



Report To:	Full Council
Date:	2 nd March 2026
Subject:	Annual Budget Report 2026/27, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Capital Programme and Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Policy/Strategy, Annual Delivery Plan, Living Wage Supplement and Pay Policy Statement
Purpose:	To approve: The General Fund Budget for 2026/27, including the use of reserves, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Capital Programme and Strategy, Treasury Management Policy/Strategy, the Annual Delivery Plan, Living Wage Supplement and Pay Policy Statement, including the approval of Council Tax levels.
Key Decision:	N/A
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Sandeep Ghosh, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Growth
Report Of:	Russell Stone, Director of Finance (S151 Officer)
Report Author:	Russell Stone, Director of Finance (S151 Officer) Ramesh Prashar, Interim Finance Consultant Nicole Hayes, Head of Finance Delivery - BBC (PSPSL)
Ward(s) Affected:	All
Exempt Report:	No

Summary

Attached to this report is the final detail of the 2026/27 budget, the 5-year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) from 2026/27 to 2030/31, Capital Programme, Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Policy/Strategy, the Annual Delivery Plan for 2026/27, Living Wage Supplement and Pay Policy Statement.

The report also includes the recommended level of Council Tax for 2026/27, including the of the IDB levy.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Council approves the following recommendations as considered by Cabinet on 18 February 2026:

1. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (at Appendix 1) be approved;
2. That it be noted that the Council Tax Base for Boston Borough Council (BBC) of 20,572 and 9,455 for Boston Special Expenses (Band D equivalent) has been set for 2026/27 and on the 23 December 2025 by the Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer, under officer delegation in line with the Constitution;
3. That the Revenue Estimates for the General Fund and Boston Special Expenses for 2026/27 (Appendices 1, 1A and 1B) be approved;
4. The additions to and use of reserves (as detailed at Appendix 1) be approved;
5. The Capital Programme and Capital Strategy (Appendices 2 and 3) be approved;
6. That the Treasury Management Policy Statement Treasury Management Strategy Statement MRP Policy and Annual Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Practices (Appendix 4A, 4B and 4C) be approved;
7. The Fees and Charges Schedule 2026/27 (Appendix 5) be approved;
8. That the report of the Section 151 Officer, under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the budget calculations and adequacy of proposed financial reserves be noted (Paragraph 10).
9. That the Council Tax for a Band D property in 2026/27 be set at £231.48 (£7.83 per annum increase on 2025/26 levels) for Boston Borough Council and £82.44 (£1.35 per annum increase on 2025/26 levels) for Boston Special Expenses; and
10. The Annual Delivery Plan for 2026/27 (Appendix 6) be approved.

It is recommended that Council:

11. Approve the application of the Living Wage Supplement to be paid to all employees whose current hourly rate falls below the Real Living Wage Foundation rate of £13.45 with effect from 1 April 2026 as outlined in paragraphs 9.2 and 9.3 of this report; and
12. Approve the Pay Policy report and Statement 2026/27 as outlined in Appendix 8A and 8B.

Reasons for Recommendations

To comply with the budgetary and policy framework and legislative requirement.

Other Options Considered

No other options were considered.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Local Government Finance Act 1972 requires the Council to set a balanced, risk assessed budget each year and to approve the setting of Council Tax by 11 March in each year.
- 1.2 This year's budget has been set within a background of unprecedented inflationary pressures and significant changes in resident, customer and business needs as well as proposed significant changes to funding arrangements. Despite these challenges the Council's financial position means that it is able to take a considered approach to mitigating these exceptional pressures. The attached Budget Report sets out the Council's Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2026/27, the Council Tax increases proposed, the MTFS to 2030/31, associated financial strategies and Annual Delivery Plan.
- 1.3 The preparation of the budget for 2026/27 has been a detailed process involving officers and the attached appendices reflect the latest known position. The report below sets out the basis for the final budget and MTFS for the next five years and assumptions used in its development.
- 1.4 The Provisional Local Government Settlement announced on 17 December 2025 included provisional allocations for 2027/28 and 2028/29 allocations. The settlement reflects changes made through the 2024 Autumn Budget & Spending Review, 2025 Budget and 20 November Policy Statement which collectively results in an unprecedented level of change to the Local Government Finance system and significant added complexity.
- 1.5 The Final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2026/27 was released in February 2026. For authorities which are in business rates pool for 2025/26, the Fair Funding Assessment allocations have been adjusted between the Provisional and Final Local Government Finance Settlement to reflect the restated 2025/26 baselines due to the new treatment of pooling gains.
- 1.6 The budget proposals have been subject to review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 January 2026 with the draft minutes attached at Appendix 7. A budget consultation process with the public has been completed. The draft Treasury Management Strategy was also presented to Audit and Governance Committee on 19 January 2026.

2. Key Budget Pressures

2.1 Identified below are the key assumptions included within the proposed budget:

- The changes from the Local Government Finance settlement have been incorporated.
- The adjustments required between the Provisional and Final Local Government Finance Settlement for Boston Borough Council, has resulted in a reduction in Revenue Support Grant for 2026/27 of £0.234m, which is fully offset by an Additional Support Grant of the same value.
- Inflation increases have been reviewed throughout the MTFS and are included at appropriate levels. Ongoing inflationary pressures and wider economic uncertainty continue to make the forecasting of future expenditure increasingly volatile.
- For the pay award 2026/27 to 2030/31 a 3.0% increase has been assumed.
- Based on the Pension Triennial Valuation the pension contribution will be 18.2% in 2026/27 with an additional lump sum amount payable towards the deficit on the pension scheme reducing from £741k to £493k. This rate is applied only to those staff in the local government pension scheme. Any vacant posts are assumed to be within the pension scheme.
- The return on cash investment reflects the level of cash balances and current Bank of England base rates alongside the forecasts provided by our external treasury advisors.

3. Council Tax and Business Rates

3.1 District Councils are permitted to increase their Relevant Basic Amount (RBA) of Council Tax by up to 3% or £5, whichever is higher. The RBA takes into account the total of the Council precepts plus Boston Special Expenses.

3.2 The MTFS assumes a Council Tax increase in line with the maximum allowed under the Local Government Finance Settlement. In the case of Boston Borough for 2026/27 this is a £7.83 (3.5%) per annum increase (for band D properties). The increase is reflected through the MTFS. The table below demonstrates that the annual increase is within the 3% threshold when considering the RBA.

Relevant Basic Amount Calculation	2025/26		2026/27		Movement	
	Precept (£)	Band D (£)	Precept (£)	Band D (£)	£	%
Boston Special Expenses	769,057	81.09	779,470	82.44	1.35	1.67
BBC	4,538,082	223.65	4,762,006	231.48	7.83	3.50
Total – RBA	5,307,139	261.55	5,541,476	269.37	7.82	2.99
Tax Base	No of Band D Properties		No of Band D Properties		Change in Properties	%
Boston Special Expenses	9,484		9,455		(29)	(0.31)
BBC	20,291		20,572		281	1.38

- 3.3 The tax base projections for 2026/27 have provided for a growth of 281 band D equivalent properties. Future growth has been projected at 1.5%.
- 3.4 A revaluation exercise for Business Rates will take effect from 1 April 2026, with 5 new multipliers replacing the current 2 multipliers. A provision has been put aside for any potential appeals based on intelligence from the Council's advisors to cover any effects from this, but there still remains a large amount of uncertainty in this area.
- 3.5 As well as the potential for the authority to attract additional income through retained business rates there is also the risk of uncertainty through a reduction in the amount of business rates that it collects, this has been further exacerbated by economic impacts. This coupled with uncertainties relating to appeals against rateable values for business premises, with the potential for successful appeals being backdated makes estimating income accurately extremely challenging and potentially volatile.

4. Local Government Settlement

- 4.1 The Final Local Government Finance settlement delivered in February 2026 has provided the following support.

Local Government Finance Settlement	Settlement 2025/26	Settlement 2026/27	Difference
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Revenue Support Grant	(482)	(3,353)	(2,871)
Additional Support Grant	-	(234)	(234)
Funding Floor Guarantee	(255)	-	255
Recovery Grant	(306)	(306)	-
New Homes Bonus	(174)	-	174
Legacy Grants now rolled into RSG	(209)	-	209
Business Rates	(2,830)	(2,797)	33
S31 Grants relating to Business Rates	(2,382)	-	2,382
Total	(6,638)	(6,690)	(52)

- 4.2 As a result of the reset of the Business Rates Retention System from 1 April 2026 as part of the Government's Fair Funding Review, the net Retained Business Rates income has reduced significantly from prior years. This is compensated by an increase in Revenue Support Grant.
- 4.3 Changes from previous years include 4 new consolidated grants, bringing together 16 funding streams over the multi-year Settlement, alongside grants that have been rolled into the Revenue Support Grant. Of these 4 grants, 2 are applicable to Boston Borough Council – Homelessness, Rough Sleeping & Domestic Abuse Grant and the Crisis & Resilience Fund.
- 4.4 The 2026/27 Local Government Finance Settlement includes provisional allocations for 2027/28 and 2028/29.
- 4.5 Amongst other changes, the spending comparisons made by MHCLG within the settlement have been assessed against values from 2024/25 and not 2025/26.
- 4.6 Given the scale of change being experienced, the main areas of change within the settlement are set out below.
- **Fair Funding Assessment** – MHCLG has published the provisional outcome of the Fair Funding Review which sets the new levels of funding for Local Authorities. The settlement suggests that the Fair Funding Assessment amounts also include Simpler Recycling new burdens (primarily food waste), but this is not itemised, and analysis suggests there is little additional funding that could account for this.
 - **Funding Floor** – MHCLG has decided to implement a 2-tier system of funding floors. This means that some Local Authorities will receive varying levels of funding protection depending on how far from the newly assessed level of funding they are.
 - **Business Rates Reset, Revaluation and Multiplier Reform** – the split of Fair Funding Assessment to Baseline Funding Level and Revenue Support Grant, and the new top-up and tariff amounts, reflects MHCLG's latest analysis on the impact of the business rates revaluation, business rates reset and introduction of new business rates multipliers.

5 **Internal Drainage Boards**

- 5.1 Internal Drainage Board (IDB) increases are set out in the table below. The Council is liaising with the local Internal Drainage Boards to work towards limiting future increases where possible. Lobbying of government is also underway with the impact of this loss of revenue to the Council due to the embedded levy having an impact every year that passes.

Internal Drainage Board	2021/22 (Actual) £	2025/26 (Actual) £	2026/27 Draft Budget £	Increase over 2025/26 £	Increase over 2025/26 %	Increase 2021/22 £	Increase 2021/22 %
Witham Fourth Internal Drainage Board	1,108,050	1,547,276	1,625,698	78,422	5.07	517,648	46.72
Welland and Deepings Internal Drainage Board	61,851	85,478	87,895	2,417	2.83	26,044	42.11
Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board	842,838	1,293,006	1,357,420	64,414	4.98	514,582	61.05
South Holland Drainage Board	973	1,290	1,348	58	4.50	375	38.54
Total	2,013,712	2,927,050	3,072,361	145,311	4.96	1,058,649	52.57

6 Capital Programme

6.1 The Capital Programmes and Capital Strategy are included at Appendices 1, 2 and 3.

6.2 The five-year General Fund Capital Programme includes provision for Investment and Growth linked to the Councils Strategic objectives. The main areas of continued investment are:

- Disabled Facilities Grant.
- Pride in Place.
- Leisure.
- Food Waste.
- Vehicle Replacement.
- Investment in IT.

6.3 Due to the nature of some capital projects, it can be common for large scale project timing to change over the medium term. This budget provides the best estimates of deliverability available at the time of production and the programme will be flexed over time with approvals sought in line with the Council's financial procedure rules.

7 Reserves

7.1 A detailed breakdown of Reserve movements are included in Appendix 1 to this report.

8 Balancing the Budget and Other Proposed Changes

8.1 In terms of balancing the budget the following areas have been considered as part of the budget setting process:

Short Term

- Service Reviews planned.
- Continued work to engage on the Internal Drainage Board financing challenge.
- Review of all new pressures and service budgets to consider efficiency opportunities and alternative options.

- Income opportunities including reviews of fees and charges.
- Reviewing all assets to maximise income and efficiency of use.

Medium Term

- Work with PSPSL in terms of its transformation plans for the future.
- Driving transformational change using the SELCP sub-regional partnership as a driver for innovation and efficiency.
- Delivering and supporting economic growth

9 Additional Considerations

- 9.1 **Annual Delivery Plan** - The South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (SELCP) Annual Delivery Plan (Appendix 6) identifies the planned programme of work for the Partnership and sovereign Councils for 2026/27, drawing on the previously approved Partnership Work Programme, as well as wider opportunities that have since been identified.
- 9.2 **Real Living Wage Pay Supplement** - Since 2021, the Council has chosen to apply a pay supplement specifically to support its lowest paid employees and assist them in meeting the cost of living. This supplement, reviewed each April, ensures their earnings align with the real Living Wage as set by the Living Wage Foundation.
- 9.3 The Living Wage Foundation announced a new rate of £13.45 per hour in October 2025. The Council's lowest paid employees are currently earning £12.65 per hour in line with NJC pay scales. Applying the Real Living Wage supplement with effect from 1 April 2026 will result in an additional cost of £50k. The NJC pay award is often not implemented until later in the year, when implemented if the NJC hourly rate is above the Real Living Wage rate, the supplement will no longer be applicable. This will be included as a budgetary adjustment during 2026/27.
- 9.4 **Pay Policy Statement** - Under Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011, a Pay Policy Statement is required to be produced annually and must be approved by Council. This has been a requirement since 2012/13. The Pay Policy Statement, once approved, must be published on the Council's website by 31 March 2026. This report presents the Pay Policy Statement for 2026/2027. The Pay Policy report and Statement for 2026/27 is attached at Appendix 8A and 8B.

10 Section 25 - Report of the Section 151 Officer as to the Robustness of the Estimates Made for the Purposes of the Budget Calculations and the Adequacy of the Proposed Financial Reserves.

- 10.1 *Under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, the Authority's Chief Financial Officer (presently the Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer) is required to report to Council on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the Council's Budget calculations and the adequacy of the General Fund balances and reserves. The Council must have regard to this report, which is set out below, when making decisions in respect of the Budget.*
- 10.2 *In expressing the opinion, the Section 151 Officer has considered the financial management and control frameworks that are in place, the budget assumptions, the financial risks facing the council and the level of reserves.*

- 10.3 *Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 concentrates primarily on the uncertainties within the forthcoming budget year, however longer-term uncertainties and increasing pressures on the Council's finances also inform consideration of the adequacy of the level of reserves for the medium term.*

Financial Controls

- 10.4 *The Section 151 Officer has responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal control is maintained to provide an assessment of the current position across the whole Council's finances and identifying areas for improvement where appropriate.*
- 10.5 *The Code of Practice for Financial Management (the FM Code) was introduced by CIPFA in November 2019. The Code clarifies how Chief Finance Officers should satisfy their statutory responsibility for good financial administration as required in section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.*

Medium Term Financial Planning

- 10.6 *The Council has completed successfully a medium-term financial planning process for both the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme. In doing so, it has set down a Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) over 5 years and has successfully forecast the estimated budget position for 2026/27 and the years following.*
- 10.7 *In forming the MTFS and the associated suite of reports appended to the Draft Budget 2026/27 the Council has demonstrated a significant capability to frame and form both strategic and operational initiatives to manage the strategic position.*

Council Tax

- 10.8 *A further key component in balancing the Budget has been the recommendation for the agreement by Council of an increase in Council Tax It is of the utmost importance that this stream of funding is agreed in order to (a) protect the strategic wellbeing of the Council in future years and (b) to suppress the need for additional savings in those years.*

Reserves

- 10.9 *The Section 151 Officer considers that level of Reserves is currently sufficient, in respect of any ongoing risks and challenges set out in the MTFS.*

Budget Assumptions and Background

- 10.10 *The Section 151 Officer is satisfied that the Draft Budget 2026/27 has been based on the best available information and has used reasonable assumptions and approaches that are commonly used across the Local Government sector.*

10.11 *In addition, a number of key processes have been set in place and the Section 151 Officer is generally satisfied that:*

- i. *Existing and future expenditure pressures have been suitably estimated using suitable techniques and by reference to evidence and relevant professional advice and informed opinion.*
- ii. *The senior members of the Finance Team and/or the Section 151 Officer have provided advice to Directorates, the Senior Leadership Team and Members throughout the process.*

On Amendments to the Draft Budget 2026/27

10.12 *Should Amendments to the Budget be set before Council that impair the prospect that the Budget and Council Tax for 2026/27 can be set lawfully by (a) implying an imbalance or other aspect which the Section 151 Officer determines as resulting in a loss or (b) deems to be otherwise unlawful, Council will not be able to set a lawful Budget as is required by statute. Under these circumstances, should they arise, Council would (a) need to re-consider the adjustment that has resulted in the position reached or (b) present alternative proposals that in the view of the Statutory Officer (s) deal with the observed impediment.*

11 Conclusion

11.1 That the final revenue and capital budgets, the MTFS and associated strategies be approved by Full Council.

Implications

South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

This report enables Boston Borough Council to approve its Budget and Council Tax for 2026/27 whilst considering the longer-term outlook.

This budget support the SELCP partnership arrangements

Corporate Priorities

This budget has been built in line with corporate priorities.

Staffing

The Equality Act requires the Council to consider any equality impacts in relation to staff from these plans. As projects within the programme are developed a draft impact assessment will be discussed with Trades Unions and staff, and especially as individual projects are delivered.

Workforce Capacity Implications

Contained within the report.

Constitutional and Legal Implications

This report is required by virtue of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended by the Localism Act 2011.

Data Protection

None

Financial

Contained within the report.

Risk Management

Risk management is considered as part of the budget setting process.

Stakeholder / Consultation / Timescales

The Council has a legal duty to consult with persons or representative bodies who are subject to non-domestic rates on its budget proposals.

Reputation

None

Contracts

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Equality and Diversity/ Human Rights/ Safeguarding

New Equality Impact Assessments will be developed and published wherever these are required and will be made available during the management and decision-making of the Programme.

Health And Wellbeing

None

Climate Change and Environmental Implications

None

Acronyms

CDS	Credit Default Swaps
CFR	Capital Financing Requirement
CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
DHLUC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
DMADF	UK Debt Management Agency Deposit Facility
ECL	Expected Credit Loss
EPR	Extended Producers Responsibility
GPOC	General Power of Competence
IDB	Internal Drainage Board
IFRS	International Financial Reporting Standards
IMP	Investment Management Practices
LGR	Local Government Reorganisation
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
MRP	Minimum Revenue Provision
MTFS	Medium Term Financial Strategy
PSPSL	Public Sector Partnership Services LTD
PWLB	Public Works Loan Board
RBA	Relevant Basic Amount
REFCUS	Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital under Statute
SELCP	South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership
SONIA	Sterling Overnight Index Average
TMP	Treasury Management Practices
UKSPF	UK Shared Prosperity Fund
VRP	Voluntary Revenue Provision

Appendices

Appendix 1	Draft Budget Setting Report 2026-27.
Appendix 1A	Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026 to 2031 (By Account).
Appendix 1B	Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026 to 2031 (By Service).
Appendix 2	Capital Programme 2026-27 to 2030-31.
Appendix 3	Capital Strategy 2026-27.
Appendix 4A	Treasury Management Policy Statement 2026-27.
Appendix 4B	Treasury Management Strategy, MRP Policy and AIS 2026-27.
Appendix 4C	Treasury Management Practices 2026-27.
Appendix 5	Fees and Charges 2026-27.
Appendix 6	South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership Annual Delivery Plan 2026-27.
Appendix 7	Overview & Scrutiny Committee Minutes - 15 January 2026.
Appendix 8A	Pay Policy Report 2026-27.
Appendix 8B	Pay Policy Statement 2026-27.

Background Papers

No background papers as defined in Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the production of this report.

Chronological History of this Report

Cabinet – 18 February 2026

Audit and Governance Committee – 19 January 2026 (Treasury Management Strategy)

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 15 January 2026 (Budget Proposals)

Report Approval

Report authors: Russell Stone, Director of Finance (S151 Officer)
Russell.Stone@Sholland.gov.uk
Ramesh Prashar, Interim Finance Consultant
Ramesh.prashar@Sholland.gov.uk
Nicole Hayes, Head of Finance Delivery - BBC (PSPSL)
Nicole.Hayes@pspsl.co.uk

Signed off by: Russell Stone, Director of Finance (S151 Officer)
Russell.Stone@Sholland.gov.uk

Approved for publication: Councillor Sandeep Ghosh, Portfolio Holder for Finance and
Economic Growth
Sandeep.Ghosh@boston.gov.uk