



BUDGET SCRUTINY

19th January 2026 at 2.00 p.m.

Present:

Councillors Boyd, Cairns, Crofts, Downes, Emmerson, Holland, Lindley, Patrick, Parkinson, Shutt and Silvester.

Officers in Attendance:

- Sharon Wroot (Interim Chief Executive)
- Katie Brown (Director of Adult Services)
- Carolina Borgstrom (Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure)
- Paul Cowling (Service Director – Regulated Provision)
- Damien Jaines-White (Assistant Director Regeneration)
- Diane Lee (Director of Public Health)
- Guy Lonsdale (Interim Section 151 Officer)
- Simon Jones (Assistant Director Law and Governance)
- Beverly O'Brien (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Jo Robinson (Assistant Director Policy, Strategy and Resources)

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Jackson - Leader of the Council
- Councillor S Swinburn - Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport
- Councillor Cracknell - Portfolio Holder for Children and Education
- Councillor Dawkins - Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy
- Councillor Shepherd - Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities
- Councillor Harness - Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets

SPBS.1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

RESOLVED – That Councillor Lindley be appointed as the Chair for this meeting.

COUNCILLOR LINDLEY IN THE CHAIR

SPBS.2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Brookes and Hudson for this meeting.

SPBS.3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest for this meeting.

SPBS.4 DRAFT BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2026/27 – 2028/29

Members received a report from the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets outlining how the Council planned to deliver its agreed financial strategy over the coming three-year period.

Councillor Jackson, Leader of the Council, introduced the report and members were invited to ask any questions on the draft budget, medium-term financial plan, draft business plans and the capital programme.

Medium Term Financial Plan

There were no questions from any member on the medium-term financial plan.

Business Plans

Resources

A Member asked if there were any cuts being made in this area. The Leader confirmed that there were not.

Environment and Regulatory Services

A Member asked whether the forecasts within the report included the increase to employee wages. The Leader stated that the figures included a predicated 3% increase in salaries across the organisation.

A Member questioned the expiry of the current waste disposal contract. They wondered what the plans were for a replacement. The Leader stated that the current contract was due to end in 2029. He added that they were starting to look at what that contract may look like post 2029. Elected Members wondered whether it would stay in house or be outsourced. The Leader explained that they were reviewing all aspects of

how the contract would work so that the best approach could be identified.

A Member asked about the capital investment programme. They queried that there was nothing noted for 2026/27 and whether there was any carry over. The Leader confirmed that what was in the report was the current profile for the capital programme.

Regeneration

A Member asked whether the Council was anticipating the Grimsby Central Library to be completed by 2029 and if so, was there money in the budget to make sure it could be done. The Leader explained that all they had currently committed to was the removal of asbestos. They were looking at alternative funding streams moving forward for the extra works.

Infrastructure

A Member noted the variation to the open cash budget. They wondered whether this was due to the reduction of Council Officers. Ms Wroot explained that this was purely because figures had been realigned and budgets had been moved around different service areas. She stated that the budget had split as service areas had moved departments.

An Elected Member asked about the comment included with asterisks on the Corporation Road Bridge refurbishment. They wanted confirmation that the money it was noting did exist. Councillor S Swinburn explained that the refurbishment costs were included in capital investments and that's what would be used moving forward. Mr Lonsdale explained that for commercial and legal reasons the figure couldn't be disclosed.

A Member asked about the figures under Council Investment, particularly the backlog maintenance. They wondered whether it was £3.472 million transferred from this year or whether the figures were just for 2025/26. The Leader explained that revised figures say £6.5million so that showed that they did include them.

Safer and Stronger Place

A Member queried the amounts included for capital investment going forward. They wondered whether they weren't investing anything to do with green spaces. The Leader explained that there were several different funding streams that were dedicated to Green Spaces, but this report just included what the council was intending to use. The Councillor thought it would be helpful if the narrative could be changed as it looked like the council wasn't investing anything into Green Spaces.

Children and Family Services

A Member asked whether the staffing costs included all employee costs for North East Lincolnshire. Councillor Cracknell confirmed that it did. The Councillor wondered whether it showed the difference in agency costings. Mr Cowling confirmed that it just showed the costs of North East Lincolnshire Council employees.

Adult Services

An Elected Member mentioned the issues around safeguarding and transformation work. They wondered if the budget reflected the work that would need to be done and would assist it. Councillor Shreeve confirmed that this work was included in the safeguarding budget.

Another Member asked if the report reflected the full cost of Adult Social Care. They wondered if the budget had been increased enough to cover the service delivery or whether changes had been made to the service provision. Councillor Shreeve indicated to the Councillor to look at the graphs included in the report, as they showed the increasing age of service users. He explained that service demand would continue to increase and extra money was being put in to cover that over the next three years.

Housing

One Councillor mentioned the revised council programme for housing and noted the figure noted under capital investment. They wondered if Cabinet thought it was sufficient given current demands. The Leader confirmed that they believed it to be sufficient as things stand at this current moment in time.

Public Health

A Member asked if Officers had been involved in discussions on what they were receiving, or they had been told that this was the amount they were getting. Councillor Shreeve explained that the figures in the budget was the cost of the management team. No details had been included to show the public health grant which was used for certain ring-fenced activities. The Elected Member thought it would be useful to see the breakdown of the costs for North East Lincolnshire.

Capital Programme

A Member asked about the Tree Strategy and whether it would be included. Ms Borgstrom explained that the relevant scrutiny panel had view of this but stated that the current grant was coming to an end. Officers said they would take this away and provide members with more information.

An Elected Member asked about borrowing in this current economic climate. They wondered whether we had thought about borrowing less at this moment in time. The Leader stated that they were always prudent

with borrowing. The borrowing they were doing was to complete projects that were currently underway. He stated that if there were any opportunities for grant funding coming forward, they would be bidding for them.

A Member had concerns over the transparency on why the council had the debts it currently had. They referred to the amount noted in the report that we were looking to set aside for general reserve, which had been reduced now year by year. They wondered why there was a need for further debts. The Leader explained that the Section 151 Officer was satisfied with the level of reserves we currently had. In terms of the level of borrowing, the report stated the ratio of finance costs to the cost of the net revenue stream, which was part of the whole medium term finance planning process. Councillor Harness added that the external auditor had not raised any issues with the reserves.

The Elected Member thought it was important that the report detailed 10% figure guide. He believed they needed more reassurance with more detailed figures. Mr Lonsdale stated that his statement referred specifically around treasury management. In relation to specific indicator net revenue costs, he stated that it had all been taken into account and he was very comfortable that they were not overstretching in any way towards the capital programme.

A Member asked about the financial settlement consultation that had been done before. They wondered whether it had been done again. Mr Lonsdale confirmed that it had and would share it with Elected Members.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted, and the minutes of this meeting be included as part of the response to the consultation on the proposals.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 2.56 p.m.