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AGENDA

Committee	-	**CABINET**
Date & Time	-	Wednesday, 18 December 2024 at 6.30 pm
Venue	-	Council Chamber, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding

Membership of the Cabinet:

Councillors: C N Worth (Leader), P A Redgate (Deputy Leader), J R Astill, H J W Bingham, T A Carter, A Casson, E J Sneath, G J Taylor and J Tyrrell

No substitutions permitted. Quorum 3.

Note: Cabinet reports may be referred to Council or Scrutiny Panels. They should therefore be kept for future reference during the current committee cycle.

Persons attending the meeting are requested to turn mobile telephones to silent mode

Democratic Services
Council Offices, Priory Road
Spalding, Lincs PE11 2XE

Date: 10 December 2024

A G E N D A

1. Apologies for absence.

2. Minutes - (Pages 5 - 20)
To sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 12 November 2024 (copy enclosed).

3. Declarations of Interest. -
(Where a Councillor has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest the Councillor must declare the interest to the meeting and leave the room without participating in any discussion or making a statement on the item, except where a Councillor is permitted to remain as a result of a grant of dispensation.)

4. Questions raised by the public under the Council's Constitution (Standing Orders).

5. To consider any matters which have been subject to call-in.

6. To consider matters arising from the Policy Development and Performance Monitoring Panels in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure or the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules.

7. 2024/25 Quarter Two Finance update - (Pages 21 - 46)
To set out the current financial position for the Council at the end of the second quarter of 2024/25 (report of the Deputy Chief Executive – Corporate (S151) enclosed).

8. Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2025/26 - (Pages 47 - 66)
To determine the Council Tax Support scheme 2025/26 (report of the Deputy Chief Executive – Corporate Development (S151) enclosed).

9. Customer Feedback Policy - (Pages 67 - 84)
To present a draft updated Customer Feedback Policy for the Council (report of the Assistant Director – Governance (Monitoring Officer) enclosed).

10. Street Naming and Numbering Policy - (Pages 85 - 112)
To introduce a Partnership Street Naming and Numbering Policy (report of the Assistant Director – Regulatory enclosed).

11. Any other items which the Leader decides are urgent. -

Note: (i) No other business is permitted unless by reason of special circumstances, which shall be specified in the Minutes, the Leader is of the opinion that the item(s) should be considered as a matter of urgency.

(ii) Any urgent item of business that is a key decision must

be dealt with in accordance with the Constitution's Access to Information Procedure Rules.

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Minutes of a meeting of the **CABINET** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Tuesday, 12 November 2024 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

C N Worth (Leader)

J R Astill	T A Carter	E J Sneath
H J W Bingham	A Casson	J Tyrrell

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P A Redgate and G J Taylor, together with Councillor R Gibson.

The Deputy Chief Executive – Corporate Development (S151), the Deputy Chief Executive (Programme Delivery & SIRO), the Assistant Director - Economic Growth, the Assistant Director - Housing, the Assistant Director - Leisure and Culture, the Head of Public Protection, the Deputy Head of Service – Operations (Revenues and Benefits), the Democratic Services Manager and the Democratic Services Team Leader.

In Attendance: Councillor B Alcock (Chairman, Performance Monitoring Panel), Councillor A C Beal (Chairman, Governance & Audit Committee) and Councillor A R Woolf (Chairman, Policy Development Panel).

Action By

31. MINUTES

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 17 September 2024 were agreed and signed by the Leader.

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were none.

33. QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE PUBLIC UNDER THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION (STANDING ORDERS).

There were none.

34. TO CONSIDER ANY MATTERS WHICH HAVE BEEN SUBJECT TO CALL-IN.

There were none.

35. TO CONSIDER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING PANELS

There were none.

36. SOCIAL HOUSING REGULATION - Q2 2024/25 REVIEW

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Housing which provided an update on progress made towards meeting the outcomes of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 including revised consumer standards.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing presented the report, and the following issues were raised:

- Should an inspection of SHDC's housing stock take place presently, what grading could the Authority hope to achieve?
    - The Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing responded that this was currently hard to answer. So far, there had only been a small number of Regulatory Judgements at other councils however, each one was being monitored by the Authority. Details of the gradings (C1-C4) were detailed within section 2.2 of the report. Those councils that had been graded at C2 generally had good control of their council stock, a good understanding and delivery of the consumer standards, and good health and safety provision. Those councils with a C3 grading seemed to have concerns around health and safety. With regard to the issue of health and safety and SHDC housing stock, compliance clinics were being held monthly, providing a great deal of assurance and scrutiny, and there was also a robust testing of data being undertaken. The Portfolio Holder was confident that sufficient consideration was being given to the health and safety element and achieving the required standards.

- It appeared that more responsibility on housing issues was being placed on members – was this the case?
    - The Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing responded that although there was an emphasis for members to have more responsibility, the regulator's view was that the governing body i.e. the Cabinet be kept fully informed, hence the number of reports at this meeting and in the future. It was important to ensure that everyone was kept very well informed on the issues and progress. In addition, individual members had responsibility for individual areas – as an example, the Portfolio

Holder advised that she had responsibility for complaints.

- With regard to the issue of damp, condensation and mould, to what extent was the Council responsible for what could be perceived as 'lifestyle' factors (such as drying washing indoors and not heating the home) that could contribute to these problems? Were any measures being taken to mitigate this?
    - The Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing responded that, following Awaab's Law, it was an important cultural change to move away from considering problems being as a result of 'lifestyle' issues. In the past, this had been the typical response of councils and landlords. There has been a shift in the Authority's approach, and speedy assessments of houses are being undertaken. There could be occasions where advice needed to be given to tenants in order to improve the situation within their home however, it was important to also look at a property on its own merit and make a decision based on that information as to what improvements could be undertaken.

DECISION:

That the work underway to align services with the new regulatory regime, and the Council's progress towards delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards be noted.

(Other options considered:

- *Do nothing – to retain progress updates through operational arrangements with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing. This option was not considered to be appropriate as the Regulator of Social Housing was clear that Councillors were responsible for ensuring that the Council, in its role as a registered provider, was meeting the regulatory standards set*.

Reasons for decision:

- *To provide assurance to Cabinet on the Council's preparations for regulatory inspection and provide updated information on ongoing work towards meeting the outcomes of the consumer standards).*

37. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Housing which sought adoption of the Housing Revenue Account Governance Framework: Housing Landlord Services 2024/25.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing presented the report, and the following issues were raised:

- Would there be any staffing or finance implications as a result of the establishment of the required housing groups and roles?
    - The Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing stated that as a result of the programme and transformation work, new officers had been employed on a temporary basis. All of the other work had been absorbed by the current staff. It was an issue that officers and members were aware of, and once all the projects and work had bedded in, it may well impact on the staffing structure in the future.

DECISION:

1) That the Housing Revenue Account Governance Framework: Housing Landlord Services 2024/25 be adopted.

2) That minor operational amendments to the Framework be delegated to the Assistant Director – Housing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing.

(Other options considered:

- *Do nothing – to not adopt the Framework. This was not recommended as it was necessary to evidence the arrangements in place for governance as part of meeting the requirements of the outcomes of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.*

Reasons for decision:

- *As a responsible social landlord, the Council was required to have robust governance arrangements in place to monitor and scrutinise the management of the Housing Landlord Service. The Regulator of Social Housing would consider the effectiveness of governance arrangements as part of their programmed inspection of the Council as a registered provider).*

38. KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY: HOUSING LANDLORD SERVICES

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Housing which sought adoption of the Knowledge and Information Management Strategy: Housing Landlord Services.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing presented the report.

DECISION:

1) That the Knowledge and Information Management Strategy: Housing Landlord Services be adopted.

2) That minor operational amendments to the Knowledge and Information Management Strategy: Housing Landlord Services be delegated to the Assistant Director – Housing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing.

(Other options considered:
- *Do nothing – to not adopt the Strategy. Failure to deliver a key recommendation from the Housing Ombudsman Service, which could contribute towards a Complaint Handling Failure Order.*

Reasons for decision:
- *To deliver a recommendation from the Housing Ombudsman Service, recommending that all Registered Providers implement a Knowledge and Information Management Strategy).*

39. TENANCY STRATEGY 2024-2029

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Housing which sought adoption of the Tenancy Strategy 2024-2029.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing presented the report.

DECISION:

1) That the Tenancy Strategy 2024-2029 be adopted.

2) That minor operational amendments to the Tenancy Strategy 2024-2029 be delegated to the Assistant Director – Housing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing.

(Other options considered:
- *Do nothing – to not adopt the Strategy. This option was not recommended – it was good practice to update strategies on a regular basis and amendments were required due to changes in the sector.*

Reasons for decision:
- *The Localism Act 2011 placed an obligation on each local*

authority to have a tenancy strategy. Registered Providers would be consulted following consulting Policy Development Panel).

40. HOUSING LANDLORD SERVICES COMPLAINT HANDLING – Q1-Q2 2024/25 UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Housing which provide an update on progress made towards delivering the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code 2024.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing presented the report.

DECISION:

That the Housing Landlord Service's complaint handling performance during quarter 1 and 2 of 2024/25 be noted.

(Other options considered:

- *Do nothing – to retain progress updates through operational arrangements with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing. This option was not considered to be appropriate as the Housing Ombudsman was clear that governing bodies were responsible for ensuring that the Council, in its role as a social landlord was meeting the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.*

Reasons for decision:

- *To provide assurance to Cabinet on the Council's compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and provide updated information on ongoing work towards delivering a positive complaint-handling culture, ensuring residents' concerns are addressed promptly and appropriately).*

41. SOCIAL HOUSING DECARBONISATION FUND: WAVE 2:1 AND WARM HOMES: SOCIAL HOUSING FUND WAVE 3

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Housing which sought to update Cabinet on the progress of delivering works under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund: Wave 2:1 and to propose a budget virement to facilitate its delivery; and to provide details of a further programme under Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund Wave 3.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing presented the report, and the following issues were raised:

- Had any feedback been received from tenants whose properties had already had work undertaken, in order to understand satisfaction levels?
    - The Assistant Director – Housing advised that with regard to satisfaction levels, an assessment was undertaken for each property at the end of the works. The work being undertaken was extensive and as a result, was taking some time. There is a dedicated officer in place who was working with the contractors and tenants. Feedback received to date was generally good.

- Was the performance of air source heat pumps that were being installed satisfactory?
    - The Assistant Director – Housing advised that a few properties had had air source heat pumps installed. Solar panels were also being installed so the benefit of both alongside each other could be realised. To date, the response had been generally positive. It was important to note that this was an advancing technology, however officers were not aware of any issues.
    - The Leader commented that it may be useful to have some annual feedback/data around this, particularly on areas such as cost.

- What were the criteria for selecting properties to have works undertaken?
    - The Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing stated that the focus for funding was to raise the EPC rating for properties and therefore lower-rated properties would be prioritised. As more funding was released, it was likely that properties with higher EPC ratings could then become eligible.
    - The Assistant Director – Housing added that alongside this work sat the Decent Homes programme of works which continued. With regard to prioritisation of the funding under discussion, EPC ratings drove the programme.

DECISION:

That Cabinet note the intention to submit a bid to the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund Wave 3 as set out in the body of the report.

RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET TO COUNCIL:

That Cabinet recommend to Full Council that the HRA capital

programme be amended to £7,007,000. Noting this amendment will be funded through a virement from other budgets as set out in the financial section within the report.

(Other options considered:

- *Do nothing. No further action could be taken which would result in the current scheme delivering outcomes to 148 less properties than originally anticipated. This was not considered a viable option as it was likely that failure to deliver the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund programme in its entirety would impact on the Council's ability to bid for future funding.*

Reasons for decision:

- *Cabinet was asked to recommend a virement from existing approved budgets within the HRA capital programme. Previously significant funds were set aside to enable remodelling of an existing scheme within the Council's housing stock. However, due to the limited scope of future options for the scheme that work could no longer proceed. Cabinet was advised that all potential capital improvements considered viable for the scheme had already been completed.*
- *Under the Safety and Quality Consumer Standard the Council was expected to demonstrate knowledge of its housing stock together with appropriate plans to maintain and invest in decent and safe homes. Therefore, submitting a bid to the Warm Homes: Social Housing fund Wave 3 scheme would enable the Council to continue to demonstrate strong outcomes under this standard).*

42. SHDC Q1 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Corporate which provided an update on how the Council was performing for the period 1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Communications presented the report and the following issues were raised:

- There was a heavy reliance on PSPS – what training did their staff receive and how was this monitored and controlled?
    - The Portfolio Holder – Corporate and Communications advised that all staff undertook a structured training programme, there was a 'buddy' system in place, and team leaders would periodically review and monitor calls. Calls were recorded so, should any issues be raised by the public, they could be referred to and learning taken from them. SHDC did not monitor specifically but performance could be seen through KPIs and monitoring reports.

- Was the target for the KPI 'Percentage of corporate complaints responded to within corporately set timescales' too ambitious?
    - The Portfolio Holder – Corporate and Communications advised that the targets had been reduced slightly. Additionally, there had been some staffing changes and a service review was also due which would result in a change to how work was undertaken within the team. He had seen the results for Quarter 2, and the performance around complaints and FOIs had improved.

- Performance against the KPI 'Percentage of subject requests responded to within statutory timescales had also underperformed – what was the reason for this?
    - The Portfolio Holder – Corporate and Communications advised that this target had also been reduced slightly, and that the workload was dealt with by the same team that dealt with corporate complaints. He advised that the Governance and Audit Committee was considering a report the following week that contained further information on this area. This would be shared and would provide further information on the type of requests whilst also showing the improving performance trajectory.

- The Performance Monitoring Panel also considered the report prior to the Cabinet – how could findings from both committees come together to benefit the Authority?
    - The Portfolio Holder – Corporate and Communications stated that if any contentious issues were raised by the Performance Monitoring Panel he was alerted, and if any issues related to areas within his Portfolio, he would pursue these.
    - The Leader also requested that future reports reflect better alignment between the two committees, reflecting back feedback from the Performance Monitoring Panel in order that more focus could be given by Cabinet to the issues raised.

- For two Environment KPIs – 'Percentage of household waste collected for recycling and composting' and 'Percentage of recycling collected that is unable to be recycled (contamination)', data was not available, and it was stated that data was recorded by LCC by Waste Transfer Station rather than by the Council, and that this had been raised at the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership. Pressure should be applied

to outside bodies to provide the required information more quickly.

- The Portfolio Holder – Corporate and Communications replied that because the performance framework had changed, data was sometimes not available. The Communications Teams often undertook campaigns on social media and in the local paper advising which waste items to place in specific bags.
- The Assistant Director – Corporate explained that the reason these metrics were included was because OffLog (the new watchdog formed by the previous government) would be monitoring them in the future. Some indicators, such as these were currently missing data however, officers were working hard with the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership to ensure that the information was received in a timely manner moving forward, to feed into the performance framework.

DECISION:

That the contents of the report be noted.

(Other options considered:

- *Not to monitor performance – this was not recommended.*

Reasons for decision:

- *To ensure Council performance was properly scrutinised).*

43. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Corporate which sought approval for the proposed AI Policy.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Communications presented the report, and the following issues were raised:

- The Chairman of the Policy Development Panel advised that the Panel had debated the Policy thoroughly, and despite some initial scepticism, had seen the positives in many areas, for example the use of chatbots which could assist in reducing telephone waiting times. It was important to embrace the technology offered by AI.

- Whilst embracing new technology, some members of the public still preferred the ‘human’ element of interaction and it was important to keep this consideration in mind going forward.

- The Risk section within the report stated that a Comprehensive Risk assessment would be undertaken for each AI project – what was seen as the biggest risk, and had any specific risks been identified?
    - The Portfolio Holder – Corporate and Communications advised that no systems using AI as the policy described were currently being used. Any project or service improvement would be managed by the Authority's project risk framework and would be considered by relevant committees. From his perspective, many of the current issues were around the security of data – a high proportion of AI that the Authority could use would be provided by a third party. Key points within the Policy therefore relating to areas such as data protection assessments and how the data was being used were very important.
- Could there be a risk around others purporting to be the Council – from an industry point of view, was this a big risk? Should some research be done into this area?
    - The Assistant Director – Corporate advised that others purporting to be or affiliated to the Authority was an issue that happened anyway and was being dealt with in line with current processes. He agreed that it was important that data management was robustly managed, to understand companies that were engaged, and also who their parent companies were. Data security and privacy was vitally important.

- The Leader highlighted the benefits of AI, which would allow the Partnership to be more efficient in day-to-day transactions, providing increased capacity to deal with more complex issues.

DECISION:

That the Policy at Appendix A to the report be approved.

(Other options considered:
- *No other options were considered;*

Reasons for decision:
- *To ensure a robust and effective AI policy was adopted by the Council).*

44. SOUTH HOLLAND CULTURAL STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the report of the Director – Economic Development which sought approval of the new South Holland Cultural Strategy and support of the Cultural Framework for the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership.

The Leader presented the report, and the following issues were raised:

- The Strategy went a long way to identify and explain what culture was, and its spread. It would help residents to live happier, fulfilled lives.

- The Strategy was good however, it was disappointing that whilst larger settlements were referenced, little mention was made of smaller towns and villages in the district. Not all significant sites were included or were only mentioned in passing e.g. the Abbey and bridge at Crowland, and not all groups appeared to have been consulted.
    - The Leader agreed with this comment. Whereas previously culture had been considered on its own, it was now being linked more with funding and economy, and there were important links to the Growth and Prosperity Plan.
    - The Assistant Director – Economic Growth advised that the National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) that was providing funding to all three areas of the Partnership had commissioned a cultural audit to ensure that all cultural organisations, businesses and assets across the Partnership were captured. The document would be a live document and could be amended once this audit had been completed.

DECISION:

1) That the South Holland Cultural Strategy (attached at Appendix B) be adopted.

2) That delegation be given to the Assistant Director for Economic Growth, in consultation with the Leader, Cllr Nick Worth, to make minor amendments to the South Holland Cultural Strategy.

3) That the Executive Summary as a Cultural Framework for the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (attached at Appendix A) be supported.

(Other options considered:

- Arts Council England had provided the funding to create the Cultural Strategy, therefore it was a requirement of the funding to produce the strategic document, as had been the case in Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council.

Reasons for decision:

- A formally adopted Cultural Strategy and agreement of priority

actions would provide South Holland District Council with the cultural principles to be reflected in each place. In addition, the Cultural Framework would support funding applications, increase engagement with art and culture and facilitate greater connectivity with Art and Cultural organisations. The adoption of a similar document by Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council had already helped the SELCP to gain Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation status and it was this funding that had supported the writing of the South Holland Cultural Strategy.

- The ambition of the Framework and associated NPO status supported a wider cultural and place- based approach to regeneration and linked culture with community engagement to support our Partnership objectives, reflecting the principles of the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership Growth and Prosperity Plan*).*

45. PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER (DOG CONTROL)

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Regulatory which sought approval for a new Public Spaces Protection Order on dog fouling and irresponsible dog ownership.

The Portfolio Holder – Public Protection presented the report, and the following issues were raised:

- Whilst this report was welcomed, this issue had been discussed over many years and concern was raised as to how effectively it could be enforced. With regard to signage, could signs be erected to advise dog owners to take dog waste home as bins were filled very quickly.
    - The Group Manager – Public Protection advised that consideration could be given to signage and she would take this forward.

- Many bins had been provided over the years and some now needed replacement – was consideration being given to their replacement where required?
    - The Portfolio Holder – Environmental Services advised that a bin would be replaced where damaged however full consultation had to be undertaken should a new site be required.

- The Chairman of the Policy Development Panel advised that the Panel had requested that the Policy be brought back for consideration a year after enforcement in order to review progress.

DECISION:

1) That, following consideration of feedback from the public consultation and Policy Development Panel, the making of the proposed Public Spaces Protection Order to implement dog controls for the District of South Holland be approved; and

2) That the Fixed Penalty Notice be approved and set at the maximum of £100.

(Other options considered:

- *Do not introduce a new PSPO for dog controls – it was considered that a PSPO was the best means to implement the proposed dog controls. Offences for dog fouling were currently only available under the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996. The PSPO would be applicable to all public open spaces and also enabled the introduction of further offences associated with dog control issues.*
- *Introduce some but not all of the proposed offences – it was recommended that all three of the offences were introduced to improve dog controls across the District and reduce associated nuisance. The consultation demonstrated that the majority of responders supported the introduction of all three offences.*
- *Introduce a lower Fixed Penalty Notice fine – it was recommended that the maximum amount was used as a deterrent, and in-line with many other local authorities across the country.*

Reasons for decision:

- *The public consultation showed considerable public support for the three proposed offences. It was therefore recommended that they were introduced in South Holland.*
- *It was recommended that the Fixed Penalty Notice was set at the statutory maximum of £100 to reflect the anti-social nature of the offences and act as a deterrent).*

46. DEBT WRITE OFF

Consideration was given to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive – Corporate Development (S151) which sought approval for the write off of uncollectable debt.

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder – Finance, the Leader presented the report.

Members agreed that only the principles of the report would be discussed and there was therefore no need for the meeting to go into private session.

DECISION:

That the amounts identified in the report, as detailed below, be approved for write off.

Council Tax	£ 63,054.73
Business Rates	£ 7,592.85
Housing Benefit Overpayment	£ 12,322.42
Sundry Debt	£135,721.75
Total	£218,691.75

(Other options considered:

- *Do not approve the amounts for write off, however this would leave uncollectable debt showing on the Council's records;*

Reasons for decision:

- *All recovery methods have been considered and where appropriate pursued, before making the decision to write off. Debts will be written off against provisions in the Council's accounts. Officer time can be maximised on greatest returns, at the same time as ensuring robust procedures for debt management are in place across the revenue streams).*

47. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE LEADER DECIDES ARE URGENT.

There were none.

(The meeting ended at 7.45 pm)

(End of minutes)

Any RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL detailed above will be submitted for consideration to the meeting of the full Council on 27 November 2024.

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REPORT TO:	Cabinet
DATE:	18th December 2024
SUBJECT:	2024/25 Quarter Two Finance update
PURPOSE:	To set out the current financial position for the Council at the end of the second quarter of 2024/25
KEY DECISION:	*N/A*
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Councillor Redgate – Portfolio Holder for Finance
REPORT OF:	Christine Marshall – Deputy Chief Executive Corporate s151
REPORT AUTHOR:	Comie Campbell, (Interim) Strategic Finance Manager, PSPS and Carl Holland, Head of Finance, PSPS
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	N/A
EXEMPT REPORT	*No*

SUMMARY

This report sets out a summary of the current financial position for the Council at the end of the second quarter of 2024/25 forecasting to the year end for members consideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended:

1) That Cabinet notes the forecast revenue position of a £214k underspend for 2024/25 as detailed in Table 1 and the need for a continued focus on the savings and efficiency programme.
2) That Cabinet notes the forecast revenue position of the HRA for 2024/25 (surplus of £199,000) as detailed in Table 2.
3) That Cabinet approves the amendments to the Capital Programme at Appendix A – Table 4 to take into account the changes set out in this report.
4) That Cabinet approves the amendments to the HRA Capital Programme at Appendix A – Table 5 to take into account the changes set out in this report.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure the Council's forecast financial position for 2024/25 is considered and related decisions approved. It is important that the Cabinet are aware of the financial position of the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account to ensure that they can make informed decisions that are affordable and financially sustainable for the Council.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

To not approve the reserve movements outlined.

REPORT

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Appendix A provides information on the full year forecasted financial performance at 30th September 2024 for the following areas:

- The General Fund Revenue Budget,
- The General Fund Reserves Position,
- The Capital Programme for 2024/25,
- The HRA Revenue Budget,
- The HRA Reserves Position,
- The HRA Capital Programme for 2024/25, and
- The Treasury Management Performance for the year.

General Fund Forecast Outturn

1.2 Quarter 2 data provides a view on which to base a revised full year forecast. The full year outturn based on current projections and assumptions is a forecast net underspend of £214k.

1.3 The major variances relate to continued staffing pressures within services, offset by increased investment income. The forecast position by Assistant Director and Corporate Areas is detailed at **Appendix A - Table 1** together with an analysis of variations.

Savings Target – General Fund

1.4 An efficiency target of £831k is included in the 2024/25 General Fund budget, this mainly relates to the pressures in respect of IDB levy increases. Saving opportunities are being monitored throughout the year, this information is detailed in **Appendix A – Table 1c** of the report. The general fund forecast outturn position assumes 100% of the efficiency target is achieved. At 30 September 2024, 63% of the efficiencies have been identified, this position reflects the recent IDB funding support announcement and savings/income identified as part of the Q2 monitoring process.

1.5 In order to balance the budget including the Q1 deficit, remaining efficiencies to be found total £310k. As previously reported the Leader, Finance Portfolio Holder and Senior Leadership Team review monthly progress against the current plans for achieving the requirement.

Capital – General Fund

1.6 The total General Fund Capital Programme for Q1 2024/25 was £10.709m, with the amendments proposed in this report, the revised capital programme budget is £10.438m, for Q2 as detailed in **Appendix A – Table 4, 4b & 4C**. Actual capital expenditure for Q2 2024/25 is £1.684m, the slippage in spend being mainly related to the LUF funded project as explained in the attached Appendix. This will continue to be closely monitored.

2. Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

HRA Revenue Budget

2.1 The HRA revenue budget came under extreme pressure in 2023/24, these pressures have persisted into 2024/25 and following a detailed review process are not expected to curtail. Alongside service specific pressures, hyperinflation within repairs and maintenance in particular experiencing: cost inflation, ageing components, greater publicity of the responsibility of social landlords, and increased awareness and reports of damp, condensation and mould. These have all compounded demands which the service requires the financial resources to deliver.

2.2 **2**. Further work is still being undertaken to understand the pressures and potential mitigations to assist in forward planning, this is alongside the Business Planning and planned survey work.

Capital – HRA

2.3 The total HRA Capital Programme for 2024/25 is £21.851m with actual capital expenditure of £5.807m at 30th September 2024, as detailed in **Appendix A – Table 5**.

2.4 Alongside the revenue budget reset in Q1, following a review the HRA Capital Programme Q2 budget has also been reset. A stock condition survey programme is ongoing, which alongside the Asset Management Strategy, will inform future investment decisions.

3. Treasury Management

3.1 Section 2.6 of Appendix A provides details of the Council's Treasury Investments as at 30 September 2024. The Council's 2024/25 budget for investment income is £1.544m, the forecast outturn position for investment income at Q2 is £1.870m. This is a £0.214m increase compared to the Q1 forecast outturn position.

3.2 The higher levels of investment income compared to the original budget is due to increased balances available for investment resulting from an increased cashflow surplus and increased interest rates.

CONCLUSION

To ensure that the Quarter Two position is scrutinised and the forecast outturn reviewed.

IMPLICATIONS:
None

SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL'S PARTNERSHIP

None

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

None

STAFFING

None

CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None

DATA PROTECTION

None

FINANCIAL

As contained in this report and Appendix A.

STAKEHOLDER / CONSULTATION / TIMESCALES

None

REPUTATION

None

CONTRACTS

None

CRIME AND DISORDER

None

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY/ HUMAN RIGHTS/ SAFEGUARDING

None

HEALTH AND WELL BEING

None

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None

APPENDICES Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report: -	
Appendix A	Q2 Finance Report 2024/25

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

REPORT APPROVAL	
Report author:	Comie Campbell, (Interim) Strategic Finance Manager, PSPS and Carl Holland, Head of Finance, PSPS
Signed off by:	Christine Marshall, Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate Development) and S151
Approved for publication:	Councillor Paul Redgate Portfolio Holder for Finance

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APPENDIX A - South Holland District Council – Q2 Finance Report 2024/25

Finance Summary

- The revenue forecast shows an underspend position of £214k as at 30 September 2024 which is an improvement of £281k compared to Q1 overspend of £67k.
- The HRA is forecasting a surplus of £199k and the budgeted surplus is £181k (£192k surplus at Q1).
- General Fund specific and general reserves of the Council are forecast to be £6.458m at 31 March 2025.
- HRA reserves are forecast to be £11.788m at 31 March 2025.
- General Fund Capital spend at the end of Quarter 2 was £1.684m against a full year budget of £10.709m.
- HRA capital spend at the end of Quarter 2 was £5.8m against a full year budget of £21.851m.
- The Council held investments of £31.647m as at 30 September 2024 (£26.684m as at 30 June 2024).

Section 2 – Finance

Section 2.1 – Key Financial Issues in Quarter 2 of 2024/25

- The 2024/25 budget included an efficiency target of £831k. As at 30 September, £522k (63%) of savings have been identified. The process of identifying the in year efficiencies will continue throughout the year and any in-year deficit/surplus will be added to this efficiency target.
- The Government announced it would provide £3m of further funding to support Councils significantly impacted by Internal Drainage Board levies. South Holland was awarded £335k for 2024/25 which has been included within the forecast and efficiencies.
- Neighbourhoods is forecast to be overspent by £132k for the year due to staffing pressures within the Recycling and Refuse services. The service has been requested to look at potential mitigations.
- PSAA is consulting on the proposed audit fee scale for 2024/25 audits and 23/24 fee variations. The Q2 forecast is based on the proposed fees resulting in an overspend of £31k.
- The Council's 2024/25 budget for investment income is £1.544m. The outturn for investment income for 2024/25 is forecast to be £1.87m, split £1.228m GF and £0.64m HRA. This will be reviewed throughout the year.

Inflation	July (%)	August (%)	September (%)
CPI	2.2	2.2	1.7
RPI	3.6	3.5	2.7

Section 2.2 – Revenue Budget

Table 1 details the forecast outturn by Assistant Director showing a net underspend of £18,000 which is increased by additional investment income of £196,000 resulting in an overall net surplus of £214,000. This is based on the Quarter 2 forecast position as at 30 September 2024 and on officers' projections for the remainder of the financial year.

Table 1 – Projected Net Spend by Assistant Director Area				
Assistant Director	**Revised Budget 2024/25 £'000**	**Forecast Q2 2024/25 £'000**	**Variance (underspend)/ overspend £'000**	**Comments on main variances**
Corporate	933	943	11	Minor variances, £7k relating to salary efficiency targets not met.
Finance	5,312	5,388	76	£22k additional salary costs. £19k pressure arising from overbudgeted Revenue & Benefits grant income. £31k increase to KPMG external audit fees, offset by Redmond review grant income (£19.5k). Bank charges 10k over budget.
Housing	(137)	(147)	(10)	Favourable variance due to recovery of Gas servicing and Electrical testing costs.
General Fund Assets	351	424	73	£31k overspend forecast on salaries due to agency cover offset by vacancy savings. Other pressures include £14k relating to return of deposit paid, £11k electricity invoices backdated to 2023, and £10k excess paid on an insurance claim.
Governance	1,220	1,118	(102)	Underspend a result of vacant posts in Democratic services and Legal services.
Leisure & Culture	1,133	1,164	31	£15k overspend related to contract breakage costs. £7k overspend forecast for Ayscoughfee Gardens. £9k pressure forecast for South Holland Centre and TIC.
Neighbourhoods	4,734	4,866	132	A combined overspend of £320k on Agency staffing is forecast for Recycling and Refuse services. Overspends are being partially offset by salary savings resulting from vacancies. Anticipated savings are expected from service changes.
Planning & Strategic Infrastructure	336	214	(122)	Favourable variance arising from forecast salary savings due to vacant posts, (£156k) in Planning Policy and (£48k) in Planning Enforcement. Savings partially offset by £82k pressure in Development Management for agency staffing.

Table 1 – Projected Net Spend by Assistant Director Area				
Assistant Director	**Revised Budget 2024/25 £'000**	**Forecast Q2 2024/25 £'000**	**Variance (underspend)/ overspend £'000**	**Comments on main variances**
Regulatory	835	855	20	Income pressures in Building Control of £70k following slowdown in the housing market. Partially offset by vacancy salary savings and £24k income from prior year charge on property.
Strategic Growth & Development	275	229	(46)	Underspend resulting from vacancies within Strategy & Enabling and Economic Development.
Strategic Project	16	9	(7)	Favourable variance resulting from salaries to be recharged to capital projects.
Wellbeing & Community Leadership	1,292	1,220	(72)	Underspend forecast for Community and Voluntary Support (£45k) due to management vacancy. Favourable variance for Homelessness (£30k) due to additional grant income received.
Spalding Special Expenses	236	236	0	Spalding Special Expenses are reported to the Spalding Town Forum. Forecast variances do not impact the General Fund reserves.
Sub Total – Assistant Directors – Net Costs	**16,536**	**16,519**	**(18)**	
Recharges to HRA	(3,344)	(3,344)	0	
Internal Drainage Boards and Parish Precepts	4,712	4,712	0	
Investment Income	(1,033)	(1,228)	(196)	Increased income linked to slower reduction in rates than expected, favourable interest rates and cashflow surplus.
Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)	319	319	0	
Impairment Allowance – Bad debt provision	13	13	0	
Capital Expenditure Charged in Year	638	638	0	
Transfers to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	(499)	(499)	0	
Efficiencies Requirement	(310)	(310)	0	£522k efficiencies identified (see table 1c) reducing the requirement from original budget of £831k. Forecast assumes efficiencies will be met in full.
Other Income and Expenditure	**450**	**255**	**(196)**	
General Fund Budget net costs	**16,987**	**16,773**	**(214)**	
Council Tax	(7,696)	(7,696)	-	
Business Rates	(7,247)	(7,247)	-	
Government Grants	(2,044)	(2,044)	-	
Total Funding	**(16,987)**	**(16,987)**	**-**	
Total Budget - (Surplus)/Deficit	**0**	**(214)**	**(214)**	

Recommendation:
F1 That Cabinet notes the forecast revenue position of a £214k underspend for 2024/25 as detailed in Table 1.

General Fund Revenue Budget Movement

Full Council approved the general fund revenue budget of £16.987m in February 2024. Table 1b summarises the in-year budget movements, this is a total of £752k additional budgets. As the Council is required to set a balanced budget, each movement has corresponding approval to utilise grant allocations, unbudgeted income, or reserve balances to ensure the net budget position is unchanged.

	Table 1b - General Fund Revenue Budget Movement				
Qtr	**Description**	**AD**	**Approval**	**Funding**	**£'000**
Q1	Good Homes Alliance Contribution	Wellbeing & Community	S151 Proforma B	Earmarked Grant Reserve	43
	Subtotal: Earmarked Grants Reserve				**43**
Q2	Household Support Fund	Wellbeing & Community	S151 Proforma B	Earmarked Grant Reserve	40
	Subtotal: Earmarked Grants Reserve				**40**
Q1	Household Support Fund	Wellbeing & Community	Decision Notice	Household Support Fund Grant	223
	Subtotal: Household Support Fund Grant				**223**
Q1	Technology Forge system	Corporate	S151 Proforma B	Invest and Growth Reserve	23
Q1	Tascomi Portal software	Corporate	S151 Proforma B	Invest and Growth Reserve	6
Q1	Bin lift safety alterations	Neighbourhoods	S151 Proforma B	Invest and Growth Reserve	3
Q2	Spalding BID software	Strategic Growth & Development	S151 Proforma B	Invest and Growth Reserve	39
Q2	Leisure Operator Procurement	Leisure & Culture	S151 Proforma B	Invest and Growth Reserve	19
Q2	Christmas lights for Spalding Town Centre and the Crescent	Strategic Growth & Development	S151 Proforma B	Invest and Growth Reserve	12
	Subtotal: Invest and Growth Reserve				**102**
Q2	Overachievement of planning income to be transferred to reserve	Planning & Strategic Infrastructure	Q1 Cabinet recommendation	Planning Reserve	300
Q2	Planning Service Review	Planning & Strategic Infrastructure	S151 Proforma B	Planning reserve	11
	Subtotal: Planning Reserve				**311**
Q1	Technology Forge implementation support	General Fund Assets	S151 Proforma B	Transformation reserve	15
Q1	Waste interim manager support	Neighbourhoods	S151 Proforma B	Transformation reserve	18
	Subtotal: Transformation Reserve				**33**

	Total movement as at 30 September 2024		**752**

The 2024/25 budget included an efficiency target of £831k, efficiencies forecast so far:

Table 1c – Efficiency Description	Amount £'000	Comments
IDB funding	(335)	Central government funding in support of drainage board levy increases
Additional S113 income	(87)	Planning resources to be shared with ELDC.
Q1 ICT savings	(57)	Favourable forecast within IT at Q1 due to the benefit of some inflationary assumptions on annual subscriptions and licences contract prior to renewal.
Additional income from boiler claim	(20)	Compensation.
Additional S113 income	(14)	Planning resources to be shared with BBC.
ICT additional income	(4)	Additional recharge income forecast for Boston server room costs expected in Q4.
South Holland in Bloom	(3)	Welland Homes contribution.
Legal subscriptions	(2)	Partnership savings from shared subscriptions.
Total efficiencies found	**(522)**	
% Achieved	63%	
Target	**831**	
Efficiencies still to be identified	**310**	

A new savings and efficiency plan has been developed for 2024/25 and is being monitored by the Leader and Finance Portfolio Holder and by Cabinet Portfolio Holders including scrutiny at Informal Cabinet Meetings.

As detailed in the 2024/25 Budget Setting report on 29 February 2024, based upon current budget assumptions the value of efficiency savings required to set a balanced budget for the next five years are as follows:

	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000
Annual Savings Requirement (£'000)	185	1,030	1,104	1,427	1,767
IDB Funding Requirement (£'000)	646				

Note: These are not cumulative, once an efficiency has been achieved it will reduce the future years' requirement.

General Fund Income

The Council has several demand-led budget areas which are reliant on income for services provided. These are shown in Table 1d below.

Table 1d – Trading Income Budgets				
Income Area	**Revised Budget £'000**	**Forecast £'000**	**Variance (above)/ below budget £'000**	**Comments**
Car Parking	(377)	(380)	(3)	Small overachievement forecast.
Planning	(1,125)	(1,245)	(120)	Planning Performance Agreement income in respect of a large application. This will be taken to reserves.
Licensing	(122)	(117)	5	Small underachievement forecast.
Markets	(34)	(34)	0	
Land Charges	(75)	(90)	(15)	Forecast overachievement on inspection fees profiled on actual income YTD as at 30 September. Income is dependent on the housing market for which there is a high level of uncertainty.
Building Control	(373)	(326)	47	Pressures on income achievement following slowdown in the housing market.
Commercial Rents	(337)	(325)	12	South Holland Centre tenant runs bar on event nights, not a permanent tenant as budgeted.
Green Waste	(806)	(806)	0	
TOTAL	**(3,249)**	**(3,322)**	**(74)**	

Section 2.3 – Housing Revenue Account Budget

Table 2 – Projected Net Spend by Service Area				
Service Area	**Revised Budget 2024/25 £'000**	**Forecast Q2 2024/25 £'000**	**Variance (underspend)/ overspend £'000**	**Comments on main variances**
Rent Income – Dwellings	(18,308)	(18,325)	(17)	Actual rental income receivable is higher than originally budgeted for due to a lower than estimated level of voids/RTB sales.
Charges for Services and Facilities	(1,275)	(1,217)	17	£17k Reduction in TV aerial income due to lower take up of this service provision.
Contributions to Expenditure	(5)	(1)	4	Reduction in court income due to a reduction in court costs incurred.
Total Income	**(19,587)**	**(19,543)**	**4**	
Repairs and Maintenance	4,883	4,883	0	Forecast to spend all the repairs and maintenance budget.
Supervision and Management	4,246	4,129	(117)	Staff vacancy savings £21k. Budget 96k not required.

Table 2 – Projected Net Spend by Service Area				
Service Area	**Revised Budget 2024/25 £'000**	**Forecast Q2 2024/25 £'000**	**Variance (underspend)/ overspend £'000**	**Comments on main variances**
Rents, rates, taxes, and other charges	90	90	0	
Depreciation	5,040	5,040	0	
Movement in Allowance for bad debts	50	50	0	
Statutory recharge to the HRA for support services	3,306	3,306	0	
Total Expenditure	**17,615**	**17,498**	**(117)**	
Contribution from Operations	**(1,972)**	**(2,085)**	**(113)**	
Investment Income	(556)	(642)	(86)	Increased income linked to favourable interest rates and cashflow surplus.
Interest Payable	2,347	2,347	0	
Net Operating (Surplus)/Deficit	**(181)**	**(380)**	**(199)**	

Table 2b– HRA Revenue Budget Movement			
2024/25 Revised HRA Budget as at Council on 2 October 2024			(192)
Description	**Approval**	**Funding**	**£'000**
Additional Housemark Benchmarking Service Subscription 2024/25	S151 Proforma B	In year surplus	2
Housing Complaints Officer	S151 Proforma B	In year surplus	9
Revised HRA Budget as at 30 September 2024			**(181)**

Recommendation:

F2 That Cabinet notes the forecast revenue position of the HRA for 2024/25 (surplus of £199,000) as detailed in Table 2.

Section 2.4 – Reserves

At 30 September 2024, the closing balance for the General Fund reserves are forecast to be £6.458m, after a net transfer out of reserves of (£334k), to cover future revenue and capital expenditure. HRA reserve balances are forecasted to have £11.788m closing balance after a net transfer out of (£8.2m). **Table 3** reflects the forecast position.

Table 3 – Specific and General Reserves Balance Forecast				
Reserve	**Balances at 1 April 2024 £'000**	**Forecast Contributions into Reserves £'000**	**Forecast Use of Reserves £'000**	**Forecast Balances at 31 March 2025 £'000**
General Fund				
Council Tax	1,193	435	(8)	1,620
Replacement and Refurbishment	0	11	(10)	1
Repayment Reserve	66	0	0	66
Investment and Growth	2,854	86	(1,063)	1,877
Transformation	207	0	(85)	122
Planning Reserve	393	300	0	694
Specific Reserves Total	**4,713**	**832**	**(1,166)**	**4,380**
General Fund	2,078	0	0	2,078
Total	**6,791**	**832**	**(1,166)**	**6,458**
Housing Revenue Account				
HRA General Reserve	15,395	0	(4,809)	10,586
Insurance	200	0	0	200
Major Repairs	4,378	5,040	(8,416)	1,002
Total	**19,973**	**5,040**	**(13,225)**	**11,788**

Please note the following reserve movements that are due to take place in 2024/25:

General Fund:

- Council Tax -
  - Additions – General fund contribution including NNDR surplus and annual contribution to District Elections
  - Use of reserve (Revenue) – Pollution Control equipment
- Replacement and Refurbishment Reserve -
  - Additions – General fund contribution
  - Use of reserve (Capital) – Programmed use for asset maintenance (Priory Road – Boiler)
- Investment and Growth -
  - Additions – Repayment of Workshop van, Green Waste capital repayment, and Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme surplus
  - Use of reserve (Revenue) – Corporate savings, software purchases, Spalding BID, Christmas decorations.
  - Use of reserve (Capital) – Programmed use for asset maintenance, town centre improvement works, Council Offices Priory Road improvements, ICT Infrastructure

HRA:

- General Reserve –
  - Financing of the capital programme
  - Use of reserve (Revenue) - Property Maintenance & External Planned Schemes.
- Major Repairs

- Additions – 2024/25 depreciation charge
- Financing of the capital programme

Section 2.5 – Capital Budget

This section covers:

- Progress against the 2024/25 approved capital programme and the anticipated outturn (General Fund Table 4 and HRA Table 5);
- Financing of the Capital Programme (General Fund Table 4c and HRA Table 5b);
- Revisions to the Capital Programme (General Fund Table 4b and HRA Table 5);

General Fund (GF) Capital Programme

Table 4 – 2024/25 Capital Programme and Q2 Forecast Outturn						
Scheme	**Approved Budget 2024/25**	**Changes to approved budget**	**Revised 2024/25**	**Actual August 2024**	**Forecast Outturn 2024/25**	**Variance (under)/over**
	£000	**£000**	**£000**	**£000**	**£000**	**£000**
Non UKSPF & LUF Projects						
ICT	**137**	-	**137**	18	137	-
Footway Lighting	**62**	-	**62**	-	62	-
Neighbourhoods	**366**	-	**366**	-	366	-
Spalding Cemetery	**25**	-	**25**	-	-	(25)
Disabled Facilities Grants	**1,339**	-	**1,339**	186	700	(639)
Decent Homes Unfit and Disrepair – Housing	**150**	(150)	**-**	-	-	-
Homelessness	**31**		**31**	-	31	-
Industrial Units	**520**		**520**	-	520	-
Asset Improvement – Leisure	**50**	(50)	**-**	-	-	-
Asset and Property – Moulton Park & New Sheep Market	**96**		**96**	72	96	-
Ayscoughfee Projects	**15**		**15**	2	15	-
Car Park Resurfacing	**85**		**85**	-	85	-
Council Offices Priory Road – Boiler	**42**		**42**	-	42	-
Council Offices Priory Road – UPS	**24**		**24**	23	24	-
Capital Acquisitions re Growth and Commercialisation	**100**		**100**	-	-	(100)
Welland Homes	**2,398**		**2,398**	622	1,106	(1,292)
Local Authority Housing Fund	**157**		**157**	-	157	-
Spalding Gateway Public Realm Project	**283**		**283**	-	283	-
Lutyens Memorial	**175**	(100)	**75**	1	75	-
Unit 4 Migration	**-**	29	**29**	-	29	-
Total Non UKSPF & LUF Projects	**6,055**	**(271)**	**5,784**	**924**	**3,723**	**(2,056)**
UKSPF & LUF						
UKSPF	521	-	521	247	521	-
UKSPF – Rural	322	-	322	76	322	-
Total UKSPF	**843**	**-**	**843**	**171**	**843**	**-**

South Holland Health and Wellbeing Hub	3,811	-	3,811	437	3,811	-
Total LUF	**3,811**	**-**	**3,811**	**437**	**3,811**	**-**
Grand Total – All Projects	**10,709**	**(271)**	**10,438**	**1,684**	**8,382**	**(2,056)**

The revised capital budget as at Q2 will be £10.438m, derived from the combination of the 2024/25 approved budget of £10.709m, new in-year approved spend, and adjustment of budgets. The overall expenditure as at Q2 is £1.684m.

Progress against approved budgets

- Disabled Facilities Grants – Forecast currently in line with previous year outturn. Grant received greater than demand for DFGs due to HRA within South Holland.
- Capital Acquisitions re Growth and Commercialisation – No acquisitions planned..
- Welland Homes - option appraisal being are carried out.

Changes to approved capital budget

Detailed below are subsequent changes to the capital programme since the Q1 Finance Report and are reflected in the table above.

Table 4b Capital Programme Changes		
Project Description	**Amount £'000**	**Approval**
Decent Homes Unfit and Disrepair – Housing	(150)	Decommitment of Decent Homes scheme as no projects currently planned, also removed for future years. New bids to be approved on a case-by-case basis as works are required.
Asset Improvement – Leisure	(50)	Decommitment of Leisure works, works no longer required.
Lutyens Memorial	(100)	Decommitment of additional proforma, original approval gives sufficient budget for the scheme to be completed.
Unit 4 Migration	29	Proforma approved by S151 for Unit 4 Migration.
Total	(271)	

2024/25 Funding

Table 4c Capital Programme Financing				
All Projects	**Approved Budget 2024/25** £000	**Revised Budget 2024/25** £000	**Full year forecast 2024/25** £000	**Variance 2024/25** £000
Investment and Growth Reserve	(719)	(619)	(619)	-
Replacement and Refurbishment Reserve	(109)	(109)	(109)	-
S106 Reserve	(237)	(237)	(237)	-
Spalding Special Reserve	(25)	(25)	-	25
Grants	(6,239)	(6,039)	(5,400)	639
Internal Borrowing – Unfinanced	(819)	(819)	(719)	100
Internal Borrowing – Welland Homes	(2,398)	(2,398)	(1,106)	1,292
Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)	(163)	(192)	(192)	-
Totals	**(10,709)**	**(10,438)**	**(8,382)**	**2,056**

Recommendation:

F3 That Cabinet approves the amendments to the Capital Programme at Appendix A – Table 4 to take into account the changes set out in this report.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme

Table 5 – HRA Programme	Approved Budget 24/25 £000	Changes to approved budget £000	Revised Budget 24/25 £000	Actual August 2024 £000	Forecast Outturn 2024/25 £000	Variance (under)/over £000
Central Heating	975	-	975	237	975	-
Kitchen/Bathroom ((£24k) approved by Council 27/11/2024)	1,570	(210)	1,360	653	1,360	-
Renewable Energy (£0.956m approved by Council 27/11/2024)	6,051	956	7,007	2,142	7,007	-
Smoke Alarms	190	-	190	101	190	-
Electrical Upgrades	130	-	130	11	130	-
Roofs and Gutters	930	-	930	269	930	-
Doors and Windows	1,510	-	1,510	778	1,510	-
Flat Entrance Doors Sheltered Schemes	350	99	449	25	449	
Fire Remedial Works	75	50	125	-103	125	-
Damp and Mould Remedial Works	100	(100)	0	-	-	-
Chimneys	200	-	200	31	200	-
Paths and Drives	37	-	37	14	37	-
Boundary Walls	92	(50)	42	2	42	-
TV Aerials - Sheltered Schemes	111	-	111	-	111	-
Fees	214	-	214	-	214	-
Sewerage Treatment Plant	817	(200)	617	68	617	-
The Square ((£0.932m) approved by Council 27/11/2024)	932	(932)	-	-	-	-
Car Parks	194	(100)	94	-	94	-
Community Centre Refurbishment	132	-	132	5	132	-
Structural Works	0	100	100	0	100	-
ICT Strategy / Infrastructure	36	-	36	-	36	-
Replacement Laptops	28	-	28	9	28	-
Major Adaptions	630	497	1,127	670	1,127	-
Sheltered Alarm Upgrade	991	-	991	331	991	-
Housing Repairs Vehicles	560	(110)	450	-	450	-
Grounds Maintenance Equipment	71	-	71	-	71	-
Wignals Gate S106	4	-	4	-5	55	51
Northons Lane Holbeach	1,583	-	1,583	-2	913	(670)
Jubilee Way Gosberton	56	-	56	-6	58	2
Pheasant Street Holbeach	22	-	22	-5	23	1
Primus Close Moulton Chapel	387	-	387	9	390	3
Biehler Avenue Weston	79	-	79	-12	65	(14)
Cobgate Whaplode	47	-	47	-3	47	-
Coalbeach Lane Surfleet	63	-	63	-5	49	(14)
LAHF2 Frogmore Lane Holbeach	234	-	234	440	471	237
LAHF2 Tulip Fields Holbeach	335	-	335	-8	56	(279)

Table 5 – HRA Programme	Approved Budget 24/25 £000	Changes to approved budget £000	Revised Budget 24/25 £000	Actual August 2024 £000	Forecast Outturn 2024/25 £000	Variance (under)/over £000
River Close Surfleet	917	-	917	161	910	(7)
Scheme Subject to detailed approval	1,198	-	1,198	-	1,198	-
Total	**21,851**	**-**	**21,851**	**5,807**	**21,161**	**(690)**

Table 5b – HRA Financing	Revised Budget 24/25 £000	Forecast Outturn 2024/25 £000	Variance (under)/over £000
Capital Receipts	(948)	(948)	0
Grants and Contributions	(3,010)	(3,010)	0
Major Repairs Reserve	(8,416)	(8,416)	0
HRA General Reserve	(3,485)	(2,795)	(690)
Internal Borrowing	(5,992)	(5,992)	0
Total	**(21,851)**	**(21,161)**	**(690)**

Progress against approved budgets

- Wignals Gate - There is no overspend, project is performing in accordance with expected costs shown in the forecast outturn. Budget realignment will be required.
- Northons Lane Holbeach - The project is continuing into 2025/26 when the final homes will complete.
- LAHF2 Frogmore Lane Holbeach - There is no overspend, project is performing in accordance with expected costs. Budget will need to be realigned to reflect forecast outturn.
- LAHF2 Tulip Fields Holbeach - Project is performing in accordance with expected costs. Budget will need to be realigned to reflect forecast outturn.
- Minor variances are reported for some of the other HRA Capital programme projects.

Changes to approved capital budget

There has been a review of the HRA capital programme 2024/25 budget for Quarter 2 budget monitoring. The overall HRA capital budget has remained the same at £21.851m but approval for budget changes to various schemes is requested. These changes are highlighted in table 5 and reasons listed below.

- Kitchen/Bathroom (£210k) - In recognition of funding requirements to support other programmes of work, additional properties will not be allocated/or previous refusals revisited in this programme year.
- Flat Entrance Doors Sheltered Schemes £99k - Programme costs were previously being funded through agreed budget and the fire remedials budget. During the original works structural issues have been identified which require rectification to enable the compartmentation works to be completed. Therefore, the proposed budget amendment is based on the updated costs of delivering these works.
- Fire Remedial Works £50k - The 2024/25 programme of fire risk assessments includes the ongoing statutory requirement to inspect fire doors and maintain a fire door register. A number of fire doors have been identified as requiring repair or replacement. The budget has been adjusted to fund this programme of work.
- Damp and Mould Remedial Works (£100k) - This budget has been removed due to all works currently being categorised as revenue expenditure.
- Boundary Walls (£50k) - In recognition of funding requirements to support other programmes of work, reactive works will be prioritised in this programme year.

- Sewerage Treatment Plant (£200k) - Budget adjusted to reflect expected capital expenditure following ongoing negotiations with the new Contractor. A project to deliver a programme of improvements is being devised which will require a reset of this budget in due course.
- Car Parks (£100k) - In recognition of funding requirements to support other programmes of work, reactive works will be prioritised in this programme year.
- Structural Works £100k - New budget to address subsidence identified at two sites where underpinning is required following structural surveys.
- Sheltered Alarm Upgrade £743k - No change, programme is on track.
- Housing Repairs Vehicles (£110k) - Budget amended based on actual quotes received for the replacement of vehicles.

Capital Budgets - Council approvals 27/11/2024

The following HRA Capital programme budget movements: Kitchen & Bathrooms (£24k), Renewable Energy £956k and The Square (£932k) were considered by cabinet on 12/11/2024 with a referral to Council to approve those budget movements. These recommendations were agreed by Council on 27/11/2024.

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141 Right To Buy Receipts

141 Receipts from Right to Buy (RTB) sales can be used for funding new house purchases within the HRA, but there is a time limit for these receipts to be used on new builds or acquisitions, or the money is repayable to DLUHC. This limit was increased from 3 to 5 years in March 2021 and is calculated on an annual basis. Three further changes were introduced on 31 July 2024. The maximum permitted contribution from RTB receipts to be used on affordable homes new builds or acquisitions for 2024/25 and 2025/26 has increased from 50% to 100%. Right to buy receipts are permitted to be used with section 106 contributions. The cap on the percentage of replacement affordable homes delivered as acquisitions each year (currently 50%) has been removed.

There was no payback risk for SHDC at 31st March 2024. The next review point will be 31st March 2025, but the 2024/25 capital programme will clear any risk of repayment. During Quarter 2 there were two further Right to Buy sales (compared to one in Q1 2024/25) which makes a total of three RTB sales up to Quarter 2.

Recommendation:

F4 That Cabinet approves the amendments to the HRA Capital Programme at Appendix A – Table 5 to take into account the changes set out in this report,

Section 2.6 – Treasury Management

Investments at 30 September 2024

During the financial year, the Council has made investments in line with the agreed Treasury Management Strategy.

Detailed below are the investments held by the Council as at 30 September 2024 excluding accrued interest. Note this represents the position at this one point in time. The peaks and troughs in cash flow are managed on a daily basis. Because the Council collects money on behalf of other organisations which are paid out at future dates (e.g. Council Tax and Business Rates) the value of investments held at any point in time does not represent the value of SHDC's own resources.

Table 6 – Cash Investments as at 30 September 2024

Financial Institution	Country	Amount (£)	Fixed/ Variable	Start Date	Maturity Date	Yield
Lloyds Current Account	UK	436,924	Variable	Call	N/A	4.90%
Handelsbanken Plc	Sweden	9,718	Variable	Call	N/A	4.20%
CCLA Money Market Fund	Invested Globally	8,200,000	Variable	Call	N/A	4.99%
Toronto Dominion Bank	Canada	5,000,000	Fixed	06/10/23	04/10/24	5.89%
DNB Bank	Norway	1,000,000	Fixed	06/11/23	04/11/24	5.72%
DZ Bank	Germany	3,000,000	Fixed	27/08/24	27/11/24	4.99%
Liverpool City Council	UK	2,000,000	Fixed	22/04/24	29/11/24	5.35%
ANZ Bank	Australia	2,000,000	Fixed	03/06/24	03/12/24	5.39%
Derby City Council	UK	2,000,000	Fixed	15/03/24	16/12/24	6.65%
National Westminster Bank	UK	3,000,000	Fixed	19/08/24	19/02/25	4.87%
CIC Bank	France	2,000,000	Fixed	03/06/24	02/06/25	5.36%
UBS	Switzerland	3,000,000	Fixed	12/07/24	11/07/25	5.18%
TOTAL		**31,646,642**				

At Quarter 1 the level of investments was £26.7m.

Welland Homes

In addition to the above loans the Council has made loans to Welland Homes, a Housing Company wholly owned by the Council, as follows:

Table 7 – Welland Homes Loans as at 30 September 2024

Loan	Amount (£)	Start Date	Maturity Date	Yield
Green Lane & Walters Close, Spalding	408,851.00 389,768.37 543,023.43 **1,341,642.80**	20/03/17 10/05/17 17/05/17	17/03/47	3.50%
Parkside Crescent, Spalding *(initially a development loan at 5.50% until completed, now 3.5%)*	187,675.67 18,944.78 36,844.08 28,930.75 98,247.92 114,596.66 100,010.41 98,160.13	29/03/18 23/05/18 19/06/18 17/07/18 24/08/18 19/09/18 23/10/18 22/11/18		

Table 7 – Welland Homes Loans as at 30 September 2024				
Loan	**Amount (£)**	**Start Date**	**Maturity Date**	**Yield**
	103,037.06	21/12/18		
	50,833.29	11/01/19		
	154,096.72	20/02/19		
	80,245.80	22/03/19		
	50,178.89	12/04/19		
	62,346.40	22/05/19		
	142,858.40	07/06/19		
	21,723.09	25/02/21		
	1,348,730.05			
Transferred to Equity	(464,452.00)	07/05/19		
	884,278.05		07/05/49	3.50%
London Road, Long Sutton	**466,771.00**	12/02/19	02/10/48	3.50%
Bentley Court, Spalding	523,107.55	20/08/19		
	32,440.72	20/01/20		
	555,548.27		02/08/49	3.50%
Northon's Lane, Holbeach	461,791.15	29/03/21		
	28,286.40	18/11/21		
	490,077.55		29/03/51	3.50%
Homefields, Crowland	1,045,130.10	30/03/23		
	59,207.06	11/08/23		
	1,104,337.16		29/03/53	5.25%
Walnut Close, Sutton St James	560,227.00	18/10/23		5.25%
	49,385.14	27/09/24		5.25%
	609,612.14		25/04/53	
Homefields, Crowland (Phase 2)	**391,915.00**	30/10/23	19/10/53	5.84%
Primus Close, Moulton Chapel	621,997.93	09/08/24		7.25%
	81,698.68	20/09/24		7.25%
	703,696.61		09/08/54	
TOTAL	**6,547,878.58**			

Interest earned on these loans in the current financial year to 30 September 2024 is £127,645.

Maturity Structure of Loans

The maturity structure of loans is as follows:

Table 8 - Maturity Structure as at 30 September 2024 (incl. Welland Homes)		
Duration	**Amount (£)**	**Percentage of Total**
Instant Access	8,646,642	23%
Less than one month	5,000,000	13%
One to three months	10,000,000	26%
Three to six months	3,000,000	8%
Six to nine months	2,000,000	5%
Nine to twelve months	3,000,000	8%
More than twelve months	6,547,879	17%
TOTAL	**38,194,521**	**100%**

Long Term Equity Investments

The following table provides details relating to the Council's equity investments which are valued at "fair value" in accordance with proper accounting practice.

Table 9 – Long Term Equity Investments as at 30 September 2024		
Entity	**Equity at Cost (£)**	**Equity at Fair Value 31/03/24 (£)**
Welland Homes	3,338,921	4,070,865
South Holland Local Housing Community Interest Company	100	1,237,462
UK Municipal Bond Agency	50,000	0
TOTAL	**3,389,021**	**5,308,327**

Return on Investments

The table below provides a comparison of investment income received compared to the profiled budget.

Category	**2024/25 Budget Quarter 2 £**	**2024/25 Actual Quarter 2 £**	**2024/25 Variance Quarter 2 £**	**2024/25 Annual Budget £**	**2024/25 Forecast Outturn £**	**2024/25 Forecast Variance £**
Interest Received GF	(517,765)	(698,064)	(180,299)	(1,032,700)	(1,228,352)	(195,652)
Interest Received HRA	(256,400)	(376,600)	(120,200)	(511,400)	(641,834)	(130,434)
TOTAL	**(774,165)** *(4.771%)*	**(1,074,664)** *(5.452%)*	**(300,499)** *(0.681%)*	**(1,544,100)** *(4.771%)*	**(1,870,186)**	**(326,086)**

At 30 September 2024 there was a favourable variance of £300,499 compared with £152,851 at Quarter 1.

At Quarter 2 the forecast outturn was a favourable variance of £326,086 compared with £111,600 at Quarter 1.

These increases are mainly due to two reasons. Firstly, investments during Quarter 2 continued to be above the budgeted rates as interest rate cuts haven't materialised as quickly as the market expected and secondly, actual capital expenditure is lower than anticipated compared with when the original budget was set.

The average level of funds available for investment purposes to the end of September 2024 was £39.3m (Quarter 1 was £38.4m) including the loans to Welland Homes which are classified as long-term debtors.

Treasury investments achieved an average rate of 5.666% (Q1 5.818%) and interest on Welland Homes loans achieved an average rate of 4.257% (Q1 4.161%). The combined rate achieved on all investments was estimated to be 5.452% (Q1 5.561%) compared with the Average 3 Month SONIA Rate of 5.099% (Q1 5.167%).

External Borrowing

The Council has borrowings of £67.456m at a fixed rate of 3.48% in respect of the Housing Revenue Account self-financing settlement. Additional HRA borrowing of £10m was included in the 2024/25 budget for the full year at 5% but as at the 30 September this external borrowing has not been drawn.

The following table provides an analysis of borrowing costs as at Q2:

Category	2024/25 Budget Quarter 2 £	2024/25 Actual Quarter 2 £	2024/25 Variance Quarter 2 £	2024/25 Annual Budget £	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £	2024/25 Forecast Variance £
Interest Payable HRA	1,427,635	1,176,950	(250,685)	2,847,469	2,347,469	(500,000)

Net Treasury Position

The following table provides an analysis of the net treasury position as at Quarter 2:

Category	2024/25 Budget Quarter 2 £	2024/25 Actual Quarter 2 £	2024/25 Variance Quarter 2 £	2024/25 Annual Budget £	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £	2024/25 Forecast Variance £
GF Interest Received	(517,765)	(698,064)	(180,299)	(1,032,700)	(1,228,352)	(195,652)
HRA Interest Received	(256,400)	(376,600)	(120,200)	(511,400)	(641,834)	(130,434)
HRA Interest Paid	1,427,635	1,176,950	(250,685)	2,847,469	2,347,469	(500,000)
HRA Net Position	1,171,235	800,350	(370,885)	2,336,069	1,705,635	(630,434)
Total Net Position	**653,470**	**102,286**	**(551,184)**	**1,303,369**	**477,283**	**(826,086)**

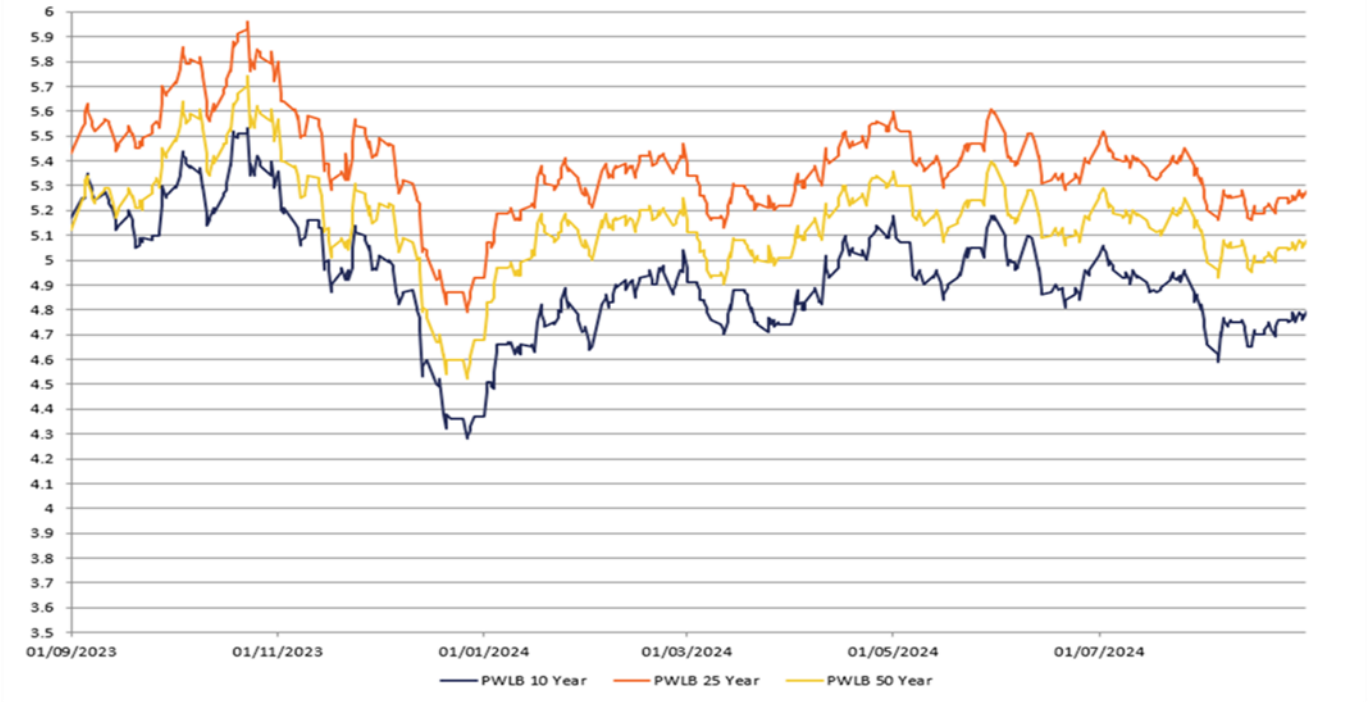
At Quarter 2 there is a combined favourable variance of £551,184 (Q1 £277,509) and the forecast outturn is a favourable variance of £826,086 (Q1 £611,600).

When calculating the estimated outturn for investment interest it has been assumed that the capital programme will slip by 25% and the remaining capital expenditure will occur on a straight line basis. This is the same assumption that was made when the original budget was produced.

Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) Borrowing Rates

During the first six months of the financial year PWLB rates have generally been on a slow downward trajectory reflecting the expectation that interest rates will fall during the remainder of the financial year.

The 50 year PWLB certainty rate was 5.13% on 30 September 2024 compared with 5.18% at the end of Quarter 1.



Treasury Management Summary

The Bank of England Base Rate was cut by 0.25% to 5.00% at the July Monetary Policy Committee meeting and there have been no further changes.

Local authorities are now offering higher rates compared with Financial Institutions by around 0.25% in the one year period. The number of Local Authorities looking to borrow is slowly stating to pick up as we head into the second half of the financial year.

Risks prevail in the financial markets and are subject to a continued high level of scrutiny with any significant issues arising being reported to the Council's Governance and Audit Committee. Changes to credit ratings of financial institutions are monitored daily and where required reported to the Section 151 Officer for an agreed course of action to be taken.

Section 2.7 – Debt Collection

A review of debts is undertaken every month, and monitoring is reported against targets. In line with the financial procedure limits debts below £1,050 require sign off by the Chief Finance Officer with all debts for this amount or over requiring Cabinet approval. New arrangements are in place for regular reporting and review of sundry debts and proactive management is taking place which is also resulting in debt levels and age of debt reducing.

An analysis of the sundry debts the Council held as at 30 September 2024 is show in **Table 15**.

Table 10 – Sundry Debt Analysis							
0-30 days £	31-60 days £	61-90 days £	91-120 days £	121-183 days £	184-365 days £	Over 365 days £	Total £
80,857	28,765	164,843	100,177	250,006	18,988	263,608	907,240

Note: This does not include details of invoice amounts £23,322.07 that are not yet due.

Section 2.8 – Council Tax and Business Rates

There remains uncertainty over the longer term effect on collection and recovery as a result of the ongoing impact of the pandemic, and the cost of living challenges. In recognition, we continue to remain prudent in setting the bad debt provision in this area.

A programme of statutory recovery activity is in place throughout the year.

Council Tax Support Scheme (CTS)

Following the annual review during 2023/24, the 2024/25 scheme has remained unchanged from the previous year, allowing for national up-ratings. A more fundamental review of the scheme is underway in 2024/25.

Council Tax – Quarter 2 In-Year Collection

The collectable debit for the year at 30 September 2024 was £65.9m with a net collection rate of 55.80% achieved (55.92% at 30 September 2023).

Business Rates – Quarter 2 In-Year Collection

The collectable debit for the year at 30 September 2024 was £25.9m with a net collection rate of 55.61% achieved (55.85% at 30 September 2023).

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Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	Wednesday, 18 December 2024
Subject:	Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2025/26
Purpose:	To determine the Council Tax Support scheme, 2025/26
Key Decision:	N
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Redgate, Portfolio Holder for Finance
Report Of:	Christine Marshall, Deputy Chief Executive - Corporate Development (S151)
Report Author:	Sharon Hammond, Head of Revenues & Benefits
Ward(s) Affected:	Not applicable.
Exempt Report:	N

Summary

This report seeks Cabinet decision on its final Council Tax Support scheme for 2025/26, having regard to the fundamental review carried out this year, and the feedback obtained through the consultation process. Cabinet's final scheme recommendation will be presented to Council for approval on 29 January 2025.

Recommendations

That Cabinet: -

1. Determines whether to: -
    i. Revise its scheme, with any or all, of the modification options: -
        a. Increase the maximum CTS for households with children to 85%.
        b. Remove the earnings disregard to Universal Credit claims.
        c. Introduce a standard £10 rate for non-dependant deductions.
        d. Increase Lower and Upper capital limits.
        e. Increase the threshold for changes in Universal Credit to £30 per week, with discretion for flexibility.
        f. Uprate in line with DWP uprating amounts for 2025/26.

Or

ii. Retain its current Council Tax Support scheme, updated in line with DWP uprating for 2025/26.

2. Recommend its decision to Full Council for approval.

3. Delegates approval for the 2025/26 final scheme policy to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, including administrative and minor changes.

4. Determines whether to introduce an Exceptional Hardship Fund to operate alongside the Council Tax Support scheme.

5. Subject to recommendation 4, delegate decision on the fund budget and scheme detail to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance.

Reasons for Recommendations

Full Council must make any revision to its scheme, or any replacement, and agree its final scheme no later than 11 March 2025 in respect of the 2025/26 financial year.

Cabinet's decision on its recommendation to Full Council for the 2025/26 scheme will reflect on the data and information provided through the fundamental review, and the results of consultation on its proposed modification options.

Other Options Considered

The do-nothing option would see the current scheme retained. This has been rejected as this would not be consistent with Cabinet's earlier decision for fundamental review. However, after considering the consultation responses, Cabinet could choose to retain the current scheme if it can justify its decision.

1. Background

1.1. The Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme, which replaced the previous national Council Tax Benefit scheme from April 2013, provides financial assistance to households on low incomes or benefits through a reduction in Council Tax. Each year the Council is required to consider whether to revise its CTS scheme.

1.2 The Local Government Finance Act 2012 sets out the process by which Councils must approve a local Council Tax Support scheme. Regulations continue to

prescribe the scheme for pensioners, allowing up to 100% support against Council Tax liability.

1.3 The current scheme provides a maximum amount of 75% support for working age claimants. it protects War pensioners and Care Leavers up to the age of 25.

1.4 A fundamental review has been carried out this year, and following Cabinet's decision in September, consultation on a range of scheme modification options has taken place. This matter is now brought back to Cabinet for a decision on its final scheme recommendation, for approval by Full Council in January 2025 ahead of implementation of 1 April 2025.

2. 2025/26 Scheme Modification Proposals

2.1 Cabinet resolved at its meeting on 17 September 2024 to consult on a number of scheme modifications. These are set out in summary below: -

i. Increase the maximum CTS for households with children to 85%.

Currently there are around 900 households with children in receipt of CTS. Recent DWP estimates shows 24% of children in South Holland live in relative low-income households.

ii. Remove the earnings disregard for Universal Credit claims.

The current scheme requires a manual process to administer earnings disregards. The DWP has regard to earnings and disregards in its calculation of the claimants UC award. This change would see the full amount of the UC award included in the CTS calculation and will improve administrative efficiency.

iii. Introduce a standard £10 rate for non-dependant deductions.

This would replace the current scale of deductions which are based on the non-dependant's earnings.

Exceptions to the deduction would continue to apply for households meeting certain criteria, including where claimant or partner is receiving Personal Independence Payment, Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance, or where the non-dependant is over 18 on certain benefits.

iv. **Increase Lower and Upper Capital Limits**.

Returning the Lower and Upper Capital limits to £6,000 and £16,000 respectively would recognise that not all capital is accessible and that households, even with a modest level of capital may still need support.

SHDC reduced its limits in 2017 to £3,000 and £8,000. Claimants that have capital between the Lower and Upper limits have an assumed income of £1 for every £250, or part thereof, calculated as part of the CTS calculation.

This change will open the CTS scheme to low-income households with up to £16,000 capital.

v. Increase the threshold for changes for Universal Credit cases to £30 per week (£130 per month), with discretion.

Since 2020 the threshold has been £15 per week (£65 per month). This increase would recognise the increase in national and real living wages and provide greater stability where work is reduced or increased by a few hours each week.

The provision for discretion will allow flexibility to ensure the council can be agile to make changes to CTS where any change appears to be more permanent, or at the request of a claimant.
This change will result in fewer changes, and therefore greater stability for household budgeting. It will also reduce the number of bills issued.

vi. Uprate the 2025/26 scheme in line with DWP uprating.

This will be consistent with previous years, aligning the scheme with the DWP's annual update of allowances and premiums for 2025/26. Whilst consultation is not necessary for this decision, it provides an opportunity to seek wider views.

2.2 The consultation also sought to establish views on whether the council should: -

vii. Introduce a Discretionary Exceptional Hardship Fund scheme.

Recognising that in any CTS scheme there may be hardship, by putting aside a budget the council would be able to provide further, short-term, financial support focused on those hard cases that need additional help in exceptional circumstances.

This would be developed under the provisions of Section 13A (1) (c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and would sit alongside the Council Tax Support Scheme.

It is proposed that such a scheme is designed to provide short-term financial support where there are unforeseen or exceptional circumstances which means Council Tax cannot be paid, and to support those residents who are taking steps to help themselves. The scheme should include signposting to other sources of help and support.
With each application decided on its own merits, any award would be applied as a credit to the Council Tax account. As a discretionary award, Council Taxpayers would not have a statutory right to an award but would have the right to appeal to the Valuation Tribunal if they disagreed with the outcome of an application.

2.3 The local scheme protections for War Pensioners and Care Leavers up to the age of 25 are not affected by these proposals.

2.4 The scheme modelling and associated indicative costs do not include provision for 2025/26 Council Tax increases, for DWP up-ratings, or for any increase in CTS that may arise through additional take-up or increased entitlement, generated by the economy or by the governments 'Move to Universal Credit' and Pensions Credit take-up programmes.

3. Consultation Response

3.1 The consultation exercise took place between 18 September and 15 November 2024.

3.2 Major precepting authorities have been consulted on the proposals.

Lincolnshire County Council response was supportive of the move to modernise the scheme, making it simpler for the council taxpayer, and to generate operational efficiencies. However, it does not support the change to vary the level of support to families citing the governments ongoing continued funding to support anyone who is vulnerable and that the proposed change to the scheme would reduce the income LCC receives which in turn reduces the available budget for spending on its services.

The Police and Crime Commissioner notes the proposals and supports proposals which simplify the scheme for claimants, and which lead to efficiencies in administration.

3.3 Wider public consultation included publicity through media release, website and social media. Letters were issued to major precepting authorities, and an email was sent to 54 groups that represent individuals identified in the Equality Act.

A total of 83 responses were received. Whilst this is a significant increase from the 35 responses received last year, it has to be recognised this is still a low response rate and the results cannot be relied upon as being wholly representative or statistically significant, but members must take the consultation responses into account when making their decision.

3.4 Feedback from the public consultation is summarised below (note where these do not add up to 100% there were responses in the 'I don't know' category which are not shown here but can be seen in the appendix): -

	Agree	**Disagree**
Increase the maximum CTS to 85% for households with children	46.8%	51.9%
Remove the earnings disregard to Universal Credit claims	59.3%	28.4%
Introduce a standard £10 rate for non-dependant deduction	61.7%	19.8%
Increase the Capital Limits	55.0%	36.3%
Increase the threshold for earnings changes for Universal Credit cases to £30 per week (£130 per month), with discretion	74.1%	21.0%

Update the 2025/26 in line with DWP uprating	71.6%	12.3%

- In addition, 69.1% of responses agreed with the proposal to introduce a Discretionary Exceptional Hardship Fund scheme, 29.6% disagreed.

3.5 The full consultation report is shown at Appendix 1.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Cabinet had regard to data and information through its fundamental review of the current scheme for 2025/26, and, in line with legislation, SHDC sought views through consulting on a range of scheme modification options. The modification options sought to make the scheme more generous for households with children, whilst streamlining elements of the current scheme to simplify and improve administrative efficiency. The net effect of the modification options is an increase on CTS expenditure estimated at £67k.

4.2. After considering the consultation responses, Cabinet could choose to retain the current scheme if it can justify its decision.

4.3. The introduction of an Exceptional Hardship Fund to sit alongside the CTS scheme, and, administered under the provisions of Section 13A (1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, would provide for further short-term financial support and signposting for hard cases. If approved by Cabinet, details for the scheme will be developed for implementation in 2025/26. This scheme will not impact on the major precepting authorities.

4.4. Schemes cannot be changed mid-year, and the proposals made could be considered incremental, with a review after the first full year of the scheme (i.e. in 2026/27) to consider scheme performance and determine if any further modification is required.

Implications

South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

None

Corporate Priorities

The Partnership Alignment and Delivery Plan includes a strategic partnership deliverable to review the Council Tax Support scheme. The fundamental review has been completed. A report to Cabinet in September provided details of the review, with this report providing the outcome of the review following consultation to inform South Holland's final decision for its 2025/26 scheme.

Staffing

None

Workforce Capacity Implications

None

Constitutional and Legal Implications

Under the principles of Consultation members are required to approach the consultation responses with a *receptive mind* and to give *conscientious consideration* to the outcome of the consultation as part of their decision making. This means members must show they took the consultation responses into account so that the results of the consultation inform their decision. Members can evidence this (conscientious consideration of the consultation outcome) through their questions and debate. If members require any further information then they should proactively seek it before making their decision. There is no duty to adopt the views of the consultees but members cannot make a decision that is fundamentally different to that which they have consulted on.

Data Protection

None

Financial

The indicative net cost for the modification options is estimated to be around £45k, of which c.9.66% (£4.4k) will be borne by South Holland. c.75.74% (£34k) by Lincolnshire County Council and c.14.59% (£6.5k) by Police and Crime Commissioner.

Whilst not directly associated with the decision on the CTS scheme, Members are reminded that South Holland District Council made a decision to implement a premium Council Tax charge on substantially furnished homes with no resident (second homes) from April 2025. This may generate additional income around £190k of which major preceptors would benefit in the same proportions as set out above.

If the schemes Capital limits are increased, this will introduce some further additional costs as it will extend the scheme to low-income households with capital up to £16k. Whilst this can't be quantified, it is likely this would affect only a small number of households.

The impacts upon the Council's budget will be included in the 2025/26 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

The indicative costs provided in this report do not include any provisions for 2025/26 increases in Council Tax or for DWP up-ratings, or for any increase in CTS that may arise through additional take-up or increased entitlement, generated by the economy or by the governments Move to Universal Credit and Pensions Credit take-up programmes.

The introduction of an Exceptional Hardship Fund would require a decision on the amount to be allocated for the fund, and this will be a direct cost to South Holland, administered under the discretionary provisions contained in Section 13 A (1) (c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, not shared as a cost of the collection fund.

Risk Management

None

Stakeholder / Consultation / Timescales

The Section151 Officer and Portfolio Holder for Finance have been consulted on this report.

Legislation requires consultation to be carried out with major precepting authorities, the public and other stakeholders where changes to the scheme are proposed. Consultation has been carried out, as detailed in Section 3 and Appendix 1 of this report.

Reputation

None

Contracts

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Equality and Diversity / Human Rights / Safeguarding

The existing Council Tax Support scheme continues to be delivered on the basis of the DWP's previous means tested Council Tax Benefit scheme regarding protection for vulnerable groups, including children and the disabled. An equality impact assessment is not considered necessary at this time.

Health and Wellbeing

None

Climate Change and Environmental Implications

None

Acronyms

CTS: Council Tax Support
DWP: Department for Work and Pensions
UC: Universal Credit

Appendices

Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report:

Appendix 1 Consultation Report

Background Papers

None

Chronological History of this Report

None

Report Approval

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Council Tax Support Scheme 2025/26
Consultation Report
Published

"You Said, We Listened"

Introduction to this consultation

1. This report contains the responses we received for the Council Tax Support Scheme 2025/26 consultation which took place between 18th September 2024 and 15th November 2024.

   An extensive review of the Council Tax Support Scheme had recently been undertaken which meant that some modifications to the scheme were proposed for 2025/26, rather than major changes. These improvements would make the scheme more generous, offering enhanced protection for vulnerable families and more efficient, streamlining processes to reduce administrative costs.

2. The exercise was performed to gain the views of residents on the proposed modifications to the Council Tax Support Scheme for the 2025/26 financial year.

Methodology

3. The consultation, which was available in both hard copy and online, was promoted in a number of ways.

   - A media release was circulated announcing the proposals for the Council Tax Support Scheme 2025/26. The media release also provided residents with details of the consultation exercise being undertaken and details of how to complete or request a paper copy of the consultation.
   - A letter was forwarded to precepting Authorities on 18th September 2024, inviting them to give their views on the proposals for 2025/26.
   - Social media; Facebook and Twitter were also used to inform residents that the consultation exercise was being undertaken.
   - A homepage banner was placed on South Holland District Council's website to draw attention to the consultation.
   - An email was sent to 54 groups that represent those individuals with the characteristics identified in the Equality Act. A few of these are listed below:
     Lincs Care Leavers
     Disability Lincs
     Victim Support in Lincolnshire
     Age UK Boston & South Holland
     Alzheimer's' Society
     Deaf Association
     British Heart Foundation
     Lincs YMCA
     ME Lincs
     Citizens' Advice mid Lincs
     Boston Salvation Army
     Boston United Disabled Football Club
     Edan Lincs (Domestic Abuse)
     Lincolnshire Rural Support Network
   - The questionnaire was also made available for people to complete on South Holland District Council's website.

4. It should be noted that base data has been rounded to the nearest number (so may add up to between 99% and 101%.) No comparisons have been made with the

previous consultation exercise undertaken in 2023 as the questions in the consultation have been revised.

Response Rate

5. 83 responses were received.

6. In addition, written responses were received from Lincolnshire County Council and the Lincolnshire Police and Crime Commissioner. Their responses are detailed at numbers 14 and 15 in this report.

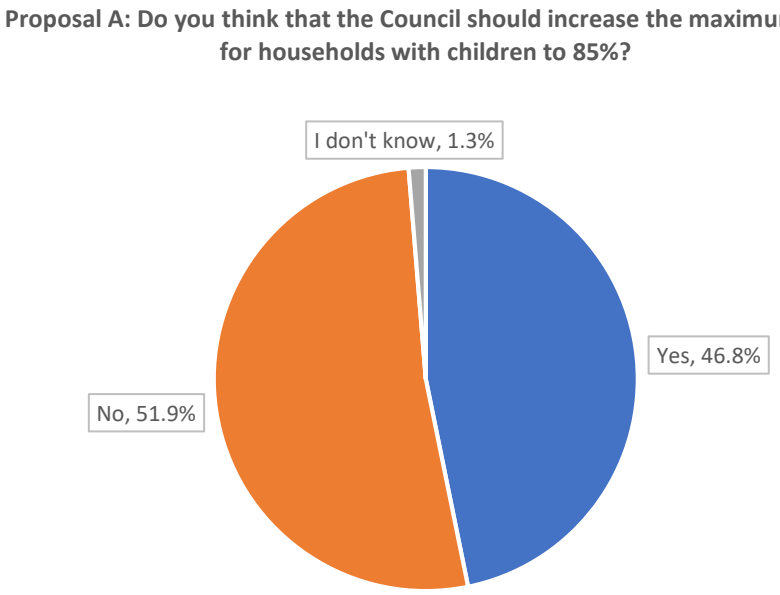
Results and Analysis

7. **Proposal A:** All respondents were asked if they thought the Council should increase the maximum CTS for households with children from 75% to 85%.

All respondents were advised that according to recently published DWP estimates, 24% of children in South Holland lived in relative low-income households. The proposed change would increase the maximum level of support for households with children to 85%, demonstrating the Council's commitment to respond positively to the concerns over child poverty.

They were also advised that there were currently 990 households with children in receipt of CTS, of which 827 received the current maximum 75% CTS award.

The chart below shows that 46.8% of all respondents thought that the Council should increase the maximum CTS for households with children from 75% to 85%, 51.9 of all respondents thought that they should 'not', with the remaining 1.3 stating that they 'did not know' if the Council should increase the maximum CTS for households with children from 75% to 85%.

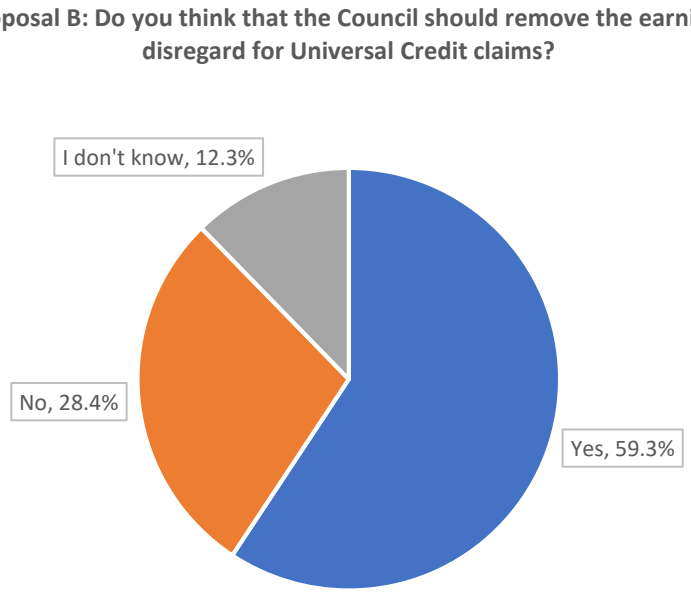


8. **Proposal B:** All respondents were asked if they thought that the Council should remove the 'earnings disregard' for Universal Credit claims.

All respondents were advised that the 'earnings disregard' was the income ignored when assessing eligibility for benefits, letting people keep more of their earnings.

Research had shown that disregarding income significantly helped with reducing barriers to work. The Department for Work and Pensions would already have regard to 'earnings and disregard' in its calculation of the Universal Credit award, and, under its current scheme, South Holland applied a further 'earnings disregard' in its calculation of Council Tax Support for Universal Credit recipients. The proposed change would see the full amount of the Universal Credit award included in the CTS calculation. This would make the scheme simpler and more efficient to administer.

The chart below shows that 59.3% of all respondents thought the Council should remove the 'earnings disregard' for Universal Credit claims, 28.4% of all respondents thought it should 'not', with the remaining 12.3% stating that they 'did not know' if they Council should remove the 'earnings disregard' for Universal Credit claims.

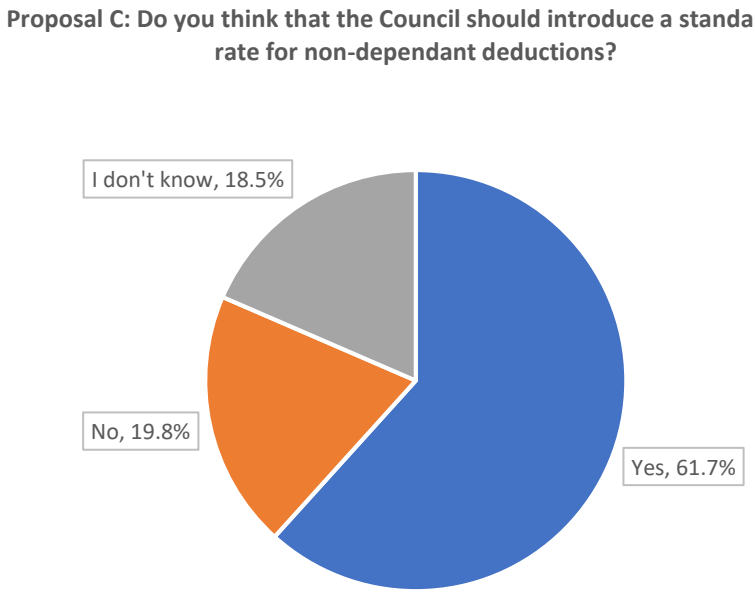


9. **Proposal C:** All respondents were asked if they thought that the Council should introduce a standard £10 rate for non-dependant deductions.

All respondents were advised that under the current scheme an applicant's entitlement to CTS could be reduced when other adults (non-dependants) lived in the premises (other than the applicant or partner). The charges varied from £4.90 to £15.10 per week depending on the circumstances of the non-dependant.

They were also advised that introducing a standard rate of £10 per week would remove the need to obtain evidence relating to non-dependants, in turn simplifying the claim process for the customer, and improving administration efficiency.

The chart below shows that 61.7% of all respondents thought that the Council should introduce a standard £10 rate for non-dependant deductions, 19.8% of all respondents thought they should not, with the remaining 18.5% stating that they 'did not know' if the Council should introduce a standard £10 rate for non-dependant deductions.

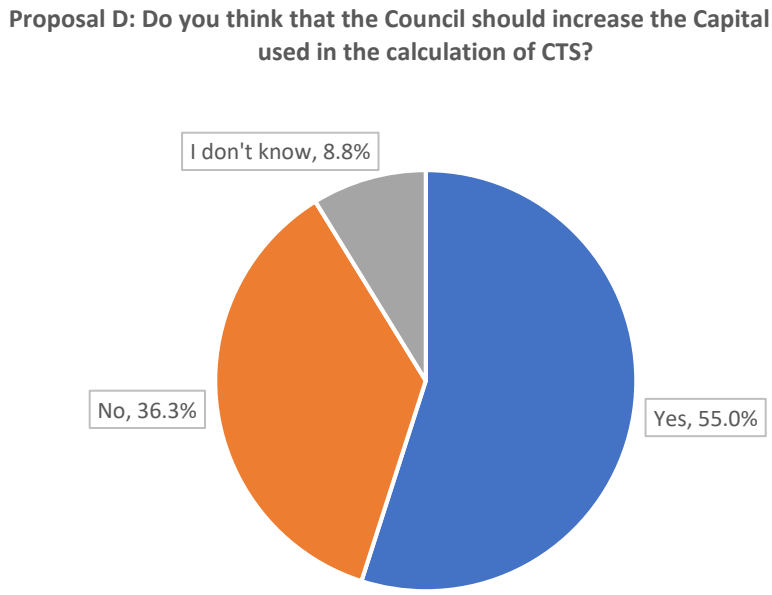


10. **Proposal D:** : All respondents were asked if they thought that the Council should increase the Capital Limits used in the calculation of CTS.

All respondents were informed that the Capital in this context was savings and other investments. South Holland's current lower and upper capital levels are £3,000 and £8,000. For every £250 between these levels, there is an assumed level of income, known as a 'tariff' of £1 in the calculation of CTS.

They were also informed that where a household has more than £8,000 there was currently no entitlement to CTS. Recognising that not all capital may be accessible, and that households with a modest level of capital may still need support we are asking whether you think the Council should increase the Capital Limits to £6,000 and £16,000.

The chart below shows that 55.0% of all respondents thought that the Council should increase the Capital Limits used in the calculation of CTS, 36.3% of all respondents thought that they Council should not, with the remaining 8.8% of all respondents stating that they 'did not know' if the Council should increase the Capital Limits used in the calculation of CTS.



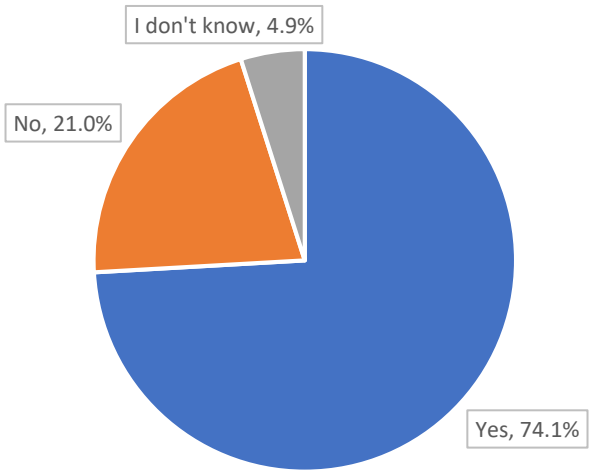
11. **Proposal E:** All respondents were asked if they thought that the Council should increase the threshold for earnings changes to £30 per week (£130 per month), with discretion.

    All respondents were advised that the current threshold was £15 per week (£65 per month). The National Living Wage was now £11.44 per hour, and the Real Living Wage was £12 per hour. As a result, if someone worked just over an extra hour a week, they may lose some of their Council Tax Support (CTS).

    The proposed change meant that while some households may benefit, others might receive less support, as earning just below the threshold would not automatically increase their CTS. However, the Council had the flexibility to adjust CTS on a case-by-case basis, either by customer request or during routine checks. The proposed adjustment would also help reduce the cost of re-issuing bills for small changes and give households more certainty when planning their budgets.

    The chart below shows that 74.1% of all respondents thought that the Council should increase the threshold for earnings changes to £30 per week (£130 per month) with discretion, 21.0% thought they should not, with the remaining 4.9% of all respondents stating that they 'did not know' if the Council should increase the threshold.

Proposal E: Do you think that the Council should increase the threshold for earnings changes to £30 per week (£130 per month), with discretion?

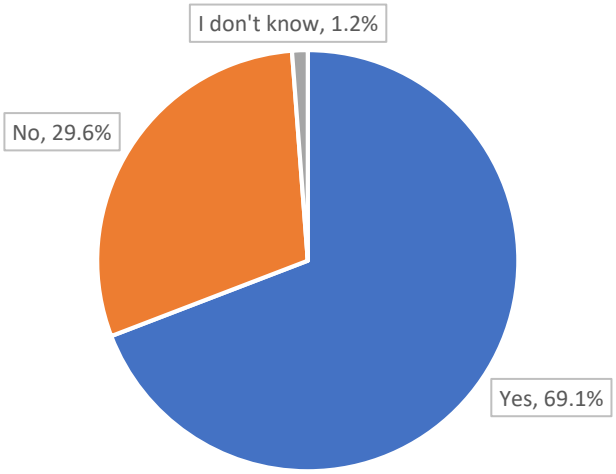


12. **Proposal F:** All respondents were asked if they thought that the Council should introduce a Discretionary Exceptional Hardship Payment Fund.

    A Discretionary Exceptional Hardship Payment Fund would provide short-term assistance to Council Tax Support claimants facing additional hardship, offering extra financial help while directing them to other resources and opportunities to maximise their income.

    The chart below shows that 69.1% of all respondents thought that the Council should introduce a 'Discretionary Exceptional Hardship Payment Fund', 29.6% of all respondents thought the Council should not, with the remaining 1.2% of all respondents stating that they 'did not know' if the Council should introduce a 'Discretionary Exceptional Hardship Payment Fund'.

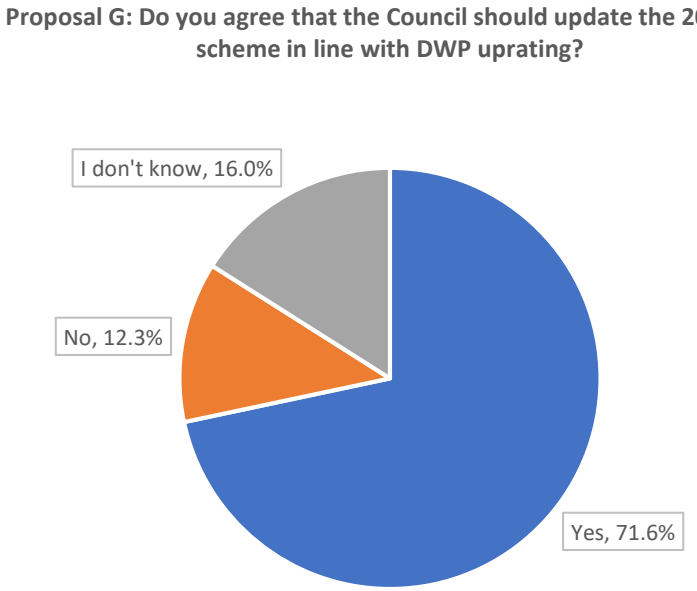
Proposal F: Do you think that the Council should introduce a Discretionary Exceptional Hardship Payment Fund?



13. **Proposal G:** All respondents were asked if they thought that the Council should update the 2025/26 scheme in line with DWP uprating.

The proposal would be consistent with previous years, aligning the scheme with the DWP's annual update of allowances and premiums for 2025/26.

The chart below shows that 71.6% of all respondents thought that the Council should update the 2025/26 scheme in line with DWP uprating, 12.3% thought that the Council should not, with the remaining 16.0% of all respondents stating that they 'did not know' if the Council should update the 2025/26 scheme in line with DWP uprating.



Responses from precepting authorities

14. A response was received from the Office of the Lincolnshire Police and Crime Commissioner supporting the proposals which both simplify the scheme for claimants and are likely to lead to efficiencies in administering the scheme.

15. A response was also received from Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) stating that as a major preceptor, any changes to the scheme can have a significant impact on the council tax received by LCC, which in turn can impact on the services LCC is able to provide to Lincolnshire residents. In response to the proposed changes to the scheme, LCC is supportive of the move to modernise the scheme, making it simpler for the council taxpayer, and to generate operational efficiencies. They do not support the change to vary the level of support to families. Whilst they recognise the need to support those groups most vulnerable in our community, the government is providing continued funding to support anyone who is vulnerable and not able to pay for essentials via the Household Support Fund. The proposed change to the scheme will reduce the income LCC receives from council tax, which in turn will reduce the budget available to spend on services LCC provides to

vulnerable groups and other essential services such as highway maintenance. It is assumed that the introduction of an Exceptional Hardship Fund, will be managed outside of the council tax support scheme, with no impact on council tax collected on LCC's behalf as a precepting authority.

Contact:

For more information relating to this report contact:

- Jackie Todd, Consultation Officer at jackie.todd@e-lindsey.gov.uk or 01507 601111

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Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	18 December 2024
Subject:	Customer Feedback Policy
Purpose:	To present a draft updated Customer Feedback Policy for the Council.
Key Decision:	No
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Jim Astill – Corporate, Governance & Communications.
Report Of:	John Medler, Assistant Director Governance and Monitoring Officer.
Report Author:	Richard Steele – Group Information Manager and Data Protection Officer.
Ward(s) Affected:	All
Exempt Report:	No

Summary

There is a clear need to manage feedback and complaints received by the Council and deal with them appropriately. This Policy is designed to achieve this aim, whilst ensuring that customers are dealt with fairly, consistently and proportionately.

South Holland District Council has not previously had a Customer Feedback Policy document. Instead, details of how to provide feedback or make complaints is detailed on the relevant pages of the Council's website.

This draft document has been fully reviewed, updated, and aligned across the partnership. Reviewing the policy ensures any updates are captured in the new aligned policy, as well as ensuring the policy is still fit for purpose and complies with all current statutory requirements.

Recommendations

- That Cabinet approves the draft Customer Feedback Policy at **Appendix 1;**

- That Cabinet authorises the Monitoring Officer to make amendments to the Policy to ensure it remains up to date and to reflect Complaint Handling Code guidance and recommendations issued by the Ombudsman.

Reasons for Recommendations

To ensure the Council has suitable procedures in place for responding to and dealing with feedback and complaints received.

Other Options Considered

Have no separate Policy – not recommended.

1. Background

1.1 The Council is responsible for ensuring it has a suitable policy in place for dealing with feedback and in particular complaints.

1.2 The Council wants to deal with complaints in a way that is open, fair and proportionate. A policy-led approach helps staff understand what is expected of them, what options for action are available, and who can authorise these actions. Having a policy that can be shared with complainants can help in managing their expectations.

1.3 Ensuring South Holland have a policy moving forwards, and aligning this policy across the Partnership means the Council has a clear policy for dealing with feedback in general, and more specifically with complaints received.

2. Report

2.1 This Policy, found at **Appendix 1** of the report, is being aligned to be the same across the 3 Councils in the S&ELCP – this will provide consistency for all staff when dealing with these incidences.

2.2 The policy gives the Council a framework to implement and take appropriate actions when dealing with complaints. It clearly defines what is and is not a complaint as well as steps that will be taken to address complaints.

2.3 This Policy:

- Confirms how to give feedback or make a complaint.
- Highlights any exceptions to the standard customer feedback procedure, for example where specific issues are treated by a defined complaints procedure.
- Defines the standard of service, including response times, to expect when making a complaint.
- Recognises the importance of customer feedback in providing insight to Council services and performance.
- Sets out how the Council monitors customer feedback and uses information to improve services and identify training needs.

2.4 This Policy has been designed to include corporate oversight and monitoring and has also been reviewed against the LGSCO Complaint Handling Code (the Code). Some of the key updates in the Code relate to response times and performance reporting. The Stage 1 response time has been changed to up to 15 working days to align with the updated LGSCO Code – previously at South Holland the response time was 3 working days to acknowledge and a further 15 days to provide a response working days. The Policy also adopts the Code's suggested definitions for 'a service request' and 'a complaint' and confirms the approach the Council will take when responding to these.

2.5 As part of the implementation of the Policy, training and guidance will be offered to ensure Officers are aware of their responsibilities when dealing with and responding to complaints. The Council plans to use a complaints review panel (a 'complaints clinic') to extract any lessons learnt from recent complaints to enable sharing across the organisation.

2.6 The Council will also produce and publish an annual complaints performance and service improvement report to assess and analyse performance and improvements. This report will cover a number of areas, all outlined within the Policy at **Appendix 1.**

2.7 **Adoption** of these processes will ensure the Council complies with the requirements of the Code and in doing so will support the Council to use the data and learning from complaints to drive service improvements.

3. Conclusion

3.1. The Policy has been fully reviewed and updated to ensure the information is easily accessible and understood by officers and members of the public alike, clearly setting out the processes for different situations. It has also been fully reviewed against the new LGSCO Complaint Handling Code to ensure best practice is being followed. A diagram setting out how the complaints process works in practice can be found at **Appendix 2**.

Implications

South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

This will be an aligned policy, so officers are working to a single policy and set of procedures, ensuring consistency for officers and residents alike. Updating and aligning the Policy will also provide an opportunity to promote the Policy and confirm procedures to ensure service areas are aware of their responsibilities in relation to feedback and complaints.

Corporate Priorities

None

Staffing

None

Workforce Capacity Implications

None

Constitutional and Legal Implications

The impact on individuals Human Rights have been considered throughout the Policy. The LGSCO has issued the Code as “advice and guidance” for all local councils in England under section 23(12A) of the Local Government Act 1974. This means that councils should consider the Code when developing complaint handling policies and procedures and when responding to complaints. If a council decides not to follow the Code, the LGSCO expects it to have a good reason for this.

Data Protection

The provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 (including UK GDPR) will be complied with at all times when dealing with people.

Financial

None

Risk Management

None

Stakeholder / Consultation / Timescales

Consultation has been undertaken with relevant PSPS staff and officers from relevant service areas to ensure all necessary scenarios are captured. The Policy Development Panel scrutinised the Policy at its Meeting on 26 November 2024 and recommended that it be adopted by the Cabinet.

Reputation

None

Contracts

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Equality and Diversity / Human Rights / Safeguarding

There is a need to balance people’s right to access information against their individual needs. The Policy makes it clear that considerations must be made in respect to each person’s circumstances.

Health and Wellbeing

The health and wellbeing of staff and members is paramount. Customers would be assessed in respect of their additional needs if their complaints are considered under the Policy.

Climate Change and Environmental Implications

None

Acronyms

LGSCO – Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

Appendices

Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report:

Appendix 1	Draft Customer Feedback Policy
Appendix 2	Diagram to show complaints process

Background Papers

No background papers as defined in Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the production of this report.

Chronological History of this Report

Committee	**Date**
Policy Development Panel	26th November 2024

Report Approval

Report author:	Richard Steele – Group Information Manager and Data Protection Officer
Signed off by:	John Medler, Assistant Director – Governance & Monitoring Officer

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CUSTOMER FEEDBACK POLICY

CONTENTS

1. Introduction

South Holland District Council values its customers and their feedback. This Customer Feedback Policy outlines how the Council will manage and respond to customer feedback, including suggestions, compliments, and complaints. The policy is designed to ensure the best possible experience for both customers and the Council.

Customer feedback is actively encouraged and used positively to improve services and make necessary changes. For example, identifying customer issues early in a new business process, or recognising patterns in repeat requests can help reduce complaints by resolving issues at the first point of contact.

The Council aims to have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments to take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified.

The Council's Customer Feedback Policy builds upon the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's (LGSCO) model complaint handing code ('the code'), which was established in February 2024. The code sets out what organisations should do procedurally that will allow them to handle and respond to complaints effectively and fairly. The purpose of the code is to enable organisations to resolve complaints raised by individuals promptly, and to use the data and learning from complaints to drive service improvements. It also aims to help to create a positive complaint handling culture amongst staff and individuals.

This Customer Feedback Policy is designed to ensure the Council actively listens to its customers, understands their needs, and continuously improves its services. By systematically collecting, analysing, and acting on feedback, the Council can ensure that every interaction enhances the overall customer journey. Customer feedback is also an important part of our Customer Experience Strategy which can be found here.

2. General feedback, suggestions, and compliments

Compliments

If you believe a service has performed well or a staff member has been particularly helpful, please let the Council know. Compliments are always appreciated and help managers recognise their team's good performance. The Council will ensure your compliment is shared with the relevant team or staff member.

Suggestions and General Feedback

The Council is constantly striving to improve its services to customers. If you would like to make a suggestion about the Council or any of its services, please get in touch. The Council will acknowledge receipt of your suggestion and will forward it on to the relevant officer to consider. Collecting feedback enables you to tell the Council where it is getting things right, and where it can do better. Feedback received will be used to learn from any mistakes that might be made and to shape services for the future, or where communications can be improved in order to manage customer expectations.

3. Definition of a service request and complaint

Effective complaint handling enables individuals to be heard and understood. The starting point for this is a shared understanding of what constitutes a service request and what constitutes a complaint. In most cases the Council should be able to put things right through normal service delivery processes.

A service request is defined as:

"a request that the organisation provides or improves a service, fixes a problem or reconsiders a decision."

Service requests provide the Council with opportunities to resolve matters to an individual's satisfaction before they become a complaint. Service requests are not

complaints but may contain expressions of dissatisfaction. The Council will take the opportunity to deal with a service request before a complaint is made.

A complaint may arise if the individual is dissatisfied with the response to their service request, even if the request is still being handled. However, the Council will continue its efforts to resolve the service request even if a complaint is made. Service requests will be recorded, monitored, and reviewed regularly.

A complaint is defined in line with the definition used by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) as follows:

"An expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of individuals."

A complaint may be about lack of response, delays, ongoing service problems or the behaviour of Council employees. This includes where the Council is:

- Doing something wrong;
- Doing something it should not have done;
- Failing to do something it should have done;
- Behaving unfairly, unreasonably, or in a discriminatory manner;
- Not carrying out a service to an agreed standard;
- Not responding to a request for a service within its stated timescale.

Complaints which are aggressive, abusive, unreasonable, or unreasonably persistent, will be dealt with under the Council's 'Unreasonable Behaviour Policy' which can be found on the Council's website or by clicking here.

4. Exclusions

There are occasions when it is **not** appropriate to respond to a complaint made under this Policy. These include:

- A Service request as defined in this Policy;
- A request for information;
- Complaints which are essentially criticisms of or disagreement with approved Council Policy or decisions properly taken;
- Any matter where a right of objection or appeal exists, (such as a grant or refusal of planning permission), unless the complaint relates specifically to the way the matter has been administered;
- Complaints which could reasonably be the subject of court or tribunal proceedings, or which need to be referred to the Council's insurers. (For example, action for compensation or personal injury);
- Any matter which falls within the remit of the Council's disciplinary procedure;
- Complaints about the conduct of a Councillor;
- An appeal made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, or Data Protection Act 2018;
- An appeal made under the Environmental Information Regulations;

- Complaints made by an employee of the Council relating to employment issues
- Complaints which have already been considered under the Council's Corporate Feedback Policy or by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
- Expressions of dissatisfaction made through a Council survey – the person completing the survey will be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to.

Where complaints are submitted more than 12 months from when the issue occurred, or the individual became aware of the issue, the Council will consider whether to apply discretion to accept a complaint made outside this time limit, where there are good reasons to do so.

Occasionally, complaints may be made when other procedures are underway, for example criminal investigations or court proceedings. The Council has the discretion not to commence, or to suspend, complaints investigations if to proceed could compromise another procedure. The complaint investigation may, if appropriate, start or resume once the concurrent process is discontinued or completed.

Where a complaint cannot be accepted by the Council, the Council will provide an explanation and also explain that this decision can be referred to the relevant Ombudsman.

5. How to get in touch

Complaints may originate in different ways; written, telephone, email, or via a personal visit. The Council aims to handle complaints at an early stage. If a complainant wishes to make a complaint, they will be requested to put the complaint in written form wherever possible.

Complaints can be received by any Officer or Councillor of the Council, as well as by any agents providing services on behalf of the Council. Complaints may also come in the form of letters from MPs.

By email*:* feedback@sholland.gov.uk

By telephone: 01775 761161

In writing: South Holland District Council, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, Lincolnshire, United Kingdom, PE11 2XE

In person: by raising directly with any Council Officer

Via the website or web chat: Feedback - South Holland District Council

Via your local Councillor: names and address of District Councillors are available by clicking here or by calling the above telephone number.

6. Accessibility and awareness

The Council recognises and values the diversity of its communities. It aims to reduce barriers and ensure that everyone has equal access to the complaints service. The Council is committed to making reasonable adjustments to accommodate a person's needs in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. This includes the following:

- Use of plain language;
- Accepting complaints over the phone or in person where it is not reasonable to request that they are submitted in writing;
- Providing information and responses in braille, large print, audio, easy read format, and other languages where needed; and
- Providing translators (including sign language translators) where needed.

While anonymous complaints are accepted, the decision to investigate them lies with the relevant manager. Anonymous complaints will be investigated to the extent possible and recorded in the Council's Complaint Register. They will also be included as part of any reporting.

Complaints made to the Council will be treated confidentially. However, customers who make their complaints public through the media may lose the expectation of anonymity.

In all complaint-related correspondence, the Council will provide individuals with information on how to engage with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

When the Council seeks feedback through surveys, it will also provide information on how individuals can provide feedback, compliments, or complaints.

7. Complaint handling resources

The Council will prioritise complaint handling and aims to have a culture of learning from complaints. All relevant staff are suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling. Complaints are seen as a core service and resourced accordingly.

The Information Governance (IG) Team will maintain a register of complaints and ensure all received complaints are recorded. The IG Team is responsible for tracking and analysis of these complaints.

Investigating Officers (usually Team Leaders or Service Managers) will be responsible for providing a suitable Stage 1 response to any complaint.

The Stage 2 Investigating Officer will be an appropriate officer from the Corporate Management Team, usually from the affected service area.

8. The complaint handling process

This Customer Feedback Policy deals with complaints and individuals are given the option of raising a complaint where they express dissatisfaction that meets the definition of a complaint in our Customer Feedback Policy.

The process is as follows:

1. Complaints are directed to the Council's Information Governance Team to record and allocate;
2. Complaints are then directed to the most suitable Team for investigation;
3. The Investigating Officer will acknowledge the complainant, outlining their understanding of the complaint using the acknowledgement template.
4. Investigating Officers will use the Stage 1 or Stage 2 template to respond to the complainant.

Complaint levels.

- Stage 1: Response to the complaint by the relevant Council Service Team.
- Stage 2: Review by an officer from the Corporate Management Team.
- LGSCO: Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman independent review.

9. Complaints stages (Stage 1)

The Council aims to fully respond to a complaint within 15 working days from receipt of the complaint to the final response (or 25 working days for complex cases). The IG team will log the initial complaint and refer this to the relevant Investigating Officer to deal with.

The Investigating Officer will acknowledge the complainant within 5 working days of the Council receiving the complaint to ensure that they clarify with the individual their complaint and to clarify the terms of the investigation.

The Investigating Officer will:

- Clarify through contact with the complainant what the scope of the complaint is;
- Deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind;
- Give the individual a fair chance to set out their position;
- Take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest;
- Consider all relevant information and evidence carefully;
- Ensure that a proper record of the investigation, correspondence and final response is recorded and lodged with the Information Governance Team.

An Investigating Officer, in undertaking an investigation, will carry out a full review including asking questions, obtaining facts, and recommending any changes to Council policies, procedures, actions or behaviour. Once an investigation has been concluded, a full response will be given to the complainant within 10 working days of the acknowledgement.

The Council can decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and will then inform complainants of the expected timescale for response. Any extension will be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) will be clearly explained to the complainant as early as possible.

A complaint response will be provided to the complainant when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions will still be tracked and actioned promptly.

The Council will address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law, and good practice where appropriate. The Council will make clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.

Where complainants continue to add additional material once a complaint has been acknowledged, other than by request the Council will either stop the clock or consider this behaviour under the unreasonable behaviour policy.

10. Complaints stages (Stage 2)

If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the individual's satisfaction at Stage 1, a complaint can be progressed to Stage 2. Stage 2 is the Council's final response.

Requests for progression to Stage 2 will be acknowledged and logged within 5 working days of the escalation request being received.

As part of the acknowledgement, Investigating Officers will set out their understanding of any outstanding issues and the outcomes the complainant is seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the complainant will be asked for clarification.

However, individuals are not required to explain their reasons for requesting a Stage 2 consideration. The Council will make reasonable efforts to understand why an individual remains unhappy as part of its Stage 2 response.

Once an investigation has been concluded, a full response will be given to the complainant within 20 working days of the acknowledgement.

The Council can decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform complainants of the expected timescale for response. Any extension should be no more than a further 20 working days.

If a complaint has been through the Council's Stage 1 and Stage 2 process and a complainant feels that it has still not been resolved to their satisfaction, they may ask the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) to investigate. The Ombudsman is an independent investigator that looks into maladministration complaints against local authorities. A complainant may ask the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman to investigate their complaint at any time, however, the Ombudsman will usually only investigate complaints that have been through the

Council's complaints system first, in order that the Council has had a fair chance to investigate. The Ombudsman may be contacted as follows:

Address:
Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman,
PO Box 4771,
Coventry
CV4 0EH.

Advice Line:
0300 061 0614.

Website:
www.lgo.org.uk

11. Putting things right

Where something has gone wrong, the Council will acknowledge this and set out actions that have been taken, or that will be taken to put thing right.

Any remedy offered will reflect the impact on the individual as a result of any fault identified.

The Council will take account of good practice guidance issued by the LGSCO when considering appropriate remedies. These can include:

- Apologising;
- Acknowledging where things have gone wrong;
- Providing an explanation, assistance, or reasons;
- Taking action if there has been delay;
- Reconsidering or changing a decision;
- Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum;
- Providing a financial remedy, where appropriate;
- Changing policies, procedures, or practices.

12. Performance reporting and self-assessment

Performance reporting on complaints is necessary to identify trends, measure the effectiveness of the complaints process, and ensure that issues are addressed promptly and systematically, ultimately leading to improved service quality.

In accordance with the LGSCO Complaint Handling Code, the Council will produce and publish an annual complaints performance and service improvement report which will include:

- An annual self-assessment against the LGSCO's model Complaint Handling Code to ensure the Council's complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements;

- A qualitative and quantitative analysis of the Council's complaint handling performance. This will include a summary of the types of complaints the Council has refused to accept;
- Any findings of non-compliance with the Code;
- The service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints;
- The annual letter about the Council's performance from the Ombudsman; and
- any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the Council.

The Council will also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.

In addition, data will be reported to the Council's Executive and relevant scrutiny committee on a quarterly basis regarding the percentage of complaints responded to within set timescales. (This data will be included in the quarterly Corporate Performance Report).

13. Scrutiny and oversight – continuous learning and improvement

The Council looks beyond the circumstances of individual complaints and considers whether service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from complaints.

The Council uses a complaints review panel to extract any lessons learnt for recent complaints to enable sharing across the organisation.

The Information Governance Manager reports to Senior Leadership Team on a regular basis on complaints received by the Council.

The Council's Monitoring Officer oversees the complaint handling performance. They work with the Information Governance Team to assess any themes or trends and identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.

The Portfolio Holder for the Customer Feedback Policy receives updates as follows:

- Regular updates on the volume, categories, and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance;
- Regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling; and
- The annual complaints performance and service improvement report.

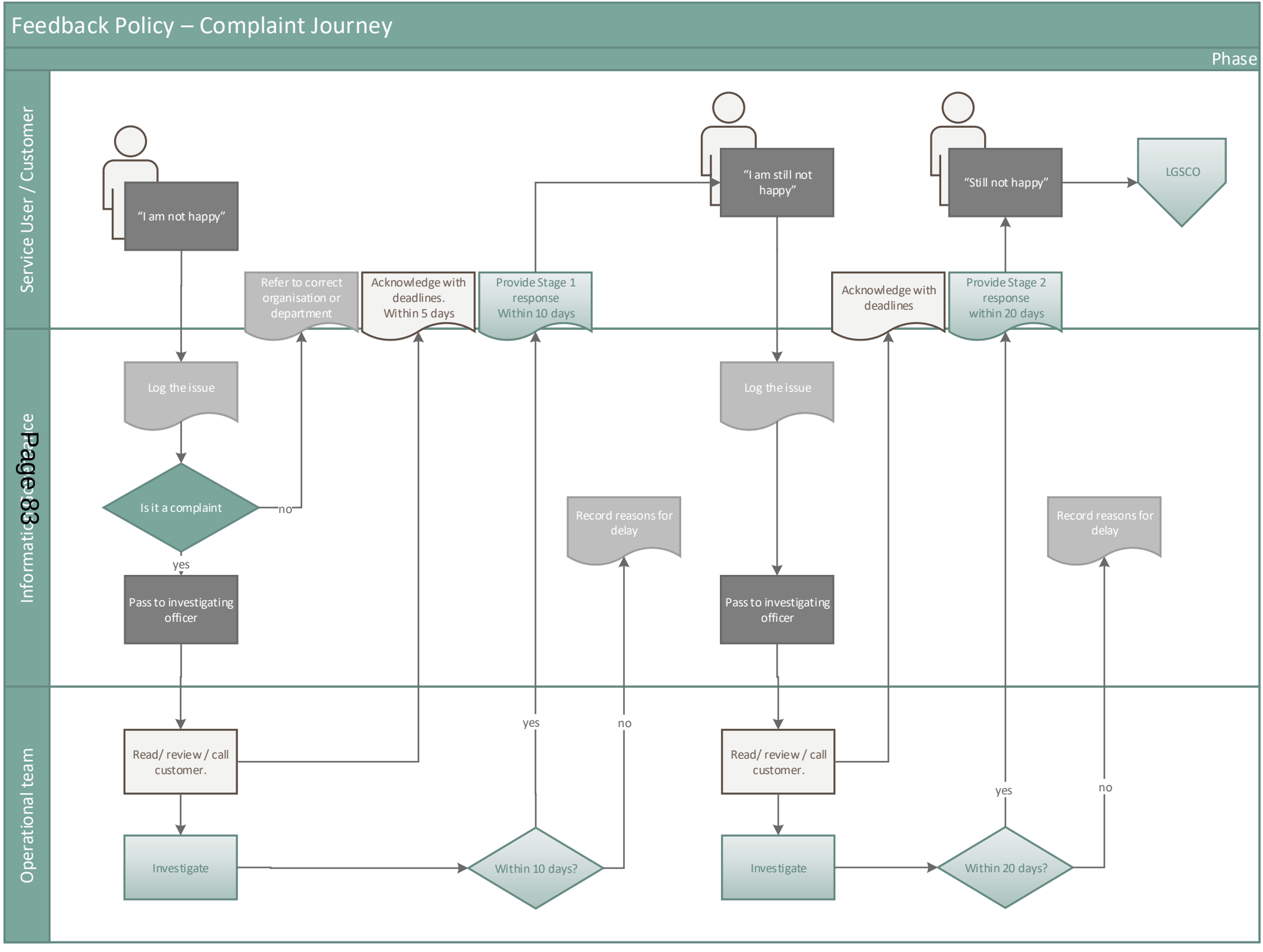
The Complaints Register, together with supporting documentation, is held by the Information Governance Team and kept available for inspection for at least 6 years.

14. Review and Revision

This Policy shall be reviewed annually. The Council's Monitoring Officer is authorised to make amendments to the Policy to ensure the Policy remains up to date and to reflect Complaint Handling Code guidance and recommendations issued by the Ombudsman.

Version Control			
Issue No	**Author**	**Issue date**	**Reason For Issue**
1.0	Assistant Director - Governance	TBC	Full update following new guidance, plus alignment to a single policy across the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (S&ELCP)

Approval		
Issue	**Approval Authority**	**Approval Date**
1.0	Cabinet	TBC


Feedback Policy – Complaint Journey
Phase
Service User / Customer
Information Governance
Operational team
"I am not happy"
Refer to correct organisation or department
Acknowledge with deadlines. Within 5 days
Provide Stage 1 response Within 10 days
"I am still not happy"
Acknowledge with deadlines
Provide Stage 2 response within 20 days
"Still not happy"
LGSCO
Log the issue
Is it a complaint
no
yes
Pass to investigating officer
Record reasons for delay
Log the issue
Pass to investigating officer
Record reasons for delay
Read/ review / call customer.
Investigate
Within 10 days?
yes
no
Read/ review / call customer.
Investigate
Within 20 days?
yes
no

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Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	18 December 2024
Subject:	Street Naming and Numbering Policy
Purpose:	To introduce a Partnership Street Naming and Numbering Policy
Key Decision:	N/A
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Henry Bingham, Portfolio Holder – Assets and Strategic Planning
Report Of:	Christian Allen, Assistant Director - Regulatory
Report Author:	Pauline Lyon – Group Manager, Building Control
Ward(s) Affected:	N/A
Exempt Report:	No

Summary

This report seeks Cabinet approval to adopt a single Street Naming and Numbering Policy (SNN) for South East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership.

The Council has a duty to ensure that all roads in the district are named and all properties numbered or named. It is important to have a SNN Policy in place to ensure the SNN function is effective and efficient.

The partnership policy seeks to align and harmonise current best practice and procedures across the three Councils of South Holland, East Lindsey and Boston.

Recommendations

- That Cabinet consider the report, policy and feedback from Policy Development Panel, see Appendix 2, and approve the South East Lincolnshire Councils Street Naming and Numbering Policy for adoption by South Holland District Council.
- That the Group Manager Building Control and the Assistant Director Regulatory be given delegated authority to make such amendments to this policy as may

from time to time be required in order to (i) reference any links or amended links to other documents as may be required; and (ii) reflect any issues over which the Council has no discretion including, but not limited to, references to any legislative changes and amended guidance. Any material amendments to the policy will be subject to the usual approval process in line with the Constitution.

Reasons for Recommendations

To align and harmonise current best practice and procedures across the three Councils.

Other Options Considered

Do nothing – this wouldn't harmonise SNN across the partnership.

1. Background

1.1 Street Naming and Numbering is a statutory function. South Holland District Council does have a SNN Policy however the Partnership alignment and Delivery Plan 2024/25 itemises a review of the SNN Policy as a deliverable, in order to be efficient and effective across the Partnership.

2. Report

2.1 The draft policy is detailed as Appendix 1.

2.2 The policy has been produced considering the current policies at South Holland District Council and East Lindsey District Council and referring to The Code of Practice as advised by Geoplace, who are responsible for collating, managing and maintaining the primary UK authoritative geospatial address and street data.

2.3 The Council has a duty to ensure that all roads in the District are named and all properties numbered or named.

2.4 Its important that the SNN function operates effectively and efficiently according to set procedures, for the benefit of the residents and visitors to the area, to ensure anyone travelling around the District can easily find where they are going. Clear, unambiguous property addresses are therefore essential. This is particularly important for emergency services responding to incidents swiftly and delivery services to ensure accurate distribution of mail and parcels.

2.5 *A* single partnership policy will ensure that there is a consistent approach across all three Councils and create opportunities for shared working.

2.6 Under the provision of Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003, the Authority reserves the right to make an administrative charge for the provision of the service. In doing so, the income from charges must not exceed the cost of providing the service.

2.7 The fees and charges will be reviewed annually during the Council's budget setting process.

3. Conclusion

3.1. A shared partnership policy will ensure there is a consistent approach to SNN, ensuring residents and visitors to the area can easily find where they need to go.

4. Implications

4.1 South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

*4.1.1 A*dopting a single SNN Policy will benefit from a consistent approach and create opportunities for the sharing of resources.

4.2 Corporate Priorities

4.2.1 This delivers on the Partnership Alignment and Delivery Plan 24/25 to align the Street Naming and Numbering Policy across the partnership.

4.3 Staffing

4.3.1 None

4.4 Workforce Capacity Implications

4.4.1 None

4.5 Constitutional and Legal Implications

4.5.1 None

4.6 Data Protection

4.6.1 None

4.7 Financial

4.7.1 This report recommends the harmonisation of the fees and charges for the SNN function.

4.8 Risk Management

4.8.1 None

4.9 Stakeholder / Consultation / Timescales

4.9.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the relevant Portfolio Holder and Section 151.

4.10 Reputation

4.10.1 None

4.11 Contracts

4.11.1 None

4.12 Crime and Disorder

4.12.1 None

4.13 Equality and Diversity / Human Rights / Safeguarding

4.13.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and the outcome was that there is no adverse effect from this policy.

4.14 Health and Wellbeing

4.14.1 None

4.15 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

4.15.1 None

5. Acronyms

5.1 The Partnership – South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

SNN – Street Naming and Numbering

6. Appendices

Appendix 1	Street Naming and Numbering Policy
Appendix 2	Minutes from Policy Development Panel

7. Background Papers

Background papers used in the production of this report are listed below: -

Document title	**Where the document can be viewed**
Street Naming and Numbering – Code of Practice	Home - Street Naming and Numbering (geoplace.co.uk)

8. Chronological History of this Report

N/A

Report Approval

Report author:	Pauline Lyon, Group Manager Building Control
Signed off by:	Christian Allen, Assistant Director - Regulatory
Approved for publication:	Cllr Henry Bingham

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Street Naming and Numbering Policy

December 2024 to December 2027

DRAFT

South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

Contents

1. Purpose of Policy

The aim of this policy is to provide a framework for South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership to operate its street naming and numbering function effectively and efficiently according to set procedures, for the benefit of the residents and visitors to the area, and covers the following activities:

- Naming of new street and numbering properties on those streets
- Re-naming an existing street or renumbering all the existing properties on an existing street.
- Registering a new property / property on an existing street.
- Allocation of numbers to properties with names only.

2. Reasons for Street Naming and Property Numbering

The Partnership has a duty to ensure that all roads in the districts are named and all properties numbered or named. Maintaining a comprehensive and high standard for naming streets and numbering or naming properties is essential to:

- Ensure post is delivered efficiently.
- Facilitate emergency services finding a property without undue delay.
- Provide consistency of property-based information across local government and national address datasets (e.g., the National Address Gazetteer and related Ordnance Survey Address Base products).
- Facilitate the reliable delivery of services and products.
- Enable the public to find where they want to go.

3. The Street Naming Legislation

The principles of this policy are supported in law under the following Acts:

- Towns Improvement Clauses Act 1847
- Public Health Act 1875 (The First Scheme)
- Public Health Acts Amendment Act 1907
- Public Health Act 1925
- Local Government Act 2003 (section 93)

4. Scheme of Delegation

Decisions are made in accordance with each of the Council's Constitution and Scheme of Delegations as amended from time to time.

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5. Consultation and Notification of postcodes and postal addresses

	Consult	Consultation period	Notification when approved
New Street Names	Parish/Town Councils, Ward members	21 days	Royal Mail Address Management, Local Post Office sorting depot Ambulance Service Lincolnshire Police Authority BT Openreach Anglian Water Authority East Midlands Electricity/Western Power British Gas Internal Council departments i.e., Council Tax, Electoral Registration.
Street Numbering (new developments)	N/A	N/A	As above
Existing Street renaming and/or renumbering	Ratepayers in the street Portfolio Holder	28 days	As above

No response will be treated as acceptance of the proposal.

6. Naming of new streets

Whilst the clarity of street numbering, naming and name plates is important for all users from visitors to the emergency services, street names should:

- Enhance the social and environmental wellbeing of the local area by creating a positive association for the occupiers of the street and wider community.
- Create a sense of place by recognising the local historical or landscape character/ geography.
- Encourage social cohesion and inclusion, or
- Reflect and/or celebrate local heritage and culture.

6.1 Street naming within Town and Parish Council areas

Any Town or Parish Council which has been duly delegated by a SELCP Council to name the streets within their boundaries must follow this Street Naming and

Numbering Policy. All applications for Street Naming and Numbering must however be made directly to respective SELCP Council in whose administrative area the development lies; at the point an application is acknowledged by the respective Council, it shall notify the relevant Town or Parish Council who has delegated authority to undertake all relevant consultation. Following such consultation and full compliance with this policy, the respective SELCP Council will be responsible for obtaining postcodes and the numbering of new developments using the names determined.

When this version of the Policy was published, only Skegness Town Council had delegation to name of streets within Skegness.

Approved naming conventions are welcomed from all Town and Parish Councils and will be shared with the builder/owner/applicant.

6.2 Naming after people

For a living or deceased person's name to be considered, evidence should be provided that they have made a significant contribution to the community either at a national, regional or local level and/ or have a historical connection to the land being developed. This should be evidenced through the completion of a 'Street Name Persons Proforma', which includes consent from the deceased person's next of kin, if applicable and where practicable. The proforma should be completed by the developer or person(s) recommending the name. In most instances, the person's surname will be used rather than their full name.

6.3 National standard conventions

All new streets should consider the following national standard conventions.

- That it is not similar, duplicated or phonetically sounding like an existing street in the local authority area or within the postal town. Consideration should also be given to the names of streets outside of the District Council borders but in an adjoining neighbouring district (to a reasonable extent)
- That it meets the Royal Mail PAF ® Code of Practice convention that only one street using the same name should exist within one post town.
- That it does not cause spelling or pronunciation problems.
- That names with more than 3 words including the suffix or with more than 30 characters should be avoided.
- That any historic connotations to people, places or events are researched and are accurate.
- That consent must be sought for the use of a name with Royal connotations.
- That the use of names and their combination with numbers should not be considered offensive, discriminative, rude, obscene, and racist or which would contravene any aspect of the Council's equal opportunities policies should not be used.

- That the use of names and their combinations with numbers which can easily be vandalised or changed into any of the above should not be considered.
- Where developers use a 'Development Name' for marketing purposes, re-use of that name should be avoided in the final naming schedule, and this should be made clear to prospective purchasers.

Themes

- Where several streets are involved, a theme linking the names should be considered to help identify the area.
- Where the new street is an area with existing themed street names, this should be followed where possible.
- Names cannot be construed to be used for advertising or commercial gain for example named after the developer's company name.

Prefixes

- New street names should not have the prefixes 'The' or 'A'.

Suffixes

- Streets in close proximity should not be assigned the same name with a different suffix, for example "Birch Road", "Birch Avenue", "Birch Park" and "Birch Crescent".
- Street names should have an appropriate suffix, which must be descriptive of the street, e.g., 'Close' to indicate a cul-de-sac. See Appendix A for a list of suffixes and their appropriate uses.

Punctuation

- Punctuation should only be used where it is necessary in a new street name. However, commas, ampersands, hyphens, quotation marks, mathematical symbols and QWERTY keyboard symbols should not be used.
- Full stops may only be used where they would make text grammatically correct. For example, 'St. Stephens Road'.

Plurals

- Street names should not include words that end in a "S" where they can be construed as either possessive or plural.

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Numbers

- Street names should not contain a number, even if spelt as a name. For example, Seven Foot Lane: “20 Seven Foot Lane” could be misinterpreted as 27 Foot Lane.

Abbreviations

- Abbreviations should not be used. The only exception to this is ‘St’ or ‘St.’ in replace for ‘Saint.

Duplication of **any** existing street name within a town or village is to be avoided.

6.4 Procedure for Street Naming

A developer/owner/applicant is advised to liaise with the local Town/Parish Council to seek their views, prior to submitting street name suggestions.

The builder, owner or developer should then submit suggestions for street names for agreement to the Council as early as possible in the application/build process and include any comments by Town/Parish Councils. Three suggestions are required as a minimum.

Upon receipt of an application the Council will formally consult Parish/Town Councils, Ward members on suggested names. Only valid reasons for objections will be considered.

In the event of a developer and the consultees failing to agree a road name and negotiation failing to reach an agreed solution, the Council must uphold the objection. A report will be prepared for the relevant Portfolio Holder to make a decision. The developer/owner has the right of appeal to the Magistrate’s Court against the objection.

If necessary, a refusal letter will be sent to developer/owner.

If no objection is received from consultees the road(s) names will be approved.

Following the decision, developers/owners will be notified in writing without delay. The numbering of the new development may also be dealt with at this time. This will be carried out once official confirmation of the post code(s) is received from the Post Office Registration Authority (This will only be carried out by the District Council and not the developer/owner).

The final stage is to notify essential services and other interested parties of the official name.

Following agreement on the name(s) for development the developer/owner will be issued with guidelines for the manufacture and installation of new signs. The

developer/owner will bear the cost of the signs.

The developer/owner will agree the number, position and type of sign(s) to be installed with the Council prior to any installation. The Council's decision on location, design and timing of installation will be final.

The installation of signs will take place when the first property in the relevant road/development is occupied. If this is not carried out within 14 days of occupation the Council can take any necessary steps to have this done. If it becomes necessary for the Council to supply and install any signs, the full cost including administrative charges will be recharged to the developer/owner.

Following completion of the final property on the site the developer/owner will contact the Council to arrange an audit of all new signs. Any additional or alterations to the signs will be purchased and installed by the developer/owner.

Following the audit, any discrepancies found must be rectified within 6 weeks from the date of written/email notification. If the work is not completed by this time, the Council reserves the right to undertake the works and pass on any costs to the developer.

7. Property Numbering (New Developments)

Main roads should be numbered so that when traveling away from the Centre of town the odd numbers are on the left hand side and even numbers on the right. Succeeding numbers should be opposite one another; even though this may mean the omission of certain numbers where frontages vary. (Suffix letters may be used in such cases as an alternative).

Side roads should be numbered in ascending order from the main road, either consecutively or odds and evens as appropriate to the layout.

For a cul-de-sac consecutive numbering in a clockwise direction is preferred.

Private garages and similar buildings used only for housing cars, etc, will not be numbered.

The number 13 is to be used in the proper sequence and no sanction should be given to its avoidance.

Buildings (including those on corner sites) are numbered according to the street in which the main entrance is to be found and the manipulation of numbering to secure a 'prestige' address or to avoid an address, which is thought to have undesired associations, should not be sanctioned.

Where a new development consists of three or more properties and delivery points cannot be accessed directly from the existing street, the creation of a new street and the associated name will be considered. Where the development is less than 3 new dwellings, suffixes will be used to maintain the numbering sequence.

In small groups of low rise flats, dwellings should be numbered within the ordinary street numbering system, but in tall blocks of flats each flat should be numbered so that the number indicates the floor level. The numbers of the flats contained in each block should also appear at the entrance to the block in a position clearly readable from the roadside.
All houses, offices, business establishments and other premises should be numbered, preferably with numerals of a minimum size of 62.5mm, and their numbers should be displayed to be in a clearly readable position facing the road. Mounting may be on gates, gate posts, doors or walls as appropriate, but ensuring that there is a good colour contrast between the numerals and the background to which they are fixed.

Where a property has a number, it must be displayed. Where a name has been given to the property with the official number, the number must always be included. The name cannot be regarded as an alternative.

When considered appropriate a scheme of numbering will be prepared and implemented. A numbering scheme will be used in all cases except in exceptional circumstances i.e.: no numbering scheme currently in place for existing surrounding properties where to number would not assist in any future renumbering scheme. No existing logical numbering pattern to follow.

It will be the responsibility of the developer/builder to supply all necessary information/plans to enable a suitable scheme to be prepared.

7.1 Procedure for street Numbering (New Developments)

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Once the road names are agreed (as per street naming process) we will:

- Contact Royal Mail and request postcodes for the proposed road names.
- Produce a site location plan showing the agreed road names, proposed house numbers and postcodes along with the same information in table form. *Note the number 13 will always be used in sequence*.

Request the Royal Mail register the road names and property numbers on the NYB (not yet build address database).

Provide the applicant with copies of the information sent to the Royal Mail.

As the properties are completed it is the applicant / developer's responsibility to notify The Council of each completion. At completion of each property Notifications and copies of the scheme are sent to the statutory bodies.

Properties that are allocated with a number may also be named. The property name will be registered by the Royal Mail as an alias. The property number MUST be displayed alongside the house name. The name cannot be regarded as an

alternative. This is enforceable under section 65 of the Town and Improvement Clauses Act 1847.

7.2 New Properties on an existing street

Where existing properties in a street are numbered, new properties should be allocated a number.

Duplication of any numbers currently in use in the same street should not occur.

Suffixes should be used where there is no gap in existing numbering sequence for an infill development.
For example, 4 new properties are proposed for a gap on an existing street between the existing numbers 25 and 31 but there are insufficient odd numbers to allocate to the new properties.

8. Re-numbering existing properties / buildings or Re-naming a street.

There are occasions where existing naming and or numbering is found to be unsatisfactory, and changes need to be made. The renaming and/or renumbering of existing streets and buildings is normally only considered when changes occur which give rise or are likely to give rise to problems for the occupiers, Post office or Emergency Services.

8.1 Procedure for Renumbering existing properties / buildings or Re-naming a street.

If the council feels it appropriate that renaming/numbering/renumbering is required, the essential services should first be consulted, and proposals agreed.

It is then necessary to seek consent from two thirds in number of the ratepayers in the street.

Following the expiry of 28 days consultation, a decision is reached considering objections and other observations received.

A report will be prepared with recommendations for the respective Portfolio Holder to make the necessary decision.

Once a decision has been made and has not been called in by scrutiny a scheme will be prepared and implemented.

A letter of notification will be sent to all relevant parties informing them that the new naming/numbering scheme will be implemented 6 months from date of the letter.

Four weeks prior to implementation a further letter will be sent to all parties reminding them of the pending change-over, stating that they will use their new official street name/number from given date and all new signs to be placed on their property as per the schedule.

Where necessary all new street signs will be purchased and installed by the Council on the day of change-over.

Notification will be provided to all relevant parties giving details of the scheme including statutory bodies.

A survey may be carried out after a period of 28 days to ascertain the level of implementation.

Where necessary a communication will be sent to occupiers not complying with the scheme of their legal duty to do so.

If notification of difficulties has been received from one of the following major stakeholders i.e., Emergency Services, Post Office, the implementation of a renaming/numbering/renumbering exercise will be undertaken within a shorter timescale due to the serious nature of these concerns. This will entail reduction of implementation from 6 months to 3 months.

9. The Naming of Buildings

The owner (not tenant) of a property may request the addition, amendment or removal of a name for their property. An application form should be completed and returned to the Local Authority along with the appropriate fee.

The council cannot formally add, amend or remove a property name where the property is in the process of being purchased, that is, until the exchange of contracts, although guidance of the acceptability of a name may be given.

A check will be made by the Local Authority to ensure that there is no other property in the locality with the registered or similar registered name. Under no circumstance will a replicated name in the locality be allowed.

Under no circumstances will a name that is offensive, or that can be construed as offensive, be allowed.

If a proposed property name is refused, then the owner will have the option to provide further suggestions or retain the current address.

Where a property has a number, it is not possible to replace the number with a name. The name cannot be regarded as an alternative.

House names are not favoured by the council or the emergency services as a number readily identifies the location of the building in the road. The only exception to this will be on the occasions, particularly in rural areas where a street numbering sequence does not exist. In these circumstances we will accept the use of a building name to identify the property.

Building names should always be prominently displayed in a position where they can be easily read from the public highway.

Where an amendment to a property name is carried out, the Local Authority will inform those bodies listed in 5.

10. Derelict, Demolition of Properties and Replacement Dwellings

Derelict Properties that are uninhabitable will be held with the street naming and numbering records with a reserved “non official” and “non postal” address, as these properties will be deemed a non postal address.

Following the renovation of a derelict property the address will require reactivation.

Demolished properties. An address is attached to the property and not the site the property is situated on. Following the demolition of a property/ies the associated address/es will be deactivated.

Replacement properties. Any replacement property/ies constructed on the site will require new property address/es. It should be noted that a replacement may not be allocated the same access as the original, as the position and location of the principal entrance may have changed.

11. Holiday Lets and Caravan Sites.

All Holiday Lets will eventually be added to the Councils property gazetteer which forms part of the National Land and Property Gazetteer. Holiday lets and caravans on a site **WILL NOT** be allocated a postal address or registered with a postcode. Post to caravans or holiday lets on a site should be addressed to a reception building and distributed to the caravans by the site operator.

12. Charging

The Power to charge falls under Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003. This sets out that local authorities may charge for discretionary services.

The fees and charges are set on a cost recovery basis to cover the non-statutory elements of the service.

All charges are to be paid prior to any service being provided. Please note: Any change to a property name/number made without contacting the Council will not be officially recognised and will not be registered with service providers and/or other organisations.

The Scale of Charges for Street Naming and Numbering can be found in Appendix B.

Fees and charges applicable for Street naming and Numbering service(s) will be annually reviewed during the Council's budget setting process and publicised through the Council's agreed communication channels including the website.

12.1 Refunds

Where an application form and fee has been submitted and a naming/numbering scheme has already been issued, no refund of fee will be available. No refund of the street naming fee can be made once a name has been submitted for the consultation period.

13. Claims for compensation

The developer should not give any postal addresses, including the postcode, to potential occupiers, either directly or indirectly (for example via solicitors or estate agents) before the official naming and numbering scheme has been issued by the Local Authority. The Council will not be liable for any costs or damages caused by failure to comply with this.

14. Decision and Discretion

The Council's decision is final for the naming of streets, re-naming of streets, numbering/naming or re-numbering/re-naming of properties and it is at the discretion of the Council acting through delegated powers under the Council's Constitution. However, in cases where any objections can be and have been lodged with the Magistrates Court then the decision of the Court will be upheld. The Council may depart from the policy where justifiable. The Council will produce a record of the decision containing the date, the decision taken, reasons, and details of any alternatives considered. Decision records can be made available for inspection upon request.

15. What the Council is not responsible for

The Council is not responsible for:

- Allocation of postcodes. This is the responsibility of the Royal Mail
- Correspondence and deliveries not being delivered to the correct address. Issues of this nature should be raised with the appropriate delivery service.
- The address being unavailable on databases used by third parties, including Internet based ones. Third parties may refresh their address sets at different frequencies and from various sources. Address changes can therefore take some time to appear in their systems.
- Maps not showing new properties or roads (e.g.: Ordnance Survey, satellite navigation systems). Information can take some time to percolate through to third party products and depends on those third-party update regimes and data sources.
- Erection of new street name plates. The owner/developer is responsible for the proper provision of street name plates.

16. Street name plates

Where new street(s) are created or affected as part of a development, the costs of supplying and erection of new street nameplates will be borne by the developer. A detailed specification will be provided to the developer to ensure new name plates are to the correct specification.

In conservation areas and all other parts of a town or village where historic street signs remain, the historic signs must be retained. If a structure carrying a historic sign is to be demolished or redeveloped, the sign must be retained, refurbished and re-used.

In the case that a new traditional street sign is required (for example if the existing is beyond repair, or existing naming and or numbering is found to be unsatisfactory etc), new street signs should be in the same style and a matching material to existing. The use of modern materials like vinyl and printed thin sheet metal should be avoided. Lettering should match existing in colour, font, and application (whether this be hand painted, embossed etc.).

16.1 Design of street name plates

The design and installation of road signage should be in accordance with that specified within Department of Transport circular 3/93.

The design of all new signs within the District will be.

- S H D C - 150mm plate white lettering on Mid Brunswick Green background.
- ELDC - White Lettering on black background
- BBC – Black lettering on White background

17. Complaints/grievance procedure

If anyone believes that the Council has acted in a way that is not in accordance with this policy the Council's formal complaints procedure should be followed. We will take appropriate action to remedy any breaches.

18. Review of this Policy

This policy will be reviewed periodically or in line with changes in relevant legislation.

19. Contact Details

If anyone has any queries about this policy, please contact Pauline Lyon. Email Pauline.lyon@sholland.gov.uk.

Boston Borough Council	Tel: 01205 314280 E-mail: tracey.banks@boston.gov.uk
East Lindsey district Council	Tel: 01507 613188/ 613193 E-mail: BC@E-lindsey.gov.uk
South Holland District Council	Tel: 01775 764447/764465 E-mail: bcadmin@sholland.gov.uk

20. Appendices

Appendix A – Street name suffixes

Appendix B – Scale of Charges

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Appendix A

All new street names should end with one of the following suffixes: -

Street	for any road
Road	for major roads
Way	for residential roads
Road	
Avenue (if to be tree lined)	
Drive	
Lane (if narrow)	
Court (for cul de sac or similar)	
Grove	
Gate	
Gardens	subject to there being no confusion with any local open space
Crescent	for a crescent shaped road
Close	for a cul-de-sac only
Square	for a square only
Hill	for a hillside road only
Circus	for a large roundabout
Terrace	for a terrace of houses (provided it is not a subsidiary name)
Vale	for residential road only (for exceptional use)
Dene	
Mead	
Rise	
Non acceptable suffixes	
End	
Cross	

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Side	All these words can, of course, be incorporated in a street name provided it terminates with an appropriate suffix (e.g. Mile End Road)
View	
Wharf	
Walk	
Park	
Meadow	
Exceptions: Single or dual names without suffixes in appropriate places (e.g. Broadway - for major roads only).	
All new pedestrian ways should end with one of the following suffixes	
Walk	
Path	
Way	
House, Court - residential only	All new block names should end with one of the following suffixes
Point - high block residential only	
Tower - high block offices or residential	

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Appendix B

Schedule of Street Naming and Numbering Charges

Existing Addresses (or addresses on new developments where schedules of numbering scheme have already been agreed and issued)

Type of Project	Charge
Renaming/Renumbering/Adding Name to an Already Numbered property	£60.00
Development renumbering due to change in layout (plot numbers or positions)	£30 per plot requiring renumbering
Renaming/Renumbering of street where requested by residents	Fees dependent on number of properties (see fees for New Addresses below)

New Addresses

Naming/Numbering of up to 5 new properties	£200 plus £25.00 per plot
Naming/Numbering from 6 to 25 new properties	£200.00 plus £20.00 per plot
Naming/Numbering from 26 to 75 new properties	£200.00 plus £15.00 per plot
Naming/Numbering of more than 75 properties	£200.00 plus £10.00 per plot
Naming/Numbering following conversion of existing property to alternative configuration	As above
Re-issue of an address for a replacement dwelling following demolition and reconstruction of property	£60.00
Additional charge where new street names required	£120.00
Additional charge where naming of a new building is required (i.e., block of flats/office suites)	£120.00 per building
Confirmation of address to solicitors/conveyance's/occupiers or owners	£30.00

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DRAFT MINUTES:
POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL 26 NOVEMBER 2024
STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Regulatory which introduced a Partnership Street Naming and Numbering (SNN) Policy.

The Assistant Director – Regulatory introduced the report which included the following main points:

- That Street Naming and Numbering was a statutory function;
- That SHDC had an existing SNN Policy in place which had been reviewed and was to be introduced/aligned across the partnership;
- The purpose of the SNN Policy and reasons for/benefits of the current review;
- The position relating to administrative charges; and
- That the draft policy was detailed at Appendix 1.

Members considered the report and made the following comments:

- Members raised the following points in respect of the street naming decision making process:
    - Regarding the naming of streets after people, outlined at point 6.2. of the Appendix, a member cited an example of a new development which had utilised female forenames as street names and it was observed that a proven connection to the land appeared to be unclear/loose. Clarification was sought regarding the timescale for which a 'historical' connection could be applied; and
    - Members cited an example where concerns were raised regarding a developer proposal for a street name which was deemed inappropriate by the Parish Council and the community. Although the proposal was subsequently discarded, members sought clarification on the decision-making process.
        - The Assistant Director – Regulatory responded that:
            - The process for street naming was set out in the existing Street Naming and Numbering Policy which focused on a requirement for developers to consult with local communities and the Parish Council;
            - As part of the consultation process, it was advised that a pre-consideration process be undertaken where developers provided three options to Town/Parish councils for consideration. Where specific concerns existed, alternative options from Town/Parish Councils would be encouraged as part of the negotiation process;
            - Where an agreement between the developer and Town/Parish council could not be reached, SHDC was bound to uphold the objection and the decision would be referred to the Portfolio Holder;
            - Regarding the developer street name proposal which was discarded following concern expressed by the Parish Council, this represented a good example of the policy in

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action. Confirmation was given that developers did not have the overriding authority regarding street naming decisions; and

- In respect of 'naming after people' evidence would need to be provided and considered as part of the process and assessed on a case-by-case basis. For a historical connection to be made, guidance stated that this be a ten-year period from the date of death.

- Members asked whether a register of potential street name options for developers was in place.
    - The Assistant Director – Regulatory agreed that the utilisation of a register which listed pre-approved road names within parishes would be helpful. Enquiries would be made as to whether a register was already in place at South Holland. It was noted that members at Boston Borough Council had also suggested this approach during recent scrutiny of the policy.

- Members queried whether the charging of a fee to name an established property was a new policy. In addition, where an owner sought reinstatement of a lost or disused house name, would a charge still apply.
    - The Assistant Director – Regulatory responded that:
        - The application of a charge for the naming of properties was inherent to the existing policy; and
        - Discretion may apply regarding the reinstatement of lost house names however this would be investigated and reported back to the committee.

- Members noted the policy of avoiding similar road names within the local authority area/town however it was felt that consideration should be extended to the names of streets outside of the district council borders but that were within a reasonable proximity of an adjoining neighbouring district.
    - The Assistant Director – Regulatory agreed with this suggestion and a point to this effect would be included within the draft policy.

AGREED:

That after consideration of the SNN Policy at Appendix 1, the comments of the panel be noted.

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