

Boston Borough Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Full Council** held in the Council Chamber - Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston, PE21 8QR on Monday 12th January 2026 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, Peter Bedford, David Brown, Dale Broughton, Callum Butler, James Cantwell, Anton Dani, Anne Dorrian, Neil Drayton, Stuart Evans, Sandeep Ghosh, Mike Gilbert, Andy Izard, David Middleton, Jonathan Noble, Ralph Pryke, Lina Savickiene, David Scoot, Sarah Sharpe, Helen Staples, Suzanne Welberry and Stephen Woodliffe.

Officers:

Chief Executive, Director of Finance, Assistant Director - Governance and Monitoring Officer, Democratic Services Manager, Democratic Services Team Leader, Civic & Member Services Officer, Head of Procurement & Contracts, PSPSL and Procurement Manager, PSPSL.

56 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Emma Cresswell, Paul Gleeson, Chris Mountain and Claire Rylott.

57 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

58 Minutes

The Minutes of the Full Council meeting on 10th November 2025 were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

59 Communications

The Chief Executive gave notice that Councillor Jonathan Noble had agreed to accept the Mayoralty for the forthcoming civic year.

60 Deputations and Petitions

The Chief Executive confirmed that no deputations or petitions had been received.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Dale Broughton proposed that the order of business be changed so that Item F – Questions from Elected Members would be taken after the items of business under Part III (Motions on Notice). This proposal was seconded by Councillor Helen Staples, and following a vote by members of the Council the proposal was approved.

61 Questions from Members of the Public

The Chief Executive confirmed that no questions had been received from members of the public.

62 Draft Audit & Governance Committee Minutes

The Mayor, as Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee, presented the draft Audit and Governance minutes from the meeting held on 17th November 2025 for councillors to note.

During consideration of the item, reference was made to the matters discussed by the Audit & Governance Committee in relation to the Proposed Amendments to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, which were before Full Council later on the agenda, and thanks was given to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Dale Broughton, and the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Growth, Councillor Sandeep Ghosh, for responding to concerns raised by bringing forward a revised proposal in respect of the financial threshold for post contract evaluation reports, which had been amended prior to consideration by Full Council.

A comment was made regarding the draft Audit & Governance Committee Minutes in relation to asset valuations, and it was requested that the actual valuation figures for the assets referred to in the Committee's discussion be provided to Members, in order to assist with transparency and understanding. It was noted that this information could be addressed through the Audit & Governance Committee in due course.

In addition, Members commented on the importance of appropriate officer attendance at meetings to support scrutiny, and queried clarification around certain asset valuation entries referenced in the external audit reporting and minutes. It was acknowledged that responses on technical points would be provided through the Committee and by officers at the appropriate forum.

63 Annual Scrutiny Report 2024/2025

The previous Vice-Chairman of the Environment and Performance Committee, Councillor Lina Savickiene, presented the Joint Annual Scrutiny Report 2024/2025, which summarised the work undertaken by the Environment & Performance Committee and the Corporate & Community Committee during the last municipal year. The report was considered by the Overview & Scrutiny at its meeting on 9th December 2025.

Members welcomed the report and reflected on the contribution scrutiny had made to policy development, performance monitoring and town-centre work. Points were raised on ensuring external bodies were invited to future scrutiny where relevant (including infrastructure bodies), and on the value of implementing recommendations from member working groups. Appreciation was expressed by the Leader of the Council for the work of former Chairs and Vice-Chairs and the support provided by officers.

64 Democratic Arrangements – Appointment to Outside Body 2025/26

The Assistant Director – Governance & Monitoring Officer introduced the report, which sought consideration of an appointment to an outside body where a vacancy had arisen, details of which were attached at Appendix 1:

- Sir Thomas Meddlecott and Others Charity Trust (Skirbeck Quarter Charities) – one vacancy was reported.

The following nomination was considered:

- Councillor Neil Drayton was nominated to sit on the Sir Thomas Meddlecott and Others Charity Trust (Skirbeck Quarter Charities).

The importance of ensuring full representation on local charitable bodies was noted. No further nominations were put forward at the meeting.

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

Resolved:

That Councillor Neil Drayton be appointed to the Sir Thomas Meddlecott and Others Charity Trust (Skirbeck Quarter Charities) for the remainder of the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

65 Community Governance Review - Stage 1 Consultation Outcomes and Draft Recommendations

The Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Mike Gilbert, introduced the report and provided an update on the Community Governance Review (CGR) being undertaken in respect of the unparished areas of Boston. The report set out the outcomes of the Stage 1 public consultation, summarised the evidence considered by the Community Governance Review Working Group, and presented the draft recommendations for approval to proceed to Stage 2 consultation.

Members were reminded that the review was being undertaken under Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, and had been initiated in light of emerging proposals for Local Government Reorganisation, which would result in Boston Borough Council being abolished. It was explained that, in the absence of a parish or town council, the unparished areas of Boston would otherwise be left without a democratically elected tier of community governance.

The Deputy Leader outlined that the Stage 1 consultation, undertaken between 14 July and 26 August 2025, had sought views on whether a parish or town council should be established for Boston, whether any existing parish boundaries should be altered, and how future governance arrangements might best reflect community identity and ensure effective and convenient local government. A total of 126 consultation responses had been received, with a clear majority expressing support for the creation of a single parish council covering the unparished area of Boston.

The draft recommendations approved by the Working Group included the establishment of a single parish of Boston aligned with the current Boston Town Area Committee footprint, limited adjustments to the Wyberton parish boundary to address small unparished areas, a parish council size of 22 councillors, warding arrangements aligned to existing borough wards, and first elections to take place in May 2027.

Members engaged in detailed discussion on the proposed recommendations and the evidence underpinning them.

Broad support was expressed for the principle of ensuring that Boston residents retained a strong local democratic voice, particularly given the scale of change anticipated through Local Government Reorganisation. The importance of safeguarding Boston's historic identity, civic traditions and assets was emphasised, and it was noted that the establishment of a town or parish council would provide a democratic body capable of holding and managing those assets in the future.

Concerns were expressed about the relatively low number of consultation responses in the context of the size of the town, and Members highlighted the need for the Council to take steps to increase public awareness and participation during the next phase of consultation. It was noted that some residents remained unclear about the implications of Local Government Reorganisation and the potential consequences of inaction, and that clearer messaging would be essential during Stage 2.

Members discussed the legal framework governing community governance reviews, including the statutory tests relating to community identity, effective and convenient local government, and the need to actively consider reasonable alternatives. The importance of ensuring that the process remained open, transparent and evidence-led was highlighted, with Stage 2 consultation recognised as a critical opportunity to test the draft recommendations and address concerns raised.

Specific reference was made to the proposed warding arrangements, including the alignment of parish wards with existing borough ward boundaries to ensure clarity, coterminosity and ease of electoral administration. The proposed merging of certain wards for parish purposes was discussed in the context of achieving fair and proportionate representation, taking into account current and forecast electorate figures.

Members also discussed the proposal to amend the Wyberton parish boundary in order to incorporate small unparished areas, noting the importance of avoiding fragmented governance arrangements and ensuring that all residents were represented by a parish council. It was recognised that further engagement with affected parish councils and residents would be required as part of the next consultation phase.

Overall, while differing views were expressed on aspects of the detail, Council acknowledged that the draft recommendations provided an appropriate basis on which to consult further, and that progressing to Stage 2 was necessary to maintain momentum and meet the statutory timetable for the review.

During the debate, Council formally expressed its condolences to Andy Lamming, Mace Bearer, following the recent death of his wife. Members extended their sympathies and best wishes on behalf of the Council.

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

Resolved:

1. That the outcomes of the Stage 1 consultation be noted; and
2. That the draft recommendations of the CGR Working Group for publication and Stage 2 consultation, as listed below, be approved:
 - Establish a single parish of Boston for the unparished area of Boston, covering the Boston Town Area Committee footprint.
 - Alter the Wyberton parish boundary to incorporate two small unparished areas south of Boston (see Appendix 3) into the parish of Wyberton.
 - That the Council size for the parish of Boston be 22 Councillors, based on national guidance and proportional representation for an electorate of approximately 23,000 (forecast to rise to 25,000 by 2030).
 - That the parish of Boston be warded into seven wards (see Appendix 4), aligned with the existing borough ward boundaries to ensure clarity and coterminosity, as follows:

Name of Parish Ward	Number of Councillors to be elected to the Parish Ward
Fenside	3
Skirbeck	5
St Thomas	2
Staniland & Station (combined)	4
Trinity	3
West	2
Witham	3

- That the first elections for the proposed new and revised electoral arrangements be in May 2027, aligning with the ordinary parish council electoral cycle.

66 Proposed Amendments to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Finance, Councillor Sandeep Ghosh, introduced the report which sought approval of proposed amendments to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs). It was explained that the review had been undertaken to ensure that the CPRs remained compliant with the Procurement Act 2023, to reflect changes in legislation and good practice, and to update rules which had last been comprehensively reviewed three years previously.

Members were advised that the proposed amendments had been considered by the Audit & Governance Committee on 17th November 2025 and by Cabinet on 10th December 2025. As a result of feedback received, the financial threshold within Clause 26.5, relating

to post-contract evaluation and reporting, had been amended from the originally proposed £1,000,000 to £500,000 prior to submission to Full Council.

The report highlighted key changes including revised procurement thresholds, strengthened requirements around conflict of interest and pre-market engagement, enhanced contract management and monitoring provisions, and updated delegations to officers. Members were asked to approve and adopt the revised Contract Procedure Rules as set out in Appendix 1A within the report.

Members welcomed the clarification and amendment to the financial threshold within Clause 26.5, noting that it responded to concerns raised previously regarding transparency and proportionality in contract reporting. The importance of retaining robust written records and evaluation of high-value contracts was emphasised, alongside the need to balance governance requirements with operational flexibility.

Reference was made to Teckal agreements, with assurance being sought that such arrangements, where work was awarded to council-controlled companies without full competition, would continue to be captured appropriately within the CPR framework. It was noted that while Teckal arrangements were permitted under procurement law, Members wished to ensure that visibility, justification and monitoring arrangements around such agreements remained sufficiently robust.

Concerns were raised about the volume and complexity of procurement-related information presented to the Audit & Governance Committee and the ability of Members to adequately scrutinise such reports. Members reiterated the importance of officers being present at meetings to assist with detailed technical questions and provide assurance where required.

During the debate, some Members expressed concern that the proposed changes did not provide an adequate level of reporting and scrutiny, particularly in relation to exemptions, continuity arrangements and value-for-money assurance. It was felt that additional monitoring arrangements would help to ensure that Members could scrutinise procurement activity more effectively, especially given the volume and technical nature of reports considered by the Audit & Governance Committee.

The following amendment was proposed by Councillor Anne Dorrian:

That Full Council further resolves:

- 1. That officers produce a six-monthly report to the Audit & Governance Committee detailing:*
 - the number and value of procurement exemptions and continuity arrangements;*
 - justification for each exemption; and*
 - thematic patterns or repeat use by service area or supplier.*
- 2. That where procurement is undertaken with fewer than the previous minimum number of quotations, a written value-for-money assessment is retained and made available for Member scrutiny.*

3. That a formal review report on the operation and impact of the revised Contract Procedure Rules be presented to Full Council within 12 months of adoption, including assessment of:
- transparency and competition outcomes;
 - the use of exemptions; and
 - participation rates from local suppliers and SMEs.

The proposed amendment was seconded by Councillor David Middleton. The Monitoring Officer advised on which aspects of the amendment would formally alter the CPRs and which constituted supplementary reporting arrangements that would not require the Rules themselves to be amended. Following a vote by Members, the amendment was not supported and therefore fell.

Members then returned to consideration of the substantive motion. Overall, the need for updated Contract Procedure Rules to align with current legislation, support effective procurement, and maintain appropriate levels of member oversight and accountability was acknowledged.

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

Resolved:

That the revised Contract Procedure Rules, as set out in Appendix 1A to the report, including the amended financial threshold of £500,000 within Clause 26.5, be approved and adopted.

[The Head of Procurement & Contracts, PSPSL and the Procurement Manager, PSPSL left the meeting at 7.26pm, following consideration of the above item.]

67 2025/26 Mid Term Treasury Report

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Finance, Councillor Sandeep Ghosh, introduced the report which presented the 2025/26 Mid Term Treasury Report for Council's consideration. The report provided an update on treasury management activity for the first half of the financial year and confirmed the Council's compliance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Treasury Management Code, the Prudential Code, and the Council's approved Treasury Management Strategy.

Members were advised that the mid-year position reflected the impact of higher-than-anticipated interest rates, the timing of capital expenditure, and the Council's continued low level of external borrowing. Particular reference was made to the repayment of the historic State Street LOBO loan on 11 July 2025 and its replacement with a £1 million Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loan at 4.81%, resulting in significant net savings over the remaining term.

Members were also informed that forecast investment income remained ahead of budget due to favourable market rates during the first half of the year, and that no difficulties were anticipated in meeting treasury or prudential indicators for the remainder of 2025/26.

During discussion, Members welcomed the significant financial benefit arising from the restructuring of borrowing, recognising the long-term savings delivered by the early repayment of the State Street loan. Comments were made on the importance of maintaining a cautious approach to investment and borrowing, given ongoing market volatility and interest rate movements.

Members noted the strong treasury performance recorded at mid-year and emphasised the need for continued monitoring of the Council's investment portfolio, particularly in relation to property fund valuations. Council also acknowledged the importance of the treasury function in supporting delivery of the wider capital programme and ensuring future financial resilience.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Sandeep Ghosh and seconded by Councillor Andy Izard.

Resolved:

That the 2025/26 Mid Term Treasury Report be received and noted.

68 Quarter 2 2025/26 Capital Forecast Outturn

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Finance, Councillor Sandeep Ghosh, introduced the report which set out the Quarter 2 Capital Forecast Outturn for 2025/26. The Portfolio Holder explained that the capital programme was being regularly monitored and updated to ensure that expenditure profiles remained aligned with project delivery across the Council's major schemes, including those funded through the Towns Fund, the Levelling Up Fund (LUF), and other external grant programmes.

Council was advised that a number of budget adjustments were proposed to reflect updated project timelines, including the reprofiling of £100,000 from 2026/27 into 2025/26 in relation to the Crown House scheme as part of the wider LUF programme. Members were informed that these adjustments did not represent additional expenditure, but rather a change in the expected timing of works.

Members discussed the report and welcomed the update on the delivery of major capital schemes. It was acknowledged that large regeneration projects inevitably required regular review of profiles to reflect changes in construction timing, procurement stages, and contract mobilisation.

During the debate, a request was made for clarification regarding the Crown House site, specifically whether the movement of £100,000 into the 2025/26 financial year indicated that works on the site were ahead of schedule, or whether the adjustment reflected a rephasing of planned expenditure for other operational reasons. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that a written response would be provided to address the detailed technical point.

Members noted the importance of maintaining clear reporting on project timelines given the scale of the Council's regeneration portfolio and the need to ensure that capital forecasts remained accurate.

Overall, Members recognised the continued progress being made across the capital programme and the importance of maintaining financial control and transparency during the delivery of externally funded schemes.

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

Resolved:

That the Quarter 2 2025/26 Capital Forecast Outturn, including the proposed amendments to the capital programme for 2025/26 as set out in the report, be approved.

69 Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2026/27

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Finance, Councillor Sandeep Ghosh, introduced the report which set out the proposed Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme for 2026/27. Members were reminded that the authority was required to review and approve its working-age LCTS scheme annually and that consultation had been undertaken on a range of options to ensure both continued support for vulnerable residents and the Council's ability to maintain a balanced budget.

The Portfolio Holder explained that the Council had consulted on three options: retaining the existing level of support, or introducing revised maximum entitlement levels of either 90% for lone parents, 80% for couples with children, and 75% for all other working-age households, or a further reduced option. Members were advised that the Cabinet had recommended adoption of the more moderate of the reduction options, 90% / 80% / 75% as set out in the report, with the scheme operating in line with the annual DWP uprating of allowances and premiums.

A substantial debate took place on the proposal, noting the need to balance financial sustainability with the core purpose of the scheme in protecting lower-income households. Members recognised the increasing financial pressures on the Council, including the need to deliver a balanced Medium-Term Financial Strategy, and acknowledged that LCTS remained one of the most significant discretionary financial commitments within the Council's budget.

Points were raised regarding the impact of the proposed reduction on households facing rising living costs, and Members discussed the potential consequences for families with children, single working-age adults, and those already experiencing hardship. Reference was made to the continuation of the Exceptional Hardship Fund, introduced alongside the current scheme, which would remain available to support the most vulnerable cases affected by changes to entitlement.

Some Members expressed concerns that reducing support could increase financial pressure on low-income households and disproportionately affect those struggling with living costs, while others emphasised the importance of fairness across all taxpayers and the need to ensure the scheme remained financially sustainable. Members also noted that precepting authorities had expressed support for options that reduced the overall cost of the scheme.

A recorded vote was requested and supported. The motion was carried by 18 votes in favour, 5 against, and 3 abstentions.

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

Resolved:

That the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2026/27 be revised to provide a maximum entitlement of 90% for lone parents, 80% for couples with children, and 75% for all other working-age households; with the scheme operated in line with the DWP annual uprating of allowances and premiums.

Recorded Vote on Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2026/27 (Resolution)		
For	Councillor Richard Austin BEM, Councillor John Baxter, Councillor Peter Bedford, Councillor Dale Broughton, Councillor David Brown, Councillor Callum Butler, Councillor Anton Dani, Councillor Neil Drayton, Councillor Stuart Evans, Councillor Sandeep Ghosh, Councillor Mike Gilbert, Councillor Andy Izzard, Councillor Jonathan Noble, Councillor Barrie Pierpoint, Councillor Lina Savickiene, Councillor David Scoot, Councillor Sarah Sharpe and Councillor Helen Staples	18
Against	Councillor James Cantwell, Councillor Anne Dorrian, Councillor David Middleton, Councillor Ralph Pryke and Councillor Stephen Woodliffe	5
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	Councillor Alison Austin, Councillor Patricia Marson and Councillor Suzanne Welberry	3
Carried		

70 Motions on Notice

The following Motion was received:

Amendment to Council Procedure- Limitation of questions to one per member at full council

COUNCIL NOTES:

That the current Council Procedure Rules permit Members to submit more than one question to Full Council within a single meeting cycle.

That recent meetings have demonstrated that multiple questions from the same member can extend proceedings, reduce time available for wider debate, and limit opportunities for other members to participate.

That ensuring fair and balanced participation from all elected Members is essential to the effective functioning, transparency and efficiency of Full Council Meetings.

Therefore, Council resolves

1. To amend Council Procedure Rule 11.2(Questions on Notice at Full Council) to state that a Member of the Council may submit one question only to Full Council per meeting.
2. That this amendment shall take effect at the conclusion of the Full Council Meeting on 12th January 2026.
3. That the Monitoring Officer be authorized to update the Constitution and any associated guidance documents accordingly to give effect to the amendment.

The motion was moved by Councillor Andy Izard and seconded by Councillor James Cantwell.

Councillor Izard introduced the motion by explaining that recent Full Council meetings had seen a trend of multiple questions from the same Members, which he believed had extended proceedings significantly and reduced the time available for meaningful debate on substantive agenda items. He emphasised that the motion sought neither to restrict democratic accountability nor to limit Members' ability to ask supplementary questions or questions arising from the agenda. He stated that the purpose of the proposed amendment was to ensure fairness, balance and efficiency, enabling all Members to have the opportunity to participate fully without meetings becoming dominated by lengthy questioning sessions. Councillor Izard argued that a limit of one question per Member would encourage focused and purposeful questioning, contributing to a more effective and professionally run meeting.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Cantwell expressed his view that the proposed amendment represented a fair and proportionate adjustment to the Council's procedures. He commented that recent meetings had been negatively affected by prolonged sequences of questions on notice, which in his view had overshadowed broader debate and contributed to public criticism of the conduct and efficiency of Full Council meetings. He highlighted the importance of ensuring that all Members, particularly backbenchers, had a genuine opportunity to contribute, noting that where multiple questions were submitted by the same Member, others could feel unable to participate to the same extent.

Councillor Cantwell added that the motion retained all existing routes for scrutiny, including supplementary questions and committee processes, while helping to maintain the professional management and reputation of Full Council. He concluded that the motion would support a more balanced and accessible decision-making environment, improving both the quality of debate and the public perception of the Council's meetings.

During debate, Members expressed a wide range of views on the proposed amendment to the Council Procedure Rules.

Some Members supported the motion, highlighting a pattern at recent meetings where multiple questions from individual Members had resulted in significant extensions to the "Questions on Notice" item. It was observed that this had, in some cases, left reduced time for discussion of substantive agenda business and had contributed to meetings overrunning their expected duration. Those supportive of the motion felt that introducing a limit of one question per Member would help maintain order, ensure a fairer balance of contributions, and improve the public perception of the Council's conduct.

Members expressing support also reflected that Full Council was only one of a number of avenues available for Members to raise issues, noting that scrutiny committees, portfolio holder engagement and written questions were all routes that remained unaffected by the proposed change. It was suggested that a structured limit would encourage Members to prioritise their most significant questions and help avoid what were characterised as prolonged sequences of commentary rather than questions.

Other Members raised concerns that the proposal risked narrowing opportunities for scrutiny and could be perceived as restricting Member engagement or reducing transparency. It was argued that Members must retain the ability to question the Executive freely, particularly in an environment of significant organisational and financial change. Some Members highlighted that questioning at Full Council could be the only opportunity for backbench Members to raise issues where alternative scrutiny routes had limited capacity.

Concerns were also voiced that the motion stemmed from frustration at recent political disagreements and that introducing such a procedural limit might restrict legitimate challenge. Some Members suggested that improvements in meeting conduct could be achieved through chairing and adherence to etiquette, rather than through limiting the number of questions that could be asked.

Discussion also touched upon wider governance considerations, including the structure and capacity of the Council's scrutiny arrangements and the extent to which scrutiny committees were currently able to accommodate detailed Member enquiries. Some Members felt that, in the context of scrutiny reforms implemented earlier in the year, limiting Full Council questions risked further reducing the overall space for Member oversight.

A proposed amendment to allow two questions per Member was put forward but did not receive a seconder and therefore fell.

During the debate, a Point of Order was raised in relation to the constitutional process for amending the Council's Constitution. It was noted that constitutional amendments should be accompanied by a report from the Monitoring Officer and that no report had been provided in the agenda pack. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that, whilst the matter was one which legislatively the Council could choose to resolve, it would be procedurally appropriate for the matter to be re-presented to the next Full Council Meeting with a report attached from the Monitoring Officer. Following which the Mayor confirmed that the meeting would move onto the next agenda item.

71 Questions from Elected Members

The Chief Executive confirmed that thirteen questions had been received.

1. Question to Councillor Sandeep Ghosh from Councillor Jonathan Noble:

At Full Council on 10th November 2025 you stated: 'Boston have paid back everything. At the moment we do not have any debts left'. Do you still stand by this statement?

Response from Councillor Sandeep Ghosh:

Thank you for the question and the opportunity to provide further clarification.

To address the point raised at Full Council, my reference to repayment in full related specifically to the PWLB loan, as that was the focus of the question. The State Street loan is a separate issue altogether and, given its very high interest rate, one that the previous administration appeared content to continue servicing for a considerable period.

From my very first discussion with the then Section 151 Officer after I took over the finance portfolio, I made it clear that, as Portfolio Holder for Finance, I had no appetite for retaining expensive, long-term borrowing. The intention was always to exit such loans when market conditions allowed, and since then we have kept a close and careful watch on opportunities to secure better-value alternatives.

For clarity on the State Street refinancing:

- The original State Street loan was taken out on 29 January 1991 for a period of 60 years at an interest rate of 11.125%, with an annual interest cost of £111,250.
- This loan was repaid on 11 July 2025.
- A replacement £1m PWLB loan was taken on 15 July 2025 for five years at an interest rate of 4.81%, with an annual interest cost of £48,100.
- This produces a full year net interest payment saving of £63,150 pa
- Reflecting that the premium paid on clearing the loan will be released over the remaining life of the loan, the full year budget saving will reduce by £18,047 to a net position of £45,103 saving in 2026/27.

In addition:

- The PWLB loans were repaid in full in 2024, delivering savings of approximately £6.5 million.
- The refinancing of the State Street loan means the Council is now paying roughly half of what it was previously paying in interest.

To confirm the wider debt position:

- Boston Borough Council currently has the £1m PWLB loan referred to above.
- Just to give you information about our partners.....South Holland District Council has £67.456m of debt relating to its Housing Revenue Account.
- Neither South Holland District Council nor East Lindsey District Council has any external General Fund borrowing.

Supplementary Question to Councillor Sandeep Ghosh from Councillor Jonathan Noble:

The question was “Do you still stand by this statement?” It was a yes or no answer and clearly it's “No” Councillor Ghosh doesn't stand by that statement because on the very next page he talks about the Public Works, Loan Board loan of £1,000,000 taken out in July 2025 and interest rate of 4.81% so that is a debt. It's a debt. So we do have debts. But my

question about this PWB loan, this new one is, what is the money to be used for? One presumes its for a capital expenditure and in that case for what precisely?

Response from Councillor Sandeep Ghosh:

To pay back the State Steet loan, I've already answered.

2. Question to Councillor Sandeep Ghosh from Councillor Jonathan Noble:

What are the perceived advantages and disadvantages of using a Framework Agreement when it comes to the awarding of Council contracts?

Response from Councillor Sandeep Ghosh:

Thank you for your query regarding Framework Agreements. Below is an overview of the perceived advantages and disadvantages when awarding Council contracts through this route.

A perceived advantage of utilising a Framework Agreement is efficiency. Frameworks can streamline procurement by avoiding repeated full tender processes for every requirement. Once suppliers are awarded a place onto a framework agreement, Councils can call-off contracts quickly via direct award or mini-competition. This can save significant administrative time and cost. In addition to this, framework agreements can result in better rates being accessed due to the economies of scale of a national framework which can lead to bulk discounts and competitive fixed rates over the framework's duration. They are also a public-sector compliant route to market for the Council, which reduces legal risk of challenge for the Council.

A perceived disadvantage of utilising a Framework Agreement can be that it reduces competition. This is because once a framework is established, no new suppliers can join until it expires. This can exclude local suppliers from a process. There is also the perception that frameworks are more expensive as there is often a percentage rebate fee that is required to be paid to the framework provider.

Each framework provider is slightly different in how their frameworks can be accessed. The Procurement & Contracts service provide support with regards to procurement options providing the relevant Council Officer with a recommended approach. This includes frameworks, where applicable.

Supplementary Question to Councillor Sandeep Ghosh from Councillor Jonathan Noble:

Historically these kind of agreements are useful for smaller value items which require repeat orderings. But we have this framework agreement with Pagabo. But do we have any other framework agreements, other than the Pagabo one?

Response from Councillor Sandeep Ghosh:

It's a bit technical. I will respond to you with a written answer.

[A copy of the written response is appended to the Minutes.]

3. Question to Councillor Sandeep Ghosh from Councillor Jonathan Noble:

The cost of demolition works of all the structures on the B&M building and the Crown House sites was £380,637.60. Under the Council's current contract procedure rules, such a sum would be above current Procurement Act 2023 thresholds resulting in use of the UK Public Procedure – via an E-tendering Portal and Find a Tender notice. How many tenders were received by the Council for the aforementioned demolition contract?

Response from Councillor Sandeep Ghosh:

I thank Councillor Noble for his question. The demolition works were procured compliantly via the Pagabo Framework, a public-sector compliant framework that Boston Borough Council is able to utilise. This framework allows for the direct award of a contract to any company who has met the very stringent assessment and assurance requirements to be admitted onto the Framework; for the Rosegarth Square project, a direct award contract was entered into with Lindum, a local assured contractor. This contract award complied fully with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules as well as the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (under which the Pagabo Framework was awarded).

As the Council's contract for the scheme is with Lindum, the Council itself does not then seek or receive any tenders for the different elements of the contract such as demolition or electricity connection as those quotes are secured by the Council's contractor, Lindum, from its supply chain partners. In respect of the demolition works to which Councillor Noble refers, Lindum sought three quotes and secured two. The winning quote was then confirmed as representing best value for money by the Council's own Cost Consultants prior to Lindum contracting those works.

Supplementary Question to Councillor Sandeep Ghosh from Councillor Jonathan Noble:

As I said earlier these framework agreements are normally there for long term umbrella contracts with pre vetted suppliers for setting standard items, for example price quality for future smaller orders avoiding repeat returns. So why did we use a framework agreement for a contract that was so expensive, about £380,000?

Response from Councillor Sandeep Ghosh:

I'll go back to the previous answer I gave you. Frameworks can streamline procurement by avoiding repeated full tender process for every requirement. So that's your answer.

4. Question to Councillor Dale Broughton from Councillor Anne Dorrian:

Please provide an update on the GLMCCA Board Meetings you've attended as the representative of Boston Borough Council and a summary of decisions which will most affect the residents of Boston.

Response from Councillor Dale Broughton:

I attended the GLMCCA employment and skills board meeting in October. The meeting focused primarily on governance, programme updates and progression of proposed funding and transport initiatives across greater Lincolnshire. No decisions were made at that meeting which would have an immediate or direct impact on BBC and when meetings result in such decisions being made, members will be updated through the appropriate council channels.

Supplementary Question to Councillor Dale Broughton from Councillor Anne Dorrian:

Actually, a decision was made at that meeting. You voted during that meeting with the mayor, the Reform Mayor Dame Andrea Jenkyns, to withdraw free ESOL courses for the residents of Boston and given our reliance on migrant workers in our healthcare and medical industries, our food processing plants, our tourism and culture sections, how on earth are you going to mitigate the impact that it's going to have on those migrant workers?

Response from Councillor Dale Broughton:

I'm happy to send Councillor Dorrian a written response.

[A copy of the written response is appended to the Minutes.]

5. Question to Councillor Dale Broughton from Councillor Anne Dorrian:

Please outline how democratic representation for Boston residents is intended to operate within the proposed Southern Lincolnshire unitary, including the respective roles of councillors, neighbourhood structures, and any area-based committees?

Response from Councillor Dale Broughton:

A Greater Lincolnshire for All proposal submitted to Government sets out our vision for neighbourhood committee structures and involvement. Essentially, our suggestion in the proposal is a number of neighbourhood committees based on Primary Care Network areas with relevant ward Councillors from the Unitary Council, alongside Town and Parish Council representation and strategic partner representation. The final model will be for the new Councils to determine though.

In terms of democratic representation we set out in our proposal the number of Councillors we believe to be required per Council. However, for the chosen option, it will be for the Statutory Order to set out the initial arrangements.

Supplementary Question to Councillor Dale Broughton from Councillor Anne Dorrian:

So, for Boston residents, what binding decision making powers will neighbourhood or area structures have over budgets, service priorities and policy decisions? And how will

Boston's elected members be prevented from being consistently outvoted by a much larger Southern Lincolnshire authority?

Response from Councillor Dale Broughton:

Thank you for that Councillor Dorrian. I'm really surprised you're taking such an interest now in our Greater Lincolnshire For All proposal when we've had several Full Council meetings on it and none of you or any of your Boston independent councillors could be bothered to turn up, send apologies or anything else to the meeting. So, it's quite comical that you're now starting to question the proposal when you had no interest up to now, but I will give you a written response.

[A copy of the written response is appended to the Minutes.]

6. Question to Councillor Dale Broughton from Councillor Anne Dorrian:

How will financial decision-making and budget prioritisation within the proposed Southern Lincolnshire Unitary be governed within the new unitary authority to ensure fairness across different communities?

Response from Councillor Dale Broughton:

The budget setting process for the new Councils will be similar to the process we follow at present in the existing Councils. They will set an annual budget via Council. The new Councils would determine their priorities and identify how they wish to allocate the budget they have available against the services/activities they wish to deliver.

Supplementary Question to Councillor Dale Broughton from Councillor Anne Dorrian:

How will Boston residents be able to scrutinise and challenge financial decisions such as capital investment priorities, adult social care spend or homelessness funding, when those decisions are taken at scale, and what guarantees exist that Boston's high levels of deprivation and service, demand will not be diluted by competing priorities elsewhere in the southern Unitary?

Response from Councillor Dale Broughton:

Again, Councillor Dorrian, I'll give you the same answer to the last one if you'd have shown interest previously, you might know the answer to them questions. But I will give you a written response.

[A copy of the written response is appended to the Minutes.]

7. Question to Councillor Mike Gilbert from Councillor Anne Dorrian:

Please update Members on any recent progress against town centre development goals, including support for local traders and improvements to public amenities.

Response from Councillor Mike Gilbert:

I thank Cllr Dorrian for her question.

It gives me an opportunity to explain how as a local council we operate in a commercial and business environment over which we have far less control than people imagine we do. Sadly we can't sweep our hand at an empty shop and magically a business occupies it. What many people are becoming increasingly aware of is the state of the national economy is not in the responsibility of a local council to control. We don't control the commercial decisions of private businesses. Therefore, we have no short-term control over whether Banks leave our town, retail units are viable, or what changes there are in the pattern of retail and services in our area. We know policies around the minimum wage, business rates and welfare spending are set by government, and these policies affect our Borough and its business community. So with that statement out of the way, it is clear people should expect us as a local council to do what we can to mitigate the effects of whatever winds are battering us from Westminster and to improve our area in meaningful ways that may tilt our town away from the relentless decline that has affected so many towns in our country.

The Town Centre Strategy identified Clean and Safe as objectives for our town. In partnership with Boston Town Board we have secured funding for two Community Safety Wardens, who operating along side the police and our Environmental enforcement officers to monitor and enforce the Public Spaces Protection Orders and deal with littering and spitting etc. There is much to do to coordinate the activities of these important people and I am looking at the Idea of a community safety hub in the town centre where the public and agencies can have a single point of contact to share intelligence and report antisocial behaviour and other issues linked to public anxiety.

Since I took over the Portfolio for the Town centre in August last year I have established under the Town Centre Strategy, a town centre coordination group. This consists of all operational managers and portfolio holders responsible for delivery of services as well as events in the town centre. This enables us to refer issues into the group and to look at overcoming operational barriers to change and where possible funding opportunities. The scope of this group is wide and includes car parking and green spaces, heritage and culture as well as the market manager and Environmental services.

A review of the Town Centre plan is underway to ensure actions are being progressed, actions completed can be closed and outcomes reported, and more importantly. new and emerging issues captured to ensure we continue to respond to the changing needs of Boston town centre.

Our Market goes from strength to strength and last year won an award. We are looking to establish a closer working arrangement with HMP North Sea Camp to enable us to improve things like Town Centre Street name signage, and with other volunteers, the appearance of street furniture like finger posts and bollards, seating and bins, as well as tackling weed growth and general tidiness. This work will be enhanced I hope by a new volunteer scheme based on an allocation of tasks to volunteers, rather than a time-based and supervised model and will include a schedule for town centre upkeep and maintenance. I hope for reasons of civic pride and mental and physical wellbeing Boston's community come together and get involved as volunteers.

In respect of Boston being Open for business, I am actively pursuing the establishment of a Boston Business Association. This has been work in progress for over 18 months. However, I am hopeful that we can get this Association established shortly and then we can hear the views of the Business community and feed their observations into what I hope will evolve into a self-sustaining town centre development and community safety, eco

system. With the on going support of the Boston Town Board we have the opportunity to partner to spend money on the physical infrastructure of our Town Centre
In respect of the Culture, Heritage and Events, as I have said we now have operational managers contributing to our operational co ordination group. We also have had successful events such as the Xmas light switch on and with the support of the Boston Town Board we are looking to develop a range of promotions and events to celebrate Boston's Contribution to Establishing the World Class City of Boston Massachusetts 400 years ago in 2030. This celebration will I hope become a catalyst for a leap in our local prosperity.

With grants from central Govt and we need to ensure we use this money to its maximum impact. This council operates within an economic context that is not of our making. However we have an excellent opportunity to achieve lasting change it we avoid quick fixes and plan for longer term strategic change.

The remaining questions were withdrawn as the relevant members were not present to ask or respond.

[Councillor Peter Bedford left the meeting at 8.14pm, during consideration of the above item.]

The Meeting ended at 8.37 pm.

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Supplementary Questions and Written Responses Full Council – 12th January 2026

2. Supplementary Question to Councillor Sandeep Ghosh from Councillor Jonathan Noble:

Historically these kind of agreements are useful for smaller value items which require repeat orderings. But we have this framework agreement with Pagabo. But do we have any other framework agreements, other than the Pagabo one?

Response from Councillor Sandeep Ghosh:

It's a bit technical. I will respond to you with a written answer.

Written response from Councillor Sandeep Ghosh to Councillor Jonathan Noble:

Yes – Boston Borough Council does utilise other framework agreements to enter into contracts with suppliers. Please see some examples below:

- Fuel Card Services – Crown Commercial Services framework was utilised. This enabled savings compared to the previous contract in place, as well as a compliant route to market.
- Gas & Electricity Contracts – ESPO Framework was utilised. This offers a value for money solution with ESPO purchasing gas & electricity in advance to sell at competitive rates, proving value for money.
- Purchase of Personal, Protective Equipment (PPE) – ESPO Framework was utilised. This solution provided better value for money, with a % reduction in spend going via the framework instead of direct with the supplier.

The Contracts Register, which is published on the Council website, shows details of all contracts, including the “Tender Process Type”, which includes a Framework Agreement.

4. Supplementary Question to Councillor Dale Broughton from Councillor Anne Dorrian:

Actually, a decision was made at that meeting. You voted during that meeting with the mayor, the Reform Mayor Dame Andrea Jenkyns, to withdraw free ESOL courses for the residents of Boston and given our reliance on migrant workers in our healthcare and medical industries, our food processing plants, our tourism and culture sections, how on earth are you going to mitigate the impact that it's going to have on those migrant workers?

Response from Councillor Dale Broughton:

I'm happy to send Councillor Dorrian a written response.

Written response from Councillor Dale Broughton to Councillor Anne Dorrian:

The issue of ESOL funding is one that does impact on our communities and residents, which I am very aware of. I was content to support a wider look at how this funding and service was delivered and that is what was discussed by the GLCCA and at that time I was content to support the proposal being put forward by the Mayor and supported by other colleagues on the Board.

It was made very clear that a detailed consultation would take place.

Since that meeting, all Lincolnshire Leaders have been contacted and lobbied by Mark Locking, CEO of Lincoln College and chair of the Lincolnshire Federation of Colleges. They made very clear their concerns at how the change in funding would impact their provision of ESOL training and other endeavours the colleges provide to our residents.

At the most recent meeting of the GLCCA full council the proposal by the Skills Board was again discussed and while the vote was still to support the review, colleagues were able to challenge the reasoning behind the review and make sure that the consultation would be meaningful.

Colleagues highlighted the value of ESOL to businesses and those working who wanted to progress their potential and further integrate within our communities. They also asked that the consultation is meaningful and that the concerns of the colleges are understood and mitigated by discussion and agreement. The ESOL funding is not the major part of the funding package that affects colleges. They have other concerns that need to be understood.

All positions that I fully support following the letter from Lincolnshire colleges.

So, in answer to your direct question, the issues you raise will be mitigated by responding positively to the consultation and supporting the colleges, which I am happy to do.

5. Supplementary Question to Councillor Dale Broughton from Councillor Anne Dorrian:

So, for Boston residents, what binding decision making powers will neighbourhood or area structures have over budgets, service priorities and policy decisions? And how will Boston's elected members be prevented from being consistently outvoted by a much larger Southern Lincolnshire authority?

Response from Councillor Dale Broughton:

Thank you for that Councillor Dorrian. I'm really surprised you're taking such an interest now in our Greater Lincolnshire For All proposal when we've had several Full Council meetings on it and none of you or any of your Boston independent councillors could be bothered to turn up, send apologies or anything else to the meeting. So, it's quite comical that you're now starting to question the proposal when you had no interest up to now, but I will give you a written response.

Written response from Councillor Dale Broughton to Councillor Anne Dorrian:

How the new area committees function will ultimately be for the new councils to decide. We have proposed a model in GLFA but the final decision rests with the new councils.

6. Supplementary Question to Councillor Dale Broughton from Councillor Anne Dorrian:

How will Boston residents be able to scrutinise and challenge financial decisions such as capital investment priorities, adult social care spend or homelessness funding, when those decisions are taken at scale, and what guarantees exist that Boston's high levels of deprivation and service, demand will not be diluted by competing priorities elsewhere in the southern Unitary?

Response from Councillor Dale Broughton:

Again, Councillor Dorrian, I'll give you the same answer to the last one if you'd have shown interest previously, you might know the answer to them questions. But I will give you a written response.

Written response from Councillor Dale Broughton to Councillor Anne Dorrian:

Like there is now, there will be a range of mechanisms that allow elected councillors and the community to scrutinise priorities and decisions of the new councils and to engage in their decision making. The detail of the methods/approach will be for the new councils to decide.

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