

Boston Borough Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet** held in the Committee Room - Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston, PE21 8QR on Wednesday 17th September 2025 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor Dale Broughton (Leader), in the Chair.

Councillors Councillor Mike Gilbert (Deputy Leader), John Baxter, Callum Butler, Sandeep Ghosh, Chris Mountain, Sarah Sharpe and Helen Staples.

Officers:

Deputy Chief Executive (Programme Delivery) and Assistant Director - General Fund Assets, Interim Finance Director and S151 Officer, Assistant Director - Regulatory, Assistant Director - Communities and Housing Services, Business Intelligence and Change Manager, Head of Revenues and Benefits, Safer Communities Manager (Operations), Group Manager - Organisational Development and Democratic Services Team Leader.

8 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Claire Rylott.

9 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

10 Minutes

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 7th May 2025 and the Special Cabinet meeting held on 31st July 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

11 Questions from Members of the Public

No questions were received.

12 Recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny (Standing Item)*

There were no recommendations.

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

There were no recommendations.

14 Quarter 1 25/26 Performance and Risk Report

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Dale Broughton, presented a report by the Assistant Director – Corporate and the Assistant Director – Governance & Monitoring Officer which provided Cabinet with an overview of the Council's performance and risk position as at the end of June 2025.

In presenting the report, the Leader highlighted that the quarterly update covered key performance indicators (KPIs), strategic and operational risks, and drew attention to any significant changes requiring Cabinet's consideration. He confirmed that overall performance remained stable, with no major concerns flagged. While the household waste recycling and composting rate continued to fall below the nationally set target, this was recognised as a persistent challenge for Boston and other authorities. However, improvements were anticipated through the introduction of food waste collections and operational changes being led by the Neighbourhoods team.

Cabinet was advised that all risks were being actively managed, with robust mitigations in place. No risks had been identified as critical. A new risk had been added in relation to the BBC server room, following concerns raised by ICT regarding the need for upgrades or potential relocation. Although funding for the project had previously been agreed, the initiative had been paused, and Cabinet may be required to consider whether to revive the project. The Leader concluded by stating that the Council continued to proactively manage both performance and risk.

Members discussed the report and commented as follows:

- Cabinet welcomed the positive trajectory in market performance, noting that Council-run stall occupancy had increased from 68.5% in the previous year's Quarter 1 to 71% in the current quarter. Members acknowledged that this improvement reflected the success of initiatives such as the Boston Makers and Craft Market, held monthly, and the broader diversification of stalls at regular markets.
- Cabinet was informed that recent engagement activity had generated significant interest from prospective traders, with 18 applications received in a two-week period, including interest from outside the district. Social media engagement was reported to be strong, with the Boston Market Facebook page achieving 169,000 views over a 28-day period. New traders included those offering flowers, barista coffee, crystals, and gifts.
- It was noted that the Markets Manager had made a demonstrable impact, with the Boston Makers Market selling out each month and plans in place to continue the initiative into the following year.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Dale Broughton and seconded by Councillor John Baxter.

Resolved:

That the quarterly performance and risk monitoring information for Q1 of 2025/26 be noted.

15 2025/26 Quarter 1 Finance Update

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Growth, Councillor Sandeep Ghosh, presented a report by the Interim Director of Finance (S151 Officer) which set out the Council's financial position as at 30 June 2025 and provided a forecast to year-end. The report highlighted a projected revenue overspend of £829,000 for the 2025/26 financial year.

Cabinet was informed that the draft Quarter 1 position forecasted a net revenue deficit of £829,000. The principal cause of the overspend was a shortfall in achieving targeted salary savings, although service managers were actively reviewing forecasts and identifying opportunities to deliver efficiencies.

Councillor Ghosh highlighted that the Council's investment income was performing strongly, with a forecast overachievement of £213,000 against the budget. He also reported that the Council had received £654,000 in government funding to offset Internal Drainage Board (IDB) levy pressures, which had been reflected in the outturn figures.

Cabinet was reminded that the 2025/26 budget included an overall savings and efficiency target of £1.429 million, of which £760,000 (approximately 53%) had been identified to date. If the additional investment income was committed against this target, the outstanding requirement would reduce further.

In respect of treasury management, Councillor Ghosh confirmed that negotiations had successfully concluded to repay the Council's State Street loan early, replacing it with borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board at a lower rate. Full financial details would be reported in the Quarter 2 update.

Turning to the capital programme, Cabinet was advised that proposed amendments totalling £201,000 were presented for approval. Forecast expenditure for the year was £37 million against a revised budget of £38 million, resulting in a projected underspend of £921,000.

Cabinet acknowledged the challenges associated with delivering the required savings and efficiencies, particularly in relation to staffing costs. Members welcomed the proactive approach being taken by service managers to identify further opportunities for savings.

The additional investment income and government support for IDB levies were noted as positive developments that had helped to mitigate the overall financial position. Cabinet also welcomed the early repayment of the State Street loan and the move to more favourable borrowing arrangements.

Appreciation was expressed for the work undertaken by the Finance team in preparing the report and for their continued efforts in managing the Council's financial position.

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

Resolved:

- 1. That the forecast revenue position of £0.829m overspend for 2025/26, as detailed in Appendix A – Table 1 within the report, and the need for continuous focus on the savings and efficiency programme be noted; and**
- 2. That the amendments to the Capital Programme, in Appendix B – Table 3 within the report, that require Cabinet approval, to take into account the changes set out within the report, be approved.**

16 Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2026/27 - Consultation

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Growth, Councillor Sandeep Ghosh, presented a report by the Interim Director of Finance (S151 Officer) which sought Cabinet's approval to consult on options for the 2026/27 Local Council Tax Support Scheme.

Cabinet was informed that since 2013, billing authorities had been required to develop local schemes to support low-income working-age households. The national scheme for pensioners remained unchanged, with councils having no discretion in that area.

Councillor Ghosh explained that the current scheme provided up to 100% support for households with children and up to 85% support for other working-age households. Forecast expenditure for 2025/26 was approximately £4.9 million, with over £2.6 million allocated to working-age claimants. The cost of the scheme was shared between major precepting authorities, with Boston Borough Council meeting around 13% of the total.

Although the scheme had originally been scheduled for review after a full year of operation, the Council's wider financial challenges had necessitated an earlier reassessment. Three options were therefore proposed for consultation:

- Option 1 – Retain the current maximum support levels and identify savings elsewhere.
- Option 2 – Reduce support to 90% for lone parents, 80% for couples with children, and 75% for other households.
- Option 3 – Reduce support to 90% for lone parents, 80% for couples with children, and 70% for other households.

Cabinet was reminded that the purpose of the report was to agree the consultation approach, not to determine the final scheme. A further report would be brought back following the consultation, with final recommendations to be made to Full Council.

Members discussed the report and commented as follows:

- Cabinet acknowledged the importance of the consultation and its potential impact on residents across the borough. Members emphasised the need for wide engagement, including with parish councils, to ensure that all communities had the opportunity to contribute.
- It was noted that the Council faced a difficult balancing act between supporting vulnerable households and maintaining financial sustainability. Members stressed the importance of gathering a broad range of views to inform the final decision.
- Cabinet welcomed the proposal to consult on multiple options and supported efforts to promote the consultation through various channels, including community networks and online platforms.

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

Resolved:

1. That the following options be consulted on:

- **Option 1 - Retain the current maximum level of support for Households with Children 100% and Other Households 85% and find savings elsewhere;**
- **Option 2 – Reduce the maximum level of support to 90% to lone parents, 80% to couples with children and 75% for all other households;**
- **Option 3 – Reduce the maximum level of support to 90% to lone parents, 80% to couples with children and 70% for all other households; and**

2. That oversight and approval of the consultation approach be delegated to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance.

17 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Dale Broughton, presented a report by the Assistant Director – Corporate which sought approval for a Partnership Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy.

Cabinet was informed that the strategy set out a clear framework to ensure that Council services were fair, accessible and inclusive for all residents and staff. It aligned with the Council's legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty, and responded to feedback received through the Local Government Association Peer Challenge.

Councillor Broughton explained that the strategy had been developed following consultation with staff, councillors and community partners, including Citizens Advice, SHINE and Lincs Digital. The approach was built around four key objectives: understanding communities, inclusive leadership, accessible services, and a diverse workforce.

The strategy was supported by a high-level action plan and included provision for a two-year fixed-term officer post to oversee delivery. It had been endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and supported by scrutiny committees at South Holland and East Lindsey.

Cabinet was advised that governance arrangements would include oversight by an Equalities Board, with regular reporting to the Portfolio Holder and Senior Leadership Team.

Cabinet welcomed the strategy and acknowledged the importance of embedding equality, diversity and inclusion across all areas of Council activity. Members noted the collaborative approach taken in developing the strategy and the value of input from community partners and scrutiny committees.

The inclusion of a dedicated officer role to support implementation was seen as a positive step in ensuring delivery of the action plan and maintaining momentum.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Dale Broughton and seconded by Councillor Sandeep Ghosh.

Resolved:

- 1. That the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan, at Appendices A and B within the report be approved; and**
- 2. That a 2-year fixed term officer role to provide expertise and to oversee the implementation of the high-level action plan be contributed to.**

18 South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership Body Worn Video (BWV) Policy 2025

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Dale Broughton, presented a report by the Assistant Director – Regulatory which sought Cabinet's approval of the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership Body Worn Video (BWV) Policy 2025.

Cabinet was informed that body worn video cameras were increasingly used by council officers in enforcement roles, both to gather evidence and to deter abuse or aggression. The use of such devices was subject to strict regulation to protect individuals' rights and ensure that any personal data captured was securely managed.

Councillor Broughton explained that the policy had been developed to ensure that BWV was only used by trained staff and only in circumstances where its use was lawful, proportionate, legitimate and necessary. The policy set out clear procedures for the management of video evidence, including storage, retention, reproduction and disposal.

The policy had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 17 July 2025 and was supported without amendment. The Committee had welcomed the policy as a further example of effective partnership working.

Cabinet welcomed the policy and acknowledged the importance of ensuring that body worn video was used appropriately and in line with legal and ethical standards. Members noted the safeguards built into the policy and the clarity it provided for officers using BWV in operational settings.

The support of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was noted, and the policy was recognised as a positive step in enhancing officer safety and public confidence.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Dale Broughton and seconded by Councillor Sarah Sharpe.

Resolved:

- 1. That the report, policy and any feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 July 2025 be noted and the Body Worn Video Policy approved; and**
- 2. That delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director Regulatory / Senior Responsible Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to make such amendments to this policy as may from time to time be required in order to (i) reference any links or amended links to other documents as may be required; and (ii) reflect any issues over which the Council has no discretion including, but not limited to, references to any legislative changes and amended guidance. Any material amendments to the policy will be subject to the usual approval process in line with the Constitution.**

19 South and East Lincolnshire Council's Crowdfunding Scheme - Two Year Progress

The Portfolio Holder for Communities, Councillor Helen Staples, presented a report by the Assistant Director - Housing and Communities which provide an overview of the first two years of the South and East Lincolnshire Crowdfunding Scheme.

Cabinet was informed that the scheme, launched in spring 2023, provided an innovative platform for community groups to raise funds for local projects. The model encouraged community involvement from the outset, with projects eligible for up to £5,000 in match funding from the Boston fund, alongside contributions raised through public crowdfunding.

Councillor Staples reported that the scheme had supported 15 projects across the partnership, with a total value of £149,887, of which £77,117 had been contributed by the crowd. This represented a strong return on investment, with £4 raised by the community for every £1 contributed by the Council, exceeding the original target of £3 to £1.

The report highlighted a range of successful projects, including cultural events, improvements to community buildings, and initiatives that increased volunteer opportunities and community engagement. Examples included the Lithuanian Community Group, Pridal House, Taste It Lincolnshire, and the Arts Theatre production.

Members discussed the report and commented as follows:

- Cabinet welcomed the report and praised the scheme's achievements. Members noted the impressive level of community engagement and the financial return generated through public contributions.
- The importance of further promotion was highlighted, with suggestions made to raise awareness at upcoming community events. Officers confirmed that a communications plan was in place to support the next phase of the scheme, and that the Communities and Housing Services team would provide dedicated resource to drive future engagement.
- Cabinet acknowledged the scheme's role in strengthening relationships between the Council and local communities, and recognised its contribution to civic pride and social cohesion.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Helen Staples and seconded by Councillor Chris Mountain.

Resolved:

That the progress of the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Crowdfunding scheme be noted and that its continuation be supported.

The Meeting ended at 6.26 pm.