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NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

26th March 2026

Present: Councillor Goodwin (in the Chair)

Councillors, Augusta, Beasant, Bonner, Bright, Cairns, Clough, Cracknell, Crofts, Dawkins, Downes, Emmerson, Farren, Freeston, Harness, Hasthorpe, Holland, Hudson, Jackson, Lindley, Mickleburgh, Mill, Morland, Parkinson, Patrick, Pettigrew, Shepherd, Shreeve, Shutt, Silvester, K. Swinburn, S. Swinburn, Wheatley and Wilson.

Officers in Attendance:

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

NEL.75 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from this meeting were received from Councillors Aisthorpe, Boyd, Brookes, Haggis, Henderson, Humphrey, Jervis and Kaczmarek.

NEL.76 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meetings of North East Lincolnshire Council held on 11th December 2025 and 19th February 2026 (Budget) and the special meeting of North East Lincolnshire Council held on 11th March 2026 be approved as a correct record.

NEL.77 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

NEL.78 **QUESTION TIME**

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

The first question was submitted by Mr Lee Sammut to Councillor Dawkins, Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy. Mr Sammut was not able to attend the meeting and therefore Madam Mayor read out the question on Mr Sammut's behalf, as set out below.

I, along with the other North and Central Promenade Traders had a meeting with Councillor Dawkins last year regarding the excessive number of events held over an excessive amount of time, on the southside of Cleethorpes. The traders stay open all through winter, losing money in hope of a good spring and summer season. However, when the season comes around events organised by a third party, and authorised by the council, take our customers away to the other side of Cleethorpes. This issue was promised to be looked at by Councillor Dawkins for this coming season; however, we now hear that this Easter a three-week event will be held yet again. Can you please reassure the local traders and myself that this will be stopped as promised, and future events be kept at a minimum in the spring and summer season.

Councillor Dawkins, Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy, responded that a review of markets had been undertaken, balancing support for events with concerns from local businesses during peak season. A balanced approach was being taken, and there were no three-week events planned for Easter or during the year, with efforts to avoid bank holidays for future market bookings.

The second question was submitted by Mr Colin McNicholl to Councillor Dawkins, Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy. Mr McNicholl was unable to attend the meeting and therefore Madam Mayor read out the question on Mr McNicholl's behalf, as set out below.

Can Councillor Dawkins please explain why he recommended and encouraged the Cabinet to support and agree the findings of the needs assessment set out in appendix 1 of the Libraries and Archives Review Phase 1 report when the report contained multiple errors, omissions, unjustified claims of trends and was simply an excellent example of how not to use data responsibly for informed decision making?

Referring to my document titled "Observations of a Library User on the Libraries and Archives Review Phase 1 Cabinet Report" emailed to Councillor Dawkins by Nick Browning, can Councillor Dawkins please ensure that my document is made available for public viewing by posting it on the council website and/or other suitable means of circulation?

Councillor Dawkins, Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy, responded that the Phase One report was an early stage proposal, subject to further consultation. Feedback, including from Mr. McNichols', was recorded in Phase Two. It was confirmed that Waltham and Cleethorpes Libraries would remain open, and Grimsby Central Library would reopen subject to refurbishment options. The Council published consultation reports but not individual submissions.

The third question was submitted by Mr Bryan Dicker to Councillor Shreeve, Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care. Mr Dicker was unable to attend the meeting and therefore Madam Mayor read out the question on Mr Dicker's behalf, as set out below.

It is not often that the public witness cross party cooperation without an argument, but the Great Grimsby Sleep Out, an annual event organised by Harbour Place, a much valued and reputable charity, is one of those times.

I understand the Communities Scrutiny Panel recently received an updated report citing relationship break down as a leading cause of homelessness. It is evident, nationally as well as locally, that the system is not perfect, given the housing shortage and the number of empty properties requiring repair. There is, however, a group where homelessness is an ongoing issue. Those with mental health issues and substance misuse, both legal and illegal. You need only to walk along Victoria Street to see the people setting up camp in shop doorways with cans of beer next to them. Anyone who has worked in mental health will recognise the problem and will understand that without support, those individuals are unable to maintain a home and in fact find it difficult to obtain short term help due to the issues that arise from the inability to refrain from their current lifestyle. Unfortunately, individuals in our community are spreading inaccurate information, claiming that organisations, including charities are doing nothing.

What support is offered by this council to support individuals on the points I have raised and stand a chance of maintaining a home?

Councillor Shreeve, Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care, responded that the Council worked closely with, and provided funding to, several organisations in the area to ensure a joined-up approach to accessing accommodation and support for homeless households.

Support for people sleeping on the streets included:

- Funding provided to Harbour Place to provide outreach and related support for rough sleepers in North East Lincolnshire, helping those most vulnerable access life-saving services.
- Support provided by North East Lincolnshire Council's Rough Sleeper Coordinator, who worked to ensure services were joined up in their approach to assisting the most vulnerable rough sleepers. This included conducting regular, holistic and supportive early morning and late-night street outreach across the borough with other partners, including Humberside Police, visiting rough sleeper hotspots and investigating Streetlink reports from members of the public. They worked to build trust with rough sleepers, seeking to understand the root causes of a person's situation and what could be done to help them.
- Partnership working across the council, social care service, substance use services and physical and mental health services. This included for example two adult social workers from Focus working alongside the council's Homelessness Prevention Service to offer advice and assistance, with the aim of providing more effective, joined up support.
- Supported accommodation units in Swan House. This was set up to accommodate those furthest from independence who have slept on the streets, providing daily support commissioned from Humbercare. This supported people to engage with the services they required to move on to independent living, having acquired the skills and support to do so.

North East Lincolnshire Recovery Partnership (NELRP) supported people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness through close joint working with rough sleeping and homelessness teams, coordinated outreach approaches, on street prescribing and co-located provision to improve continuity between the street, accommodation and treatment pathways. Turning Point was the council's main provider of drug and alcohol services and sat within the NELRP. They worked in collaboration with Navigo, the main provider of mental health services in North East Lincolnshire, which was commissioned by the Integrated Care Board to ensure that people who had a dual diagnosis of substance use and a mental health condition could access appropriate support. Wizer, which was commissioned by the council, provided wrap around support to prison leavers, beginning up to 16 weeks before release to ensure pre-release planning. Their support included helping individuals secure or sustain accommodation and linking them into treatment and community services. Wizer also worked closely with housing teams, with daily information sharing and weekly meetings to ensure coordinated, timely responses that reduced the risk of homelessness and supported a stable transition back into the community.

The council also provided support to people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness through our Housing Related Support framework. Housing Related Support was currently delivered by six local providers of accommodation and

housing support. It provided person centred support to help people who required support to build independence and maintain their accommodation. This could include support with financial management, sustaining a tenancy, employment and training, health and wellbeing, daily living skills, and strengthening support networks. As well as providing support within people's own homes to prevent them becoming homeless, Housing Related Support could also include access to hostels and supported accommodation to offer stable and supportive environments for those in need, enabling them to improve their quality of life.

The fourth question was submitted by Mr Bryan Dicker to Councillor Jackson, Leader of the Council. Mr Dicker was unable to attend the meeting and therefore Madam Mayor read out the question on Mr Dickers behalf, as set out below.

Full Council meetings are, of late, prolonged by amendments, with discussions including the use of irrelevant, dubious statistics and off-topic contributions. One such example was the call to request the government to give powers already held by local authorities. This misinformation has caused issues accumulating with business' suffering criminal damage. The interventions from certain councillors would be more appropriate at scrutiny panels where it can be debated properly. Added frustrations include elected members arguing with the mayor, as Chair, when they are reminded to talk on the proposed motion, incorrectly claiming they are denied their freedom of speech, yet later attempt to prevent freedom of speech of their opponents, further extending the meeting. It is common, and inevitable in councils with no overall control that there is lengthy debate. This authority has five parties represented with different contributions to make.

There are some light-hearted moments that are welcome, demonstrating to a degree of connection with the public who are asking themselves which member is Sir Humphrey. There is obviously a need for clearer guidelines to distinguish the relevant from unnecessary contributions. If monthly meetings are not reinstated, how will the council ensure meetings remain focused and efficient to deliver for the residents?

Councillor Jackson, Leader of the Council acknowledged public frustration with council meetings. He stated that conduct was governed by Standing Orders and robust debate was healthy, but members must act reasonably. He believed some members lacked self-awareness regarding their behaviour. He did not believe monthly meetings were the answer, as much business was delegated to Cabinet, portfolio holders and committees, and they would not improve debate or behaviour.

NEL.79 THE LEADERS STATEMENT

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

The Leader commenced his statement with an update on regeneration projects

explaining that Grimsby Town Centre Freshney Place redevelopment was on budget/schedule, with Parkway Cinema and Starbucks confirmed, as well as Nando's now being agreed as an anchor tenant for 2027. Abbey Walk car park had been demolished, with plans for a surface car park and the preservation of the Harold Gosney reliefs. Plans for a new transport hub on Osborne Street were progressing.

The Leader highlighted that Horizon Youth Zone was highly popular, with over 2,500 members, and the new housing development had commenced on the Alexandra Dockside brownfield site.

With regard to funding, the Leader explained that most of the projects in Grimsby were enabled by substantial grant funding (Future High Street Fund, Town's Fund, Levelling Up). In Cleethorpes the Levelling Up Fund was delivering three projects: Pier Gardens, the new build on Sea Road, and Marketplace regeneration (commencing May).

Referring to education, the Leader confirmed that the Department for Education had approved a new special school for children with emotional/mental health needs on the former high-rise flats site, aiding East Marsh regeneration.

The council had also received £270,000 government funding for playgrounds which was welcomed.

The Leader explained that our Pride in Place Plan had been recognised nationally, securing £20 million over 10 years for community-steered projects. The Town of Culture application was also gaining momentum with strong community support.

The Humber Economic Strategy had been published and endorsed by the four local authorities and the mayoral combined authorities, focusing on clean energy, manufacturing, ports, and logistics. As a result, the Humber Estuary Growth Board had been established and would be a single voice championing the Humber Economic Strategy and overseeing its delivery.

The Leader conveyed his disappointment with the recently published Northern Growth Plan, as the Humber, particularly the South Humber Bank, was barely featured. As a result, a local response was being formulated.

The Leader felt the government's decision not to invest in the return of the direct London King's Cross to Cleethorpes train service was disappointing and noted private operator Arriva Grand Central's interest and the need to maintain pressure.

Concerns were raised about speculative housing developments on greenfield sites due to inadequate infrastructure and the government's "unreasonable and undeliverable" housing target (622 homes/annum). The Leader highlighted that the suggested target of 400 homes/annum (200 market, 200 social) was

dismissed by the government. The emphasis was now on developing near the Humber employment zones and urban brownfield sites.

RESOLVED – That the Leader's Statement be noted.

Note – Ms Wroot left the meeting for consideration of the following item.

NEL.80 APPOINTMENT OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

The Council considered a report from the Leader of the Council seeking approval to appoint Sharon Wroot as Chief Executive for North East Lincolnshire Council.

RESOLVED –

1. That Sharon Wroot be appointed as:
 - Chief Executive
 - Head of Paid Service (Section 4 LGHA 1989)
 - Returning Officer
 - Electoral Registration Officer
2. That it be noted that the Appointments Committee reached a unanimous decision in identifying Sharon Wroot as the preferred candidate following a national recruitment campaign and formal interview process on 10 March 2026.
3. That the Assistant Director People and Organisational Development be authorised to finalise the necessary employment arrangements in accordance with constitutional and statutory requirements.

Note – Ms Wroot returned to the meeting at this point.

NEL.81 SPECIAL URGENCY DECISIONS

The Council considered a report noting special urgency decisions taken by Cabinet or Portfolio Holders since the meeting of Council on 11th December 2025.

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

NEL.82 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The Chair invited Councillor Bright 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.

Can the Portfolio Holder give a summary of the financial plan for the Freshney Place Project?

Councillor Harness, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets, responded that Freshney Place was a strategic asset, a major employer, and key to the town centre regeneration. It was purchased with Future High Street funding, it aimed for financial sustainability through rents, service charges, and car parking, without council taxpayer subsidy. The leisure development was funded by capital resources and external funding, diversifying income and strengthening resilience. Occupancy was at 96% and rent collection 99%. New anchor tenants included the Diagnostic Centre, Top Town Market, the Carers Hub, and the temporary Library Hub. A Heritage Lottery Fund grant had been secured for the former House of Fraser building restoration. Net operating income was £1.8 million in 2025, with a target of £1.4 million for 2026.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Bright asked about changes in forecasting methodology given previous projections were substantially wider of the mark.

Councillor Harness attributed past discrepancies to national insolvencies, rent revaluations, and car park issues, and he provided an assurance that best efforts would be made to meet targets.

The Chair invited Councillor Silvester to present the following question to Councillor Shepherd, Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities. The question having been submitted on notice in accordance with Council's Standing Orders.

Did the Portfolio Holder agree that the Conservatives were elected to this Council with a firm mandate to reduce anti-social behaviour, arson and criminal damage across North East Lincolnshire?

Councillor Shepherd, Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities agreed and asserted that the current administration had a firm grip on the issue.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Silvester asked if significant reductions were being seen in key areas.

Councillor Shepherd's reported reductions from April 2024 to December 2025: arson and criminal damage (5%), burglary (5%), public order offences (10%),

robbery (8%), violence against the person (12%). He noted a rise in vehicle offences. Antisocial behaviour showed a 5.6% reduction (Feb 2025-Feb 2026) and 14.1% year-to-date reduction across the borough.

The Chair invited Councillor Cairns to present the following question to Councillor Shepherd, Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities. The question having been submitted on notice in accordance with Council's Standing Orders.

Clear, Hold, Build (CHB) had been a success in South Ward; how significant were the figures?

Councillor Shepherd responded that in South Ward (April-Dec 2024 vs. April-Dec 2025), all crime reduced by 10.6% (77 fewer crimes), and antisocial behaviour reduced by 18% (9 fewer incidents). The "Build" section, led by the Council, focused on intelligence submission, community engagement, environmental enforcement, and activity tracking.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Cairns asked if there was a plan to roll out CHB across the borough.

Councillor Shepherd confirmed a drive to develop this further, with the "Build" section supporting Operation Mandela on the East Marsh, and there were plans to expand across the borough as successes grew.

The Chair invited Councillor Crofts to present the following question to Councillor Shepherd, Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities. The question having been submitted on notice in accordance with Council's Standing Orders.

Anti-social use of motorcycles was a problem across North East Lincolnshire. What actions were the police taking with regard to such motorcycle use?

Councillor Shepherd responded that Operation Yellowfin targeted nuisance vehicles in parks and open spaces, with four dedicated officers in Grimsby and Scunthorpe, directed by a dedicated Police Inspector.

Councillor Croft's supplementary question he asked what actions the Council were taking on anti-social behaviour and crime, especially in rural areas.

Councillor Shepherd responded that the Council was developing a borough-wide Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) in support of Humberside Police, with 97% public support during consultation. Funding of £35,000 had been secured from the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for signage and gating systems to inhibit vehicle access to open spaces, particularly rural areas.

The Chair invited Councillor Parkinson to present the following question to Councillor Shepherd, Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities. The

question having been submitted on notice in accordance with Council's Standing Orders.

What effect is Operation Yellowfin having on nuisance vehicles in Cleethorpes?

Councillor Shepherd responded that Operation Yellowfin and Operation SNAP supported issues in Cleethorpes. Operation SNAP issued 65 notices of intended prosecution in summer 2025 for road traffic violations, supported by the use of the council's CCTV. Over 105 images had been sent in the year-to-date with a high prosecution rate. Rapid deployment cameras were fitted on the North Promenade and were being installed at the Boating Lake car park.

The Chair invited Councillor Lindley 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.

Grimsby is in the process of applying to be Town of Culture 2028. Do you believe we are a serious contender to win this accolade and what would it mean to Grimsby and the rest of North East Lincolnshire?

Councillor Dawkins acknowledged there was fierce competition with hundreds of towns applying. He explained that Grimsby would submit a compelling expression of interest based on its unique story, a cultural programme for all, and building on successes such as the Horizon Youth Zone. Winning would bring national acclaim, further investment, new partnerships, opportunities for creative/heritage sectors, skill development, boost reputation, enhance well-being, bring pride in place, and increase visitor numbers/footfall. Councillor Dawkins expressed confidence in winning. He also announced that permission had been received to increase the capacity of the Meridian Showground from 5,000 to 15,000, which would significantly enhance the Town of Culture bid.

NEL.83 APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBER TO THE CHILDREN AND LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

The Council considered a report advising of the proposed appointment of a non-voting trade union representative as a co-opted member of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel.

RESOLVED – That Simon Jones (Unison Convenor) be appointed as a non-voting trade union co-opted member of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel, with effect from the 2026/27 Municipal Year.

NEL.84 DISPENSATION – SECTION 85 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

The Council considered a report recommending the provision of special dispensations under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

RESOLVED –

1. That Council grants a special dispensation to Councillor Keith Brookes until 31st December 2026, in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, for health reasons.
2. That Council grants a further special dispensation to Councillor Marian Jervis until 31st December 2026, in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, for health reasons.

NEL.85 PAY POLICY STATEMENT

The Council considered a report from the Leader of the Council presenting the pay policy statement for the period 2025/26.

RESOLVED – That the pay policy statement for the period 2026/27 be approved.

NEL.86 NOTICE OF MOTION 1

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

North East Lincolnshire Council:

- a) Recognises that North East Lincolnshire road users are concerned about the number of potholes currently blighting our highways;*
- b) Acknowledges that the growth in pothole numbers is a national phenomenon, driven by adverse weather conditions over the past three months;*
- c) Welcomes the increase in resources being dedicated to road resurfacing, including pothole repairs, in North East Lincolnshire;*
- d) Welcomes the review of North East Lincolnshire Council's current policies, procedures and ways of working to increase the rate and effectiveness of pothole repairs.*

Following a debate, the Mayor put the motion to a recorded vote in accordance with the Constitution. The votes cast were recorded as follows:

For the motion

Councillors Augusta, Beasant, Bonner, Cairns, Clough, Cracknell, Crofts, Dawkins, Emmerson, Farren, Freeston, Goodwin, Harness, Hasthorpe, Hudson, Jackson, Lindley, Mickleburgh, Mill, Morland, Parkinson, Patrick, Pettigrew, Shepherd, Shreeve, Shutt, Silvester, K. Swinburn, S. Swinburn, Wheatley and Wilson (31 votes)

Against the Motion

Councillor Bright, Downes (2 votes)

Abstain

Councillor Holland (1 vote)

RESOLVED –

1. That it be recognised that North East Lincolnshire road users were concerned about the number of potholes currently blighting our highways.
2. That it be acknowledged that the growth in pothole numbers was a national phenomenon, driven by adverse weather conditions over the past three months.
3. That the increase in resources being dedicated to road resurfacing, including pothole repairs, in North East Lincolnshire be welcomed.
4. That the review of North East Lincolnshire Council's current policies, procedures and ways of working to increase the rate and effectiveness of pothole repairs be welcomed.

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting closed at 8.35 p.m.