

Minutes of a meeting of the **SOUTH HOLLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Wednesday, 31 July 2024 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

A R Woolf (Chairman)
J Whitbourn (Vice-Chairman)

B Alcock	S Chauhan	I Sheard
D Ashby	L J Eldridge	E J Sneath
J R Astill	M Geaney	T Sneath
J Avery	R A Gibson	A Spencer
P Barnes	M Hasan	G J Taylor
A C Beal	S Hutchinson	A C Tennant
H J W Bingham	J L King	J Tyrrell
M D Booth	J Le Sage	D J Wilkinson
C J T H Brewis	M Le Sage	C N Worth
A Casson	J L Reynolds	
N Chapman	G P Scalese	

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors T A Carter, A Harrison, P A Redgate and S-A Slade,

In Attendance: Joint Chief Executive, Assistant Director - Governance (Monitoring Officer), Joint Director of Economic Development, Assistant Director - Regulatory, Chief Finance Officer (PSPS), Democratic Services Manager and Democratic Services Team Leader.

22. SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Prior to the formal business of the meeting, the Chairman raised the following:

Re-burial of Matthew Flinders

The Chairman referred to the recent re-burial of Matthew Flinders in Donington and invited Councillor J King (part of the team who had worked very hard to arrange the event) to speak. Councillor King started by thanking all those involved with the event – many had given their time to assist in all aspects of ensuring that the event was a success. She thanked Councillor Redgate, who had assisted in securing UKSPF monies (overall, the cost of the event had been between £80,000 and £90,000, of which £35,000 had been provided through UKSPF funding), Councillor Bingham who had provided free plants to decorate the village, and those members who had provided donations for the event in the park. The project to bring about the reburial of Matthew Flinders in Donington had taken five years, and had involved much hard

Action By

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work, but had been a great success.

Recent events in Southport

The Chairman referred to the recent tragic events in Southport. The Council's thoughts were with all those affected by this tragic event, and to a wider degree, all affected by knife crime.

23. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of Full Council held on 15 May 2024.

Members also agreed that there was no requirement to discuss the content of the exempt minutes from the meeting of Full Council on 15 May 2024, included later in the agenda.

DECISION:

- 1) That the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on 15 May 2024 be signed as a correct record; and
- 2) That the exempt minutes from the meeting of Full Council on 15 May 2024 be signed as a correct record.

24. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

There were none.

25. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Chairman reminded members that details of events that he had attended as Chairman could be viewed under the Chairman's Log on the Council website.

The Chairman advised of the following forthcoming events:

- Saturday 10 August 2024 – Give-it-a-Go Day – Carter's Park, Holbeach
- Thursday 15 August 2024 – Race Night – Spalding Yacht Club
- Saturday 24 August 2024 – Variety Show – South Holland Centre, Spalding
- Sunday 29 September 2024 – Civic Service – All Saints Church, Moulton

26. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET.

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The Leader made the following announcement:

The Leader had recently received a letter from the Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) highlighting changes to National Planning Policy and other Housing policies. The letter was at a high level, and further details would be forthcoming over the next few months. The key areas detailed were:

- Increases to planning fees and greater freedom for councils to set planning fees;
- Greater flexibilities in the use of Right to Buy receipts;
- Commitment to consult on wider reforms to Right To Buy eligibility and discounts;
- Changes to housing targets (this would affect many district councils however SHDC were currently, and had been for a few years, above target);
- More of a focus on councils giving planning permission than developers building out sites that have permission;
- Councils would need more powers and funding to address sites that sat empty, stalled and were not built out;
- The Government was retaining a brownfield-first approach;
- A strong focus on accelerating Local Plans;
- Reintroduction of Strategic Planning and Spatial Development Strategies (there was no policy detail available yet)

The Government had launched an 8-week consultation on the key changes, and the deadline for this was 24 September 2024. The Leader and the Planning Department would keep members updated on any further details as they emerged.

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing, Conservation and Heritage and Tourism made a number of announcements:

- At SHDC, work was already underway on a carbon reduction plan which would outline the authority's current baseline in terms of carbon emissions and set out how to reduce these as part of its net zero ambition. This was a useful exercise in helping to unlock future external funding opportunities to decarbonise operations and hopefully reduce operating costs at the same time.
- The Partnership's Home Energy Advice and retrofit team had been nominated for an APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) service award, for the best building and housing initiative. This was in recognition of the team's performance in delivery of home upgrade grants for energy efficiency to local residents, as they were the top performer in the entire

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Midlands region in 2023/24.

- The start of SHDC's programme of renovation and restoration of the war memorials in the Ayscoughfee Hall Gardens was announced. There had already been a thorough clean of both the WW1 Lutyens memorial and the stone of remembrance, and the more recent WW2 memorial. Work would shortly begin on repainting all of the names on both memorials (although the WW2 memorial's names had never been painted, only incised and were currently difficult to read). In addition, sympathetic repairs would be undertaken to the wall and pillars of the original edifice using heritage stonemasons and craftsmen. This work would be carried out over the new few months and should be completed in the early part of next year.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Development announced that as part of 'Love Your Parks Week' the Communities Team had been travelling around the district promoting some of the activities available in local parks. Parks in Weston Hills and Crowland had already been visited with further visits in the week to be made to the Matthew Flinders Park in Donington and West Street, Long Sutton. The Portfolio Holder also advised that in Spalding, a 'Bike Jam' would be taking place on 20 August, at the Skate Park on Spalding Road.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate, Governance and Communications responded that he had attended the event in Crowland which had been very well supported. He announced that a web-chat service had recently been launched which provided another method by which residents could contact Customer Services. This had been live for just over one month and to date, there had been just over 1000 interactions across the Partnership. Further details would follow and going forward, statistics would be reported as part of the quarterly performance report considered by the Performance Monitoring Panel.

27. QUESTIONS ASKED ON NOTICE UNDER STANDING ORDER 6

There were none.

28. QUESTIONS ASKED WITHOUT NOTICE UNDER STANDING ORDER 7

Question to: Councillor Bingham

Question from: Councillor Gibson

Subject: Ayscoughfest at Ayscoughfee Gardens

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Councillor Gibson commented on the recent music festival (Ayscoughfest), held in Ayscoughfee Gardens, which had been very successful. He thanked all those that had organised the event and assisted in any way. Would the Portfolio Holder – Assets and Strategic Planning be happy to look into this becoming a yearly event? Councillor Bingham responded that due to its success, he would be happy to support any event that brought people into the town of Spalding, and to use the fantastic resource of Ayscoughfee Gardens.

Question to: Councillor Casson

Question from: Councillor Beal

Subject: Graffiti removal and CCTV

Councillor Beal asked for clarification on the procedures for removal of graffiti, and asked how effective CCTV was in deterring and capturing perpetrators. Councillor Casson agreed that graffiti was a problem in many towns. Initially, a warden would undertake an inspection of the locations. If the site was owned by another service (e.g. gas board, County Council), they would be notified. If it was located on Council property, Waste Services would be notified to deal with its removal. If it was located on other buildings/shops, those at the site would be spoken to initially to identify who was responsible for it. Once they had been identified they would be asked to remove the graffiti but if this did not happen, the warden could serve them with a fixed penalty notice. Over the last few months, 8 incidences of graffiti had been reported and since removed. With regard to CCTV cameras, Councillor Casson believed these to be a good deterrent. This year, 118 incidents had been captured and from this, there had been 8 prosecutions. It was acknowledged that with regard to incidences of graffiti, it was difficult to identify individuals on CCTV, and the Police were not always notified immediately. CCTV was currently monitored in Boston, but in the last few months, there had been a volunteer in Spalding Police Station monitoring CCTV covering Spalding for 2 days a week.

Question to: Councillor Casson

Question from: Councillor Booth

Subject: Promotion of CCTV cameras to parishes

Councillor Booth asked if acquisition of CCTV cameras by parishes was being actively promoted. If so, when would this be rolled out? Councillor Casson commented that this had only recently been added to his Portfolio, although he was aware that there had been discussions around whether parishes would wish to have CCTV. He would look into this question and provide a

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response in due course.

Question to: Councillor Astill/Councillor Redgate

Question from: Councillor Barnes

Subject: Management of budgets/spend

Councillor Barnes commented that at a recent meeting of the Performance Monitoring Panel, consideration had been given to a Sustainable Products Policy. Upon discussion around procurement and stationery, it was concerning that no clear response had been received on what the spend on stationery was over the year. Councillor Astill commented that this issue was likely to sit with Councillor Redgate. The Leader commented that budgets were tightly monitored at a high level, with officer budget holders controlling budgets at a lower level. A response to the question would be provided.

Question to: Councillor Taylor

Question from: Councillor James LeSage

Subject: Anti-social behaviour in Spalding town centre

Councillor J Le Sage commented that following recent consultation on Spalding Town Centre, he was aware that a contract had been awarded to improve identified spaces in the town centre. However, anti-social behaviour specifically was the main source of concern for most people – he asked what the approach to this was to be and what was going to change? Councillor Taylor confirmed that the contract had been signed, with work to complete this year. It was important for residents to live in a vibrant, clean environment, and he agreed that anti-social behaviour also had to be addressed. The design team had met with the Police a number of times, including on-site, and they had taken on board the advice given by the Police. He reiterated that any anti-social behaviour be reported – this data could assist in moving resources across the county or lobbying for extra resources.

Question to: Councillor Worth

Question from: Councillor Hutchinson

Subject: Health provision - Holbeach

Councillor Hutchinson was disappointed to hear that the Health Hub in Holbeach would not be going ahead. The Internal Care Board stated that it was not viable for a new or a split site and the only realistic option would be to expand the existing site however, more land was required. Surrounding land was owned by the local authority and Holbeach Parish Council. Would the Leader commit to using Council land for this purpose? The Leader

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responded that if the land was Parish Council land, he would have no problem with the Parish Council speaking with the surgery – this would be the best route in. This could be a more feasible option.

Question to: Councillor Casson

Question from: Councillor Hassan

Subject: Fly tipping in Spalding

Councillor Hassan commented that fly-tipping seemed to be increasing in Spalding in general, and within his ward (St Johns), he and Councillor J LeSage were receiving many complaints. What measures were currently being implemented to address this concern, and were there any plans to increase enforcement, or any new initiatives planned to mitigate this problem. Finally, at the last Council meeting, the problem of early presentation of waste had been discussed and Councillor Tyrrell had advised that letters were to be issued – what had happened in this regard? Councillor Casson responded that the question involved Waste Services and responsibility lay within both his and Councillor Tyrrell's portfolio. With regard to letters, Councillor Tyrrell confirmed that responsibility for these lay within Councillor Casson's portfolio.

Question to: Councillor Tyrrell

Question from: Councillor Eldridge

Subject: Waste Collection Survey

Councillor Eldridge commented that it was good to see that the waste collection survey has gone live – what was the response so far, and was there any indication of where opinions lay? Councillor Tyrrell responded that over 2000 responses had been received to date and that the survey was going well. He encouraged everybody to respond as significant input was important. The survey had been advertised in many places.

Question to: Councillor Bingham/Councillor Tyrrell

Question from: Councillor Sheard

Subject: Opening times for public toilets at Ayscoughfee Gardens and in Spalding Town Centre

Councillor Sheard stated that Ayscoughfee Gardens were a real asset and it was particularly satisfying to see the newly refurbished tennis courts. However, many users of the tennis courts had complained that the toilets were not open to them all the time – was there any chance to look at extended hours? In addition, could the toilets in Spalding town be opened later than 4pm? Councillor Bingham commented that public toilets in the

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town centre sat under Councillor Tyrrells' portfolio and that he would address this issue. Councillor Bingham agreed with the issue around opening times of the toilets in Ayscoughfee Gardens – consideration was currently being given into different models of altering staffing to enable the toilets to remain open for longer. It was also hoped to look at ways of reducing anti-social behaviour. Councillor Tyrrell agreed that toilet opening hours in Spalding town centre should be longer, particularly in line with shop opening times. He would take this suggestion forward.

Question to: Councillor Worth

Question from: Councillor Alcock

Subject: Environment Agency requirement to repair breach in Welland Bank

Councillor Alcock commented that for many reasons, the breach in Welland Bank had still not been rectified by the Environment Agency. The Welland itself was currently in a parlous state. Farmers still had problems in the Wash itself. If the breach itself was not repaired soon, the same issue would recur as weather became wetter over the forthcoming months. The new river was held at a much higher level than it normally was for longer than it should have been which had resulted in surrounding land not having the chance to dry out, remaining extremely wet and thus resulting in machinery not being able to access the land. In addition, the centre of Spalding looked very unattractive. Could the Authority use its strength to persuade the Environment Agency to repair the breach in the Welland Bank swiftly? The Leader responded that he fully agreed with Councillor Alcock and all that he had said. The situation had been a complete disaster and work had to be moved on. The River Taxi had been unable to run during the year, and the visual aspect of the river was poor. He would gladly draft a letter to the Environment Agency, with the Chief Executive on behalf of the Council, addressing the concerns raised. Councillor Casson added that he sat on the Welland and Deeping Internal Drainage Board which covered the Wash area and stated that it had also been frustrated at the apparent inability of the Environment Agency to sort the situation out.

Question to: Councillor Astill

Question from: Councillor Sheard

Subject: Customer Services – call-back facility

Councillor Sheard stated that she had attempted to contact the Council on the telephone on multiple occasions, that there had been a queue and she had therefore been left with the option to leave a message for call back, which had not been received. Non-response appeared to be an issue for other residents. She

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requested statistics for the call-back facility. Councillor Astill apologised to Councillor Sheard for her experience with the service and requested that she provide him with the telephone number she had called in on in order that he could provide this information to the Customer Services Team to investigate. He provided the following details on the number of successful callbacks in the last quarter – 844 in April, 440 in May and 505 in June. He also asked that if there were any similar issues with webchat, that users contact Customer Services to take this forward.

Question to: Councillor Astill

Question from: Councillor Chauhan

Subject: Call-back costs

Councillor Chauhan asked if there were any cost implications relating to call-backs? If so, could this be a reason for a call-back not being made? Councillor Astill responded that it was not the case that call-backs were not made due to the cost. Call-backs had been introduced to address the issue of callers waiting for long periods of time. He advised that details of call-back costs would be provided.

Question to: Councillor Tyrrell

Question from: Councillor Sheard

Subject: Disposal of clothing

Councillor Sheard commented that she had been made away that during the transition from West Marsh Road depot to Warentree Lane, it appeared that a stock of t-shirts, body warmers and boots had been thrown away. Had this happened, if it had, how much stock had been disposed of, to what value and why? Councillor Tyrrell responded that he was not aware that this had happened and would looking into the situation.

29. COMMITTEE MINUTES

The minutes of the following Committees and Panels be noted:

- Joint Performance Monitoring Panel and Policy Development Panel – 18 April 2024
- Planning Committee – 8 May 2024
- Performance Monitoring Panel – 22 May 2024
- Planning Committee – 12 June 2024
- Government and Audit Committee – 13 June 2024
- Planning Committee – 17 July 2024

30. REPORT FROM CABINET MEETING ON 16 JULY 2024

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Consideration was given to the report of the Cabinet which sought approval for the Cabinet's recommendations.

23/24 Outturn Report & 22/23 Abbreviated Outturn including Audit Update

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder – Finance, the Leader presented the report and highlighted the following areas:

The outturn report and reserves position in 2023/24 were more positive as a result of the excellent work that had been undertaken by the Finance team and which continued to be built on in 2024/25, with the team closely monitoring budgets and savings and efficiency targets.

General Fund revenue outturn

At 31 March 2024, the General Fund outturn position was an underspend of £116,000 against an overspend of £340,000 at Quarter 3 – the Leader highlighted this significant and positive change, and thanked the Finance team and Portfolio Holders for their work in achieving this.

The largest changes since the Q3 forecast were:

- Planning and Strategic Infrastructure saw a £114,000 improvement since Q3;
- The Wellbeing and Community Leadership position improved by £118,000 from the Q3 forecast due to proactive management of demand in the Homelessness Service and additional income for private Sector Housing

Treasury management return on investment continued to perform well, with the general fund receiving £327,000 interest in excess of the full year budget.

The 2023/24 budget included an efficiency target of £877,000 and £695,000 (79%) was achieved against that target.

In Quarter 2, a release from reserves of £300,000 of the National Homes Bonus had been received, and this had been included in the outturn position.

HRA revenue outturn

At 31 March 2024, the HRA had a surplus of £701,000.

Capital

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Table 5 detailed the general fund capital outturn position with spend of £7million against a revised budget of £9.2million (being 76% of planned spend). Table 7 detailed the revised 2024/25 budget with the inclusion of slippage from 23/24, which formed one of the recommendations to Full Council.

The HRA capital outturn was detailed in Table 8, at 31 March £16.5million had been spent against the approved budget of £23.9million (69%). Table 10 illustrated the revised 2024/25 budget with the inclusion of slippage, which was also a recommendation to Full Council.

The following issues were raised:

- Agency Staff was mentioned as reason for overspend in a number of areas - was the Authority actively trying to do something about this, and attempting to reduce this kind of excess expenditure?
 - The Leader responded that the Authority was continually looking at how agency staff were used, particularly in Waste Services, attempting to reduce their use wherever possible.
- Leisure and Culture showed a negative variance of £35,000 relating to the South Holland Centre, and card misuse was quoted – how much of the £35,000 was card misuse and what was meant by card misuse.
 - The Leader was unable to provide an answer on this and would provide a response in due course.

DECISION:

- 1) That the reserves transactions and balances as set out in Appendix A of the Cabinet report (Appendix B of the Council report) – Table 2 be approved;
- 2) That the Capital Programme for 2024/25 as shown in Table 7 be amended to take into account the changes set out in Appendix A of the Cabinet report (Appendix B of the Council report);
- 3) That the HRA Capital Programme for 2024/25 as shown in Table 10 be amended to take into account the changes set out in Appendix A of the Cabinet report (Appendix B of the Council report); and
- 4) That the capital financing adjustments – Table 3, reserve

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transactions and balances for 2022/23 be approved, as set out in Appendix B of the Cabinet report (Appendix C of the Council report) – Table 5.

31. KEY DECISION PLAN

Consideration was given to the Key Decision Plan.

DECISION:

That the Key Decision Plan be noted.

32. TREASURY ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate Development (S151) which provided members with a review of Treasury Management performance and activity during 2023/24 to ensure best practice was maintained.

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder – Finance, the Leader presented the report and highlighted the following areas:

Each year a comprehensive report on the Council's treasury activities came before Council. This complied with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management

The following headlines (this data had already been reported throughout the year to the Governance and Audit Committee) were provided:

- Investment income earned was £2.4million, £545,000 greater than budgeted with an average rate of return of 5.17%;
- £2.35million interest was paid on the Council's HRA borrowing at a rate of 3.48%. This was a £67million loan over a 38 year term;
- £23.5million of capital had been invested within the District across the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account;
- Most of the Council's investments were with banking institutions, for fixed term periods and for periods under 1 year;
- Economically the focus has been on bringing down inflation to provide the possibility to reduce interest rates

DECISION:

That the Annual Treasury Management Review 2023/24 at

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Appendix A be received and approved, as required by the Local Government Act 2003, following scrutiny by the Governance and Audit Committee at its meeting on 18 July 2024.

33. NOMINATIONS FOR COMMITTEES AND OTHER SEATS AND PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION.

The following proposed committee change was reported to Council:

- Councillor N Chapman to stand down as a member of the Governance and Audit Committee, leaving a vacancy on the Committee.

34. HEALTH SCRUTINY FOR LINCOLNSHIRE REPORT

Consideration was given to the report of Councillor Scalese in respect of Health Scrutiny for Lincolnshire.

DECISION:

That the report be noted.

35. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

There were none.

36. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

DECISION:

Under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act

37. REGULATORY SERVICE REVIEW

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director, Regulatory which sought member approval to deliver a Regulatory Service Review (including public protection and building control).

The Leader presented the report.

DECISION:

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That the recommendations detailed within the exempt report be approved.

(The meeting ended at 7.38 pm)

(End of minutes)