

Boston Borough Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet** held in the Committee Room - Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston, PE21 8QR on Wednesday 18th February 2026 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor Dale Broughton (Leader), in the Chair.

Councillors Mike Gilbert (Deputy Leader), Callum Butler, Sandeep Ghosh, Claire Rylott and Helen Staples.

Officers:

Chief Executive, Director of Finance (S151 Officer), Assistant Director - Communities and Housing Services, Head of Finance Delivery - BBC (PSPSL), Interim Finance Consultant (virtually) and Democratic Services Team Leader.

53 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors John Baxter, Chris Mountain and Sarah Sharpe.

54 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

55 Minutes

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 27th January 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

56 Questions from Members of the Public

No questions were received.

57 Recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny (Standing Item)*

There were no recommendations.

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

There were no recommendations.

59 South & East Lincolnshire Community Safety Strategy

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Dale Broughton, presented a report by the Assistant Director – Communities & Housing Services, who was in attendance, which set out the refreshed South & East Lincolnshire Community Safety Strategy following a comprehensive strategic review undertaken across the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership.

The Leader explained that the Strategy detailed how Boston Borough Council, South Holland District Council and East Lindsey District Council would continue to work collaboratively with key statutory partners, including Lincolnshire Police, Lincolnshire Fire & Rescue, public health bodies and the voluntary and community sector, to reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime across the sub-region.

Members were advised that the Strategy fulfilled the Partnership's statutory responsibilities under Sections 5–7 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and complemented county-level activity delivered through the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership, which discharged several duties on behalf of responsible authorities, such as public consultation and domestic abuse-related death reviews.

The Leader highlighted that the Strategy had been developed using a wide evidence base, including police data, local health information, the Lincolnshire Strategic Needs Assessment, and findings from recent consultation and engagement exercises. This process identified four clear priorities for the Partnership:

1. Tackling anti-social behaviour, particularly neighbour-related issues;
2. Improving understanding of fear of crime and wider perceptions;
3. Supporting the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership's place-based, project-driven approach; and
4. Encouraging increased reporting to strengthen the local intelligence picture.

The Leader further noted that the Strategy had been reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the annual Crime and Disorder review, receiving support for its aims, evidence base and alignment with local priorities.

During discussion, Members conveyed their best wishes to a colleague who was absent following a recent operation.

The meeting recognised the substantial contribution made by the Community Safety Officers since taking up their posts. It was noted that between August and December they had undertaken extensive patrols, during which 38 individuals had been approached for drinking alcohol within the Public Spaces Protection Order area, and 32 pieces of intelligence had been passed to Lincolnshire Police to support ongoing enforcement and problem-solving activity.

Members referred to recent information provided by the Chief Constable at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which indicated overall crime in Boston was down 1.7% year on year, with serious violence with injury down 13% and violence without injury down 13.3%. These figures were regarded as encouraging evidence of the impact of joint working and targeted activity.

The meeting further noted that the Community Safety Officers were regarded as approachable and visible within the community, regularly engaging with residents, local businesses and visitors to the town. Their work extended beyond the town centre, with patrols also taking place in surrounding neighbourhoods and parish areas, contributing to wider reassurance and early intervention.

Members discussed the importance of maintaining an intelligence-led approach to policing. It was emphasised that accurate and timely reporting of incidents by the public was essential, as failure to report concerns could create a misleading picture of local crime levels and potentially affect resourcing decisions. The meeting encouraged residents to report any issues and to obtain a crime reference number to ensure incidents were formally recorded, helping to strengthen the intelligence base and support future bids for police funding where relevant.

Overall, Members felt that the Strategy aligned well with the evidence presented and supported the continuation of collaborative work to tackle crime, anti-social behaviour and perceptions of safety across the area.

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

Resolved:

- 1. That the contents of the report and the work of partners in addressing crime and disorder in South and East Lincolnshire and Lincolnshire as a whole be noted;**
- 2. That Full Council be recommended to adopt the Community Safety Strategy which sets out the areas of focus identified by the South and East Lincolnshire Community Safety Partnership; and**
- 3. That Full Council be recommended to delegate authority to the executive of the authority to make any future amendments to the Strategy as required to meet emerging needs identified and that subject to Full Council authorisation the Cabinet delegates authority to the Assistant Director – Communities and Housing Services, in consultation with relevant Portfolio Holders, to amend the Strategy.**

60 Annual Budget Report 2026/27, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Capital Programme and Capital Strategy Treasury management Policy/Strategy, and Annual Delivery Plan

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Growth presented the Annual Budget Report 2026/27, together with the Medium Term Financial Strategy, Capital Programme, Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Policy/Strategy, and the Annual Delivery Plan, as set out in the published agenda. The Director of Finance (S151 Officer) and the Head of Finance Delivery – BBC (PSPSL) were in attendance to support, and the Interim Finance Consultant was in attendance virtually.

The Portfolio Holder outlined the national and local financial context within which the proposals had been developed, referring to the late confirmation of the Local Government Finance Settlement, the implications of the Government's Fair Funding Review, and ongoing pressures including inflation, increased service demand and the impact of the Internal Drainage Board levy.

Members were advised that the budget had been through all relevant committees, with every Member given the opportunity to ask questions during the scrutiny process. It was noted that despite significant challenges, the proposed budget for 2026/27 presented a balanced position without requiring in-year efficiency savings.

The Leader recorded his thanks to the Finance Team for their extensive work in bringing forward the budget and highlighted the importance of understanding how Council Tax income was apportioned, particularly in light of the pressures created by the IDB levy. It was noted that the proposals had been examined thoroughly, ensuring that all Members had ample opportunity to ask questions and scrutinise the detail.

Members discussed the ongoing impact of the Internal Drainage Board (IDB) levy, confirming that it continued to place significant pressure on the Council's finances. Reference was made to how little of every £10 of Council Tax income was retained by the Borough Council once statutory precepts were applied, demonstrating the scale of the issue.

Although the report contained a substantial amount of financial information, Members considered the key message to be that the Council had managed its resources responsibly, despite the negative effects of national funding arrangements, some of which had not fully met local needs. It was observed that the authority remained in a stronger financial position than many councils within the county, with others facing considerably larger budget gaps.

Appreciation was expressed for the commitment and hard work of staff throughout what had been a challenging period, particularly with Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) underway. Members noted that the authority was on course to leave the organisation in a healthy financial position, and recorded their admiration for the professionalism shown across the organisation. Thanks were extended to the wider team for achieving a balanced position under difficult circumstances, and it was emphasised that, as LGR progressed, the priority for any future authority would need to remain the residents of Boston, with strong financial discipline essential to ensuring the borough was transferred in a stable and responsible condition.

Members welcomed the fact that the Council had not needed to seek Government permission to raise Council Tax above the 3% limit, viewing this as further evidence of prudent financial management.

The meeting recognised that this had been a difficult budget to prepare, particularly given the significant and ongoing pressure created by the Internal Drainage Board (IDB) levy, which had increased by 56% since 2021/22, with future rises still uncertain. Members supported the approach of maintaining reserves at a safe level to protect statutory services and ensuring costs continued to be carefully managed. It was also noted that a special interest group continued to lobby Government for fairer and more equitable funding arrangements in relation to the IDB levy, and Members acknowledged the value of this work in helping the Council remain in a comparatively secure financial position.

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

Resolved:

1. That the Draft Budget 2026/27, including all appendices, be approved and that it be forwarded to Council on 2nd March 2026 for consideration and approval with the following specific recommendations:
 - a) That the Medium Term Financial Strategy (at Appendix 1) be approved.
 - b) 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, as of the 23rd December 2025, by the Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer under officer delegation in line with the Constitution;
 - c) That the Revenue Estimates for the General Fund and Boston Special Expenses for 2026/27 (in Appendices 1, 1A and 1B within the report) be approved;
 - d) That the additions to and use of reserves (in Appendix 1 within the report) be approved;
 - e) That the Capital Programme and Capital Strategy (in Appendices 2 and 3 within the report) be approved;
 - f) That the Treasury Management Policy Statement Treasury Management Strategy Statement MRP Policy and Annual Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Practices (in Appendices 4A, 4B and 4C within the report) be approved;
 - g) That the Fees and Charges Schedule 2026/27 (in Appendix 5 within the report) be approved;
 - h) 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 (in Paragraph 10 within the report);
 - i) 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
 - j) That the Annual Delivery Plan for 2026/27 (in Appendix 6 within the report) be approved.
2. That authority be delegated to the Director of Finance (S151 Officer), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, for the further amendment of this document (where needed to ensure financial integrity and reconciliation) in preparation for Council on 2nd March 2026.

The Meeting ended at 6.22 pm.