

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 10th November 2025 at 6.30 pm.

Present:

The Mayor Councillor Barrie Pierpoint, in the Chair.

Councillors Patricia Marson (Deputy Mayor), Alison Austin, Richard Austin BEM, John Baxter, Peter Bedford, David Brown, Dale Broughton, James Cantwell, Anton Dani, Neil Drayton, Stuart Evans, Sandeep Ghosh, Mike Gilbert, Paul Gleeson, Andy Izard, Chris Mountain, Jonathan Noble, Ralph Pryke, Claire Rylott, Lina Savickiene, David Scoot, Sarah Sharpe, Suzanne Welberry and Stephen Woodliffe.

Officers:

Chief Executive, Assistant Director - Governance and Monitoring Officer, Director of Finance, Head of HR & OD, Group Manager - Organisational Development, Democratic Services Manager, Democratic Services Team Leader and Civic & Member Services Officer.

44 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Callum Butler, Emma Cresswell, Anne Dorrian, David Middleton and Helen Staples.

45 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

46 Minutes

The Minutes of the Full Council meeting on 29th September 2025 were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

47 Communications

The Chief Executive introduced Mr Russell Stone as the Council's newly appointed Director of Finance (S151 Officer). Members welcomed Mr Stone and noted his commitment to supporting the Council's financial governance.

48 Deputations and Petitions

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

49 Questions from Elected Members

1. Question to Councillor Sandeep Ghosh from Councillor Jonathan Noble:

If the Government's devolution plan for Lincolnshire goes ahead, the Southern Lincolnshire Unitary Council of which Boston will be a part, is likely to be saddled with half of the defunct Lincolnshire County Council's £469 million debt, so what preliminary

provisions has the South and East Lincolnshire Partnership made for dealing with this problem?

Response from Councillor Sandeep Ghosh:

I would like to thank Councillor Noble for his question. The level of debt will remain unchanged under Local Government Reorganisation. The financial modelling that forms part of the submission to Government will take into account a range of financial factors, including existing debt levels.

Furthermore, the formation of the two divisions has not yet been determined. Should we fall within the southern division, it will not only involve the SELCP partnership but also other councils that will participate in the discussions. We are, therefore, at a very early stage of the overall process, and it would be premature to draw conclusions or make provisions at this point.

Supplementary question from Councillor Jonathan Noble to Councillor Sandeep Ghosh:

Now we understand that the Boston Council's current level of debt is approximately £16.5 million due to our investment in various property funds. And obviously, should this southern unitary go ahead we will probably have the debts of North and South Kesteven Councils, but also our two partnership councils. So my question is, what is the current level of debt in each of our partnership Councils, that is East Lindsey District Council and South Holland District Council?

Supplementary response from Councillor Sandeep Ghosh:

I can at least tell about Boston, I don't know about the other councils. Boston have paid back everything. The State Street loan has been paid two weeks back and at the moment we don't have any debts left. Thank you.

2. Question to Councillor Sandeep Ghosh from Councillor Jonathan Noble:

How much did Boston Borough Council pay for the former B and M Building in PE21, including demolition costs?

Response from Councillor Sandeep Ghosh:

Boston Borough Council paid £1,800,000 plus VAT (so £2,160,000 including VAT) for the land and buildings commonly referred to as 'the former B&M site' to enable what is now known as its Rosegarth Square project.

In terms of demolition, as the Council entered into a Minor Works Building Contract for the Rosegarth Square project, which included demolition of both the former B&M building and Crown House, it is very difficult to disaggregate a pure cost for the B&M building only; however, the final account figure for demolition works of all structures across the two sites was £380,637.60.

Supplementary question from Councillor Jonathan Noble to Councillor Sandeep Ghosh:

Now the Council has paid a very high figure for the B&M building and land, given that the property was on the market for £1.3 million for many months, if not more than a year. So the Council has paid over £500,000 more than the notional value of the site. How does the Council justify this misuse of taxpayers money?

Supplementary response from Councillor Sandeep Ghosh:

I really can't give you a straightforward answer about that because it all goes through a procurement process and we get the bids and accordingly we do the job, but I can go into detail and give you a proper answer why if you think it's an extra paid, thank you.

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

3. Question to Councillor Sandeep Ghosh from Councillor Jonathan Noble:

How much did Boston Borough Council pay for the now demolished Crown House?

Response from Councillor Sandeep Ghosh:

Boston Borough Council paid £1,050,000 (one million and fifty thousand pounds) to acquire land and buildings known as Crown House.

Supplementary question from Councillor Jonathan Noble to Councillor Sandeep Ghosh:

It seems a high price to pay given that it is a site that the Council intended to demolish the building itself. So the question is this, why did the Council not consider refurbishments and internal reconfiguration of the Crown House, given that the building was of no great age?

Supplementary response from Councillor Sandeep Ghosh:

I'll get back to you about that, thank you.

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

4. Question to Councillor Sandeep Ghosh from Councillor Jonathan Noble:

What is the collective annual salary cost of Boston Borough Council's Climate Change officers?

Response from Councillor Sandeep Ghosh:

The collective annual salary costs (gross pay + NI + pension) for the x3 climate change officers, based upon the 23% sharing arrangement applicable to Boston Borough Council is £42,839.

Supplementary question from Councillor Jonathan Noble to Councillor Sandeep Ghosh:

Given the level of political posturing involved in the Council's net zero target of 2040 and concomitant climate change cost in terms of officers employed, why did the Council not consider a tree planting scheme on the lands it owns, which would help to improve the air quality in the borough for a fraction of the costs previously quoted?

Supplementary response from Councillor Sandeep Ghosh:

Councillor Noble, you are actually giving me a suggestion. It's a full project itself, so we really cannot decide now why we didn't do that. So, if you have any suggestions like that, you can always come back to me offline and we can always discuss about that. Thank you.

5. Question to Councillor Mike Gilbert from Councillor James Cantwell:

The Boston Independent Party argue that Members were offered Financial Incentives to join the Cabinet and support removing Councillor Dorrian from her post leader earlier this year. As a new member of the cabinet where you offered this to join?

Response from Councillor Mike Gilbert:

I thank Cllr Cantwell for his question as it allows me to state absolutely unequivocally that when discussing my possible role within Cllr Broughton's administration, there was no discussion about remuneration or allowances. The only conversations I had with Cllr Broughton related to my role within the administration and what areas I would cover within my portfolio.

I accepted the role of Deputy Leader with responsibilities which include the Town Centre, because I live within the Boston Town Centre area, I am passionate about Boston's important global legacy and want Boston to become recognised for its contribution to the evolution of Western society through its historical links to the United States.

No other issues were discussed or even considered.

Supplementary question from Councillor James Cantwell to Councillor Mike Gilbert:

I know that Councillor Rylott was not offered this and I hope Councillor Staples can confirm whether she was at a later date. Would you argue that if members make these comments they should be willing to back it up with hard evidence so that these matters could be investigated and not conjecture and political point scoring.

Supplementary response from Councillor Mike Gilbert:

Yeah, I think there are a number of things, a number of allegations that have been exchanged within this Chamber, which probably needed greater scrutiny. And this example you've just given is just one of them. There are numerous others as well. Thank you.

6. Question to Councillor Mike Gilbert from Councillor Stuart Evans:

As I'm sure elected members recall, a Members Working Group was formed in Jan 2024, to look into all aspects of BBC's Car Parks. This lasted around 4 months and produced various recommendations that were unanimously approved at the E&P Scrutiny meeting of 27th August 2024.

Since then NOTHING has happened in any aspect of this MWG report.

My question to Cllr Gilbert, who was one of the members of this Group & who made a valuable contribution to its final recommendations, is simply... why have the recommendations not been implemented after what is now well over a year later?

Response from Councillor Mike Gilbert:

I thank Cllr Evans for his question which acts as a timely reminder that members of this council invest a huge amount of time attending working groups and committees all with the aim of making improvement in our town and borough.

Whilst I have only been a member of the current administration since late July, I have had discussions with the lead officer for car parks about the progress of the recommendations from the Carparks working Group. It was one of my first actions when I assumed my current role because I was a member of the Car Parks working group myself.

Progress has been patchy in the sense that some of the recommendations I endorsed as part of the group had significant cost implications. These are not being overlooked, but for example widening the car parking bays in the Sheep Market car park has not been actioned this year and is not budgeted for next year, but will be undertaken if capital funding can be identified and will certainly feature as we progress towards our ambitions for 2030 and the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the founding of our sister City Boston Massachusetts.

Likewise signage has yet to be improved but again this is something I will push to deliver as it is essential we get this right as we have a wide heritage agenda including our preparations for 2030 and its obvious, we need to make our town clear and accessible with signage towards our car parks to enable visitors to find their way into our town.

In respect of the Charges review, this was undertaken and implemented in 2024/25, updated again for 2025/26, but did not add any Shopper/Commuter passes as further statistical evaluation was required but unfortunately those specific skills are no longer available internally.

Finally, some better news, we have a group of volunteers of whom I am one who have started to undertake work in some of our small plots of green space around the borough. St Georges Carpark area is one place where a lot has been achieved. The main constraints on achieving more however relate to volunteer numbers and as such we are going to be promoting volunteering opportunities around the town to not only enable local people to work to improve what is their town centre, but also to improve their physical and mental wellbeing. The more volunteers we get the more we can achieve.

We have a Town Centre Coordination group emerging from the Town Centre Strategy. This group is an operational group of councillors and officers who deal with the practicalities of town centre management. I have asked that Car Parking and all related issues become a standing item, and therefore a minuted item to ensure that car parking as it relates to the towns economy, heritage offer, and appearance can have a clear focus in the future and the working groups report will be an important element of that.

Supplementary question to Councillor Mike Gilbert from Councillor Stuart Evans:

Thank you, Counsellor Gilbert, for a very comprehensive reply. I'm glad to hear that this project has not totally fallen victim to the efficiency savings monster that seems to stalk Boston Borough Council of late. What with all the good work regarding the marked uplift in the Boston market in recent weeks, it would be a shame to stop there. The costings for the re-lining of the car park is around £2000, which seems excellent value for money. So can you please assure the people of Boston that they are finally going to get a revamped cattle market car park, incorporating larger spaces and a more relaxed parking experience when visiting Boston Town Centre sooner rather than later.

Response from Councillor Mike Gilbert:

It is absolutely my ambition to see the aims of that working group fulfilled within a reasonable space of time. I can't give you a time scale, but I'm on to it.

The remaining questions were withdrawn as the relevant members were not present to ask or respond.

50 Questions from Members of the Public

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

51 Draft Audit & Governance Committee Minutes

The Mayor, as Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee, presented the draft Audit and Governance minutes from the meeting held on 13th October 2025 for councillors to note.

It was noted that a report had been issued with a rating of insufficient control for one area where no controls were found in place. This was highlighted as an unusual situation, as such circumstances had not occurred in the last 20 years. Clarification was requested on which area this related to and whether it referred to financial controls. The Mayor advised that a response could be provided by Internal Audit officers at the next Audit & Governance Committee meeting.

Concerns were expressed that at the previous Audit & Governance Committee meeting, no Section 151 Officer, Deputy Section 151 Officer, or representative had been present. It was confirmed that the new S151 Officer would ensure appropriate attendance at future meetings.

A query was raised regarding borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board to invest in property funds. It was confirmed that the amount borrowed, approximately £16.5 million, had been repaid. Clarification was also provided regarding the difference between this borrowing and the State Street loan.

52 Democratic Arrangements - Allocation of Seats Review and Appointments to Outside Bodies 2025/26

The Assistant Director – Governance & Monitoring Officer introduced the report, which set out a revised allocation of seats on the Council's committees, panels, and working groups following recent changes to the political composition of the authority. Members were advised that the review had been undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990.

The Assistant Director – Governance & Monitoring Officer confirmed that the revised seat allocations and associated appointments were attached at Appendix 1 of the supplementary agenda pack. The report recommended that Council approve the updated allocations for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year.

In addition, Council was asked to consider appointments to outside bodies where vacancies had arisen, details of which were attached at Appendix 2 of the supplementary agenda pack:

- Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board – one vacancy was reported.
- Witham Fourth District Internal Drainage Board – two vacancies were reported.
- Thomas Sanderson Trust – one lay member vacancy was reported.

The following nominations were considered:

- Councillor James Cantwell was nominated to sit on the Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board.
- Councillor Richard Austin BME and Mr Phillip Ashton were nominated to sit on the Witham Fourth District Internal Drainage Board.
- No nominations were received for the Thomas Sanderson Trust.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Dale Broughton and seconded by Councillor Stephen Woodliffe.

Resolved

- 1. That the revised allocation of seats and appointments to Committees, Panels and Working Groups, in Appendix 1 within the report, be approved for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2025/26;**
- 2. That Councillor James Cantwell be appointed to the Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board for the remainder of the 2025/26 Municipal Year; and**

- 3. That Councillor Richard Austin and Mr Phillip Ashton be appointed to the Witham Fourth District Internal Drainage Board for the remainder of the 2025/26 Municipal Year.**

53 Review of HR Policies

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Dale Broughton, introduced the report which sought approval of the revised Pensions and Pension Discretions Policy. The report explained that under the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Regulations, the Council is required to publish a policy statement detailing how it would exercise its discretionary powers in relation to pension matters. A copy of the Pensions & Pension Discretions Policy was attached as Appendix A within the report.

The proposed policy had been developed by Public Sector Partnership Services (PSPS) and reviewed through a comprehensive process, including consultation with trade union representatives, the Readers' Panel, and consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8th October 2025.

The policy set out the Council's approach to mandatory and non-mandatory discretions under the LGPS, ensuring compliance with statutory requirements and promoting consistency, transparency, and fairness in decision-making. It also supported effective workforce planning and succession management by providing clear guidance for managers and employees.

The report highlighted that approval of the policy would:

- Ensure harmonisation of pension arrangements across the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership;
- Strengthen governance and safeguard regulatory compliance; and
- Provide a fair and equitable framework for pension-related decisions.

Members welcomed the clarity provided by the revised policy and noted its importance in maintaining compliance with LGPS regulations. It was acknowledged that the policy would assist in managing workforce changes and retirement planning, while ensuring that decisions were made consistently across the partnership.

Members also noted that the policy had been subject to thorough review and scrutiny, and that no significant changes had been proposed beyond those required to reflect current legislation and best practice.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Dale Broughton and seconded by Councillor Stephen Woodliffe.

Resolved

That the HR policy (Pensions & Pensions Discretion Policy) be approved.

[The Head of HR & OD and the Group Manager - Organisational Development left the meeting at 7.07pm, following consideration of the above item.]

54 Licensing Act 2003 - Statement of Licensing Policy

The Portfolio Holder for Infrastructure, Councillor Chris Mountain, introduced the report which sought approval of the revised Statement of Licensing Policy in accordance with Section 5 of the Licensing Act 2003. The Licensing Authority was required to review, adopt and publish its Statement of Licensing Policy every five years. The current policy was due for review by January 2026, and failure to adopt a revised policy by that date would leave the authority open to legal challenge in respect of licensing decisions.

The report outlined the statutory framework and confirmed that the policy set out the approach the Licensing Authority would take to promote the four licensing objectives:

- Prevention of crime and disorder
- Public safety
- Prevention of public nuisance
- Protection of children from harm

The Licensing Committee considered a draft revised policy on 10th June 2025 and resolved that consultation should be undertaken in accordance with the Act. Public consultation took place between 23rd June and 17th August 2025. One response had been received from Lincolnshire Police which was reviewed by the Licensing Committee on 23rd September 2025, and amendments were made where appropriate. A copy of the report detailed consultation responses was attached as Appendix 1 within the report. The final draft policy, incorporating the changes for adoption by Full Council, was attached as Appendix 2 within the report.

Members expressed disappointment at the limited number of responses received during the consultation period. Despite this, Members acknowledged that the responses received had been considered and incorporated into the final draft. The importance of the policy in balancing the needs of local businesses with the protection of public health and safety was emphasised. Members commended the Licensing Team for producing a comprehensive and clear policy that reflects statutory requirements and local priorities.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Chris Mountain and seconded by Councillor Stuart Evans.

Resolved

That the Statement of Licensing Policy be approved, following which it will be published by the statutory deadline.

55 Motions on Notice

The following Motion was received:

Community Governance Review Working Group Membership

To change the membership of the community governance review working group.

The Council notes the important role of the community governance review working group in shaping the future of local governance arrangements within the Borough.

In the interests of ensuring broader representation and participation the council resolves to;

- A) Increase the number of members on the community governance review working group from 5 to 7 elected members and
- B) Appoint the following members to the community governance review working group:

Mike Gilbert
Paul Gleeson
Barrie Pierpoint
Anton Dani
Suzanne Welberry
Stephen Woodliffe
Andy Izard

The motion was moved by Councillor Suzanne Welberry and seconded by Councillor Andy Izard.

Members emphasised the importance of accelerating progress on the Community Governance Review to avoid delays that could impact the transfer of assets and the creation of a town council. It was noted that scheduled meetings of the working group had been cancelled, which had caused concern about the pace of work and the risk of losing momentum on such a significant project.

The debate highlighted the need for strong local representation to ensure that Boston's interests were prioritised during any transition to a unitary authority. The increase in membership from five to seven had been proposed to ensure broader representation and accelerate progress on the review. Members stressed that without a proactive approach, there was a danger that local decision-making could be diluted and that Boston's voice might not be adequately heard in future governance arrangements.

There was also a clear focus on the importance of protecting heritage and financial assets and ensuring they remained under local control. Members agreed that those assets represented a vital part of Boston's identity and economic stability, and that robust arrangements should be in place to safeguard them before any structural changes occurred.

In addition, the requirement for timely consultation with parishes and stakeholders was underlined as essential to maintaining transparency and community engagement. Members recognised that effective communication would help build trust and ensure that local residents and organisations had the opportunity to contribute to shaping the governance model.

Finally, there was a strong commitment to collaborative working within the expanded group to deliver outcomes efficiently and effectively. Members agreed that the proposed

appointments brought experience and dedication to the task, and that the enlarged membership would help ensure that the review progressed without further delay.

Resolved

That the membership of the Community Governance Review Working Group be increased from 5 to 7 elected members and that Councillors Mike Gilbert, Paul Gleeson, Barrie Pierpoint, Anton Dani, Suzanne Welberry, Stephen Woodliffe and Andy Izard be appointed to the Working Group.

The Meeting ended at 7.20 pm.

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Supplementary Questions and Written Responses Full Council – 10th November 2025

2. Supplementary Question to Councillor Ghosh from Councillor Noble:

Now the Council has paid a very high figure for the B&M building and land, given that the property was on the market for £1.3 million for many months, if not more than a year. So the Council has paid over £500,000 more than the notional value of the site. How does the Council justify this misuse of taxpayers money?

Supplementary response from Councillor Sandeep Ghosh:

I really can't give you a straightforward answer about that because it all goes through a procurement process and we get the bids and accordingly we do the job, but I can go into detail and give you a proper answer why if you think it's an extra paid, thank you.

Written response from Councillor Ghosh:

Officers do not recognise the figure to which you refer (the £1.3million). Negotiations on the acquisition price by the Council were not at this level indeed the starting position with the Vendor in Autumn 2023 was much higher than the price eventually agreed.

The Council employed an independent valuer to work with them on the acquisition including advice on value and terms.

Officers took external advice at every step of the process and this negotiation was led by the RICS qualified external valuer leading to an agreed acquisition price of £1.8m + VAT.

The price paid took account of a contribution towards the vendors "sunk costs" involved in holding this site vacant and preparing development proposals including a joint venture opportunity with Boston Borough Council. Acquiring the interest off market also meant the Council was a special purchaser which was also taken into account by the valuer in their negotiations on behalf of the Council. Additional factors were also taken into account including:-

- The benefit to the Council in securing control of the site and the ability to deliver against funding requirements and wider regeneration opportunities enabled the Council to achieve a number of efficiencies, for example a more straightforward phasing plan for the public realm works.
- Acquisition enabled de-risking of future spend against the work streams particularly around design and costing within the programme of PE21 projects.
- The Council acquired this asset without a condition known as "overage" (whereby a proportion of any higher value uplift on development would be paid to the vendor). This is important and means the Council's future freehold interest would not be fettered by overage conditions which can add unnecessary complications to preparing future development appraisals and future disposal.

Given the above I believe there was full justification supported by external professional advice to acquire an unencumbered freehold interest in this site at the negotiated price the Council did. I therefore do not agree with the statement made regarding the use of taxpayers' money.

3. Supplementary Question to Councillor Ghosh from Councillor Noble:

It seems a high price to pay given that it is a site that the Council intended to demolish the building itself. So the question is this, why did the Council not consider refurbishments and internal reconfiguration of the Crown House, given that the building was of no great age?

Supplementary response from Councillor Sandeep Ghosh:

I'll get back to you about that, thank you.

Written response from Councillor Ghosh:

When the Council acquired Crown House it did so in full knowledge that the building would not be straightforward to refurbish given its age, configuration and future flexibility. Consequently 2 specific recommendations were included in the Decision Notice:

Recommendation 4 - The Assistant Director – Strategic Projects be provided with delegated powers to prepare and implement a plan for demolition and clearance of the site, also from within budgetary provision in accordance with the requirements of the Levelling Up Fund, as soon as practicably possible following the acquisition of the site.

Recommendation 5 - The Assistant Director – Strategic Projects be provided with delegated powers to prepare and implement a plan for the Crown House site to be redeveloped including the construction of a new mixed-use building (part commercial and community use and part residential) of approximately 1500sqm. Actions to include the bringing forward of a planning application, appointing a full design team and building contractor, negotiating terms for and, entering into a building contract and progressing development through to the end of RIBA Stage 7 (construction works are complete) in consultation with the Council's Chief Executive, Joint Deputy Chief Executive - Programme Delivery and Leader of the Council.

Redevelopment offered the opportunity to deliver a new build with modern materials, construction methods and warranties/ guarantees as well as the practical point of being able to set the building back from its original footprint to help further enhance the public realm proposals in this area. Refurbishing an existing building of the age, layout and flexibility of the former Crown House building cost effectively and addressing the points above was considered to be an inferior option for this site. The decision was taken with the knowledge of the cost and complexities of refurbishment as part of a balanced assessment of the benefits of redevelopment.