

Boston Borough Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet** held in the Committee Room - Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston, PE21 8QR on Wednesday 10th December 2025 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor Dale Broughton (Leader), in the Chair.

Councillors Mike Gilbert (Deputy Leader), John Baxter, Callum Butler, Claire Rylott and Sarah Sharpe.

In attendance:

Councillor Stephen Woodliffe.

Officers:

Deputy Chief Executive (Programme Delivery) and Assistant Director - General Fund Assets, Director of Finance, Assistant Director - Leisure and Local Services, Group Manager – Insights & Transformation, Head of Special Projects (Leisure), Chief Executive - Public Sector Partnership Services Ltd, Chief Finance Officer (PSPSL), Head of ICT & Digital, PSPSL, Head of Revenues and Benefits, Head of Procurement & Contracts, PSPSL, Procurement Manager, PSPSL, Head of Finance Delivery - BBC (PSPSL) and Democratic Services Team Leader.

26 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sandeep Ghosh, Chris Mountain and Helen Staples.

27 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

28 Minutes

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 17th September 2025 and the Special Cabinet meetings held on 13th November 2025 and 26th November 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

29 Questions from Members of the Public

No questions were received.

30 Recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny (Standing Item)*

There were no recommendations.

31 Recommendations from the Boston Town Area Committee (BTAC) (Standing Item)

There were no recommendations.

32 Quarter 2 25/26 Performance and Risk Report

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Dale Broughton, presented a report by the Assistant Director – Corporate and the Assistant Director – Governance & Monitoring Officer which provided Cabinet with an overview of the Council's performance and risk position as at the end of September 2025. It set out progress against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), highlighted areas of underperformance, and summarised changes to the strategic risk register. Cabinet was advised that the quarterly update formed part of the Council's governance framework, supporting transparency and informed decision-making. The report included detailed performance data at Appendix A, the Council's risk registers at Appendix B, Partnership risks at Appendix C, and fraud risks at Appendix D.

Overall performance remained strong across most service areas, with the majority of indicators on or above target. The report confirmed that 92 KPIs were being monitored for 2025/26, including 27 targeted measures directly within the Council's control and 65 trend indicators providing contextual insight. While most indicators were performing well, two areas required improvement:

- Corporate Complaints Response Times – 86.67% of complaints were responded to within corporately agreed timescales, against a target of 95%.
- Subject Access Requests (SARs) – 83.33% were completed within statutory timescales, also below the 95% target.

Actions were in place to address these issues, including process reviews, improved escalation routes, and additional training for staff.

The report also highlighted positive developments in risk management. The risk associated with server room infrastructure had reduced from high to medium following agreement to progress relocation and upgrade works. The likelihood of failing to meet the Council's Net Zero target had decreased, with mitigation measures now embedded and the decarbonisation programme on track. Depot capacity risk had also reduced following confirmation of an extension to the depot lease from April 2025, ensuring sufficient space for future growth and the introduction of food waste collections. Other significant risks, including financial sustainability, cybersecurity, and reliance on third-party providers, remained under close review with mitigation actions ongoing.

Members welcomed the positive overall performance and acknowledged the resilience demonstrated across services. The strong food safety performance was noted, with 97.5% of rateable food businesses achieving a rating of three stars or above, which was considered reassuring for residents and visitors during the festive season.

The discussion recognised the importance of addressing underperformance in complaints handling and SARs to maintain public confidence. The measures being implemented to streamline processes and improve data sharing were supported, with an emphasis on monitoring progress closely.

Members also endorsed the proactive approach to risk management and the reduction in several key risks. The improvements in infrastructure planning and environmental commitments were highlighted as essential for future service resilience. It was agreed that while the overall position was positive, continuous improvement remained a priority, particularly in areas where targets had not been met.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Dale Broughton and seconded by Councillor John Baxter.

Resolved:

That the quarterly performance and risk monitoring information for Q2 of 2025/26 be noted.

[Councillor Stephen Woodliffe entered the meeting at 6.04pm, during consideration of the above item.]

33 Proposed Amendments to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules

The Head of Procurement & Contracts (PSPSL) presented a report by the Assistant Director – Governance & Monitoring Officer on the revised draft set of Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs), which form part of the Constitution and govern procurement and contract management. The purpose of the amendments was to ensure compliance with the Procurement Act 2023 and associated regulations, and to align the Council's approach with best practice and the requirements of the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership. The report included a clean version of the proposed CPRs at Appendix 1a, a tracked-changes version at Appendix 1b, and a summary of key changes at Appendix 3. Revised Delegations to Officers were also presented at Appendix 2, aligning decision-making authority with updated procurement thresholds.

Members were advised that the current CPRs had not been reviewed for three years and were becoming outdated. The revised version incorporated legislative changes, clarified authorisation thresholds, and strengthened governance arrangements to safeguard public funds and maintain transparency.

The amendments aimed to:

- Ensure all procurement activity was fair, transparent, and compliant with legislation.
- Provide clarity on roles, responsibilities, and authorisation limits.
- Support consistency across the Partnership and reduce governance risks.

Members noted that the proposed changes reflected the Council's commitment to robust governance and effective procurement practice. The discussion highlighted the importance of aligning thresholds with the new legislative framework and ensuring officers have clear guidance on authorisation and reporting requirements. It was confirmed that the Audit & Governance Committee had considered the proposals and that any comments raised would be addressed prior to submission to Full Council.

The need for clarity on reporting arrangements for contracts below £1 million was acknowledged, and it was confirmed that a response would be circulated to Audit & Governance members following queries raised at the last Audit & Governance Committee meeting on 17th November 2025. Members supported the approach to harmonise rules across the Partnership, recognising the benefits of consistency for shared services and joint procurement exercises.

Members agreed that the revised CPRs would strengthen accountability, reduce the risk of non-compliance, and provide a clear framework for officers and suppliers. The inclusion of updated provisions on exemptions, frameworks, dynamic markets, and contract management was welcomed as a means of improving efficiency while maintaining control.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor John Baxter and seconded by Councillor Callum Butler.

Resolved:

1. **That the draft revised Contract Procedure Rules, at Appendix 1a within the report, be recommended to Full Council for adoption; and**
2. **That the Delegations to Officers that sets out the authorisation for decision making in relation to Contract Procedure Rules at Appendix 2 within the report be approved. This approval will be subject to a Council decision to amend the Contract Procedure Rules.**

[The Head of Procurement & Contracts (PSPSL), the Procurement Manager and the Assistant Director – Governance & Monitoring Officer left the meeting at 6.13pm, following consideration of the above item.]

34 Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy

The Director of Finance (S151 Officer) presented a report by the Assistant Director – Governance & Monitoring Officer which contained the updated Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy for approval. Members were advised that the policy had been reviewed to ensure it remained robust, compliant with current legislation, and aligned with best practice across the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership. The policy set out the Council's commitment to preventing fraud and corruption in all its activities and dealings with external partners, safeguarding public funds and maintaining public confidence. The updated policy was attached at Appendix 1 within the report.

The revised policy included clear definitions of fraud, bribery and corruption, outlined the responsibilities of officers and members, and detailed the procedures for reporting and investigating suspected irregularities. It also incorporated provisions for ongoing monitoring and review, ensuring that the Council could respond promptly to legislative changes and emerging risks.

The report recommended that Cabinet approve the policy and delegate authority to the Section 151 Officer to make minor amendments in future, where necessary to reflect changes in legislation, statutory guidance or contact details, following consultation with the relevant portfolio holder.

Members welcomed the updated policy and acknowledged its importance in maintaining strong governance and protecting the integrity of the Council's operations. The discussion emphasised the need for clear guidance and effective communication to ensure that all staff and members understood their responsibilities under the policy. The inclusion of delegated authority for minor updates was supported as a practical measure to keep the policy current without requiring repeated formal approvals for administrative changes.

The approach to harmonise the policy across the Partnership was noted as a positive step, providing consistency and resilience in managing fraud risks. Members agreed that the policy would help safeguard public resources and reinforce the Council's zero-tolerance stance on fraud, bribery and corruption.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Sarah Sharpe and seconded by Councillor Claire Rylott.

Resolved:

- 1. That the Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy attached at Appendix 1 within the report be approved; and**
- 2. That authority be delegated to the S151 Officer, to review and make minor amendments to the Policy to reflect changes in legislation, statutory guidance or contact details, following consultation with the portfolio holder.**

35 Quarter 2 2025/26 Forecast Outturn

The Director of Finance (S151 Officer) presented a report which provided members with the financial forecast for the remainder of the 2025/26 financial year, based on the position at the end of September 2025. It outlined the projected revenue and capital outturn, identified key variances, and highlighted areas requiring continued focus to maintain financial sustainability. The report included the detailed revenue forecast at Appendix A – Table 1 and the capital programme amendments at Appendix B – Table 3.

Members were advised that the forecast revenue position showed a £0.571m deficit, which represented an improvement compared to Quarter 1, when the deficit was reported at over £0.8m. The improvement was attributed to a combination of cost savings, efficiency measures, and additional income streams. The report also confirmed that the Council continued to work towards achieving its savings and efficiency target for the year, with approximately £700,000 still to be realised.

The capital programme was reviewed, with amendments set out in Appendix B – Table 3 within the report. The revised programme totalled approximately £38.5m, with forecast expenditure of £37m, resulting in a projected underspend of around £1.25m. It was noted that these changes would require approval by Full Council.

The report also highlighted treasury management activity, including the early repayment of the State Street loan and its replacement with borrowing at a significantly lower interest rate, generating an in-year saving of approximately £28,000 and delivering ongoing benefits in future years.

Members welcomed the improvement in the revenue position and acknowledged the efforts of officers in managing financial pressures. The discussion recognised that while progress had been made, the remaining efficiency target required continued focus and innovative approaches to service delivery.

Attention was drawn to income pressures in areas such as commercial waste, planning, and markets, and the steps being taken to mitigate these, including recruitment of a new commercial waste manager to drive growth in that service. The potential for further savings through operational efficiencies and income generation was noted as a priority.

The discussion also considered the implications of property fund investments, with clarification provided that while current carrying values were below initial investment levels, long-term returns remained positive and the Council would only consider exiting these funds if financially advantageous.

Members agreed that the amendments to the capital programme were necessary to reflect updated project timelines and funding allocations. The importance of maintaining robust financial management and monitoring throughout the remainder of the year was emphasised, particularly in light of ongoing economic uncertainty.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Callum Butler and seconded by Councillor Mike Gilbert.

Resolved:

1. **That the forecast revenue position of £0.571m deficit for 2025/26 as detailed at Appendix A – Table 1 within the report and the need for continuous focus on the savings and efficiency programme be noted;**
2. **That the amendments to the Capital Programme within Appendix B – Table 3 within the report be noted; and**
3. **That Full Council be recommended to approve the amendments to the Capital Programme at Appendix B – Table 3 within the report.**

36 Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2026/27

The Director of Finance (S151 Officer) presented a report which detailed the annual review of the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme for working-age households. Cabinet was reminded that the Council is required to review its scheme each year and consult with precepting authorities and other stakeholders. The scheme for pension-age households remains prescribed by Government and is not subject to local discretion. The report included consultation results and modelling within the supporting Appendix 1.

The current scheme provided up to 100% support for households with children and up to 85% support for other working-age households. The report outlined the outcome of the consultation agreed by Cabinet in September 2025, which sought views on three options for 2026/27:

- Option 1: Retain the current maximum support levels.

- Option 2: Reduce support to 90% for lone parents, 80% for couples with children, and 75% for all other households.
- Option 3: Reduce support to 90% for lone parents, 80% for couples with children, and 70% for all other households.

Consultation responses indicated a modest level of engagement, with the majority supporting a reduction in support. The report recommended Option 2 as the preferred approach, balancing the need to reduce scheme costs with the aim of minimising the impact on vulnerable households. The estimated saving from Option 2 was approximately £332,000, compared to £421,000 for Option 3. The report also confirmed that the scheme would continue to include discretionary provisions for exceptional hardship cases and would be uprated annually in line with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) allowances and premiums.

Members acknowledged the financial pressures facing the Council and the need to deliver a balanced budget while continuing to support those most in need. The discussion recognised that the proposed changes represented a difficult but necessary decision, given the wider economic context and the Council's duty to maintain financial sustainability.

It was noted that the recommended option sought to limit reductions for households with children and lone parents, while introducing a fairer contribution for other working-age households. The inclusion of an exceptional hardship provision was welcomed as an important safeguard for those experiencing severe financial difficulty.

Members also reflected on the consultation process, noting the low level of responses and the importance of exploring alternative methods of engagement in future to ensure broader participation. The need for clear communication with residents about the changes and the support available was emphasised.

The discussion concluded that Option 2 provided the most balanced approach, reducing scheme costs without imposing the more significant reductions proposed under Option 3.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor John Baxter and seconded by Councillor Claire Rylott.

Resolved:

1. **That Full Council be recommended to approve a change to the maximum level of support to 90% for lone parents, 80% for couples with children and 75% for all other households with the scheme uprated in line with DWP's annual update of allowances and premiums for 2026/27; and**
2. **That approval for developing the 2026/27 scheme rules in accordance with recommendation 1, above, be delegated to the Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance as appropriate, including prescribed, administrative and minor changes.**

37 Exclusion of Public and Press

The recommendation was moved by Councillor John Baxter and seconded by Councillor Mike Gilbert.

Resolved:

That under Section 100(A)(iv) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended).

[The Head of Revenues and Benefits (PSPSL) and Councillor Stephen Woodliffe left the meeting at 6.34pm, following consideration of the above item.]

38 Council / Public Sector Partnership Services Transformation and Service Modernisation Programme

The Chief Executive – Public Sector Partnership Services Ltd presented a report by the Assistant Director – Corporate which set out the proposed Transformation and Service Modernisation Programme for Public Sector Partnership Services Ltd (PSPS).

The recommendation was moved by Councillor John Baxter and seconded by Councillor Mike Gilbert.

Resolved:

To agree the recommendations as set out in the exempt report.

[The Chief Executive – Public Sector Partnership Services Ltd, the Chief Finance Officer (PSPSL), the Head of ICT & Digital (PSPSL) and the Head of Finance Delivery – BBC (PSPSL) left at 6.46pm, following consideration of the above item.]

39 South and East Lincolnshire Council's Partnership - Contracting of Leisure Facilities with an external operator as agent for service delivery

The Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture and Tourism, Councillor Sarah Sharpe, presented a report by the Deputy Chief Executive (Programme Delivery) and Assistant Director - General Fund Assets which sought approval to enter into leases and an agreement for the management and lifecycle maintenance of Boston Borough Council's leisure facilities.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Sarah Sharpe and seconded by Councillor Callum Butler.

Resolved:

To agree the recommendations as set out in the exempt report.

The Meeting ended at 6.49 pm.