

Boston Borough Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet** held in the Committee Room - Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston, PE21 8QR on Wednesday 26th March 2025 at 6.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Anne Dorrian (Leader), in the Chair.

Councillors Councillor Dale Broughton (Deputy Leader), Callum Butler, Emma Cresswell, Sandeep Ghosh and Sarah Sharpe.

In attendance:

Councillor Stephen Woodliffe.

Officers:

Chief Executive, Interim Finance Director, Assistant Director – Strategic Growth and Development, Head of Finance (Client), Group Manager – Insights & Transformation and Democratic Services Team Leader.

72 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John Baxter.

73 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

74 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th February 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

75 Questions from Members of the Public

No questions were received.

76 Recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny (Standing Item)*

There were no recommendations.

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

There were no recommendations.

Prior to moving on to the main agenda items, the Leader welcomed Brendan Arnold, Interim Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer to the meeting.

78 2024/25 Quarter Three Finance Update

The Portfolio Holder – Finance, Councillor Sandeep Ghosh, presented the Quarter 3 Finance report that set out a summary of the current financial position for the Council at

the end of the third quarter of 2024/25 forecasting to the year end for members consideration.

The report provided information on the forecast full year financial performance as at 31st December 2024 and as detailed within Appendix A for the following areas:

- The General Fund Revenue Budget;
- The General Fund Reserves Position;
- The Capital Programme for 2024/25; and
- The Treasury Management Performance for the year.

Councillor Ghosh highlighted the following key points:

- There was a forecasted surplus of £607,000 for the year-end, which was an improvement of £425,000 from Quarter two.
- Planning fee income was forecasted to underperform by £94,000, representing a 37% reduction in service income. This underperformance was attributed to the current condition of the housing market.
- The Council's investment income was forecasted to overachieve by £703,000, with a full-year outturn of £2.289 million against the budgeted £1.587 million. This overachievement was driven by higher than anticipated interest rate levels and increased cash balances.
- Car parking income was forecasted to increase by £94,000 for the whole year, representing a 10% increase over the budgeted income for 2024/25.
- The Council had achieved 78% of its savings efficiency target, with £656,000 saved out of the £846,000 target for 2024/25. That included both general and IDB savings requirements.
- The proposed revised capital budget for the general fund was £20 million. Significant progress had been made on various projects, including Rosegarth Square and Mayflower, with a total spend of £9 million as of 31st December 2024.
- The Council's cash continued to perform well, with a forecasted achievement of £703,000 in excess of the budget.
- The recommendation to Full Council in respect of the Capital Programme was amended to refer to Table 5a within Appendix A and not 4b.

Members discussed the report and commented as follows:

- A question was asked regarding the increased external audit charges and whether the government grant of £45,000 to offset those charges would be an annual provision. Members noted that the charges were annual and governed by the public sector audit authority. The grant had been offered under the previous government, and it was uncertain if it would continue annually.
- In respect of the financial impact of handing back the Redstone Caravan site management to Lincolnshire County Council, noting a loss of £13,000, it was noted that the decision had been based on an overall evaluation, considering occasional capital costs that the Council would incur if it retained the site.
- A query was raised regarding the specific budget movement related to staffing costs attributed to the ad finance. The specific details were not currently available, but it was clarified that the item referred to a budget movement, not actual spend.

- The underperformance in cremation income by £92,000 was queried in respect of whether people were opting for services elsewhere. The underperformance was attributed to the rise of direct cremations, which were less costly than traditional services. The trend was expected to continue.
- Councillor Callum Butler highlighted the importance of addressing the issues raised and ensuring that the financial performance continues to improve.
- Councillor Ghosh suggested that the Council might be over-budgeting in certain areas, such as cremation income, and recommended a review to align the budget more closely with actual performance.
- Councillor Dale Broughton praised the success in increasing car parking income, which had helped offset other areas of underperformance.
- Councillor Anne Dorrian highlighted the positive impact of the volunteer scheme and the increasing number of volunteers, emphasizing the social value it brought to the community.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Sandeep Ghosh and seconded by Councillor Callum Butler.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the forecast revenue position of a £627k underspend for 2024/25, as detailed within Table 1, and the need for continued focus on the savings and efficiency programme be noted; and**
- 2. That Full Council be recommended to amend the Capital Programme, at Appendix A – Table 5a, to take into account the changes set out within the report.**

[Councillor Stephen Woodliffe entered the meeting at 6.33p.m., during consideration of the above item.]

79 Quarter 3 24/25 Performance and Risk Report

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Anne Dorrian, presented the Quarter 3 24/25 Performance and Risks report which covered Boston Borough Council's information for Quarter 3 of 2024/25 (as at the end of December 2024). A joint performance management framework was agreed across the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership for 2024/25 to support the delivery of services. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) had been agreed to capture performance against the strategic priorities of the Partnership and the individual Councils. A breakdown of the performance and risk information was detailed in Appendices 1 and 2 within the report.

Councillor Dorrian highlighted the following key points:

- The majority of KPIs were on target (green), with some areas needing improvement (amber) and a few off target (red).
- The amber indicators included:
 - The Occupancy Rate at Industrial Units were at 92.86%, against a target of 95%, which was expected to improve by the end of the financial year.

- Food Business Ratings where 96.9% of businesses were rated three or above against a target of 98% and officers were working closely with low-scoring businesses to improve standards.
 - The Occupancy Rate for Other Investment Property were at 96.55%, against a target of 97%, which was expected to improve with ongoing negotiations.
- The red indicators included:
 - Household Waste Recycling was at 32.68%, against a target of 45%, with improvement from Q2 but still off target. Efforts were ongoing to address the issue.
 - The Corporate Complaints Response showed that 88% had responded within the deadline against a target of 95%. It was noted that a low number of complaints could disproportionately affect the performance reporting.
 - Housing Benefit Processing was over 13 days against a target of 12 days. This remained within DWP performance expectations of 15 days.
 - Call Answering Rates in Revenues and Benefits were at 72.56% against a target of 87%. Increased call volumes and lengths were impacting performance. Extended hours in the evenings and weekends were being implemented to meet demand.
- The strategic and partnership risks have been thoroughly reviewed in Quarter 3.
- A new strategic risk has been added regarding local government reorganisation.

Members discussed the report and commented as follows:

- It was highlighted that the recycling contamination percentage only related to blue bins and a suggestion was made to include purple-lidded bins for a more accurate figure.
- Positive developments in market occupancy rates had been reported, with new initiatives and successful farmers and makers markets.
- Members noted the increase in digital services uptake, indicating successful customer contact through web chat and online services.
- The growing number of volunteers and the positive impact on the community, reflecting pride in the borough, was emphasised, as well as the social value of the volunteer scheme, estimating significant community benefits.
- Members discussed the calculation of budget risk and the parameters used to determine risk levels.

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

RESOLVED:

That the quarterly performance and risk monitoring information for Q3 of 2024/25 be noted.

80 Boston Plan 2040

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Anne Dorrian, presented the report which sought consideration of the Boston Plan for 2040 which had been revised and updated following consultation and scrutiny. Members noted that the Boston Plan for 2040 provided a vision for the entire Borough and set out key themes and priorities. A summary of the feedback

received during consultation was attached at Appendix 2 and the revised Boston Plan for 2040 was attached at Appendix 1 within the report.

Members noted that delivery oversight would sit in the Economic Development Directorate, with the establishment of multi-agency working groups to deliver agreed key actions. The plan would be kept up to date as new actions and initiatives developed and circumstances changed and evolved.

Members discussed the report and commented as follows:

- Members expressed satisfaction with the increased emphasis on the rural areas of the borough, noting that the plan now included a dedicated section for rural areas.
- Concerns were raised regarding the public perception that Boston Borough Council was only focused on the town centre. The need for clear communication about the Council's responsibilities and the distinction between borough and county council duties was emphasised.
- The focus on economic growth was praised, particularly the priorities of supporting economic sectors, developing skills and employment opportunities, and attracting inward investment.
- The positive impact of the volunteer scheme and the importance of continuing to drive improvements for the borough was highlighted.
- Members noted the benefits that parish councils had received from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, emphasizing the Council's commitment to supporting rural areas.

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

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Boston Plan for 2040 be approved; and**
- 2. That authority be delegated to the Director of Economic Growth, in consultation with the Leader, to keep the Plan up to date as new work emerges and circumstances change.**

81 Exclusion of Public and Press

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Emma Cresswell and seconded by Councillor Callum Butler.

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).

82 Commercial Food Waste Collection

The Portfolio Holder – Environmental Services, Councillor Callum Butler, presented the report which sought approval of the delivery of a food waste collection service to businesses within the Borough.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Emma Cresswell and seconded by Councillor Callum Butler.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Option 1, to support the delivery of a commercial food waste collection from 1 April 2025 to protect the viability of the commercial waste service, to support the local economy, safeguard the current client base and income and enable continued service growth, be approved; and**
- 2. That the 2025/26 budget is amended to support additional resources required to deliver the service in the first year, to be approved.**

83 Supporting the local delivery of new affordable homes on Wainfleet Road, Boston

The Assistant Director – Strategic Growth and Development, presented the report which sought approval of a grant to secure the delivery of new affordable homes at Wainfleet Road, Boston, in pursuit of meeting housing need arising from the local community, and for the grant payment to be financed through the council's 'affordable housing commuted sums' budget, which was funding specifically ringfenced towards supporting the delivery of new affordable homes in the local area.

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

RESOLVED:

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

The Meeting ended at 7.39 pm.