

Boston Borough Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held in the Committee Room - Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston, PE21 8QR on Thursday 30th April 2026 at 6.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Suzanne Welberry (Vice-Chairman) in the Chair.
Councillors Alison Austin (substitute for Paul Gleeson), Richard Austin BEM, David Brown, Neil Drayton, Stuart Evans, Andy Izard, Ralph Pryke and David Scoot.

In attendance:
Councillor Peter Bedford.

Officers:
Service Director – Regulatory, Flood and Water Manager, Area Flood Risk Manager, Chief Executive, Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Officer, Community Resilience Officer, Partnership Resilience Manager, Democratic Services Team Leader, Group Manager – Insights & Transformation and Democratic Services Officer.

90 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Anton Dani, Emma Cresswell, Paul Gleeson (substituted by Councillor Alison Austin), Patsie Marson, Barrie Pierpoint and Lina Savickiene.

91 Declarations of Interest

Several Members declared interests in relation to items on the agenda.

Councillors Welberry, Pryke and Scoot declared that they were Members of the Board of Public Sector Partnership Services (PSPS). These interests were noted in relation to agenda items where reference was made to partnership working or shared service arrangements.

Councillors Pryke, Welberry, Scoot and Richard Austin also declared that they were Members of the Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board. These declarations were made in respect of the item relating to the Section 19 Flooding Investigation Report: Wyberton West Road / Park Road, Boston, given the role of the Internal Drainage Board as a Risk Management Authority referenced within the report and presentations.

92 Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 10th February 2026 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

93 Public Questions

No questions were received from the public.

94 Section 19; Flooding Investigation Report; Wyberton West Road / Park Road, Boston

The Chairman introduced the item and welcomed representatives of the relevant Risk Management Authorities to the meeting.

The Service Director – Regulatory, at the invitation of the Chairman, presented the report and provided a detailed introduction to the matter before the Committee. Members were reminded that the item related to the flooding event of 6th January 2025, which resulted in internal flooding to 38 residential properties within the Wyberton West Road and Park Road areas of Boston.

The Service Director – Regulatory explained that, in accordance with the requirements of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, Lincolnshire County Council, in its capacity as Lead Local Flood Authority, had undertaken a Section 19 flood investigation to establish the causes of the event and identify the relevant Risk Management Authorities. The final Section 19 Flood Investigation Report (S19-941, dated 30 July 2025) was attached to the agenda as Appendix A.

It was further outlined that the Section 19 report had previously been considered by the Committee, at which time Members had resolved to invite representatives of the Risk Management Authorities to attend a future meeting to provide an update on how the recommendations arising from the investigation, as set out within Appendix A, had been addressed or were intended to be progressed. The purpose of the item was therefore to enable the Committee to scrutinise the actions taken to date and to consider whether further steps were required.

Following the introduction of the report, the Chairman invited the representatives of the Risk Management Authorities to present to the Committee.

The Flood and Water Manager from Lincolnshire County Council, in the capacity of Lead Local Flood Authority, provided an overview of the statutory framework governing Section 19 investigations. It was explained that such investigations were undertaken to establish the causes of flooding events affecting internal property flooding and to identify those organisations with relevant flood risk management responsibilities. The Committee was advised that, whilst the process allowed for recommendations to be made, there were no statutory powers to compel delivery, and therefore implementation relied on partnership working between the relevant authorities.

The Committee were informed of the increasing scale and frequency of flood events across Lincolnshire in recent years, noting that a significant number of properties had been impacted by flooding across multiple events. It was emphasised that, although flood water often receded quickly, the longer-term impacts on affected residents could be substantial and enduring. The presentation also highlighted the criteria for undertaking Section 19 investigations, with particular emphasis on internal flooding as the primary trigger for a formal investigation.

In relation to the event of January 2025, it was confirmed that the investigation, as set out within Appendix A, had identified a combination of contributing factors, including extreme rainfall, saturated and frozen ground conditions, rapid runoff from the wider catchment,

and elevated tidal levels, which together resulted in increased pressure within the South Forty Foot Drain, leading to overtopping at known low points along the flood defence system, which was identified as the principal mechanism for the flooding experienced within the affected residential areas.

The Area Flood Risk Manager from the Environment Agency then addressed the Committee and outlined the organisation's responsibilities for managing flood risk from main rivers and the sea. It was explained that the Environment Agency also had responsibility for the operation of flood warning systems and the development of long-term investment programmes aimed at reducing flood risk.

In response to the recommendations within the Section 19 report (Appendix A), the Committee was advised that a new, localised fluvial flood warning area had been established for the affected community following the January 2025 event. This was intended to ensure that residents would receive more targeted and timely warnings in the event of future flooding. It was noted that the development of such warning areas required detailed technical assessment, including establishing appropriate trigger levels, to ensure both accuracy and reliability.

The Committee were also informed that a review of hydraulic modelling for the South Forty Foot Drain had been undertaken following the event. The updated modelling had broadly confirmed the assumptions and outputs of earlier modelling work, although it was acknowledged that additional refinement work may be undertaken as part of ongoing investigations. It was further reported that funding had been secured for the 2026/27 financial year to undertake more detailed investigation into flood defences within the Boston area, including assessment of embankment condition, wall integrity, and potential issues relating to settlement and seepage, as identified within Appendix A.

The Chief Executive of the Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board then provided an update in respect of operational arrangements within the wider drainage network. The Committee was advised that significant improvements had been made to the management of pumping stations since earlier flood events, including the introduction of enhanced telemetry systems which allowed for remote operation and more rapid implementation of emergency pumping profiles.

It was explained that, whereas manual intervention had previously been required across multiple sites, the new system allowed for a more coordinated and responsive approach to managing water levels across the catchment during extreme conditions. It was further outlined that the drainage network within the catchment remained highly complex, with many pumping stations and interconnected watercourses. As such, management of water levels required a balance between protecting downstream areas, including Boston, and avoiding adverse impacts within upstream catchments. Ongoing discussions between partner organisations were reported to be taking place to explore improvements to system integration and operational response during future events.

The Committee then received a briefing from the Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Officer and the Community Resilience Officer, from the Lincolnshire Fire & Rescue Emergency Planning & Business Continuity Service, who outlined the work being undertaken to support community preparedness and recovery, in line with the recommendations set out within Appendix A. It was explained that a key focus had been

placed on strengthening community resilience through the development of local emergency plans, the establishment of community response arrangements, and the provision of training and resources to support volunteers.

The Committee was advised that communities were encouraged to take an active role in planning for future flooding events, including identifying local places of safety, coordinating volunteer support, and establishing communication channels to ensure information could be shared effectively during emergencies. It was emphasised that this work was intended to complement, rather than replace, the role of the emergency services, by enabling communities to act more quickly and effectively in the immediate stages of an incident.

In concluding the presentations, it was emphasised that a significant amount of work had been undertaken across all partner organisations since the January 2025 flooding event, and that further work remained ongoing to better understand the circumstances of the event and to identify opportunities to reduce flood risk in the future.

Following the conclusion of the presentations, the Chairman opened the meeting for questions and comments, and the Committee proceeded to undertake a detailed and wide-ranging discussion.

Attention was drawn to the condition of flood defence assets, particularly in relation to sections of the South Forty Foot Drain where overtopping had occurred. Members expressed concern that defects, including cracking and areas of weakness within the flood wall, had been identified prior to the January 2025 event and queried why more immediate remedial action had not been undertaken. Officers explained that whilst inspections had identified areas requiring attention, works were subject to established funding and prioritisation processes. Schemes were required to be developed and submitted through programmed bidding cycles, and as a result, there could be a delay between the identification of issues and the delivery of substantive works. It was further noted that, although some interim works had been completed, these had not been sufficient to mitigate the impacts of the event.

The Committee explored this matter further, expressing concern that such processes could leave communities exposed to risk where known issues remained unresolved. It was acknowledged that flood risk management involved many assets across a wide geographic area, and that decisions regarding investment were made based on relative risk and available resources. Members emphasised the importance of ensuring that identified vulnerabilities were addressed in a timely manner wherever possible.

The discussion then moved to the role of modelling and risk assessment, with Members seeking clarification on the reliance placed on historic hydraulic modelling. It was noted that modelling undertaken in 2016 had been used to inform earlier strategic decisions, and Members questioned whether such modelling remained sufficiently robust considering increasingly frequent and severe weather events. Officers confirmed that the modelling had been reviewed following the January 2025 event and was found to be broadly consistent with observed outcomes. However, it was also acknowledged that the event had been significantly influenced by specific catchment conditions, including frozen and saturated ground, which had resulted in rapid runoff and elevated water levels. The Committee recognised that whilst modelling remained an essential tool, it must continue to evolve alongside changing environmental conditions.

Consideration was then given to the flood warning arrangements in place at the time of the event. Members noted that there had been no specific fluvial flood warning for the affected area prior to January 2025 and questioned whether this represented a gap in provision. The Committee was advised that the existing warning system had been configured primarily to address tidal flood risk and that the need for a dedicated fluvial warning area had not previously been identified. It was confirmed that this had been rectified following the event through the introduction of a new, localised warning area.

The Committee also examined the operation and coordination of flood risk infrastructure, including pumping stations and sluice systems. Members sought to understand how these systems had functioned during the event and whether any limitations had contributed to the flooding experienced. It was explained that the event had been driven by a complex combination of factors, including high fluvial flows coinciding with tidal constraints, which had restricted the discharge of water from the system. Members were advised that improvements had since been made to operational arrangements, with further work ongoing to strengthen coordination and system responsiveness.

Members also considered the statutory framework governing flood risk management, particularly the limitations of the Section 19 process. It was acknowledged that recommendations arising from the report could not be enforced and that implementation depended upon the priorities and resources of the respective Risk Management Authorities. Members expressed concern regarding the potential implications of this and emphasised the importance of continued scrutiny in ensuring accountability.

Discussion also addressed the availability and uptake of property flood resilience measures. Members noted that take-up of the grant scheme had been relatively low and sought to understand the reasons for this. It was explained that, whilst eligible residents had been contacted directly, many had been focused on immediate recovery and insurance matters, which had impacted engagement.

Throughout the discussion, Members returned to the impact of the flooding on residents and the ongoing recovery process, recognising that the consequences had been long-lasting and significant, and that continued support and engagement remained essential.

The Committee received representations from members of the public who had been directly affected by the flooding event, together with contributions made by the local County Councillor.

The representations provided a detailed account of the experience of residents over the preceding 18 months and highlighted the significant and ongoing impact of the flooding on individuals and households. It was explained that, whilst the initial response to the incident had been swift and supportive, the longer-term recovery had proved considerably more challenging.

Concerns were raised regarding the availability and accessibility of information following the incident, in particular limited awareness of the Section 19 Flood Investigation Report and that communication regarding its findings had not been consistently received. Residents further expressed concern regarding the condition and adequacy of flood defences identified, and highlighted the continued anxiety within the community during periods of heavy rainfall.

Notwithstanding these concerns, it was emphasised that residents wished to work constructively with partner organisations and expressed a clear desire for improved engagement, transparency and ongoing involvement in future planning.

The Committee also heard from the County Councillor, who raised concerns regarding coordination between Risk Management Authorities and elected representatives. It was indicated that communication with local Members had not always been consistent, and that improved information sharing was required to support councillors in representing their communities effectively.

Officers acknowledged the concerns raised by both residents and the County Councillor and recognised the need to improve communication, coordination and engagement moving forward.

In drawing the discussion to a close, the Chairman thanked the representatives of the Risk Management Authorities and members of the public for their contributions.

The Committee acknowledged the complexity of the flooding event and the significant impact on affected residents and emphasised the importance of ensuring that progress against the recommendations contained within the Section 19 report were actively monitored.

Resolved:

- 1. That the report and the representations from the Risk Management Authorities received and be noted;**
- 2. That the comments and concerns raised during the meeting be formally recorded and shared with the relevant organisations;**
- 3. That a further update report be brought back to the Committee in six months' time to provide assurance on progress against the recommendations contained within the Section 19 Flood Investigation Report; and**
- 4. That the matter remain subject to ongoing scrutiny.**

[The Community Resilience Officer entered the meeting at 6.45pm, during consideration of the above item.]

[Councillor Neil Drayton left the room at 8.04pm and returned at 8.06pm, during consideration of the above item.]

[The Flood and Water Manager (Lincolnshire County Council), Area Flood Risk Manager (Environment Agency), Chief Executive (Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board), Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Officer, and Community Resilience Officer (Lincolnshire Fire & Rescue Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Service) and Councillor Peter Bedford left the meeting at 8.16pm.]

[At the conclusion of this item a brief adjournment was held at 8.16pm until 8.31pm.]

95 Scrutiny Arrangements Review

The Chairman introduced the item and invited the Democratic Services Team Leader to present the report.

The Democratic Services Team Leader provided a detailed overview of the findings arising from the review of the Council's scrutiny arrangements. It was explained that the review had been undertaken following the introduction of the single-committee scrutiny model and was intended to assess its effectiveness in practice, drawing on operational experience since the implementation of the current arrangements.

Members were advised that the review had been informed by consultation responses and feedback gathered from Members, officers and stakeholders who had experience of both the former two-committee structure and the current single-committee model. The findings indicated that the single-committee model had, in general terms, improved visibility and coordination of scrutiny activity, enabling a more cohesive approach and reducing duplication of work. It was also noted that the model had supported clearer alignment between scrutiny, Executive decision-making and the Council's Forward Plan.

The Committee was informed that the majority of responses received through the consultation process were supportive of the current arrangements. Benefits identified included improved continuity of discussion, more efficient use of resources and a clearer overview of the scrutiny work programme. It was acknowledged, however, that a minority of respondents had expressed a preference for a return to a more specialised, two-committee structure, highlighting the potential advantages of subject-specific focus and increased capacity for more detailed consideration of service areas.

Following the presentation, the Chairman opened the item for discussion.

The Committee considered the findings of the review and reflected on their experience of operating within the current scrutiny structure. Members acknowledged that the introduction of a single-committee model had resulted in a more streamlined approach to scrutiny, with improved oversight of the Council's business and reduced fragmentation between subject areas. It was observed that the ability to consider a wide range of issues within a single forum had enhanced continuity of discussion and enabled Members to develop a broader understanding of the interdependencies between services.

At the same time, Members recognised that the breadth of the agenda could, at times, limit the depth of scrutiny that could be applied to individual items. The importance of effective agenda planning and prioritisation was therefore emphasised, particularly to ensure that adequate time was allocated to complex or high-priority matters.

The role of task and finish groups was discussed as a mechanism for addressing this issue, enabling more detailed examination of specific topics outside of the main Committee setting. It was noted that such arrangements provided flexibility within the current structure and allowed for targeted scrutiny where necessary.

Members also considered the impact of the current arrangements on engagement with officers and external partners. It was noted that the single-committee model had provided greater clarity around reporting routes, with officers having a more consistent and

predictable forum for bringing matters forward. This was considered to have contributed positively to the overall effectiveness of scrutiny.

In reflecting on the consultation feedback, the Committee acknowledged that, whilst differing views had been expressed, the prevailing position supported continuation of the current model. Members emphasised the importance of maintaining a flexible and responsive approach, with ongoing review to ensure that the scrutiny arrangements continued to meet the needs of the Council and its communities.

In drawing the discussion to a close, the Chairman thanked the Democratic Services Team Leader for the report and the work undertaken in conducting the review.

The Committee recognised that the current scrutiny arrangements had delivered operational benefits and noted that continued development and refinement would be essential to ensure their ongoing effectiveness.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Richard Austin and seconded by Councillor Stuart Evans.

Resolved:

- 1. That the findings of the Scrutiny Arrangements Review be noted;**
- 2. That the comments made during the discussion be recorded and used to inform the continued development of scrutiny arrangements; and**
- 3. That the current scrutiny model be kept under review to ensure it remained effective and responsive to the Council's needs.**

96 Quarter 3 25/26 Performance Report

The Chairman introduced the item and invited the Group Manager – Insights and Transformation to present the report.

The Group Manager – Insights and Transformation provided an overview of performance for Quarter 3 of the 2025/26 financial year, as detailed in the report and supporting information contained within the Appendix to the report, outlining progress against key performance indicators and service delivery objectives across the Council. Members were advised that the report formed part of the Council's regular performance monitoring arrangements and was intended to provide assurance on service performance, highlight areas of concern, and identify emerging risks.

It was explained that the report and associated appendix included a range of quantitative performance measures supported by narrative commentary, enabling the Committee to assess how services were performing against established targets. Attention was drawn to areas where performance had been maintained or improved, as well as those where performance had not met expected levels, with accompanying explanations to provide context to the outcomes.

The Committee was informed that performance monitoring formed an integral part of the Council's governance framework and supported both operational management and strategic oversight.

Following the presentation, the Chairman opened the item for questions and comments.

The Committee undertook a detailed review of the performance information presented, having regard to both the headline indicators contained within the main report and the detailed data and narrative. Members reflected on the overall position, acknowledging areas of positive performance alongside those requiring further attention.

During the discussion, particular focus was given to areas where performance targets had not been achieved. Members sought clarification on the underlying causes of underperformance and the actions being taken to address those issues. It was recognised that, in some cases, performance had been influenced by external factors or operational pressures, whilst in others there remained opportunities for service improvement.

The Committee explored how performance information was used to inform service delivery and decision-making, noting the importance of ensuring that data was both accurate, meaningful and clearly presented. Members emphasised that performance monitoring should not only provide a retrospective view but should also support forward planning and continuous improvement.

Consideration was also given to the presentation and accessibility of the performance information. Members noted that clear and concise reporting was essential to effective scrutiny, and that the supporting narrative was particularly valuable in providing context to performance data.

The Committee recognised that understand trends over time was essential in identifying both progress and emerging areas of concern. Members further considered how the information could be used to inform its future work programme, including identifying areas of underperformance, emerging risk or strategic importance for further more detailed scrutiny.

Throughout the discussion, the Committee emphasised the importance of maintaining a robust and transparent approach to performance monitoring, ensuring that both achievements and challenges were clearly reported and understood.

In drawing the discussion to a close, the Chairman thanked the Group Manager – Insights and Transformation for the report and the update provided.

The Committee recognised the importance of regular performance monitoring in supporting effective governance and service improvement and acknowledged the role of scrutiny in reviewing and challenging performance where appropriate.

Resolved:

That the Quarter 3 2025/26 Performance Report be noted.

97 Work Programme and Forward Plan

The Chairman introduced the item.

The Committee considered the current Work Programme , the draft Work Programme for 2026/27, and the Council's Forward Plan, as set out within the agenda papers. Members were reminded that the Work Programme was a live document, intended to support effective forward planning of scrutiny activity, ensure alignment with the Council's priorities, and retain sufficient flexibility to respond to emerging issues.

The draft Work Programme for 2026/27 was also presented for consideration, to assist Members in shaping and planning scrutiny activity for the forthcoming municipal year.

The Committee considered the current and draft Work Programme alongside the Forward Plan.

Members acknowledged the importance of maintaining a clear, realistic and manageable schedule of business. it was recognised that the Work Programme should remain flexible and responsive, allowing the Committee to balance its core responsibilities, including performance monitoring, with the capacity to respond to emerging risks or matters of public concern.

In considering the draft Work Programme for 2026/27, Members made the following specific contributions to inform its further development:

- it was noted that the Review of the Town Centre Task and Finish Group report was expected to be available for consideration at the Committee's next meeting in June 2026;
- a request was made for scrutiny to consider matters relating to the visitor economy as part of the forward work programme;
- Members asked that Council Tax and Business Rates collection performance be given consideration going forward;
- concern was raised regarding the use of indelible labels in shops, and Members suggested this as a potential area for future scrutiny; and
- the importance of effective public engagement was highlighted, with a suggestion that different teams be invited to future meetings to help determine the most appropriate course of action.

Members noted that the draft Work Programme for 2026/27 would continue to be reviewed and refined, with further opportunities to add or adjust items as priorities for the new municipal year became clearer.

In drawing the discussion to a close, the Chairman thanked Members for their contributions.

Resolved:

That the content of the Work Programme, the draft Work Programme for 2026/27, and the Council's Forward Plan be noted.

The Meeting ended at 8.46 pm.