

Boston Borough Council

Minutes of the **Annual** meeting of the **Full Council** held in the Council Chamber - Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston, PE21 8QR on Monday 19th May 2025 at 6.30 pm.

Present:

The Mayor Councillor Barrie Pierpoint, in the Chair.
Councillors Patricia Marson (Deputy Mayor), Alison Austin, Richard Austin BEM, John Baxter, David Brown, Dale Broughton, Callum Butler, James Cantwell, Anton Dani, Anne Dorrian, Stuart Evans, Sandeep Ghosh, Mike Gilbert, Paul Gleeson, Andy Izard, David Middleton, Chris Mountain, Jonathan Noble, Ralph Pryke, Claire Rylott, Lina Savickiene, David Scoot, Sarah Sharpe, Helen Staples, Suzanne Welberry and Stephen Woodliffe.

Officers:

Chief Executive, Assistant Director - Neighbourhoods, Assistant Director - Governance and Monitoring Officer, Democratic Services Manager, Democratic Services Team Leader, Civic & Member Services Officer, Democratic Services Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

1 Election of the Mayor

It was proposed by Councillor Anne Dorrian and seconded by Councillor Dale Broughton that Councillor Barrie Pierpoint, be elected Mayor of the Borough until the next Annual Meeting of the Council.

Resolved:

That Councillor Barrie Pierpoint be elected Mayor of the Borough of Boston to hold office until the next Annual Meeting of the Council.

The Mayor Elect thereupon made the declaration required by the Local Government Act 1972, took the Chair, and acknowledged the honour that had been conferred on him.

(The Mayor in the Chair.)

2 Election of the Deputy Mayor

It was proposed by the Mayor and seconded by Councillor David Scoot that Councillor Patsie Marson, be elected Deputy Mayor of the Borough until the next Annual Meeting of the Council.

Resolved:

That Councillor Patsie Marson be elected Deputy Mayor of the Borough of Boston to hold office until the next Annual Meeting of the Council.

3 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Peter Bedford, Emma Cresswell and Neil Drayton.

4 Vote of Thanks to the Retiring Mayor

Councillor Sarah Sharpe moved a vote of thanks to Councillor Helen Staples as retiring Mayor. This was seconded by Councillor John Baxter.

Resolved:

That the best of thanks of the Council be extended to Councillor Helen Staples for her term of office as Mayor, and to Miss Jennifer Oglesbee for supporting the Mayor in her role as Mayoress.

The Mayor presented a Borough Plaque to the retiring Mayor, Councillor Helen Staples, who then addressed the meeting.

The Mayor presented a Borough Plaque to Miss Jennifer Oglesbee.

5 Vote of Thanks to the Retiring Deputy Mayor

Councillor Helen Staples moved a vote of thanks to Councillor Suzanne Welberry as retiring Deputy Mayor. This was seconded by Councillor Sarah Sharpe.

Resolved:

That the best of thanks of the Council be extended to Councillor Suzanne Welberry for her term of office as Deputy Mayor, and to Miss Jade Welberry for supporting the Deputy Mayor in her role as Deputy Mayoress.

The Retiring Mayor presented a Borough Plaque to Councillor Suzanne Welberry, who then addressed the meeting.

6 Mayor's Scout and Mayoress' Guide

The Mayor expressed her appreciation to Olivia Mumby-Croft, the retiring Mayoress' Guide, for the manner in which she carried out her duties during the past year. The Retiring Mayor presented a Borough Plaque to Olivia Mumby-Croft.

The Mayor handed the Sash of Office to the new Mayoress' Guide, Isabel Chapman.

Thomas Copeland was appointed Mayor's Scout in his absence.

7 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

8 Minutes

The Minutes of the Full Council meeting on 3rd March 2025 were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

9 Communications

The Chief Executive confirmed there were no communications.

10 Scrutiny Arrangements

Councillor Paul Gleeson, Chairman of the Corporate & Community Committee, introduced a report which sought consider recommendations for delivering scrutiny within Boston Borough Council. A copy of the Scrutiny Arrangements Review Report that was considered by the Corporate & Community Committee on 8th May 2025 was attached at Appendix 1.

The report proposed the adoption of the recommendations made by the Corporate & Community Committee to move to a single standalone Overview and Scrutiny Committee to replace the current Scrutiny Committee arrangements; and to constitute the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee with 15 members, ensuring it convened regularly, with a review to take place in six months.

Members discussed the report and commented as follows:

- Concerns were raised regarding the process by which the proposal had been brought forward. It was noted that the report had not been considered by both scrutiny committees prior to its presentation to Full Council, and that some Members felt that the consultation process had been insufficient. There was a perception among some that the proposal had been politically motivated, rather than driven by operational need. In response it was highlighted that a joint scrutiny approach had initially been sought and that all members had been invited to participate in the review of the arrangements.
- Concerns were also expressed about the potential impact on the quality and depth of scrutiny. Members highlighted the risk that a single committee might struggle to manage the volume and complexity of business currently divided between two committees. It was suggested that this could lead to longer meetings, reduced focus on specific issues, and a diminished ability to hold the executive to account effectively.
- Some Members questioned the evidence base for the proposed change, noting that the report lacked a detailed analysis of the performance of the current arrangements. Others defended the effectiveness of the existing scrutiny committees, citing examples of robust and proactive work undertaken in recent years.
- In contrast, other Members spoke in favour of the proposal, arguing that a single committee would reduce duplication, improve efficiency, and provide a more coherent approach to scrutiny. It was suggested that the new structure would allow for better coordination of work programmes and more effective use of officer time. The inclusion of a six-month review was welcomed as a means of assessing the impact of the change.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Paul Gleeson and seconded by Councillor Stephen Woodliffe.

Resolved:

- 1. That a single, standalone Overview and Scrutiny Committee to replace the current Scrutiny Committee arrangements, be established;**
- 2. That the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee be constituted with 15 members, ensuring it convenes regularly, with a review to take place in six months; and**
- 3. That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director – Governance and Monitoring Officer to amend the relevant sections of the Constitution accordingly to give effect to the recommendations in this report.**

11 Democratic Arrangements 2025/26

The Assistant Director – Governance & Monitoring Officer introduced a report relating to the establishment of committees, appointments to outside bodies, the programme of meetings, and the appointment of Independent Persons. Members were advised that, following the earlier decision to adopt a single scrutiny committee, the relevant appendices (1A, 2A, and 3A) should be referred to, which were included in the supplementary agenda pack that had been tabled.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed a minor amendment to the list of nominations to outside bodies: one nominee had withdrawn from the Witham Fourth District Internal Drainage Board, resulting in the number of nominees matching the number of available seats. The Monitoring Officer also confirmed a minor revision to recommendation 6 in the report which clarified that the Independent Person appointments were for the Municipal Year 2025/26.

Prior to the vote on the full set of recommendations, Members were advised that two nominations had been received for the position of Vice-Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee. In accordance with procedure, a vote was required to determine the appointment. Nominations were received for two Members, Councillor Mike Gilbert and Councillor Anton Dani, each of whom had been duly proposed and seconded. The Mayor invited Members to vote by show of hands for each nominee in turn.

Resolved:

That Councillor Gilbert be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee for the 2025–2026 municipal year.

The outcome of the vote was noted without further debate, and the meeting proceeded to consider the remaining recommendations within the Democratic Arrangements report. These included:

1. Approval of the establishment of committees, sub-committees, panels, and working groups for the municipal year, including the allocation of seats and appointments as nominated by political group leaders.

2. Appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of committees and panels.
3. Approval of the programme of ordinary Council and committee meetings for the year, with delegated authority to the Chief Executive to amend dates if required.
4. Noting of Cabinet membership and portfolio allocations.
5. Appointment of representatives to outside bodies.
6. Appointment of Independent Persons and approval of their allowance, along with the establishment of the Council's Independent Panel.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Anne Dorrian and seconded by Councillor Dale Broughton.

Resolved:

- 1. That the establishment of Committees, Sub-Committees, Panels and Working Groups for the municipal year 2025/26, including the allocation of seats to political groups and appointments (and substitutes), as set out in Appendix 1A as tabled, be approved;**
- 2. That the appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees, Sub-Committees and Panels for the municipal year 2025/26, as set out in Appendix 2A within the report, be approved;**
- 3. That the Programme of Ordinary Council and Committee Meetings for the municipal year 2025/26, as set out in Appendix 3A within the report be approved; and that delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the relevant Chairman, to amend meeting dates or cancel meetings as and when required;**
- 4. That the membership of the Cabinet and Portfolios for the for the municipal year 2025/26, as set out in Appendix 4 within the report, be noted;**
- 5. That the appointments to the Council's Outside Bodies, as set out in Appendix 5 as tabled, be approved with the appointments to automatically terminate at the end of the appointment term or if the Member ceases to be a Member of the authority; and**
- 6. That Amanda Boustred and David Irvine be appointed as Boston Borough Council's Independent Persons for the municipal year 2025/26, that an Independent Person annual allowance rate of £1,200 be approved and that the Council's Independent Panel be appointed as set out in section 7.6 within the report.**

12 Use of Special Urgency Provisions - Information Report

The Assistant Director – Governance & Monitoring Officer introduced the Use of Special Urgency Provisions - Information Report which provided details of executive decisions taken under special urgency and decisions taken under special urgency and that were not subject to call-in in accordance with Part 4B of the Constitution (Access to Information Procedure Rules).

The Monitoring Officer advised that three executive decisions had been taken under the special urgency rules during the preceding municipal year. These decisions were listed in Appendix 1 to the report, and a link to the published decisions had been provided for Members' reference.

The report was presented for information only. No comments or questions were raised by Members during the item, and the report was duly noted without further discussion.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

13 2024/25 Quarter Three Finance Update

The Portfolio Holder for Financial Management and IT, Councillor Sandeep Ghosh, presented a report by the Interim Director of Finance (Acting S151), which provided 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.

Councillor Ghosh highlighted the following key points:

- An in-year efficiency target of £846,000, of which £656,000 (78%) had been identified by the end of Q3.
- A forecast reduction in planning fee income of £93,000.
- An increase in forecast car parking income of £76,000.
- Investment income exceeding expectations, with a projected overachievement of £703,000 against a budget of £1.587 million.

Members were advised that the purpose of the report was to seek Council approval for amendments to the capital programme, as detailed in Appendix A (Table 5A) within the report. The revised capital budget for 2024/25 stood at £20.052 million, with the Towns Fund projects comprising the largest proportion of spend.

Members discussed the report and commented as follows:

- Attention was drawn to the deferral of vehicle replacements within the capital programme. It was noted that ensuring the safety and reliability of operational equipment remained a priority, and clarification was sought on the implications of the slippage for frontline services.

- Further queries were raised regarding the Boston Partnership Fund, including its origin, purpose, and current balance. Members also commented on the overall financial performance, welcoming the strong position in respect of investment income and reserves. However, it was acknowledged that returns from property funds were forecast to be below expectations, and wider economic conditions were noted as a potential risk to future financial stability.
- The Portfolio Holder for Finance confirmed that the matters raised would be followed up with the relevant officers and that responses would be provided in writing where appropriate.

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

Resolved:

That the Capital Programme be amended to take into account the changes set out in at Appendix A – Table 5a within the report.

14 Waste Services Delivery Model

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services, Councillor Callum Butler, presented a report by the Director of Communities which proposed a delivery model for the Council's statutory food waste collection service, due to commence in April 2026 in accordance with the Environment Act 2021.

The report presented two options for vehicle procurement:

- Option 1A: the purchase of a separate fleet of smaller food waste vehicles, retaining the existing refuse collection fleet.
- Option 1B: the acquisition of dual-compartment "pod" vehicles capable of collecting both general and food waste simultaneously, thereby replacing the existing fleet.

The preferred option, Option 1B, was recommended on the basis of operational efficiency, environmental benefit, and cost-effectiveness, with projected annual savings of approximately £615,000 compared to Option 1A. Members were advised that due to a 40-week lead time for vehicle delivery, a decision was required in order to place orders by June 2025.

Members discussed the report and commented as follows:

- Clarification was sought on a number of matters, including the future of the existing refuse fleet, the anticipated number and cost of new vehicles, and the procurement process. Questions were also raised regarding the availability of government funding, the impact on staffing requirements, and the timing of the report's presentation to Council.
- It was noted that changes to collection routes would be necessary under either option, and that a full route optimisation review would be undertaken as part of the implementation process.
- The Portfolio Holder confirmed that responses to the points raised would be provided in writing where appropriate.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Callum Butler and seconded by Councillor Anne Dorrian.

Resolved:

1. That the drawing forward of £2.010m from the capital programme allocation for 2027/28-2028/29 to 2026/27 to fund the capital costs of purchasing food waste collection vehicles be approved;
2. That slippage of £0.840m in the Capital Programme allocations for Food Waste for 2025/26 into 2026/27 to fund the capital costs of purchasing food waste collection vehicles be approved; and
3. That an addition of £0.130m to the capital programme in 2026/27 to fund the capital costs of purchasing food waste collection vehicles be approved.

15 South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership Performance Report

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Anne Dorrian, presented a report by the Assistant Director – Corporate which provided an overview of progress made against the Partnership's alignment and delivery plan, covering the period since the previous update in September 2024.

The report outlined that all activities scheduled for 2024/25 had either been completed, removed as no longer relevant, or carried forward into the 2025/26 plan. Updates were also provided on external funding secured, financial efficiencies achieved, and the development of the performance framework for the forthcoming year.

Further detail was included on the work of the Partnership's four thematic priority boards: Economic Development, Health, Safer Communities, and Environment. Each board had continued to deliver against its objectives, with progress monitored and reported by the relevant Assistant Directors.

Members discussed the report and commented as follows:

- Concerns were raised regarding the effectiveness of customer contact arrangements, particularly in relation to telephone response times. It was noted that some callers had experienced extended waiting periods and, in certain instances, calls had been disconnected before being answered. These issues were highlighted as areas requiring further attention to ensure a satisfactory level of service to residents.
- Reference was also made to the results of the Partnership's workforce survey, which indicated that a proportion of staff did not feel well-informed about the Partnership's activities or decision-making processes. It was suggested that further engagement and communication with staff would be beneficial in strengthening internal awareness and confidence in the Partnership's direction.

The report was presented for noting and was duly received by Council without amendment.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

16 Animal Welfare Licensing Policy

The Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Dale Broughton, presented a report by the Assistant Director – Regulatory which proposed the adoption of an Animal Welfare Licensing Policy for the Borough. The purpose of the policy was to provide a clear and transparent framework for the licensing, administration, and enforcement of premises undertaking licensable animal activities, in accordance with relevant legislation. A copy of the Proposed Animal Welfare Licensing Policy was attached to the report as Appendix 1.

The report outlined that, while there was no statutory requirement to adopt a formal policy, doing so would support consistency, best practice, and public confidence in the Council's approach. The proposed policy had been developed with reference to similar policies across the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership to ensure alignment and consistency.

It was noted that the draft policy had been considered by the Regulatory and Appeals Committee in December 2024, followed by a six-week consultation with stakeholders. Feedback received during the consultation had been reviewed by the Committee in March 2025, and the final version of the policy was now presented to Council for adoption.

Members discussed the report and commented as follows:

- A query was raised regarding the availability of the full policy document and whether Members had been provided with sufficient information to make an informed decision. It was questioned why the draft policy, which had been considered by the Regulatory and Appeals Committee, was not more prominently presented within the Council agenda papers. Clarification was provided that the policy had been included in the published agenda pack.

No further comments were made, and the recommendation to adopt the policy was subsequently approved.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Dale Broughton and seconded by Councillor Anne Dorrian.

Resolved:

- 1. That the Animal Welfare Licensing Policy, attached at Appendix 1 within the report, be adopted and published; and**
- 2. That authority be delegated to the Senior Licensing Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Regulatory & Appeals Committee and the Portfolio Holder, to make any non-material amendments.**

The Meeting ended at 8.19 pm.