

Minutes of a Meeting of the Council held in the Hub, Mareham Road, Horncastle, Lincolnshire LN9 6PH on Wednesday, 28th February, 2024 at 2.00 pm.

## PRESENT

Councillor Dick Edginton (Chairman)

Councillors Terry Aldridge, Claire Arnold, Tom Ashton, Richard Avison, Wendy Bowkett, Stef Bristow, Danny Brookes, Jimmy Brookes, Sandra Campbell-Wardman, Graham Cullen, Richard Cunnington, Colin Davie, Roger Dawson, Sarah Devereux, Carleen Dickinson, Dick Edginton, Stephen Evans, Stephen Eyre, Martin Foster, Richard Fry, William Gray, Adam Grist, Will Grover, Alex Hall, Travis Hesketh, Darren Hobson, George Horton, Rosalind Jackson, Neil Jones, Sam Kemp, Thomas Kemp, Steve Kirk, James Knowles, Terry Knowles, Craig Leyland, Steve McMillan, Daniel McNally, Carl Macey, Jill Makinson-Sanders, Ellie Marsh, Graham Marsh, Fiona Martin, M.B.E., Daniel Simpson, Robert Watson and Ruchira Yarsley.

### **79. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Billy Brookes, Mark Dannatt, David Hall, Andrew Leonard, Stephen Lyons, Kate Marnoch, Edward Mossop and Paul Rickett.

### **80. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (IF ANY):**

At this point in the Meeting, Members were invited to declare any relevant interests.

- Councillor Wendy Bowkett asked that it be noted that in respect of Item No. 14 'Funding for Good Homes Alliance Pilot Report', that she was the Executive Member for Adult Care and Public Health at Lincolnshire County Council.
- Councillor George Horton asked it be noted that he wished to declare an interest in relation to Item 10 'Annual Budget Report 2024/25, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Capital Programme and Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Policy/Strategy and Annual Delivery Plan - Table of Fees and Charges at Appendix 4'.

### **81. MINUTES:**

The Open and Exempt Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 13 December 2023 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

*N.B. Due to the Exempt status of the report Members agreed to bring Agenda Item 22' 'Dispensation Request' forward.*

**82. DISPENSATION REQUEST:**

An Exempt report was presented to enable consideration of a Dispensation for a Member of the Council. Members considered the information contained within the report and confirmed they did not wish to debate in Closed Session.

Following which it was Proposed and Seconded that the recommendation contained within the Exempt Report be supported.

RESOLVED

That in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, that a dispensation be approved for a period of 6 months from 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024 as set out in the recommendation in the Exempt report.

**83. ACTION SHEETS:**

The Actions were noted as complete.

**84. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIRMAN:**

The Chairman had attended the following civic engagement since the last Meeting:

- Mablethorpe and Sutton on Sea Town Council's Civic Service on 18 February 2024.

Members were informed that a Notice of Appointment under s91 of the Local Government Act 1972 had been published to appoint Councillors to North Thoresby Parish Council to make the Parish Council quorate.

Members were advised that Item 13 'Pay Policy Statement 24/25' had been withdrawn from the Agenda as the Legal Manager was waiting for further legal advice to be received.

**85. QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC:**

One question had been received as below, following which a written response had been provided in line with Council Procedure Rule 10.9.

Question 1	Jenny Gough
Subject	Installation of solar panels on agricultural land.
Response by	Tom Ashton, Portfolio Holder for Planning
Supplementary	What time, energy and research is ELDC putting into looking at brownfield sites for proposals that will be coming forward for applications for solar farms?
Response	Just to clarify that brownfield sites will always feature much higher in the order of preference

	as to where development of this nature should go. I share your concerns for the number of applications for large solar installations in Lincolnshire and the broader impact and loss of agricultural land, but I cannot comment on forthcoming applications. Furthermore, as a planning authority we are guided by our planning policies which are compliant with national polices and must be robust to stand up to inspection.
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A full copy of the question is attached at **Appendix 1 to these Minutes**.

## **86. REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD:**

The Leader of the Council presented Members with his report and also referred Members to the electronic communication circulated to Members relating to the Council's position on the current National Grid proposal to run a 400kV overhead transmission from Grimsby to Walpole. A copy of this is attached to the Minutes at Appendix A.

Following which, questions and comments were put forward as follows:

### Flood Support

Councillor Martin asked it be noted that the donation of £2k should read Horncastle Town Council, not Centre. Thanks were also conveyed to all ELDC staff who worked so hard after the flood to support Members and administered the grants which had been widely and gratefully accepted

It was highlighted that the Environment Agency's (EA) report on the flooding had just been published which raised a lot of concerns and it was suggested that Overview Committee should undertake some scrutiny work around this.

A Member echoed the Leader's comments and congratulations regarding the work of the staff, particularly the Wellbeing Team and the Planning Department and highlighted the remarkable impact their work had made,

In response, the Leader acknowledged the concerns raised with the EA's report and endorsed that this should go to Overview Committee to carry out a piece of scrutiny work. Flooding was an issue that the Council had to deal with across East Lindsey, and it was not just the potential of the sea flooding but also the rivers and surface water flooding which was a critical issue in some of the communities.

### Funding

A Member thanked the Leader for referencing the funding allocated to Goulceby Church and highlighted this as a good example of a community working together and the benefits it could achieve.

In response, the Leader appreciated hearing the gratitude of the residents and stated that it was always good to hear when things happened locally to make a difference to people's lives.

### Digital Support

A Member passed her thanks to Lincs Digital for providing the service and was pleased that this service had finally come to Louth.

### Achievements

A Member thanked the Leader for his report and offered his congratulations to the officers who were being rewarded for their achievements.

### Wellbeing Service Delivery – Case Study

Further to the case study referred, a Member asked that her thanks be noted to the Wellbeing Service for its excellent work on behalf of her residents.

Recognition was also given to the Household Support Fund which had reached families in need in the district's communities and who were very grateful for the help they had received.

In response, the Leader commented that a lot of work was undertaken but unseen by members of the public in relation to vulnerable people and sensitive cases. It was highlighted that the officers did a sterling job every day with a 24-hour service in operation and his thanks and appreciation went to them.

### Planning Service Update

The Portfolio Holder for Planning thanked the Leader for his kind words in respect of the Planning Service update and asked that his thanks went to Mike Gildersleeves, Assistant Director for Planning and Strategic Infrastructure who was leaving the Partnership. He added that Mr Gildersleeves had been a huge support to him in his portfolio role, and also to the development, management and planning policy teams.

In response, the Leader added that Mr Gildersleeves had been a very helpful officer over the last few years and it had been a great pleasure to work with him and wished him well in his future role.

### Asylum/Refugees in Skegness Hotels

A Member commented that it was good to see that Skegness would be getting the hotels back for tourists following their use by asylum seekers and queried whether there was a date when the hotels would be completely empty and back in use.

In response the Leader advised that he would ask the relevant officer to contact him with the latest information.

#### Towns Fund projects for Mablethorpe and Skegness: February 2024 Update

A Member referred to the approval of 12 project business cases in 2022, however highlighted that there were 13 projects in total and queried why Mablethorpe's Mobi Hub project had not been detailed.

In response, the Leader advised that he would obtain the detail with regards to the Mobi Hub.

It was highlighted that the Council had been in receipt of Towns Funding for a while and that there was a range of outcomes in terms of projects that had been delivered on time, on budget and to specification. It was queried whether at this stage how the Council, as guardians of public funds would leverage the experience from this to ensure that the big projects could be delivered on budget and on time.

In response, the Leader advised that the Council was going through COVID through the delivery of the projects. It also had to deal with a massive financial crisis that affected many people and pushed up the cost of resources and the cost of inflation. Therefore, it was a real challenge to deliver the projects and considered that the teams had done exceptionally well to manage those, and lessons had been learned.

It was highlighted that the Council had been recognised in its endeavours with its officers for Levelling Up Funding, dealing with government agencies and officers and ELDC had been recognised as a very good authority in dealing with that across the Partnership.

A Member commented that it was good to see that works had started on the towns fund projects and was pleased to see that these were progressing.

A Member commented it was wonderful to see the construction projects coming to fruition in the district. It was queried where the Leader saw funding for future capital projects coming from, whilst also taking into consideration implications of an impending general election and possible change of government and as stated by the Leader, the Council was in continuing dialogue with various developers of nationally significant infrastructure projects. A concern was raised that the outstanding natural beauty of the area and the health and wellbeing of the Council's residents was at risk of being abandoned in exchange for something else on future capital investment sources for the district council.

In response, the Leader stated that the Council had done very well out of the Levelling Up Process and acknowledged that the comments were genuinely made about the benefit that it was going to bring to various communities along the coast.

With regards to what would happen after the election was unknown, however highlighted that the benefit of the Partnership was to make its footprint and voice known and heard.

In anticipation of the future, the Leader highlighted the continued need for good engagement with the Local Government Association which had strong links and engagement with government. It was important for the Leaders from each of the three Councils to see what the new landscape potentially could be and hoped this was a blue vision for the future. The Partnership would continue to press for Levelling Up funding which had been an ambitious project that had delivered very well.

The Portfolio Holder for Coastal Economy added that he was pleased to see that work had commenced on the Further Education College in Skegness which was making steady progress.

In response, the Leader stated that one of the great strands of Levelling Up was the 12 ambitions and skills. The Skills Agenda was a key part of that and had resulted with the delivery of the college in Skegness from a small satellite campus to a bespoke facility with a curriculum that was going to support local businesses and local students as they progressed with their lives. It was highlighted that it was important to keep ambition and growth of the young people in the district, to invest locally and work locally.

#### National Grid proposal to run a 400kV overhead transmission from Grimsby to Walpole

A Member thanked the Leader for the updated report on the National Grid proposal and his quick response on this, however highlighted her disappointment that the people from Mablethorpe had been asking the Leader for a response to the Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) proposal and had waited 2 ½ years for this.

In response, the Leader highlighted with regards to Mablethorpe and the GDF, the Council was asked to be part of the working group by Nuclear Waste Services and Lincolnshire County Council as the other primary partner in this, in terms of their role. Following pre-decision scrutiny it was Executive Board's decision to be part of that working group to ensure engagement in the process. There would be a test of public support where local residents in the search area would be able to make a decision on whether they accepted the GDF being undersea near Theddlethorpe.

A Member commented that local authorities got to know about large infrastructure planning proposals much earlier than elected Members and considered that it was time for this to be addressed in order that Members could scrutinise and be fully engaged in the process.

In response, the Leader stated that there was a point in time when such proposals landed on local authorities in the initial stages, whereby they were financially sensitive and become a burden of knowledge until the point where

could be made public. However, the point on timeliness of Councillor awareness was taken.

A Member thanked the Leader for the update and considered that it would be a travesty if the pylons were allowed in Lincolnshire.

Councillor Colin Davie, also a Lincolnshire County Councillor (LCC) stated that LCC had a very strong view on this matter and would be publishing its response to the round one consultation the following week. It was highlighted to Members that the initial proposals did not tell the whole story and within the document it was clear that there would be a huge number of new projects what would wish to connect to the National Grid if it was consented and would require an estimated land take of 6000 acres in East Lindsey.

It was requested that the Leader should strive for all local authorities concerned to work together in making sure that there was no duplication of expenditure and to commit to make available whatever resources were required to defend the South East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership area from the proposals.

In response, the Chairman thanked Councillor Davie for his comments. He added that LCC had made a very strong position statement on this and was happy to confirm that the Council and wider Partnership would proceed to deal with this as a united voice across the local authorities. Work would have to be undertaken together in terms of the expenditure and he would make available whatever resources were needed as this was a significant issue for the whole of the county.

Several Members further concurred with the points made and thanked the Leader for making a very clear statement on the pylons and the excellent work that had gone into this.

**87. SUSPENSION OF COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES:**

RESOLVED:

That Council Procedure Rules be suspended for the following item to allow the mover of the Budget Report and Group Leaders(s) or representative of, in response thereto to speak for no longer than 15 minutes on one occasion.

**88. ANNUAL BUDGET REPORT 2024/25, MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY, CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND CAPITAL STRATEGY, TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY/STRATEGY AND ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN:**

N.B. A recorded vote was mandatory on the Annual Budget Report 2024/25 in line with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014.

A report was presented to enable consideration of the Annual Budget Report 2024/25, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Capital Programme and Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Policy/Strategy and Annual Delivery Plan, pages 53 to 212 of the Agenda refer.

During his introduction Councillor Fry, Portfolio Holder for Finance wished to express his thanks in particular to Christine Marshall, Section 151 Officer, Colleen Warren, Head of Finance (Client) PSPS Limited and Stuart Leafe, Strategic Finance Manager, PSPS Limited for the time consuming and difficult work undertaken in the preparation of the budget whilst the economic environment remained complex and volatile and furthermore for the help and support from all Council service areas, officers and Portfolio Holders.

Members were advised that the 2024/25 Budget had now been embedded into the new financial system and in the future delivery would be expedited. The success of the SELCP was also recognised for its 'One Team' approach in maintaining services, driving growth and most notably vitally bidding for £70m of capital funds.

Main points relating to the budget were explained in detail on pages 55 to 60 of the Agenda referred, as follows:

- Key Budget Pressures
- Council Tax and Business Rates
- Local Government Settlement
- Internal Drainage Boards
- Capital Programme 2024/25-2028/29 and Treasury Management/Investment Strategies
- Reserves
- Balancing the Budget
- Additional Considerations
- Areas for Priority Investment and Consultation

In summary, the Portfolio Holder for Finance considered that in very challenging times, the budget presented a positive picture, appropriately met the challenges the Council faced and most importantly that the team had delivered a balanced budget to be proud of.

Following which, it was Proposed and Seconded:

- That Recommendations 1 – 11 of the Annual Budget Report 2024/25, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Capital Programme and Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Policy/Strategy and Annual Delivery Plan proposed by Executive Board on the 14th February 2024 be approved.

An Amendment by the Labour Group was Proposed by Councillor Ros Jackson and Seconded by Councillor Claire Arnold as detailed below.



Labour budget amendment 2024/25:

Fair Mileage for Staff

The mileage rate paid to staff at 45p a mile hasn't been altered by HMRC since 2011. Since that time costs to motorists have risen, not only for fuel but in a host of other ways including car maintenance, insurance, and higher prices for purchase.

We propose to allocate £52,000 to supplement the 45p rate to 63p per mile for those employees who use their own car for work and claim through expenses, approximately 35% of employees.

This is a single-year plan, due to the current cost of living pressures, and will not impact on future years' budgets.

Car Park Solar Panels

We propose to invest in improvements to the council's car parks with solar canopies in order to create an increased ongoing revenue stream for the council, and to assist in the transition to net zero by 2040. This may also include charging points for electric vehicles. EV charging points will increase the capital costs but reduce the payback time for any installation.

A reserve of £330,000 will be created to draw on to begin work on installing solar panels over the most promising car parks in ELDC ownership. The project will draw on experience from the solar installation at the Hub in Horncastle and should consider an extension to that in the first instance.

Supporting affordable homes

We will be putting £300,000 towards supporting the delivery of affordable rented homes in the district, whether those homes are via council housing or in collaboration with a social housing provider. This money will be used to unlock more sites for affordable housing throughout the district, that would not otherwise be viable to be built.

Savings

We plan to fund these projects from the Corporate Priorities Reserve. This would leave a projected £3,139,000 in that reserve by March 31<sup>st</sup> 2025, for the delivery of other corporate priorities.

2024/25

Spending

Fair mileage supplement	£52,000
Solar panels over council car parks	£330,000
Affordable homes support	£300,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£682,000</b>

## Savings Plan

Corporate Priorities Reserve	£682,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£682,000</b>

No changes to 2025/26, 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29

Total Cost over 5 years	£682,000
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During her introduction of the Amendment, Councillor Jackson acknowledged that it had been a difficult budget to set and paid tribute to officers for achieving a finalised budget. It was highlighted to Members that certain items on the amendment were more strategic than specific to the budget plan but were incorporated in the corporate priority spending plans. A correction to the figures was highlighted as updated figures had been provided which meant there would be £3,759,000 left in the corporate priorities reserve after the proposed measures which was a slight increase on the original figure.

Debate ensued on the Amendment, and a Member queried whether the Labour Group had undertaken staff mileage comparisons in East Lindsey.

A further Member considered that it was timely to support an increase in mileage rates for staff, particularly as many people had been affected by the cost-of-living crisis and wanted to be part of a business that recognised this and appreciated its staff.

It was further queried in relation to solar panels why this had not been put forward for all buildings owned by the Council, including any new homes built. A Member concurred with the comment and considered that it was important for solar panels to be fitted to all car parks now, and for wider consideration of where these were being installed particularly as the Council was working towards being net zero by 2040.

A Member commented that the mileage rate of 45p was the tax-free approved amount and queried whether the Labour Group had considered what tax implications there would be for staff if it was increased to 63p.

In response to the Amendment, the Leader stated that it was difficult to support this due to the individual elements and the requirement to have a discussion on each of them.

He continued that with regards to the increase in mileage rates, this could not be supported as it affected and impacted on all three councils in the Partnership so could not be considered in isolation. It was acknowledged that staff were under pressure financially, however it was highlighted that a process had been undertaken with the NJC pay award in 2023/24 and an allowance had been made in the 2024/25 budget of 3.5% until the NJC award had been announced. It was further highlighted that the Council provided a pool car scheme with fuel cards and pool cars for staff in accessible locations.

In further response to the amendment, the Leader of the Council added that the other matters in the amendment were included in the budget and would be taken forward. Therefore, as the amendment had been put forward with all three elements en bloc, he would not be supporting it.

In response, Councillor Jackson thanked Members for their comments to the Amendment.

In relation to other organisations, Councillor Jackson stated it was not known which other companies in the district had offered increased mileage rates, however, was certain that other local authorities had increased their mileage rates so there was a precedent for this.

Councillor Jackson acknowledged the Leader's comments with regards to the pool cars, however stated that the figures calculated were based on those members of staff who did not use pool cars which was circa 35% and based on those claiming mileage and considered there were a small of number of staff disadvantaged in this way.

Councillor Jackson thanked the Leader for referring to the solar panels for car parks and affordable homes support in the budget and looked forward to seeing this progress.

In response to the tax implications for an increase in the mileage rate, Councillor Jackson stated that there would be tax implications that would affect certain employees, however still supported increasing the rate and considered that HMRC needed to change the basic mileage rates which were well out of step with the real cost of motoring.

In conclusion to the debate on the amendment, the Portfolio Holder for Finance informed Members that a reserve of £1.8m had been set aside for carbon reduction carbonisation and would ask officers to actively look at the proposal for solar panels on car parks to take this forward.

With regards to supporting affordable housing, the Portfolio Holder for Finance highlighted that there was no requirement for an additional recommendation as funding was already accessible in terms of this which was referred to in the introduction of the budget presentation. The funding would be considered in respect of the initiatives taken forward to Executive Board to access the corporate priorities reserve and would recommend that the Labour Group proceeded in this manner.

Upon being put to the vote the Amendment was declared lost:

For the Proposal: Councillors Arnold, Danny Brookes, Jimmy Brookes, Cullen, Cunningham, Dawson, Hesketh, Jackson and Terry Knowles - 9

Against the Proposal: Councillors Aldridge, Ashton, Avison, Bowkett, Campbell-Wardman, Davie, Devereux, Dickinson, Edginton, Evans, Eyre, Foster, Fry, Gray, Grist, Grover, Alex Hall, Hobson, Horton, Jones, Sam

Kemp, Tom Kemp, Kirk, James Knowles, Leyland, McMillan, McNally, Macey, Makinson-Sanders, Ellie Marsh, Graham Marsh, Martin, Simpson and Yarsley  
- 34

Abstentions: Councillor Bristow and Watson - 2

Absent: Councillors Billy Brookes, Dannatt, Dennis, David Hall, Leonard, Lyons, Marnoch, Mossop, Rickett and Taylor – 10

A further Amendment by the Skegness Urban District Society (SUDS) was Proposed by Councillor Danny Brookes and Seconded by Councillor Richard Cunningham as detailed below:

*SUDS budget amendment 2024/25:*

We request the following additions to the 2024/25 budget:

- a) To include funding of night streetlights estimated cost circa £250,000 in Skegness, due to the continuing fall of the night-time economy in the town because a lot of our tourists staying in caravans are now staying on their sites due to the fact of not wanting to walk home in the dark. We were quoted £250,000 by the County Council up front to fund this which the town can't afford. To be funded from the Corporate Priorities Reserve.
- b) A sum of £300,000 be earmarked from the Corporate Priorities reserve for the refurbishment of the toilets around the district with a view to then seeking transfer of those assets where appropriate to Town and Parish Councils.

During his introduction to the Amendment, Councillor Danny Brookes thanked the Portfolio Holder for Finance and his team for providing an exceptional budget.

Debate ensued on the Amendment and a Member commented that whilst he appreciated the ethics behind the amendment relating to street lighting, he did not see why Skegness should be highlighted against the other coastal or inland towns. It was queried what evidence there was to support the increase in footfall and the economy by lighting the streets during the night. It was further highlighted that Lincolnshire County Council were replacing streetlights with solar lights which would reduce overall costs.

With regards to the refurbishment of toilets a Member commented that he had used the toilets in Skegness many times and had found them to be exceptional and was aware that the contractors DANFO had received an award for its work. Therefore, he would not be supporting the amendment. In response, Councillor Brookes confirmed that his amendment did not include the toilets that were contracted out.

A Member concurred with the comment in relation to the night lighting being proposed for Skegness rather than Mablethorpe or Sutton on Sea which was frustrating. However, on reflection it was considered that Skegness was the largest and better-known resort and one of the highest revenue tourist areas within the district which needed to be recognised. It was further considered that Lincolnshire County Council should be responsible for the lighting and reiterated the frustrations that it did not provide what was required in the coastal areas.

With regards to the toilets, it was highlighted that not all were in an 'exceptional' condition as previously highlighted, therefore was happy to support the Amendment.

A Member considered that if the night-time street lighting for Skegness was a priority for Skegness, the Town Council had at its own disposal the means to solve this problem as it had a significant budget.

A Member highlighted that a scrutiny panel had recently looked at public convenience provision in East Lindsey and believed that there was a recommendation for the amount of £300k put forward in the Amendment to be spent on toilet facilities around the district. Therefore, it was queried that if Council had noted the report and it had been approved by the relevant Portfolio Holder this amount may be contained within the current budget. It was queried whether clarification could be provided on this as the toilet provision was very important to the visitor economy.

In response to the Amendment for night-time street lighting, the Leader of the Council highlighted that there was a facility in the budget for the Council to make loans to town and parish councils and suggested that Skegness Town Council might be minded to apply for a loan at an advantageous rate. Therefore, he could not support this Amendment.

With regards to the refurbishment of toilet facilities, the Leader of the Council confirmed that the Council had a facility in the budget to asset transfer and that the scrutiny panel's recommendation did make an allowance for a sum of money being available to the Council and the budget allowed for this to be taken forward. However, he could not support the Amendment as it stood.

Councillor Stef Bristow advised Members that she was appointed Chairman of the Public Convenience Scrutiny Panel and was pleased to hear that Members were supportive of spending money on toilets. Members were advised that the draft report was being presented to Overview Committee on 5 March 2024. Councillor Fiona Martin, Chairman of Overview Committee clarified that the report was going to Overview Committee for quality checking before being presented to Council at its AGM on 22 May 2024 and hoped that it received a full debate.

With regards to the street lighting further concerns were expressed on future continued funding.

*N.B. Councillors Jimmy Brookes and Sandra Campbell-Wardman left the Meeting at 3.59pm.*

In response to the comments made to the Amendment, the Portfolio Holder for Finance clarified that if the budget and treasury management strategy was approved, the allowance for loans to town and parish councils would be available. With regards to the proposed £300k refurbishment for toilets, there was a programme of works for this in the capital programme, however he would like to see moving forward more town and parish councils taking ownership of these assets.

Upon being put to the vote the Amendment was declared lost.

For the Proposal: Councillors Arnold, Bristow, Danny Brookes, Cullen, Cunnington, Dawson, Hesketh, Hobson, Jackson, Terry Knowles and Watson - 11

Against the Proposal: Councillors Aldridge, Ashton, Avison, Bowkett, Davie, Devereux, Dickinson, Edginton, Evans, Eyre, Foster, Fry, Gray, Grist, Grover, Alex Hall, Horton, Jones, Sam Kemp, Tom Kemp, Kirk, James Knowles, Leyland, McMillan, McNally, Macey, Makinson-Sanders, Ellie Marsh, Graham Marsh, Martin and Yarsley - 31

Abstentions: Councillor Simpson - 1

Absent: Councillors Billy Brookes, Jimmy Brookes, Campbell-Wardman, Dannatt, Dennis, David Hall, Leonard, Lyons, Marnoch, Mossop, Rickett and Taylor – 12

Debate returned to the original proposition.

*N.B. Councillor Sandra Campbell-Wardman re-joined the Meeting at 4.07pm.*

Councillor Jackson highlighted the proposed Constitutional Limits/Financial Amendment set out at Appendix 7, page 211 of the Agenda refers and was strongly against the increase to Executive Board sign off limits increasing from £300k to £500k to align this limit across the Partnership and was disappointed that this had not gone to Audit and Governance Committee for consideration. It was further queried why the Partner Councils could not reduce their limits in line with ELDC.

A Member concurred with this and considered that this increase should not have been included in the budget and was worthy of scrutiny on its own merits and would not be supporting the budget if this remained as a recommendation. It was highlighted that there needed to be the relevant checks and balances when spending money and if Executive Board was delegated to sign off amounts up to £500k it was queried whether Members would be made aware in good time in case they wished to call in a decision that was going to consume such a large sum of money.

Councillor Danny Brookes, Leader of the SUDS Group agreed that the increase to the sign off limit for Executive Board should not be included in the budget, but on a separate matter wished to thank the Portfolio Holder for Finance for his hard work over the last few years and in conjunction with the Finance Team for producing a balanced budget for 2024/25.

A further Member echoed her concerns over the vast increase in the sign off limit for Executive Board without consultation or scrutiny although acknowledged the will to align such areas across the Partnership.

Councillor Jackson further requested that a focus be placed on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) factors in the capital strategy as soon as it was available.

*N.B. At this point in the Meeting, Councillor George Horton asked it be noted that he wished to declare an interest in relation to the Table of Fees and Charges at Appendix 4.*

Councillor Horton congratulated the Portfolio Holder for Finance and his team for the difficult job of producing the 2024/25 budget. However, having previously recognised that tourism was one of the biggest industries in the district was dismayed to see that the fees for caravan site licences had more than doubled.

A Member commented that the fee for fixed penalty notice for dog fouling was too low and stated that if a higher penalty was imposed more enforcement officers could be employed.

A further concern was raised with regards to Council Tax Premiums set out in Additional Considerations, Section 9.1, page 59 of the Agenda refers, where a premium up to 100% was charged penalising homeowners for properties unoccupied periodically (second homes). It was highlighted that East Lindsey could not be compared to Cornwall, or London where many houses had been bought as a second home or for letting. It was queried with regards to the fully vacant properties whether the uplifting of the Council Tax had caused any of those properties to be sold or returned for letting.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning commended the Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Finance Team for a good budget and the work undertaken to address the long-standing challenge caused by Internal Drainage Board Funding and the special levy arrangements. The incredible work undertaken by those during the storm events over the winter was also appreciated. He stated that the budgets in recent years was a tribute to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and why the Council was in the position as a well-funded district through the good long-term management of the finances and he wholeheartedly supported the recommendations as set out in the report.

Councillor Claire Arnold stated on behalf of the Labour Group that they were not happy with the proposed increase to the sign off limit for Executive Board,

following which it was Proposed that Recommendation 10 be removed from the report, page 54 of the Agenda refers.

The Chief Executive advised Members that a recommendation could not be removed but could seek to amend it and take a recorded vote after the debate.

Following which, it was Proposed and Seconded that Recommendation 10 be amended to read 'That the sign off limits for the Executive Board remain at £300,000'.

In response to the amendment to Recommendation 10, the Leader of the Council considered that some of the comments made had been said in haste, referring to Executive Board making decisions in isolation and not being transparent. The Leader added that the proposed increase to the limit was on the back of the Council's experience over the last few years having to deal with significant financial issues that were hindered in decision making and the timeliness of those decisions because the Council did not have the limit that the Partner Councils had.

With regards to the comment made in relation to the Partner Councils equalising their limit to £300k, the Leader of the Council considered this to be a retrogressive statement and in terms of a mindset was worrying about the direction in which the Council travelled.

In response to the comment with regards to checks and balances, the Leader of the Council highlighted that checks and balances were carried out during the decision-making process, including call-in and Member briefings and other various elements for disseminating information. It was further highlighted that having a limit of £300k had been limiting and considered that it was important to join the Partner Councils to have that ability, therefore would not support the amendment to the recommendation.

A Member commented that every year Councillors were given lesser responsibility and that decisions were not made by having a wide debate but controlled by Executive Board and agreed that the sign off limits for the Executive Board remained at £300k. A further Member concurred with this statement and highlighted that the Executive Board was homogeneous by not being diverse and politically proportioned as the Council's Committees were and would be supporting the amendment to the recommendation.

A Member acknowledged that the recommendation to increase the sign off by £200k was large and there should have been a debate, however for a Council of its size, and as part of the Partnership it did not seem excessive and would not like to see East Lindsey left behind.



A Member stated that he had not heard of any examples of decisions that had gone awry at the current level of £300k and there had not been any clear reasons put forward as to why the level should be increased to £500k, therefore would not be supporting the amendment to the recommendation.

A Member queried why the proposed increase to the sign off limits had not been considered by the Constitutional Working Group in the first instance and stated that it was bad for democracy and governance if the proper process was not followed.

A Member queried whether this set a 'green light' for amendments to be made to the Constitution.

In response to the comments made to the proposed amendment to the recommendation, the Section 151 Officer advised Members in her opinion that for a local authority the size of East Lindsey, a limit of £300k was quite modest. Over the past 2 years, there had been instances where sign off limits were exceeding the £300k limit and the decision had to go to Full Council for a decision. It was highlighted to Members that a mechanism was already built into the Constitution for call in of decisions. It was further highlighted that alignment of the sign off limits made it easier for those shared officers across the Partnership, however fully respected the points that had been made.

In conclusion to the amendment, Councillor Arnold thanked Members for their support and reiterated the need to involve all Councillors in decision making.

In response to the amendment to the recommendation the Portfolio Holder for Finance stated that he had nothing further to say and would not be supporting the amendment.

The Monitoring Officer clarified to Members that the Audit and Governance Committee's role was to monitor and review the operation of the Council's Constitution to ensure that the full aims and principles were given full effect. There was also a Constitutional Working Group that worked with the MO to keep the Constitution under review to ensure it remained fit for purpose and met and reported back to the Audit and Governance Committee as required with recommendations to Full Council. However, this did not preclude other matters that changed the Constitution, for example Item 15 'Members Allowances Scheme and Independent Remuneration Panel Report' which depending on how this was determined could result in a change to detail within the Constitution so did not preclude Full Council from considering that matter.

As a Point of Order, a Member asked for clarification on putting forward an amendment as he understood this should be formally tabled and debated on and not added in during the debate.

In response, the MO advised that it was custom and practice for political groups to provide amendments in advance on the budget, however there was

nothing in the Constitution that precluded a further amendment coming forward.

No further comments on the amendment were received.

Upon being put to the vote, the Amendment that Recommendation 10 be amended to read 'That the sign off limits for the Executive Board to remain at £300,000' was declared lost.

For the Proposal: Councillors Arnold, Bristow, Cullen, Cunnington, Dawson, Hobson, Horton, Jackson, Terry Knowles, Simpson and Watson - 11

Against the Proposal: Councillors Aldridge, Ashton, Avison, Bowkett, Danny Brookes, Campbell-Wardman, Davie, Devereux, Edginton, Evans, Foster, Fry, Gray, Grist, Grover, Alex Hall, Hesketh, Jones, Sam Kemp, Tom Kemp, Kirk, James Knowles, Leyland, McMillan, McNally, Macey, Ellie Marsh, Graham Marsh, Martin and Yarsley - 30

Abstentions: Councillors Dickinson, Eyre and Makinson-Sanders - 3

Absent: Councillors Billy Brookes, Jimmy Brookes, Dannatt, Dennis, David Hall, Leonard, Lyons, Marnoch, Mossop, Rickett and Taylor – 11

Debate returned to the original proposition.

Councillor Makinson-Sanders, on behalf of the Independent Group thanked Christine Marshall, Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate Development)/Section 151 Officer, Councillor Richard Fry, Portfolio Holder for Finance and officers in the Finance Team for their hard work in delivering a balanced budget.

The Leader of the Council thanked Members for their comments of appreciation for the work that had gone into the budget and those persons involved. He added that he acknowledged the concerns raised in the debate on the third amendment and wanted to assure Members that the Executive Board acted with the best interests of the Council and considered that the executive function and structure of the Council had worked well for a number of years.

In conclusion, the Leader of the Council referred to a recent commitment of the Council's ambition to its communities and highlighted the success of the Towns Funding and other Levelling Up monies from government. It was however, considered important that all communities were recognised and Members were advised that Portfolio Holders and officers were developing a £9m investment programme for market towns, villages and parishes to be delivered over the next 3 to 4 years. This would be funded from the corporate priorities reserve and there would be six themes to this work 'Civic Pride, Health and Security, Community Assets and Community Development, Culture and Heritage, Regeneration and Business Support and Employment'. Appropriate engagement would be convened with Councillors and communities as this was developed for delivery.

No further comments on the original proposition were received.

Upon being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED:

That the following recommendations proposed by Executive Board on 14th February 2024 be approved:

1. That the Revenue Estimates for the General Fund and Medium-Term Financial Strategy for the period 2024/25 – 2028/29 (Appendices 1, 1a and 1b) be approved.
2. That the Council Tax for a band D property in 2024/25 be set at £166.59 (a £4.95 per annum increase on 2023/24 levels) be approved.
3. The additions to and use of reserves (as detailed at Appendix 1) be approved.
4. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (at Appendix 1) be approved.
5. The Capital Programme and Capital Strategy (Appendices 1, 1c and 2) be approved.
6. The Treasury Management Policy 2024/25 (Appendix 3a) and Treasury Management Strategy, including the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy and Annual Investment Strategy 2024/25 (Appendix 3b) be approved.
7. The Fees and Charges Schedule 2024/25 (Appendix 4) be approved, and Council approve the application of annual RPI uplifts for all fees and charges where applicable.
8. The Annual Delivery Plan for 2024/25 (Appendix 5) be approved.
9. That Council notes the results of the Budget Consultation process at Appendix 6
10. That the alignment of constitutional financial limits across the partnership (Appendix 7) be approved.
11. That Council reaffirms its previous decision in respect of long-term empty properties determined in Appendix 1, para 4.10, and makes a determination for the introduction of the premium for substantially furnished with no residents (second homes), to be introduced at the earliest point, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025.

Upon being put to the vote the original proposition was carried.

For the Proposal: Councillors Aldridge, Ashton, Avison, Bowkett, Danny Brookes, Campbell-Wardman, Cunnington, Davie, Devereux, Dickinson, Edginton, Evans, Eyre, Foster, Fry, Gray, Grist, Grover, Alex Hall, Hesketh, Hobson, Jones, Sam Kemp, Tom Kemp, Kirk, James Knowles, Terry Knowles, Leyland, McMillan, McNally, Macey, Makinson-Sanders, Ellie Marsh, Graham Marsh, Martin, Simpson, Watson and Yarsley – 38

Against the Proposal: Councillor Bristow - 1

Abstentions: Councillors Arnold, Cullen, Dawson, Horton and Jackson - 5

Absent: Councillors Billy Brookes, Jimmy Brookes, Dannatt, Dennis, David Hall, Leonard, Lyons, Marnoch, Mossop, Rickett and Taylor – 11

*N.B. The Meeting adjourned for a comfort break at 4.49pm and reconvened at 5.03pm.*

## **89. COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2024/25:**

N.B. A recorded vote was mandatory on Council Tax Setting 2024/25, in line with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented a report to enable consideration of the amounts of Council Tax applicable for 2024/25 for each valuation band and in each part of the district.

The East Lindsey District Council budget for 2024/25 was considered by Executive Board on 14th February 2024 and recommendations were now provided to Council on 28th February 2024, setting the band D Council Tax at £166.59, a £4.95 (3.06%) increase on 2023/24. The Budget report was based on the finance settlement advised by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Full details were set out at Sections 1 and 2 and Appendices A to E of the Supplementary Agenda, pages 2 to 25 refer.

The recommendations were duly Proposed and Seconded.

No comments or questions were received.

**RESOLVED:**

That the formal Council Tax resolutions for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix A and summarised in paragraph 4.1 be approved.

For the Proposals: Councillors Aldridge, Arnold, Ashton, Avison, Bowkett, Bristow, Danny Brookes, Campbell-Wardman, Cullen, Cunnington, Davie, Devereux, Dickinson, Edginton, Evans, Eyre, Foster, Fry, Gray, Grist, Grover, Alex Hall, Hesketh, Hobson, Horton, Jackson, Jones, Sam Kemp, Tom Kemp, Kirk, James Knowles, Terry Knowles, Leyland, McMillan, McNally, Macey, Makinson-Sanders, Ellie Marsh, Graham Marsh, Martin, Simpson, Watson and Yarsley– 43

Against the Proposals: 0

Abstentions: Councillor - 0

Absent: Councillors Billy Brookes, Jimmy Brookes, Dannatt, Dawson, Dennis, David Hall, Leonard, Lyons, Marnoch, Mossop, Rickett and Taylor – 12

*N.B. Councillor Terry Knowles left the Meeting at 5.10pm.*

**90. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2024/25:**

A report was presented to determine the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2024/25. This report sought Council approval of the Executive Board decision on the final proposals for the 2024/25 Local Council Tax Support scheme (Executive Board Minute No. 54 from the Meeting held on 10 January 2024 refers).

During his introduction of the report the Portfolio Holder for Finance referred to the results of the 2024/25 Scheme Consultation as set out at Section 3 of the report, pages 215 to 216 of the Agenda refer.

High level findings were summarised as follows:

- The majority of respondents, (64%) agreed that the council should retain the main characteristics of the current Council Tax Scheme.
- 50% of respondents felt that the current scheme was fair and provided support to those most vulnerable.
- 62% of respondents agreed the Council should increase the scheme in line with DWP provisions for 2024/25 and future years.

The full consultation report was shown at Appendix A.

The recommendations were duly Proposed and Seconded.

There were no comments or questions received.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the continuation of the current Council Tax Support scheme, including uprating in line with DWP's annual update of allowances and premiums for 2024/25 be approved, and
- ii) The provision for Care Leaver support under this scheme to be increased to age 25 be approved.

**91. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2024/25:**

Members were advised that this Item had been withdrawn from the Agenda, pending receipt of further legal advice.

*N.B. Councillor Wendy Bowkett left the Meeting at 5.16pm.*

## **92. FUNDING FOR GOOD HOME ALLIANCE PILOT REPORT:**

The Portfolio Holder for Better Ageing and Communities presented a report that sought approval to accept funding received from Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) and approve delegations to fund and host the Lincolnshire Good Homes Advice and Casework pilot.

The background to the report was highlighted to Members, as set out at Section 1 of the report, pages 229 to 231 of the Agenda refer.

Members were requested to consider approving the recommendations to enable officers to progress the pilot scheme. A Good Home Alliance advice and casework pilot would help the Council's residents, especially owner-occupiers who were older and vulnerable, to maintain their homes. This would benefit the community's health and wellbeing and should lead to considerable cost saving to the public purse. Additionally, the Centre for Ageing Better would continue to work with Lincolnshire Councils to fund an evaluation of the pilot. This would provide invaluable information and evidence on the benefits of the service to residents, the savings to the public purse and other operational learning to support the service being permanently delivered.

LCC supported the use of this additional Better Care / Disabled Facilities Grant funding to support the Good Home Alliance advice and casework pilot as set out within Section 2 of this report, pages 231 to 235 of the Agenda refer.

Following which the recommendation was duly Proposed and Seconded.

Members were invited to put their comments and questions forward.

A Member considered this to be a very worthy scheme, however raised a concern that residents had to visit the web pages to access the information. It was therefore, suggested that this pilot scheme be tagged to the Wellbeing Service. In response, the Portfolio Holder for Better Ageing and Communities acknowledged that there were a lot of vulnerable residents and assured Members that there were dedicated members of staff in the Wellbeing Team to assist this group of people.

A Member echoed the comment raised, and provided an example where some ward surgeries were held in buildings that had no internet access. It was further queried if and how the pilot fitted into the Heart Scheme. In response, the Portfolio Holder for Better Ageing and Communities confirmed that the pilot scheme would work in conjunction with the Heart Team. With regards to accessing the information, there would be a social media campaign and also information provided at community hubs.

A Member welcomed this scheme and commented that a lot of hard work had been invested in this. It was queried whether a leaflet could be distributed with Council Tax bills to make residents aware of the service. In response,

the Portfolio Holder for Better Ageing and Communities regretted that there would be insufficient time for this to be included in the mailing of Council Tax bills, however reiterated that there would be a campaign to get the message out across the district.

A Member considered this was a very good scheme and recognised the collaborative work between the 3 councils and officers across the Partnership.

In conclusion, Members were advised that this was a 2-year pilot scheme and would be advertised regularly in the Members' Point Brief. It was requested that Members be asked to disseminate this information to their town and parish councils.

#### RESOLVED

1. That £340,965 funding from Lincolnshire County Council to fund the 2-year pilot service, inclusive of the £112,844 ELDC contribution be accepted; and

That subject to the receipt of additional external funding contributions,

2. Approval be delegated to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership and Portfolio Holder for Communities and Better Ageing, to accept up to £145,035 in additional external funding contributions to support the delivery and expansion of the Advice and Casework pilot throughout 2024/25 - 2026/27. Bringing the total available funding for the 2-year Advice and Casework pilot to £486,000 across 2024/25 – 2026/27.

*N.B. Councillor Wendy Bowkett re-joined the Meeting at 5.16pm.*

#### **93. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME AND INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL REPORT:**

Members received a report on the Members' Allowances Scheme and Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) Report to consider recommendations from the IRP and approve a Members' Allowances Scheme from 1 April 2024.

The Monitoring Officer introduced Nicci Marzec, Spokesperson for the IRP and referred Members to the Panel's report attached at Appendix 1 to the report, pages 253 to 266 refer.

Ms Marzec thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to present the report and was conscious that Members may have questions on the elements that were deliberated on as part of the report.

Members were advised that there were four key areas that the Panel was asked to focus on that came out of the questionnaire sent out to Councillors in autumn 2023.

- Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances
- Allowance for the Vice-Chairman of Planning Policy Committee
- To consider remuneration for Co-opted Independent Members
- To consider increases to the Leader, Deputy Leader and Executive Allowances

It was highlighted that a lot of active benchmark work was undertaken on allowances both in Lincolnshire and similar authorities across the country. Overall, the Panel determined that the basic allowance in East Lindsey was not significantly lower than others either in terms of statistically nearest neighbours or Lincolnshire district councils and the fact that East Lindsey had already adopted the annual cost of living allowances linked to the staff pay award which was applied to the councillor basic allowance. Over time, if this continued the basic allowance in East Lindsey may end up as one of the highest in the county and had already increased quite significantly over the last 2 years as a result of pay awards and the Panel recommended that this index link continued.

The Panel also looked at the £50 per year increase to the basic allowance which had been the pre-cursor to the link to the staff pay award. The recommendation was that as this had been put in place before the annual link to the pay award, then that should now cease as it was now outdated.

In relation to a number of the special responsibility allowances, it was essentially determined that the Leader's allowance should remain as it was, subject to the annual increase from the pay award, however the Deputy Leader and Executive Board Members were lower than the average Lincolnshire allowances for the same role. In comparison to other Lincolnshire authorities the Deputy Leader allowance was approximately 60% of that of the Leader, therefore it was a recommendation of the Panel to amend the Deputy Leader allowance to 60% of that of the Leader's allowance. Similarly, the Panel proposed an increase to the Executive Board Member allowance to bring them up to the Lincolnshire average.

In terms of Co-Opted Members allowances, the Panel undertook a lot of benchmark work with regards to what happened in other authorities across the country and in particular the recommendations from CIPFA in terms of the function of Audit and Governance Committee and the technical expertise required. As a result, to attract that technical expertise the Panel recommended an allowance of £650 per annum.

These recommendations were summarised in Appendix A at Paragraph 8, page 257 of the Agenda refers.

The Chief Executive asked that his thanks to the members of the IRP for their work on the report and attendance at the Meeting be noted.

Members were invited to put their comments and questions forward.



A Member highlighted that currently a Chair of a Scrutiny Panel received a standard payment for producing a report, however referred to the 'not applicable' for the Chairman of Scrutiny and Policy Panels (per report), page 259 of the report refers and queried whether this would continue.

In response, the MO clarified that as ELDC operated a different type of scrutiny to the partner councils, there was not a comparable allowance for a scrutiny chair and why it was listed as 'not applicable'. It was confirmed that if Members adopted the scheme again incorporating the recommendations it would continue as part of the existing scheme.

A Member queried how the Panel saw fit that the Leader of ELDC which represented a larger number of people than the Leaders at Boston Borough Council and South Holland District Council received less remuneration and considered it grossly unfair.

In response Ms Marzec advised that the Panel was required to assess the amount of work involved in the role and whether it had significantly changed to warrant an increase, however after undertaking this assessment the role had not significantly changed in its duties and responsibilities to warrant an increase in that particular role.

The Deputy Leader of the Council echoed the Chief Executive's comments and supported the recommendations, with the exception of the Members Basic Allowance. As the largest Council within the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (SELCP) it was highlighted that this allowance was behind the partner councils and since the formation of the SELCP, ELDC Councillors had additional responsibilities and more complex matters to scrutinise which had delivered substantial savings whilst maintaining and improving the services that the Council delivered.

Following which the Deputy Leader of the Council proposed the IRP recommendations be approved and that the basic allowance for all Members be increased by £1,000.

It was considered by increasing this, it recognised the value of Members and hoped it would encourage younger more diverse members in the communities to consider putting themselves forward to stand for election during financially difficult times.

Councillor George Horton seconded the proposal.

Speaking to the proposal, Councillor Jackson stated that the Basic Members Allowance decided by the IRP should be respected, however took on the points made.

Councillor Ros Jackson further commented that she was grateful to the work of the IRP and was very pleased to see that an allowance had been proposed for the role of an Independent Co-Opted Member.

At this point, the Monitoring Officer clarified to Members that the IRP report and its recommendations stood alone, and Members should debate on the substantive motion proposed by the Deputy Leader of the Council and seconded by Councillor Horton.

Further to the information contained within the report of the IRP, the Portfolio Holder for Coastal Economy stated that the Leader of the Council had taken on extra responsibilities since the Partnership was formed and worked extremely long hours in the role and considered he should be remunerated accordingly. It was further highlighted that most Councillors were involved and active with the Partnership and that they worked hard in their communities.

A Member agreed that the Leader of the Council should be remunerated properly for the difficult work that he undertook. He further considered that he would not be against increasing the basic members allowance by double to encourage more people to become Councillors and engage, however personally considered that this should be means tested.

The Leader of the SUDS Group agreed that the Leader of the Council should receive a higher allowance by at least being on an equal level with the Leaders from the other two councils, and highlighted that from his own experience the Leader put in a lot more work since the Partnership was formed.

A Member concurred with the Deputy Leader of the Council in relation to attracting the right people by being proactive and offering the right remuneration.

In response, the Leader of the Council thanked Members for their kind words and was humbled by them. He further thanked the IRP Members for the work undertaken and the report presented.

With regards to Members' suggestions to further increases to some of the allowances, he stated that he fully understood the motivation for that and acknowledged the amount of work Members put into their communities. He highlighted examples over recent years to the response to Covid and the incredible responsibility for Members to engage with their communities in very difficult circumstances. He further agreed with the comments received in relation to engaging younger people and by making the role attractive to get people engaged and acknowledged that the allowances were not enough but reflected the worth of a Councillor's role.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning reiterated previous comments with regards to increasing the basic members allowance to encourage more young people to want to join the Council and recognised the difficulties managing this for those in employment and the impact on the work/life balance. He also concurred that the Leader of the Council's special responsibility allowance be aligned to that of the Leaders at SHDC and BBC.

The East Lindsey Independent Group Leader concurred with the comments made and stated that it cost money to undertake the role as a Councillor which was the reason for payment of the basic members' allowance.

A Member thanked the IRP for its hard work on producing the report, however did not fully agree with the findings or the recommendations and considered that it was not right to compare different areas for worth as each person was individual. It was highlighted that a lot of work undertaken by Councillors was unseen, particularly that of a confidential and sensitive nature. It was further highlighted that each council was unique to certain things, for example East Lindsey had tourism and farming which was very different to an authority based in the Midlands.

At this point in the Meeting, the Leader of the Council stated that he would be leaving the room as he did not feel comfortable being present while the allowance for his role was being discussed.

*N.B. Councillor Craig Leyland left the Meeting at 6.00pm.*

Following which, a discussion ensued with regards to the population of each partner council and the equivalent pence per head of the electorate.

A Member highlighted that if East Lindsey Members were given an increase of £1000, it would calculate to 4.3 pence per head which was still less than other local authorities.

At this point in the Meeting, it was Proposed and Seconded that an amendment be made to include the Leader of the Council Allowance to be increased to £20,000 and continue to be index-linked to the national pay award as set out in the IRP's recommendations.

There were no further comments or questions received to the amendment.

Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was carried.

3 Abstentions were noted.

*N.B. Councillor Craig Leyland, Leader of the Council re-joined the Meeting at 6.03pm.*

The Deputy Leader of the Council thanked Members for supporting his proposal to increase the basic members allowance by £1000. It was acknowledged that it was difficult in making decisions to increase these types of allowances, however it was an area that needed addressing.

The Monitoring Officer clarified to Members that the vote was to approve the recommendations contained within the IRP's report which included the amendment to the Leader of the Council's Allowance and the proposal for the Basic Members Allowance to be increased by £1000.

Upon being put to the vote, the vote was carried.

7 Abstentions were noted.

RESOLVED:

- That the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP), an increase of the Basic Allowance of £1,000 and an increase of the Leader of the Councils Allowance to £20,000 are incorporated into the Members' Allowances Scheme from the 1 April 2024 and to include the associated financial implications into the 2024/25 budget be approved. The recommendations of the IRP are detailed at page 5 of the IRP's Report (Appendix A to this report).

The Chairman advised Members that as the Council had been in session for over four hours, a vote was required for the Meeting to continue.

Following which, it was Proposed and Seconded that the Meeting continued to conclude the business.

RESOLVED:

That the Meeting continued to conclude the business.

*N.B. Councillor Stef Bristow left the Meeting at 6.05pm.*

#### **94. SOUTH & EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE REPORT:**

The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Affairs presented a report that set out the progress of the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership since the last update on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

The background to the report was highlighted to Members, as set out at Section 1, page 268 of the Agenda refers and particular reference was made to the following:

- Progress of the Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24 (Section 2)
- Performance Framework 2024/25 (Section 3)
- Peer Challenge Update (Section 4)
- Updates from the Priority Partnerships (Section 5)
- Partnership Scrutiny Update (Section 6)

Following which the recommendations were duly Proposed and Seconded.

Members were invited to put their comments and questions forward.

A Member referred to the Table at Section 2.5 'SELCP £42m Savings Tracker – cashable and non-cashable', page 269 of the Agenda refers and queried the

difference in the total at £24,614,132 against the planned target savings of £42,671,000 in 2031/32. It was further highlighted that the figures appeared to be on track, until 2026/27 when the projections started to fall considerably.

In response, the Leader of the Council considered that it was the reality of actually projecting that far into the future and how accurate this could be. The Section 151 Officer explained that it was about capturing those savings which had already crystallised, although there were still existing targets and options being looked at. Therefore, these savings would not be incorporated into the table until they were real and the gap in the figures was for what was yet to be achieved. Members were advised that the SELCP was currently doing extremely well against that target.

No further comments or questions were received.

RESOLVED

That the following areas of the report be noted.

- The progress of the Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) 2023/24 (Section 2)
- The Performance Framework 2024/25 (Section 3)
- The Peer Challenge update (Section 4)
- The updates from the Priority Partnerships (Section 5)
- The Partnership Scrutiny update (Section 6)

*N.B. Councillor Richard Cunnington left the Meeting at 6.14pm.*

## **95. MOTIONS ON NOTICE:**

The following Motion was received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12:

### Violence against women and girls

*'Violence against women and girls is a serious problem that isn't improving quickly enough.*

*According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), in England and Wales during the 2021/22 period:*

- 1. 6.9% of women aged over 16 were victims of domestic abuse.*
- 2. 3.3% of women aged over 16 were victims of sexual assault.*
- 3. 4.9% of women aged over 16 were victims of stalking.*
- 4. There were 2887 cases of honour-based abuse recorded by police.*
- 5. 24.8% of women had experienced abuse before the age of 16.*

*East Lindsey District Council must seriously consider and play its part by working together, informing others, and encouraging people to reduce the rates of these horrific crimes.*

*Therefore, we propose, that by resolution that East Lindsey District Council will:*

- 1. Encourage all Councillors to take the White Ribbon Pledge, never to take part in, condone, or stay silent about violence against women.*
- 2. Undertake the steps to achieve White Ribbon Accreditation, joining many councils and public sector bodies that have already done so.*
- 3. Train frontline staff to recognise the signs of Violence Against Women and Girls.*
- 4. Act to reduce harms.*
- 5. Communicate with the public to raise awareness of the signs of Violence Against Women and Girls and coercive control.*
- 6. Appoint a male Councillor as an Ambassador and a female Councillor as a Champion*
- 7. Mark White Ribbon Day on 25th November each year with a fundraising / awareness event'.*

Proposer: Councillor Claire Arnold

Seconder: Councillor Ros Jackson

In her introduction, Councillor Arnold added that she would like to see all Councillors stand together and work collaboratively to raise awareness about men's violence against women and girls and together this could change harmful and negative cultures and to take an organisational wide approach to promote a safe and positive work culture and a healthy place to be. By becoming accredited, a strategic plan could be created for all levels of the Council structure where it could empower each and every one to speak out and stop violence against women.

Councillor Jackson added that many staff across Lincolnshire had already highlighted violence against women and girls and this had also been included in Lincolnshire Police's Campaign 'You're right, that's wrong'. Unlike a normal motion, it was not possible to illustrate with a specific example but it was stressed that this was happening in Members' wards and had devastating impacts. Behind the statistics, lives were ruined, women and families were uprooted and health damaged and this also resulted in additional costs including safeguarding, rehoming victims, Wellbeing Service, police, NHS and other services. In conclusion, Councillor Jackson urged Members to support the Motion.

The Deputy Leader of the Council agreed with the comments made and added that the more people were prepared to stand and say it was not acceptable, the better chance there was of stamping it out and considered it an excellent Motion to support.

The Portfolio Holder for Coastal Economy concurred with the comments made and emphasised that the damage caused went far deeper and often resulted in women entering abusive relationships due to learned behaviour. He considered it to be a fantastic Motion and was happy to support it.

A Member stated that he was in full support of the Motion and had been looking at some data in relation to violence against women, girls and men. However, it was highlighted that although the Motion covered a core issue, there were bigger challenges in every community, with some of them being brought on by mental health issues and cost of living pressures. Therefore, it was important for the Council to support his Motion to make East Lindsey one of the best and safest places to live.

A Member concurred with the reference to abuse against men and wholeheartedly agreed that both a home and workplace should be a safe area and was happy to support the Motion.

A Member stated that he fully supported the Motion and added that this type of abuse was often unrecognisable and those involved were ordinary and unsuspecting individuals. It was further highlighted that there was also a lot of mental abuse involved. It was queried whether Councillors could be offered training in these matters so that people could be signposted to the right individuals/organisations for help.

In response to the Motion, the Leader of the Council stated that he was very happy to support the Motion and highlighted the work of Lincolnshire County Council who raised awareness of violence against men.

A Member stated that he was fully supportive of the Motion and asked for further information on the White Ribbon pledge to provide a better understanding to ensure the Council was doing the best and going as far as it could, versus other initiatives in this respect. In response, Councillor Arnold advised that this had been highlighted to her by some other Councils who had signed up to this.

A Member concurred that many men were also subject to abuse and highlighted that at a refuge in Louth, Members had been helping men as well as women, with men often very reluctant to seek help and support.

In conclusion, Councillor Arnold thanked Members for their positive and supportive comments and hoped that by the Council supporting the Motion, part of the pledge was to encourage the conversation and this would help people to come forward and read out her own pledge as 'I promise to never use, excuse or remain silent about men's violence against women and girls'.

Members were referred to the White Ribbon Accreditation Programme that ensured organisations took a strategic approach to ending men's violence against women. Details can be viewed by clicking on the link [White Ribbon UK](#)

Upon being put to the vote, the Motion was carried,

**RESOLVED**

That the Motion be supported.

*N.B. Councillor Carl Macey left the Meeting at 6.29pm.*

**96. DRAFT MINUTES OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE:**

Members received the draft Minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2024 for noting.

Councillor Ros Jackson, Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee highlighted several key points from the Meeting:

- An exercise to review the effectiveness of the Committee had been undertaken which had produced an improvement plan.
- The 2024/25 Budget was discussed with an emphasis on the Internal Drainage Board funds and a robust discussion was held.
- The Committee would be re-advertising for a second Independent Co-opted Member.
- Due to a number of incomplete reports for the financial statements and the external auditors, an extraordinary meeting would be convened for these to be presented, anticipated to be held in April 2024.

Members were invited to put their comments and questions forward. None were received.

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 24 January 2024 be noted.

**97. QUESTIONS:**

Question 1	Councillor Jackson
Subject	Emergency Planning relating to proposed Geological Disposal Facility (GDF)
Response by	Councillor Foster
Supplementary	None
Question 2	Councillor Jackson
Subject	Bringing Empty Homes back into use
Response by	Councillor Gray
Supplementary	None
Question 3	Councillor Jackson
Subject	Business Rates loss relating to avoidance techniques
Response by	Councillor Fry
Supplementary	None



Question 4	Councillor Hesketh
Subject	Delay on referendum on proposed GDF
Response by	Councillor Leyland
Supplementary	When are you going to show leadership in this matter?
Response	We are – we joined the working group led by NWS. This was taken through Overview Committee and agreed by Executive Board that we would become part of the process. We need to ensure that we have all information on the potential benefits and safety before we go to the test of public support, no later than 2027. We will withdraw if we don't get public support. The local MP is against this and I keep her fully informed. There are other issues that we need to fully understand, for example the rail link from the south of the county which would make a significant difference to the local economy and residents' lives. The potential employment would also make a difference, but the issue of flood defence is also critical. The Council in a position of neutrality must keep residents informed and if we withdrew now we would be denying residents the opportunity.
Question 5	Councillor Hesketh
Subject	The Council's top three strategic issues
Response by	Councillor Leyland
Supplementary	Can you re-look at the published document as it does not read well?
Response	We have a wider strategic ambition which we share with the partnership and obviously those are issues that we're going to deliver locally. I will happily look at this if there is any ambiguity or confusion over the strength of the message.
Question 6	Councillor Hesketh
Subject	Identified land in Mablethorpe for 4000 houses
Response by	Councillor Ashton
Supplementary	Are you going to make a plan?
Response	To plan for 4000 homes at this time would be far too premature in the planning process and completely ridiculous, notwithstanding the increase in sea defenses on the coast before the Environment Agency would allow us to begin to make plans.
Question 7	Councillor Horton
Subject	Payment towards retirement of Boston Borough Council's Chief Executive.
Response by	Councillor Fry
Supplementary	None

Question 8	Councillor Horton
Subject	Increase in provision of grass roots football
Response by	Councillor Leyland
Supplementary	None
Question 9	Councillor Horton
Subject	Payment in compensation of retirement of a senior member of staff
Response by	Councillor Leyland
Supplementary	Would a position like this have gone out to the public or was it an in-house decision?
Response	I will provide a response in writing.
Question 10	Councillor Makinson-Sanders
Subject	Call-In Procedure
Response by	Councillor Leyland
Supplementary	Would you support Overview Committee in setting up a scrutiny panel to look at this?
Response	This does need to be debated and Overview Committee would be the correct forum to do so.
Question 11	Councillor Makinson-Sanders
Subject	Cheque payments
Response by	Councillor Fry
Supplementary	None
Question 12	Councillor Hesketh
Subject	Debate on Pylons
Response by	Councillor Leyland
Supplementary	Will you look at clarifying the Constitution so that elected Members can have a discussion/debate?
Response	I think the issues raised have been dealt with by the Monitoring Officer and Chief Executive. If we were to look at the Constitution it would need to go through the proper channels.
Question 13	Councillor Hesketh
Subject	Community opinion on Nuclear Waste
Response by	Councillor Leyland
Supplementary	None
Question 14	Councillor Hesketh
Subject	Opinion on pylons.
Response by	Councillor Leyland
Supplementary	None
Question 15	Councillor Hesketh

Subject	Community view on pylons
Response by	Councillor Leyland
Supplementary	None
Question 16	Councillor Hesketh
Subject	Removal of Motion
Response by	Councillor Leyland
Supplementary	None
Question 17	Councillor Hesketh
Subject	Timing of Motion
Response by	Councillor Leyland
Supplementary	None
Question 18	Councillor Hesketh
Subject	Community held opinion
Response by	Councillor Leyland
Supplementary	None
Question 19	Councillor Hesketh
Subject	Viking CCS Pipeline Project
Response by	Councillor Leyland
Supplementary	Do you think we should look at these things as a whole as there is a whole catalogue of industrialization of the countryside going on?
Response	There will be other issues for the East of England in terms of planning but the principal remains the same where we have applications that are of a significant scale. We need to understand where they all are, what they do and how they impact communities.
Question 20	Councillor Horton
Subject	Markets
Response by	Councillor Grist
Supplementary	None
Question 21	Councillor Makinson-Sanders
Subject	Shortage of litter bins
Response by	Councillor Foster
Supplementary	None
Question 22	Councillor McNally
Subject	Refused Motion
Response by	Councillor Leyland
Supplementary	Would you be prepared to speak to Group Leaders and consider bringing a different format forward for questions to council?
Response	It is a discussion to be had with Group Leaders but it is

	also a matter of the Constitution so it will be a combined effort.
Question 23	Councillor McNally
Subject	Motion to Council
Response by	Councillor Leyland
Supplementary	None
Question 24	Councillor Yarsley
Subject	Responses from non-statutory bodies
Response by	Councillor Ashton
Supplementary	None
Question 25	Councillor Yarsley
Subject	ELDC's responsibility to residents who get no support from external organisations
Response by	Councillor Ashton
Supplementary	None
Question 26	Councillor Yarsley
Subject	Top water/sewage build up on new developments
Response by	Councillor Ashton
Supplementary	None
Question 27	Councillor Bristow
Subject	ELDC's reputation relating to proposed GDF
Response by	Councillor Leyland
Supplementary	None
Question 28	Councillor Bristow
Subject	Mechanism to test wishes of residents relating to withdrawing from GDF process
Response by	Councillor Leyland
Supplementary	None
Question 29	Councillor Alex Hall
Subject	Extending the Wolds AONB to include the coastal marsh
Response by	Councillor Ashton
Supplementary	Could you look further into extending the AONB and update on the process?
Response	Yes, I agree in principal to the points you raise. There is a lot more work to be done on this. It would take a lot of work to extend this but I will speak to LCC colleagues.
Question 30	Councillor Alex Hall
Subject	National Grid proposals – Input from backbenchers

Response by	Councillor Ashton
Supplementary	None
Question 31	Councillor Watson
Subject	Magna Vitae – termination of contract
Response by	Councillor Leyland
Supplementary	Is the Leader's word 'respective' the same definition as mine that the individual councils in the Partnership can make their own individual choice of provider should they wish to do so?
Response	That is correct.
Question 32	Councillor Simpson
Subject	Areas identified as suitable for renewable and low carbon energy sources and supporting infrastructure
Response by	Councillor Ashton
Supplementary	Can we have some assurance that we will be doing some work on this?
Response	As part of the Local Plan review we will be looking at the relevant policies. This needs understanding in a lot more detail.
Question 33	Councillor Simpson
Subject	Policies in place to progress applications
Response by	Councillor Ashton
Supplementary	None
Question 34	Councillor Simpson
Subject	Solar/photo voltaic panels policy
Response by	Councillor Ashton
Supplementary	None
Question 35	Councillor Simpson
Subject	Delivery of solar/photo voltaic on farm buildings
Response by	Councillor Ashton
Supplementary	None
Question 36	Councillor Simpson
Subject	Photo voltaic panels fitted to new developments
Response by	Councillor Ashton
Supplementary	None
Question 37	Councillor Simpson
Subject	Policy to protect the view from St. James' Church, Louth
Response by	Councillor Ashton
Supplementary	Do you think we will get around to doing such work?
Response	The way planning policy has changes is substantial. I will pick this up with the Planning Policy Team. I cannot

	guarantee anything but I will look through this with you.
Question 38	Councillor McNally
Subject	Debates on planning matters where the Council is only a consultee
Response by	Councillor Leyland
Supplementary	None
Question 39	Councillor McNally
Subject	Procedure for Motions
Response by	Councillor Leyland
Supplementary	Are you going to look at the timescale and see what is acceptable? Could you change this so that in future it is within the 9 days?
Response	You have had a response from the Monitoring Officer but I will happily look at this for you.
Question 40	Councillor Makinson-Sanders
Subject	Addressing health inequalities with the elderly population living in caravans on the coast.
Response by	Councillor Gray
Supplementary	There is an inaccuracy in your reply. Can you guarantee that you will address this as soon as possible?
Response	You've raised a good point. We are committed and focused on our age friendly responsibilities, and we are addressing this and have a dedicated officer in our district. There is no timescale.
Question 41	Councillor Makinson-Sanders
Subject	National recognition for the Saltmarsh.
Response by	Councillor Ashton
Supplementary	None

A full copy of the question is attached at **Appendix 2 to these Minutes.**

*N.B. Councillors Sandra Campbell-Wardman and Richard Avison left the Meeting at 6.36pm.*

*N.B. Councillor Ellie Marsh left the Meeting at 6.40pm.*

*N.B. Councillor Claire Arnold left the Meeting at 6.50pm.*

**98. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

The programmed date for the next Meeting of the Council was confirmed as the AGM on Wednesday 22 May 2024, commencing at 6.30pm.

The meeting closed at 7.00 pm.