

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 2nd March 2026 at 6.30 pm.

Present:

The Mayor, Councillor Barrie Pierpoint, in the Chair.

Councillors Patricia Marson (Deputy Mayor), Alison Austin, Richard Austin BEM, Dale Broughton, Callum Butler, Neil Drayton, Stuart Evans, Mike Gilbert, Paul Gleeson, Jonathan Noble, Ralph Pryke, Claire Rylott, Lina Savickiene, David Scoot, Sarah Sharpe, Helen Staples, Suzanne Welberry and Stephen Woodliffe.

Officers:

Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service), Executive Director - Programme Delivery, Service Director – Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer), Executive Director - Finance (Section 151 Officer), Service Director – Communities and Housing Services, Interim Finance Consultant, Head of Finance Delivery - BBC (PSPSL), Head of HR & OD, HR Projects and Transformation Manager, Democratic Services Manager and Democratic Services Team Leader.

72 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Baxter, Peter Bedford, David Brown, James Cantwell, Emma Cresswell, Anton Dani, Anne Dorrian, Sandeep Ghosh, Andy Izard, David Middleton and Chris Mountain.

73 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

74 Minutes

The Minutes of the Full Council meeting on 12th January 2026 were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

75 Communications

There were no communications.

76 Deputations and Petitions

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

77 Questions from Elected Members

The questions were withdrawn as the relevant members were not present to ask or respond.

78 Questions from Members of the Public

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

79 Annual Budget Report 2026/27, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Capital Programme and Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Policy/Strategy, Annual Delivery Plan, Living Wage Supplement and Pay Policy Statement

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Dale Broughton, introduced the report and presented the Council with the full suite of financial documents for 2026/27, comprising the General Fund Revenue Budget, Medium Term Financial Strategy (Appendices 1, 1A and 1B within the report), Capital Programme and Capital Strategy (Appendices 2 and 3 within the report), Treasury Management Policy and Strategy (Appendices 4A - 4C within the report), Fees and Charges 2026/27 (Appendix 5 within the report), the Annual Delivery Plan (Appendix 6 within the report), and the Pay Policy Report and Statement (Appendices 8A and 8B within the report).

During his introduction, Councillor Broughton reached the five-minute limit for speeches. In accordance with the Constitution, the Mayor called for a vote on whether he should be permitted to continue. Following the vote, Council resolved that the Leader be allowed to continue his introduction, after which he proceeded to outline the key features of the budget:

- The 2026/27 budget was balanced with no in-year efficiency target, supported by strong financial management and savings achieved through the Partnership, which had delivered over £42 million in efficiencies.
- Significant national funding changes—including the Fair Funding Review, dissolution of the Business Rates Pool, and consolidation of grants—were fully reflected in the MTFS (Appendices 1, 1A, 1B).
- Internal Drainage Board (IDB) levies remained a major financial pressure, rising to £3.072m, a 52.57% increase since 2021/22, now equating to 64.5% of the borough Council Tax retained locally.
- A 3.5% increase in Council Tax, which was within the government's referendum limit, setting the Band D charge at £231.48, with most households in Bands A–C experiencing weekly increases of 10–13 pence. (MTFS Tables – Appendix 1).
- The Capital Programme (Appendices 2–3) set out investment in leisure improvements, Rosegarth Square, the Boston Depot extension, Pride in Place schemes, and infrastructure for mandatory food-waste collections.
- The Treasury Management Policy and Strategy (Appendices 4A–4C) confirmed a prudent, risk-averse approach to borrowing and investment, aligned with the capital programme and compliant with national codes.
- The Annual Delivery Plan (Appendix 6) detailed key priorities for 2026/27 including town centre, environmental and strategic planning work.
- The Pay Policy Statement and Real Living Wage Supplement (Appendices 8A–8B) ensured the lowest Council pay rate would increase to £13.45 per hour from 1 April 2026.

Members commented on the long-standing pressures created by Internal Drainage Board (IDB) levies, noting that the rising costs continued to place a disproportionate strain on the Council's finances and remained a source of considerable frustration. Reference was made to the difficulty of managing a budget where IDB increases absorbed such a significant share of the Council Tax retained locally.

Frustration was also expressed regarding the Government's approach to funding, with comments highlighting that national decisions had failed to recognise or adequately respond to the financial realities faced by district councils such as Boston. Members additionally voiced dissatisfaction with Lincolnshire County Council, drawing attention to ongoing concerns about the condition of local highways as an example of pressures passed down to the borough.

Several Members remarked on the positive work of officers over many years, acknowledging the professionalism and dedication shown in maintaining financial stability, delivering services, and ensuring the borough remained well-managed despite increasing external pressures. Particular thanks were offered to the finance team for their support during the budget process, and to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Growth for his work throughout the year.

Brief references were made to the financial challenges set out within the report, including reductions in certain income streams and wider economic uncertainty, with recognition that the achievement of a balanced budget with no in-year efficiency target represented a significant accomplishment in the circumstances.

Members also touched upon the wider context of Local Government Reorganisation, noting that future structural changes could alter the way budgets were set and delivered, and emphasising the importance of protecting the interests of Boston residents during this period of transition.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Dale Broughton and seconded by Councillor Mike Gilbert.

Resolved:

- 1. That The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (as outlined in Appendix 1 within the report) be approved;**
- 2. That it be noted that the Council Tax Base for Boston Borough Council (BBC) of 20,572 and 9,455 for Boston Special Expenses (Band D equivalent) had been set for 2026/27 and on 23rd December 2025 by the Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer, under officer delegation in line with the Constitution;**
- 3. That the Revenue Estimates for the General Fund and Boston Special Expenses for 2026/27 (as outlined in Appendices 1, 1A and 1B within the report) be approved;**
- 4. That the additions to and use of reserves (as detailed in Appendix 1 within the report) be approved;**

5. That the Capital Programme and Capital Strategy (as outlined in Appendices 2 and 3 within the report) be approved;
6. That the Treasury Management Policy Statement Treasury Management Strategy Statement MRP Policy and Annual Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Practices (as outlined in Appendices 4A, 4B and 4C within the report) be approved;
7. That the Fees and Charges Schedule 2026/27 (as outlined in Appendix 5 within the report) be approved;
8. That the report of the Section 151 Officer, under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the budget calculations and adequacy of proposed financial reserves be noted (as outlined in Paragraph 10 within the report);
9. That the Council Tax for a Band D property in 2026/27 be set at £231.48 (£7.83 per annum increase on 2025/26 levels) for Boston Borough Council and £82.44 (£1.35 per annum increase on 2025/26 levels) for Boston Special Expenses;
10. That the Annual Delivery Plan for 2026/27 (as outlined in Appendix 6 within the report) be approved;
11. That the application of the Living Wage Supplement to be paid to all employees whose current hourly rate falls below the Real Living Wage Foundation rate of £13.45 with effect from 1 April 2026, as outlined in paragraphs 9.2 and 9.3 within the report, be approved; and
12. That the Pay Policy report and Statement 2026/27 (as outlined in Appendices 8A and 8B within the report) be approved.

Recorded Vote on Annual Budget Report 2026/27, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Capital Programme and Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Policy/Strategy, Annual Delivery Plan, Living Wage Supplement and Pay Policy Statement (Resolution)

In accordance with Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 the vote was taken as a recorded vote:

For	Councillor Alison Austin, Councillor Richard Austin BEM, Councillor Dale Broughton, Councillor Callum Butler, Councillor Neil Drayton, Councillor Stuart Evans, Councillor Mike Gilbert, Councillor Paul Gleeson, Councillor Patricia Marson, Councillor Barrie Pierpoint, Councillor Ralph Pryke, Councillor Claire Rylott, Councillor Lina Savickiene, Councillor David Scoot, Councillor Sarah Sharpe, Councillor Helen Staples, Councillor Suzanne Welberry and Councillor Stephen Woodliffe	18
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	Councillor Jonathan Noble	1
Carried		

80 Council Tax Setting 2026/27

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Dale Broughton, introduced the report and explained that the item brought together all elements required to formally set the Council Tax for 2026/27, incorporating the precepts of Lincolnshire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner, parish councils, Boston Special Expenses, and the borough's own requirement. Members' attention was drawn to the statutory resolutions and detailed calculations contained in Appendices A – E within the report, which had to be approved in order to set the Council Tax for the coming year.

Councillor Broughton highlighted that the borough's Council Tax requirement and Band D charge reflected the decisions taken under the previous agenda item, including the 3.5% increase for Boston Borough Council and the increase to Boston Special Expenses. As part of the introduction, reference was made to the practice of issuing residents with a £10 explanatory breakdown within their annual bills, showing how their Council Tax contribution was allocated across each service and precepting authority.

The Leader noted that the report satisfied the legislative requirement for billing authorities to set their Council Tax no later than 11 March, and reminded Members that, under the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, the item required a recorded vote.

Members made brief comments on the proposed level of Council Tax for 2026/27. One Member questioned whether the full 3.5% increase was necessary and suggested that alternative approaches, such as utilising the climate change reserve, reviewing the collection fund adjustment, or reconsidering elements within the MTFS, might allow the increase to be reduced or avoided.

Other Members expressed concern that such measures would only provide short-term relief and could create wider financial pressures in future years. Reference was made to earlier decisions not to raise Council Tax between 2011 and 2015, which continued to have lasting implications for the authority's ability to generate income.

The modest impact of the increase on most households was also noted, with Members referring to the small weekly difference and the need to maintain financial resilience in a context of ongoing pressures.

During the discussion, Councillor Broughton confirmed that he would pass Members' comments and concerns on to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Growth, particularly in relation to the suggested alternative financial approaches and wider issues raised.

Overall, Members acknowledged that while any increase was regrettable, the proposed level was necessary and proportionate to support the delivery of a balanced budget and to protect essential services.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Dale Broughton and seconded by Councillor Callum Butler.

Resolved:

That the formal Council Tax resolutions for 2026/27 (as set out within Appendix A and summarised in paragraph 4.1 and the accompanying Appendices B to E) be approved.

Recorded Vote on Council Tax Setting 2026/27 (Resolution)		
In accordance with Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 the vote was taken as a recorded vote:		
For	Councillor Alison Austin, Councillor Richard Austin BEM, Councillor Dale Broughton, Councillor Callum Butler, Councillor Neil Drayton, Councillor Stuart Evans, Councillor Mike Gilbert, Councillor Paul Gleeson, Councillor Patricia Marson, Councillor Barrie Pierpoint, Councillor Ralph Pryke, Councillor Claire Rylott, Councillor Lina Savickiene, Councillor David Scoot, Councillor Sarah Sharpe, Councillor Helen Staples, Councillor Suzanne Welberry and Councillor Stephen Woodliffe	18
Against	Councillor Jonathan Noble	1
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Carried		

81 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 19th January 2026 for councillors to note.

No comments were made, and the draft Minutes were noted.

82 Audit and Governance Committee Annual Report 2024/2025

The Mayor, as Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee, presented the Committee's Annual Report for 2024/25, which was provided within the agenda pack as Appendix 1. The report summarised the Committee's work across the previous municipal year, including oversight of audit activity, financial reporting, governance arrangements, risk management and treasury matters. Members were advised that the report had been submitted to Full Council for noting only.

No comments were made, and the Annual Report was noted.

83 Terms and Conditions alignment across the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Dale Broughton, introduced the report and explained that the item sought approval for the next and final phase of aligning terms and conditions of employment across the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership. Details of the SELCP Vehicle Purchase Assistance Policy, the SELCP Redundancy and Redeployment

(extract) and the SELCP Time Off Policy (Appendix) were included within Appendices A – C.

Members were reminded that the earlier phases of alignment had already harmonised several key employment policies and had introduced a shared pay structure across the three Partnership councils. The proposals before Members represented the concluding stage of that programme. If approved, a 45-day consultation period with staff would be undertaken before final implementation.

The report also emphasised the important role of the Partnership workforce in sustaining service delivery and achieving efficiencies, and recorded thanks to staff for their continued dedication.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Dale Broughton and seconded by Councillor Claire Rylott.

Resolved:

- 1. That authority be delegated to the Head of Paid Service to lead the employment consultation(s) with the workforce, management and Chief Officers (excluding the Chief Executive); to further revise Terms and Conditions of employment to seek greater alignment across the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership;**
- 2. That authority be delegated to the Head of Paid Service to implement revised Terms and Conditions (excluding those that impact the Chief Executive), after consultation taking into consideration any changes that arose through consultation from the workforce and unions, provided changes were less than or equal to that approved by Council (including approving any new policies and policy updates required for the implementation); and**
- 3. That an amendment to the Pay Policy Statement 2026/27 be approved, if following a period of consultation, the proposed changes were implemented as set out within the report, specifically for Boston Borough Council which would amend the details related to: ‘Redundancy and Severance Payments’.**

84 South & East Lincolnshire Community Safety Strategy

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Dale Broughton, introduced the report and presented the proposed South & East Lincolnshire Community Safety Strategy and Action Plan, as set out within the report as Appendices 1 and 2. The Strategy fulfilled the statutory duties placed on local authorities under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and had been developed jointly across the Partnership to ensure a coordinated approach to community safety issues.

Members were advised that the Strategy identified four key priority areas informed by police data, local intelligence, and community feedback:

- Tackling anti-social behaviour, with particular focus on neighbour-related issues;
- Improving understanding of fear and perception of crime;

- Working with the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership to support place-based project delivery;
- Encouraging increased reporting of crime and anti-social behaviour to strengthen the evidence base.

Those priorities, along with the wider actions set out in the appendix, were designed to strengthen coordination between the three Partnership councils, Lincolnshire Police, Fire and Rescue, and the wider voluntary and community sector.

Members made several observations regarding the proposals. Attention was drawn to concerns about future national changes to police governance, with particular reference to the proposal to transfer the functions of the Police and Crime Commissioner to a mayoral model. During the discussion, comments were made about the importance of robust arrangements for police funding and scrutiny, and the need for clarity over how these responsibilities would operate in any future structure.

During the debate, Members commented on the strategic importance of the Community Safety Strategy and reflected on recent engagement with policing partners. Reference was made to the recent attendance of senior police representatives at a scrutiny meeting, during which Members had the opportunity to undertake detailed questioning. Those representatives had provided data indicating reductions in certain crime categories within the borough.

The discussion also acknowledged the continuing impact of fear of crime within the community and the importance of improved reporting, data sharing and public communication to ensure resources were deployed effectively.

In addition, Members noted the excellent work undertaken by Councillor Woodliffe as the borough's representative on the Lincolnshire Police and Crime Panel, recognising his contribution to constructive scrutiny at the county level.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Dale Broughton and seconded by Councillor Callum Butler.

Resolved:

- 1. That the contents of the report, and the work of partners in addressing crime and disorder in South and East Lincolnshire and Lincolnshire as a whole, be noted;**
- 2. That the Community Safety Strategy, which set out the areas of focus identified by the South and East Lincolnshire Community Safety Partnership, be adopted; and**
- 3. That the executive of the authority be authorised to make any future amendments to the Strategy, as required, to meet emerging needs identified.**

85 Community Governance Review - Fosdyke Parish Council

The Assistant Director – Governance and Monitoring Officer introduced the report, which set out a request received from Fosdyke Parish Council for a Community Governance Review (CGR), seeking to increase the size of the Parish Council from five to seven councillors. The CGR would be carried out in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The proposed Terms of Reference was attached as Appendix A within the report.

Members were advised that, if approved, the Review would follow the timetable set out within the appendix, including a public consultation period and subsequent reporting to Full Council for final determination. The proposal was considered reasonable on the basis of the parish's current electorate and in line with national guidance.

During the discussion, Members welcomed the request from Fosdyke Parish Council, commenting that it was encouraging to see active interest in parish governance at a time when many areas struggled to attract new councillors. The important role of parish councils in supporting rural communities was emphasised, and Members felt that increasing the size of the council would help strengthen local representation.

Reference was made to the wider context of Local Government Reorganisation, with Members noting that parish and town councils were likely to play an increasingly important part in representing local views, particularly should there be structural changes at principal authority level. The Leader highlighted this point specifically, commenting on the significance of strong parish governance for the future.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Dale Broughton and seconded by Councillor Stuart Evans.

Resolved:

- 1. That a Community Governance Review be undertaken for the Parish of Fosdyke;**
- 2. That the Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Review, attached in Appendix A within the report, be approved; and**
- 3. That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director – Governance and Monitoring Officer to carry out the review with the findings of the review reported to Council for final decision.**

86 Constitution Amendment - Council Procedure Rule 11 - Questions by Members

Councillor Paul Gleeson, as Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, introduced the report, which had been considered by the Committee at its meeting on 10th February 2026. The report recommended an amendment to Council Procedure Rule 11.2, limiting Members to submitting one question only to Full Council per meeting, while retaining the right to ask one supplementary question. A copy of the Monitoring Officer's report was attached as Appendix 1 within the report.

The proposed amendment had been brought forward following advice from the Monitoring Officer, who had confirmed that the proposal could be considered by the Council on receipt of a the committee's recommendation and the Monitoring Officer's report. The intention of the amendment was to support fairness, balance and efficiency during Full Council meetings, while ensuring Members continued to have access to a variety of scrutiny mechanisms.

A detailed discussion took place on the proposed amendment to limit Members to submitting one question per Full Council meeting. Several Members spoke in support of the change, explaining that recent meetings had seen large numbers of questions submitted by a very small number of Members, often close to the submission deadline. This had placed significant pressure on officer time and contributed to extended meetings, particularly when the Members submitting those questions did not attend to ask them.

Members reflected on the tone and conduct associated with questioning at recent meetings. Comments were made about occasions where supplementary questions had been used in ways perceived to be unconstructive, confrontational or politically motivated, and reference was made to instances of discourteous behaviour outside the Chamber. Members expressed concern that such behaviour detracted from productive debate and created an uncomfortable atmosphere for Members and officers alike.

Considerable discussion took place around the availability of alternative mechanisms for raising issues or seeking information. Members noted that many queries could be, and routinely were, resolved by emailing officers or speaking directly with Portfolio Holders. One Member cited their own experience that the majority of their questions had been answered fully through such informal channels, without the need to table them at Full Council.

As part of the debate, Members also explained that similar limits exist in many other local authorities, referencing that this approach was neither unusual nor restrictive. Several examples were mentioned, and Members noted that Lincolnshire County Council operates a comparable system, where Members are limited to one question at Full Council. This was presented as evidence that the proposed measure aligned with established and effective practice elsewhere, and that it would help bring Boston's procedures in line with sector norms.

Further comments stressed the need to protect officer capacity, with Members acknowledging the significant time involved in preparing written responses to multiple questions, particularly when technical input was required from several service areas. Members welcomed the clarity that a one question limit would bring and felt it would encourage Members to prioritise the issues most important to them.

Some Members highlighted experiences of poor conduct and personalisation arising from recent questioning, including adversarial exchanges and inappropriate language outside the Chamber. Concerns were raised that such behaviour did not reflect the professional standards expected of elected Members. Supporters of the motion felt the amendment would promote a more focused, respectful and business like approach to question time.

While the importance of questioning as a tool for scrutiny and accountability was acknowledged, most Members who spoke felt that the amendment represented a fair and proportionate measure that balanced democratic engagement with effective meeting management and responsible use of officer time.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Paul Gleeson and seconded by Councillor Alison Austin.

Resolved:

- 1. That Council Procedure Rule 11.2 be amended so that a Member may submit one question only to Full Council per meeting;**
- 2. That the amendment take effect at the close of the Full Council meeting on 2nd March 2026; and**
- 3. That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to update the Constitution and associated guidance documents to give effect to this change.**

Before closing the meeting, the Mayor invited Members to sign a card conveying the Council's best wishes to Councillor David Brown, who had recently experienced health issues. Members were thanked for their attendance and contribution to the meeting.

The Meeting ended at 7.48 pm.