

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 4th June 2026 at 6.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Stuart Evans, in the Chair.

Councillors Suzanne Welberry (Vice-Chairman), Alison Austin, Richard Austin BEM, Anne Dorrian, Neil Drayton, Patricia Marson, Barrie Pierpoint, Ralph Pryke and David Scoot.

In attendance:

Councillors Sarah Sharpe (Portfolio Holder - Heritage, Culture and Tourism) and Helen Staples (Portfolio Holder - Communities).

Officers:

Executive Director - Programme Delivery, Service Director – Culture & Regeneration, Place Officer (Development), Service Director – Corporate Services, Business Intelligence and Change Manager, Group Manager Public Protection and Democratic Services Officer.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Emma Cresswell, Anton Dani, Andy Izard and Lina Savickiene.

2 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 30th April 2026 were agreed and signed by the Chairman, subject to it being noted that Councillor Suzanne Welberry was an Executive Director of PSPSL and not Councillor David Scoot.

4 Public Questions

No questions were received from the public.

5 Highways Authority, Lincolnshire County Council

The Chairman advised that the Portfolio Holder for Highways at Lincolnshire County Council, Councillor David East, was unable to attend the meeting. However, he had provided a written response to questions raised, that had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting and also included a protocol for raising highways matters through County Council ward members.

Members noted that it was the third occasion in which a representative from Lincolnshire County Council had been unable to attend a meeting and raised concerns regarding the Committee's limited ability to undertake effective scrutiny and to raise issues directly on behalf of residents.

Attention was drawn to the timing and clarity of the information provided. It was noted that the reporting protocol had been issued at a late stage and that the absence of prior engagement had restricted the opportunity for Members to fully consider or challenge the proposed approach. Members also raised concerns regarding the clarity of communication from the County Council, emphasising the importance of information being presented in plain and accessible language. The practical implications of the protocol were also considered, particularly in relation to existing reporting mechanisms. It was noted that there remained uncertainty regarding the continued use and effectiveness of tools such as "Fix My Street", and how they aligned with the advised process. Members highlighted the importance of ensuring that residents had clear and consistent routes for reporting highways concerns and that they were able to support it effectively.

The Committee further emphasised the importance of direct engagement with external partners, noting that attendance at meetings formed a key part of transparent and accountable decision-making. It was considered that the absence of a representative limited Members' ability to fully explore issues and to seek assurance on matters raised.

In drawing the discussion to a close, the Chairman acknowledged the concerns raised by Members and confirmed that these would be formally recorded.

6 Strategy / Policy Review and Development

The Chairman introduced the item and invited the Service Director – Corporate Services, supported by the Business Intelligence and Change Manager, to present the report.

The Service Director – Corporate Services outlined the proposed approach to managing strategy and policy review and development in advance of Local Government Reorganisation, advising that increasing demands on officer capacity required a more proportionate approach to routine policy updates. It was explained that the proposal would allow minor or non-material changes to be progressed through delegated authority, whilst maintaining appropriate oversight.

In considering the report, the Committee acknowledged the pressures associated with Local Government Reorganisation but emphasised the importance of maintaining transparency and effective Member oversight.

Members discussed the potential implications of increased delegation and highlighted the need to ensure that the Committee remained sighted on changes being made and retained the ability to scrutinise where necessary.

Consideration was given to how delegated decisions would be communicated, noting the importance of ensuring that Members were informed in advance of changes and that there was an opportunity to raise concerns where appropriate. The need for ongoing visibility of changes made under delegated authority was also emphasised, together with the importance of maintaining clear governance arrangements throughout the transition period.

Members further considered the position should Local Government Reorganisation not proceed, emphasising the importance of ensuring that any interim arrangements did not become embedded without appropriate review.

In response to the discussion, the Service Director – Corporate Services confirmed that the comments raised by the Committee were helpful and sought to clarify the Committee's expectations in relation to the proposed approach. It was confirmed that the following would be incorporated into the process and reflected within the Cabinet report:

- That Members would be notified in advance of any proposed use of delegated authority to amend a policy, providing an opportunity for the Committee to request further scrutiny where required.
- That a summary of changes made under delegated authority would be reported back to the Committee on a regular basis to ensure ongoing visibility; and
- That appropriate safeguards would be included to ensure that the proposed arrangements would cease should Local Government Reorganisation not proceed.

The Service Director – Corporate Services confirmed that those measures would ensure that transparency and Member oversight were maintained whilst enabling a more proportionate approach to policy management.

In drawing the discussion to a close, the Chairman thanked officers for the report and for the clarification provided.

Resolved:

- 1. That the report be noted; and**
- 2. That the comments of the Committee, including the need for advance notification, summary reporting and appropriate safeguards, be incorporated into the Cabinet report.**

[The Service Director – Corporate Services and the Business Intelligence and Change Manager left the meeting at 7.37pm, following consideration of the above item.]

7 Public Space Protection Order for Dog Controls

The Chairman introduced the item and invited the Group Manager – Public Protection to present the report.

The Group Manager – Public Protection outlined the proposal to extend the current Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for dog controls for a further three-year period. It was explained that the Order had been in place since 2017 and had been subject to regular review, with the current proposal supported by the results of a recent public consultation which demonstrated a high level of support for the continuation of the existing controls.

The Committee was advised that the PSPO remained an effective mechanism for addressing issues such as dog fouling, exclusion of dogs from play areas, requirements to place dogs on leads where necessary, and the requirement for dog owners to carry suitable means to clear up after their animals.

Members welcomed the continuation of the Order and broadly recognised the positive impact it had had in improving environmental conditions across the Borough. It was noted that there had been a general improvement in behaviour over time, although some issues had remained.

During the discussion, Members raised practical points relating to awareness and enforcement. Particular attention was given to the level of public understanding of the requirements of the PSPO, including:

- The requirement to carry appropriate means to remove dog waste; and
- The ability to dispose of bagged waste within general litter bins as well as designated dog waste bins.

It was noted that awareness of these requirements remained inconsistent, and that increased publicity would support compliance. Members emphasised the importance of clear and ongoing communication, including the use of signage, social media and wider campaigns to reinforce expectations.

The availability of dog waste bins and general disposal facilities was also considered. Whilst it was acknowledged that provision existed across the Borough, the Committee highlighted the importance of ensuring that messaging clearly promoted the use of all appropriate bins, rather than creating reliance on dedicated dog waste facilities alone.

The Committee recognised the importance of continued enforcement activity and the role this played in maintaining standards and encouraging responsible behaviour. In response, the Group Manager – Public Protection confirmed that a programme of communications and public engagement was already in place and would continue, including targeted campaigns to raise awareness of the requirements of the PSPO and to reinforce key messages regarding responsible dog ownership and disposal arrangements.

Brief discussion also took place regarding the attendance of Portfolio Holders at Committee meetings, with differing views noted.

In drawing the discussion to a close, the Chairman thanked the Group Manager – Public Protection for the report and noted the Committee's general support for the continuation of the Order, together with the importance of maintaining effective communication and enforcement.

Resolved:

That the proposal to extend the Public Spaces Protection Order for dog controls for a further three years be supported.

8 South & East Lincolnshire Destination Management Plan

The Chairman introduced the item and invited the Portfolio Holder – Heritage, Culture and Tourism, supported by the Service Director – Culture & Regeneration and the Place Officer (Development), to present the report.

The Portfolio Holder outlined the significance of the Destination Management Plan, advising that it provided a clear strategic framework to strengthen Boston's identity, support the town centre and contribute to wider ambitions through Boston 2030 and partnership working across South and East Lincolnshire. The Service Director – Culture & Regeneration presented the report and delivered a detailed overview supported by a presentation. It was explained that the Plan set out the direction for the visitor economy between 2026 and 2030 and established a coordinated approach across the partnership, whilst maintaining a distinct focus on Boston through a locally tailored action plan.

The Committee was advised that the Plan was structured around four key priorities: improving places and infrastructure, developing quality visitor experiences, strengthening marketing and digital presence, and supporting the visitor economy sector through business engagement and partnership working. It was further outlined that Boston had a strong foundation of heritage, cultural and natural assets, and that the Plan sought to better connect them into a more coherent, year-round offer supported by stronger identity and coordinated delivery.

The Service Director provided a balanced assessment of both opportunities and challenges, highlighting heritage-led regeneration, international links, nature-based tourism and cultural programming as key strengths, whilst also acknowledging issues relating to perception of the town centre, limited awareness of the visitor offer, digital presence and connectivity.

Members were informed that early delivery would focus on the next 12 to 24 months, including establishing governance arrangements, aligning activity with Boston 2030, improving the town centre visitor experience, developing bookable cultural and heritage experiences, and strengthening engagement with businesses and stakeholders. It was further noted that the action plan would remain a live document, supported by annual review and ongoing partnership input.

Following the presentation, the Chairman opened the item for discussion, and the Committee proceeded to undertake a detailed and wide-ranging debate.

Members considered the issue of perception of the town centre, recognising that this acted as a barrier to visitor confidence. In response, the Service Director outlined the distinction between actual safety and perceived safety and highlighted the importance of visible presence, coordinated approaches with community safety partners and improved communication.

The Committee emphasised that consistent and positive messaging would be key, noting that all stakeholders, including businesses, services and elected Members, had a role to play in promoting a unified and confident narrative for Boston.

Attention was drawn to the Borough's heritage and cultural offer, with Members acknowledging the importance of the Cultural Quarter and wider regeneration activity. The Service Director – Culture & Regeneration advised that strengthening Boston's story and improving how it was communicated to both residents and visitors would form a central part of delivery, alongside the development of cultural events and programming to increase footfall and engagement.

The Committee considered the importance of ensuring that the Plan delivered for residents as well as visitors. In this regard, Members highlighted the need to engage more effectively with younger people and to ensure that local communities were involved in shaping future development. The Service Director confirmed that engagement work had already taken place with local students and community groups, and that this would inform future planning and investment decisions.

Members also explored the issue of transport and connectivity, recognising this as a significant challenge for the Borough. The Service Director acknowledged these constraints and advised that, whilst such issues were not wholly within the Council's control, the approach would focus on mitigating their impact through practical measures such as developing coordinated visitor itineraries and exploring opportunities within the group travel market. It was also noted that strengthening the overall quality of the offer would remain critical in attracting visitors despite these challenges.

The Committee further considered the role of volunteers and community groups, recognising the strength of the sector but also noting that activity could at times be fragmented. The Service Director – Culture & Regeneration advised that a more coordinated approach would be adopted moving forward, supported by improved information sharing and partnership working. The Place Officer (Development) provided further assurance that engagement with volunteers would be more flexible and proactive, including outreach activity and the development of shared initiatives such as trails and coordinated programming. In considering delivery, Members acknowledged the importance of funding and available resources.

The Service Director confirmed that the initial phase of work was supported by existing funding and additional staffing capacity, and that the approach would prioritise early delivery and achievable outcomes. It was further noted that work was ongoing to secure longer-term funding and to develop a sustainable programme of investment beyond the initial phases.

The Committee placed emphasis on the importance of governance and accountability. The Service Director – Culture & Regeneration confirmed that a formal governance structure, including a steering group, would be established to oversee delivery of the Plan. It was further advised that key performance indicators would be developed to measure success and that progress would be subject to annual review and ongoing scrutiny. Members welcomed this approach and emphasised the importance of establishing governance arrangements at pace, with clear and measurable outcomes.

Consideration was also given to the wider Borough, with Members highlighting the importance of ensuring that outlying villages and rural areas benefited from the Plan. The Place Officer (Development) advised that work was already underway to engage with parishes and to develop initiatives such as heritage and church trails, with a view to connecting rural assets more effectively into the visitor economy offer.

In drawing the discussion to a close, the Chairman thanked the Portfolio Holder and officers for a comprehensive and informative presentation. The Committee acknowledged both the scale of the opportunity and the challenges ahead and emphasised the importance of maintaining momentum in delivery.

Resolved:

- 1. That the report and presentation be noted;**
- 2. That the comments raised during the meeting be used to inform the ongoing development and delivery of the Destination Management Plan; and**
- 3. That the importance of robust governance arrangements, clear performance measures and strong partnership working be recognised as key to the successful implementation of the Plan.**

[The Portfolio Holder, the Service Director – Culture & Regeneration and the Place Officer (Development) left the meeting at 7.24pm, following consideration of the above item.]

9 Work Programme and Forward Plan

The Chairman introduced the item and invited the Executive Director – Programme Delivery to present the Work Programme and Forward Plan.

The Executive Director – Programme Delivery provided a brief overview of the current Work Programme and emphasised that it remained a live document, which could be updated to reflect the Committee's priorities and emerging issues. It was further outlined that Members were able to request additional items for consideration and that the programme would continue to evolve in response to the Committee's work.

In considering the item, the Committee noted progress in relation to ongoing work, including the work of the Review of the Town Centre Task and Finish Group, with an expectation that a report would be brought to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting in July.

Members also identified additional areas for further scrutiny, including:

- The need for a clearer understanding of developer contributions over an extended period; and
- A request for further information on performance and operational issues relating to waste collection services.

It was further noted that effective scrutiny of external partners remained important, with Members emphasising the value of direct engagement through Committee meetings. In response, the Executive Director – Programme Delivery confirmed that the Committee's requests could be incorporated into the Work Programme and that additional items could be scheduled accordingly.

In drawing the discussion to a close, the Chairman thanked Members and officers for their contributions and noted that the Work Programme would continue to be reviewed and refined.

Resolved:

That the Work Programme and Forward Plan be noted.

[Councillor Anne Dorrian left the meeting at 7.46pm, during consideration of the above item.]

The Meeting ended at 7.55 pm.