirement for all Councils to be full constituent members of Combined County Authorities in order that we can fully input into the decisions that impact the communities we serve. As members will be aware, under current governance arrangements, we are non-constituent members with limited ability to influence and this isn't acceptable.

2 – to request that Government take note of the Lincolnshire Vision 2050 document, which sets out the shared ambition of Councils over the next 25 years and that the ambition in that document needs to be matched by the government in devolving sufficient powers and resources to enable us to deliver.

In addition to the collective letter I also sent my own letter. I hope this demonstrates that I continue to lobby Government on this matter along with other District Councils in Lincolnshire.

If Council would allow me, if you would allow me Madam Mayor, we've had a letter today updating us that we will certainly not be given constituent recognition on the devolution deal.

Supplementary question from Councillor Stephen Woodliffe to Councillor Anne Dorrian

Following on from that, as best we can, what actions if any are being taken with the other two Councils in our partnership to approach His Majesty's Government for a new better Devolution deal?

Response from Councillor Anne Dorrian

Thank you again for notice of your question Councillor Woodliffe. For the sake of expediency would you mind if I give you a written answer? Thank you.

[A copy of the written response is appended to the Minutes.]

Question to Councillor Sandeep Ghosh from Councillor Stuart Evans

Within the BBC budget statement of 4th March 2024, there was an efficiency target of £172k. How are Boston Borough Council progressing towards this target & in what areas are the savings being achieved?

Response from Councillor Sandeep Ghosh

I thank Councillor Evans for notice of his question.

For the purpose of supporting the efficiency targets in the 2024/25 budget a savings and transformation programme was developed. Following the peer review, this is currently being further developed into a multi-year plan to support the Medium Term Financial Strategy over the longer term.

To provide some assurance the main components of the plan for 2024/25 to support this savings target were:

- Procurement savings
- Service review efficiencies
- Changes to services to increase income or decrease costs to the Council by changing how we work and how our partners work that may impact on our budget.
- This was alongside the lobbying of government with regards to the IDB pressure of £659k which they have now supported to the tune of £431k (64%).

Of the general requirement for efficiency savings of £172k we have achieved £142k to date being 83% at Quarter 1.

For both the general and IDB savings requirements the total crystalised to date is £573k against the target of £846k being 68% at Q1 this is very positive and work is on-going.

Other savings and efficiencies are also being developed and proactively monitored monthly.

Supplementary question from Councillor Stuart Evans to Councillor Sandeep Ghosh

Thank you, Councillor, for that comprehensive reply. Can you also please just assure the people of Boston that services will not be reduced as a consequence of these efficiency savings?

Response from Councillor Sandeep Ghosh

Indeed, I already mentioned couple of times in my previous reports this is not going to be the case.

30 Questions from Members of the Public

The Chief Executive confirmed that no questions had been received from members of the public.

31 Audit & Governance Committee Minutes

Councillor Barrie Pierpoint, Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee, presented the Audit and Governance minutes from the meeting held on 8th July 2024 which was for councillors to note.

32 2023/24 Outturn Report & 2022/23 Abbreviated Outturn

Councillor Sandeep Ghosh presented a report by the Deputy Chief Executive – Corporate Development & Section 151 Officer which set out recommendations from Cabinet to Full Council in order to amend the capital programme budget for 2024/2025, to approve the reserves transactions and balances as set out in Appendix A, and to approve the reserve transactions and balances for 2022/2023, as set out in Appendix B.

Members noted that Boston Borough Council was one of 31 Councils in the UK that had successfully released their draft statement of accounts for 2023/2024 by the statutory deadline 31st May 2024. The audited statement of accounts for 2022/2023 had also been signed off by the External Auditors, Mazars; and the final revenue position for 2022/2023 was a surplus of £155,000.

Members discussed the report and the following comments were made:

- It was requested that future financial reports be written in a clearer format.
- It was noted that the PSPS contract had been in excess of the budget.
- Officers and the Portfolio Holder were thanked for their work.

Councillor Peter Bedford requested details of the returns on the corporation farm. Councillor Ghosh agreed to provide that information following the meeting.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Sandeep Ghosh and seconded by Councillor Anne Dorrian.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the reserve transactions and balances for 2023/24, as set out in Appendix A – Table 4 within the report, and the transfer of the revenue surplus to reserves be approved;**
- 2. That the Capital Programme be amended to take into account the changes set out in Appendix A – Table 5b within the report; and**
- 3. That the reserve transactions and balances for 2022/23, as set out in Appendix B – Table 3, be approved.**

33 Annual Treasury Report 2023/24

Councillor Sandeep Ghosh presented a report by the Deputy Chief Executive – Corporate Development & Section 151 Officer which provided Members with a review of Treasury Management performance and activity during 2023/24 to ensure best practice was maintained.

Members noted that the Council was required to produce an Annual Treasury report after the end of each financial year in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Code of Practice on Treasury Management. The Annual Treasury Report 2023/24, in Appendix A within the report, was considered by the Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting on 8 July 2024. A full breakdown of capital expenditure was detailed in Appendix A1, at the end of the report.

The Portfolio Holder and Officers were congratulated for their work.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Sandeep Ghosh and seconded by Councillor Anne Dorrian.

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Treasury Management Review 2023/24, in Appendix A within the report, as required by the Local Government Act 2003 following scrutiny by the Audit and Governance Committee at their meeting on 8 July 2024 be approved.

34 South & East Councils Partnership Performance Report

The Leader of the Council presented an update on the progress of the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership since 4th March 2024.

The report set out the progress made by the Partnership business case under the headings of:

- Alignment and Delivery Plan (ADP) –activity was being monitored by the Joint Strategy Board to support the Partnership in delivering on its priorities, as well as sovereign Council ambitions.
- Peer Challenge Update – The Partnership LGA Peer Challenge had taken place in October 2022. The Peers' findings and feedback had been reported to Council and fed into the Partnership's development plans for 23/24 and beyond. A follow up visit had been carried out on 28th September 2023 to explore progress against each of the original recommendations where the Peers had noted a significant amount of progress which had been made to deliver on their 2022 recommendations.
- Priority Partnerships Update – A number of key Partnerships had been established as mechanisms for delivering the strategic priorities for the Partnership, which were set out within the report.
- Partnership Scrutiny Update – On forming the Partnership, the Councils had committed to undertake an annual scrutiny of the Partnership's progress as identified in the approved business case. The third joint scrutiny of the Partnership was carried out in September 2024, with a report to come forward for consideration in due course.

Councillors Woodliffe referred to the S&ELCP £42m Savings Tracker – cashable and non cashable, on page 79 of the report, which he felt showed a risk where the target had risen above the total from 26/27 onwards. The Leader assured members that the target (blue line) had been set by the Councils and therefore could be changed if required.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Anne Dorrian and seconded by Councillor Dale Broughton.

RESOLVED:

That the progress of the Partnership be noted.

35 Motions on Notice

The following Motions were received:

Rural Strategy

Council resolves to:

- Bring forward a Council-led Rural Strategy, similar in format to the Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2027 within 1 year of the 16th of September 2024.
- Boston Borough Council create this strategy in consultation with Borough Councillors, Parish Council's, relevant Rural Voluntary/Residents' Groups, and Rural Residents on issues/action points in these communities.

The recommendations within the Motion were moved by Councillor James Cantwell and seconded by Councillor Claire Rylott.

Councillor Anne Dorrian moved an amendment and proposed that the motion be referred to Cabinet for consideration. This was seconded by Councillor Dale Broughton.

Members discussed the recommendation and the following comments were made:

- Some Members were of the opinion that the motion should instead be referred to Scrutiny for consideration followed by Cabinet and then Full Council, if required. Other Members agreed that the motion should be referred to Cabinet in the first instance.
- The population figures on the Council's website appeared to be incorrect as opposed to the most recent Census.
- Cabinet was the responsible body for developing new policies.

The amended recommendation was moved by Councillor Anne Dorrian and seconded by Councillor Dale Broughton.

RESOLVED:

That the substantive motion be referred to Cabinet for further consideration.

Changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance and Protecting Pensioners from Fuel Poverty

Council resolves to:

- Bring forward a Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit which in some respects will help access to the Winter Fuel Payment for those most in need.
- Request that the Council Leader write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty.

- Commit the Council to signing the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK and write to all members offering them the opportunity to sign the petition themselves.
- Encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through partnerships with local charities and community organisations to that all eligible pensioners in Boston Borough are supported in claiming their entitlement.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor James Cantwell and seconded by Councillor Stuart Evans.

The Leader advised that she had a number of amendments, as follows:

- The second bullet point (within Council notes), the estimated impact of the decision, had gone up from 2 million to 2.5 million.
- The addition of the word 'some' in the third bullet point (within Council notes): 'The significant role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping some older residents of Boston Borough'.
- The removal of the word and from the last line of the second bullet point (within Council believes): 'that sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit will now lose their allowance'.
- The addition of the words 'some of' in the third bullet point (within Council believes): 'affect the health and well-being of some of our poorest older residents'.
- The removal of the words 'bring forward a' and the addition of 'Acknowledge the' from the first bullet point (within Council resolves to): 'Acknowledge the Council-led local awareness campaign'.
- The removal of the words 'Commit the Council to signing the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK and' and the addition of 'Age UK' in the third bullet point (within Council resolves to): 'write to all members offering them the opportunity to sign the Age UK petition themselves'
- The removal of the word 'encourage' and the addition of 'Continue our' from the fourth bullet point (within Council resolves to): 'Continue our local efforts to promote Pension Credit'.

Members discussed the amended recommendations and confirmed their support. It was requested that details of the Council led awareness campaign to be shared with councillors.

The amended recommendation were moved by Councillor Anne Dorrian and seconded by Councillor Dale Broughton.

RESOLVED:

That Council resolves to:

- **Acknowledge the Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit which in some respects will help access to the Winter Fuel Payment for those most in need;**
- **Request that the Council Leader write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty;**

- **Write to all members offering them the opportunity to sign the Age UK petition themselves; and**
- **Continue our local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through partnerships with local charities and community organisations to that all eligible pensioners in Boston Borough are supported in claiming their entitlement.**

[Councillors Stephen Woodliffe, Paul Gleeson, Richard Austin, Alison Austin and Peter Bedford left the meeting at 8.00p.m., prior to consideration of the Changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance and Protecting Pensioners from Fuel Poverty Motion.]

The Meeting ended at 8.11 pm.

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Supplementary Questions and Written Response Full Council – 16th September 2024

Supplementary Question to Councillor Callum Butler from Councillor James Cantwell

On the 15th of May I contacted officers regarding the buildup of detritus in Sutterton Village. I asked, is there a rotor of when Villages usually have their cleaning each quarter that I can pass on to my parish councils, and also, does our cleaning align with Lincolnshire County Council spraying the reads along roads? The answer from the officers was: “we didn't have a rotor which we can provide to Parish Councillors and sweeping does not align with Lincolnshire County Council spraying the reads”. Is this still true and, if so, can we develop a rotor to give to Parish councils to provide certainty and coordinate with Lincolnshire County Council going forward, Cllr Butler?

Written Response from Councillor Callum Butler

The response that officers gave you on the 15th of May are still true. However within the Alignment and Delivery plan there is a project to look at exactly this issue. Not just across Boston Borough, but the whole partnership. This will include how we can improve our sweeper schedules so that they are the most effective across the whole borough. We also plan to make the schedule information available on the council website once this is project is complete. Improving the coordination of services between Boston Borough and Lincolnshire County Council will also be included as part of this project and also as part of the wider Alignment and Delivery plan. I agree with you that we need to work more succinctly for the betterment of our residents.

Supplementary Question to Councillor Anne Dorrian from Councillor Stephen Woodliffe

What actions if any are being taken with the other two councils in our partnership to approach His Majesty's government for a new better Devolution deal?

Written Response from Councillor Anne Dorrian

As set out in my response at Council, Lincolnshire's District Leaders have written to the Secretary of State making the point that the Vision 2050 document for Greater Lincolnshire is ambitious and that we need the Government to be equally as ambitious in the powers and resources they devolve to Greater Lincolnshire. Whilst we hoped the proposed Deal would be improved by Government, clearly they refused to listen to our suggestions.

Given the recent announcement, the focus now needs to be on what further Devolution of powers might look like in future Deals for Greater Lincolnshire and how we can influence and shape those. I am keen to be actively involved in that process.

The Partnership Council Leaders have also written to Government to remind them of our joint working and the efficiency that can be generated through collaborating the way we are across South & East Lincolnshire.