

Present: Councillor Alan Briggs (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Debbie Armiger, Councillor Biff Bean,
Councillor James Brown, Councillor Chris Burke,
Councillor Bob Bushell, Councillor Liz Bushell,
Councillor Natasha Chapman,
Councillor Martin Christopher, Councillor Annie Currier,
Councillor Laura Danese, Councillor Thomas Dyer,
Councillor Gary Hewson,
Councillor Rebecca Longbottom, Councillor Bill Mara,
Councillor Adrianna McNulty, Councillor Neil Murray,
Councillor Donald Nannestad, Councillor
Lucinda Preston, Councillor Callum Roper,
Councillor Anita Pritchard, Councillor Clare Smalley,
Councillor Hilton Spratt, Councillor Rachel Storer,
Councillor Dylan Stothard, Councillor Naomi Twedde,
Councillor Pat Vaughan, Councillor Calum Watt,
Councillor Joshua Wells, Councillor Emily Wood and
Councillor Loraine Woolley

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Aiden Wells

43. Minute's Silence - Councillor Sue Burke

Council observed a minute's silence in memory of the late Councillor Sue Burke.

44. Confirmation of Minutes

(a) 3 December 2024

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2024 be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

(b) 17 December 2024

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2024 be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

45. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Pat Vaughan declared a Personal Interest with regard to agenda items titled 'Council Tax Base 2025/26', 'Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2025/26', 'Council Dwellings and Garage Rents 2025/26' and 'Statement of Accounts 2023/24'.

Reason: Both his daughter and granddaughter worked in the finance department at the City of Lincoln Council.

46. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor was pleased to report on some of the activities he had undertaken since the last meeting of the Council, which included his attendance at the following:

- A visit to Lincoln Manor Care Home in Lincoln: a residential and dementia care home newly opened in January 2025.
- Performance of A Midsummer Night's Dream by second year students at the University of Lincoln.
- The opening of a new YMCA project on the St Giles estate which was considered to be a much needed and beneficial facility for the area.
- A Christmas carol service at HMP Lincoln.
- Officiated at the Lincoln Santa Fun Run starting the event, and handing out the medals to finishers.
- Attended a Bangladeshi cultural event at St Peter at Gowt's Church hall.
- Visited 18 Lincoln care homes across three days.

The Mayor was keen to emphasise what an honour it was to attend these events and to engage with the people of Lincoln.

47. Receive Any Questions under Council Procedure Rule 11 from Members of the Public and Provide Answers thereon

There were no questions received.

48. Receive Any Questions under Council Procedure Rule 12 from Members and Provide Answers thereon

Councillor James Brown to Councillor Joshua Wells

Question

"In our last full council meeting in December, I asked how many empty stalls there were in the Cornhill Market. The answer then was 9. After talking to stall holders and reading articles in our local press I'm led to believe that number has increased. What is the answer now?"

Answer

There were currently twelve empty units, which included:

- Two hot food and beverage
- Six retail/food and beverage
- Three fresh produce (identified as fish/butchers/fresh produce)
- One mezzanine floor (identified for a bar – currently used for extra seating during winter months and event activity)

The market had been operating at 67.5%, which was slightly under the projected 70% business case. The National Association of British Markets had estimated the average occupancy rate was 72%, so the Council was not far off the average.

Over the Christmas period, the Council had worked intensively with stallholders to identify any gaps in the Council's offer, with a view of improving occupancy and diversity. In the meantime, councillors were urged to be positive about the market and support local businesses, many of whom were fledgling and working hard to build their businesses which took a lot of time and energy.

Supplementary Question

"Did the Council regret its investment in the market?"

Answer

No, the Council was very proud of the new Lincoln Cornhill Market, which was an important asset for the City. The market was busier than it used to be and it was a far more modern space. As stated above, the Council was working alongside stallholders to improve occupancy and diversity. There were also plans to increase events at the Cornhill, which in turn would increase footfall.

Councillor Martin Christopher to Councillor Naomi Tweddle

Question

“It was great to see the Leader at the recent Local Motion Poverty Truth event. Please could the Leader share some personal highlights with any members who could not attend on the day?”

Answer

The Leader advised that she had found the event very useful and it was a great opportunity to sit with residents from within the community and to listen to their stories, who had been affected by poverty in a variety of ways. The Leader also commented that she was proud to have sat with the Assistant Director – Shared Revenues and Benefits who, him and his team, had provided vital assistance to the community during the cost of living crisis.

Councillor Clare Smalley to Councillor Naomi Tweddle

Question

“I have heard from many pensioners who have struggled this winter to make ends meet. The labour government’s decision to cut the winter fuel allowance has make the cost-of-living crisis even worse for struggling pensioners. What does the Leader of the Council suggest pensioners in Lincoln should do when faced with a choice between heating or eating?”

Answer

There were a number of organisations and partners who offered help to advise and support residents of Lincoln when suffering cost of living related issues and helped encourage the take up of Pension Credit. A raft of information was available on our Council’s website (<https://www.lincoln.gov.uk/benefits/cost-living-support>), and hard copy Cost of Living Support leaflets were also available.

The Council had an internal Cost of Living Support Team providing support and advice and worked with a range of fantastic partners in the City. The Team had helped deliver and co-ordinate a significant amount of food and fuel financial support through the Household Support Fund. Pensioners could also access services through Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire ([Age UK | Lincoln & South Lincolnshire](#)). The Council’s key message was ‘please don’t struggle, - contact the Council to see if we can provide some advice and/or support’.

Supplementary question

“Has the work on encouraging the uptake of pension credit been fruitful?”

Answer

Yes, this piece of work had contributed to the uptake of pension credit across the city, but the Leader did not have figures to hand. However, a general barrier to the uptake was the application form, as it was very complex, but the Council provided support on its completion. The Council continued to lobby for a simplified form to make the process more accessible.

Councillor Natasha Chapman to Councillor Naomi Tweddle

Question

“Could the Leader of the Council please update us on the status of the investigation into the upsetting events at the crematorium last year?”

Answer

The Portfolio Holder agreed that the events of last summer at Lincoln crematorium had been extremely upsetting and as confirmed at previous Full Council meetings, the Council's response had been swift and comprehensive. The Police investigation continued and as such it was not possible to comment further on that aspect.

However, efforts had been focussed on delivering the comprehensive action plan, which was developed by the Council after the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities inspection last summer. Progress had been positive when considering the difficult operating environment for the staff over the last eight months and the crematorium had remained high performing.

The Council was now in the process of recruiting some new staff to the crematorium and interviews would be held shortly for the manager position and three cremation technicians, building up capacity and further resilience in the team.

The service continued to be delivered to a very high standard, thanks to the efforts of our agency partner, who had provided the Council with excellent support in terms of advice, guidance and exceptional temporary staff to help us review our policies and procedures. The Portfolio Holder was confident that users of the service at the crematorium received a first-class service.

Supplementary question

“Would there be a further inspection to make sure any identified areas of improvement had been addressed?”

Answer

Yes, there would be continuous evaluation to ensure identified areas of improvement had been addressed.

Urgent Question – Received Under 12.4 of the Council Procedure Rules

Councillor Clare Smalley to Councillor Naomi Tweddle

Question

“Can the Leader of the Council please explain the deal made with the Conservatives at the January meeting of the Joint Committee of the City, District and Borough Councils; a result of which Leaders of other political parties are excluded from the Greater Lincolnshire Mayoral Combined County Authority.”

Answer

A meeting of the District Joint Committee (DJC) for Devolution was held on 12 December 2024. The DJC were invited to appoint four District Council representatives at meetings of the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority (GLCCA). Unfortunately, the terms of reference for the GLCCA did not allow for one representative per district council and had specified an allocation of four representatives.

What was agreed at the DJC was for North Kesteven District Council; East Lindsey District Council; City of Lincoln Council; and South Holland District Council to represent the district councils at the GLCCA, representing all Lincolnshire district councils. It was stressed that this was not a political decision but a wish for the city, coast, market towns and countryside to be equally represented. The Leader expressed that there was now a clear need for collaboration to ensure a unified voice for the district councils.

Supplementary question

“I am aware of the strength of feeling of other council leaders, who do not form part of the four representatives. What was the likely impact on relationships moving forward?”

Answer

The district councils were placed in a difficult position as it was never possible for all seven district councils to be represented on the GLCCA, owing to their terms of reference. As stated above, there was a need for collaboration to ensure there was unified voice representing the districts on the GLCCA.

49. Motion Under Council Procedure Rule 14 - Back Lincoln – Stop a Mega-Council

Councillor James Brown moved the following motion:

“This Council Notes:

1. “The Government’s English Devolution white paper in December 2024, which included reference to supporting local government reorganisation.
2. “The proposals being considered and implemented by some counties to merge existing district councils into large, county-wide unitary authorities, as seen recently in North Yorkshire.

3. "The significant concerns of residents, businesses and the third sector across Lincolnshire regarding the negative impact a mega-council would have on local democracy, accountability, and the effective delivery of public services.
4. "The financial situation of mega-councils created in recent years such as Somerset and North Northamptonshire have not improved post-unitarisation. The financial crisis in local government has not been solved by unitarisation.

"This Council Believes:

1. "Decisions affecting Lincoln should be taken in Lincoln.
2. "Lincoln is a historic seat of democracy, with the UK's oldest parliamentary constituency and a mayoralty that has existed for over 800 years. This history would be lost in a mega-council, county wide unitary.
3. "Whilst the current two-tier system presents some challenges, the solution does not lie in the creation of vast and remote mega-councils that would diminish local voices and accountability.
4. "If unitarisation is to be implemented in Lincolnshire, it should be based on smaller, more localised areas that are aligned with existing communities and their identities, rather than one or two, county-wide mega-councils.
5. That any restructuring of local government in Lincolnshire must be driven by the genuine needs and preferences of local communities, and should not be a top-down imposition that disregards local concerns.

"This Council Resolves:

1. "At the current time, to reject the creation of a large, county-wide mega-council for Lincolnshire.
2. "To call upon the Leader of the City Council to write to all Council Leaders in Greater Lincolnshire and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to inform them of Lincoln's wish to remain Lincoln, and request that they abandon any plans for a county-wide mega-council.

The above motion was seconded by Councillor Martin Christopher, who urged Council to vote in favour of the motion. It was stated that this was a difficult junction for the city and it was therefore imperative that this Council made its view known. It was possible for Lincoln's identity to get lost in any proposed countywide mega council and therefore this Council should formally reject this possibility to protect its democratic heritage. The motion would also require the Leader to write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to inform them of Lincoln's wish to remain Lincoln, and request that any plans for a county-wide mega-council were abandoned.

The Mayor invited speakers on the motion. The following amendment to the motion was moved by Councillor Naomi Twedde (Leader of the Council):

Amendment to delete the second part of “*This Council Resolves*” so it now reads:

“This Council Resolves:

“At the current time, to reject the creation of a large, county-wide mega-council for Lincolnshire.”

The Leader explained the rationale behind the amendment was that it was considered premature to be writing to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government setting out the City of Lincoln Council’s view, as the guidance for local government reorganisation had not yet been issued by Government. However, the principle of not wanting a countywide mega-council for Lincolnshire was supported but until guidance had been released, it was premature to be writing to the Secretary of State setting out the Council’s position.

The entire amended motion reads:

“This Council Notes:

1. “The Government’s English Devolution white paper in December 2024, which included reference to supporting local government reorganisation.
2. “The proposals being considered and implemented by some counties to merge existing district councils into large, county-wide unitary authorities, as seen recently in North Yorkshire.
3. “The significant concerns of residents, businesses and the third sector across Lincolnshire regarding the negative impact a mega-council would have on local democracy, accountability, and the effective delivery of public services.
4. “The financial situation of mega-councils created in recent years such as Somerset and North Northamptonshire have not improved post-unitarisation. The financial crisis in local government has not been solved by unitarisation

“This Council Believes:

1. “Decisions affecting Lincoln should be taken in Lincoln.
2. “Lincoln is a historic seat of democracy, with the UK’s oldest parliamentary constituency and a mayoralty that has existed for over 800 years. This history would be lost in a mega-council, county wide unitary.
3. “Whilst the current two-tier system presents some challenges, the solution does not lie in the creation of vast and remote mega-councils that would diminish local voices and accountability.
4. “If unitarisation is to be implemented in Lincolnshire, it should be based on smaller, more localised areas that are aligned with existing communities and their identities, rather than one or two, county-wide mega-councils.
5. “That any restructuring of local government in Lincolnshire must be driven by the genuine needs and preferences of local communities, and should not be a top-down imposition that disregards local concerns.

“This Council Resolves:

“At the current time, to reject the creation of a large, county-wide mega-council for Lincolnshire.”

The above amendment was seconded by Councillor Donald Nannestad, who reserved his right to speak.

During discussion on the amendment, the following points were noted:

- It was commented that unitarisation would happen for Lincolnshire but how this would look in reality was yet to be agreed;
- There was general support that a single unitary for the whole of Lincolnshire would be too large and there was a need for the area to be broken down into at least two unitary authorities. However, it was reiterated that without any guidance issued it was difficult to set on record Lincoln’s position.
- The benefits of unitarisation were discussed, with particular mention to clear lines of authority and accountability.
- The original motion was deemed premature and could be seen as scaremongering and this should not have come forward until clear guidance had been issued. The Government’s lack of guidance and tight timeframes were also criticised.
- A councillor expressed disappointment in the amended motion, as it was felt this Council should put on record its position at this stage. However, it was appreciated that the amended motion supported that this Council did not wish to see introduction of a mega-council for Lincolnshire.

Councillor Donald Nannestad, who had reserved his right to speak, sought support on the amendment advising that whilst unitarisation was not opposed, the introduction of a countywide mega-council was not supported. However, the Council must wait for guidance to be issued before writing to the Secretary of State.

Councillor James Brown, who had moved the original motion, was invited to give his right of reply. Councillor Brown was disappointed that his original motion had been amended as he felt this was the right time to set out Lincoln’s position. Councillor Brown therefore urged Council to vote against the amendment.

Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was carried and became the substantive motion.

During discussion on the substantive motion, the following points were noted:

- It was reiterated that it was right for the Council to wait for the much required guidance on local government reorganisation.
- A councillor expressed her deep opposition to a mega council for Lincolnshire, stating that the City of Lincoln Council was distinct and unique and this must not get lost within a countywide mega-council.

The Leader of the Council, who had moved what had become the substantive motion, was invited to give her right of reply. The Leader reiterated that the substantive motion did not reject unitarisation, only the introduction of a

countywide mega-council. It would not be appropriate to write to the Secretary of State at this stage until the criteria was known.

Upon the substantive motion being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED that

This Council Notes:

5. The Government's English Devolution white paper in December 2024, which included reference to supporting local government reorganisation.
6. The proposals being considered and implemented by some counties to merge existing district councils into large, county-wide unitary authorities, as seen recently in North Yorkshire.
7. The significant concerns of residents, businesses and the third sector across Lincolnshire regarding the negative impact a mega-council would have on local democracy, accountability, and the effective delivery of public services.
8. The financial situation of mega-councils created in recent years such as Somerset and North Northamptonshire have not improved post-unitarisation. The financial crisis in local government has not been solved by unitarisation

This Council Believes:

6. Decisions affecting Lincoln should be taken in Lincoln.
7. Lincoln is a historic seat of democracy, with the UK's oldest parliamentary constituency and a mayoralty that has existed for over 800 years. This history would be lost in a mega-council, county wide unitary.
8. Whilst the current two-tier system presents some challenges, the solution does not lie in the creation of vast and remote mega-councils that would diminish local voices and accountability.
9. If unitarisation is to be implemented in Lincolnshire, it should be based on smaller, more localised areas that are aligned with existing communities and their identities, rather than one or two, county-wide mega-councils.
10. That any restructuring of local government in Lincolnshire must be driven by the genuine needs and preferences of local communities, and should not be a top-down imposition that disregards local concerns.

This Council Resolves:

At the current time, to reject the creation of a large, county-wide mega-council for Lincolnshire.

50. Receive Reports under Council Procedure Rule 2 (vi) from Members

(a) Report by Councillor Donald Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing

Councillor Donald Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing, presented his report to Council, which was detailed on pages 17 – 42 of the agenda pack.

The report was noted.

(b) Report by Councillor Rebecca Longbottom, Portfolio Holder for Customer Experience, Review and Resources

Councillor Rebecca Longbottom, Portfolio Holder for Customer Experience, Review and Resources, presented her report to Council, which was detailed on pages 43 – 58 of the agenda pack.

The report was noted.

(c) Report by Councillor Calum Watt, Chair of Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Calum Watt, Chair of Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee, presented his report to Council, which was detailed on pages 59 – 76 of the agenda pack.

A discussion took place regarding the return of an Armed Forces Day, which was considered a tangible and positive outcome of the Committee.

The report was noted.

(d) Report by Councillor Emily Wood, Chair of Audit Committee

Councillor Emily Wood, Chair of Audit Committee, presented her report to Council, which was detailed on pages 77 – 86 of the agenda pack.

The Chair of Audit Committee expressed her thanks to Jaclyn Gibson (Chief Finance Officer) and Amanda Stanislawski (Internal Audit Manager) for their work and support to the Committee.

The report was noted.

51. To Consider the Following Recommendations of the Executive and Committees of the Council

(a) Council Tax Base 2025/26

It was moved, seconded and

RESOLVED

- (1) That it be noted that there were no special items as defined in Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) applicable to any part or parts of the City of Lincoln local authority area in respect of its Council Tax Base.

- (2) That approval be given to the Chief Finance Officers' calculation of the Council Tax Base for the financial year commencing 1st April 2025 and ending 31st March 2026, as set out in the Appendix to the report.
- (3) That, in accordance with the Chief Finance Officers' calculation, and pursuant to the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as amended), that the Council Tax Base for the 2025/26 financial year be approved as £25,764.25.

(b) Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2025/26

It was moved, seconded and

RESOLVED

- (1) That approval be given to a 'no change' to the core Council Tax Support Scheme for the financial year 2025/26, as set out in Section 4 and subject to technical amendments, as described at paragraph 5.3 of the officer's report.
- (2) That approval be given for an Exceptional Hardship Fund of £25,000 to be available for the financial year 2025/26.

(c) Council Dwellings and Garage Rents 2025-26

It was moved, seconded and

RESOLVED

- (1) That the basis of rent calculation for individual Council house rents be approved as set out in paragraphs two and four of the report, which increased dwelling rents by 2.7% for social housing and affordable rents from 7 April 2025.
- (2) That an increase to Council garage rents for 2025/26 be approved, in accordance with the proposal in paragraph two of the report, by 3% from 7 April 2025.

(d) Statement of Accounts 2023/24

It was moved, seconded and

RESOLVED that the Statement of Accounts 2023/24 be approved.

52. Independent Remuneration Panel Review of the Members' Allowance Scheme

It was moved, seconded and

RESOLVED

- (1) That an increase of 2.50% be applied to the existing basic allowance and special responsibility allowances from 1 April 2024 and again from 1 April 2025.

- (2) That the Members' Allowances Scheme, as detailed in the Council's Constitution, be amended accordingly.