

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 3RD FEBRUARY 2026 FROM THE JOINT PANEL MEETING ON 28TH JANUARY 2026

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CABINET REPORT - BUDGET

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The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Morley introduced the item, and the Assistant Director for Resources and Deputy Section 151 Officer presented the report and highlighted the key areas.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for Resources and Deputy Section 151 Officer for the report and invited questions and comments from the Panel as summarised below.

Councillor Jones referred to Appendix 2f on page 84 of the report and noted that the projected total service cost for refuse and recycling in 2026–27 had decreased. Councillor Jones asked whether a portion of the government grant could be used to introduce a free bulky household waste collection service alongside the existing paid service. The Leader, Councillor Beales, advised that this would constitute a budget amendment and was subject to a separate process. He confirmed that the Section 151 Officer would examine the proposal and report back in detail.

In response to questions from Councillor Kemp, the Leader, Councillor Beales explained that savings had been identified and advised that they were not expected to directly impact services. With regards to the ferry, the Leader, Councillor Beales explained a detailed report was under consideration and would be brought forward in due course with recommendations to go through the scrutiny process and would be considered as an amendment to the capital programme.

In response to a question from the Chair, Councillor Long, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Morley, explained that officers had reviewed various elements to identify savings. He added that they had examined different services and income streams and had identified potential new services that would be beneficial.

Councillor Ryves asked why the proposed £25 million cost for St James' and Lynnsport was not included in the capital programme. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Morley, advised that once further work on the business case had been completed and the project was shown to be viable, it would be added to the capital programme.

Councillor Collop referred to fees and charges and noted that the brown bin service had increased by 20% and was due to rise again to £81.00, which she felt was unfair on residents. The Leader, Councillor Beales, explained that to protect services, the Council had to draw income from all available sources. He acknowledged that it had not been an easy decision.

In response to a comment from the Chair, Councillor Long, Members confirmed that the brown bin service could be paid monthly by direct debit.

Councillor Parish referred to fees and charges and commented on car parking charges in Heacham. The Leader, Councillor Beales, reported that he had met with Councillor Parish and the Chief Executive and had analysed market data, which would be reported back to Heacham Parish Council.

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Business, Councillor Ring, reported that a review of winter parking was underway and that officers had been working with the external contractor to make the necessary adjustments.

Councillor Collingham commented that it was unfortunate the Borough Council did not offer an annual parking pass allowing residents to pay a single fee and park in any Council-controlled car park. The Leader, Councillor Beales, advised that the points raised regarding parking charges would be reviewed by the relevant Portfolio Holder.

The Chief of Staff and Monitoring Officer presented the annual pay policy statement and highlighted the key areas.

RESOLVED: The Joint Panel supported the following recommendations to Cabinet:

Recommendation 1: It is recommended that Council note the revision to the Forecast for 2025/2026 as set out in Section 2 of the report.

Recommendation 2: It is recommended that Council delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to approve the contract for the appointment of a strategic partner to implement Local Government Reorganisation (Paragraph 4.1.2).

Recommendation 3: It is recommended that Council approves the amendments to the Fees and Charges Policy explained in paragraph 4.3.2 and proposed in Appendix 4b.

Recommendation 4: Council is recommended to approve the Policy on Earmarked Reserves and General Fund Balance and the maximum balances set for the reserves as noted in the report and at Appendix 8.

Recommendation 5: It is recommended that Council:

- 1) Approves the budget requirement of £24,475,309 for 2026/2027 and notes the projections for 2027/2028, 2028/2029 and 2029/2030.
- 2) Approves the Fees and Charges 2026/2027 detailed in Appendix 4a.
- 3) Approves the Pay Policy at Appendix 5.
- 4) Approves the level of Special Expenses for the Town/Parish Councils as detailed in the report (Appendix 7).
- 5) Approves a Band D council tax of £157.44 for 2026/2027.

Recommendation 6: It is recommended that Council approves a minimum requirement of the General Fund balance for 2026/2027 of £1,273,890 (5% of estimated budget requirement).

Recommendation 7: Pursuant to Section 25 of the Local Government Act, Council is asked to have due regard to this statement at Section 9 of this report when considering and approving the budget and the level of council tax for 2026/2027.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for Resources and Deputy Section 151 Officer for the report and invited questions and comments from the Panel as summarised below.

Councillor Kemp referred to capital receipts and asked whether any land sold in the Borough was placed in a separate account or returned to the Capital Strategy. The Assistant Director for Resources and Deputy Section 151 Officer explained for accounting purposes; he would keep track of it as a capital receipt. He added that administration could allocate them to fund elements of the Capital Programme if required.

In response to a further question from Councillor Kemp, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Morley confirmed that there were no projections for the next tax year regarding income from potential land sales in the Borough.

Councillor Ryves asked how the operational boundary was determined. The Assistant Director for Resources and Deputy Section 151 Officer explained that it was based on the previous two years' capital spend, balance sheet liabilities and the capital spend budgeted for the following year.

The Chair, Councillor Long, noted that Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) interest rates appeared to be continually rising and asked whether there was a point at which the PWLB would no longer be the preferred source of borrowing, and whether commercial lenders might offer more competitive rates. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Morley explained it was a historic effect of the administration run by the Conservative Government.

RESOLVED: The Joint Panel supported the following recommendations to Cabinet:

Cabinet is asked to recommend that Council approve:

- The Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2026/2027, including treasury indicators for 2025-2030.
- The Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2026/2027.
- The Investment Strategy 2026/2027.

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CABINET REPORT - CAPITAL STRATEGY 2026 - 2027

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The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Morley introduced the item, and the Assistant Director for Resources and Deputy Section 151 Officer presented the report and highlighted the key areas.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for Resources and Deputy Section 151 Officer for the report. There were no questions raised.

RESOLVED: The Joint Panel supported the following recommendation to Cabinet:

That Cabinet approve the Capital Strategy 2026/2027 as attached to the report.

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CABINET REPORT - CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND RESOURCES 2025 - 2030

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The Assistant Director for Resources and Deputy Section 151 Officer presented the report and highlighted the key areas.

The Chair reminded Members that if there were any questions relating to the exempt report, this would require a resolution to exclude the press and public.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for Resources and Deputy Section 151 Officer for the report and invited questions and comments from the Panel as summarised below.

Councillor Bearshaw referred to Table 7 on page 214 of the report and asked what the miscellaneous grants covered and why they had increased significantly. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Morley, explained that the miscellaneous grants comprised various funding streams, including those related to homelessness and grants from the County. He advised that a full list could be provided to Members. The Chair, Councillor Long, suggested that the matter could be added to the Work Programme for scrutiny by a relevant Panel, such as the Environment and Community Panel. The Assistant Director for Resources and Deputy Section 151 Officer confirmed that he would establish the reason for the increase in miscellaneous grants and circulate the information to the Joint Panel after the meeting.

In response to a question from Councillor Parish, the Assistant Director for Resources and Deputy Section 151 Officer explained that some of the miscellaneous grants were administered by the Council and confirmed that he would provide Members with a breakdown.

RESOLVED: The Joint Panel supported the following recommendations to Cabinet:

- 1) Cabinet recommends to Council the amendments to capital schemes and resources for the 2025-2030 capital programme as detailed in the report.
- 2) Cabinet recommends to Council that new capital bids as set out in Appendix 3 and the exempt report, are approved to be included in the capital programme 2025-2030 as detailed.