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NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

11th December 2025

Present: Councillor Goodwin (in the Chair)

Councillors Aisthorpe, Augusta, Beasant, Boyd, Bright, Cairns, Clough, Cracknell, Crofts, Dawkins, Downes, Emmerson, Farren, Freeston, Haggis, Harness, Hasthorpe, Henderson, Holland, Hudson, Humphrey, Jackson, Kaczmarek, Lindley, Mickleburgh, Mill, Morland, Parkinson, Patrick, Pettigrew, Shepherd, Shreeve, Shutt, Silvester, Wheatley and Wilson.

Officers in Attendance:

- Sharon Wroot (Interim Chief Executive)
- Zoe Campbell (Senior Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Simon Jones (Assistant Director Law and Governance - Monitoring Officer)
- Guy Lonsdale (Interim Section 151 Officer)
- Paul Windley (Democratic and Scrutiny Team Manager)

NEL.49 MOMENT OF REFLECTION

Mr Inderjit Singh provided a moment of reflection on behalf of the local Sikh community.

NEL.50 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor welcomed all present to the meeting and took the opportunity to remind Elected Members to be respectful to one another at all times during the course of this meeting.

NEL.51 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from this meeting were received from Councillors Bonner, Brookes, Jervis, K. Swinburn and S. Swinburn. Councillors Mickleburgh and Shreeve gave their apologies for having to leave this meeting early.

NEL.52 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meetings of North East Lincolnshire Council held on 25th September 2025 and the special meeting of North East Lincolnshire Council held on 12th November 2025 be approved as a correct record.

NEL.53 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any items on the agenda for this meeting.

NEL.54 QUESTION TIME

There were two questions submitted by members of the public for this meeting, in accordance with the Council's procedures.

The first question was submitted by Sam Brown to Councillor S Swinburn, Portfolio Holder for Housing, Infrastructure and Transport. Sam was unable to attend the meeting and the Mayor put the question on their behalf, as set out below.

Corporation Bridge as I'm sure everyone knows, continues to be an inconvenience with the works going on, affecting local businesses, residents and of course to our local authority as the speculation of spiralling costs escalate. Residents are rightly concerned of the effects the works to Corporation Bridge is having, for example there are concerns that local businesses have continued to face frustration with the ongoing delays and the possibility of lost revenue; questions are being asked if affected businesses will get any sort of compensation. There's the question of how much the works are costing our council and the confusion by the previous contractor on why they were sacked. At a Transport Infrastructure and Strategic Housing scrutiny panel, two options on how to proceed were put forward, one option being to continue, with the idea of opening the bridge in 2026 and the other to spend an extra £800,000 to open one lane for traffic with this delaying the opening until 2027, at this same scrutiny panel it was mentioned by a member in attendance that the previous contractor had made mistakes, maybe then that was why that contractor was let go.

My question - will the Portfolio Holder clear the air on Corporation Bridge and explain to the people of North East Lincolnshire how the council got to where it is and what will be done moving forward?

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Infrastructure and Transport, Councillor Jackson, the Leader of the Council, responded that to fully answer the question, giving it justice, and “clearing the air”, would mean disclosing exempt information which may undermine the Council’s ongoing position and ultimately be detrimental to the interests of residents. He noted that all elected members were obliged to act in the interests of the communities they serve, and to ensure that their decisions benefitted residents, whilst acting prudently and with appropriate transparency. With those obligations in mind and knowing what he knew, those interests were best served by him saying very little at this stage. That was his honest opinion as an elected member, Leader of the Council and a resident of this borough. He added that he appreciated that there was much public interest in the scheme, that there had been challenges and delays, but he assured everyone that positive steps were being taken to progress matters as quickly and as appropriately transparently as possible.

The second question was also submitted by Sam Brown and was to Councillor Shepherd, Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities. Sam was unable to attend the meeting and the Mayor put the question on their behalf, as set out below.

Back in August 2022 North East Lincolnshire Council bought Freshney Place Shopping Centre. This authority runs the centre at an arms length approach leaving the day to day operations to a company called Queensbury. Before and after the purchase there have been issues with anti social behaviour. While the staff of the centre, with help from Humberside Police, are able to control the amount of ASB that happens, sometimes it can be too much.

On Thursday 30th October 2025 a group of young people took action against the centre and staff, leaving them overwhelmed. There were young people riding around the inside of the centre on bikes, young people giving grief and abuse to staff, with staff having objects thrown at them. The group of young people also took the opportunity to pull and destroy some of the plants and flowers that had been placed on Victoria Street by Grimsby in Bloom.

My question, learning from what happened on the day in question, what actions and reassurances can the Portfolio Holder give to the tenants and the staff of the centre and to all that use Freshney Place to prevent such incidents happening again?

Councillor Shepherd, Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities, responded that the Community Safety and Youth Justice Partnership was aware

of the actions of a small number of children within the Grimsby Town Centre on 30th October 2025. This being the period commonly known as mischievous and Halloween night, a yearly period where by anti-social behaviour (ASB) was caused across the borough, and this also a common pattern across the nation.

The partnership was working together to not only investigate incidents that occurred during this period but also further enhancing its proactive response at key points where we know activity increases, to support children being diverted from ASB, criminality and to increase public safety.

Freshney Place could confirm that an incident involving a group of youths occurred in the wider town centre on 30 October 2025. While Freshney Place was affected, most of the disruption took place on Victoria Street and the surrounding areas. Freshney Place security team mobilised immediately and effectively, and at no point was Freshney Place overwhelmed. During this incident Freshney Place restricted access to young people involved in the anti-social behaviour. These actions were taken to ensure safety of our tenants, shoppers and staff, and to maintain a controlled and secure environment within the centre.

Following the incident, Freshney Place acted promptly and had continued to take robust measures:

- Security staffing was increased immediately and would continue to be during peak periods.
- Liaison with Humberside Police and Council CCTV teams was maintained throughout
- Exclusion notices were issued where appropriate.
- Security patrols were reorganised to ensure rapid response for any further issues
- Freshney Place had been in direct dialogue with Safer Towns and Communities regarding the incident.

NEL.55 THE LEADERS STATEMENT

The Council received a statement from the Leader of the Council.

The Leader commenced his statement with a focus on regeneration projects, noting that the transformation of Grimsby town centre and the delivery of the Masterplan continued. The demolition of the western end of Freshney Place was complete and the foundations and piling for the new cinema and leisure units were going in. The conversion of the former BHS building to a new market hall continued. The Horizon Youth Zone building had now been handed over to Onside for its phased opening in the new year. He commented that the conversion of the West Haven Maltings building looked stunning and would provide a fantastic, game changing youth offer for North East Lincolnshire as well

as helping with town centre diversification. The demolition of the transport hub site was also now complete and designs were being worked up for the new facility. There had been a series of successful festive events on Riverhead Square along with a great Christmas lights switch on event across the town centre a couple of weeks ago. This had focused on local businesses. The new E-Factor business Hive in St James House had transformed the building. In Victoria Street, High Street Greening in collaboration with Grimsby in Bloom and local businesses had delivered sustainable planters and new all-year-round lighting, creating a much more vibrant space. The Leader added that Keepmoat was now mobilising onsite to deliver the new Alexandra Dock housing development. In Cleethorpes, the Sea Road, Pier Gardens and Market Place projects were now moving into the delivery phase with project starts in quarter one of the new year. This would visibly transform Cleethorpes during 2026.

The Leader turned to Children's Services and reported that following the service being rated "Good" in the recent Ofsted inspection, the council had retained the statutory direction to ensure resilience and strength in depth in terms of the scale and pace of change, along with implementation of the national Families First Partnership programme.

The council's Local Government Reform submission had been sent to the Government and we were now waiting for the Secretary of State to announce the statutory consultation process. This was expected by quarter one of next year.

Consultation had opened on North East Lincolnshire's draft Preferred Options Local Plan and would run until 1 February 2026. This was a very important document as it would determine what the borough looked like through to 2043. The Leader commented that it was important that local people had their say, especially now we had to accommodate 622 new homes per year, equating to more than 11,000 over the plan period.

The Leader noted that the Council action tracking report would be circulated after this meeting. He concluded by wishing everyone a merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

RESOLVED – That the Leader's Statement be noted.

NEL.55 SPECIAL URGENCY DECISIONS

The Council considered a report noting special urgency decisions taken by Cabinet or Portfolio Holders since the meeting of Council on 25th September 2025.

RESOLVED – That the use of Special Urgency provisions as set out in paragraph 1.5 of the report now submitted, be noted.

NEL.56 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The Chair invited Councillor Downes to present the following question to Councillor Harness, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets. The question having been submitted on notice in accordance with Council's Standing Orders.

I have been contacted recently by a resident group in my ward, with concerns that they are hearing word locally that ward funding is ending from next year. As all members know, when used appropriately, ward funding is the lifeline of many community groups. Could the portfolio holder tell me what the current view of the council and its leadership is regarding ward funding and if there have indeed been any discussions to date or are any planned discussions regarding the future of it and what is known about the impact of removing it on local communities, given we support some of the poorest communities in the country including for example, residents on the East and West Marshes.

Councillor Harness, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets responded by giving an assurance that ward funding would continue in the next financial year.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Downes asked if the portfolio holder would commit to protecting ward funding beyond the next financial year.

Councillor Harness responded that he was unable to give such a commitment as budgets were considered year by year. As he understood it, ward funding had been in place for 15 years and he could see no reason why it would stop in the future.

The Chair invited Councillor Humphrey to present the following question to Councillor Jackson, Leader of the Council. The question having been submitted on notice in accordance with Council's Standing Orders.

Does the Leader agree that it is important to the Effective and Engaging council priority of NELC and to public confidence in our elected representatives that all councillors keep their Register of Interest regularly, and at least annually, updated?

Councillor Jackson, Leader of the Council responded that yes it was important that it was kept up to date but most important was that it was kept current rather than just annually.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Humphrey asked the Leader to explain why a number of Cabinet members had not updated their register for over two years.

Councillor Jackson responded by noting that he had asked all Members of his group to make sure that their Register of Interests was brought up to date but noted that there were a number of Labour Group members who also appeared not to have brought their interests up to date.

The Chair invited Councillor Humphrey to present the following question to Councillor K. Swinburn, Chair of the Standards and Adjudication Committee. The question having been submitted on notice in accordance with Council's Standing Orders.

Does the Chair share my disappointment that following the cancellation of the October and December Standards Committee meetings, we are set to hold just two Standards Committee meetings this municipal year?

Councillor Farren, Deputy Chair of the Standards and Adjudication Committee responded in the absence of the Chair. Councillor Farren did share Councillor Humphrey's disappointment as she felt that four meetings per year was a very modest number. Arguably most of the committee's business was dealt with via sub committees, which had regrettably been kept very busy this year. She considered that one cancellation per year was reasonable, but two was 50% of the committee's work. She asked whether a member of the public would think that was fair. Councillor Farren felt that there were themes that could have been drawn upon and perhaps scheduled in or set aside as reserves, so that the committee could undertake work that would benefit our authority and the wider public. Examples include the proposed changes in standards legislation, the continuing debate over appeals for council staff, and perhaps a refresh on grievance and dismissal procedures.

The Chair invited Councillor Holland to present the following question to Councillor Harness, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets. The question having been submitted on notice in accordance with Council's Standing Orders.

When the Corporation Road Bridge repairs were started in February 2023, the public and local businesses were told that work would take 10 months, and the bridge would re-open in December of that year. It is now apparent that the works will last for the best part of 4 years. This is creating a continuing and significant down-turn in trade for a number of small and large retail and hospitality businesses in the impacted area. The affected businesses that I have spoken to are understandably angry and frustrated. It is not an exaggeration to say that some are in despair. Small and medium-sized businesses are the lifeblood of the economy in our Borough. This is not a problem of their making; it is a problem of this council's making.

Councillor Harness, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets responded that he had every sympathy with affected businesses but it was for those businesses to contact NELC or their well-respected ward councillors. He was not aware that any of the businesses in vicinity of the bridge had raised concerns directly with officers. From a traffic point of view, the feedback from our highways team was that the diversion route was now well established and provided access to all businesses operating in the area. The highways team monitored our network and traffic flow closely and currently had no concerns about the impact of the diversion from an access and traffic point of view. Regarding the Business Rates, each affected business could follow the Check, Challenge and Appeal process with the Valuation Office Agency if they believed the work on the bridge amounted to a Material Change of Circumstance, that is having a negative impact on their property. The Valuation Office Agency would consider this and may reduce the Rateable Value of the property. That would be a decision for the Valuation Office Agency though ultimately. Councillor Harness noted that a large number of small businesses in North East Lincolnshire received 100% Small Business Rates Relief so did not actually pay any Business Rates and therefore any reduction in Rateable Value would not help those businesses. He added that the Business Rates Team Manager had personally offered to speak to affected businesses to explain and assist further.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Holland felt that there was a disparity between that and what local businesses were saying and asked whether it would make sense for the council to be proactive and contact them to advise what to do.

Councillor Harness reiterated that the best way forward was for businesses to contact the council directly or the two ward councillors in the West Marsh ward. He was happy to work with ward councillors on this issue.

The Chair invited Councillor Holland to present the following question to Councillor Hudson, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero. The question having been submitted on notice in accordance with Council's Standing Orders.

In December 2022, this Council voted to set a net zero carbon emissions target of 2030, some 20 years ahead of the EU Climate Law and UK Government Climate Change Act targets of 2050. Could the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero explain what practical impact this local 2030 target has made to the lives of residents, other than possibly encouraging Government to put in place net zero policies which have helped create the highest energy costs in the developed world leading to industry struggling to remain competitive and energy costs being a crisis for the hospitality sector for which many local jobs are dependent upon.

Councillor Hudson, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero responded that Council only agreed to move as fast as reasonably practicable and only set the target for the council, not Borough-wide. Anyone who had received the warm home funding grant would be over the moon as they now had better insulated

homes and their electricity bills would be down. Over 700 trees had been planted, in areas with the least leaf canopy, which as well as reducing carbon emissions was good for people's mental health. There had been real benefit to the council through the grant funding that had been obtained to insulate our buildings and replace boilers. Money had been saved by going down this route. Councillor Hudson stated that the biggest saving had been with the cremators, which would cost millions to replace. The switch to electric would result in getting most of the money back through grant funding. He felt that Council had made the right choice.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Holland noted that grant funding was public money and that the Leader of the Opposition, Kemi Badenoch, had vowed to repeal the Climate Change Act if the Conservatives won the next General Election. The current government also appeared to be making policy shifts. Would the portfolio holder therefore agree that a review of the council's net zero strategy would make sense.

Councillor Hudson responded that the position was constantly under review and they were not striving for 2030 at any cost. He acknowledged that the easier work had been done and noted that grants were drying up. He felt that the council would be forced to review the situation as it would need to decide whether to pursue at any cost. If so then buying credits would be the only way, which he personally did not favour. He felt that it would be better to extend the target or postpone until more grants were available. Whilst taxpayers had paid more overall, locally there had been benefits. He stated that 2030 was not set in stone, would be kept under review and decisions made as the situation developed.

The Chair invited Councillor Augusta to present the following question to Councillor Dawkins, Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy. The question having been submitted on notice in accordance with Council's Standing Orders.

"Last December, I asked for an update on progress at Barrett's Recreation Ground in relation to the play pitch strategy. Since then, we have seen further decay and residents left feeling the site is just being ignored. Could the portfolio holder provide a further update on the actions taken since then and the current status of the strategy in relation to Barretts?"

Councillor Dawkins, Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy responded that the existing Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) from 2020 was at its 5-year point, therefore was due a full review and officers had started work to develop a new PPS for the whole of North East Lincolnshire that was expected to be ready for approval during Summer-2026. Barretts Recreation Ground would remain a focus within the review of the PPS, along with many other sites across the area with potential to develop across the borough. While the

PPS was in a process of full review, where supply and demand information for pitches were being updated, large scale projects were unlikely to move forward on site during this period. We would be clearer from Summer-2026 onwards on where in the borough large-scale playing pitch developments could be prioritised and investment targeted. While the PPS was being updated, the council had continued to invest where opportunities presented themselves to deliver across parts of the previous PPS. In particular, the partnership work between the Council, Sport England and Ormiston Maritime Academy to refurbish the hockey pitch at the Academy to support and protect hockey in the borough was a real positive for hockey locally. There has been wider investment in recent years through grant funding secured from the Lawn Tennis Association into Barrett's Recreation Ground and the council was currently exploring enhancing this with adding floodlights during 2026. This had taken the derelict tennis courts and refurbished them into a good quality facility with over 1500 court hours booked over its first year of operation and this was likely to grow further through bringing floodlit provision forward.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Augusta asked if more use of the recreation ground would be encouraged by installing lighting from the entrance at Scartho Road.

Councillor Dawkins noted the massive investment seen at sites across the Borough. He added that lighting would form part of the review and he welcomed Councillor Augusta's comments.

The Chair invited Councillor Augusta to present the following question to Councillor Jackson, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economy, Regeneration, Devolution and Skills. The question having been submitted on notice in accordance with Council's Standing Orders.

In light of Small Business Saturday and the vital role local SMEs play in our economy, can the portfolio holder outline what specific support this Council is currently providing to small businesses, and what additional measures are being considered to help them thrive in the coming year?

Councillor Jackson, Portfolio Holder for Economy, Regeneration, Devolution and Skills responded that he welcomed the opportunity to explain what the council was doing to support small and medium sized enterprises in the Borough. The Economy and Funding (InvestNEL) Team provided dedicated support to the local business community, providing a monthly newsletter outlining any local opportunities and events, and signposting to specialist support agencies. They hosted events and workshops with subjects such as procurement, supply chain, and collaboration aimed at supporting local business to win work. The InvestNEL Team's ongoing business engagement with local businesses allowed them to target businesses with support and funding opportunities as soon as they became available, working as a key contact into the council to ensure businesses received the right support quickly. They also assist businesses to access

information and advice from internal departments such as Planning, Procurement, and Business rates. The InvestNEL web page was aimed at local business, providing information on grants and funding, skills and training, membership organisations and networking, and a bespoke premises search support service, as well as a downloadable business support guide. The E-Factor Group had a dedicated, free, business support service dedicated to SMEs, with a bespoke package of support for pre-start businesses, including the popular 'Be Your Own Boss' workshops. With 300 members, the business hive provided workshops, events, and valuable networking opportunities. Four full time business advisors provided confidential consultations, connecting businesses with grants and other support organisations. There was also the Investment Hub, with many years of experience in a banking environment offering free and practical financial advice. There were local grant schemes, such as a £500 start up grant, and £1,000 growth grant for established SMEs, funded through UK Shared Prosperity in 2025/26, and delivered by the Growth Hub for Greater Lincolnshire area. As well as grants, a wide range of fully funded programmes were available to help businesses at every stage, including Business Boost, Low Carbon, AI Accelerator, leadership and skills development and manufacturing support. There was apprenticeship support for both levy and non-levy paying businesses, assisting SMEs to access the apprenticeship programme through levy transfer, engaging with DWP and the Adult Careers Team to assist with recruitment through the council's Skills and Employment Strategic Lead. Regeneration projects in both Grimsby and Cleethorpes, were improving "place" and making both towns more attractive for both local residents and visitors. Free car parking had been provided in selected council operated car parks on Small Business Saturday. In conclusion, the Leader felt that there was a good range of opportunities for small businesses and suitable assistance was being provided.

Councillor Pettigrew joined the meeting at this point.

The Chair invited Councillor Augusta to present the following question to Councillor Hudson, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero. The question having been submitted on notice in accordance with Council's Standing Orders.

Residents have raised particular concerns about the deteriorating condition of the signs in People's Park, alongside wider issues with park infrastructure. What steps is the portfolio holder taking to restore and maintain our parks across our authority to ensure these public spaces remain welcoming and well-kept?

Councillor Hudson, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero responded that signage was currently under review and People's Park was scheduled for a visit in February 2026. He added that the council had 36 ground keepers who were incredibly dedicated, did great work and deserved the Council's support.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Augusta asked whether the portfolio holder's thanks would be extended to the Park Care team who assisted with the upkeep of flower beds at People's Park.

Councillor Hudson had not had the opportunity to meet the Park Care team but offered his thanks to them.

The Chair invited Councillor Kaczmarek to present the following question to Councillor Goodwin, Madam Mayor. The question having been submitted on notice in accordance with Council's Standing Orders.

At the previous special full Council, you allowed the matter of Corporation Bridge to be added to the agenda despite vocal opposition. During this there was an attempt to move to a closed session without allowing any debate or discussion. Once in closed session we were told by the Monitoring Officer that we were not permitted any debate or discussion. Do you Madam Mayor, agree that it was a failing of Officers and Councillors that we had no opportunity to talk over such an important problem?

Councillor Goodwin, Madam Mayor responded that as she was not present at the meeting she would decline to comment but she understood that the Monitoring Officer gave clear advice to Members.

The Chair invited Councillor Kaczmarek to present the following question to Councillor Harness, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets. The question having been submitted on notice in accordance with Council's Standing Orders.

We have seen many pictures of the state of Floral Hall in recent weeks. Many plants of heritage value have died on your watch. Why have you let such an important piece of heritage be lost?

Councillor Harness, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets responded that he took no responsibility for the death of plants within the Floral Hall. The good news was that Cleethorpes Wildlife Rescue had taken on a two year lease of the site from November 2025, with the potential for a Community Asset Transfer to follow. The main use would be for the sanctuary and rehabilitation of wildlife. The Floral Hall was vacated in February 2025 and in-between the leases was managed by the council, including the watering of plants. Cleethorpes Wildlife Rescue wanted to secure the long term viability of the Floral Hall and were committed to the tropical garden, wanting to keep it open for the community.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Kaczmarek asked why the portfolio holder had allowed the site to fall into such a state of disrepair.

Councillor Harness responded that this was a 50-year-old asset and times had changed. It had been through the hands of many organisations and unfortunately had been neglected but he was sure that everyone would welcome this as a new beginning.

The Chair invited Councillor Wheatley to present the following question to Councillor Cracknell, Portfolio Holder for Children and Education. The question having been submitted on notice in accordance with Council's Standing Orders.

Does the portfolio holder agree with me that the children of this borough must never be used as a political tool?

Councillor Cracknell, Portfolio Holder for Children and Education responded that she firmly believed that the comments made within the recent Ofsted inspection report relating to political understanding and agreement is routed in all party commitment to ensure that children within children's services were not used for political advantage and in that regard, she agreed with Councillor Wheatley. She added that did not preclude the importance of challenge and scrutiny. The council needed both to demonstrate and understand its role in ensuring that what it was doing was all it can for all families and in line with our corporate parenting responsibilities.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Wheatley asked if the portfolio holder would agree that it was disappointing to see continued attempts to politicise the children's and education agenda by one of the parties in the chamber in direct conflict with the improvement agenda.

Councillor Cracknell responded by noting that she supported what she had said about the all-party commitment to improvement both historically and now as part of the council's transformational journey, but she supported Councillor Wheatley's comments.

The Chair invited Councillor Patrick to present the following question to Councillor Aisthorpe, Chair of the Communities Scrutiny Panel. The question having been submitted on notice in accordance with Council's Standing Orders.

A couple of scrutiny meetings ago, the Chair improperly tried to amend an officer report, and understandably, other members of the panel didn't support her, bolstered still by the legal advice that her proposal wasn't possible, but was quickly rectified with unequivocal support when the proposal was changed to a recommendation to Cabinet, as per the process. Yet the Chair publicly suggested a falsehood that we as a committee at first opposed her on the materiality of the issue and she had to win us round, all of which she knew not to be true. Out of respect for her office, will the Chair set the record straight and acknowledge that it was the mechanism of the proposal that was at fault and not the support of the panel members?

Councillor Aisthorpe, Chair of the Communities Scrutiny Panel felt that this was a matter of differing interpretation, and she was satisfied that the panel followed the correct procedures.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick asked whether the Chair's refusal to answer his question as constitutionally obliged, made it fit and proper for her to continue in her role.

Councillor Aisthorpe stood by her comments and the work she did on behalf of her residents.

NEL.57 TREASURY OUTTURN REPORT H1 2025-26

The Council considered a report from the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets containing details of treasury management arrangements, activity and performance during the first half of the 2025-26 financial year.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

NEL.58 CALCULATION OF THE COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2025/26

The Council considered a report from the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets seeking approval of the Council Tax Base for 2025/26 and outlining the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme for the forthcoming year.

RESOLVED –

1. That the proposal to retain the existing criteria for the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2026/2027 which maintains the maximum discount of 65% for all working age residents, be supported.
2. That the Council Tax Base for the Council and other precepting bodies in 2026/2027 be set at 47,214.4 Band D equivalents (as detailed in Appendix A of the report now submitted).

NEL.59 NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE JOINT HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY 2025-2035

The Council considered a report from the Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care seeking approval of the North East Lincolnshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2035

RESOLVED – That the North East Lincolnshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy be adopted as part of the Policy Framework.

Note – Councillors Mickleburgh and Shreeve left the meeting at this point.

NEL.60 OUTSIDE BODY APPOINTMENTS - GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE MAYORAL COMBINED COUNTY AUTHORITY AUDIT AND OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES' SUBSTITUTES

The Council considered a report from the Monitoring Officer advising of proposed appointments of substitute members to the Greater Lincolnshire Mayoral Combined County Authority Audit Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED –

1. That Councillors Crofts and Shutt be appointed as substitute member representatives for the Conservative and Labour Groups respectively on the Greater Lincolnshire Mayoral Combined County Authority Audit Committee.
2. That Councillors Lindley and Humphrey be appointed as substitute member representatives for the Conservative and Labour Groups respectively on the Greater Lincolnshire Mayoral Combined County Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

NEL.61 NOTICE OF MOTION 1

The Council considered a Notice of Motion, proposed by Councillor Clough and seconded by Councillor Patrick, submitted in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders as set out below:

This Council notes that many households in North East Lincolnshire are under significant financial pressure and that council tax debt can place additional strain on families.

This Council further notes that while we adhere to better principles on council tax debt collection, the current approach does not align itself to support residents or to ensure that recovery practices reflect the reality of modern debt management.

This Council recognises that moving towards a more supportive and proportionate model of recovery represents a significant shift in how we approach council tax arrears. It reflects a commitment to treating residents fairly, reducing hardship and preventing avoidable escalation.

This Council believes that our debt recovery processes should be consistent with the standards expected across other sectors. Debt collection should be proportionate, fair and focused on supporting residents to resolve arrears without unnecessary stress or punitive action.

This Council therefore resolves to ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets to review the existing council tax debt recovery process,

including the use of enforcement agents, repayment arrangements and early engagement with residents. The review should consider how to make our approach more aligned with contemporary debt recovery practice, focused on prevention, early support and reducing the risk of residents falling into deeper hardship.

This Council also resolves to ensure that any revised process preserves the Council's ability to collect what is owed while treating residents with dignity and respect.

Following a debate, and with the consent of Council, the requirement for a recorded vote on the motion was waived and, upon a show of hands it was unanimously

RESOLVED –

1. That the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets be asked to review the existing council tax debt recovery process, including the use of enforcement agents, repayment arrangements and early engagement with residents. The review should consider how to make our approach more aligned with contemporary debt recovery practice, focused on prevention, early support and reducing the risk of residents falling into deeper hardship.
2. That it be ensured that any revised process preserves the Council's ability to collect what is owed while treating residents with dignity and respect.

NEL.62 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

The Mayor moved that the Council's Standing Orders governing the length of meetings be suspended to permit this meeting to continue beyond 9.30 p.m. This was seconded by Councillor Jackson. Upon a show of hands, the motion was carried and it was:

RESOLVED - That the Council's Standing Orders governing the length of meetings be suspended to permit this meeting to continue beyond 9.30 p.m.

NEL.63 NOTICE OF MOTION 2

The Council considered a Notice of Motion, proposed by Councillor Aisthorpe and seconded by Councillor Beasant, submitted in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders as set out below:

This Council notes:

- 1. That over the last three years, more than 340 Section 81 notices have been issued by North East Lincolnshire Council to Anglian Water, requiring investigation or repair of water related defects affecting the public highway.*
- 2. That a Section 81 notice is a legal enforcement tool under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 requiring a utility company to investigate or fix leaks, bursts or other defects in apparatus that pose risks to the highway or public safety. Failure to act promptly can result in enforcement action or cost recovery by the local authority.*
- 3. East Marsh, Croft Baker and Freshney are consistently among the worst-affected wards, with 42 Section 81 notices in East Marsh alone since 2022, reflecting the scale of disruption in densely populated communities.*
- 4. The number of Section 81 notices does not provide a reliable measure of performance, because many bursts and leaks never trigger formal enforcement, meaning the true scale of the problem is likely significantly higher.*
- 5. Repeated bursts, especially on Freeman Street, continue to cause disruption to residents, businesses and traffic, as well as avoidable deterioration of the highway infrastructure.*
- 6. That recent correspondence received by East Marsh ward councillors from Anglian Water acknowledged that mains infrastructure on Freeman Street is dated but “currently managing demand effectively”. Rather than committing to replacement or upgrade of aging mains, Anglian Water is assessing whether pressure reduction and other operational changes could mitigate repeat failures.*

Council believes:

- 1. That residents have the right to clear information about the state of local water infrastructure and the actions being taken to address persistent failures.*
- 2. That repeated bursts and leaks are not merely operational issues but have strategic implications for highways budgets, regeneration priorities, business continuity, and public confidence.*
- 3. That elected members must have timely access to clear and transparent infrastructure data to fulfil their responsibilities to residents and communities.*
- 4. That burst mains and prolonged leakage increase risks to local watercourses and the marine environment, contribute to preventable water pollution, and undermine statutory environmental and health protections*

Council therefore resolves:

1. *To request the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Infrastructure and Transport to submit a report to the Transport Infrastructure and Housing Scrutiny Panel within the next six months, to include:*
 - a. *Trends in Section 81 notices over the past five years;*
 - b. *Geographic distribution of notices and repeat locations;*
 - c. *The Council's assessment of underlying infrastructure issues;*
 - d. *The effectiveness of responses received from Anglian Water;*
 - e. *The impact of leaks on highway condition and associated costs.*
 - f. *The economic impact of repeated bursts on local businesses, public transport and accessibility, with a particular focus on key commercial areas such as Freeman Street.*
2. *To invite Anglian Water to attend the Transport Infrastructure and Housing Scrutiny Panel to provide an update on issues relating to water infrastructure and Section 81 notices, and should they be unable to attend, to provide a written briefing addressing:*
 - a. *Their assessment of high-risk locations;*
 - b. *Their decision-making around pipe replacement;*
 - c. *The implications of reducing water pressure;*
 - d. *Their investment plans for North East Lincolnshire.*
3. *That the Leader of the Council be requested to write formally to Anglian Water, challenging the adequacy of currently proposed mitigation measures and requesting a borough-wide action plan identifying replacement priorities and timescales for high-failure locations, including Freeman Street.*
4. *That the Leader of the Council be requested to write to the relevant Secretary of State and to Ofwat, urging the introduction of stronger statutory duties on water companies regarding leak reduction, infrastructure investment, and timely response to failures of the network.*
5. *That the Leader of the Council be requested to report back to all elected members within the next six months on the responses received from Anglian Water, Ofwat, and the Secretary of State.*

During the course of the debate on the motion, Councillor Shutt proposed an amendment that the Leader be requested to write to the office of the Grimsby and Cleethorpes MP requesting an update on the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs response to her letter regarding her ongoing concerns with the condition of Anglian Water's network in Grimsby and the Leader be requested to inform all Members of the content of that response. The Monitoring

Officer ruled that the amendment was required to be submitted on notice under the Standing Orders of the Council as it did not arise from the debate.

Councillor Dawkins moved a closure motion to adjourn the debate. The Mayor did not think the debate had been reasonably exhausted so the debate continued.

Following a debate, and with the consent of Council, the requirement for a recorded vote on the motion was waived and, upon a show of hands it was

RESOLVED –

1. That the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Infrastructure and Transport be requested to submit a report to the Transport Infrastructure and Housing Scrutiny Panel within the next six months, to include:
 - a. Trends in Section 81 notices over the past five years;
 - b. Geographic distribution of notices and repeat locations;
 - c. The Council's assessment of underlying infrastructure issues;
 - d. The effectiveness of responses received from Anglian Water;
 - e. The impact of leaks on highway condition and associated costs.
 - f. The economic impact of repeated bursts on local businesses, public transport and accessibility, with a particular focus on key commercial areas such as Freeman Street.
2. To invite Anglian Water to attend the Transport Infrastructure and Housing Scrutiny Panel to provide an update on issues relating to water infrastructure and Section 81 notices, and should they be unable to attend, to provide a written briefing addressing:
 - a. Their assessment of high-risk locations;
 - b. Their decision-making around pipe replacement;
 - c. The implications of reducing water pressure;
 - d. Their investment plans for North East Lincolnshire.
3. That the Leader of the Council be requested to write formally to Anglian Water, challenging the adequacy of currently proposed mitigation measures and requesting a borough-wide action plan identifying replacement priorities and timescales for high-failure locations, including Freeman Street.
4. That the Leader of the Council be requested to write to the relevant Secretary of State and to Ofwat, urging the introduction of stronger statutory duties on water companies regarding leak reduction, infrastructure investment, and timely response to failures of the network.

5. That the Leader of the Council be requested to report back to all elected members within the next six months on the responses received from Anglian Water, Ofwat, and the Secretary of State.

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting closed at 10.28 p.m.