

Minutes of a meeting of the **POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL** held in the Meeting Room 1, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Tuesday, 3 February 2026 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

L J Eldridge (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair)

D Ashby
P Barnes
A C Beal

M Geaney
M Hasan
J L Reynolds

M Le Sage
J Whitbourn

In Attendance: The Business Intelligence and Change Manager, the Assistant Director - Communities and Housing Services, the Tenant Engagement and Influence Lead, the Housing Transformation (HRA) Manager, the Director of Economic Development, the Assistant Director - Leisure and Local Services, the Information Manager and Data Protection Officer, the Heritage Manager and the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development (PSPS), the Transformation Officer, the HR Projects and Transformation Manager, the Democratic Services Officer and the Democratic Services Support Officer.

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors R A Gibson and A R Woolf

64. MINUTES

AGREED:

That the minutes of the following meetings be signed by the Chairman as a correct record:

- Policy Development Panel held on 25 November 2025; and
- Special Policy Development Panel meeting held on 17 December 2025 with an amendment required to insert the note that Cllr Tyrrell attended as a substitute for Cllr Reynolds.

65. ACTIONS

Consideration was given to the update on actions which arose at the 25 November 2025 Policy Development Panel meeting and the tracking of outstanding actions.

The Democratic Services Officer relayed the following updates;

Action By

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- In respect of action 52. 25/26, the following response was provided by the Information Manager and Data Protection Officer.
'delay in reviewing the Data Protection Policy was due to the Policy being aligned across the partnership.
- In respect of action 53. 25/26, the following response was provided by the Business Intelligence and Change Manager;
'an update had been provided to the members with the responses to the members questions. Members confirmed they were content for these updates to be noted in the minutes.
- In respect of action 58. 25/26, the following response was provided by the Environment and Sustainability Officer;
'an update had been circulated to the members. Members confirmed they were content for these updates to be noted in the minutes.

AGREED:

That the update regarding actions be noted.

66. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

There were none.

67. QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 6

There were none.

68. TRACKING OF RECOMMENDATIONS

There were none.

69. ITEMS REFERRED FROM THE PERFORMANCE MONITORING PANEL

There were none.

70. KEY DECISION PLAN

Consideration was given to the Key Decision Plan dated 26

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January 2026.

AGREED:

That the Key Decision Plan be noted.

71. SHDC AND S&ELCP POLICY REGISTERS

Consideration was given to the SHDC Policy Register and the S&ELCP Policy Register.

The Business Intelligence and Change Manager introduced the report and gave the following update:

- A discrepancy regarding the status of the Graffiti and Street Art Management Policy had been identified and would be rectified, with the correct status updated on the register accordingly;
- That several policies listed on the SHDC Policy Register were included on the current agenda for consideration and review, including the Data Protection Policy and the Records Management Policy, which were being presented together;
- The Whistleblowing Policy had been considered by the Governance and Audit Committee and would continue through the relevant approval processes.
- The Graffiti Street Art Management Policy would now be presented at a future Policy Development Panel meeting, and this adjustment would be reflected in the policy register;
- The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership confirmed that the Private Sector Housing Strategy would be brought to a future meeting, with only minor changes anticipated;
- A number of financial policies were undergoing a review as part of the budget-setting process and that the majority had already been considered by the Governance and Audit Committee and would progress to Cabinet for final approval. This would remove a significant section of pending policies from the register; and
- A substantial number of ICT policies were currently in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and would be added to the policy register once the review was completed.
- That the Communications Strategy was scheduled for consideration in September 2026.

Overall, the policy register was reported to be in a healthy position, and that upcoming policies would continue to be

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monitored and updated.

AGREED:

That the SHDC Policy Register and the S&ELCP Policy Register be noted.

72. CONSULTATION FOR HERITAGE DOCUMENTS - SPALDING CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN INCLUDING SPALDING SHOPFRONT DESIGN GUIDE, SPALDING HERITAGE STRATEGY, HOLBEACH CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN, SELCP DESIGN GUIDE.

Consideration was given to the report of the Director – Economic Development which asked the Panel to provide feedback on the progress of the public consultation.

The Heritage Manager and the Director – Economic Development attended for this item.

The Heritage Manager presented the report and provided the Panel with a detailed update on the progress of the public consultation relating to a suite of heritage documents as set out in the report including:

- Spalding Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (including the Spalding Shopfront Design Guide)
- Spalding Heritage Strategy
- Holbeach Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan
- S&ELCP Traditional Building Design Guide

It was noted that:

- The documents sat across two portfolio areas — Heritage & Conservation and Planning. The consultation had commenced in November 2025 and had included social media campaigns, press and site notices, letters to properties proposed for inclusion or removal, and public events held in both Spalding and Holbeach. Hard copies had been made available on request, which included Members and the Civic Society. Documents were also accessible on the Council's consultation webpage and via the planning portal;
- Although the formal six-week consultation period had elapsed, the documents remained online to allow further comment. The Heritage Manager noted a lack of responses from Spalding town centre businesses, prompting further engagement coordinated with the

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Spalding BID. Additional engagement was planned with the Spalding Town Board on 9 February 2026. All comments were requested by 13 February 2026 to allow a consolidated submission to consultants; and

- The Heritage Strategy and the Traditional Building Design Guide served as guidance only documents and had no formal adoption.

Members considered the report and made the following comments:

- Members queried the lack of responses from Spalding town centre businesses during the consultation.
 - The Heritage Manager explained that while initial engagement was low, an additional event had been held with Spalding BID and further outreach undertaken. It was suggested that businesses may have felt unaffected due to no proposed changes to conservation area boundaries, or because many were not owner-occupiers. The consultation remained open until 13 February 2026 and further responses might still be received.
- Members asked had the follow-up engagement yielded improved responses from businesses, and what proportion as a percentage had responded overall.
 - The Heritage Manager reported that a handful of attendees had attended the BID event along with two email comments, but the total number of businesses as a percentage figure was not available to report at the meeting.
- Members commended the clarity of the documents and asked about formal sign-off.
 - The Heritage Manager confirmed the documents were in a draft format and that formal sign-off arrangements would be addressed once amendments had been made to where possible incorporate consultation responses at the final stage.
- Members referred to the Spalding Conservation Area Appraisal and noted that public comments suggested that resources should focus on improvements to the existing conservation area rather than an extension of it. Could specific detail of the feedback be provided.

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- The Heritage Manager reported that residents commonly raised issues related to the condition of windows, doors and materials on residential properties and explained that such matters currently fell under permitted development rights, limiting the Council's control, but that the management plan identified possible mechanisms for increasing restrictions. Feedback had included the use of residential Grant Schemes to assist with costs.
- Members asked how licensing regulations relating to visibility into shopfronts might interact with planning control in conservation areas.
 - The Heritage Manager confirmed that licensing and planning were separate legal regimes and that licensing considerations had not been assessed as part of the appraisal.
- Members raised concerns about the map quality within the Spalding and Holbeach appraisals and asked whether higher-resolution mapping could be provided.
 - The Heritage Manager acknowledged the comment and confirmed that higher-definition mapping would be explored for future versions to aid readability.
- Members asked how many conservation area appraisals were being consulted across the partnership, and what were the cost implications of completing the remainder.
 - The Heritage Manager stated that seven appraisals were out to consultation across the S&ELCP. They were exploring ways to deliver the remaining appraisals, which typically cost £5,000–£15,000 each, depending on size of the area.
- Members referred to the Holbeach Conservation Area Appraisal and queried whether residents affected by the proposed extensions been contacted directly, and if so were response levels known.
 - The Heritage Manager confirmed that direct letter-drops to properties within the proposed additions/removals area had been delivered along with multiple site notices. Around five responses had been received for Holbeach, which was broadly consistent with response levels seen in other areas.

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Relating to the Spalding Shopfront Design Guide, members raised the following questions;

- Members queried whether the Spalding Shopfront Design Guide be district-wide rather than Spalding-specific.
 - The Director – Economic Development, advised that the Spalding Shopfront Design Guide had been funded via the Spalding Town Board and appended to the Spalding appraisal, hence its limited geographic scope. A partnership-wide treatment was being progressed in the separate S&ELCP Traditional Building Design Guide, which provided generic guidance across the area.
- Members asked whether feedback from businesses included both independents and multinationals traders and what input was received.
 - The Director – Economic Development, explained that the Business Improvement District covered all businesses in scope, with several local businesses engaging at the provided sessions. Feedback focused less on specific design points and more on historic enforcement concerns and wider management issues.
- Members referred to the Shopfront Guide and queried whether its application as ‘material consideration’ would deter multinationals or disadvantage local independents if their corporate branding conflicted with the guide.
 - The Director – Economic Development and the Heritage Manager explained that economic development and planning colleagues had typically worked with corporate applicants and design teams to secure acceptable, brand-compliant solutions. In conservation areas, proposals must preserve or enhance; the guide would provide solutions rather than impose a blanket prohibition. Proposals that preserved character should be supported; enhancements were sought where preservation was not achieved. Decisions would be made on planning merits rather than business type.
- Members asked what resources and capacity would be available to enforce the Spalding Shopfront Design Guide.
 - The Director – Economic Development responded that the document was a guide and not enforceable.
 - The Heritage Manager noted a step-change in conservation staffing since March: a full-time

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Principal Conservation Officer now worked wholly on conservation (previously split role), and a second full-time Conservation Officer post had been shared across the partnership, along with the appointment of an Assistant Conservation Officer. It was noted that while formal planning enforcement sat with the Enforcement Team, the Conservation Team could now draft robust conservation responses to support notices and would look to handle simpler cases more proactively as capacity allowed.

- Members asked if officers were actively striving for enhancement rather than mere preservation in day-to-day casework.
 - The Heritage Manager confirmed that, for every application within a conservation area, they would assess whether proposals preserved or enhanced. Where applications did not preserve in the first instance then officers would seek enhancements. For sites not currently proposing works, it was recognised that there was a need for proactive engagement (including potential grants and proactive enforcement) to encourage improvement.
- Members asked whether officers could pursue the enhancement of prominent buildings such as the former Johnson Hospital.
 - The Heritage Manager confirmed that the aspiration to improve key sites was reflected in the Heritage Strategy and wider regeneration plans, and proactive measures would be explored.
- Members referred to the placeholder images in the S&ELCP design guide and asked if these could be replaced with local photographs.
 - The Heritage Manager advised that the placeholders would be replaced with local photographs to illustrate examples from within the partnership area.

AGREED:

- a) That the comments of the Panel be noted; and
- b) That the proposed course of action, which involved further consultation, subsequent amendments to the documents and placing before Cabinet for approval, be supported.

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73. EXTENSION OF THE HOUSING LANDLORD STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Housing which sought feedback on a one-year extension to the current Landlord Strategy timeline, aligning it with ongoing service transformation activity and enabling a deeper tenant engagement in shaping the next strategy.

The Housing Transformation (HRA) Manager presented the report which set out the proposal to extend the current Housing Landlord Strategy and highlighted the following:

- The extension was intended to align the strategy with ongoing service transformation work, to allow further tenant engagement, and support the co-creation of a revised future strategy;
- Members were advised that the service continued to deliver improvements following the Regulator of Social Housing inspection, and that work on the provider improvement plan was progressing well;
- Recruitment for the new Tenant Scrutiny Panel was underway, supported by training to strengthen tenant-led oversight. Monthly meetings with the Regulator of Social Housing were taking place to evidence progress; and
- Tenants had been consulted in October 2025 and expressed strong support for extending the strategy which allowed more meaningful involvement and engagement.

Members considered the report and made the following comments;

- Members sought assurance that improvements were continuing across the service, particularly benchmarking performance against neighbouring authorities.
 - The Housing Transformation (HRA) Manager confirmed that:
 - The Tenant Satisfaction Measures for 2025/26 had recently been completed and once validated, would be brought back to Members.; and
 - Tenants had also requested additional benchmarking against neighbouring authorities with housing stock; therefore, comparative data for North Kesteven, South Kesteven and Lincoln had been included.
- Members asked how the survey would engage with the

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- elderly and geographically remote tenants.
 - The Housing Transformation (HRA) Manager responded that:
 - Tenant engagement events were being held across the district, with attendance monitored to ensure a representative spread of tenant voices. Where community centres were not available, village halls and church halls were used; and
 - Updates for members were provided through Member Briefings, posters in the members lounge and agreement to send direct emails where possible.
- Members asked how the recruitment to the Tenant Scrutiny Panel was progressing.
 - The Housing Transformation (HRA) Manager informed the Panel that eight strong expressions of interest had been received, with two further forms expected. If all were confirmed, a 10-member panel would be established. Membership was drawn from across the district, and a full geographical breakdown could be provided.
- Members asked how the service would ensure engagement with sheltered housing tenants and those with mobility issues.
 - The Tenant Engagement and Influence Lead advised that events were being held within sheltered housing schemes, with newsletters hand-delivered by the Independent Living Team. Tenants unable to attend events could contact the service by phone or email, and information was regularly posted to those requesting it.
- Members asked whether the appendices to the report could be re-ordered in future to assist readability.
 - The Housing Transformation (HRA) Manager confirmed that the sequence of appendices would be reviewed in future reports.
- Members sought further information on the Councils progress towards achieving a C1 regulatory grading.
 - The Housing Transformation (HRA) Manager confirmed that tenant engagement had been the main area of weakness, and that monthly meetings with the Regulator allowed ongoing updates. Once the scrutiny panel was established and scrutiny

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activity demonstrated improved outcomes for tenants, the Regulator would consider internal validation for regrading.

- Members requested further detail regarding the Complaints Working Group referenced in the report.
 - The Housing Transformation (HRA) Manager advised that the group, established in early 2025, comprised of the Assistant Director - Housing, the Portfolio Holder, and service team leaders. The group monitored complaint trends and themes to identify service learning and improvements.
- Members queried why Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints had increased significantly.
 - The Housing Transformation (HRA) Manager explained that the Housing Ombudsman had advised that complaints were previously under-reported, and the Council had undertaken a major internal and external campaign to ensure all dissatisfaction was properly captured. The resulting increase therefore reflected improved accuracy and aligned with sector averages.
- Members asked when would 100% stock condition data coverage would be achieved.
 - The Housing Transformation (HRA) Manager replied that coverage had since risen to 90.05%. All properties had been attempted at least three times, the current coverage level was considered acceptable by sector data specialists and the Regulator, but the Council would continue working toward 100%.
- Member raised concerns about ensuring that properties were appropriately matched to household needs, particularly where tenants were under-occupying larger homes.
 - The Housing Transformation (HRA) Manager advised that housing officers supported tenants to move where appropriate and agreed to seek further information regarding any additional work underway in this area.

AGREED:

- a) That the progress in delivering the Housing Landlord Strategy be noted;

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- b) That following consideration and the noting of feedback from the Policy Development Panel, the revised extended Housing Landlord Strategy 2024/2027 (Appendix A) be recommended to Cabinet for adoption.

74. DATA PROTECTION POLICY AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Governance and Monitoring Officer which asked members to review the updated policies prior to Cabinet consideration.

The Group Manager for Information Governance and Data Protection Officer introduced the report and stated that the policies had been updated to comply with the latest statutory requirements, which included the new Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 (DUAA), and were to be aligned across the partnership. The key updates included:

- The introduction of a new statutory complaints process under the DUAA, which required a 30-day response deadline, which is outside of the Council’s complaint process;
- A shift to proportionate searches for rights requests and subject access requests (SARs), replacing the previous requirement for exhaustive searches; and
- A new high-level approach to Records Management, focused on accuracy, security, retention, and transparency, supported by the Information Commissioners Office Code of Practice.

Members considered the report and made the following comments;

- Members asked for clarification on the term “port data” referenced within the Data Protection Policy.
 - The Group Manager for Information Governance and Data Protection Officer explained that this related to the GDPR right to data portability, whereby individuals may request that certain categories of their personal data be transferred to another organisation. It was confirmed that this transfer was not automatic and would only occur upon request, with engagement between the Council and the receiving organisation as appropriate.

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- Members raised the need for Member training on data protection, explaining that the policies were highly technical and that councillors routinely handled sensitive information.
 - The Group Manager for Information Governance and Data Protection Officer confirmed that training sessions had previously been delivered at the other partnership councils and that they would be willing to provide group training sessions on request, covering Data Protection and Freedom of Information, and agreed to liaise with Democratic Services to arrange sessions.
- Members asked whether the Council had experienced data protection breaches and enquired about liability and insurance cover.
 - The Group Manager for Information Governance and Data Protection Officer advised that one voluntary report to the Information Commissioner had been made in the past twelve months. The Council, as data controller, carried liability for compensation where required, including liability relating to data processors. It was confirmed that insurance was in place, although claims would depend on the findings of loss adjusters, and that the existence of current policies formed part of the required control environment. Further information would be provided to the members outside of the meeting.
- Members asked if the Council could refuse a data portability request.
 - The Group Manager for Information Governance and Data Protection Officer replied that it was a qualified right, not an absolute one, and could be refused in defined circumstances. The Policy wording would be amended to reflect “right to request” rather than an unconditional right.
- Members queried how identity was verified when a subject access request (SAR) was made verbally, particularly when documents such as driving licences were provided electronically.
 - The Group Manager for Information Governance and Data Protection Officer responded that:
 - Verification was risk-based, however the officers were able to access existing information, identification documents, and

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- could request face-to-face checks:
 - The Information Commissioners Office guidance discouraged creating unnecessary barriers, but additional checks were used where needed; and
 - An enhanced written guidance outlining how identity checks were carried out for SARs would be produced.
- Members asked whether any examples existed where individuals had provided information that was later deemed insufficient to verify their identity.
 - The Group Manager for Information Governance and Data Protection Officer advised that most requests related to individuals already known to the Council and that additional documents such as Power Of Attorney were requested where required. The Council aimed to balance appropriate verification with avoiding unnecessary barriers for individuals seeking access to their data.
- Members raised concerns regarding the potential risks of scammers attempting to obtain personal data and queried whether strengthened processes were required.
 - The Group Manager for Information Governance and Data Protection Officer noted that scammers were increasingly sophisticated and confirmed that risk-based checks and additional verification steps were applied when necessary, including ensuring that unfamiliar email addresses were appropriately challenged. Additional written guidance was again agreed.
- Members sought clarification on the 'stop-the-clock' provision within the Data Use and Access Act.
 - The Group Manager for Information Governance and Data Protection Officer confirmed that where further information or clarification was required from the requester, the statutory response period did not run until the necessary information had been received.
- Members asked how long the Council retained records of

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the subject access requests.

- The Group Manager for Information Governance and Data Protection Officer responded that records of SARs were kept for six years, in line with the limitation period requirements and agreed to include further clarification within the policy for readability.

AGREED:

That following consideration by the Committee the Data Protection Policy and Records Management Policy attached at Appendices 1 and 2 be recommended to Cabinet for approval.

75. SHDC MARKETS POLICY REVIEW

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director - Leisure and Local Services Division which presented for members consideration an update to the SHDC existing Markets Policy and the introduction of a new SHDC Severe Weather Policy.

The Assistant Director - Leisure and Local Services Division introduced the report and highlighted the following key proposed changes:

- Classification of traders as regular or casual at the point of application.
- Allowing casual traders to book pitches up to 28 days in advance (increased from 14):
- Introducing promotional fees for specialist events such as Makers' Markets:
- Traders using their own stalls to provide risk assessments:
- Clearer application and payment instructions:
- Incentives for new and returning traders, including a free trial day for those absent for over 12 months:
- Updated disciplinary procedures, including inappropriate online behaviour;
- Updated health and safety requirements and food hygiene expectations; and
- Improved support during the system transition, including demonstrations and on-market assistance.

Members were also advised of recent improvements in market performance, including a 50% increase in trader attendance in Quarter 1, and 42–50% increases in subsequent quarters, which was up against national declining trends.

Members considered the report and made the following comments;

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- Members asked whether repetition between the revised policy and the terms and conditions indicated a need for amalgamation:
 - The Assistant Director responded that repetition was intentional to ensure key information was not missed and that the documents remained separate due to health and safety guidance.
- Members queried the reported 15% increase in market stalls and whether a breakdown per market was available:
 - The Assistant Director explained that increases were district-wide and that detailed figures could be provided outside the meeting.
- Members queried whether local buskers who turned up on market days and use amplified sound were subject to the same rules as stallholders, or if they required licences.
 - The Assistant Director advised that the Council could prevent the use of amplified sound within the defined market area but could not stop individuals on the public highway. The Assistant Director would look to check the specific incidents referenced to and would report back to the members.
- Members asked whether the notice periods for weather-related cancellations could be included in the policy itself, not only in the Terms & Conditions.
 - The Assistant Director responded that the cancellation notice details would be included in the Markets Policy as well as the Terms & Conditions.
- Members queried fee implications should a trader become ill during the trading day;
 - The Assistant Director confirmed that traders in such circumstances would be supported by the Market Office. Although fees were non-refundable a line could be added to the Policy to clarify that fee adjustments would be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Members asked whether the Markets Officer was first-aid trained.
 - The Assistant Director understood that most operations staff had received first-aid training but

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would confirm the first aid training status of the Markets Manager and arrange training if required.

- Members questioned contradictions in fee schedules between regular and casual traders.
 - The Assistant Director explained that new fees would take effect when the Goss system launched and that the current policy remained until June.
- Members enquired if regular traders had to pay for non-attendance, and how many non-attendance days were granted.
 - The Assistant Director responded that regular traders did not have to pay for non-attendance. They were entitled to book off days equivalent to one month's trading, shared across the markets they operate in, and added this entitlement would be clarified in the Policy.
- Members noted that the website link in the policy was outdated and asked if this could be removed.
 - The Assistant Director confirmed it would be removed in both the existing and new policy versions.

Councillor M Le Sage and Councillor M Hasan left the meeting at 19.59.

AGREED:

- a) That the review of the draft Market Policy and Severe Weather Policy report be noted, and
- b) That following consideration of the draft South Holland Markets Policies, at Appendix 2 and 3 of the report, the panel's feedback be noted prior to consideration of the documents by Cabinet.

76. TERMS AND CONDITIONS ALIGNMENT – NEXT PHASE

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Human Resources & Operational Development – (PSPS) which asked the members to provide feedback on the proposals to facilitate Phase 2 of the alignment of terms and conditions of employment across South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership Councils.

The Head of HR & OD (PSPS), presented the report and highlighted the following three policy amendments;

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1. Car Loan Policy – to be replaced with a new partnership-wide policy;
2. Annual Leave (Time Off Policy) – Appendix amendment only; and
3. First Aid Payment Policy – Appendix amendment only.

The Head of HR & OD (PSPS) confirmed that all annual leave figures referenced were exclusive of statutory bank holidays, which would be added separately within the policy. Clarification was also provided regarding the forecast financial impacts; cost implications were included within the report. Formal consultation with staff and recognised unions were proposed, and therefore implementation would not occur until consultation and Council approval were complete.

Members considered the report and raised the following questions:

- Members sought clarification on the forecast costs associated with the proposals.
 - The Head of HR & OD (PSPS) responded that the figures represented anticipated costs for South Holland, with any increases largely arising where operational services such as Waste Operations would require backfill to cover additional annual leave. For other services, additional annual leave was not expected to be a direct cost, as work would be picked up on return. The uplift to first aider payments was minor and aligned with the BBC model and was in line with NJC awards.
- Members queried the wording of the Car Loan Policy regarding recovery through civil proceedings and asked whether the Council would recover associated costs as well as any outstanding balance and interest.
 - The Head of HR & OD (PSPS) advised that:
 - The Council would follow its standard debt-recovery process via Credit Control and the local courts, where costs were generally minor; any escalation to solicitors would be assessed on a case-by-case basis; and
 - The policy wording would be clarified to refer to 'interest and associated costs' and further noted that, where feasible, outstanding amounts would first be recovered from final salary, or otherwise by repayment plan, and that proportionality would be considered where recovery costs might outweigh the remaining debt.

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- Members asked that references to annual leave entitlements be made clear if excluding statutory bank holidays, and that this wording be applied consistently across the Time Off Policy appendix tables.
 - The Head of HR & OD (PSPS) confirmed that annual leave figures quoted excluded bank holidays and agreed to mirror the wording across both tables for consistency.

- Members raised concerns that the proposed alignment of first aider allowances could lead to a disproportionate increase in the number of trained first aiders.
 - The Head of HR & OD (PSPS) explained that first aiders were nominated and coordinated by the Health and Safety Team, that numbers would be kept proportionate to operational need, and that an uncontrolled increase was not anticipated.

- Members sought assurance that the new mobility clause in contracts would not remove entitlement to claim travel expenses when staff were required to work at alternative locations.
 - The Head of HR & OD (PSPS) confirmed that reasonable expenses were already provided for elsewhere in the contract, in line with the Council's expenses policy. The extract presented to the Panel covered the mobility clause only; however, the suggestion to include a cross-reference to the expenses policy was noted.

AGREED:

That the Panel's feedback on the proposals in the report to facilitate Phase 2 of alignment of terms and conditions of employment across the South & East Lincolnshire Council Partnership Councils, be noted.

77. SHDC HOUSING COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS, COMPLAINTS AND COMPENSATION POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Housing which asked the members to consider amendments to SHDC Housing Comments, Compliments, Complaints and Compensation Policy following an annual refresh with tenants.

The Tenant Engagement and Influence Lead introduced the

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report and advised Members that, on the day of the meeting, the Housing Ombudsman had released new guidance on compensation. The Tenant Engagement and Influence Lead had not yet been able to review the document and noted that further changes to the compensation section of the policy might be required. If so, the policy would be returned to the Panel for further consideration.

The summarised key updates to the policy were:

- Greater accessibility and transparency, including clearer information on how to make a complaint;
- Requirements to consider the Reasonable Adjustments Policy, ensuring equitable access for all tenants;
- Strengthened expectations for Stage 1 complaints to be investigated by senior officers or team leaders who have operational oversight;
- Stage 2 complaints to be investigated by Service Managers or the Assistant Director, reflecting good practice and tenant preferences;
- Clearer statutory timeframes, with added transparency around when extensions may be permitted and under what circumstances, and
- Improved tenant voice and accountability through the Complaints Focus Group, enhanced reporting routes and year-on-year trend analysis.

Members considered the report and made the following comments;

- Members asked whether new guidance published by the Housing Ombudsman on compensation would require amendments to the policy.
 - The Tenant Engagement and Influence Lead advised that the guidance had only been released that day and required a full review; any necessary changes would be assessed, and if significant, the updated policy would be brought back to the Panel, with amendments clearly highlighted.
- Members queried whether complainants were contacted following the resolution of their case to provide feedback.
 - The Tenant Engagement and Influence Lead confirmed that all complainants were sent a written response with a survey link and, where appropriate, a posted satisfaction survey. Response rates, however, were low; therefore, the service intended to introduce follow-up spot telephone calls to improve insight into tenant experience.

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- Members raised concerns about the positioning of policy updates in the agenda pack and suggested that appendix updates be placed before the policy itself.
 - The Tenant Engagement and Influence Lead acknowledged the suggestion and agreed that this ordering could be improved for future reports.
- Members asked how long complaint records were retained.
 - The Tenant Engagement and Influence Lead confirmed that records were kept for six years in accordance with data protection requirements and Housing Ombudsman guidance.
- Members queried whether only senior officers should handle Stage 1 complaints, expressing concern that this may limit learning opportunities for other staff.
 - The Tenant Engagement and Influence Lead responded that Stage 1 complaints would be investigated by senior officers or team leaders, while Stage 2 complaints would be undertaken by service managers. This structure aligned with tenant feedback and good practice, ensuring Stage 1 resolution was achieved effectively.
- Members referred to wording in the policy suggesting investigations would be completed 'as soon as possible' and asked for clarification in relation to formal timescales.
 - The Tenant Engagement and Influence Lead confirmed that all complaints must be acknowledged within five working days; Stage 1 complaints responded to within ten working days; and Stage 2 within twenty working days unless an extension was agreed with the tenant. It was agreed to review and amend any ambiguous wording.
- Members asked how long tenants had to escalate a Stage 1 complaint to Stage 2 and how often this occurred.
 - The Tenant Engagement and Influence Lead confirmed tenants had twelve months from the Stage 1 response to request escalation. Although exact figures were not available, early trends suggested fewer Stage 2 escalations this year, potentially due to stronger Stage 1 resolutions.
- Members sought clarification on whether compensation calculations were broken down for all awards and what categories were used.

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- The Tenant Engagement and Influence Lead explained that the Housing Ombudsman recommended three categories: mandatory payments (such as home loss), quantifiable loss (evidenced financial loss), and discretionary payments. Discretionary levels were grouped into low, moderate and high bands, with new Ombudsman guidance expected to improve consistency. Annual reports included full compensation data and would continue to be provided to Members.
- Members asked whether full compensation data across all categories was available to the Panel.
 - The Tenant Engagement and Influence Lead confirmed that the Complaints and Performance Focus Group received quarterly data, and the annual report to all Members contained the complete data set reviewed by officers. A request to include key data in future policy reports was noted for implementation.

AGREED:

- a) That the Policy Development Panel feedback on the Housing Comments, Compliments, Complaints and Compensation Policy be noted, and
- b) That the Policy Development Panel recommended adoption of the Housing Comments, Compliments, Complaints and Compensation Policy to Cabinet.

78. POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Governance (Monitoring Officer) which set out the Work Programme of the Policy Development Panel

Appendix 1 listed the schedule of meetings for 2025/26 with expected items populated against each meeting.

Appendix 2 outlined the task groups of the Panel

Members considered the report and made the following comments:

- The longstanding Data Protection Task Group was not

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- required and could be removed from Appendix 2; and
- The Business frontage Task Group was discussed but it was agreed this would remain on the Appendix 2.

The Assistant Director – Communities and Housing Services added that as the SELCP Private Sector Housing Strategy had been presented within a suite of policies at the previous meeting, the Chairman had agreed, rather than the Panel receiving another report for noting on the matter, that any updates be added to the Policy register for consideration.

- Members agreed with this approach.

The Democratic Services Officer requested that the additional meeting on 9 February 2026, arranged for the Waste Policies follow-up, be noted within the Work Programme and confirmed that the meeting would take place at 6pm in the Council Chamber.

AGREED:

That the work Programme of the Policy Development Panel be noted.

79. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT.

There were none.

(The meeting ended at 8.30 pm)

(End of minutes)

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