Minutes of a meeting of the **CABINET** held in the Meeting Room 1, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Tuesday, 17 February 2026 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

C N Worth (Leader)

P A Redgate (Deputy Leader)	T A Carter	G J Taylor
J R Astill	A Casson	
H J W Bingham	E J Sneath	

The Chief Executive, the Director of Finance (S151), the Director of Communities, the Assistant Director – Housing, the Assistant Director – Communities and Housing Services, the Assistant Director – Neighbourhoods, the Interim Strategic Finance Manager, 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), Councillor P Barnes and Councillor A R Woolf (Chairman, Policy Development Panel).

Action By

96. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

There were no apologies for absence.

97. MINUTES

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 20 January 2026 were agreed and signed by the Leader.

As no discussion was required on the exempt set of minutes from the Cabinet meeting held on 20 January 2026, appended later on the agenda, these minutes were also agreed and signed by the Leader at this point.

98. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were none.

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

There were none.

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

There were none.

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

There were none.

102. ANNUAL BUDGET REPORT 2026/27, MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY, CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND CAPITAL STRATEGY, TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY/STRATEGY AND ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Finance (S151) which requested approval and referral to Council on 26 February 2026 for consideration and approval: The General Fund Budget for 2026/27, including the use of reserves, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Capital Programme and Strategy, Treasury Management Policy/Strategy and the Annual Delivery Plan including the approval of Council Tax levels.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the report.

The creation of the budget had been challenging for South Holland. This was because of the uncertainty over the outcome of the Government's Fair Funding Review not becoming clear until mid-December.

To add to this, errors were flagged on the methodology used by the government to calculate the figures announced in December. This meant that further adjustments had to be made by the Government in the Final Local Government Settlement which was only released late last Wednesday.

The budget position continued to be refined from the information provided post Final Settlement. Whilst the position for 2026/27 remained unchanged, it was future years that were affected, with the gap being more than what had been budgeted for from the original figures provided in the Provisional Settlement.

General Fund budget:

While the move to multiyear settlements significantly improved medium term visibility, the immediate impact for South Holland

District Council had been a rebalancing of funding sources exercise, rather than it being a net increase in resources.

In particular, the reset of Business Rates and the revaluation exercise being progressed had materially reduced locally retained income, thus placing greater reliance on Revenue Support Grant and transitional protections provided directly by the government.

This was at a time when the following was sought:

- Supporting those who were most vulnerable in our society
- Creating a vibrant District for our residents to live in, and also
- Creating an environment for businesses to grow.

The budget also included expenditure for the creation of the Food Waste collection service for which SHDC received no additional resource from the government and which the Authority had managed to budget for within existing resources.

Furthermore, the Internal Drainage Boards continued to be an ever-increasing pressure, with an increase in their levy for 2026/27 of 4.6%. This took the increase since 2021/22 to 49% with the total cost for 2006/27 being £3.723 million which now accounted for 55% of the Council Tax retained.

Against this backdrop, the proposed budget:

- Delivered a balanced and sustainable position for 2026/27
- Supported statutory service delivery
- Protected financial resilience, and
- Maintained capacity for transformation and investment

Additional efficiency measures, further partnership working across the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership, and maximising income opportunities had been key to mitigating the financial challenges. Despite a complex and volatile environment, the proposed budget enabled the Council to maintain service delivery in line with its priorities.

Included in the budget pack was a suite of Treasury Management documents. These were very important for the Council as they outlined its Treasury Management strategy for the year which included the management of the Council's borrowing, investments and cash flows. Alongside ensuring robust arrangements were in place, these activities had delivered significantly increased returns in year and supported delivery of the balanced budget.

Also being proposed was a significantly large Capital Programme of £25.4m in 2026/27 which included major investments in Waste

Transformation, the Health and Wellbeing Hub, and essential asset renewals.

Proposals included increasing Council Tax in line with government guidance equating to an increase of just over 12 pence a week for a Band D property. Members were asked to note that 74% of properties in South Holland were in a Council Tax band bracket of A to C, A (26%), B (21%) and C (27%), so would see increases lower than this.

Housing Revenue Account budget:

Significant investment and growth had been built into the HRA budget relating to service demand increases, inflation, service improvements and regulatory changes.

The HRA Capital programme would also continue to invest in Decent Homes & Major Adaptions and at the same time increase its focus on Green Homes Energy Efficiency

The HRA 30-year business plan was balanced and showed healthy balances to deal with unforeseen circumstances.

The HRA was ringfenced and could only operate from the rents it collected and therefore rent increases had been set within government guidelines.

Parks and Play areas within Spalding:

It was planned to utilise funding from Spalding Special Reserves to support Parks and Play area Maintenance including any Replacement works within Spalding.

A clear delivery plan and prioritisation of sites was being developed.

A detailed report would be brought forward in year once the scope of works and funding requirements had been fully assessed, enabling an informed decision on the appropriate use of the Reserve.

In Conclusion:

This budget responded to one of the most complex settlements that Local Government had faced.

It also reflected South Holland District Council's ability for strong planning, having strategic foresight, and commitment to local services.

Investment was being undertaken where it mattered most, holding firm on financial discipline, and positioning the Council for a stable future.

Consideration was given to the report, and the following issues were raised:

- The Chairman of the Governance and Audit Committee commented on the governance assurance process underpinning the budget preparation, noting that external partners had provided minimal comment. The governance and assurance work had been fully undertaken, with assessments by PSPS and KPMG indicating that the process had run smoothly.

- Members sought clarification regarding a typographical error in the budget table at section 5.1 of the covering report relating to the heading in the fifth column – it stated 'increase over 2026/27' – should this be 2025/26?
    - The Portfolio Holder confirmed that this was an error and that the correction would be made.

- Members questioned the sustainability of significant one-off financial movements such as changes to pension contributions, noting that these could not be assumed to continue into future years.
    - The Director of Finance (S151) acknowledged the volatility and explained that forward projections would reflect realistic assumptions informed by past experience and actuarial advice.

- Members asked why land charges income continued to reduce.
    - The Director of Finance (S151) advised that this reflected competitive pressures within the sector and ongoing challenges in maintaining income levels.

- Members queried whether the Local Plan review scheduled for 2026/27 would take place given resource pressures.
    - The Leader confirmed that the Local Plan review was required and that preparatory work would commence.

- Members raised concerns regarding the potential loss of the Council's VAT partial exemption status.
    - The Director of Finance (S151) confirmed that the position was monitored closely and that no breach was expected, though this remained a significant financial risk requiring ongoing oversight.
- In response, Members sought information on the implications should VAT partial exemption be lost.
    - The Director of Finance (S151) advised that detailed financial consequences would be provided separately.

- Members welcomed updates on progress with the leisure centre redevelopment and noted the successful attraction of funding towards the project and the Council's contribution to the project. It was confirmed that the project remained on schedule and was due to open the following year.

- Members noted a missing VAT-inclusive fee within Appendix 5 relating to market trader charges (Spalding Market (Tuesday and Saturday) Regular traders) for 2026/27.
    - The Portfolio Holder acknowledged the omission and confirmed it would be corrected.

- The Leader commented on the challenges arising from reductions in government funding, including the disparity between funding for urban and rural councils.

- The Leader confirmed that a significant error in the government's original financial settlement had resulted in a one-year transitional correction for 2026/27, with reductions expected again from 2027/28. Further clarification from central government was awaited.

- The Portfolio Holder raised concerns relating to Internal Drainage Board (IDB) levy increases and the wider financial impact, and that lobbying continued at a regional and national level. Members also noted that recent pumping hours indicated likely further increases.

- Members acknowledged the partnership's achievement in delivering savings ahead of target while maintaining services.

Officers noted that the partnership's transformation and efficiency work had exceeded its original financial objectives.

DECISION:

It is recommended that Cabinet approve the Draft Budget 2026/27 including all appendices and it be forwarded to Council on 26th February 2026 for consideration and approval with the following specific recommendations:

1) The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (at Appendix 1) be approved.

2) That it be noted that the Council Tax Base for South Holland District Council of 31,567 and 9,746 for Spalding Special Expenses (Band D equivalent) has been set for 2026/27 and on the 23 December 2025 by the Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer under officer delegation in line with the Constitution.

3) That the Revenue Estimates for the General Fund, HRA and Spalding Special Expense for 2026/27 (Appendices 1, 1a, 1b and 1c) be approved.

4) The additions to and use of reserves (as detailed at Appendix 1) be approved.

5) The Capital Programmes and Capital Strategy (Appendices 2a, 2b and 3) be approved.

6) That the Treasury Management Policy Statement Treasury Management Strategy Statement MRP Policy and Annual Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Practices (Appendix 4a, 4b and 4c) be approved.

7) The Fees and Charges Schedule 2026/27 (Appendix 5) be approved.

8) That it be noted that on 28th January 2026 Council approved the housing rent increase for 2026/27.

9) That the report of the Section 151 Officer, under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the budget calculations and adequacy of proposed financial reserves be noted (Paragraph 11).

10) That the Council Tax for a Band D property in 2026/27 be set at £214.92 (£6.39 per annum increase on 2025/26 levels) for

South Holland District Council and £23.40 (£0.27 per annum increase on 2025/26 levels) for Spalding Special Expenses.

11) The Annual Delivery Plan for 2026/27 (Appendix 6) be approved.

12) Delegate the further amendment of this document (where needed to ensure financial integrity and reconciliation) in preparation for Council on 26 February to the Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance.

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

Reasons for decision:
- *To comply with the budgetary and policy framework and legislative requirement).*

103. WASTE POLICIES

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Communities which requested approval of waste policies required to implement the new waste collection delivery model.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Environmental Services presented the report.

Cabinet made the decision in July 2025 to change the waste collection regime within the South Holland area and since that time, the team had been working towards implementing those changes.

A key item of those changes were the new waste policies which had been considered by two Special Policy Development Panel meetings on 17 December 2025 and 9 February 2026, prior to consideration at this meeting.

Members were reminded that these changes were driven by the Environment Act including the introduction of weekly food waste collections and the separation of paper and card from other recyclables.

The policies could be found in Supplement 1 of the agenda pack:
- Appendix A - Summary of Policies and Policy Development Panel discussions; and
- Appendix B - Full Policies document

Whilst there were a number of changes to the policies as a result of moving from bags to bins, the key change to identify was policy

3.5 on Side Waste, which stated that nothing placed outside of the bin would be collected.

For properties that were identified as not being suitable for bins, the policy outlined the number of bags that would continue to be provided and how many could be presented per collection.

Although the changes may be unpopular, SHDC as a local authority was required to:

- Control the amount of waste being collected.
- Drive up the amount of waste being recycled.
- Drive down the amount of waste being incinerated.

All of these would lead to a more effective and efficient service.

For those with additional capacity needs, Policy 3.14 showed that households of 6 or more residents or those with health needs would be able to request additional capacity.

Consideration was given to the report and the following issues were raised:

- Members acknowledged the thorough work undertaken by the Policy Development Panel in scrutinising the policies.

- Members raised concerns regarding the proposed charging arrangements for places of worship, village halls and community centres, noting that these venues were often run by volunteers and not-for-profit groups. They also queried the original policy position relating to bin allocation and charging, particularly the shift from providing one free bin set to charging for all containers.
    - The Portfolio Holder responded that one free bin had been the original policy position, that the Policy Development Panel had recommended the revised approach of charging at a commercial rate due to the commercial nature of many activities undertaken within these buildings, such as private hire events, and that Cabinet retained the authority to amend the recommendations. It was confirmed that one free set of bins could be provided, with any additional requirement chargeable.
- Councillor Taylor proposed an amendment to Recommendation 1, clarifying that places of worship, village halls and community centres should not be charged at a commercial rate and instead be provided with a free set of

bins, with additional requirement chargeable. Councillor Casson seconded this amendment, a vote was taken and the amendment to recommendation 1 was approved.

- Members asked for clarification on the financial implications of the new waste service and queried the overall cost.
    - The Portfolio Holder advised that a breakdown had been provided and agreed previously at Cabinet and Council in June/July 2025, and an updated position would be reflected in the Budget 26/27.

- Members raised concerns about the level of public education required to support the implementation of the new waste model, stressing the importance of clear, ongoing communication about what materials should be placed in each container and the reasons behind the changes.
    - The Portfolio Holder responded that an engagement team would be put in place and that extensive communication would accompany the roll-out, funded in part by additional monies secured to support the transition.

- Members asked for further information regarding the Government's expectations that household waste levels should reduce, querying how this would be achieved and what would happen if residents did not reduce the volume of waste they produced.
    - The Portfolio Holder reiterated that the national policy direction encouraged reduction and reuse and that ongoing resident engagement and education would support behavioural change.

- Members queried the policy commitment to collect missed bins within five working days, expressing concern about where bins would be kept in the interim.
    - The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the commitment had been strengthened following feedback from the Policy Development Panel and clarified that where authorised, recollection would take place within the specified timeframe.

- Members raised concerns about the potential for food waste

caddies to blow away during high winds, particularly in exposed rural areas.

- The Leader advised that other authorities operating similar systems had not experienced significant issues and confirmed that the caddies met industry standards for stability and durability.

- Members sought assurance that Cabinet would undertake a review of the new waste arrangements no later than twelve months after implementation, noting the scale of change and the likelihood that adjustments would be required.
    - The Leader acknowledged the point and referred to previous discussions at the Policy Development Panel which had recognised the need for flexibility during the early stages of the service.

DECISION:

1) That following review, the waste policy revisions suggested from the Policy Development Panel meetings of 17 December 2025 and 9 February 2026, as set out in Appendix A, be noted and agreed, with the exception of the proposal at item 3.15(e) (Bins at Places of worship, village halls and community centres - charging a commercial rate for collections from village halls and community centres should be considered due to commercial use.) – it was agreed that these premises should not be charged at a commercial rate, and instead be provided with a free set of bins, with additional requirement chargeable;

2) That the waste policies as presented n Appendix B be approved;

3) That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director – Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Environmental Services, to approve minor and operational changes to waste policies should there be future need.

4) That the Equality Impact Assessment of the policies presented in Appendix C be noted.

(Other options considered:

- *Not applicable;*

Reasons for decision:

- *To enable the Council to provide a clear set of policies for the new waste collection service delivery model to ensure legal*

compliance, to provide an efficient and effective service, and to provide clear information to residents).

104. SOCIAL HOUSING REGULATION – Q3 2025/2026 UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Housing which provided Cabinet with 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.

The report provided an update on the Council's progress in meeting the outcomes of the RSH consumer standards.

The report outlined the steps taken to address identified weaknesses, including the progress against the Regulatory Improvement Plan and continued delivery of the Housing Transformation Programme.

Key improvements included:

- Stock condition surveys were now over 91.12% complete, giving accurate data on homes, with surveys continuing to take place.
- Tenant engagement had expanded, with the development of a Tenant Scrutiny Panel which was being recruited to this month (February).
- Review of key letters with tenants to ensure they were providing clear and understandable information.
- Several key tenant led policies had been developed and adopted, including the Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Aids and Adaptations Policy, ensuring services better reflected tenants' needs.
- Development of a Contractor Code of Conduct with Tenants.

The Council remained committed to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement and the quarterly reports would provide progress on how the authority was working towards a C1 grading.

Consideration was given to the report, and the following issues were raised:

- Members congratulated officers on the progress achieved to date and stated that a high bar was being set. In addition, it

was encouraging to see the new level of transparency around housing issues.

DECISION:

1) That Cabinet notes the progress made in addressing areas of weakness identified in the Regulator of Social Housing's C2 judgement of the Council against the consumer Standards as part of its proactive regulatory inspection regime;

2) That Cabinet notes the quarterly Tenant Engagement Impact Assessment Report (included as Appendix C).

(Other options considered:

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

Reasons for decision:

- *To provide oversight, awareness and assurance of the Council's compliance with regulatory requirements as a Social Landlord).*

105. SELCP SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Communities and Housing Services which requested adoption of a new Safeguarding Policy.

The Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing, Conservation and Heritage presented the report.

Under the 'Children Act 1989 and the Care Act 2014' all local authorities were legally required to have safeguarding procedures in place. The policy under consideration laid out clear and consistent guidance to all officers and councillors across the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership area, on how to deal with concerns they may have in respect to safeguarding vulnerable adults or children. This included where to seek advice and how to submit a case for further action.

The policy would be reviewed annually for minor changes such as practice updates from case reviews, which would be overseen by the Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing, Conservation and

Heritage. A full review would also take place every four years, with any proposed revisions presented to Cabinet for approval to maintain strategic oversight and governance.

Supporting the strategy development and its subsequent actions, the shared Safeguarding Officer would play a key role in the administration of our safeguarding responsibilities. This included ensuring appropriate training was in place and being undertaken for all officers and Councillors each year.

The Chief Executive commented that a lot of the good practice required in this area was already in place within the HRA.

DECISION:

1) That Cabinet adopts the joint SELCP Safeguarding Policy.

2) That Cabinet delegates authority to the Assistant Director – Communities and Housing Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to make minor amendments to the policy, ensuring it remains up to date with legislative changes and operational requirements.

3) That the Assistant Director – Communities and Housing Services undertakes a full review of the policy every four years, with any proposed revisions presented to Cabinet for approval to maintain strategic oversight and governance.

(Other options considered:

- *An updated single policy for each council was considered but discounted due to the possible confusion this may cause. Especially when considering the fundamental requirements of the Children Act 1989 and the Care Act 2014 are the same for all three councils;*

Reasons for decision:

- *Under the Children Act 1989 and the Care Act 2014, all local authorities are legally required to have safeguarding measures in place, helping to protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect and exploitation;*
- *Prior to the three councils moving to the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (SELCP), each council had their own safeguarding policy. Following the move to a single workforce, including having a single Strategic Safeguarding Officer for the Partnership, a single policy will ensure a standardised approach to safeguarding exists across the councils and its functions).*

106. SOUTH & EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Communities and Housing Services, which sought approval of the Community Safety Strategy and to recommend its adoption by Full Council.

The Portfolio Holder for Public Protection presented the report.

The South and East Lincolnshire Community Safety Strategy set out how the councils of South Holland, Boston, and East Lindsey worked with partners such as Lincolnshire Police, Fire and Rescue and the voluntary and community sector, to reduce crime, anti-social behaviour (ASB), and fear of crime across the sub-region. It fulfilled statutory duties under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and aligned with countywide activity through the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership.

A strategic review incorporating police data, local health information, the Lincolnshire Strategic Needs Assessment, and public feedback identified four areas of focus for the South and East Lincolnshire Community Safety Partnership:

1. Tackling ASB in our communities, with a particular focus on neighbour-related issues.
2. Develop understanding of fear and perceptions of crime, to identify underlying causes.
3. Work with the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership to support a place-based approach to project delivery.
4. Encouraging increased reporting to build a stronger intelligence picture.

The partnership approach ensured coordinated activity across the three districts, avoiding duplication and making best use of shared resources. Responsibilities such as public consultation, Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews, and countywide public meetings were discharged jointly through the county level Safer Lincolnshire Partnership.

The Strategy aligned strongly with corporate priorities on safe and resilient communities and enhanced the partnership’s reputation for responding to local safety concerns.

The strategy was supported by scrutiny as part of a wider update relating to crime and disorder duties at the end of 2025.

The Portfolio Holder passed on his thanks to officers within the HRA who had provided support and feedback as part of the development of this strategy and associated action plan.

The Leader commented that the South and East Lincolnshire Community Safety Partnership was highly regarded across the County and its effectiveness had been noted by a number of consultees being spoken to as part of the LGR process.

DECISION:

a) That Cabinet note the contents of the report and the work of partners in addressing crime and disorder in South and East Lincolnshire and Lincolnshire as a whole.

b) That Cabinet recommends Full Council adopt the Community Safety Strategy which sets out the areas of focus identified by the South and East Lincolnshire Community Safety Partnership.

c) That Cabinet requests that the Full Council authorises the executive of the authority to make any future amendments to the Strategy as required to meet emerging needs identified; and that subject to Full Council authorisation the Cabinet authorises the Assistant Director, Communities and Housing Services, in consultation with relevant Portfolio Holders to amend the Strategy.

(Other options considered:

- *Do nothing;*

Reasons for decision:

- *To communicate the commitment of the South and East Lincolnshire Community Safety Partnership in supporting the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership to meet the statutory duties set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and address crime and disorder at the local level).*

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

There were none.

(The meeting ended at 7.25 pm)

(End of minutes)

Any RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL detailed above will be submitted for consideration to the meeting of the full Council on 26 February 2026.