

Minutes of a meeting of the **SPALDING TOWN FORUM** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Wednesday, 14 January 2026 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

R A Gibson (Chairman)

D Ashby
S Chauhan
M Hasan

J Le Sage
M Le Sage
G P Scalese

I Sheard
A Spencer
G J Taylor

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors J Whitbourn.

In Attendance: J Bland (Civic Society), D Jones (Pedals), Pastor K Taylor (Churches Together in Spalding and District), The Press, Pastor C Sandhu (Lighthouse Church) and D Wootton (Lincolnshire Community Foundation), the Chief Finance Officer and the Finance Team Leader.

20. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Councillor M Le Sage was elected as Vice-Chairman for the Spalding Town Forum.

21. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2025.

AGREED:

That the minutes be signed as a correct record.

22. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

There were none.

23. ACTIONS

Consideration was given to the update on actions which arose at the 30 September 2025 Spalding Town Forum meeting.

Action By

AGREED:

That the update regarding actions be noted.

24. SPALDING SPECIAL EXPENSES QUARTER 2 FORECAST REPORT FOR 2025/26

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Finance (S151) which provided members with an update on the Spalding Special Expenses Quarter 2 Forecast Outturn Position for 2025/26.

Before commencing the presentation, the Chief Finance Officer advised members of an omission on page 20 of the agenda pack. The table showed a budget of £234,250, however the recharges budget of £10,800 had been omitted. This would be amended so the correct budget should read £223,450.

The same omission had been repeated in the forecast column. This did not impact the overall bottom line but meant the budget and forecast lines were incorrect.

The Chief Finance Officer presented the Spalding Special Expenses Quarter 2 report 2025/26, and the main points were highlighted:

- The report covered the financial position to 30 September 2025 (Quarter 2), detailing forecast expenditure against the 2025/26 approved budget.
- The correct approved budget for 2025/26, as agreed by Council in February 2025, was £223,450, in line with the Spalding Special Precept.
- The forecast outturn for the year as at Quarter 2 was £203,206, indicating a forecast underspend of £20,244.
- Most budget areas remained broadly on track, as shown in Section 2 of the report.

The underspend was primarily attributable to increased income, including:

- Advanced cemetery plot income (Q1)
- Higher-than-budgeted income from Spalding United Football Club.

Section 3 of the report detailed reserves:

- Opening balance as at 1 April 2025: £216,000
- £24,000 contribution approved for Ayscoughfee leisure vandalism repair work.
- With the forecast underspend of £20,000, the reserve was projected to close at £212,000.

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Members considered the report, and the following questions were raised.

- The Chairman sought clarification on the period covered by Quarter 2.
 - The Chief Finance Officer confirmed it represented the position as at 30 September 2025 (month 6). Although the Forum was meeting in January, this was the first opportunity to present the Q2 figures.
 - The Chief Finance Officer added that the Q2 forecast had also been used as a basis for informing the budget setting process for the forthcoming financial year, which the Forum would discuss next on the agenda.

AGREED:

That the Spalding Special Expenses Quarter 2 Forecast report for 2025/26 be noted.

25. 2026/27 BUDGET PROPOSAL

Consideration was given to the presentation of the 2026/27 Budget Proposal.

The Chief Finance Officer presented the Spalding Special Expenses Proposed Budget for the 2026/27 financial year and highlighted the following:

The Chief Finance Officer explained that, unlike in previous years, a full written report had not been provided at this stage as the Council was still finalising the wider organisational budget for 2026/27. A PowerPoint presentation had been prepared to allow early consultation with members of the current budget position for Spalding Special Expenses.

The Chief Finance Officer shared the presentation on-screen and gave an overview of the income-generating elements of the Spalding Special Expenses budget.

Members were reminded that Spalding Special Expenses were funded through council tax income, levied via a parish-level charge applied to residents of the Spalding Town area. This charge was calculated using the Council's Band D equivalent methodology.

Last financial year (2025/26), the Band D charge set for Spalding Special Expenses was £23.13 per annum. The Council's draft

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budget proposals for 2026/27—which were scheduled to be considered by Cabinet in February—recommended a revised Band D charge of £23.40. This represented:

- An annual increase of £0.27 (27p)
- Equivalent to a 1.17% uplift.

The Chief Finance Officer stressed that 27p reflected the annual increase, not a weekly charge.

With the revised Band D charge and updated tax base applied, the resulting projected council tax income for Spalding Special Expenses in 2026/27 was £228,056. This compared with £223,450 in the current financial year (2025/26), as referenced earlier in the Quarter 2 update.

- The Chairman enquired if the increased amounts for all the Council Tax band properties could be provided.
 - The Chief Finance Officer responded that a detailed breakdown would be provided to the members.

Members were advised that the presentation provided a summary of how the budget was currently positioned for the forthcoming financial year.

- The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the slides could be circulated with the minutes to allow members further opportunity for review.

The Forum was informed that the overall proposed budget increase for 2026/27 was £4,646, and this uplift had been allocated across various service areas within Spalding Special Expenses.

The Chief Finance Officer drew attention to a number of cost pressures that had contributed to the increase, including:

- Pay inflation.
- Increased CCTV operational charges
- Adjustments to the Christmas decorations budget to align with actual costs.
- A newly included provision for a site attendant at Ayscoughfee

Alongside these pressures, the Chief Finance Officer explained that savings had also been identified to mitigate overall growth where possible.

The Chief Finance Officer emphasised that despite these pressures, the budget for 2026/27 had been managed within existing resources, meaning there would be no reliance on reserves to balance the budget. On this basis, and assuming no further unplanned expenditure was incurred, the reserves balance was expected to remain at £220,000.

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Members were advised that the proposed budget, as presented, would now form part of the Council's wider budget papers to be submitted to Cabinet in February, after which recommendations would be made to Council at the end of February for approval.

Members considered the 2026/27 Budget Proposal presentation and made the following comments:

- Members queried why the budget for Christmas decorations had increased from £10,000 in the current year to £25,000 in the next financial year.
 - The Chief Finance Officer responded that the increase was believed to relate primarily to electricity costs but confirmed that clarification would be sought, and a further explanation provided.
- Members expressed concern about the scale of the increase to the Christmas decorations budget, commenting that the rise appeared excessive and could not be attributed to electricity alone. It was noted that some decorations, such as those along The Crescent, were illuminated during daylight hours, and suggestions were made regarding the use of timers to reduce costs.
- Members discussed if the proposed budget was being used to fund expenditure that had not previously fallen within its remit and further noted that the increases appeared to coincide with savings made elsewhere within the budget and was the proposed budget absorbing additional costs without adequate justification.
 - The Chief Finance Officer explained that the budget increase for Christmas decorations related to the removal, storage, and reinstallation costs, which were subject to a tender process. An estimate had been included pending tender completion.
- A question was raised regarding the "Spalding Special Contributions", which showed an increase from £49,000 to £78,00, members asked what activity or expenditure this related to.
 - The Chief Finance Officer advised that the increase incorporated costs for the Ayscoughfee site attendant, increased CCTV charges, and demand pressures at Ayscoughfee. These increases had been partly offset by reductions within the ad hoc events budget.
 - The Chief Finance Officer agreed to provide a further breakdown of the site attendant requirement.

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- Members expressed concern regarding governance and the decision-making processes and queried how the Forum's funding was allocated.
- The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that clarification would be sought and shared with members.

Members noted that due to the early date of the January Spalding Town Forum meeting, this had enabled the members to have sight of the details of the budget in advance and the necessary supporting information.

AGREED:

That the presentation of the 2026/27 Budget proposal be noted.

26. UPDATE FROM LINCOLNSHIRE POLICE

Consideration was given to the update from Inspector Matthew Dickinson – Lincolnshire Police.

Inspector Dickinson attended the meeting to provide an update to the Spalding Town Forum on cycle-related concerns within the town. He explained that he had recently returned to his role as Neighbourhood Policing Inspector and had been invited to brief Members on issues including cycling without lights, unsafe cycling practices and enforcement options available to the police.

Inspector Dickinson outlined the main offences and relevant legislation relating to cycling. He explained that, although cycling issues were a long-standing concern, the available penalties were relatively minor, which limited the deterrent effect.

Key Offences & Penalties (as outlined by Inspector Dickinson)

- *Careless and inconsiderate cycling* – offence under the Road Traffic Act 1988; maximum £1,000 fine.
- *Dangerous cycling* – offence under the Road Traffic Act 1988; maximum £2,500 fine.
- *“Wanton and furious riding”* – an older offence used in cases where bodily harm is caused through reckless cycling; carries a potential custodial sentence of up to two years, though rarely used.
- *No lights on a cycle* – offence under the Road Vehicle Lighting Regulations; maximum £50 fine.

Operational Considerations

- Offences involving under-18s would be referred to the Joint

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Diversions Panel (JDP), though this was often disproportionate for minor cycling matters.

- Adults would be dealt with via a Traffic Offence Report, which would be processed by the Central Ticket Office.
- PCSOs held delegated powers to stop cyclists and require names and details, although seizure powers applied only to e-scooters, not pedal cycles.
- The neighbourhood team was due to lose three Community Beat Managers and one Sergeant for a six-month period due to force-wide workforce redeployment, which would reduce capacity for dedicated enforcement activity.
- Historically, the team had focused on education and engagement rather than large-scale enforcement, including school engagement and work with manufacturing sites.
- A future partnership approach was likely to focus on supporting the upcoming “*Don’t Be Dim*” campaign, led by the Right-Side Trust and supported by Lincolnshire Police, Halfords, and Pedals.

Members considered the update and raised the following concerns;

- An increased numbers of young cyclists riding through the pedestrianised town centre at unsafe speeds.
- Children cycling without lights, particularly during school travel times.
- Dangerous cycling practices observed on West Marsh Road and in mixed-traffic industrial areas.
- Pedestrian safety concerns linked to cyclists and e-scooter riders.
- The need for greater education of both children and parents about road safety.
- Desire for a visible police presence at peak times.
- Consideration of mobility scooter behaviour and where the legal responsibilities lie.

Members asked the following questions;

- Why could there not be a dedicated week of enforcement during school travel times?
 - Inspector Dickinson responded that he acknowledged the issue but confirmed he could not commit dedicated resources daily due to staffing reductions. However, he would explore involving Town Centre Hotspot Patrols (funded through partnership arrangements) to undertake targeted enforcement.

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- Could more be done to educate workers travelling through industrial areas?
 - Inspector Dickinson said he agreed that further communication with businesses would be beneficial and emphasised the need for partnership messaging between the Police, District Council, County Council, and employers.

- Could the Police encourage safer cycling behaviour in schools, including visibility and lighting?
 - Inspector Dickinson advised that central police resources and the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership may already hold educational materials. He committed to making enquiries and would raise the issue for potential delivery in schools.

- Would police bicycle patrols help support enforcement?
 - Inspector Dickinson responded that the Lincolnshire Police force did possess bicycles, but they required servicing and funding for maintenance was challenging. Additionally, large geographic coverage areas made deploying PCSOs on bikes operationally difficult. However, he did not rule out future use.

- Could imaginatively approaches to visibility (e.g., decorative lights) or school-based demonstrations be used?
 - Inspector Dickinson said he would welcome further discussion and agreed to explore what educational films or materials might already exist.

- What was the legal position regarding mobility scooters?
 - Inspector Dickinson responded that it would depend on the scooter's classification. Some machines could legally be driven only on the road if they met the threshold of a motor vehicle, requiring insurance and MOT. Others were permitted on footpaths. He gave an example of a previous case illustrating the legal complexities involved.

- What would happen when cyclists with no lights, or e scooter users, were stopped?
 - Inspector Dickinson explained that for;
 - Pedal cycles: There was no power of seizure; officers would use discretion and seek to ensure the rider returned home safely.

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- E scooters: Treated as motor vehicles. If uninsured, they would be seized and ultimately destroyed, as they could not legally be insured under current legislation.
- Several Members proposed distributing reflective wristbands and safety materials in local schools.
 - Inspector Dickinson said he supported any initiative that reinforced safety messaging and welcomed partnership working.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Matthew Dickinson for his attendance, his openness regarding current resourcing challenges, and his willingness to collaborate.

Inspector Dickinson offered to return in three months to provide an update, particularly around partnership work and the *“Don’t Be Dim”* campaign.

27. SPALDING PLAY PARKS UPDATE

Consideration was given to the Spalding Play Parks update.

Several ward councillors had recently visited a number of Spalding play parks and presented their findings to the Spalding Town Forum.

They shared photographs and highlighted areas they felt required improvement.

The Portfolio Holder for Assets and Strategic Planning attended the meeting to respond. He confirmed that all play parks were regularly inspected by qualified officers and that none had been found to be unsafe, although some were dated and due for general improvement. Minor works such as bin repainting, pressure washing and fencing repairs were already programmed in.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the Assets Team was carrying out a full audit and costing exercise for all Spalding play parks, and that this work would be brought back to the Forum to help prioritise future investment and identify funding options.

He welcomed councillors’ observations and local knowledge, noting that final decisions would be based on professional assessments.

Members thanked the Portfolio Holder and acknowledged the importance of improving local play provision for residents.

28. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman invited members to raise additional items for discussion which the Chairman had received prior notification of;

Brown Tourist Information Sign for the Parish Church

A Member reported that the new Vicar of St Mary's and St Nicolas Parish Church had enquired about obtaining a brown tourist information sign to direct visitors to the church. The Vicar was concerned that reduced visibility of the church from the road could be impacted with any future developments on the Bull and Monkey site.

The Member had investigated the requirement and confirmed:

- Applications for brown signs must be made to Lincolnshire County Council.
- The County Council required support from a Parish or Town Council -something Spalding does not have.
- The Vicar therefore sought support from the Spalding Town Forum.
- The application fee was £150, and the sign itself cost £100. The Church had not requested additional financial assistance, only a letter of support.

The Chairman confirmed that a letter of support could be provided, subject to confirmation of the proper process.

Fingerpost Signage – Condition and Potential Refurbishment

It was highlighted that the Vicar had also raised the possibility of adding a small “14th-century church” directional blade to existing fingerposts in the town. On inspection of the Fingerpost signage, it was noted that many of Spalding Town Centre's Fingerpost signage had deteriorated and were in poor condition.

Key points raised:

- Fingerposts were in a “particularly dire state”, with some bent, leaning or pointing incorrectly.
- The issue had first been identified in 2021 through work on the Spalding Reconnected town centre project.
- A report by the former Historic Environment Manager identified 14 fingerposts, 12 of which were believed to be District Council assets due to the tulip finials.
- It was suggested that the Spalding Town Forum consider

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asking the Spalding Town Board to support refurbishment costs through future funding rounds.

- The Chairman agreed that the matter was worth progressing.
- The Chairman noted a Chairman's Budget of £750 could contribute towards refurbishment if viable.

Update on the Celebrate the River Day

The date of the 5 July 2026 had been agreed for the Celebrate the River Day. The event would be organised by the Welland Yacht Club and supported by local ward councillors.

Request for Publication of Town Events

A Member asked whether the Communities Team could share information on upcoming town events for the year, as residents were requesting details and wished to plan ahead.

- The Chairman agreed to ask the Communities Team to issue any available information or update the Members directly.

The Chairman thanked the Members for their attendance and contribution.

29. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Spalding Town Forum was scheduled to take place on the 14 April 2026

(The meeting ended at 8.16 pm)

(End of minutes)