

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK

JOINT PANEL MEETING

**Minutes from the Meeting of the Joint Panel Meeting held on Wednesday,
22nd October, 2025 at 5.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday
Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ**

PRESENT: Councillors Long (Chair), Collop (Vice-Chair), Bearshaw, Bhondi, Blunt, Bone, Crofts, Devulapalli, Dickinson, Heneghan, Jones, Kemp, Kirk, Kunes, Osborne, Parish, Ratcliffe and Ware.

PORTFOLIO HOLDERS:

Councillor Beales – Leader of the Council

Councillor Morley – Portfolio Holder for Finance

Councillor de Whalley – Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Biodiversity.

PRESENT UNDER STANDING ORDER 34: Councillors Rose and Everett in the room and Councillor Collingham (remotely).

OFFICERS:

Alexa Baker – Monitoring Officer

Kate Blakemore – Chief Executive

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE MEETING

RESOLVED: Councillor Long was appointed Chair for the meeting.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR FOR THE MEETING

RESOLVED: Councillor Collop was appointed Vice Chair for the meeting.

3 MEMBERS PRESENT UNDER STANDING ORDER 34

Councillors Everett and Rose.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5 MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6 SCRUTINY GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

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The Monitoring Officer presented the findings of the Scrutiny Governance Review, outlining the results of the LGA Peer Review, drivers for change, benchmarking with other Councils and the four options for potential restructuring.

The Chair thanked the Monitoring Officer for the report and invited questions and comments from the Joint Panel Members, as summarised below.

Councillor Bearshaw commented that when he was Chair of the Regeneration and Development Panel he had found the regular meetings with other Panel Chairs really useful in terms of co-ordinating Work Programmes. He also noted that some meetings had been cancelled due to lack of agenda items and the importance of bringing items to the Panels early so that the Panel could assist with the development of Policy.

Councillor Kemp commented that the existing structure should remain as the Borough was a large diverse area which needed adequate representation. One Panel would be overloaded. Councillor Kemp also commented that meetings should not be moved to the day time and that the names of the two proposed Panels needed further consideration.

Councillor Sayers commented that the current structure wasn't the problem, the scrutiny function was just underused therefore culture and resources should be looked at for improvement.

Councillor Bone acknowledged that this review had commenced before Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) had been announced and now wasn't the time to be changing structures.

Councillor Ware acknowledged the rationale and objectives and commented that training for Councillors was important.

Councillor Ratcliffe supported maintaining the status quo, but acknowledged that improvements were needed with regard to training and support for Members. She also commented that a lot of Councillors had stood for election on the understanding that Council meetings took place in the evening and she did not want this to change.

Councillor Parish referred to the LGA Peer Review, benchmarking and that structures should not limit the amount of Councillors that could be involved in scrutiny.

Councillor Kunes referred to the proposed names of the Panels in the two Panel option and commented that Environment had been missed, but this was a high priority.

Councillor Devulapalli agreed that Scrutiny needed improving and the three Panel model should remain, with improvements to be made to their remit and functions.

Councillor Jones and Bhondi both commented that with LGR looming now was not the time to restructure the Panels.

Councillor Heneghan did not feel that reducing the amount of Panels would improve Scrutiny and could make it feel rushed as there would be fewer meetings.

Councillor Blunt commented that instead of changing the structure, improvements to the current structures should be implemented, for example better work programming and training for Members.

The Chief Executive felt that the current Panel Work Programmes were currently driven by the Cabinet Agenda and the purpose of the restructure was to get the Panels to focus on high impact strategic items that made a difference and added value. She also commented that the proposed restructure would provide more opportunity for external scrutiny. The Chief Executive also made reference to effective use of officer resource and current duplication.

Councillor Dickinson referred to the work of the Constitution Informal Working Group and comments they had made in relation to the amount of items which slipped. The Monitoring Officer explained that with more effective Work Programming this should not be the case going forward.

The Leader, Councillor Beales, commented that it was crucial that Scrutiny provided a challenge and held the Executive to account and felt that this needed to be strengthened.

Councillor Everett addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34 stating that the current arrangements should remain.

Councillor Rose addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34 asking how Members would be selected to sit on the Panels and was informed that this would be done in the usual way by Full Council and would be politically proportional.

Councillor Bearshaw proposed a further option in that the Regeneration & Development and Environment & Community Panel merge, but their current Terms of Reference be maintained so that all Panels could conduct external Scrutiny.

The Panel did not support the option proposed by Councillor Bearshaw.

In response to comments made by Councillor Sayers relating to strengthening the relationship with the Executive and work programming, the Chair advised Councillor Sayers to feed this into the Constitution Informal Working Group.

Councillor Blunt proposed an amendment to option 4, which was to maintain the status quo and requested that it be amended to ensure work programming was strengthened and introduce a training programme for Members.

This was supported by the Panel.

RESOLVED: That the Panel support the following option for Scrutiny Arrangements going forward:

The current arrangements for Scrutiny are retained with further work to improve Work programming to be carried out and a training programme for Members to be introduced.

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DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

To be confirmed as necessary.

The meeting closed at 7.06 pm