

BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

At the meeting of Boston Borough Council held at the Council Chambers, Municipal Buildings, Boston, PE21 8QR, on Monday, 6th March, 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

The Mayor (Councillor Anne Dorrian), in the Chair
Councillors Frank Pickett, Tom Ashton, Tracey Abbott, Alison Austin, Richard Austin BEM, Peter Bedford, David Brown, George Cornah, Anton Dani, Deborah Evans, Paul Goodale, Martin Griggs, Jonathan Noble, Judith Skinner, Paul Skinner, Aaron Spencer, Yvonne Stevens, Peter Watson, Judy Welbourn, Nigel Welton and Stephen Woodliffe

Officers –

Chief Executive, Assistant Director - Finance (Deputy S151 Officer), Section 151 Officer, Assistant Director - Governance and Monitoring Officer, Deputy Chief Executive (Growth), Democratic Services Manager and Democratic Services Officer

70 MINUTES

Following amendments made prior to the meeting the minutes of the last meeting of the Council, held 23 January 2023, were taken as read and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

71 APOLOGIES

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors Alan Bell, Martin Howard, Neill Hastie and Brian Rush

72 COMMUNICATIONS

The Chief Executive reported the following communications;

- Members were reminded that, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, all votes on the budget and council tax setting reports would be taken as recorded votes.
- Members were reminded that if they were two months or more in arrears, they must disclose the fact and not vote on any item to set tax or any decision which may affect its calculation. In accordance with the present arrangements for the selection of Mayor, Councillor Yvonne Stevens had agreed to serve as Mayor for the Municipal year 2023/24, subject to being re-elected in May.

73 DEPUTATIONS AND PETITIONS

There were none for this meeting

74 QUESTIONS FROM ELECTED MEMBERS

The Chief Executive announced that there were a number of questions received for the meeting.

1. Question to the Mayor from Councillor Tom Ashton:

“Could you confirm whether you attended the last meeting of the Corporate & Community Committee in your role as the Member for Skirbeck or as The Mayor?”

Response from the Mayor:

"I thank Cllr Ashton for notice of his question. I attended the meeting of the Corporate & Community meeting as the elected member for Skirbeck Ward."

There was no supplemental question.

2. Question to the Mayor from Councillor Tom Ashton

"Could you tell me how many prospective candidates for the Boston Independent Group have been received by yourself in the Mayor's Parlour and the Chamber since 1st November 2022?"

Response from The Mayor:

"I thank Cllr Ashton for notice of his question. None."

Supplemental question from Councillor Tom Ashton:

"I am grateful for the answer, but I detect this is only a technically accurate response as it clearly doesn't cover people who have declared as candidates after being entertained here."

Personally, I wouldn't believe for a moment that the trappings of the Mayoralty might ever be used for candidate recruitment, but we do need openness and transparency so that those less sceptical than myself might be sure.

So therefore, would you share, by email to all Councillors, a full list of who has been entertained in the Parlour or Chamber since 1st November 2022?"

Supplemental response from the Mayor:

"Councillor Ashton at the last meeting of Full Council you asked about my different roles and I gave a very thorough response but clearly you were unable to consolidate your learning. During my 40 year career in teaching and local government I was both, fully cognisant and fully compliant with the boundaries which consisted between work and my personal life. My role as Mayor is no different, in fact anticipating this type of innuendo, I recently had a meeting with the Monitoring Officer to assure him that I was fully acquainted with what is and is not allowed during an election campaign. I have hosted a plethora of different groups in the parlour, that means many Councillor Ashton, before and since 1st November 2022 including but not limited to; the congregation of St Swithers Church from Bicker, I have a Ladies Business Lunch which was great fun, Fishtoft and Old Leake Warm Hubs came along, a group of Muslim women who taught me more about Islam, the Cultural Association of the Malayalees, I have hosted local wombles, local teachers, local business people and at least two open meetings which were publicised widely by our comms team and which could be attended by absolutely any member of our community. Each and every gathering is above reproach. Overall, it strikes me, you seem to be measuring me against your own standards and that would be very wrong. I have now been a volunteer for Lincolnshire Police for over 8 years, and to qualify for that role, given the nature of the work that I do I was required to undergo enhanced management vetting. I cannot help but wonder if you would pass the same stringent tests that I did, but that is a rhetorical question, you do not have to answer that."

3. Question to Councillor Pickett from Councillor Ashton

"Could you please confirm what safety measures, including Dashcams, are in place in our Boston Borough licenced taxis to protect drivers from abuse by passengers or members of the public?"

Response from Councillor Pickett

"There are no policy requirements in respect of Dashcams being fitted in licensed vehicles. In respect of licensed drivers, they are all subject to 6 monthly DBS checks and are expected to operate in accordance with this Authority's Code of Conduct for licensed drivers."

Supplemental questions from Councillor Ashton

“As I am as aware as you are of Dashcam footage allegedly existing of one of our Licensed Taxi Drivers being subject to personal abuse by a very senior member of this Council on account of historic political differences, would you please raise with Officers whether audio visual recording equipment could be made mandatory for Boston Licensed Vehicles to give them the protection they might need?”

Supplemental response from Councillor Pickett

“Yes, we are looking into it”

4. Question to Councillor Welton from Councillor Ashton

“In view of the debacle last year whereby the Boston Town Area Committee failed to meet between May and September and so deprived Boston of its Christmas lights, would you agree with me that this Committee, its membership, and its Terms of Reference should be reviewed and revised?”

Response from Councillor Welton

“It is noted that the BTAC meeting of 7th July was inquorate. The meeting was rescheduled and held on 10th August. Like all governance arrangements it is important to ensure they remain fit for purpose. My view is the Leader and the Chair of BTAC should meet with the Assistant Director with responsibility for Governance to discuss the potential for a review.”

Supplemental question from Councillor Ashton

“I am grateful for your reply but a Committee which is responsible for some three quarters of a million pound of government money is incapable of holding a quorate meeting then something is fundamentally wrong. Would you agree that in the interest of openness and transparency there would be merit in expanding BTAC to include some of the neighbourhood groups and resident associations who are currently having to fill the democratic void left by BTAC and also in relocating BTAC to the Guildhall – the ancient home of Town government to encourage better public scrutiny of its activities?”

Supplemental response from Councillor Welton

“I think every option needs to be considered to make sure the democratic process is open and transparent, but people do have faults. BTAC is a Committee of Members that sit on that Committee because of the ward they sit in, and I think that is something that the members of that Committee can look at, at a later date. It is not for me to say what that Committee does as I am not a Member of that Committee, but from a democratic process, we do in this Council allow a lot of latitude for members of the public to engage. Councillor Woodliffe is an advocate of that and at his scrutiny Committee he allows many, many people to address the Committee, even if we are not always following the constitution, isn't that right Councillor Woodliffe. However, I think that going forward BTAC has a lot to give for this town and I think that maybe it needs to expand its remit, I think it needs to be reviewed and it needs to be modernised and I think it needs to be more of a working Committee that does good for the people of that area. It has a very large budget, and that budget is well spent, however I think it could be better spent. It could only be better spent if members of the public are engaged in the process of that Committee. So yes, going forward open up BTAC, open up this chamber, open up every part of our democratic process, stay within the constitution, but if the constitution doesn't fit the Committee and the process, we have got to change the constitution. This Council, this chamber has that right and decision process to change the constitution any time it likes, and if that benefits the people of this town then I am all for it”

5. Question to Councillor Welton from Councillor Tom Ashton

“In view of the extraordinary decision of the City of Lincoln Council to cancel its hugely successful and long-established Christmas Market, as Portfolio Holder for Economic

Development would you agree with me that this represents a fantastic opportunity which Boston has the chance now to seize in bringing dispossessed stallholders and potentially many thousands of visitors to our town? Would you and your Cabinet colleagues, working with our fantastic Economic Development and Growth team, do everything you can to bring the Lincoln Christmas Market to Boston in the first week of December this year as a matter of urgent priority?"

Response from Councillor Welton

"Following the news that the long-standing Lincoln Christmas Market has stopped, I have been in discussion with Officers from the Economic Growth Team who have already started to look at the opportunity for Boston to become the hub town in Lincolnshire for Christmas celebrations.

The focus for 2023 would be a Christmas Market with complimentary events, activities, and decoration to create an exciting programme of festivities, which is inclusive for the local community, and to attract visitors. If it went ahead, the 2023 Boston Christmas market would be a pilot, with the purpose of building contacts with stallholders and potential partners. Our aim would be to build on the pilot each year and work towards complimentary and connected events across the sub-region with activity in the Lincolnshire Wolds, Coast and South Holland.

The Boston Christmas market could comprise of different themed areas to attract a variety of stallholders including food and drink, art and craft and traditional festive fayre. Utilising different areas of the town will mitigate congestion and encourage footfall into retail and hospitality businesses.

The Growth Team would engage with a variety of organisations - stallholders, venues including St Botolph's, Guildhall, Blackfriars and Fydell House, along with businesses, Boston College, Transported and community groups and forums.

Working in partnership with Transported and Boston College will support art and cultural activities and build on the already successful Illuminate parade, with Destination Lincolnshire enabling a marketing campaign, tailored to attract coach/group travel operators and visitors. This could incorporate online and print promotion, including a Christmas market map and events programme, town centre advertising and capturing PR opportunities."

Supplemental question from Councillor Ashton

"I am delighted to hear that so much work has already been done to bring the Lincoln Christmas Market to Boston this year, and very much hope that we are both elected in May to make sure that it does. Could you advise me as to the timescales for taking this forward?"

Supplemental response from Councillor Welton

"Before I give you a timescale, I need to say that it started the day that I found out that there was a debate on whether the Lincoln market was going to happen. An email was sent that very day and a response was given to me within 24 hours, we have since then worked very hard on this and have made great progress and I am expecting a decision on the progress going forward any moment. Thank you"

6. Question to Councillor Paul Goodale from the Leader

"The BTAC operatives keep our town Centre clean providing the extra touches. Could you share with me in particular which members of BTAC called upon the services of the BTAC operatives in their own wards in this period and up to date."

Response from Councillor Paul Goodale

"I agree that the BTAC operatives do work hard. Member requests are not specifically recorded but are included in a work programme that is presented to BTAC. The Operations

Service provides regular updates and photographs of the work that has been completed to that Committee. Should Members of BTAC like any additional areas or tasks to be considered these can be discussed at Committee.”

Supplemental question from the Leader

“Actually, I have really applauded our operatives, they really have made a big difference to the town. All those little touches, the paint and stuff like that is absolutely fantastic but to measure performance the data needs to be collected and provide value for money for the public. When you get questioned, you need to be able to demonstrate it. I am really concerned there is nothing in the minutes. Thank you”

Supplemental response from Councillor Goodale

“As I explained in my response earlier that the Members requests are not recorded individually as are not members of the public requests to facilities, but I can assure the leader that as for my own ward I have called upon BTAC the operatives many times, I have had graffiti on the lights, assisted litter picking and street cleaning and I know other members have also done the same. The fact that we don’t collect that information I don’t feel is a detriment to the area at all, the BTAC operatives do a wonderful job adding extra to the town, supplement to what this Council is supposed to do.

7. Question to the Leader from Councillor Judith Skinner

“Could the Leader share with us the details around the celebration of our successes through the South & East Lincs Councils Partnership at the ‘Delivery through Collaboration’ event at the House of Lords recently. This was a fantastic celebration of what our forward-thinking Partnership has achieved through Government funding and inward investment not seen on this scale before in Boston – all for the benefit of our communities.”

Response from the Leader

“Lord Porter of Spalding, CBE, hosted an event at the House of Lords on the 21 February 2023. The event was an opportunity for our partners and strategic stakeholders to find out how the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership are delivering levelling up in our sub region.

The event was attended by around 140 people who listened to a range of speakers talk about the Partnership’s commitment to collaboration, particularly how we work together to respond to the sub-region’s challenges and opportunities. Presentations focussed on innovation in responding to health inequalities, skills development and raising aspirations for our young people, supporting growth and expansion of our businesses, transport and connectivity, and celebrating what the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership has achieved by ensuring a place-based focus on economic development.

My thanks go to our South and East Lincolnshire Economic Development team and the Portfolio Holders namely Nigel Welton, Nick and Graham who have supported this initiative from conception. Indeed, this team have supported UK firsts and projects that are likely to be world firsts.

Attendees included national, regional and Lincolnshire partners, including members of the House of Lords and members of Parliament, businesses, developers and investors and representatives from key stakeholders. Each guest received a brochure which included the Partnership’s accomplishments and case studies of levelling up examples and place-based initiatives.

Speakers at the event were: -

- Lord Gary Porter, CBE, - Leader of South Holland District Council
- Professor Richard Parish, CBE - Executive Chair of the National Centre for Rural Health and Care
- Professor Cathy Parker - Chair of the Institute of Place Management

- Professor Val Braybrook, MBE - Dean at University of Lincoln and National Centre for Food Manufacturing
- Sir John Hayes, MP - South Holland and The Deepings
- Matt Warman, MP - Boston and Skegness

The event was sponsored by Ring Central and Ventum Dynamics. Ventum has worked with the Partnership to facilitate a UK first with the installation of two innovative and cost-effective mini wind turbines at Freshline Ltd and Skegness Pier. The amount of sponsorship secured was £14,000.

Following the event the team have received positive feedback from attendees, including these examples: -

Professor Richard Parish - *I just wanted to congratulate you and your colleagues on a very successful event. I have attended many of these and, indeed, organised a fair few as well. None has been more successful! It was a credit to all of you, if I may say so, and Lord Porter for initiating it. I have a strong feeling that success beckons with the developments in your patch. There is a lovely quotation to bear in mind - 'Success has many parents, but failure is an orphan'. I think there will be many parents (you might say partners) appearing on the scene as the project develops.*

Tony Bowden, Helicon Heath - *Could I ask you to please pass on my thanks to Gary - Lord Porter of Spalding and congratulations to all who have contributed and will contribute so much to so many invaluable projects. I enjoyed the opportunity to meet and network with a number of people I hadn't met before and to find so many common interests.*

Tim Downing, Pygott and Crone – *A very useful and positive event. Lots to shout about.*

Professor Cathy Parker – *It was a real privilege to visit the House of Lords at the invitation of Gary Porter and congratulations all involved in the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership for what they are achieving in their region. We have visited with the Institute of Place Management many times and see place partnerships are strong in Lincolnshire because you genuinely respect and value the people you work with. You should be rightly proud of what you have achieved already – and be confident in your next set of ambitious projects for the region.*

The event galvanised existing partnerships and has stimulated further conversations to explore strategic relationships and inward investment opportunities. No business or Council is an island, we have to actively engage to benefit our sub-region."

There was no supplemental question.

8. Question to Councillor Jonathan Noble from Councillor Anton Dani

"By buying the eight homes for the refugees of war, what are the benefits of that purchase to the BBC?"

Response from Councillor Jonathan Noble

"Thank you for your question. The report considered by Cabinet at their meeting on February 22nd captures and sets out the benefits that taking part in the Local Authority Housing Fund is anticipated to bring to the authority and its residents. These anticipated benefits can be summarised as follows.

- The delivery of eight new properties, owned by the council, to meet housing need in the borough into the short, medium, and long term. The eight properties will constitute a net increase in supply of homes available to the council to meet housing need.
- Involvement in the Local Authority Housing Fund and directly investing the grant in property owned by the council aligns with the Council's ambition to explore holding and investing in

new housing, as captured within the Council's Annual Delivery Plan. The scheme would provide up to £691,500 in funding to provide eight properties, paid for partially by government, for use by the authority over the longer term.

- That if the authority was not to take part in the scheme, the housing need that the properties are designed to meet is likely to arise anyway. Therefore, the homes provided under the scheme will make a net positive contribution to housing available to the council to meet need, therefore supporting the council in meeting the needs of the wider population too.
- Whereas financial modelling at this stage is indicative, the expected gross annual return on investment on the council's contribution to the eight properties has been forecast to be c6.5%, and would generate around £55,000 per annum in gross rental income to the authority. Therefore, the early business case demonstrates potential to deliver a positive financial impact upon the council through investment in new property. Furthermore, the investment is anticipated to assist the authority in saving cost in other areas, notably bed and breakfast expenditure over the short, medium, and long term. A full business case will be bought back for member's consideration, as and when properties to acquire under the fund are identified.

Finally, as a wider point, the project supports the UK Government's stated aim to support households displaced and settled legally in the UK, following conflict in both Afghanistan and the Ukraine. For the purposes of clarity, the scheme is not aimed at households who have arrived in the UK illegally, outside of government sponsored resettlement schemes."

Supplemental question from Councillor Dani

"Looking at the cost of living, can you Councillor Noble tell us who is responsible for buying furniture for these houses, paying council tax, paying utility bills, who is in charge of that please"

Supplemental response from Councillor Noble

"My understanding Councillor Dani is that the Council will cover all of those costs"

9. Question to Councillor Richard Austin from Councillor Anton Dani

"As a Portfolio holder for Heritage and as you know the Christmas Market has been cancelled in Lincoln, would you support this event in bringing it to Boston this coming December?"

Response from Councillor Richard Austin

"Thank you, Cllr Dani, for your question. We should all look forward to a vibrant Christmas market that attracts a large number of visitors to Boston. The Cabinet had an initial discussion about it on Wednesday. The foundation stones for a great annual event are already in place. Our historic Market Place, Wide Bargate and Central Park make the perfect venue. Our Christmas Illuminate Parade is already well established. Boston's tradition of staging an exciting market, with wide appeal, go back more than a thousand years to 1125. A Boston Christmas Market will have a strong continental flavour; we are the only town in Lincolnshire that is a member of the Hanseatic League, and we have a well-established foreign national community. Furthermore, it will certainly increase our current £90m visitor economy as well as enhancing community cohesion."

Supplemental question from Councillor Dani

"The businesses and the local people that I talk to have shown a great joy of adopting a Christmas market in Boston and my question is, can you Councillor Austin assure all of us tonight that you will push and do your best for this event to come home since Boston has received enough funds and lately have received £14.8 million Levelling Up fund so I don't see any excuse"

Supplemental response from Councillor Richard Austin

"I can assure you I will be doing all I can to ensure that the right things happen, and we get as much as we can to increase our economy accordingly.

10. Question to the Leader from Councillor Stephen Woodliffe

"Why has the Council Meeting agenda, including the reports and associated papers not been presented to all councillors in good time? Five clear working days prior to the meeting means Monday 27th February and today is Tuesday 28th February, and I have received nothing via Royal Mail and my councillor locker was empty on Monday night. Councillors expect to receive all relevant paperwork in good time."

Response from the Leader

"Thank you for your question. Neither did I. Audit, settlement and staffing issues have caused delays to budget reports not just to Boston and the partnership, but to other Councils throughout the UK. Although the agenda was published in accordance with the statutory timeframe and electronic copies of the papers were circulated to members and available online, there was an issue with the post which resulted in the delay to you receiving your papers. If you would prefer a hard copy of the papers to be left in your pigeonhole the Democratic Services Team would be happy to arrange this for you."

Supplemental question from Councillor Stephen Woodliffe

"Our understaffed and overworked Officers are attempting to provide a high standard of service to three independent district councils, with all three requiring budget papers (possibly the most complex task in the financial year) at the same time. Now, if we cannot staff the administrative functions adequately, then that calls into question the viability of the entire tripartite structure. Do you think Cllr Martin Hill is rubbing his hands with glee and anticipation?"

Supplemental Response from the Leader

"He is probably rubbing his hands in anticipation anyway. But bottom line is we have staff members that are ill, we have lost staff members and we need to train more and as you know I am always keen to train through apprenticeship schemes etc and 'grow your own' because then they grow in. With the Finance staff there is a national shortage as I mentioned in the first part of the question and there again it may be that we have to 'grow our own'.

11. Question to Councillor Deborah Evans from Councillor Stephen Woodliffe

"Why is the fly-tipping ward data not readily available to all Elected Members?"

Response from Councillor Deborah Evans

"Ward level data on fly tipping does not form part of the Council's current performance management framework. Fly tipping data by ward is collated by the enforcement contractors and shared with Council officers to provide intelligence to inform deployment of enforcement staff and other initiatives designed to deter offenders. This information can be made available and shared with ward members upon request."

Supplemental question from Councillor Stephen Woodliffe

"Everyone has now received the Fly-Tip data acquired by our Officers which I sent out last week. People may consider the Christmas Lights fiasco as a key issue but the reality is that street rubbish is clearly the most toxic issue of all. Just speak to any resident and face the visceral anger for yourselves. The private companies are funded by the fines and so have no financial interest in curbing fly-tipping. The Officers are content to employ private companies to offload responsibility for the issue, but councillors have to face the public who are furious about the situation. Do you agree with me that all councillors need to work together to resolve this matter?"

Supplemental response from Councillor Deborah Evans

“100% and I think I have worked with everybody in this room and we have achieved some really good things, it is absolutely disgusting the fly tipping and the waste and we are definitely working as hard as we can and there is loads more to be done but I can guarantee you that we do work together and we get in touch with each other and that is the only way, you have got to learn to cross parties on this to achieve anything”

12. Question to the Leader from Councillor Stephen Woodliffe

“How can Boston Borough Council retain its staff if it allows their standard of living to be severely degraded by inflation?”

Response from the Leader

“As an employer we recognise the impacts of the rising costs of living on our workforce as well as our residents. We like most employers are trying to balance the high levels of inflation with budget constraints. Our pay is determined nationally by the National Joint Council and last years’ pay deal saw a flat rate applied across all pay scales, achieving a higher percentage increase to employees in lower pay scales than those in higher pay scales. The lowest employee pay levels across the council are supplemented by an allowance which ensures that no member of staff is paid below what is considered the Real Living Wage”

Supplemental question from Councillor Stephen Woodliffe

“No matter how you spread the 5%, someone is destined to lose out, and the differentials in pay are there for a good reason. Some jobs can be done by many, but many jobs can only be done by a few. What initiatives are in place to ensure that suitably qualified and experienced officers are recruited?”

Supplemental response from the Leader

“Apprentices and succession planning form part of the Council’s ongoing strategy. Skills and training are part of our ongoing strategy for the sub-region and by encouraging people to train and get the right number of trainee’s long term, problem solved. But balancing the budget is always going to be hard.”

13. Question to the Mayor from Councillor Tom Ashton

“Four weeks ago you sent an email signed in your capacity as Mayor to myself and a few selected colleagues complaining of, among other things, the questions, concerns, and complaints which I and others have raised in relation to your conduct. Do you believe that, as Mayor, you should be held to a different standard of scrutiny to other councillors?”

Response from the Mayor

“I thank Cllr Ashton for notice of his question. No.”

Supplemental question from Councillor Tom Ashton

“Thank you for your response, and I am delighted to note your Damascene conversion into a paragon of virtue in public life, and would have been prepared to believe it, had it not been for the response you gave to me a few moments ago.

However in view of this transformation, will you now take the opportunity to apologise from the Chair to Cllr Cooper for the vitriol to which you subjected him to on your first meeting back in this chamber nearly four years ago; to Cllr Edge for the unkind comments in the Chancel of St Botolph’s church when she was taken unwell; to Cllr Skinner for questioning his reading age; and to everyone else with a similar experience of being insulted or belittled these last four years?”

Supplemental response from the Mayor

“Ye ugly, creepin, blastit wonner,

Detested, shunn’d by saunt an’ sinner,

How daur ye set your fit upon her-
Sae fine a lady?
Gae somewhere else and seek your dinner
On some poor body. O wad some Power the giftie gie us
To see oursels as ithers see us!
It wad frae mony a [blunder](#) free us,
An' foolish notion:
What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,
An' ev'n devotion!

It is remarkable that once again a Robert Burns poem sums up how you are seen by myself and some others within this chamber. The last time I quoted Burns at you I received several compliments, that be more than three, from Members of your own group, in addition from those from the opposition and members of the public. This poem I read from tonight, just so you know, were two stanza's from 'To a Louse'. Now the email to which you referred in your original question I put you and others on notice. In that email I listed disturbing behaviours undertaken by you and several others in senior positions in this Council, and I asked you to stop, the others did, but here you are again. In the email I comment that your behaviour appears to be part of a co-ordinated campaign of bullying and harassment towards me, and I asked you to stop, yet here you are again. In the email I tell you that your behaviour is having a detrimental effect on my health and wellbeing and I asked you to stop, yet here you are again. What will it take for you to just leave me alone? In all of these actions you are clearly attempting to impugn my character and denigrate my role as Mayor and I can only assume it is because I have worked so very hard to make the Mayoralty a success, that the green-eyed monster has reared his ugly head. You cannot take away from the, the fact that I have brought warmth, originality, creativity, inclusiveness, respect, and fun to the Mayoralty. I have not only re-invented the role to make it relevant for the 21st century, I have ensured that the Mayoralty is no longer about the great and the good, but it is about the real people of this Borough. I have also put steps in place to ensure that the protocols that had slipped so badly under recent Mayors have been reinstated. You Councillor Ashton have been invited to many Mayoral events, but you have chosen, not even to RSVP most of them, let alone honour us with your attendance. So don't sit there sniping and complaining when it's yourself that has absented yourself from Mayoral engagements. Lastly, in your question to me, you mentioned the contents of an email which I wrote under the heading; 'Highly confidential', you have now breached that confidentiality without seeking my consent and in doing so you have breached the Member Code of Conduct."

14. Question to the Councillor Nigel Welton from Councillor George Cornah

"Could Cllr Welton confirm that the withdrawal of the planning appeal by the applicant, relating to converting the old Clarks Shoe Shop into an Adult Gaming Centre, means that the decision of the Planning Committee to refuse permission will stand?"

Response from Councillor Nigel Welton

"Thank you for your question, I can advise that as the appeal against that development has been withdrawn, and the decision has not been subject to any further challenge through Judicial Review, the decision of the Planning Committee does stand. However, I must be clear, that the decision relates to that scheme, on that building only, and thus cannot be seen as setting a precedent for future decisions either in relation to that building or others in the town. As Members will know, all planning decisions must be taken within the remit of planning law, and as such, must be taken on the respective merits or otherwise of the application presented. To that end, I cannot rule out future similar submissions being made, nor can I

prejudge the outcome of such submissions. These applications are clearly very emotive within our communities, but as I have said, we must consider those applications presented to us on a fair basis, within the requirements of legislation and policy.”

Supplemental question from Councillor George Cornah

“Can I ask, how much input does emotion place in planning decisions?”

Supplemental question from Councillor Nigel Welton

“Legally, it shouldn’t, but what emotion does do is raises the profile of applications within our communities and that is a good thing, as long as the Planning Committee ensures that the law and planning policy is followed correctly.”

15. Question to Councillor Paul Goodale from Councillor Stephen Woodliffe

“Why was BTAC not responsible for the provision of Christmas Lights in Boston at Christmas?”

Response from Councillor Paul Goodale

“Whilst BTAC has grant aided organisations to assist them in providing Christmas lights in Boston periodically through its grants programme, the actual provision of Christmas lights is not and has not ever been a function of the Committee.”

Supplemental question from Councillor Stephen Woodliffe

“BTAC is a committee of the Borough Council, as the acronym states. As its constitution states; from the constitution, specifically, the Committee does not have delegated powers to take decisions on out sourcing of services, it must operate within the allocated budget for the Town area. So as BTAC cannot initiate or take part in a procurement exercise and must remain within its allocated budget, do you agree with me that, the Conservative Party simply does not understand what BTAC can do and more importantly what I cannot do?”

Supplemental response from Councillor Paul Goodale

“I actually believe that all Members of BTAC, which is a cross party Committee of this Council, over the last four years, especially while I have been Chairman and I have known from previous Chairman it has been renowned for its non-political status so I am afraid, Councillor Woodliffe can make that comment but I could not possibly comment. BTAC, for the last four years has been a totally non-political entity, well a part of it is, and it is a political entity by this Council. But it has made all of its decisions on the joint decision of the Committee and obviously every member of the Committee has participated fully, although we have an issue with attendance but I think most members have reasons for some of that non-attendance, which I won’t bring to this Council, hopefully those issues have been resolved. But I just hope that Members take on board the fact that BTAC works for the best interest of the people that paid the BTAC Levy and that is it a non-biased political Committee. [inaudible]”

16. Question to Councillor Paul Goodale from Councillor Stephen Woodliffe

“When the auditors visited BTAC they were clearly impressed with its efficiency and standard of governance. What advice and guidance do you think BTAC can offer the Cabinet when it comes to good governance?”

Response from Councillor Paul Goodale

“Thank you for the question and your comments regarding the governance arrangements for the Boston Town Area Committee (BTAC). BTAC does not have a role in advising on the governance arrangements for the Council. The Audit and Governance Committee, supported by the Statutory Officers and the work of the Internal and External Audit Teams provide the Council with the independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin and promote good corporate governance and financial standards.”

No supplemental question was asked.

75 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Chief Executive confirmed there were three questions from Members of the public;

1. Question to Councillor Tracey Abbott from Mr Robert Dewars

“Why were 2 councillors and leader allowed to bypass the system re the Christmas lights in Boston without consulting the rest of the councillors and what will be done to stop this happening in the future? This ruined any chance the retailers had to take extra revenue during this time as it detracted the general public from making the effort to come into town.”

Response from Councillor Tracey Abbott

“Last year we received a letter from the Christmas in Boston Group informing us that they would no longer be able to provide the Christmas lights for Boston. As the Portfolio Holder for Town Centre, I worked with the available budget, whilst taking into account the cost of living and the rising cost of energy. We purchased a large decorated and lit tree which was installed in the town centre in readiness for the 24th November Christmas event, which will be able to be used again for future years. I am pleased to report that over the Christmas period, verified footfall data also showed an increase on the previous three years for Boston Town Centre. Compared to December 2019, the total footfall figure in December 2022 was an increase of 12.8%”

Supplemental question from Mr Dewars

“I believe when Councillor Abbott was asked the question about where she got the figures for the footfall she couldn't answer it, so I don't know where these figures have come from. Certainly, what I saw, there was nowhere near the amount of people there was in previous years. She never answered the question which was, why were 2 Councillors and leader allowed to bypass the system so none of the rest the Councillors knew about this plastic Christmas tree thing and would have objected to it?”

Supplemental response from Councillor Abbott

“Well the leader was never present at any of the meetings, it was not just two Councillors, officers were also involved as well as the Chief Executive.”

2. Question to Councillor Tracey Abbott from Mr Dale Broughton

“Councillor Abbott at the last full council meeting you presented a set of figures apparently showing a 65% increase in footfall in December 2022 on previous years, which you had only received minutes before the meeting. Can I ask what the actual figures are, not percentages of this increased footfall, how were these figures calculated and was that the same method for measuring used in previous years?”

Response from Councillor Tracey Abbott

“December 2019, footfall was 134,008, December 2020, 91,107, 2021, 116,100, this December 22 151,188. BBC utilise HUQ footfall data, which uses mobile phone technology and is independently verified to demonstrate consistency year-on-year since 2019

Supplemental question from Mr Dale Broughton

“The figures you have provided your opinion, show Boston in December 22 was busy and a good foot fall, however relying on just on piece of data without checking with the actual retail businesses is both foolish and unprofessional. After stating at the last meeting, it is not your job to go and visit retailers, I asked several businesses with over 130 years of business in our town what their thoughts were on these figures. James Hopper of Hoppers Jewelers said “it was absolutely terrible, the worst December in over 25 years, the footfall through the door was so far down, the town was empty, the few who did venture in were so disappointed they

vowed not to return. We tried our best with our own Christmas lights but the town to have come so far and make no effort was a total embarrassment on everybody'. National news once again for the wrong reasons. I feel the Christmas just gone could be the final nail in the coffin for this once great town." Linda Ashton stated, "Footfall has been down year on year, the worse December we have had. The town is dying with people going to other towns that have more choice and more to offer. The market was a joke and I don't know how anyone who does the markets make any money." Wendy Reed of Westlands, "Worst Christmas in 30 years, lack of people in the town, no effort made by the Council and national humiliation once again. This really let down the people of Boston." So Councillor Abbott, are you happy to continue using just data and not actually making any effort to contact Boston retailers for their views and concerns and if you are re-elected in May, due to the success in your opinion, and your data for December, will you repeat Christmas again with no decoration in the town just a plastic tree, as you obviously feel it worked so well?"

Supplemental response from Councillor Tracey Abbott

"I am not quite sure what part of the question that really was. The data we have is verified, 100% verified. The fact that our teams are constantly contacting retailers to help. We have just also mentioned that we are making contact regarding the Lincoln Christmas Market to try and help again to increase for this Christmas market. I think it is a case of we will obviously have to wait and see how we can improve but we are improving and we are doing our absolute utmost. You can tell by how many people here have said so"

A question was received from Mrs Paula Ashleigh Morris to Councillor Tom Ashton, however Mrs Morris was not present at the meeting so the question was not asked.

76 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

77 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was moved by Councillor Peter Watson, seconded by Councillor Anton Dani and;

RESOLVED that the confirmed minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 5 December 2022 be received.

78 BUDGET & MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023/24 & PAY POLICY

Councillor Jonathan Noble, Portfolio Holder for Finance, introduced a report by the Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate Development) and S151 Officer, setting out the Council's proposed General Fund Annual Budget for 2022/23 to 2027/28, Capital Programme, Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy and Annual Investment Strategy, Fees and Charges Schedule, Pay Policy Statement and Annual Delivery Plan.

The report stated that the Budget was being set within a background of unprecedented inflationary pressures and significant changes in resident, customer and business needs. Despite the challenges the Council's financial position meant that it was well placed and able to take a considered approach to mitigating the exceptional challenges. In addition, the Council had been and continued to be successful in drawing in significant capital and revenue investment for the area.

The proposed budget had been through the budget consultation process with the public and Members, the draft budget proposals were subject to review by the Audit and Governance Committee on 30 January 2023 and Corporate and Community on 2 Feb 2023. The Treasury Management Strategy had also been presented to the Audit and Governance Committee on the 30th January and to Cabinet on 22nd February. The report had been updated to reflect the final budget accompanying the report.

During Debate the following comments were made:-

- There was continual uncertainty over the level of the Internal Drainage Board levies. However, representations continue to be made to Government.
- Officers were congratulated on managing to produce a balanced budget for the upcoming year.
- Concerns were raised regarding the pay increase agreed for staff, it was felt that the increase was not enough to support staff.
- Meetings had been held to reassure Members that increases in Council Tax were necessary.
- Thanks were given to the current and past Finance Portfolio Holders for the position the Council's budget was in.
- Members of the public were encouraged to make use of the Council Tax Support Schemes that the Councils offer.

It was moved by Councillor Jonathan Noble, seconded by Councillor Paul Skinner and

RESOLVED that:

1. The Revenue Estimates for the General Fund for 2022/23 as set out at Appendix A be approved.
2. The Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out at Appendices A, 1 and 2 be approved.
3. The Capital Programme as set out at Appendix A be approved.
4. The Fees and Charges for 2022/23 as set out at Appendix 4 be approved.
5. The use of Reserves detailed as set out at Appendix 5 be approved.
6. The Treasury Management Strategy, including the Minimum Revenue Provision policy and Investment Strategy as set out at Appendix 6 be approved.
7. The South and East Lincolnshire Council's Annual Delivery Plan 2022/23 as set out at Appendix 7 be approved.

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

For	Against	Abstain
Cllr Tracey Abbott Cllr Tom Ashton Cllr Alison Austin Cllr Richard Austin Cllr Peter Bedford Cllr David Brown Cllr George Cornah Cllr Anton Dani Cllr Anne Dorrian Cllr Deborah Evans		

<p>Cllr Paul Goodale Cllr Martin Griggs Cllr Jonathan Noble Cllr Frank Pickett Cllr Judith Skinner Cllr Paul Skinner Cllr Aaron Spencer Cllr Yvonne Stevens Cllr Peter Watson Cllr Judith Welbourn Cllr Nigel Welton Cllr Stephen Woodliffe</p>		
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79 COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2023/24

Councillor Jonathan Noble, Portfolio Holder – Finance introduced a report by the Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate Development) setting out the proposed charge to be levied on the Council Taxpayers for the services provided in the Borough.

The report stated that formal resolution was required to set the Council Tax in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (As amended). The formal resolutions were detailed at Appendix A, proposing that a Band D property would pay £208.89, a £6.03 (2.97%) increase on 2022/23.

The resolutions incorporated the precept requirement for Boston Borough Council, as well as all other Authorities that issue a precept in the Borough.

The precept requirements for the Boston Town Area Committee, Parish Councils, Lincolnshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner were set out in Appendix A of the report.

Before opening up to debate, the following anomalies were corrected;

- The Lincolnshire Police and Crime commissioner had an increase of more than £10, it was £15.
- A chart was included on page 164, this should have shown that Boston Borough Council increase at 2.97% and Lincolnshire County Council increase at 4.99%.

It was proposed by Councillor Jonathan Noble, seconded by Councillor Paul Skinner and

RESOLVED that Council approves the formal Council Tax resolutions for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix A and summarised at 4.1 of the report.

For	Against	Abstain
<p>Cllr Tracey Abbott Cllr Tom Ashton Cllr Alison Austin Cllr Richard Austin Cllr Peter Bedford Cllr David Brown</p>		

<p> Cllr George Cornah Cllr Anton Dani Cllr Anne Dorrian Cllr Deborah Evans Cllr Paul Goodale Cllr Martin Griggs Cllr Jonathan Noble Cllr Frank Pickett Cllr Judith Skinner Cllr Paul Skinner Cllr Yvonne Stevens Cllr Peter Watson Cllr Judith Welbourn Cllr Nigel Welton Cllr Stephen Woodliffe </p>		
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Formal Council Tax Resolution:

Council is recommended to approve the following resolutions:

- 1 It is to be noted that on 14 December 2022 the Council calculated: -
 - (a) the Council Tax Base 2023/24 for the District as **20,274** (item T in the formula in section 31B(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended) and;
 - (b) Dwellings in those parts of the district to which a Parish precept relates as shown in **Appendix B**
2. Calculate that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2023/24 (excluding Parish precepts) is **£4,235,036**
- 3 That the following amounts be calculated by the Council for the year 2023/24 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended (the Act): -
 - (a) £35,006,786 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act;
 - (b) £29,474,621 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act;
 - (c) £5,532,165 being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year (item R in the formula in Section 31a (4) of the Act);
 - (d) £ 272.87 being the amount at 3(c) divided by the amount at 1(a)

(item T), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts);

- (e) £1,297,129 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Including Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (see **Appendix B**);
- (f) £ 208.89 being the amount at 3(d) less the result given by dividing the amount at (e) by the amount at 1(a) calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its areas to which no parish precept relates;

4. That it be noted that for the year 2023/24 the Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) and the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Lincolnshire have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:-

Council Tax 2023/24	A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
Lincolnshire County Council	1,002.42	1,169.49	1,336.56	1,503.63	1,837.77	2,171.91	2,506.05	3,007.26
Police & Crime Commissioner for Lincolnshire	194.16	226.52	258.88	291.24	355.96	420.68	485.40	582.48

5. That having calculated the aggregate in each case the amounts at 3(h) and 4 above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the amounts shown in **Appendix E** as the amount of Council Tax for 2023/24 of the categories of dwellings shown.
6. **Appendix F** provides definitions for the formal Council Tax resolution.

80 SOUTH & EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE

Councillor Paul Skinner, Leader of the Council, presented the report which set out the further progress of the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership since the previous update on 26th September 2022.

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

- Annual Delivery Plan 2022/23 – The joint Annual Delivery plan activity was being monitored by the Joint Strategy Board to support the Partnership in delivering on its priorities, as well as sovereign Council ambitions.
- Performance Framework 2023/24 – The performance measured had been reviewed for 2023/24 and set out in the Framework. It was recommended to continue on the current suite of measures wherever possible to allow the Council to build up trend reporting over time.
- Peer Review Action Plan – The LGA Peer Review had taken place in October 2022. The Peers' findings and feedback had been reported to Council in January 2023 and fed into the Partnership's development plans for 23/24 and beyond. The Peers were to undertake a follow up in mid – 2023 to review progress.
- Priority Partnership Update – A number of key Partnerships had been established as mechanisms for delivering the strategic priorities for the Partnership
- Growth and Prosperity Priority Partnership – the Growth Team continued to work with existing partners but develop new relationships with strategic organisations to continue to not only raise the profile of the SELCP but also to create valuable connections between business, public sector and national organisations.
- Safer Communities Priority Partnership – following the approval of the South and East Lincolnshire Community Safety Strategy, the sub-region's Community Safety Partnership had been working on a number of key community safety priorities for South and East Lincolnshire.
- Enhancing the Living Environment Priority Partnership – the South and East Lincolnshire Climate Action Network (SELCAN) the Environment Priority Partnership met in October and December 2022. During the meetings SELCAN welcomed a new member from Lincoln University who will act as a youth representative, and guest officers from the Council's Planning Policy Team attended to discuss strategic planning and engagement with the Local Plan Review.

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

RESOLVED that Council:

- **Approve the Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) 2022/23 update**
- **Approve the Performance Framework 2023/24**
- **Note the Peer Review Action Plan Delivery progress**
- **Note the updates from the Priority Partnerships**
- **Note the Partnership Security Action Plan Delivery Progress**

81 MOTION ON NOTICE

The following Motion was received:

1. This Council resolves to formally thank our fantastic staff for their recent achievements, notably Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation Status and associated funding for the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership and securing the £14.8million necessary to make the Rosegarth.

As the seconder to the motion was not present at the meeting it proposed by Councillor Tom Ashton, seconded by Councillor Nigel Welton and

RESOLVED:

That the motion be postponed to be considered at the next Full Council meeting.

(The meeting ended at 8.25 pm)