BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK

KING'S LYNN AREA COMMITTEE

Minutes from the Meeting of the King's Lynn Area Committee held on Thursday, 17th September, 2026 at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ

PRESENT: Councillors S Everett (Chair), F Bone, R Colwell, D Heneghan, B Jones (Vice - Chair), A Kemp, A Moore, J Rust, D Sayers, S Squire and A Ware

PORTFOLIO HOLDERS: Councillor Squire, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Coastal (remotely)

PREENT UNDER STANDING ORDER 34B: Councillor J Fry (remotely)

OFFICERS PRESENT:

Mark Whitmore - Assistant Director for Health, Wellbeing and Public Protection
Carl Holland – Assistant Director for Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer
Emma Kavanagh – Chief Operating Officer (remotely)
Claire Thompsett – Operations Manager, Public Open Spaces (remotely)
Carl Reed - Play Area Inspector/Technician, Public Open Spaces (remotely)

14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Collop and Lowe.

15 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: The minutes from the previous meeting held on the 18th June 2026 were agreed as a correct record.

16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There was none.

17 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

18 MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34

Councillor Fry was present under Standing Order 34B.

19 **CHAIR'S CORRESPONDENCE (IF ANY)**

There was none.

Councillors Rust and Ware arrived at the meeting at 6:12pm.

Councillor Colwell arrived at 6:14pm.

20 **PRESENTATION ON PLAY AREA EQUIPMENT**

Click here to view the recording of this item on YouTube.

The Operations Manager for Public Open Spaces and Play Area Inspector and Technician gave a presentation which outlined the condition, inspection, maintenance and investment needs of Kings Lynn's play areas, while Councillors discussed prioritisation, accessibility, funding and community involvement.

The Operations Manager for Public Open Spaces reported that the borough managed 82 play areas and associated facilities, including 43 play areas and multi-use games areas in the unparished part of Kings Lynn. Sites were grouped as good, fair or worn; all equipment was described as serviceable and safe for use, although worn equipment may be nearing the end of its expected lifespan.

The Play Area Inspector and Technician explained that play areas received weekly routine visual inspections, monthly operational maintenance inspections and annual independent inspections. Checks covered equipment damage, litter, surfacing, corrosion, timber rot, worn components, fixings, safety clearances and standards compliance. He recorded operational findings through a mobile inspection app linked to an online database, while annual inspection findings could be viewed as soon as they were uploaded. Maintenance work included repairs to fixings, moving parts, damaged components, graffiti removal, jet washing and safety surfacing. Annual inspection findings were risk-scored, with higher-risk defects prioritised and any unsafe equipment isolated until repairs could be completed.

The Operations Manager for Public Open Spaces described recent investment at Parkway, where 18 pieces of equipment, new safety surfacing and bins were installed using community funding associated with the Florence Fields development. At Edma Street, 10 new pieces of equipment, improved surfacing and accessible-play elements were installed using funding linked to the Salters Road development.

The Operations Manager for Public Open Spaces confirmed that £120,000 had been included in the 2027 capital programme as a

potential route to develop inclusive play facilities, possibly at The Walks. Earlier accessible-play funding had not been pursued because it was considered insufficient to deliver a meaningful scheme, so the final scope and further funding sources still needed to be established.

The future investment programme was intended to consider asset condition, safety, accessibility, inclusivity, community need and demand. Site-specific reviews would determine whether ageing equipment should be replaced like-for-like, redesigned, enhanced or rationalised, with funding potentially drawn from the capital programme, grants, developer contributions and partnerships.

Councillor Rust queried the presence of a Norfolk County Councillor at the meeting. In response, the Chair explained that the meeting was held in public and anyone was entitled to attend as an observer but would not be permitted to address or participate in the meeting.

The Chair thanked the Officers for the presentation and invited comments and questions from the Committee. Councillor Heneghan welcomed the planned £120,000 capital allocation for inclusive play in 2027 and highlighted prioritisation of how money was spent was important along with other funding streams were needed. She added the area around the play areas such as seating for parents was also important.

Councillor Colwell thanked Officers for their work and referred to the removal of equipment at Blenheim Road. He asked what the authority could do about play areas built by developers that had not been adopted because they did not meet the required standard.

The Operations Manager for Public Open Spaces explained unadopted sites were excluded from the presented figures, but officers worked with developers by providing information on the standard required for adoption; outcomes varied between sites. She explained that the Blenheim Road site was unusual because the developer entered administration and the land was not in the Borough Council's ownership or another identified portfolio. Officers had nevertheless monitored the remaining equipment for safety. A corroded climber leg identified during inspection required removal, leaving wider ownership and replacement questions unresolved.

Following Councillor Colwell's suggestion for the Chair to write a letter to developers, the Chair acknowledged that adoption arrangements may involve a complex process and could overlap with planning matters, including possible Section 106 funding. He agreed that correspondence with developers might be appropriate after consulting planning officers, while the adoption process and available remedies required further investigation.

Councillor Bone stressed that inclusive provision should combine accessible and standard equipment so children can play together rather than creating a separate facility. Councillor Rust added that surfacing must enable access for wheelchair users and parents, noting that woodchip, uneven humps and other surfaces could prevent access even where equipment itself was accessible. She added the Youth Advisory Board could be consulted.

Councillor Sayers argued that the capital budget should reflect recurring replacement needs, estimating that approximately four and a half play-area sets could require replacement annually and that around £500,000 per year might be needed, excluding additional accessible-play costs. He added the importance of fences surrounding play areas to ensure children were contained and safe.

Councillor Squire explained that some sites had only one poorly used item of equipment, so future provision may involve fewer but better-equipped play areas. She said The Walks may not necessarily be the best location and argued against selecting equipment without understanding local needs. She added consultation with parents, children, the wider community and Members to determine the appropriate location, design and facilities was important. She added further the need to supplement the £120,000 through grants, developer-related funding, CIL funding and potentially local business sponsorship.

The Chair supported exploring grants and sponsorship but noted that any sponsorship would need appropriate advertising arrangements and that grant conditions should be checked to avoid funds being reclaimed.

RESOLVED: The Committee received and noted the presentation given on Play Area Equipment.

Councillor Kemp arrived at the meeting at 6:49pm

21 **SPECIAL EXPENSES MONITORING REPORT**

Click here to view the recording of this item on YouTube.

The Assistant Director for Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer presented the report. He reported on the financial outturn for the year ending 31 March 2026 and the monitoring position to August 2026 for 2026–27. The 2025–26 position produced a £24,000 underspend and therefore a lower contribution from the Council, which subsidises special-expense expenditure. Footway-lighting utility costs remained volatile and higher than anticipated, partly because the 2026–27 budget had been set before the 2025–26 outturn was known. Significant pavilion works had addressed central-heating and water-

supply safety and regulatory compliance, with fire-alarm upgrades also undertaken; these works continued to affect the current year.

The Chair, thanked the Assistant Director for Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer and invited questions and comments from the Committee.

Councillor Rust questioned how frequently pavilions were hired, what income they generated and where that income was allocated. The Assistant Director for Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer did not have the figures at the meeting but agreed that the information would be circulated to all committee members and used to inform discussion of the 2027–28 special-expenses budget.

Councillor Kemp asked about the overspend on public conveniences and whether measures such as solar panels could reduce utility costs. The Assistant Director for Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer explained utilities and safety certification must be maintained, while any solar-panel investment would require a business case and prioritisation against other capital projects.

The Chair enquired whether charging users for public conveniences could help subsidise maintenance and staffing. The Assistant Director for Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer commented this was a policy decision for the Council and agreed to feed the suggestion into the autumn budget-setting discussions.

RESOLVED: The Committee considered the outturn for 2025/2026 and the monitoring position and projected outturn for 2026/2027 as detailed in the report.

22 PARISH PARTNERSHIP SCHEME REMINDER

Click here to view the recording of this item on YouTube.

The Committee was reminded that applications for the 2027–28 Parish Partnership Scheme must be submitted to the Assistant Director for Health, Wellbeing and Public Protection and Democratic Services by 26 October for consideration at the 12 November meeting.

Councillor Bone asked whether installing waiting-restriction lines to keep emergency access clear could be funded through the scheme. The Chair commented, double yellow lines would generally require the County Highways Authority to introduce a traffic regulation order and complete consultation, so the matter was not a simple Borough Council installation. Officers agreed to investigate the scheme's applicability and report back.

23 COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME AND CABINET'S FORWARD

DECISION LIST

Click here to view the recording of this item on YouTube.

Councillor Colwell requested for the Kings Lynn Town Council and local government reorganisation to be included in the work programme so the committee could respond quickly to developments. The Chair noted that a pre-Council briefing and an update on the review conclusion were scheduled before the next full Council, with the Electoral Arrangements Committee leading work on progressing a town council.

Councillor Colwell requested the item on public toilets be brought forward specifically noting the public toilets at Gaywood.

Councillor Kemp requested more detailed information behind headline special-expenses figures, including inspection, maintenance, infrastructure and compliance costs, to help understand what a future town council might need to provide. The Assistant Director for Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer explained the Informal Working Group had been established to examine costs and cost-reduction options in detail, with the resulting information to be published and brought forward for public discussion where appropriate.

The Assistant Director for Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer explained further the timetable and statutory process for a possible town council were still being explored, and the finance team was preparing for either continuation of special expenses or development of a new town-council budget. Councillor Sayers added that potential transfers of civic buildings and other assets would bring both capital and revenue costs that should be included when considering any future precept.

Councillor Rust and Ware requested a future police update on town-centre anti-social behaviour, including whether reported figures match public perception and specific concerns about electric bikes.

The Committee noted the Work Programme and Cabinet Forward Decision List.

24 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

12th November 2026 at 5:15pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall.

The meeting closed at 7.18 pm