

Boston Borough Council

Minutes of a Special meeting of the **Overview & Scrutiny - Corporate & Community Committee** held in the Committee Room - Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston, PE21 8QR on Thursday 8th May 2025 at 6.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Paul Gleeson, in the Chair.

Councillors Suzanne Welberry (Vice-Chairman), Neil Drayton, Andy Izard, Chris Mountain and Barrie Pierpoint.

Officers:

Deputy Chief Executive (Programme Delivery) and Assistant Director - General Fund Assets, Assistant Director - Governance and Monitoring Officer, Democratic Services Team Leader, Democratic Services Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

136 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Brown, Anton Dani and Helen Staples.

137 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

138 Scrutiny Arrangements Review

The Chairman, Councillor Paul Gleeson, thanked members for their attendance. He explained that the purpose of the meeting was to review the existing scrutiny arrangements with a view to making recommendations to the next Full Council meeting.

The Chairman began by expressing concerns about the current scrutiny process within the Council. He highlighted the need for more pre-scrutiny (reviewing policies before they became reports) and developing policies. The Chairman mentioned that the current scrutiny committees had been established in 2011 and reflected outdated corporate objectives. He added that there had been issues with overlapping responsibilities between the two scrutiny committees, leading to inefficiencies.

As a result, the Chairman had requested a report to explore the scrutiny arrangements in Boston Borough Council. The Chairman stated that all councillors had been invited to attend the meeting and share their views. He explained that the next two years were particularly important for scrutiny in light of the Local Government Reorganisation and the forthcoming changes.

Members discussed the report and commented as follows:

Councillor Barrie Pierpoint was supportive of the idea of a single scrutiny committee. He referred to the duplication of work and the need to make better use of councillors' time. He had experienced duplication of work when he had previously sat on both Scrutiny Committees and added that he felt councillors were being spread too thinly as a result.

Councillor Pierpoint stated that a single scrutiny committee would need to meet more regularly, perhaps monthly, and would need to be focussed and comprise of members who were dedicated to undertaking the scrutiny function.

Councillor Andy Izard thanked the Chairman for making the Committee aware that an invite had gone out to all Councillors. He raised concerns with moving to a single scrutiny committee, emphasising the importance of scrutiny especially with devolution. He expressed the need for pre-reports and questioned if a single committee would have enough time to handle all the work effectively. Councillor Izard also mentioned the importance of the Task and Finish Groups having the necessary support to function properly. He agreed that a new format would be needed should the Council decide to continue with two Scrutiny Committees. The Chairman advised that the membership of a Task and Finish Group was not limited to Scrutiny members.

Councillor Pierpoint advocated for a single, focused committee with strong leadership. He explained that it was important for Task and Finish Groups to also have strong Chairs in place.

Councillor Chris Mountain expressed his support for a single committee. He suggested that a new single structure would provide an opportunity to streamline processes and to make savings. He also suggested increasing the membership of a single committee to ensure that more members were involved in the scrutiny process.

Councillor Suzanne Welberry referred to her experience of sitting on both Committees and the duplication of work. She agreed with the need to modernise the scrutiny function, to increase the membership and meet more regularly.

Councillor Mountain expressed the need for more concise reports and referred to the report which officers had presented to the Committee as a good example.

The Chairman asked officers for their views regarding the size of the committee, should a single committee be the preferred option. The Assistant Director – Governance & Monitoring Officer advised that the current numbers across both committees were not unreasonable. He explained that the maximum size of a scrutiny committee would be all members excluding the Cabinet. However, that would be particularly unusual. He recommended that the Committee would have an odd number of members for voting reasons. In respect of Task and Finish Groups he suggested that they were useful in supporting the Scrutiny process and were not limited to committee members but would exclude executive members.

Councillor Andy Izzard queried what arrangements the other Partnership Councils (East Lindsey and South Holland) had in place. The Assistant Director – Governance & Monitoring Officer advised that East Lindsey District Council had one Overview Committee which commissioned Scrutiny Policy Panels to carry out work; and that South Holland District Council had two Scrutiny Committees: The Performance Monitoring Panel and the Policy Development Panel. He added that there was also a Joint Scrutiny Committee which worked across the Partnership.

The consensus was for a single Scrutiny Committee comprising 15 members which meet on a monthly basis, with a review to be carried out six months following its establishment.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Chris Mountain and seconded by Councillor Barrie Pierpoint.

RESOLVED:

That the Corporate and Community Committee recommends to Full Council to:

- 1. Establish a single, standalone Overview and Scrutiny Committee to replace the current Scrutiny Committee arrangements; and**
- 2. Constitute the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee with 15 members, ensuring it convenes regularly, with a review to take place in six months.**

In response to a query the Monitoring Officer advised that a delegation would be sought in the report to Full Council to enable the Terms of Reference to be updated to reflect the proposed changes.

The Meeting ended at 7.01 pm.