Town Hall
14 High Street
Caistor
LN7 6TX

Minutes of the Personnel and Finance Committee held at 7:00pm at the Caistor Town Hall on 25 August 2026

Present: Cllr S. Davey, Cllr J. Cox, Cllr L. Milner (Chair), Cllr A. Clark, Cllr P. Morris,
In Attendance: Michelle Moss,
Members of public present: 0

1. **To appoint the Chair of the Personnel and Finance Committee - Ref: 5350**

RESOLVED to appoint Cllr Milner as Chair of Personnel and Finance Committee.

All in favour

2. **To receive declaration of interests and requests for dispensations and to consider granting dispensation(s) - Ref: 5351**

None.

3. **To resolve to accept apologies for absence and reasons given in accordance with Local Government Act 1972 s85(1) - Ref: 5352**

None.

4. **Public Participation (10 minutes max). Individual members of the public are permitted to address the council for up to 5 minutes each - Ref: 5353**

None.

5. **To review and approve the draft minutes from 28th April 2026 meeting - Ref: 5354**

The draft minutes had been circulated prior to the meeting.
RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the personnel and finance committee meeting of 28th April 2026 as a true record of the meeting. 1 councillor abstained as they were not at the last meeting.

1 abstained

6. **Finance - Ref: 5355**

a) **To review the projected spend against budget forecast for 2026/27 - Ref: 5356**

It was noted that: the spend for most budget lines is on track; insurance was likely to be greater than budgeted, for; staff costs may be slightly higher due to government linked pay increase; legal costs may be lower than anticipated.

b) **To review the current bank signatories and decide whether any changes need to be made (JC) - Ref: 5357**

The Committee reviewed the current arrangements for bank signatories and noted that changes were required to ensure the mandates remained up to date and reflected the Council's current governance and financial control requirements.
RESOLVED that the following authorised bank signatories be approved, and all others be removed, and that the clerk be authorised to complete and submit all necessary paperwork:
a. Unity Trust and Charity Bank - Cllrs Milner, A.Clark, Wright and the clerk;
b. NatWest Current and treasurers accounts - Cllrs Milner, J.Cox, Wright and the clerk.

All in favour

c) **To review expenditure of the Mayors allowance and make any recommendations - Ref: 5358**

It was noted there has been no expenditure against the Mayoral allowance this financial year.

d) **To review the insurance quotations and policy cover, determine the Council's insurance provider and length of agreement - Ref: 5359**

Councillors considered quotations received from Zurich Municipal, Clear Councils (Ecclesiastical) and Gallagher (Hiscox) for the Council's insurance renewal from 1 September 2026. The premiums, levels of cover and key policy features offered by each provider were reviewed. Councillors noted that all quotations were within the extended budget approved by Full Council on 13th August and considered the level of cover provided, including public liability, officials' indemnity, legal expenses and property protection. Councillors agreed that the Zurich

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Municipal quotation offered the best overall value to the Council, providing the most appropriate balance of cost, cover and protection. The benefits of the three-year Long Term Agreement were also noted.
RESOLVED that the Council accepts the Zurich Municipal insurance quotation under a three-year Long Term Agreement at an annual premium of £5,681.90, as it was considered to offer the best overall value to the Council having regard to both cost and level of cover provided.

All in favour

e) To consider the development of a Forward Plan to identify priorities, projects, asset management requirements, resource implications and financial commitments over the next 3-5 years - Ref: 5360

Councillors acknowledged the value of planning for known future expenditure commitments and asset replacement requirements. However, it was noted that the Council's priorities can change over time, particularly following elections or changes in Council membership, and that maintaining a separate long-term plan may become burdensome and quickly outdated. Councillors agreed agreed that, rather than maintaining a formal Forward Plan, future projects and known expenditure requirements should continue to be considered as part of the annual budget-setting process. This would enable Councillors to review current priorities each year while also ensuring that foreseeable costs, asset replacement programmes, maintenance requirements and compliance-related expenditure are appropriately considered.

RESOLVED not to develop a formal Council Forward Plan; known future expenditure commitments, asset replacement requirements and anticipated projects shall instead be considered as part of the Council's annual budget-setting process, enabling Councillors to review priorities and allocate resources on a yearly basis.

All in favour

f) To consider the initial draft budget for 2027/28 and identify any anticipated financial pressures, projects or service requirements that should be included - Ref: 5361

The Committee reviewed the draft budget for 2027/28. It was noted that: operational expenditure is broadly in line with the current year's budget, with inflationary uplifts applied where appropriate; there is greater budget flexibility primarily due to a reduction in cost pressures associated with the historic burial issue including legal costs; ideally, wherever possible, councillors would like to maintain the precept at a level broadly consistent with the previous year; the level of funding available would need to be balanced against the Council's project priorities and future asset requirements.
The Committee considered proposals to allocate additional funds to Earmarked Reserves to support future works and asset replacement across a number of key assets, including park equipment, the Sports & Social Club, Town Hall, Fire Station and Cemetery.
RESOLVED that the draft 2027/28 budget be developed further, taking into account the Council's project priorities and future asset requirements, whilst seeking wherever possible to maintain the precept at a level broadly consistent with 2026/27.

All in favour

g) To consider whether to move from the current bespoke finance management package to a commercial package - Ref: 5362

The Committee considered a report from the Clerk/RFO reviewing the Council's current finance software arrangements and comparing them with a number of commercial finance packages commonly used within the parish and town council sector. It was noted that: the current bespoke finance package continues to meet the Council's operational requirements and is provided free of charge; however, Councillors acknowledged the business continuity and support risks associated with reliance on a single individual for ongoing maintenance, development and technical support.
The Committee considered the alternative packages reviewed within the report and noted that Edge IT appeared to offer an appropriate balance of functionality, cost and support arrangements. It was further noted that the Council already utilises several Edge IT products, which may provide efficiencies in terms of supplier management, support and system integration.
RESOLVED to investigate the potential of moving to the Edge IT finance package, having regard to cost, suitability, business continuity and support arrangements, and to report back to a future meeting.

All in favour

7. Policy - Ref: 5363

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a) To review the business continuity plan - Ref: 5364

The Committee reviewed the Business Continuity Plan and noted the proposed amendments. It was agreed to investigate suitable password encryption software for Council use, with details to be incorporated into the Plan once implemented. It was further agreed to update the bank signatory details in accordance with earlier discussions and to include details of Facebook administrators once agreed later in the meeting.

RESOLVED that the Business Continuity Plan be amended and approved as outlined above, including investigation of a password encryption solution for future inclusion within the Plan.

All in favour

b) To consider whether the Grant Award Policy should be retained, amended, deferred or removed - Ref: 5365

It was noted that grant awards had been suspended during the current financial year due to increased operational cost pressures. Members agreed that, where finances allow, it is important to continue supporting community organisations through grants. It was agreed to amend the policy to provide for a single annual grant round, whilst retaining Council's discretion to defer or suspend grant awards if necessary. The option of replacing recurring grant applications with specific budget allocations was discussed but not supported.
RESOLVED that the Grant Award Policy be retained, but amended to provide for one annual grant round in April. The Council shall retain the discretion to defer or suspend grant awards where financial circumstances require.

Following approval of the annual budget in January, the Clerk shall publicise the availability of grant funding to local organisations.

Majority vote

8. Other - Ref: 5366

a) To consider the recommendations from the Internal Auditors report 25/26 and decide any action - Ref: 5367

The Committee considered the recommendations contained within the Internal Auditor's Report for 2025/26. Councillors noted that: the report was very positive; the only observation relating to a Local Council Association's guidance on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the need to avoid over-reliance on AI as a reason for not filling staffing roles; the previous Deputy Clerk appointment had not been successful due to recruitment and retention challenges; that the Deputy Clerk role had also been intended to provide cover during periods of Clerk absence; the Clerk reported that the use of AI had significantly reduced workload pressures and improved efficiency.
Councillors were supportive of the continued use of AI, subject to appropriate security and data protection arrangements remaining in place.

RESOLVED to note the Internal Auditor's observation and take no further action at this time.

All in favour

b) To consider councillor admin access to facebook and decide whether the current arrangements are appropriate (JC) - Ref: 5368

RESOLVED to keep the admin access to facebook limited to the clerk, Cllr Wright and Cllr J.Cox.

All in favour

9. Personnel - Ref: 5369

a) To consider the new HMRC mileage rates and decide whether to apply them to CTC expenses policy - Ref: 5370

The Committee considered the revised HMRC mileage rates and their potential application to the Council's Expenses Policy. Following discussion, it was agreed that adopting the HMRC rates would ensure the Council's reimbursement arrangements remain aligned with current government guidance.

RESOLVED to adopt the revised HMRC mileage rates and update the Council's Expenses Policy accordingly.

All in favour

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b) **To review the Lone worker risk assessment and agree any action - Ref: 5371**

Councillors reviewed the Lone Worker Risk Assessment and considered the control measures currently in place. It was noted that: the Estates Operative had declined the use of a Council mobile phone and preferred to use his personal mobile phone, which contains emergency contact information; the Clerk had assessed the training requirements associated with lone working and had implemented a training plan using WorkNest online training modules; an annual review of training requirements would be diarised to ensure training remains current and appropriate.

c) **To consider the staff stress questionnaire and determine how it should be actioned - Ref: 5372**

Councillors considered the Staff Stress Questionnaire and discussed how it should be administered and reviewed. It was agreed that the questionnaire would be issued annually by the Chair of the Estates Committee to support staff wellbeing and provide an opportunity to identify any concerns or support requirements.
RESOLVED that the Staff Stress Questionnaire be administered annually by the Chair of the Personnel and Finance Committee.

All in favour

d) **To consider Clerks workload and potential solutions, including the possibility of recruiting a replacement deputy clerk (JC) - Ref: 5373**

Councillors considered the Clerk's workload and potential options to provide additional support, including the possibility of recruiting a replacement Deputy Clerk. It was noted that: workload demands fluctuate throughout the year, with some periods of particularly high activity; there have been several significant historical issues which have been managed over the last few year and caused additional work and pressures; the Clerk confirmed that they did not wish to move to a full-time role; the introduction of Microsoft Copilot had helped to reduce some administrative pressures and improve efficiency. At the present time, Councillors agreed that recruitment of a Deputy Clerk was not required but that the situation should continue to be monitored.

Meeting closed at 8:50pm