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Monday, 12 January 2026

Chair: Councillor P Peacock

Members of the Committee:

**Councillor R Cozens
Councillor S Crosby
Councillor L Brazier
Councillor S Forde**

**Councillor C Penny
Councillor P Taylor
Councillor J Kellas**

MEETING:	Cabinet
DATE:	Tuesday, 20 January 2026 at 6.00 pm
VENUE:	Civic Suite, Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, NG24 1BY
<p>You are hereby requested to attend the above Meeting to be held at the time/place and on the date mentioned above for the purpose of transacting the business on the Agenda as overleaf.</p> <p>If you have any queries please contact nigel.hill@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk.</p>	

AGENDA

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1. Notification to those present that the meeting will be recorded and streamed online	
2. Apologies for Absence	
3. Declarations of Interest from Members and Officers	
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5. Chair's Update	Verbal Report

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15. Exclusion of the Press and Public	

Cabinet will be invited:-

'To consider resolving that, under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item

of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.'

Category of "Exempt Information" Under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended

3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

16. Arkwood Loan Facility Agreement

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Note – Fire Alarm Evacuation

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Agenda Item 4

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Cabinet** held in the Civic Suite, Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, NG24 1BY on Tuesday, 9 December 2025 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor P Peacock (Chair)

Councillor R Cozens, Councillor S Crosby, Councillor L Brazier, Councillor S Forde, Councillor C Penny, Councillor P Taylor and Councillor J Kellas

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor S Haynes

325 **NOTIFICATION TO THOSE PRESENT THAT THE MEETING WILL BE RECORDED AND STREAMED ONLINE**

The Leader advised that the proceedings were being audio recorded and live streamed by the Council.

326 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

Councillor J Kellas declared an interest in item 13- Community Grant Scheme Update as he

327 **MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING 11 NOVEMBER 2025 AND 26 NOVEMBER 2025**

The minutes from the meeting held on 11 November and 26 November 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

328 **CHAIR'S UPDATE**

The Leader of the Council drew the attention of the Cabinet to the projects included in the East Midlands Mayoral Authority Growth Strategy which were located in the Newark and Sherwood Area. These included large investment projects in Ollerton and Yorke Drive, Newark.

329 **HOUSING COMPLIANCE ASSURANCE REPORT - QUARTER 2**

The Business Manager Building Safety & Asset Investment was welcomed to his first Cabinet meeting, to present the Housing Compliance report for quarter 2. The report and associated appendices set out the Council's performance against the Council's legal and regulatory landlord responsibilities for a range of building safety measures including fire protection, gas, asbestos, electrical and water. The Cabinet heard how monitoring had been undertaken and subsequent mitigation works to achieve the required performance targets.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet note:

- a) the exceptions to performance of the housing service compliance functions;
- b) interim arrangements for monitoring damp and mould ahead of introduction of Awaab's Law; and
- c) the ongoing actions to improve and maintain performance.

This links to two ambitions in our Community Plan:

Ambition 2: Increase the supply of housing, in particular decent homes that residents can afford to buy and rent, as well as improving housing standards and,

Ambition 7: Be a top performing, modern and accessible Council that get its everyday services right for the residents and businesses that it serves

Reasons for Decision:

To provide assurance on the work undertaken to ensure the safety of tenants and compliance with the regulatory standards.

Options Considered:

None

Councillor L. Brazier left the meeting following consideration of this item.

330 BUDGET PERFORMANCE REPORT- QUARTER 2

The Assistant Business Manager - Financial Services, presented a report which detailed the forecast outturn position for the 2025/26 financial year for the Council's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account revenue and capital budgets, which detailed performance against the approved estimates of revenue expenditure and income; report on major variances from planned budget performance; and report on variations to the Capital Programme for approval; all in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

The Cabinet considered details of the favourable and unfavourable variances reported, detailed in tables one and two of the report, and the HRA revenue outturn in table three of the report. The Council had been fully compliant with all prudential indicators during the reporting period.

In discussion, Members considered resource provision for the Monitoring Officer function following implementation of the new working arrangements, which would be kept under review.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet:

- (a) note the General Fund projected favourable outturn variance of £0.062m;
- (b) note the Housing Revenue Account projected unfavourable outturn variance of £0.201m to the Major Repairs Reserve;
- (c) approve the variations to the Capital Programme at Appendix E;
- (d) approve the Capital Programme revised budget and financing of £46.823m; and

(e) note the Prudential indicators at Appendix H.

Reasons for Decision:

To consider the forecast outturn position for the 2025/26 financial year for the Council's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account revenue and capital budgets.

To show performance against the approved estimates of revenue expenditure and income; report on major variances from planned budget performance; and report on variations to the Capital Programme for approval; all in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

Options Considered:

Not applicable.

331 COMMUNITY PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 2

The Transformation and Service Improvement Officer presented a report which detailed the Quarter 2 Community Plan Performance Report (July to September 2025). The report and accompanying presentation highlighted performance across a number of performance indicators and work in progress and planned in mitigation to achieve performance targets. Members considered re-let times for voids in depth, and the performance of the leisure services.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet:

- a) review the Community Plan Performance Report attached as **Appendix 1**;
- b) review the compliance report attached as **Appendix 2**; and
- c) consider the Council's performance against its objectives highlighting any areas of high performance and identifying areas for improvement.

Reasons for Decision:

Performance management is used to drive improvement by analysing data and progress against key activities as well as building a picture of the context of performance using district statistics, customer feedback and workforce information.

Options Considered:

Not applicable

332 COST OF LIVING UPDATE

The Business Manager- Healthy Place was in attendance to provide an update on the delivery of proposals to assist tenants and residents with the rise in the cost of living. The report detailed actions undertaken and the proposed activities for activity in 2026/27. Members noted the report and welcomed the work to support residents.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet:

- a) Approves the budget proposed for 2026/27 over the activities as described in Section 3 of the report, to be financed by £100,000 added into GF budgets and

£30,000 from the HRA unallocated efficiency savings; and

b) Agrees that any underspend within a project can be distributed amongst the pre-agreed projects to enhance delivery.

Reasons for Decision:

To support tenants and residents with the ongoing cost of living challenges.

Options Considered:

The alternative option includes not providing an additional budget and programme specially to address issues resulting from the cost-of-living crisis. This has been discounted due to the council's desire to support those residents most in need, with a focus for the coming year of support on meeting basic needs for the most vulnerable.

333 14 MARKET PLACE, NEWARK

The Asset Manager- Corporate Property was in attendance to provide an update on the tenancy of 14 Market Place, Newark. Members heard that since the December 2024 report considered and agreed by Cabinet, discussions had been ongoing with the potential end users of the ground floor part of the building for the proposed Community Hub. This included discussions with Lincoln College Group (LCG) and the Nottingham CVS who after viewing the property and plans decided against taking a tenancy at 14 Market Place due to the building not being large enough to incorporate their plans. Despite best efforts which included representations to, and by, the Newark Towns Board, it had not been possible to secure a tenant to manage and operate the ground floor throughout the week as a Community Hub. Having exhausted that option, it was proposed to market and let the ground floor space on commercial terms.

AGREED (with 6 for and 1 abstention) that Cabinet approve:

- a) the conversion of the designated community space within 14 Market Place, Newark to a commercial use; and
- b) delegated authority be given to the Deputy Chief Executive/Director - Resources to enter into a future lease once a tenant has been identified.

Reasons for Decision:

To ensure the continued utilisation of 14 Market Place as a commercial and residential asset, supporting the Council's town centre strategy and maximising the value of a key property within the Council's portfolio.

Options Considered:

Potential tenants such as Lincoln College Group and CVS were considered but ultimately declined due to the space not meeting their operational requirements.

334 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING FUNDING (KEY DECISION)

The Business Manager Planning Policy & Infrastructure was in attendance to present a **Agenda Page 7**

report which set out the current situation regarding neighbourhood plan funding for Parish and Town Councils and set out options for future funding. It was proposed that the District Council and Locality work with interested Neighbourhood Planning Bodies to scope out what they aim to achieve and seek to establish potential costs. Once this work was done, consideration can be given to how funding could be secured.

Members welcomed the report and proposals to work with parish councils and parish meetings.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) Cabinet agree that the District Council and Locality work with interested NPBs to scope out what they aim to achieve and seek to establish potential costs; and
- (b) following the appraisal of potential resource implications, the District Council work with Neighbourhood Planning Bodies and Locality to identify potential funding sources.

Reasons for Decision:

To allow officers to consider alternative funding approaches for Neighbourhood Plans.

Options Considered:

None - supporting Town & Parish Council's in Neighbourhood Planning is a statutory responsibility.

335 INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING STATEMENT (KEY DECISION)

The Business Manager - Planning Policy & Infrastructure was in attendance to present a report to update Cabinet on matters set out in the 2024/25 (the reported year) Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS); and to seek approval to amend current CIL procedures. Members noted it was a national requirement for the District Council to publish an annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) setting out the current position on developer contributions. The 2025 IFS had been finalised and appended to the report for Members.

The report also set out a procedure for spending the meaningful proportion of CIL monies for Parish Meetings.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet:

- a) approve the publication of the Infrastructure Funding Statement, which has been produced in accordance with the legislative requirements, before the end of the calendar year;
- b) approve payment of the CIL meaningful proportion to Town and Parish Councils once per annum. This process to commerce for monies collected in the financial year 2025/2026;

- c) approve the proposed guidance note at Appendix C for Town and Parish Councils, regarding CIL Meaningful proportion including informing them of their legal duty to produce an annual report on CIL receipts, CIL Spend, and CIL monies held in their account; and
- d) approve the proposed procedures set out at paragraph 2.13 and 2.14 for the spend of CIL for Parish Meetings and Parishes with no meetings.

Reasons for Decision:

To ensure that the District Council is operating in accordance with the requirements of the Community Infrastructure Regulations.

To deliver resource efficiencies by reducing the administrative burden for Newark & Sherwood District Council To provide guidance on various aspects of CIL Meaningful Proportion Spend.

Options Considered:

None, there is a statutory requirement to publish the IFS by the end of the calendar year.

To not make an amendment to the payment of the CIL meaningful proportion to Town and Parish Councils.

336 COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEME UPDATE

The Business Manager- Healthy Places was in attendance to present the annual report on the Community Grant scheme delivery for 2025-26 and budget setting proposals for 2026-27. The first round of the community grant scheme for 2025-26 received 44 applications of which 20 were successfully allocated a grant. The grant scheme was heavily oversubscribed with request for support totalling over £370k, over three times the amount available for allocation. Due to the demand on the scheme, it was proposed that Cabinet increase the budget for 2026-27 to £150,000 to continue the community grant scheme (inclusive of the £6086.71 underspend for 2025-26).

Members considered the eligibility criteria for grants and agreed to amend 3.3 in the report to the following :-

- Applicants can only secure grant once in a three-year period
- Where there are applications from multiple branches of an umbrella organisation, that are not separately constituted, only one allocation will be made in any three-year period.
- That where elected councillors are members of/ affiliated with groups receiving grant, all grants will be conditioned to ensure that there is no political gain through grant or associated publicity.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet:

- c) notes the delivery of the Community Grant Scheme in 2025-26 to date;
- d) approves an increase to the current budget of £43,610 up to £150,000 for the 2026-2027 Community Grant Scheme; and
- e) approves the changes to the Community Grant Scheme eligibility criteria as detailed in section 3.3 of the report, subject to the second bullet point reading as follows:

Where there are applications from multiple branches of an umbrella organisation, that are not separately constituted, only one allocation will be made in any three-year period.

Reasons for Decision:

To ensure that funding can be allocated to community groups – supporting communities to be sustainable and thrive.

Options Considered:

To withdraw the community grant scheme. This alternative has been discounted due to the demonstrable positive impact the scheme has on the local community – empowering local groups and developing community capacity and resilience.

Meeting closed at 8.15 pm.

Chair



Report to: Cabinet Meeting: 20 January 2026

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Paul Peacock, Strategy, Performance & Finance

Director Lead: Deborah Johnson, Customer Services & Organisational Development

Lead Officer: Carl Burns, Business Manager - Transformation & Service Improvement, Ext.5293

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open Report / Non-Key Decision
Report Title	Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review Outcome
Purpose of Report	To present the findings of the recent LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review
Recommendations	That Cabinet review and note the Peer Team's feedback and associated appendices of this report
Alternative Options Considered	Not applicable
Reason for Recommendations	The Peer Team's feedback offers an independent view of how the Council is performing including areas where it can strengthen its approach. Reflecting on this feedback helps ensure the Council continues to improve, stays focused on delivering for residents and remains aligned to its strategic priorities.

1.0	<u>Background</u>
1.1	In October 2024, the Local Government Association (LGA) undertook a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) at NSDC. A team comprising senior councillors and officers from across local government conducted a comprehensive assessment, reviewing key financial, performance, and governance data, followed by an intensive three-day onsite evaluation at Castle House. Their findings, detailed in the Peer Team's report, recognised NSDC as a high-performing authority with a strong organisational culture and a proven record of delivering effective core services that positively impact residents.
1.2	The review highlighted areas of strength, as well as opportunities for further improvement. In response, an action plan comprising 12 specific initiatives was developed by a cross-party working group, established with Cabinet approval in February 2025.

1.3	Implementation of the action plan was already underway at that point, with early progress illustrated by the completed review of the Community Plan, the outcomes of which were reported to the full Council in May 2025.
1.4	The Peer Team is returned for a progress review on the 11th and 12th of December 2025, which provided an opportunity to share achievements and challenges, and to objectively assess progress against the Corporate Peer Challenge recommendations.
2.0	<u>Position Statement Update</u>
2.1	In preparation for the visit a short position statement was prepared to update the Peer Team on NSDC's progress against their recommendations. This can be found at Appendix A and includes a detailed update on developments in strategic planning, governance, councillor development, workplace culture, and it also outlines recent achievements through local government reorganisation activities. This statement was supplemented by the action plan that was developed through the Cabinet appointed working party in 2025. This action plan can be found at Appendix B .
3.0	<u>The Peer Team's Approach</u>
3.1	The approach for the progress review involved an onsite visit on 11 and 12 December 2025 with the Peer Team meeting select groups and officers for discussions on the Council's progress against the original recommendations from their initial visit in October 2024.
3.2	The Peer Team were again formed by representatives from various local authorities with the following returning for the review: Cllr Anthony McKeown (Leader, High Peak Borough Council) Cllr Georgina Hill (LGA Regional Lead Peer, Independent Group) Ka Ng (Chief Executive, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council) and Becca Singh (Peer Challenge Manager, Local Government Association)
3.3	Their review was structured around the recommendations previously set out in the Corporate Peer Challenge, with a focus on key themes: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Review and prioritise the 2023-2027 Community Plan.2. Review Audit, Governance, Overview and Scrutiny functions of the council to maximise councillor engagement and council productivity.3. Ensure councillors understand the longer-term budget pressures.4. Establish an ongoing councillor development programme.5. Continue to foster the positive culture of the organisation.6. Consider agreeing a Team Charter amongst the Joint Administration.
3.4	In addition, Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), which emerged as a priority for the Council after the announcement in December 2024, was considered as a supplementary area of focus during this review.

3.5	By examining these areas, the Peer Team aimed to assess both achievements and ongoing challenges, providing an objective evaluation of the Council's progress against the agreed recommendations.
4.0	<u>Progress Review – Peer Team's Feedback</u>
4.1	The Peer Team's review highlights that the Council's Leader and Chief Executive continue to be highly regarded both within and outside the organisation. Also acknowledged is the high service standards and strong customer focus maintained with staff and councillors remaining dedicated to serving the district's diverse communities.
4.2	The report goes on to highlight that after the initial CPC feedback, some 14 months ago, a positive and supportive culture persists, which has been further reinforced during a period of increased demand and ongoing council restructuring.
4.3	Below is an overview of the team's feedback against their original recommendations. For a detailed account of these findings, please refer to the full report at Appendix C .
4.4	<u>Review and Prioritise the 2023-27 Community Plan</u>
4.4.1	The report notes the thorough review and prioritisation of its 2023-27 Community Plan in light of CPC feedback which resulted in a streamlined version being approved in May 2025. The process which included evaluating completed actions and engaging key stakeholders through several workshops was coordinated by a dedicated working group which was commissioned by the Cabinet.
4.4.2	Additionally, the report acknowledges the PPIC working group which looked at activities being delivered which are beyond the Council's core remit and how the outcomes were shared to enhance understanding among councillors, particularly regarding inter-agency collaboration. The team also noted that despite some concerns about progress on matters outside the Council's control, ongoing efforts reflect a commitment to adapting and delivering on priorities, especially as attention shifts towards local government reorganisation.
4.5	<u>Review Audit, Governance and Scrutiny Arrangements to Maximise Councillor Engagement and Council Productivity</u>
4.5.1	The Peer Team's report acknowledges that following their feedback, the Council revised the terms of reference for both committees, clarified governance arrangements, and strengthened the code of conduct. Noting that in May 2025, the Audit & Governance committee's remit was divided between two new committees: Audit and Accounts (A&A), and Governance, General Purposes and LGR (GGP&LGR), each with distinct responsibilities.

4.5.2	<p>The report notes early positive feedback regarding these changes, with improved collaboration among committee chairs and vice-chairs, and direct engagement with internal and external auditors. Notably, both new committees are chaired by opposition members, which is recognised as inclusive and good practice. Nearly all councillors are actively involved in committee work, ensuring broad representation in decision-making. The increased use of working groups has promoted inclusivity in scrutiny functions, the report advises that these groups should continue in order to facilitate efficient decision-making. Reference is made to national good practice from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, emphasising the need for scrutiny to provide adequate challenge and remain distinct from audit functions.</p>
4.6	<p><u>Improve Councillor Understanding of Long-Term Budget Pressures</u></p>
4.6.1	<p>The report acknowledges that, following the CPC and the review of the Council's audit and governance functions, the Section 151 and Deputy Section 151 Officer delivered finance training for councillors. It notes that the training covered the Council's statutory responsibilities, financial governance and budgetary control. It further notes that a budget planning workshop was held in October 2025, focusing on the medium-term financial plan and budget setting. The report acknowledges that while improving participation across six different political groups, as well as non-aligned councillors, requires considerable officer resource, the Council remains committed to ensuring full involvement of councillors, especially in financial arrangements.</p>
4.6.2	<p>The report also highlights that recent decisions demonstrate how this investment in councillor learning and development has led to increased awareness of long-term budget pressures. Councillors are reported to be asking more knowledgeable questions of officers regarding resources, resulting in a more considered approach to decision-making.</p>
4.6.3	<p>The report also highlights the Council's success in being awarded various funds, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £19.5m in March 2025 for a decade-long investment (2026-2036) in town centre transformation following Town Deal success • £20m Levelling Up 3 funds for Ollerton and Clipstone; and • around £1.35m allocated for 2025/26 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity fund to support businesses, skills, and young people
4.7	<p><u>Establish an Ongoing Councillor Development Programme</u></p>
4.7.1	<p>The report confirms NSDC's strong commitment to the ongoing development of its councillors, ensuring that the highest standards are consistently upheld. The report highlights that the newly formed GGP&LGR Committee now oversees councillor development and has established a working group to identify specific training needs and preferences. It confirms that feedback from recent training sessions is being used to inform future development plans.</p>

4.7.2	<p>The report also recognises the Council's commitment to equipping councillors to manage public expectations, particularly in instances where requests fall outside the Council's remit or require statutory processes. Councillors are encouraged to consult with officers as needed and to respond confidently and clearly, especially when signposting the public to the appropriate channels. The report suggests that further support may be required for councillors to better understand the implications of LGR and their evolving roles throughout this process.</p>
4.8	<p><u>Continue to Foster the Positive Culture of the Organisation</u></p>
4.8.1	<p>The Peer Team recognises the importance of a positive culture and acknowledges the significant investment of both energy and resources into cultivating a positive organisational culture. The team again commented frequently on the positive culture experienced first-hand throughout their visit. They note that, amidst the Council's ambitious programme of work, this positive environment has been sustained, with officers continuing to express their enjoyment of working for NSDC. The report further highlights that partners speak highly of the Council's culture and their experiences of collaboration, both during the CPC and the subsequent progress review.</p>
4.8.2	<p>The report observes that staff remain dedicated to delivering high-quality service and routinely go above and beyond to achieve positive outcomes for residents. Whilst noting that the feedback received during the staff discussion group showed gratitude for the support received from senior managers.</p>
4.8.3	<p>The report concludes that, despite the significant changes brought about by LGR, it is encouraging to see the council maintain its focus on supporting staff as a key priority.</p>
4.9	<p><u>Consider a Team Charter for the Joint Administration</u></p>
4.9.1	<p>The report outlines that following the initial CPC recommendation around revisiting the charter idea to strengthen coalition ties and that following review this was not supported. The report recognises ongoing political tensions within the minority administration, though cooperation continues. The CPC also advised creating a communications protocol and reviewing the Code of Conduct; both matters are currently being addressed by relevant committees and officers. The report notes a substantial rise in Code of Conduct complaints, primarily among councillors, prompting additional staff recruitment and an update of the complaint's procedure. The Peer Team recommends all councillors familiarise themselves with procedural changes once revised. Additionally, the report mentions potential frustration and/or confusion arising from some councillor's social media posts and welcomes the forthcoming review of the Social Media Protocol.</p>

5.0	<u>Local Government Reorganisation</u>
5.1	<p>The Peer Team recognises the significant commitment shown by NSDC officers in developing and submitting the final LGR proposal on 28 November 2025. The team acknowledge the strong community leadership throughout negotiations, committing time and resources at both officer and councillor levels, this was also noted by partner councils during their meeting with the Peer Team.</p>
5.2	<p>The Peer Team recommends the Council carefully assess risks involving its two owned companies, Arkwood and Active4Today, during the LGR process. Noting that scrutiny and thorough review of business plans are essential for robust assurance and risk management.</p>
5.3	<p>The Peer Team also highlights and appreciate the positive approach illustrated by NSDC's objectives through LGR.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave a legacy of a high performing, financially resilient council with completed and progressed key regeneration capital projects. • Contribute fully and influentially to the shaping and establishment of the new councils. • Support our colleagues to take advantage of opportunities presented by LGR.
6.0	<u>Summary</u>
6.1	<p>The Peer Team's report again highlights several strengths, while also encouraging the Council to continue making improvements. The Council's response to the team's initial report, which followed their October 2024 visit, was a collaborative effort involving both elected members and officers. Unsurprising therefore that the team once again emphasised our strong and positive organisational culture in their feedback. The Peer Team's full report can be found at Appendix C.</p>
7.0	<u>Next steps</u>
7.1	<p>Following endorsement by Cabinet the Council's webpage will be updated with the LGA's latest report and broadcast by our communications team.</p>
8.0	<u>Implications</u>
	<p>In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.</p>

Implications Considered			
Yes – relevant and included / NA – not applicable			
Financial	NA	Equality & Diversity	NA
Human Resources	NA	Human Rights	NA
Legal	NA	Data Protection	NA
Digital & Cyber Security	NA	Safeguarding	NA
Sustainability	NA	Crime & Disorder	NA
LGR	NA	Tenant Consultation	NA

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

[18 Feb 2025 - Cabinet - Corporate Peer Challenge - Final report](#)

LGA Peer Challenge - Progress Update

Date: 02 December 2025

Introduction

This document provides the Peer Team with an update on our response to the Peer Challenge Final Recommendations. Shortly after the team concluded its Final Report, Cabinet approved the formation of a cross-party working group which was tasked with developing an action plan to deliver improvements in the areas recommended by the LGA team. This action plan can be found in the link below and is also attached as Appendix A.

[Cabinet report - Local Government Association \(LGA\) Peer Challenge](#)

As a Council, we recognise the importance of learning from others and seeking out new and different perspectives. We fully committed therefore to assessing every one of the Final Recommendations and have carefully considered how best to respond.

Alongside the Action Plan, the sections below cover our response to the Peer Team's Final Recommendations. We have added a section on Local Government Re-organisation which has emerged since the Peer Team's visit and has become for us and many other parts of the Country, a significant additional focus.

Recommendation 1: Review and prioritise the 2023-2027 Community Plan

During the autumn of 2024, a comprehensive review of the 2023-2027 Community Plan was undertaken, marking two years since its launch and providing an opportunity to assess progress to date.

Commissioned in response to the LGA's feedback, which described the initial plan as 'overambitious' and at times 'overlapping with the roles of other organisations,' the council completed a full evaluation, documenting all actions delivered. Key stakeholders, including elected members and the Senior Leadership Team, participated in dedicated workshop sessions to inform the review, which was followed by delivery of a revised Community Plan including updates to the associated Key Performance Indicators and the council's overarching performance framework.

The updated report and framework were presented to the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee (PPIC) in March 2025 for scrutiny and assurance, and subsequently to Cabinet in April 2025 for endorsement. A much slimmed down and updated Community Plan was approved by Full Council on 20 May 2025, reflecting a robust process of review and improvement.

In addition to this review, a working group was established to address cross-cutting issues that fall outside the formal scope of a typical district council. Assessing the sustainability and impact of these activities on Council resources, the group focused on key areas such as flood response and public health. The group noted that the Council's flood response under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and associated community

resilience initiatives remained critical, while the ongoing delivery of public health services was highlighted as an ongoing priority.

The working group is nearing the final stages of its work and progress to date includes the development of an initial set of recommendations aimed at improving inter-agency coordination and clarifying lines of accountability, which will be presented to the Policy and Performance Improvement Committee (PPIC) in December 2025.

[Cabinet Report - Community plan refresh - April 2025](#)

[Full Council - Community plan 2023-2027 - May 2025](#)

Focus and prioritisation has become even more important with Local Government Re-organisation absorbing significant amounts of member and officer capacity. While that is understood and appreciated, there is now the additional challenge to meet the ambitions to leave the very best legacy possible of Newark and Sherwood District Council.

Recommendation 2: Review Audit, Governance, Overview and Scrutiny functions of the council to maximise councillor engagement and council productivity

In line with the LGA's recommendation, the Audit & Governance (A&G) Committee established a dedicated working party to conduct a comprehensive review of the Terms of Reference for both the A&G Committee and the Policy and Performance Improvement Committee (PPIC). The working party also examined the composition of the A&G Committee, specifically reviewing governance arrangements and code of conduct. This thorough review process culminated in the presentation of a series of reports outlining the working party's findings in May 2025.

[Audit & Governance - Local Government Peer Review – Corporate Peer Challenge - May 2025](#)

[Audit & Governance - Review of the Council's Constitution - May 2025](#)

[GGPLGR - Code of Conduct Annual Report for the Period 1 May 2024 – 30 April 2025](#)

As a result of the review, revisions were proposed to Full Council who resolved to split the single Audit & Governance Committee into two new committees, one focused on audit, the other on wider governance matters and LGR. These two committees have been established and are the Audit & Accounts Committee, and Governance, General Purposes & Local Government Reorganisation Committee (GGPLGR).

The changes also provided an opportunity to reflect on the Peer Team's encouragement to revisit the leadership of committees, which is now provided by members who are not part of the ruling administration.

The new GGPLGR committee has been established with a clear remit and its responsibilities include reviewing and recommending amendments to the council's constitution, ensuring compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements, oversight of the Code of Conduct and Local Government Re-organisation.

These changes are a good indication of the value of the Peer Challenge and our willingness to listen and respond to external feedback. It is also worth noting that the chairs and vice chairs of all NSDC committees

now convene on a regular basis to coordinate their respective work programmes. This collaborative approach is designed to ensure that reports are directed to the most appropriate committee, thereby maximising the effectiveness of scrutiny and oversight. This includes the annual review of the governance statement which was completed in July 2025.

[Audit & Governance - Review of the Council's Constitution - Replacing the Audit & Governance Committee - July 2025](#)

[Full Council - Changes to the Council's Constitution - Replacing the Audit & Governance Committee - July 2025](#)

Recommendations 3 and 4: Ensure councillors understand the longer-term budget pressures and establish an ongoing councillor development programme

NSDC remains committed to supporting the ongoing development of its elected members, recognising that effective councillor training is essential to maintaining high standards of governance and community leadership. The council's approach reflects best practice recommendations from the LGA and is designed to equip councillors with the knowledge and skills required to navigate an ever-evolving local government landscape.

In the past year, officers have delivered a series of targeted training initiatives. Notably, an all member training day was held in June, providing a refresher for new and more experienced councillors. This was complemented by finance training delivered by the Section 151 Officer, which focused on statutory responsibilities, financial governance, and budgetary control. More recently, a budget planning workshop took place in October 2025, enabling councillors to engage with the medium-term financial plan and enhance their understanding of the budget-setting process. Further arrangements are in hand to involve the full cross section of members in this latest budget round. Given the nature of our political composition which involves six different political groups and a number of independent, unaligned members, this is a resource intensive task but one we are committed to.

Looking ahead, the newly established Governance, General Purposes and Local Government Reorganisation (GGPLGR) Committee is set to assume responsibility and oversight for councillor development, ensuring a strategic and coordinated approach to future training. This committee will oversee the identification of development needs, the planning of training programmes and the evaluation of its impact, thereby embedding councillor development as a core element of NSDC's governance framework.

Through these and other initiatives, we hope we have demonstrated our commitment to encouraging and supporting members to not only discharge their duties effectively and in accordance with best practice but to support their own ambitions to progress.

Recommendation 5: Continue to foster the positive culture of the organisation

The positive culture of the Council is something we treasure and put a huge amount of energy into. Since the Peer Challenge in October 2024, we have continued to champion initiatives that celebrate

achievement, boost personal and professional growth, encourage open dialogue and take a genuine interest in the health and well-being of colleagues. We do this because we genuinely care but also because we appreciate that high employee satisfaction drives high customer satisfaction.

At the time of preparing this position statement, we are a week away from our annual 'Serving People, Improving Lives' awards which is a highlight in our calendar and held to recognise outstanding contributions of individuals and teams. Colleagues are invited to nominate others having regard to our values and year on year, the number of nominations has increased.

The Chief Executive continues to host a short, online welcome for groups of new employees to make clear our expectations and the importance of our culture. Time after time, new recruits speak positively of their first impressions, the welcoming environment, strong sense of team and can-do attitude.

In addition to formal recognition, NSDC places a strong emphasis on employee development and engagement. The introduction of the Ambition Academy provides tailored learning and development pathways, supporting staff at all stages of their careers. Additionally, the development of the Perform module is aimed at enhancing performance management processes, enabling regular feedback and supporting personal growth. This is now in a pilot period with selected service areas and is due for a full launch early in the new year.

Staff engagement is key to all of this, and we actively promote engagement through a series of well-attended staff roadshows that provide opportunity for direct communication with senior leaders and foster a sense of shared purpose. The annual staff survey continues to provide valuable insights into employee experience, informing ongoing improvements and ensuring that staff voices are heard and acted upon whilst regular staff recognition events, both formal and informal, also contribute to a culture where achievements are acknowledged and valued.

Through these initiatives, NSDC demonstrates a clear commitment to nurturing a supportive and high-performing organisational culture. By investing in its people and continually seeking to enhance the working environment, we aim to ensure that staff are empowered to deliver on our mission of serving people and improving lives, underpinning our reputation as an employer of choice within the sector.

Recommendation 6: Consider agreeing a Team Charter amongst the Joint Administration

This is the only recommendation that the Council has chosen not to take forward. That is not to say that is has been ignored but rather it is not felt appropriate for our circumstances. It was considered shortly after the May 2023 local elections and best practice protocols/charters were obtained from other parts of the country that had also experienced significant political change that had resulted in no overall majority. While political relationships can on occasions become strained, in general they are respectful and constructive and a form of charter at this point in time is not felt to be something that would add value.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

Along with twenty other parts of the Country, our Council submitted its Final Proposal for Local Government Re-organisation on 28 November 2025.

Three proposals are being submitted for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, each of them proposing to replace the current nine Councils with two new unitary councils.

The preferred north-south option of Newark and Sherwood District Council is supported by three other Councils. Two Councils have chosen not to support any option. Nottingham City has submitted its own option. Nottinghamshire County Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council has submitted the third option.

Newark and Sherwood has been actively involved throughout the LGR process, at a political and officer level and has contributed significant resource to the development of the Final Proposal.

While we await the Government's decision, transition work will continue and LGR commitments will undoubtedly have an impact of our capacity to deliver. Budget provision has been set aside to provide additional resource and early in the New Year, the nine Councils will develop transitional plans and programme and project support.

Every effort is being made to keep elected members and officers fully informed and to maintain a 'business as usual' mindset for the majority of colleagues, whilst being open about the scale of the change that is to come.

Our three objectives are to:-

- Leave a legacy of a high performing, financially resilient Council
- Contribute fully and influentially to the shaping and establishment of the new Councils
- Support our colleagues to take advantage of opportunities presented by LGR

A selection of information relevant to the Peer Team's recommendations

- The number of ambitions within our Community Plan has been reduced from 8 to 7 and the number of actions reduced from 140 to 61 which accounts for a 56% decrease.
- The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) measuring our progress against the Community Plan were also reduced. This has seen a 21% reduction from 117 in 2024/25 to 92 in 2025/26.
- The revised Community Plan was reviewed by the Out of Remit Activities Working Group. As a result, all service areas were mapped to identify activities which are out of remit and allowed scrutiny to be applied to these service areas to understand whether any reductions in the work undertaken were necessary. Key recommendations were highlighted within flood response and resilience, as well as public health.
- At the time of writing this update, 36 of a total 39 Councillors participate in one or more Council committees. Of the remaining three, two were recently elected following a by-election and have not yet joined a committee, while the third serves as a substitute committee member but is not currently an active committee member.
- The Staff Comments & Feedback portal launched in January 2025 as part of our broader commitment to fostering open and transparent communication among colleagues. We continue to

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communicate with colleagues regarding feedback submission. These efforts include maintaining a dedicated page on our Staff Intranet, issuing periodic communications, and incorporating reminders into staff email signatures to promote participation in the survey.

- 340 colleagues were welcomed to the Palace Theatre in February to take part in the Staff Roadshows. The 2025 Staff Roadshows saw a number of changes from previous years based on colleague feedback, including:
 - Attendance by our Environmental Services, who historically attended a separate 'drop in' style session due to operational constraints.
 - Slido allowed colleagues to vote in live polls and take part in a Q&A with SLT and over 160 questions were received.
 - The session encouraged networking between colleagues who may work in separate parts of the organisation.
- Workforce turnover has improved by 1% year-on-year between 2024/25 and 2025/26. This is assessed by the number of leavers as a percentage of the total workforce. In Q1 2024/25, the workforce comprised 730 employees, compared to 748 in Q1 2025/26. Several factors influence staff turnover, such as the average age profile, resulting in retirements and our commitment to supporting colleagues' professional development, which facilitates career progression both within and outside the organisation and encourages new talent to join. Overall, staff turnover rates remain within target parameters and reflect positively on the workforce's satisfaction with the organisation as an employer.

Newark and Sherwood District Council

CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN 2025

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SERVING PEOPLE, IMPROVING LIVES

Introduction

At Newark and Sherwood District Council, our goal is to continuously improve and serve our residents by providing a service that helps ensure Newark and Sherwood is an excellent place to live and work. To further this aim, we invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to conduct a Corporate Peer Challenge in October 2024.

The visit consisted of a team of senior local government councillors and officers who performed an extensive review of key financial, performance, and governance information before they then spent three days at Castle House providing rigorous, strategic, and credible evaluations. Utilising their onsite presence and access to the council's key strategies and documents, the Peer team provided feedback on the Council's performance, which is detailed in their report.

Overall, the review determined that NSDC is a high-performing council with a positive organisational culture and a solid track record of successful delivery across essential service areas. The council was recognised for effectively providing core services to its communities and contributing to meaningful improvements to residents' lives. While performing well in most areas, there remains room for improvement; consequently, we have used the team's feedback and recommendations to formulate 12 actions, which are outlined in this document.

We take pride in the positive feedback received during this review process and are fully committed to pursuing further improvement through this action plan. We are confident that the LGA's feedback will foster our growth as an organisation, and we look forward to welcoming the team back to NSDC for a progress review before the end of 2025.



Delivery of the Plan

The timeframes for the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) actions are as follows:

Short Term (aim to complete within 3 months)

Medium Term (within 6 months)

Long Term (A year or over)

In February 2025 the Cabinet approved the formation of a cross party working group that were tasked with developing this action plan. The working group reviewed in full the peer team's recommendations and through several meetings worked with officers to produce the plan below.

Throughout this process, opportunities to implement the changes recommended in the report were taken so we are well underway in delivering change, an example of this can be seen in the review of the Community Plan which is complete with the results of which being presented to Full Council in May 2025. The delivery of this action plan is a collective responsibility of all council officers and preparing it collaboratively with members has enhanced efforts to align existing programmes and initiatives. Lead officers have been assigned accordingly, and progress will be driven and monitored through established governance structures. These officers are tasked with ensuring the advancement of actions, facilitating wider staff involvement, and reporting on milestone achievements through established corporate performance monitoring frameworks. Regular updates on the action plan will be received by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) with a full progress update expected in September 2025. In the longer term, the LGA will return to NSDC for their progress review, offering council officers and elected members the opportunity to share successes and challenges with peers and to thoroughly evaluate progress against the CPC recommendations.

2025 Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan

Key recommendations by Peer Challenge Team	NSDC Actions
<p>Recommendation 1: Review and prioritise the 2023-2027 Community Plan</p> <p>Peer Team's Feedback - Work on this has already begun with the Cabinet. This may involve reducing the number of priorities and setting timescales for delivery. The process should be inclusive, for example holding a workshop between Cabinet and SLT to agree priorities and timescales. This should include examining areas that are beyond NSDC's remit and refocus on what a district council can and needs to deliver, before looking at wider areas of work.</p>	<p>NSDC Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed a full review of the Community Plan noting all actions that have been completed Hosted workshop sessions with key stakeholders (elected Members and Senior Leadership Team and Business Managers) Implemented changes to the Community Plan ensuring to update the associated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and the Council's performance framework Presented the updated report and performance framework to the Policy, Performance Improvement Committee (PPIC) in March 2025 for further scrutiny and assurance Presented the report to Cabinet in April 2025 for endorsement Presented the final version of the Community Plan to Full Council on 20 May 2025 for approval. <p>PPIC Meeting 10 March 2025 Cabinet meeting 01 April 2025</p> <p>Lead Officer(s): Director of Customer Services & Organisational Development Business Manager Transformation & Service Improvement</p> <p>Timeframe: Short Term</p> <p>Status: Complete</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: Review Audit, Governance, Overview and Scrutiny functions of the council to maximise councillor engagement and council productivity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit & Governance (A&G) Committee formed a working party to undertake a full review of the Terms of Reference (ToRs) for both the A&G committee and PPIC, number of committee members on A&G and the number of meetings held per annum

<p>Peer Team feedback - Review terms of reference for Policy and Performance Improvement Committee (PPIC) and Audit and Governance Committee (AGC) to ensure the adequacy and robustness of the Council's governance, risk and control arrangements. Using a wide range of scrutiny tools available, could encourage more councillors to be better engaged in scrutiny and overview activity. This could include identifying long term challenges, and conducting deep dive commissions, or task and finish groups for shorter investigations. Deep dives could be into subject areas that councillors need more information on before deciding whether to invest staff time and resources in a particular area of work. Consider use of scoring matrix to inform this programme. Ensure the roles of PPIC and AGC are clear and consider how the forward plan for each committee covers the full range of scrutiny, governance, risk management and performance responsibilities. Consider whether opposition councillors could be chairs or vice-chairs of committees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A series of reports were presented to committee outlining the working party's findings in May 2025 <p>Audit & Governance - Local Government Peer Review – Corporate Peer Challenge - May 2025</p> <p>Audit & Governance - Review of the Council's Constitution - May 2025</p> <p>GGPLGR - Code of Conduct Annual Report for the Period 1 May 2024 – 30 April 2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a result of the Peer Team's feedback and following the review referred to above, the previous Audit and Governance Committee has been split in two, with one committee focused on Audit, the other on Standards, Constitutional matters and LGR. <p>Lead Officer(s): Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer</p> <p>Timeframe: Short Term</p> <p>Status: Complete</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: Ensure councillors understand the longer-term budget pressures. Ensure regular financial reports include long-term forecasts to all councillors are understood.</p> <p>Peer Team feedback - The regular reports to PPIC and Cabinet include forward forecasts, and NSDC revises the MTFP annually and identifies the financial gap that will need addressing at the end of the three-year term of the plan. However, it became clear during discussions with councillors that not all appreciated the real financial pressures and risks the council is under, nor the balances that need to be made. The Autumn budget provides an ideal opportunity to update councillors on NSDC's financial pressures. This will help councillors when revising the Community Plan (recommendation 1). Consider holding an audit on the robustness and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance training was delivered to all available members in June 2025 with a further budget workshop conducted in October 2025. • The Council's 151 and Deputy 151 Officers provide dedicated budget briefings to political groups during the budgetary process as well as to Cabinet and PPIC • The meeting of the quarterly Shareholder Committee has been brought forward and now takes place before Cabinet considers the Council's quarterly performance reports. This gives Cabinet members more time and focus on scrutinising the performance of the two companies. • The s151 Officer is a Board member of Arkwood and the Chief Executive attends all Board meetings. This provides the Shareholders with the assurance that business plans and on-going decisions are subject to appropriate scrutiny.

<p>sustainability of the Arkwood and Active4Today business plans, introducing an annual report to scrutinise those accounts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board of Directors of Active 4 Today include 3 elected members, the Deputy s151 Officer and the Director of Customer Services and Organisational Development. This provides the Shareholders with the assurance that business plans and decisions are subject to appropriate scrutiny. <p>Lead Officer(s): Monitoring Officer Section 151 officer Business Manager Financial Services</p> <p>Timeframe: Short Term/Long Term</p> <p>Status: Complete/Ongoing (Members receive quarterly updates on the budget and further training will be provided through the councillor development group)</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: Establish an ongoing councillor development programme</p> <p>Peer Team feedback - This would ensure that long-standing, as well as new councillors are kept up to date with the many changes that are happening in local government. Consider setting up a councillor development steering group to feed into this process, recognising that officers have a role in recommending development opportunities. Encourage councillors who are new to areas of responsibility to attend Leadership Academy courses. This will build up networks of expertise from around the country and improve resilience of councillors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Councillor development group will be overseen by the GGP&LGR Committee Elected Member training day conducted on 17 June 2025 The GGP&LGR Committee have recently directed a working group to further develop the members training programme. This will be established in December 2025 <p>Lead Officer(s): Monitoring Officer</p> <p>Timeframe: Medium Term</p> <p>Status: Complete/Ongoing</p>

<p>Peer Team feedback - Recommendation 5: Continue to foster the positive culture of the organisation</p> <p>Officers are deeply committed to delivering the best for local communities. However, many of the officers the team met (formally and informally) are very stretched. Although the recent staff survey indicates that this is 'some' rather than 'many' staff, the peer team recommends that the council explore this further. This is affected by the demands of the Community Plan and work that is outside NSDC's remit. It is underpinned by staff having a strong commitment to deliver high quality, appropriate, supportive services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A full review of the Community Plan (Recommendation 1) and the Council's 'out of remit activities' (Recommendation 9) to ensure that capacity is released wherever possible - completed and was presented to Full Council on 20 May 25 • CEO regular briefings – face to face, virtually and in writing are in place with a specific objective to maintain morale and culture during the uncertainty of LGR • Feedback from regular induction sessions continues to emphasise and report a welcoming, positive and performance focused culture • Staff commitment to 'go the extra mile' continues to be strongly in evidence • Commitment to staff welfare and development programmes have been enhanced • Long service awards have been strengthened and nominations for our annual Serving People & Improving lives (SPIL) awards have once again increased <p>Lead Officer(s): Director of Customer Services & Organisational Development Business Manager – Human Resources & Training</p> <p>Timeframe: Short Term/Long Term</p> <p>Status: Complete/Ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation 6: Consider agreeing a Team Charter amongst the Joint Administration</p> <p>Peer Team feedback - This should include a Communication Protocol and be linked with the review of Councillor Code of Conduct.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSDC Peer Challenge working party discussed the requirement for a team charter • Reviewed the existing code of conduct (linked to Recommendation 8) • A&G reviewed the communication protocol • This has been reviewed by the current administration who felt that a team charter would not be beneficial at this time due to the group being together for over two years. The standards of behaviour are clear and understood by all elected members.

	<p>Lead Officer(s): Monitoring Officer</p> <p>Timeframe: Short Term</p> <p>Status: Complete</p>
<p>Recommendation 7: Strengthen and enhance the Annual Governance Statement</p> <p>Peer Team feedback - The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) could be strengthened and enhanced to ensure that NSDC is assuring itself that governance and scrutiny arrangements are clear and strong. The AGS is an opportunity for the council to set out what it wants to achieve and how, along with clear indications of how plans will be scrutinised, overseen and taken forward by councillors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensured an annual review of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is present on the work programme Undertook a review of the AGS in July 2025 Explored opportunities to benchmark against other Local Authorities AGS where appropriate. <p>Lead Officer(s): Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer</p> <p>Timeframe: Medium Term</p> <p>Status: Complete</p>
<p>Recommendation 8: Strengthen the application of the national code of conduct</p> <p>Per Team feedback - The Audit and Governance Committee had already agreed to explore how to strengthen the application of the national Code of Conduct, something which the Peer Team supports to mitigate the risk of the reputation, effectiveness and positive culture of the Council being undermined. The significant increase in formal and informal complaints against councillor conduct risks bringing the council into disrepute.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responded to the upcoming changes to the national code of conduct Reviewed the existing code of conduct to ensure it is clear and understood by all stakeholders Presented a code of conduct item at the Monitoring Officers network meeting for discussion and feedback. A&G/Monitoring Officer reviewed the use of social media guidance Monitoring Officer to fully apply the national code of conduct in events of any future breach. Invested in additional resources to assist with Code of Conduct complaints <p>Lead Officer(s): Monitoring Officer</p>

<p>Recommendation 9: Explore further options for scrutiny of Arkwood & Active 4 Today</p> <p>Peer Team feedback - Arkwood Development Ltd and Active4Today report to Cabinet for scrutiny as a result of external legal advice. The peer team recommend that the council improves this scrutiny to ensure that more councillors have a clear understanding of their business planning and delivery. This could be through deep dives or other scrutiny mechanisms used by PPIC.</p>	<p>Timeframe: Medium Term</p> <p>Status: Complete</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed governance agreements of Active 4 Today and Arkwood Confirmed existing arrangement is fit for purpose. i.e. Cabinet via Executive Shareholder committee applies scrutiny to both entities Executive Shareholder Committee to consider future opportunity to delegate focussed scrutiny of Active 4 Today and Arkwood Development Ltd to the Policy and Performance Improvement Committee <p>Lead Officer(s): Business Manager Transformation & Service Improvement</p> <p>Timeframe: Long Term</p>
<p>Recommendation 9: Review NSDCs 'out of remit' activities within the Community Plan and day to day business.</p> <p>Peer Team feedback - There is currently a very ambitious 2023-27 Community Plan, which includes about 140 projects, and some of these projects fall within the remit of other organisations. Whilst this was done with the best of intentions at the time, it is putting a strain on capacity. The council needs to carry out a review of the Community Plan, with a view to ensure that sufficient capacity would be able to deliver the Council's core services.</p>	<p>Timeframe: Medium Term</p> <p>Status: Complete</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy & Performance Improvement Committee (PPIC) established a working group to review and map any activities that may fall 'out of the remit' of a typical District Council. A cross-party working group was formed and held their first meeting in April 2025. The group have recently completed their review and their final report will be presented to PPIC in December 2025 <p>Lead Officer(s): Business Manager Transformation & Service Improvement</p> <p>Timeframe: Medium Term</p> <p>Status: Complete</p>

<p>Recommendation 10: Review the communication plan of projects linking to 'diversity and addressing inequalities in the district'.</p> <p>Peer Team feedback - Little direct reference was made in conversations during the CPC to diversity or addressing inequalities, despite the work that the council is doing in this area. For example, work to support gypsies and travellers and relations with settled communities, and positive work on the resettlement of refugees. The peer team recommend that more is made of this work, particularly when demonstrating achievement of the council's equality objectives and fulfilling its Equality Duty obligations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equality, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EEDI) lead has conducted a full review of the Council's EEDI strategic internal & external approach. This has included a review of the communication plan with a focus on maximising awareness of the work the Council is delivering to address inequalities in the district. An updated EEDI Strategy will be presented to Cabinet in January 2026 <p>Lead Officer(s): Business Manager Transformation & Service Improvement Business Manager Communication & Marketing</p> <p>Timeframe: Long Term</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation 11: Review the performance of the housing allocation service area</p> <p>Peer Team feedback - The total households on the housing waiting list as of 31st March 2023 was 89 households per 1,000. This compares reasonably with the England average of 82, but less favourably when compared to 39.4 amongst CIPFA near neighbours and 38.8 within East Midlands district councils.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carried out a full review of the housing allocation service with the aim of bringing the total number of households on the housing allocation list to a level that compares more favourably to our CIPFA neighbours A full-scale review of our housing register has been carried out and applications dropped to 2513 as at 31 March 2024. This now places us at 40.1 per 1000 households an improvement from 89.0 <p>Lead Officer(s): Business Manager Housing Services</p> <p>Timeframe: Short Term</p> <p>Status: Complete</p>

<p>Recommendation 12: Review of the staff appraisal mechanisms</p> <p>Peer Team feedback - There is a clear performance management structure in the council including Business Managers reporting performance to SLT, Cabinet and PPIC quarterly. There is an individual staff appraisal system in place, but this is not consistently carried out across the council. The peer team suggests that NSDC should consider a review of the appraisal mechanisms to build a stronger performance management culture.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reviewed current mechanism for staff appraisalsExplored opportunity to bring appraisal processes online to enable better assurance of appraisal completion and frequencyA pilot of this system is now underway with the aim of rolling out the new system out fully in early 2026 <p>Lead Officer(s): Business Manager Human Resources & Training</p> <p>Timeframe: Short Term</p> <p>Status: Complete</p>
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LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review

Newark and Sherwood District Council

11-12 December 2025

Feedback

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1. Introduction

The council undertook an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) in October 2024 and published the full report with an action plan.

The Progress Review is an integral part of the Corporate Peer Challenge process. It is designed to provide space for the council's senior leadership to:

- Receive feedback from peers on the early progress made by the council against the CPC recommendations and the council's RAG rated CPC Action Plan.
- Consider peers' reflections on any new opportunities or challenges that may have arisen since the peer team were 'on-site' including any further support needs.
- Discuss any early impact or learning from the progress made to date.

The LGA would like to thank Newark and Sherwood District Council for their commitment to sector-led improvement. This Progress Review was the next step in an ongoing, open and close relationship that the council has with LGA sector support.

2. Summary of the approach

The Progress Review at Newark and Sherwood District Council took place onsite on 11-12 December 2025.

The Progress Review focussed on each of the recommendations from the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC), under the following theme headings:

1. Review and prioritise the 2023-2027 Community Plan.
2. Review Audit, Governance, Overview and Scrutiny functions of the council to maximise councillor engagement and council productivity.
3. Ensure councillors understand the longer-term budget pressures.
4. Establish an ongoing councillor development programme.
5. Continue to foster the positive culture of the organisation.
6. Consider agreeing a Team Charter amongst the Joint Administration.

An additional area of focus is local government reorganisation (LGR) which became a priority for the council in December 2024, after the CPC took place.

For this Progress Review, the following members of the original CPC team were involved:

- Cllr Anthony McKeown, Leader High Peak Borough Council
- Cllr Georgina Hill, LGA Regional Lead Peer (Independent Group)
- Ka Ng, Chief Executive, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
- Becca Singh, Peer Challenge Manager, Local Government Association

3. Progress Review - Feedback

As stated in the CPC feedback in October 2024, the leader and chief executive are held in high regard internally and externally and both are viewed as effective. Staff and councillors are clearly committed to serving communities in the district, recognising differing needs in different places.

Fourteen months on from the CPC, there is still a positive, supportive and welcoming culture, with staff going the extra mile to support each other and the communities they serve. This is particularly important at this time of increased demand and changing council structures, and the peer team were pleased to see that this culture has been maintained and strengthened since we were last on site.

The council is still one that delivers good services and focuses strongly on customer service. Many of the staff live in the district and therefore have family and friends who are residents, customers, and clients of the council, and are proud to work for the council.

Out of the CPC's six recommendations, the council's RAG rated action plan reports that all recommendations were considered by the council, and five of them have progressed significantly. The remaining one (about establishing a charter for the administration) was considered and the council decided it was no longer appropriate with changed political realities such as LGR.

3.1. Review and prioritise the 2023-27 Community Plan

The Community Plan is the council's plan for activity, originally set by the incoming administration setting out its priorities and key activities for delivery until the next election. At the time of the CPC, the council recognised that this was too detailed and needed prioritising.

In response to the CPC feedback, the council evaluated the plan, documenting all actions delivered. It also held dedicated workshop sessions with key stakeholders, including councillors and the senior leadership team (SLT) to inform the review.

As a result, Full Council approved an updated and slimmed down Community Plan on 20 May 2025. The council also set up a working group to address issues that may be beyond the scope of a district council's core remit. This working group has now completed its work. Peers encourage the council to ensure the working group's conclusions are communicated to all councillors to support their understanding of the council's powers. For example, the working group identified opportunities for more inter-agency coordination and collaboration, which has already been taken forward (e.g. the Environment Agency reporting to the council). However, there are still some councillors disappointed with the lack of progress on issues outside the council's remit. With LGR a major focus, the peer team recommends that the council undertakes a further review of the Community Plan to affirm priorities in the remaining time available. This should consider the capacity it has to deliver cabinet's priorities alongside day-to-day business, as well as the transition phase for LGR.

These actions demonstrate the willingness of the council to learn from wider sector experience in other councils and partners and adapt as necessary. It continues to be an ambitious council, aiming to leave the best legacy possible of Newark and Sherwood District Council, doing the best for its communities right to the end.

3.2. Review Audit, Governance and Scrutiny arrangements to maximise councillor engagement and council productivity

The CPC reported that although the council did have audit, governance and scrutiny arrangements in place, the work of the two committees covering these areas of work - Audit and Governance (AGC), and Policy and Performance Improvement

Committee (PPIC) - often overlapped. Councillors were not always clear of the remit of both committees, and work programmes were developed in isolation. The CPC team encouraged the council to explore different overview and scrutiny tools such as setting up task and finish groups to engage more councillors, considering the merits of deep dives into subjects before committing officer time and resources into different areas of work.

Following the CPC, the council reviewed the terms of reference of both AGC and PPIC. This included the composition of the committees, particularly looking at governance arrangements and strengthening the code of conduct for councillors.

The review reported in May 2025, resulting in AGC remit being split between two new regulatory committees: Audit and Accounts Committee, and the Governance, General Purposes and LGR Committee (GGPLGR), with clear remits for each.

It is too early to determine how effective these changes have been, but early signs are encouraging, with positive feedback from both councillors and officers. The chairs and vice-chairs work with other committee chairs and vice-chairs to co-ordinate work programmes. This is a much more collaborative, effective and efficient way of working than before. The Audit and Accounts Committee demonstrates good practice by meeting directly with both internal and external auditors, which is a change from previous practice.

In addition, the two new committees are chaired by members of the opposition. This should be regarded as notable practice and has proved to be a successful and inclusive approach. The council also has a good record of allocating committee positions proportionately. Building on this good work, the peer team recommends that the council considers how to continue to improve the scrutiny function, which is the remit of PPIC.

Nationally, good practice is available from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny

(cfgs.org.uk), particularly the “Structures, resources and formal powers” practice guide ([Structures, resources and formal powers - a practice guide - CfGS](#)). It is important that the scrutiny function provides adequate challenge to the cabinet and undertakes a clearly different role from the audit function. The recent changes to the committee structures and remits have helped ensured this is now the case.

It is worth noting that out of the district’s 39 councillors, 36 currently sit on committees. Two of the remaining three are newly elected through by-elections, and the third is a substitute member of a committee. This ensures that all councillors, across the political spectrum, are involved in decision-making.

The increase in the use of councillor working groups has helped to develop an inclusive approach to the council’s scrutiny functions. It will be important to ensure that working groups enhance decision-making without delaying it, and provide a focused, efficient resolution to the issues they explore.

3.3. Improve councillor understanding of long-term budget pressures

Since the CPC and review of the council’s audit and governance functions, the Section 151 and deputy Section 151 officers delivered finance training for councillors. This included the council’s statutory responsibilities, financial governance and budgetary control. A budget planning workshop was held in October 2025 focused on the medium-term financial plan and budget setting. Whilst improving participation across six different political groups, plus non-aligned councillors takes considerable officer resource, the council is committed to ensuring full involvement of councillors, particularly in financial arrangements.

Recent decisions demonstrate that this investment in councillors’ learning, and development has resulted in increased awareness of long-term budget pressures. Councillors are asking more knowledgeable questions of officers about resources, and there is a more considered approach to decision-making.

The council has been successful in being awarded various funds, for example:

- £19.5m in March 2025 for a decade-long investment (2026-2036) in town centre transformation following Town Deal success
- £20m Levelling Up 3 funds for Ollerton and Clipstone

- and around £1.35m allocated for 2025/26 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity fund to support businesses, skills, and young people

The government has not yet set the timescale for financing LGR; when this happens, councillors may need further support to understand the implications of how this could have an impact on the financial position. The LGA has provided a series of guidance notes on LGR and finance which the council may find useful:

[Local government reorganisation: Finance essentials | Local Government Association](#)

3.4. Establish an ongoing councillor development programme

Newark and Sherwood District Council is, and always has been, committed to supporting ongoing development of its councillors to maintain high standards.

Following the CPC, and review of its committee functions, in June 2025, a councillor training day provided a refresher for new and more experienced councillors.

The new GPLGR committee is responsible for councillor development and has established a working group to identify specific wants and needs of councillors. It is important that the council uses the feedback from training that has already been provided to inform councillor development plans.

Managing expectations is essential to a councillor's role, for example when a member of the public requests something that is outside a district council's remit or requires a statutory process to follow to resolve the issue. It is important for councillors to consult with officers as appropriate and be more confident in how they respond to such requests, especially when it may mean turning down, or refusing something. Councillors need to be clear on the remit and powers of the district council and can help to direct questioners to the right path.

There may be additional areas that councillors need extra support on - particularly in understanding the implications of LGR and their role as councillors during different stages of this process - that the officers will need to advise on. The LGA can also provide support around LGR.

3.5. Continue to foster the positive culture of the organisation

The chief executive has put significant energy and resource to developing a positive culture, which was very noticeable at the time of the CPC. In all the ambitious work that the council wants to achieve, the positive culture has been maintained, and officers continue to enjoy working for Newark and Sherwood District Council and demonstrate their dedication to the work. Partners speak highly of the culture at the council, and how good it is to work with the council, both on the CPC and on the Progress Review.

The peer team recognises that the sector is now in a challenging climate, such as scarcity of resources to support communities. Senior managers recognise the pressure frontline staff can be under and have taken steps to foster the positive culture across the organisation. This has included extra communications staff roadshows, increasing integration with staff based outside Castle House, and continuing the staff awards scheme.

Staff remain dedicated to doing a good job and still go the extra mile to achieve a positive resolution for the residents they serve. Staff, and the peer team, are grateful for the support that they receive from senior managers. This is particularly difficult at a time of considerable change through LGR, and it is good to see this continue to be a priority for the council.

3.6. Consider a Team Charter for the joint administration

The election in 2023 returned a council under no overall control. The council considered setting out a charter for the coalition administration setting out how the different parties would work together. This involved researching and talking to other councils in a similar political situation. However, at that time, it was felt that this would not add value to the political relationships that existed and instead focused on drawing up the Community Plan. The CPC in 2024 suggested the administration revisited the idea, to maintain a strong coalition between all the parties involved. The council considered it amongst other CPC recommendations, but it is not something that the council's politicians, of all the coalition parties, feel would be useful.

There is a fine political balance, with an administration comprising different political groups and operating in a minority. Some relationships between and within political

groups are being strained, but the coalition is continuing to work together.

The CPC team also suggested establishing a communications protocol, and a review of its Code of Conduct. The GPLGR committee is considering a communications protocol, and the monitoring officer is working with councillors to review the Code of Conduct.

There has been a significant increase in the number of Code of Conduct complaints in the last eighteen months. They are largely between district councillors, and between parish councillors. The current complaints process may not be fit for purpose, as many complaints are being treated as a Code of Conduct complaint when this may not be appropriate. This puts a strain on political relationships.

As a result of the number of investigations – with over 30 currently being investigated – the council has taken on additional staff to address the backlog. The Monitoring Officer is currently updating the complaints procedure to address these challenges. The peer team recommend that when the complaints procedures have been revised, all councillors familiarise themselves with the changes. The Monitoring Officer will have to work with parish council clerks to improve the understanding of parish and town councillors.

The CPC team noted that when councillors communicate on social media, members of the public may not be able to distinguish easily if the message represents the view of the council or a private view of the member. It is encouraging to see that the GPLGR committee will be reviewing the Social Media Protocol in the near future.

3.7. Local Government Reorganisation

Newark and Sherwood District Council submitted its final proposal for LGR on 28 November 2025. Three proposals have been submitted for the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire area, each proposing to replace the current nine councils with two unitary councils, but with different boundaries. Two councils in the county have chosen not to support any option.

Throughout the process, Newark and Sherwood District Council has demonstrated good community leadership by being actively involved in negotiations at both officer and councillor levels. Partner councils highlighted the commitment Newark and

Sherwood District Council showed through ensuring officer time and resources are available to work on these issues.

The peer team suggests that the council considers the potential risks with the two council-owned companies, Arkwood and Active4Today, through the LGR process. It will be important to continue applying appropriate scrutiny and oversight of them, and that the business plans are thoroughly reviewed to support strong assurance and risk management through the LGR process.

The council has three key objectives for the transition to the new councils:

- Leave a legacy of a high performing, financially resilient council with completed and progressed key regeneration capital projects.
- Contribute fully and influentially to the shaping and establishment of the new councils.
- Support our colleagues to take advantage of opportunities presented by LGR.

The peer team want to acknowledge this positive approach.

4. Final thoughts and next steps

The LGA would like to thank Newark and Sherwood District Council for undertaking an LGA CPC Progress Review. The review marks the end of the CPC process for this cycle, but not the end of the relationship between the council and the LGA.

We have an on-going offer of support to councils through sector-led improvement. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas identified for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this.

Mark Edgell (Principal Adviser) is the main point of contact between the authority and the Local Government Association (LGA) and his e-mail address is Mark.Edgell@local.gov.uk.

Further information, support, and resources on LGR/Devolution, can be found on the [LGA's devolution and LGR Hub website](#).



Report to: Cabinet Meeting: 20 January 2026

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Paul Peacock, Strategy, Performance & Finance

Director Lead: Sanjiv Kohli, Deputy Chief Executive & Director - Resources

Lead Officer: Andrew Bayliss, Transactional Finance Manager, Ext. 5537
Phil Ward, Business Manager – Revenues & Benefits, Ext. 5347

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open Report / Non-Key Decision
Report Title	Council Tax Support for Terminally Ill Residents
Purpose of Report	<p>To provide elected Members with information and options for supporting terminally ill residents by providing council tax support through discretionary measures.</p> <p>This report recommends the establishment of a discretionary Council Tax Relief Scheme to support households facing the hardship of living with a terminally ill family member.</p>
Recommendations	<p>That Cabinet approve:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Option 3 as detailed in paragraph 2.4.3 of the report; and the Discretionary Council Tax Relief Scheme to support households facing the hardship of living with a terminally ill family member, as set out at Appendix A to the report.
Alternative Options Considered	Alternative options considered are set out in paragraphs 2.4.1, 2.4.2 and 2.4.4 of this report
Reason for Recommendations	<p>The recommended option supports the recommendation of Marie Curie to develop schemes to provide support to households on a low income that include someone living with a terminal illness. The recommended option is affordable to the Council, as identified in the report and the financial implications.</p> <p>The recommended option aligns to Ambition 3 in the Community Plan to 'Improve health and wellbeing, with an emphasis on communities with lower levels of life expectancy'.</p>

1.0 Background

- 1.1 During 2024, Marie Curie, the UK's leading end of life charity, published a report that explored poverty and fuel poverty at the end of life in the UK. The report identified that in 2023, 111,000 people died in poverty, more than one in six deaths registered in England, Scotland and Wales.
- 1.2 At full Council on 21 October 2025, a motion was proposed and unanimously supported to '*establish a PPIC working group to consider the development of an appropriate policy for Council Tax Exemption for those with a terminal illness, or a partner or family member within the same household, as part of the local tax reduction scheme*'.
- 1.3 Council tax exemptions and discounts are set in legislation and cannot be amended by individual authorities. There is no statutory council tax exemption or relief that can be awarded to residents living with a terminal illness. There is an existing statutory exemption for properties left empty by a resident living in a care or nursing home, which may remove the need for some residents with a terminal illness to be covered by any adopted discretionary scheme.
- 1.4 Section 13A(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, provides Councils with discretionary powers to reduce the amount of council tax payable for individuals, or for specific classes of council taxpayers who find themselves in similar 'exceptional' circumstances. Where the powers detailed above are invoked, it includes the power to reduce an amount to nil. The Council has already invoked this power in establishing a 'care leavers reduction scheme' providing a reduction in council tax to those people in the district defined as care leavers. Any decision made under section 13A is funded locally from the general fund and cannot be passed to other council tax preceptors through the collection fund. In this respect, any decision made must be funded by Newark & Sherwood residents and budgeted for fully in the Councils accounts.
- 1.5 On 1 December 2025, this report was presented to and considered by the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee and sought to provide Members with information and options for supporting terminally ill residents by providing council tax support through discretionary measures.

At that meeting it was agreed by the committee to endorse and recommend to Cabinet:

- a) the approval of the preferred Option 3 as detailed in the report;
- b) that Officers be instructed to develop a Discretionary Council Tax Relief Scheme to support households facing the hardship of living with a terminally ill family member.

- 1.6 The remainder of this report sets out those options together with proposing the discretionary scheme as recommended by PPIC.

2.0 Proposal/Options Considered

2.1 Information obtained from the Council's Housing, Health & Wellbeing team has identified there were, as at 1 October 2025, 1,453 people within the Newark & Sherwood district with an end-of-life diagnosis. We are unable to confirm how many of these people are resident in hospitals, care or residential homes and how many are receiving care in the homes of family members. We also have no address information which would enable assessment of council tax banding and eligibility to other council tax exemptions or discounts.

2.2 The lack of definitive information makes accurate costing difficult due to the numbers of unknowns. We are, however, able to make some assumptions in order to provide costed options set out below.

2.3 Newark & Sherwood District Council has a council tax budget of £8.484m in 2025/26. The ability to increase council tax levels is limited (without the requirement for a referendum) by the local government finance settlement. It is anticipated that the 2026/27 settlement will allow for an increase in council tax precepts at district council level to be set at 2.99% or £5, whichever is the higher. This would enable the council tax budget to be increased to an estimated £8.819m in 2026/27 (allowing for an increase in the property base of 400 band D properties), an increase of £0.335m, if the maximum increases were applied.

2.4 Several options for a discretionary support scheme for households facing the hardship of living with a terminally ill family member have been considered and indicative costings provided based on the limited information held. Details of each option are provided below:

2.4.1 **Option 1** – Develop a scheme to provide 100% council tax relief to all households within the Newark & Sherwood district impacted by having a relative living in the household who has been diagnosed as receiving end-of-life care. This option limits the exposure to provision of the relief to the direct household. Information provided above suggests 1,453 residents in the district are living with an end-of-life diagnosis. What is not known is how many of those 1,453 residents are living in private accommodation and therefore eligible for council tax relief. The table below gives an estimate of the cost of this scheme on the assumption of relief to 1,453 households.

Property Band	Band charge in 2025/26	Cost of relief (1,453 properties)
Band D	£2,582	£3,751,646
Band A	£1,721	£2,500,613

Therefore, the estimated cost of this Option 1 will be between £2,500,613 and £3,751,646. This range of cost is not affordable for the council.

2.4.2 **Option 2** - Develop a scheme to provide 100% council tax relief to all households within the Newark & Sherwood district impacted by having a relative who has been diagnosed as receiving end-of-life care. This would be provided irrespective of where the individual who has been diagnosed lives. It is not possible to cost this option as we only have details of those residents in the N&S district who have been diagnosed. This option could provide relief to multiple households, where adult children of the diagnosed patient reside in properties in our district. Given that option 1 above has an indicative cost of circa £3m and this option 2 would potentially provide support to significantly higher numbers, the estimated cost could be more than £5m annually. This is not affordable for the Council.

2.4.3 **Option 3** - Develop a scheme to provide 100% council tax relief to all households who are in receipt of relief through the local council tax relief scheme (LCTR) within the Newark & Sherwood district impacted by having a relative living in the household who has been diagnosed as receiving end-of-life care. This option limits the exposure to provision of the relief to the direct household, but only where the occupants of the household have limited finances and are supported through our LCTR scheme. This option aligns with the recommendation of the Marie Curie charity that local authorities should review council tax and discretionary support schemes to provide support to households on a low income.

Within the district there are 58,790 residential properties, latest data indicates that 6,685 households receive support through the LCTR scheme. Of those 6,685 households, 2,806 are of pension age and are already eligible for up to 100% council tax relief. This leaves 3,879 working age council tax support recipients, who already receive up to 80% council tax relief (circa 7% of the total properties). 93% of LCTR recipients of working age are resident in properties in council tax bands A or B. If we assume an end-of-life diagnosis is not linked to LCTR eligibility (i.e. not linked to income), applying the same percentage to the 1,453 end-of-life residents reduces this figure to 96. The table below gives an estimate of the cost of this scheme on the assumption of relief to 96 households, with a requirement for a top-up of 20% relief and thereby giving 100% council tax relief.

Property Band	Band Charge in 2025/26 at 80% LCTR	Cost of Relief (96 properties – 20% top-up relief)
Band D	£516.40	£49,507
Band A	£344.27	£33,005

Therefore, the estimated cost of Option 3 is between £33,005 and £49,507. This is affordable for the Council, and it is recommended that the budget for the first year, 2026/27, is set at £50,000.

2.4.4 **Option 4** - Develop a scheme to provide 100% council tax relief to all households who are in receipt of relief through the local council tax relief scheme (LCTR) within the Newark & Sherwood district where the council tax liable party, subject to the LCTR claim, has been diagnosed as receiving end-of-life care. This option limits the exposure to provision of the relief to the council taxpayer only, and only where the taxpayers have limited finances and are supported through our LCTR scheme. This would further reduce the estimated 96 households by removing the

resident in the household being diagnosed eligibility. If this were to halve the prospective numbers, to 48 households, it would reduce the estimated cost of the scheme to those in the table below.

Property Band	Band charge in 2025/26 at 80% LCTR	Cost of relief (48 properties – 20% top-up relief)
Band D	£516.40	£24,787
Band A	£344.27	£16,181

Therefore, the estimated cost of Option 4 is between £16,181 and £24,787. This is affordable for the council.

2.5 Based on the options provided above, the recommendation would be to further develop option 3, a scheme which provides support to existing LCTR recipients by increasing their relief to 100%. This option also appears to best support the recommendation of Marie Curie to develop schemes to provide support to households on a low income that include someone living with a terminal illness.

2.6 Further options could be considered and costed to cap the amount of relief available to an equivalent banded level, for example cap the relief to the equivalent of the council tax level at band A. However, these options would not provide 100% relief to any council taxpayers other than those in a band A property and would not relieve the residents of the council tax burden. These options would also not best fit with the recommendations of the Marie Curie report.

2.7 **Eligibility**
Whichever option is decided upon, scheme eligibility should be determined by a number of mandatory elements, preventing staff from having to apply discretion in a time of extreme difficulty for the recipients. As a minimum the criteria should be set to:

- Your residence is in the Newark & Sherwood District
- You, your partner or a family member in your household is terminally ill
- The household is in receipt of council tax support through the LCTR scheme
- You are in receipt of a clinician completed **SR1 form**, which advises that the named person:
 - has a progressive disease, and
 - because of that disease, the expected remaining life of the patient is less than 12 months.

2.8 The developed scheme would start from 1st April 2026, with no relief backdated prior to that date. The scheme would pay the relief from the date the **SR1** applies (or 1 April 2026 where the date is earlier) and allow for relief to be paid until the end of the financial year during which death occurs, unless they die in March in which case relief will be paid to the end of the financial year and also cover April of the following financial year. If the named person does not die within the 12 months as anticipated, there must be no claw back of relief paid and it should be on-going until they do pass.

Guidance has been developed to enable the scheme to be operated, this guidance is shown at appendix A.

2.9 As with all other relevant Council Tax related local policies and decisions, any approved scheme relating to Council Tax Support for Terminally Ill Residents will need to be reconsidered by March 2028 by the new unitary authority to continue beyond April 2028.

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Implications Considered			
Yes – relevant and included / NA – not applicable			
Financial	Yes	Equality & Diversity	N/A
Human Resources	N/A	Human Rights	N/A
Legal	Yes	Data Protection	N/A
Digital & Cyber Security	N/A	Safeguarding	N/A
Sustainability	N/A	Crime & Disorder	N/A
LGR	N/A	Tenant Consultation	N/A

Financial Implications FIN25-26/7118

3.1 Any decision to award relief under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 must be met entirely by the general fund and cannot be passed on to the collection fund and therefore shared with preceptors. Depending on the final structure of the potential scheme to support households on a low income that include someone living with a terminal illness, the Council will need to make appropriate budget adjustments to accommodate any awards.

The Council currently holds a balance of £26,283 in grant receipts in advance from a government Council Tax hardship grant. This amount could be used to partially fund the new scheme. However, once this funding is exhausted, any remaining costs will need to be covered by the General Fund.

As detailed in the main body of the report, options 1 and 2 are not financially viable for the Council. Option 3 is the recommended approach. If option 3 is approved, an additional budget of £50,000 will be included in the proposed 2026–27 General Fund budget. Of this, £26,283 will be funded from the available grant, resulting in a net budget increase of £23,717 for 2026–27. For subsequent years within the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) period, the budget will increase by £50,000 annually.

Legal Implications LEG2526/385

3.2 Section 13A(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, provides Councils with a discretionary power to reduce the amount of council tax payable by individuals and to allow a further reduction to those already benefitting from the authority's council tax reduction scheme.

Section 13A(6) of the act allows the power under (1)(c) to reduce the amount to nil and Section 13A(7) allows the power to be exercised in relation to particular cases or by determining a class of case.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None

Council Tax Support for Terminally Ill Residents**Introduction**

During 2024, Marie Curie, the UK's leading end of life charity, published a report that explored poverty and fuel poverty at the end of life in the UK. The report identified that in 2023, 111,000 people died in poverty, more than one in six deaths registered in England, Scotland and Wales.

Section 13A(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, provides Councils with a discretionary power to reduce the amount of council tax payable by individuals and to allow a further reduction to those already benefitting from the authority's council tax reduction scheme. Section 13A(6) of the act allows the power under (1)(c) to reduce the amount to nil and Section 13A(7) allows the power to be exercised in relation to particular cases or by determining a class of case.

Any decision made under section 13A is funded locally from the general fund and cannot be passed to other council tax preceptors through the collection fund. In this respect, any decision made must be funded by Newark & Sherwood residents and budgeted for fully in the Councils accounts.

Newark & Sherwood District Council (the Council) Scheme

The Councils scheme is to provide 100% council tax relief to all households (including single person residents) who are in existing receipt of relief through the local council tax relief scheme (LCTR) within the Newark & Sherwood district impacted by having been diagnosed as receiving end-of-life care or having a relative living in the household who has been diagnosed as receiving end-of-life care.

For the purposes of this scheme a relative is determined a member of another person's family if:

- he or she lives with that person as a couple
- one of them is related to the other
- or is a relative of one member of the couple.

and where

- 'couple' means two people who are married to each other or live together as husband and wife (or equivalent same sex partnership)
- 'relative' means a parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece or first cousin* (*a child of a parent's sibling; nephew or niece of a parent; a child of an uncle or aunt; someone who shares common grandparents but not parents)
- a half-blood relationship is treated the same as a whole blood relationship
- a stepchild of a person is to be treated as his/her child.

Scheme Eligibility

As a discretionary scheme, each case must be considered individually against a set of eligibility criteria. As a minimum the criteria for eligibility to the Councils scheme is

- Your residence is in the Newark & Sherwood District
- You, your partner or a relative residing in your household is terminally ill
- The household is in receipt of council tax support through the Councils LCTR scheme
- You are in receipt of a clinician completed **SR1 form**, which advises that the named person:
 - has a progressive disease, and
 - because of that disease, the expected remaining life of the patient is less than 12 months.

Scheme duration

- This scheme will start from 1st April 2026, with no relief backdated prior to that date.
- The scheme will pay the relief from the date the **SR1** applies (or 1st April 2026 where the date is earlier) and allow for relief to be paid until the end of the financial year during which death occurs, unless they die in March in which case relief will be paid to the end of the financial year and also cover April of the following financial year.
- If the named person does not die within the 12 months as anticipated, there will be no claw back of relief paid and payment of relief be on-going until they do pass, or the scheme is ended.



Report to: Cabinet Meeting: 20 January 2026

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Paul Peacock - Strategy, Performance & Finance

Director Lead: Sanjiv Kohli, Deputy Chief Executive, Director - Resources & S151 Officer

Lead Officer: Nick Wilson, Business Manager – Financial Services. Ext 5317

Report Summary	
Type of Report	<p>Open Report / Key Decision</p> <p><i>There is an exempt version of this report which contains exempt information as defined under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, Paragraph 3 under which the Cabinet has the power to exclude the press and public if it so wishes.</i></p> <p><i>It is considered that the need to treat the information in this report as exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosure because it contains commercially sensitive information. This information has been redacted in this open report.</i></p>
Report Title	Arkwood Loan Facility Agreement
Purpose of Report	To provide an update on the current credit facility with Arkwood Developments Ltd. and to seek approval to extend the loan cap to accommodate the company's current development programme.
Recommendations	<p>That Cabinet approve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the additional £13,591,929 to be added to the Capital programme, making a total capital budget of £25m; b) the variation to the Facility Agreement to accommodate the power to vary the agreement and the extension to the cap on the facility from £12m to £25m; and c) subject to the subsidy control advice, to delegate responsibility to the Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Performance & Finance to amend the Facility Agreement to ensure the agreement remains subsidy control compliant.
Alternative Options Considered	Should the recommendation not be approved, this would impact on Arkwood's ability to be able to progress the sites they are contractually obliged to complete and would force the company to seek external finance.

Reason for Recommendations	<p>To ensure that the Council's wholly owned company are able to meet their contractual commitments and complete the existing developments. This aligns with Ambition two within the Council's Community Plan ensuring which has a specific action relating to:</p> <p>"Develop new homes for open market sale or rent through Arkwood Developments Ltd."</p>
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1.0 Background

- 1.1 Arkwood Developments Ltd. currently have a capital budget of £11,408,071, which was approved by the Policy & Finance Committee on 23 January 2020. This was on the basis of 75% of the Gross Development Value of the Bowbridge Road scheme, which was Arkwood's first development. This loan facility is currently subject to a [REDACTED] rate of interest.
- 1.2 Arkwood have successfully developed and sold 87 market value homes: namely The Avenues on Bowbridge Road. In the past two years, Arkwood have also acquired the site on Lowfield Lane and 3 other sites outside of District which are at different stages of development. The current progress on these sites was recently reported to the Executive Shareholder Committee on 9 December 2025.
- 1.3 The loan facility works in the way that loan advances are made when Arkwood need to incur expenditure such as salaries, SLA costs or other overheads and contractor payments for the development of sites. When sales revenue is received by Arkwood, in the first instance any outstanding loaned amount is repaid to the Council. The facility is there to ensure that Arkwood have the cash available when necessary to ensure that it can meet its contractual obligations.
- 1.4 To date, the company have operated within the existing financial cap, despite the economic challenges faced by the business, in its infancy, by Covid, the war in Ukraine, and the insolvency of its main contractor on its first development site. , The company has not during this period come close to breaching its borrowing cap and as at 5 December the amount borrowed from the Council stood at £7,952,500 albeit this figure has fluctuated in the years since 2020.
- 1.5 The original report that was tabled at the Policy & Finance Committee on 6 April 2017 described four ways in which the Council would benefit financially through a wholly-owned company:

Receipts from land sold by the Council to the Company

To date the Council has sold two parcels of land to Arkwood totalling £4,791,911, being the land at Bowbridge Road in Newark and Lowfield Lane in Balderton.

Interest on loans to the Company

Since the facility agreement was put into place in 2021, Arkwood have paid the Council £0.098m in interest expense up until 31 March 2025. As the company has been able to reinvest the cash from the profits generated from the Bowbridge Road development, it has lowered its requirement for borrowing. This is anticipated to increase over the next few years, based on their business plan, as the number of sites being developed has increased and the cash from the profits from Bowbridge Road having been utilised on the purchase of new sites outside of the district and administrative expenses.

Purchase of services from the Council

Arkwood has entered into Service Level Agreements with a number of Business Units within the Council, to provide services to it e.g. Payroll, Finance, HR, Health & Safety. As such to 31 March 2025, Arkwood have paid the Council £0.301m in expenses for these services. Whilst the company has grown in establishment since inception, there are many services for which it will continue to seek from the Council, and as such will continue to purchase into the future.

Distributions of profit made by the Company through dividends

Based on Arkwood's accounts made up to 31 March 2025, they are currently reporting a cumulative loss of £39,293, with total equity in the company of £3.960m. Whilst the company has total assets worth £8.134m, short-term and longer-term creditors make up £4.174m (of which £3.214m related to the borrowed amount from the Council). Due to this, Arkwood are yet to be able to pay a dividend to the Council. Arkwood's original business plan, presented to the Shareholder Committee 11 June 2019 anticipated that, alongside the development at Bowbridge Road, sites at Elm Avenue, Newark; Lowfield Lane, Balderton; Crew Lane, Southwell and Ollerton & Boughton were all due to be completed prior to March 2024 and anticipated a forecast profit on development costs of [REDACTED]. Although the business plan referenced developments outside of the district, it was anticipated that this would be after all of the developments within the district had been delivered. Due to the delays and non-availability of these sites, Arkwood has now accelerated housing developments outside of the district. Overhead costs would then need to be accounted for. Since inception, these costs have amounted to £2.9m. Therefore, taking the forecast development profit of [REDACTED] and deducting the actual overhead costs of £2.9m would have meant that the company would potentially have made a profit before taxation of [REDACTED] which, after corporation tax at 20% would have given rise to profits of [REDACTED] available for dividend if the schemes had come forward, at the originally anticipated time, albeit there may have been an additional interest requirement but it would not have reduced available profits down to a level whereby a dividend would not have been payable.

- 1.6 The Council has therefore generated cumulative revenue of 9.96% (£0.399m) return on its £4m equity investment in Arkwood to the end of 31 March 2025 (prior to capital receipts), with a total receipt of £5,190,499 (inclusive of capital receipts).

It anticipates this figure rising to over 20% by 31 March 2026 due to the borrowing Arkwood anticipates to need over the remaining course of this financial year.

- 1.7 This return is further anticipated to increase over the medium term, as the developments mature, with anticipated annual returns in excess of 30%, meaning that the £4m equity would be fully recouped by 2028/29.

2.0 Proposal/Options Considered

- 2.1 In order to accommodate the current developments progressing, there is a need to increase the maximum permitted facility.
- 2.2 Currently the maximum amount that could be loaned to the company is £11,408,071. Based on Arkwood's forecast Medium Term Financial Plan, they are expecting a spike in borrowing requirement which is forecast to be in excess of the current facility cap over the next half year.
- 2.3 In order to ensure that Arkwood can deliver against its commitments there is a need to increase the current cap to a proposed £25m. The £25m includes head room of £3.787m against the current forecast maximum point, meaning should sales receipts not materialise, or earlier than expected spend occur, there is sufficient head room within the agreement to accommodate the additional borrowing requirement.
- 2.4 This also then future proofs the agreement against future spikes in cash flow requirement.
- 2.5 Within the facility agreement there is a clause in relation to the maximum loan to value calculation allowable. Currently the maximum loan to value is recognised as 75%, meaning that the loaned value must not account for more than 75% of the company's assets. Hence the company must have self-funded 25% of the value of the assets that are owned.

As Arkwood have utilised the equity funding and the profits generated from the Bowbridge Road facility in order to fund their administrative costs and current and future pipelines, this has meant that a larger proportion of the next stage of development costs are likely to be needed to be funded by borrowing. As a result it is expected to need to increase this loan to value ratio for a period of time in order to accommodate the current developments. It is expected to raise the cap to 90%.

- 2.6 The Council has a debenture in place, which safeguards the Council's interests in the loan. This debenture secures the Council as first mortgagee *of all estates or interests in any freehold, leasehold or commonhold property now owned by it*.
- 2.7 Therefore, the loan is secured against tangible assets purchased and built by Arkwood. These are bought and built at commercially competitive rates therefore there is unlikely to be a negative equity situation arise. As the land purchased will appreciate over time by obtaining planning and readying for development, or value of work completed over the build phase is amassed, there will be value in these assets that could be crystallised to repay the loan, should there be a situation where the Council had to step in and take ownership of the assets.

- 2.8 In order to ensure that the facility agreement continues to be subsidy control compliant post the proposed changes, the Council have engaged with a financial advisor. At the time of writing this report, the Council has yet to receive the advice.
- 2.9 It is not expected that the facility cap will be maximised indefinitely. The cap will give headroom for the maximum point for which borrowing can occur up to and can be reviewed at points going forward. It will just give the head room necessary, whilst a number of projects are being undertaken at one point in time and hence Arkwood doesn't currently have the reserves (and hence cash) available to fund this.
- 2.10 Future expectations, based on the Medium-Term Financial Plan that has been approved by Arkwood's board show a positive position post the current developments, whereby dividends will be payable, whilst simultaneously the company will grow in Balance Sheet net worth.
- 2.11 Where the company is able to grow their Balance Sheet net worth, this will allow them to be able to withstand spikes in cashflow, reducing their borrowing requirements from the Council.
- 2.12 The facility agreement will continue to be reviewed in line with Arkwood's Medium Term Financial Plan, to ensure that the Council isn't overexposed at any point in time.

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Implications Considered			
Yes – relevant and included / NA – not applicable			
Financial	Yes	Equality & Diversity	N/A
Human Resources	N/A	Human Rights	N/A
Legal	Yes	Data Protection	N/A
Digital & Cyber Security	N/A	Safeguarding	N/A
Sustainability	N/A	Crime & Disorder	N/A
LGR	N/A	Tenant Consultation	N/A

Financial Implications - Fin25-26/3298

- 3.1 The current capital limit as set in January 2020, was based upon the Gross Development Value of the Bowbridge Road scheme, as described at paragraph 1.1. As further sites were due to come forward, it was anticipated that at some point, this cap would need to be reviewed to ensure that it is still fit for purpose. With the cap being an arbitrary limit based on the initial site, there would always need to be a further review at a point in time to ensure that future cash flow requirements could be accommodated. The aforementioned report of 23 January 2020, set out the basis of the loan to equity split as 75% loan and 25% equity based on the

estimated development cost of £16m for Bowbridge Road. If the same principal of loan to equity ratio is applied then the total development cost of the sites at Lowfield Lane, Newark; Edwards Way, Cambridge; Harlem Mill, Wirksworth; and Main Road, Long Bennington is £64m. The amount of Loan at 75% would be £48m and the amount of equity at 25% would be £16m. The proposal is to not add further equity into the company but to increase the loan facility to £25m. The cash flow within the company will be able to accommodate the remaining expenditure necessary, through sales receipts being recycled to cross subsidise development works.

Legal Implications - LEG2526/6796

- 3.2 The Localism Act 2011 under section 1 gives the Council the "power to do anything that individuals generally may do", and may do it "for, or otherwise than for, the benefit of the authority, its area or persons resident or present in its area". These powers give the Council the power to arrange and extend the proposed loan on the basis outlined within this report.
- 3.3 As mentioned above in paragraph 2.8, the Council must ensure that the loan provision complies with the Subsidy Control Act 2022 which requires that the council ensure that the interest rate for the loan and the commercial basis upon which it is based is equivalent to any offered on the commercial market - thereby not conferring an unfair and anti-competitive advantage.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None



Report to: Cabinet Meeting: 20 January 2026

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Paul Peacock, Strategy, Performance & Finance
Councillor Susan Crosby, Health, Wellbeing & Leisure

Director Leads: Sanjiv Kohli, Deputy Chief Executive & Director – Resources
Suzanne Shead, Director - Housing, Health & Wellbeing

Lead Officer: Jenna Norton, Senior Accountant, Financial Services, Ext. 5327

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open Report / Key Decision
Report Title	The Management and Operation of the Council's Leisure Facilities under an Agency Model
Purpose of Report	To present the proposal of moving to an Agency model of delivery for Leisure Services by Active 4 Today Ltd (A4T).
Recommendations	<p>That Cabinet:</p> <p>a) approve a change to the Leisure Management Agreement between Newark & Sherwood District Council and Active 4 Today such that the company becomes an 'Agent' of the Council in the delivery of Leisure Services; and</p> <p>b) delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Resources and S151 Officer to vary the existing contract to an Agency Model arrangement and enter into all necessary agreements to implement the proposals.</p>
Alternative Options Considered	To continue under the existing contract with Active 4 Today acting as Principal and would continue to incur irrecoverable VAT which a revised contract would eliminate.
Reason for Recommendations	This opportunity follows the successful litigation taken by Chelmsford City Council (and others) "the Chelmsford ruling"). The ruling confirmed as being non-business all supplies of local authority leisure services that were previously taxable (liable to VAT at the zero rate, reduced or standard rate) or VAT exempt.

1.0 Background

1.1 The Council's wholly owned 'not for profit' leisure company, Active4Today (A4T), has been delivering leisure and sports development on behalf of the Council since 2015. A4T is currently engaged to act as Principal in providing leisure facilities to the public. However, together with the Council, they are considering changing the delivery model so that A4T acts in the Council's name (as its Agent) to provide the leisure services.

2.0 Current Position

2.1 The current contractual arrangements with A4T reflect a long-established and widely adopted model for leisure outsourcing within local authorities. This structure was considered the most VAT-efficient at the time, as it transferred significant levels of VAT-exempt business activity to a separate entity, thereby protecting the Council's wider VAT recovery position under the partial exemption rules (as a Section 33 body, the Council is able to recover VAT on its exempt activities, provided the total does not exceed the 5% de minimis threshold). However, because leisure fees charged to the public are classified as VAT-exempt, A4T incurred additional costs in the form of irrecoverable VAT. The current annual cost to A4T for irrecoverable VAT is in the region of £236,000.

2.2 The opportunity to change the status, or capacity, under which A4T will provide the services follows the recent successful litigation taken by Chelmsford City Council (and Others) (["the Chelmsford Ruling"](#)). The ruling confirmed that all local authority leisure service supplies—whether previously subject to VAT (at zero, reduced, or standard rates) or exempt—are now classified as non-business activities. Not only should the non-business treatment be applied in the future, but it should also be applied in the past (the statutory four-year time limit for VAT reclaims).

2.3 In 2011, the Council joined several other local authorities in submitting claims to HMRC for the overpayment of VAT on Sporting Services - most notably through the [London Borough of Ealing case](#). These claims were made in anticipation of a potential change in VAT treatment, which was ultimately confirmed by the Chelmsford ruling. Throughout this period, the Council continued to correctly account for output VAT in accordance with the rules applicable at the time, prior to the recent reclassification of such services as non-business. The Council maintained this approach until the establishment of A4T. The total value of the claims submitted amounted to £213,894.22, which was reimbursed by HMRC following the update to its VAT manual in November 2023, along with £32,668.47 in statutory interest during 2024/25.

3.0 Proposal

3.1 Following consultation with our tax advisors and legal specialists in this field, the Council are proposing to amend the existing Leisure Management Agreement between the Council and the leisure company. The proposed restructure would designate the Council as the 'Principal' in the agreement, with A4T acting as 'Agent' on its behalf. This change means that income generated by the leisure centres would

be treated as income belonging to the Council and therefore included in the Council's VAT returns. As a result, VAT that was previously irrecoverable could now be recovered going forward—while recognising that VAT had been correctly accounted for under the rules in place prior to the recent change in treatment. The Council would, in turn, pay a management fee to A4T to cover the costs of operating the services.

- 3.2 There will be no changes to the day-to-day operations of A4T. Service delivery, and customer experience will remain unaffected. The only operational change will be in the financial reporting and VAT treatment of income, which will be managed in consultation with the Council's VAT advisors to ensure full compliance.
- 3.3 The revised agreement will be subject to legal review and approval by both parties. A transition plan will be developed to manage the changeover, including updates to financial systems, VAT processes, and internal controls. Risk is considered low due to the Council's ownership of A4T and the clear legal precedent established by the Chelmsford ruling.

4.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Implications Considered			
Yes – relevant and included / NA – not applicable			
Financial	Y	Equality & Diversity	NA
Human Resources	NA	Human Rights	NA
Legal	Y	Data Protection	NA
Digital & Cyber Security	NA	Safeguarding	NA
Sustainability	NA	Crime & Disorder	NA
LGR	NA	Tenant Consultation	NA

Financial Implications - FIN25-26/1944

- 4.1 The allocated budget for 2025/26 Active4Today management fee is £109,390. Quarter 2 budget monitoring forecast that this expenditure would not be incurred, generating a saving to the council.
- 4.2 The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) approved by Full Council in March 2025 assumed a £142,000 saving in 2026/27 arising from the reduction of the management fee as a result of the review of leisure management ([MTFP Full Council report](#)). In line with this assumption and consistent with this proposal outlined above, the budget for 2026/27 onwards has been adjusted accordingly to reflect this saving.
- 4.3 Future income and expenditure budgets will be set in collaboration with A4T and aligned with the business plan approved by the A4T board.

Legal Implications - LEG2526/9978

4.4 Cabinet is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report. The Legal team have advised on this matter and specialist external legal support has been obtained to support in the preparation of the relevant documents.

Active4Today Comments

4.5 As part of the process for investigating the Agency model, Active4Today has worked with the Council and the legal organisations, to fully appraise the proposed approach. As stated within the report above, the day-to-day operations of A4T will not change.

4.6 There will be a continuation of the same quality of provision currently provided by the Company and the service to the customer, will not be affected, with the change to way the finances will be administered.

4.7 Active4Today have fully discussed this proposed change with its Board and are fully supportive of this new approach, to implement the most tax efficient model for both organisations.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None



Report to: Cabinet Meeting: 20 January 2025

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Rowan Cozens, Heritage Culture & the Arts

Director Lead: Deborah Johnson, Customer Services & Organisational Development

Lead Officer: Carl Burns, Business Manager – Transformation & Service Improvement, Ext. 5293

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open Report / Non-Key Decision
Report Title	Equality, Equity, Diversion and Inclusion (EEDI) Strategy - Review and Revised Strategy
Purpose of Report	To update Cabinet on the progress made through the review of our EEDI processes and to introduce the revised EEDI Strategy for approval.
Recommendations	<p>That Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) note the changes made to the Council's EEDI approach; and b) approve the revised Strategy, attached as Appendix A to the report.
Alternative Options Considered	None. A District Council must maintain a current Equality, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EEDI) Strategy to comply with legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, demonstrate its commitment to fairness and inclusion, and reduce risks of reputational and operational harm. It ensures policies and services are equitable, fostering trust and engagement across the community.
Reason for Recommendations	The previous EEDI Strategy was developed in 2019 and the Council have experienced significant changes in workforce, commitments and legislation since this time. Whilst the Council have maintained their commitment to operating within the framework of the Public Sector Duty, due to these changes the Strategy and associated documentation was overdue a review. This has now been completed and is presented for approval.

1.0 Background

The Council has long delivered services in alignment with the Equality Act 2010, ensuring fair and inclusive access for all residents. However, a recent audit

highlighted that while our service delivery meets statutory requirements, there were gaps in the supporting policies and procedures. In response, a new EEDI lead was appointed to undertake a comprehensive review of EEDI practices across the organisation. This review resulted in an action plan comprising 11 targeted actions, most of which have now been delivered. An overview and update on progress is provided in the report below and its appendices. Notably, one of the key actions was to review and develop the Council's EEDI strategy. This work has been completed, and the revised strategy is presented at **Appendix A** for approval.

2.0 The Revision of the EEDI Strategy

2.1 The Council adopted its most recent Equality & Diversity Strategy in 2021, which covered the period of 2021-2023. During this period, the landscape surrounding equality and diversity has evolved and there have been notable changes within our workforce. It is now appropriate to review our current approach and outline plans for Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EEDI) in Newark & Sherwood. Additionally, the Council has extended its support to specific groups, such as care leavers and armed forces personnel, aligning them with those who hold protected characteristics. The revised version on this strategy can be found at Appendix A.

3.0 The Development of the Action Plan

3.1 Following the audit report there were several actions that required delivery before we could consider ourselves fully compliant. The immediate priority was to establish an EEDI lead and a steering group to guide this area. This was quickly delivered and the steering group met for the first time in July 2025. The audit outcome was clear in its recommendations, and these were supplemented by a review undertaken by the EEDI lead, therefore an action plan was delivered for endorsement at this first meeting. The actions contained within this plan are now complete and an overview can be found at **Appendix B** of the report.

4.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, Officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Implications Considered			
Yes – relevant and included / NA – not applicable			
Financial	NA	Equality & Diversity	Yes
Human Resources	Yes	Human Rights	Yes
Legal	Yes	Data Protection	NA
Digital & Cyber Security	Yes	Safeguarding	NA
Sustainability	NA	Crime & Disorder	NA
LGR	NA	Tenant Consultation	NA

Human Resources and Training

4.1 NSDC has long demonstrated a strong commitment to delivering equality, diversity, and inclusion through its services and day-to-day operations. The introduction of the revised EEDI Strategy serves as an overarching document, designed to bring together and reinforce the robust equalities-focused approach that is already embedded within the organisation. Rather than introducing a new direction, the strategy consolidates existing good practice, ensuring that Human Resources continue to review and refine policies, staff training, and organisational culture in line with the Council's established values. This approach will support the ongoing delivery of targeted training programmes and enhanced monitoring and reporting. HR will remain central in supporting managers and staff to further embed these principles into everyday working practices, thereby maintaining and strengthening NSDC's inclusive and equitable workplace environment.

Digital and Cyber Security

4.2 NSDC is dedicated to ensuring accessibility across all its digital platforms, recognising that effective digital and cyber security measures must be inclusive and user-friendly for everyone. Through its digital strategy, the Council actively seeks to ensure that no customer is left behind by removing barriers and promoting equal access to online services, resources, and information. The revised EEDI Strategy further strengthens this commitment by aligning organisational policies and practices with the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion. By consolidating existing good practice and maintaining a strong focus on accessible digital solutions, NSDC ensures that its digital initiatives are developed and maintained with the needs of all users in mind, particularly those from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds. The ongoing revision of our website will go further in ensuring accessibility for our residents and will be delivered in 2026. This approach not only supports compliance with legal requirements but also reinforces NSDC's values of fairness and inclusivity throughout its digital transformation journey.

Equality, Diversity & Human Rights

4.3 The revised EEDI Strategy at NSDC positively impacts the human rights of Newark & Sherwood residents by embedding the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion into every aspect of the Council's operations. By consolidating and strengthening existing good practice, the strategy aims to ensure that policies, services, and digital platforms are accessible and fair for all, regardless of background. This inclusive approach promotes equal treatment, safeguards dignity, and supports the removal of barriers that might otherwise prevent individuals from fully participating in community life. As a result, the rights of residents to access information, receive services, and enjoy a supportive environment are protected and enhanced, reflecting NSDC's ongoing commitment to upholding human rights and fostering a culture of respect and fairness throughout the district.

Legal Implications LEG2526/3148

4.4 Cabinet is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report. The Legal Team have been consulted with the work undertaken in developing the strategy, ensuring legal obligations have been considered and met.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- [Audit Report - A&G Committee on Wednesday, 2 July 2025 - Item 5 Appendix B](#)
- [Equality-Diversity-Strategy-2021-23.pdf](#)

APPENDIX A

Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025–2029

Newark and Sherwood District Council
Strategy Document
December 2025

Approved by: Cabinet	Date: 20 January 2026
Maintained by: EEDI Lead	
Next review date: January 2028	

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1. Foreword

We are proud to present our Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EEDI) Strategy for 2026–2029. At Newark and Sherwood District Council, our aim is simple: we want everyone who lives in, works in, or visits our district to feel welcomed, respected, and supported. The Equality Act 2010 guides us to regularly review our policies and practices so that every employee, resident, customer and elected member is treated fairly and without bias and this strategy document illustrates how we will achieve this aim.

Fairness matters to us. That is why we work hard to make sure everyone has equal access to our services and employment opportunities. By bringing all equality issues into one clear strategy, we can better build them into everything we do, from shaping policies to delivering services that work for everyone. Our approach is guided by the Equalities Framework for Local Government (September 2021), which has helped us focus on what really counts:

- Getting to know our communities and their unique needs
- Showing leadership, building strong partnerships, and demonstrating Council-wide commitment
- Actively engaging with our communities
- Delivering responsive services and excellent customer care
- Supporting and developing a skilled and dedicated workforce

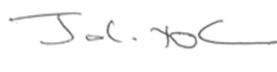
We understand that people's experiences are shaped by many factors—including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. By listening, learning, and growing together, we seek to make sure these differences are understood and valued across our community, both individually and collectively.

We are committed to raising awareness and championing equality and diversity, not only within the Council but throughout the district as a whole in the services we deliver.




Councillor Paul Peacock
Leader of the Council




John Robinson
Chief Executive

2. Executive Summary

This strategy outlines Newark and Sherwood District Council's commitment to promoting equality, advancing equity, and fostering diversity and inclusion across all services, policies, and employment practices. Spanning 2026–2029, it builds upon our current strategy, aligns with national legislation and frameworks, and responds to the latest local demographic data. The Strategy has been updated to align with the Supreme Court's 2024 ruling.

3. Introduction and Legal Context

The strategy is aimed at those who live, work in and visit the district, as well as employees and elected councilors of the Council and is underpinned by the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act') came into force in October 2010 and legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in the wider society. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand and strengthen protection in some situations.

The Act prohibits direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the basis of 'protected characteristics'. Circumstances in which age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation are the grounds upon which discrimination is based is unlawful. Further detail on these characteristics can be found in appendix A.

As part of the Act, public authorities must comply with the public sector equality duty (the Equality Duty). Equality duty requires public authorities to consider the potential impact of their policies and decisions on individuals protected under the Act. This duty aims to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations across all protected characteristics.

In 2024, the Supreme Court issued a significant ruling on sex and gender identity, this strategy has been developed in accordance with that ruling.

As an employer and service provider, Newark and Sherwood District Council is dedicated to having due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, advancing equality of opportunity; and fostering good relations through all its duties. This strategy outlines our continued commitment to equality.

4. Community Profile

The latest census data tells us that as of mid-2022, Newark and Sherwood District has an estimated population of approximately 125,089, with a growth rate of 1.4% from mid-2021 to mid-2022. The demographic composition is predominantly White, accounting for 96% of the residents, while the remaining 4% are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The district's average life expectancy stands at 81 years, and the median age reflects an ageing population at 45.2 years whilst individuals of working age (16-64) constitute 60.2% of the population. The gender ratio is 97.2 males per 100 females.

Christianity is the most practiced religion and is represented by 51% of the population. The primary language spoken is English, with 95.9% of the residents using it as their main language.

Information about our community profile helps the Council to understand the diversity and different needs within the district and helps the Council to inform the [Community Plan](#).

Key demographic characteristics include:

Age: Median age of 45.2 years with those 85+ making up 2.8% of the population.

Sex: Females make up 50.7% of the population whilst Males make up 49.3%.

Legal Partnership status: 47.7% of the population are married or in a registered civil partnership, 32.6% have never married, 10.4% have been divorced, whilst 7.1% have been widowed.

Ethnic group: 96.3% of the population are classified as 'white' whereas the remaining 3.3% are made up of Mixed or multiple ethnic groups (1.5%), Asian (1.1%), Black (0.7%), Other ethnic groups (0.7%).

Religion: 51% identified as a 'Christian' and are the most represented, 'No religion' makes up 41.2%, whilst the largest of the other religious groups identified as 'Muslim' (0.6%).

Proficiency in English: 95.9% informed that their main language was English whilst the remainder spoke English as a second language, can speak 'very well': 1.6%, well: 1.7%, 'cannot speak well': 0.7% with 0.1% suggesting that they 'cannot speak English.'

Disability: 19.9% of the population identified as 'Disabled under the equality act' whilst the remaining 80.1% identified as 'not disabled under the equality act.'

This demographic data highlights a community that is generally older, less ethnically diverse than national averages, with increasing numbers of people reporting disabilities or health-related limitations. These trends have significant implications for accessibility, service design, and inclusion efforts across the district.

*Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

5. Equality in the delivery of our services

Equality impact assessments

The Public Sector Equality Duty 2023 mandates conducting Equality Impact Assessments and we are obligated by law to demonstrate that we have given due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation; advancing equality of opportunity; and fostering good relations. Practically, this necessitates that equality considerations are evidenced in our decision-making processes and policies.

Potential impacts on equality must be evaluated prior to making any significant decisions and should be integrated into routine policymaking, business planning, and other decision-making frameworks. This is especially pertinent when making challenging financial decisions. If there is a proposal to cease, reduce, or modify a service, it is imperative to substantiate this with relevant evidence.

The Equality Assessment Guidance is accessible to officers via the intranet, and the EEDI Team is available to provide direct support to service areas and projects to assist them in gathering and interpreting equalities evidence.

Governance and Monitoring

The Council has a requirement to publish equality information at least once a year to show how we have complied with the equality duty. The Council recognises this also makes good business sense as it can help people assess the Council's performance on equality, the impact our policies and practices have had, tell us who is and isn't using our services; understand why our services may not meet their needs and help us to improve the delivery of our services by identify any data gaps and address any issues. Any monitoring undertaken must be proportionate and relevant and of benefit to our communities and this is considered when developing our Key Performance Indicators in this area. Our workforce achievements are celebrated through our quarterly performance reporting and the completion of mandatory equalities awareness training is monitored by business managers and the Learning Development team to ensure compliance.

Additionally, a Gender Pay Gap (GPG) report is presented annually to the Full Council and this report is also available to the public via our website. GPG legislation, effective since April 2017, requires employers with over 250 staff to annually report differences in average hourly and median pay between male and female employees, as well as gender distribution across pay bands. While GPG reporting highlights disparities in overall earnings between men and women, it is distinct from equal pay law, which mandates equal compensation for equal work. Notably, bonus-related pay gap reporting is not applicable in this context, as NSDC does not issue bonuses.

Procurement and Commissioning

The Council provides a wide range of services to residents and businesses in the district. In some cases, these are provided directly by the Council, in other cases by our partners and contractors. When a supplier provides goods, services or works on our behalf, we will ensure the equality obligations are part of the terms of a contract so that we know they will monitor the impact on service users and those they employ. The duty to ensure the Council complies with the requirements of the Equality Act remains with the Council for any services delivered on our behalf.

Specifically, we will:

- Inform all potential contractors and service providers about this strategy.
- Ensure contractors and service providers have non-discriminatory policies and deliver accessible goods and services appropriately.
- Ensure equal opportunities for all parties to bid on and be awarded Council contracts.
- Oversee contracts and service arrangements to ensure compliance with equality commitments.

Housing

Delivering on the Council's housing objectives requires a joined-up, evidence-based approach that puts inclusion at the heart of policy and practice. The Council aims to deliver these by embedding equality considerations into every stage, from needs assessment to service delivery and monitoring, ensuring that our housing offer supports the wellbeing and potential of all residents, especially those most at risk of disadvantage.

Specifically, we will:

- Regularly update local housing needs assessments using the latest demographic and socio-economic data. Pay particular attention to groups with protected characteristics, including age, disability, ethnicity, and carers, as well as those experiencing health inequalities or rural isolation

- Engage with underrepresented and vulnerable groups to understand barriers to accessing decent, affordable housing. Use targeted surveys, focus groups, and consultation exercises to capture lived experiences
- Embed Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) into all new housing policies, programmes, and procurement decisions. Ensure EIAs are completed before any significant changes to housing services or allocation criteria
- Review and adapt housing allocation policies to ensure they do not inadvertently disadvantage any protected group.

6. Equality in employment

The Council remains committed to fostering a diverse workforce and providing equal opportunities in employment, recruitment, selection, training, and development. Our goal is to maintain a workplace free from discrimination, victimisation, and harassment of any kind, where all employees are treated with respect.

Employment policies

The Council has implemented a comprehensive set of policies for our staff and prospective employees. These policies are designed to support our staff and provide clear guidance regarding expectations and entitlements as employees. We will continue to review and proactively promote and support equality within the workforce. This includes efforts to eliminate bullying and harassment, address discrimination, ensure pay equity, and create a flexible work-life balance.

To further support the implementation of this strategy, additional guidance documents focusing on specific aspects of equality are available and may be updated as needed throughout the life of this strategy.

Equality training

Equality training is provided for staff to inform them of their rights and responsibilities. All managers will receive regular training on equalities matters related to employment and there is an expectation that all councilors will attend Equality training delivered by our Democratic services and Human Resources officers. Equality issues are a fundamental part of our training and development programmes, regardless of whether internal or external trainers are used. Additionally, tailored equality training to meet the needs of specific services will be encouraged, especially for services engaging with external customers or where there is significant engagement with protected groups.

The Council is committed to providing equal access to training and development for all staff and where required bespoke sessions are delivered.

Internal communications

Effective internal communication is essential to embedding equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion (EEDI) across Newark and Sherwood District Council. To ensure all employees are informed, engaged, and empowered to contribute to the EEDI agenda, the Council will implement the following measures:

- **Provide a dedicated EEDI hub on the staff intranet**

A centralised area will be created on the staff intranet to host EEDI resources, updates, and guidance. This will include access to policies, Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) templates, training opportunities, and progress reports. The hub will serve as a go-to space for staff to stay informed and involved in the Council's EEDI journey.

- **Introduce EEDI Champions**

EEDI Champions will be appointed across departments to act as local advocates for inclusion. They will support colleagues in understanding EEDI principles, promote inclusive practices, and help cascade key messages from the EEDI Lead and Operations Group. Champions will also play a role in gathering feedback and identifying barriers to inclusion.

- **Improve access to and understanding of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)**

Employees will be supported in using EIAs through clearer guidance and simplified templates. These resources will be made easily accessible via the intranet, with practical examples and step-by-step instructions to help staff understand how to apply EEDI considerations in their work.

- **Signpost EEDI training via Ambition Academy**

The Council will ensure that all employees are aware of relevant EEDI training courses available through Ambition Academy. These will include mandatory modules for managers and councillors, as well as tailored sessions for teams working directly with the public or protected groups. Training will be promoted regularly through internal communications channels.

By embedding these internal communications mechanisms, the Council aims to foster a culture of transparency, shared responsibility, and continuous learning in support of its EEDI commitments.

7. Consultation and engagement

The Council aims to ensure that individuals accessing Council services, whether as residents, visitors, customers, or employees, are well informed about local issues. They should have the ability to participate and influence local decision-making and provide feedback on the Council's policies, procedures, service delivery, and collaboration with partner organisations.

To ensure consistency, the Council has a separate Community Engagement Strategy 2022 – 2027. The following principles set out how we are going to make certain that our engagement activity is flexible, focused, and appropriate for the diverse needs of the communities.

- We will co-ordinate our engagement programme so residents, or other key stakeholder groups, don't feel over-consulted.
- We will use the most appropriate methods to suit the audience, allowing engagement with a range of groups and using resources effectively.
- We will use plain English and language that is accessible to all.
- We will share how you can find out the results of any consultation before it starts.
- We will adhere to GDPR legislation, only use feedback/data within the Council and not give access to anyone else (unless clearly rationalised and communicated).
- We will find appropriate community locations across the district that are accessible when completing face to face activities.
- We will work with individuals to overcome any barriers to participation so they can be involved in areas of interest.
- We will work with underrepresented groups to ensure their voices are heard. We will treat responses with respect and welcome feedback that can help us improve.

- Where feedback includes a service request for us, we will forward this on to the relevant team for action. If the request needs directing to another agency, we will aim to ask permission to share this service request on your behalf.
- We will constantly review, revise and update consultation exercises to ensure we learn from what we do while keeping up to date with best practice and new consultation techniques and software.

8. Strategic Objectives and Action Plan

Newark and Sherwood District Council is dedicated to promoting equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion within the community. The Council's [Community Plan](#) 2023-2027 outlines key actions to support these objectives, including breaking down barriers to opportunity, increasing the supply of affordable and decent housing, and improving health and wellbeing, particularly in communities with lower life expectancy. The Council will also focus on reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, celebrating and promoting the diversity of Newark and Sherwood's heritage, culture, and community spirit, and protecting and enhancing green spaces. Additionally, this EEDI Strategy reaffirms the Council's commitment to meeting the duties placed upon it by equality legislation, ensuring that all new policies and procedures undergo an equalities impact assessment before implementation. By fostering partnerships and engaging with the community, the Council aims to create an inclusive environment where all individuals can thrive.

The way in which the Council embeds an ethos of equality, equity, diversity and inclusion is reflected across a wide range of strategic priorities and ambitions, and is consistently woven into the fabric of the Council's work through the following commitments:

- **Breaking down barriers to opportunity:** Implementing initiatives to enable residents and businesses to prosper and fulfil their potential.
- **Increasing the supply of housing:** Focusing on providing decent homes that residents can afford to buy and rent, as well as improving housing standards.
- **Improving health and wellbeing:** Emphasising support for communities with lower levels of life expectancy.
- **Promoting diversity:** Celebrating and promoting the diversity of Newark and Sherwood's heritage, culture, and community spirit.
- **Protecting green spaces:** Reducing the impact of climate change and protecting and enhancing green spaces.

To measure the success of these initiatives, the Council has a number of measurable objectives. These Key Performance Indicators are embedded into the Council's performance framework and are reported quarterly to the Senior Leadership Team, Policy and Performance Improvement Committee and Cabinet.

9. Service Delivery

Collecting information on the community profile of the district helps the Council to ensure that service delivery can be tailored to meet the needs of groups and individuals. The Council recognises the importance of equity within service delivery to meet individual needs. Engaging with people in the district enables the Council to work flexibly and responsively to minimise inequality and disadvantage, particularly in relation to the protected characteristics of people accessing the Council's services. Through this Strategy, the Council aims to embed the principles of EEDI into all service delivery.

10. Additional commitments

Newark and Sherwood District Council is committed to supporting veterans of the armed forces, carers and carers leavers, recognising their unique contributions and needs within the community. Through its endorsement of the Armed Forces Covenant, NSDC pledges to ensure that veterans and their families are treated with fairness and respect, facilitating access to housing, employment, and tailored support services. Additionally, the Council's Carers Policy outlines targeted measures to identify, value, and support carers, helping them access resources and opportunities that acknowledge their vital role. These additional commitments reinforce NSDC's broader EEDI strategy by striving to remove barriers, reduce disadvantage, and foster an inclusive environment for all residents.

11. Risk

The principal risks associated with Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EEDI) for Newark and Sherwood District Council include the following:

- Legal exposure from non-compliance with relevant legislation,
- Potential reputational damage due to perceived or actual shortcomings, and
- Operational challenges resulting from a lack of workforce diversity.

Additionally, financial consequences may arise from litigation, compensation, and increased recruitment costs. Social risks involve the possibility of exclusion and reduced cohesion within the community, while compliance failures could lead to regulatory scrutiny and sanctions. Collectively, these risks highlight the importance of robust EEDI practices to safeguard the Council's legal standing, reputation, workforce effectiveness, and social responsibilities. The EEDI Steering group mitigates these risks through regular monitoring and scrutiny, reviewing EIAs, monitoring performance and listening to customer feedback. The group meets quarterly and completes a risk workshop with the Safety and Risk Manager contributing to the overall strategic risk management of the Council.

12. Legislative Framework

This strategy sets out the measures we are taking to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation, including:

- **Human Rights Act 1998**

The Human Rights Act 1998 is a significant piece of legislation in the United Kingdom that incorporates the rights contained in the European Convention on Human Rights into domestic British law. It enables individuals to defend their rights in UK courts and compels public organizations, including the government, police, and local councils, to treat everyone equally, with fairness, dignity, and respect. This Act ensures that the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals, such as the right to life, freedom from torture, and freedom of expression, are protected and upheld within the UK legal framework.

- **Data Protection Act 1998 and Data Protection Act 2018**

The Data Protection Act 1998 was a landmark legislation in the UK that governed the processing of personal data. It established key principles for handling personal information, ensuring that data is processed fairly, lawfully, and transparently. The Act gave individuals the right to access their data and required organisations to protect personal information from misuse and unauthorised access. The updated Data Protection Act 2018 modernized data protection laws in the UK, aligning them with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). It strengthened the rights of

individuals over their personal data, introducing stricter regulations on consent, data breaches, and the right to be forgotten. This Act ensures that personal data is handled with greater accountability and transparency, providing robust protection for individuals' privacy in the digital age.

- **Employment Act 2008**

The Employment Act 2008 was introduced to simplify and improve the system of workplace dispute resolution, ensuring fair treatment for all employees. The Act reformed dispute resolution procedures, including the repeal of statutory dispute resolution procedures and the introduction of a new, less formal approach to managing disputes. The Act also strengthened the penalties for non-compliance with employment law, providing greater protection for workers against unfair treatment and promoting a more harmonious work environment. This legislation supports the principles of equality and fairness in the workplace, aligning with our broader strategy to uphold the rights of all individuals under the Equality Act 2010.

- **The Public Sector Bodies (Website and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018**

The Public Sector Bodies (Website and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 require public sector websites and mobile applications to be accessible to all users, especially those with disabilities, by meeting WCAG 2.1 AA standards, publishing an accessibility statement, and regularly reviewing accessibility. These regulations align with the EU Web Accessibility Directive and support equality and non-discrimination by ensuring inclusive access to digital services.

- **The Public Sector Equality Duty 2023**

The Public Sector Equality Duty 2023 (PSED) requires UK public sector organisations to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations. By incorporating equality considerations into daily operations and decision-making, they ensure fair treatment and inclusiveness. The Duty mandates conducting Equality Impact Assessments, monitoring, and reporting on outcomes to demonstrate compliance. Ultimately, the PSED 2023 reinforces the commitment to creating a fair and equal society where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

- **The Gender Recognition Act 2004**

The Gender Recognition Act 2004 allows transgender individuals in the UK to change their legal gender, providing a framework for obtaining a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC). It is a significant piece of legislation in that enables individuals to legally change their gender. It came into effect on 4 April 2005 and was introduced in response to rulings from the European Court of Human Rights, which highlighted the need for legal recognition of gender identity.

13. Appendices

- A: Protected characteristics
- B: EIA template
- C: Glossary

Appendix A: Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 aims to protect individuals from unfair treatment and promote a fair and equal society. It identifies several protected characteristics, ensuring that individuals are not discriminated against based on these attributes. The key protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 include:

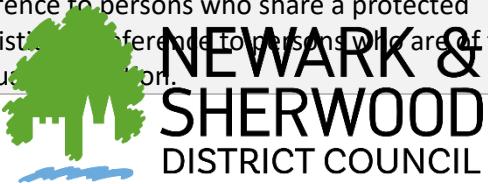
Protected Characteristic	Description
Age	<p>(1) In relation to the protected characteristic of age:</p> <p>(a) a reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a person of a particular age group.</p> <p>(b) a reference to persons who share a protected characteristic is a reference to persons of the same age group.</p> <p>(2) a reference to an age group is a reference to a group of persons defined by reference to age, whether by reference to a particular age or to a range of ages.</p>
Disability	<p>(1) A person (P) has a disability if:</p> <p>(a) P has a physical or mental impairment, and</p> <p>(b) the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on P's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.</p> <p>(2) A reference to a disabled person is a reference to a person who has a disability.</p> <p>(3) In relation to the protected characteristic of disability:</p> <p>(a) a reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a person who has a particular disability.</p> <p>(b) a reference to persons who share a protected characteristic is a reference to persons who have the same disability.</p>
Gender Reassignment	<p>(1) A person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if the person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.</p>

	<p>(2)A reference to a transsexual person is a reference to a person who has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment.</p> <p>(3) In relation to the protected characteristic of gender reassignment:</p> <p>(a)a reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a transsexual person.</p> <p>(b)a reference to persons who share a protected characteristic is a reference to transsexual persons.</p>
Marriage and Civil Partnership	<p>(1)A person has the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership if the person is married or is a civil partner.</p> <p>(2) In relation to the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership:</p> <p>(a)a reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a person who is married or is a civil partner.</p> <p>(b)a reference to persons who share a protected characteristic is a reference to persons who are married or are civil partners.</p>
Pregnancy and Maternity	<p>(1)A person (A) discriminates against a woman if A treats her unfavourably because of a pregnancy of hers.</p> <p>(2)A person (A) discriminates against a woman if, in the period of 26 weeks beginning with the day on which she gives birth, A treats her unfavourably because she has given birth.</p> <p>(3)The reference in subsection (3) to treating a woman unfavourably because she has given birth includes, in particular, a reference to treating her unfavourably because she is breast-feeding.</p> <p>(4)For the purposes of this section, the day on which a woman gives birth is the day on which—</p> <p>(a)she gives birth to a living child, or</p> <p>(b)she gives birth to a dead child (more than 24 weeks of the pregnancy having passed).</p>
Race	<p>(1) Race includes:</p> <p>(a)colour.</p> <p>(b)nationality.</p> <p>(c)ethnic or national origins.</p>

	<p>(2) In relation to the protected characteristic of race:</p> <p>(a) a reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a person of a particular racial group.</p> <p>(b) a reference to persons who share a protected characteristic is a reference to persons of the same racial group.</p> <p>(3) A racial group is a group of persons defined by reference to race; and a reference to a person's racial group is a reference to a racial group into which the person falls.</p> <p>(4) The fact that a racial group comprises two or more distinct racial groups does not prevent it from constituting a particular racial group.</p>
Religion or Belief	<p>(1) Religion means any religion and a reference to religion includes a reference to a lack of religion.</p> <p>(2) Belief means any religious or philosophical belief and a reference to belief includes a reference to a lack of belief.</p> <p>(3) In relation to the protected characteristic of religion or belief:</p> <p>(a) a reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a person of a particular religion or belief.</p> <p>(b) a reference to persons who share a protected characteristic is a reference to persons who are of the same religion or belief.</p>
Sex	<p>In relation to the protected characteristic of sex:</p> <p>(a) a reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a man or to a woman.</p> <p>(b) a reference to persons who share a protected characteristic is a reference to persons of the same sex.</p>
Sexual Orientation	<p>(1) Sexual orientation means a person's sexual orientation towards:</p> <p>(a) persons of the same sex, (b) persons of the opposite sex, or (c) persons of either sex.</p> <p>(2) In relation to the protected characteristic of sexual orientation:</p>

(a) a reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a person who is of a particular sexual orientation.
(b) a reference to persons who share a protected characteristic is a reference to persons who are of the same sexual orientation.

Appendix B: Equality Impact Assessment Template



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

What is an Equality Impact Assessment?

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a tool designed to assist you in ensuring that you have thought about the needs and impacts of a change to your policies, procedures, functions or services to ensure it is fair and does not present barriers to participation or disadvantage any groups in relation to protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010. It enables a systematic approach in identifying and recording impacts and actions.

Why do we need it?

As a local authority that provides services to the public, we have a legal responsibility to ensure that we can demonstrate that we have paid due regard to the need to:

- ✓ Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- ✓ Advance Equality of Opportunity
- ✓ Foster good relations

The EIA will help to ensure that we understand the potential effects of any new or significantly changed services, policies, plans, or strategies by assessing:

- the impacts on different groups, both internal and external
- whether any adverse impacts are identified
- what actions are identified to remove or mitigate any adverse impacts

The EIA ensures decisions are transparent and based on evidence with clear reasoning.

What are the protected characteristics?

- ✓ Age
- ✓ Disability
- ✓ Gender reassignment
- ✓ Marriage and civil partnership
- ✓ Pregnancy and maternity
- ✓ Race
- ✓ Religion and belief
- ✓ Sex
- ✓ Sexual orientation

1. INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

Name of policy / procedure / function / service	
Lead Officer and others undertaking this assessment?	
Date EIA started	
Date EIA completed	

2. SUMMARY OF THE POLICIES, PROCEDURES, FUNCTIONS, AND SERVICES BEING ASSESSED

What are the aims and objectives of the policies, procedures, functions, and services

Who is affected by these policies, procedures, functions, or services and what is the intended change or outcome for them?

(i.e. staff / service users or other stakeholders)

Which groups have been consulted with as part of the creation or review of this policy, procedure, function, or service

(Please include how they were consulted and their responses. If you haven't consulted yet and are intending to do so, please complete the consultation table below)

Considering the answers given above, do you need to consult with specific groups to identify needs/issues? If not please explain why

CONSULTATION

Negative impacts identified will require the responsible officer to consult with the affected group/s to determine all practicable and proportionate mitigations. Add more rows as required.

Group/Organisation	Date	Response

3. WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW AND WHERE THERE ARE GAPS

List any existing information / data about different diverse groups in relation to this policy? i.e. in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation etc

Examples of information / data such as consultation, previous EIAs, demographic information, anecdotal or other evidence

4. ASSESSING THE IMPACT

Protected Characteristic	Is there potential of positive or negative impact?	Please explain and give examples of evidence / data used	Action to address negative impact (i.e. adjustment to the policy, procedure etc – the action log below should be completed to provide further information)
Age			
Disability			
Gender Reassignment			
Marriage / Civil Partnership			
Pregnancy / Maternity			
Race			
Religion / Belief			
Sex			
Sexual Orientation			
Other groups which may be impacted? (carers, low literacy, priority neighbourhoods, socio-economic, health inequalities, rural isolation, veterans, care leavers)			

5. PROPOSED MITIGATION: ACTION LOG

To be completed when barriers, negative impact or discrimination are found as part of this process – to show actions taken to remove or mitigate. Any mitigations identified throughout the EIA process should be meaningful and timely. Add more rows as required.

Negative Impact	Action	Responsible Officer	Target Date
What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policies, procedures, functions, and services?			

6. EVALUATION DECISION

Once consultation and practicable and proportionate mitigation have been put in place, the officer responsible should evaluate whether any negative impact remains and, if so, provide justification for any decision to proceed.

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed new service / policy / plan or strategy or the proposed change could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?		
Final Decision	Tick	Include any explanation/justification required
No barriers identified; therefore, activity will proceed		

Stop the policy or practice because the data shows bias towards one or more groups		
Adapt or change the policy in a way that will eliminate the bias		
Barriers and impact identified, however having considered all available options carefully, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the aim of the policy, procedure etc (e.g. in extreme cases or where positive action is taken). Therefore, you are going to proceed with caution with this policy, procedure etc knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision		

Did you consult with an Equalities Ally prior to completing this assessment? Yes/No

7. SIGN OFF

Name and job title of person completing this EIA	
Officer Responsible for implementing the change to policy, procedure, function, and service etc.	
Business Manager	
Date Agreed (by Business Manager)	
Date of Review (if required)	

Appendix C: Glossary

- **Discrimination:** Unfair or unequal treatment of an individual or group based on certain characteristics, such as race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, or age.
- **Diversity:** The presence and inclusion of different types of people, recognising and valuing differences in backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives.
- **Equality:** Ensuring all individuals have equal opportunities and are not treated less favourably because of protected characteristics.
- **Equality Impact Assessment (EIA):** A process to identify and address the potential impacts of policies, procedures, or decisions on different groups, particularly those with protected characteristics.
- **Harassment:** Unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.
- **Protected Characteristic:** A specific attribute protected by the Equality Act 2010, including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- **Reasonable Adjustment:** Changes or modifications made to remove or reduce disadvantages experienced by disabled people in the workplace or in accessing services.
- **Sexual Orientation:** A person's sexual orientation towards persons of the same sex, persons of a different sex, or persons of either sex.
- **Victimisation:** Treating someone unfairly because they have made or supported a complaint about discrimination or harassment.

2025 EEDI Action Plan

APPENDIX B

Key recommendations following a review in June 2025	NSDC Actions										
<p>Recommendation 1: Establish a steering group</p> <p>tiaa's audit noted the absence of an established steering group as a '<i>priority 1 – fundamental control issue on which action should be taken immediately.</i>'</p> <p>The steering group were established with the following members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EEDI lead Director of Housing, Health & Wellbeing Senior Legal officer/Monitoring Officer) Director of Customer Services & Organisational Development Business Manager - HR & Training Business Manager – Comms & Marketing Street Scene Manager Safety & Risk Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering group established involving representatives from across the Council. • The group's terms of reference were approved in the first meeting which was held in July 2025 and it was established as a reoccurring quarterly meeting • The steering group ensures EEDI policies align with broader goals by overseeing their implementation and monitoring. It provides a platform for staff input, raises awareness of EEDI issues, and identifies improvement areas. <p>Lead Officer(s): EEDI Lead (Business Manager Transformation & Service Improvement)</p> <p>Status: Complete</p>										
<p>Recommendation 2: Establish operations group</p> <p>On receipt of the notes from the tiaa audit a desk top review was carried out by the EEDI lead and an initial action plan was developed. In order to further develop and deliver on the action plan an operations group was established. This group was born from nominations made by the steering group at their first meeting and consists of the officers listed below:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">EEDI Lead</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Senior Comms Officer</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Transformation & Service</td> <td>Environment Services Officer</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Improvement officer</td> <td>Democratic Services Officer</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Senior HR Officer</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Senior Health Improvement Officer</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	EEDI Lead	Senior Comms Officer	Transformation & Service	Environment Services Officer	Improvement officer	Democratic Services Officer	Senior HR Officer		Senior Health Improvement Officer		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operations group was established involving representatives from across the Council. • An action plan was developed by the group in their first meeting which was in August 2025 • Actions were assigned to officers in relevant areas across the council and were monitored via a shared area and collaborative channel on Microsoft Teams • 3 meetings were held with a mix of face to face and hybrid. <p>Lead Officer(s): EEDI Lead</p> <p>Status: Complete</p>
EEDI Lead	Senior Comms Officer										
Transformation & Service	Environment Services Officer										
Improvement officer	Democratic Services Officer										
Senior HR Officer											
Senior Health Improvement Officer											

Data & Digital Development Team leader Customer Services Team Leader	
<p>Recommendation 3: Review the existing EEDI strategy</p> <p>tiaa's audit found that The EEDI Strategy was related to the period 2021-2023. (2012-16 and 2016-20 were available from the internet) and it was confirmed during the audit that the Strategy has not been reviewed/updated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A full review of the Strategy has been completed and is presented for endorsement • Key changes include bringing the data displayed up to date using the latest census data, inclusion of additional commitments such as Armed Forces and Carers, revised sections on our services and continued commitments to equality in our workforce <p>Lead Officer(s): EEDI Lead</p> <p>Status: Complete</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: Risk</p> <p>Throughout the review period it was noted by the risk manager that the current status of this agenda could represent a risk to the Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk workshop conducted. • OR created which will be added onto the live risk register and reviewed by the steering group quarterly <p>Lead Officer(s): Safety & Risk Manager EEDI Lead BM HR & Training</p> <p>Status: Complete</p>
<p>Recommendation 5: Review the Council's buildings and assess their accessibility against good practice</p> <p>The group worked closely with colleagues from Corporate Property in the review of our buildings across the district. Each building was assessed against the following criteria: Toilet facilities, level access, doorway width, adequate access for wheeled visitors, lifts and fire exit plans for those requiring assistance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All buildings reviewed physically or by liaising with site managers • Key information captured and reviewed by the operations group and estates team • Any gaps have been captured in the OR for further mitigation as required <p>Lead Officer(s): TSIO Org Development Estate manager</p>

	<p>Status: Complete</p>
<p>Recommendation 6: Review toilet facilities across the estate following the Supreme court ruling</p> <p>Due to a recent ruling by the Supreme Court, it became necessary to review the toilet facilities across the Council's estate. This was conducted by members of the operations group working closely with corporate property colleagues who delivered the changes required to the signage on our facilities. Colleagues were also informed of the changes by our comms team both electronically and via posters in satellite locations where laptop access is limited.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A full review of the effected facilities was conducted by the corporate property team • Alternative signage was identified and sourced • All signage was updated in October 2025 <p>Lead Officer(s): EEDI TSIO Org Dev Estate Manager Senior Comms Officer (digital & External)</p> <p>Status: Complete</p>
<p>Recommendation 7: Conduct a full review of the Council's website</p> <p>The website was reviewed and deemed out of date and unsuitable. The main issues centred on out of date and inaccurate information. Additionally, there was also concerns about the accessibility of the webpage and this has been picked up in a wider project which aims to deliver a new platform in 2026.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EEDI webpage has been updated within the accessibility constraints applied by the current system • All information displayed is now current and up to date <p>Lead Officer(s): EEDI Lead Senior Comms Officer (digital & External)</p> <p>Status: Complete</p>
<p>Recommendation 8: Conduct a full review of the Council's EEDI intranet page to ensure it is accurate and useful for all staff</p> <p>The existing intranet page was bland and included only a list of associated policies. Work is ongoing to develop this area so that it is a useful area for all staff which holds information on equalities guidance such as templates for EIAs, support and areas to celebrate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site has now been created and is being developed • The aim of this site is for it to be a source of information for all colleagues and it will hold the latest information on the strategy as well as EIAs and guidance on how to complete them. • It will be monitored and updated regularly by the EEDI lead and our comms team to maximise the benefits to staff. <p>Lead Officer(s): Data & Digital Innovation team leader</p>

<p>Recommendation 9: Review EEDI related performance Indicators and update accordingly</p> <p>The audit team noted that the Council's KPIs should be developed. A review of these has been completed and it has been confirmed that a suite of KPIs is available and are already reported on. Additional PIs have been added to the suite such as training completion and these will be managed as Mis by the BM HR & Trg</p>	<p>Status: Ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Associated PIs have been collated and discussed KPIs such as those used in the gender pay gap review are reported annually to Full Council Additional Mis on staff training completion will be monitored via directorate meetings <p>Lead Officer(s): EEDI Lead BM HR & Training</p> <p>Status: Complete</p>
<p>Recommendation 9: Explore an option to monitor resident complaints for equality related impacts.</p> <p>The group have discussed an option to mark any complaints that clearly indicate a concern associated with equalities. This option will see Customer Services colleagues marking the complaint via a simple tick box before assigning to the respondent. If successful this would then be entirely internal facing only and be monitored by the BM Customer Services and the EEDI Lead.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The EEDI lead has gained endorsement from the Data Protection team Further technical explorations are being carried out by the Cus Serv team leader Aim is solely for internal use and will assist in performance development should any trends emerge <p>Lead Officer(s): EEDI Lead Customer Services team leader BM Customer Services</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation 10: Review the EEDI training offer for both staff and elected members</p> <p>A review of the e-learning training has been conducted and it is agreed that the current offer is suitable. Currently, there are two main courses available which aim to raise EEDI awareness, these are separate courses for staff and managers. These courses have now been made mandatory for all staff and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All associated e-learning training as been reviewed The councillor development group has been encouraged to include Equalities training in their training program for 2026 <p>Lead Officer(s): EEDI Lead Democratic services officer</p>

<p>completion will be monitored through that process. Additionally, there are several linked courses that are offered to all staff</p>	<p>Status: Complete</p>
<p>Recommendation 11: Review the current Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) document and improve guidance on completion and training</p> <p>A review of the existing form EIA document was carried out and it was refreshed inline with good practice across the sector. Additionally, I have reached out to a trainer who will provide training on EIAs for both those completing the assessment and those reviewing their content. This is pending</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIA form refreshed and updated • Guidance notes created • Training support requested which will be financed through the L&D budget <p>Lead Officer(s): Senior HR Officer</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>



Report to: Cabinet Meeting: 20 January 2026

Portfolio Holders: Councillor Rowan Cozens - Heritage, Culture & the Arts
Councillor Susan Crosby - Health, Wellbeing & Leisure

Director Lead: Deborah Johnson, Director - Customer Services & Organisational Development

Lead Officers: Carina Tona, Transformation & Service Improvement Officer
Philene Evasion-Bacon, Transformation & Service Improvement Graduate Trainee

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open Report / Non-Key Decision
Report Title	Life Chances for Girls
Purpose of Report	To provide an update and the findings from the work of the Life Chances for Girls working group.
Recommendations	That Cabinet: <ol style="list-style-type: none">note the findings and recommendations of the Working Group; andendorse the recommendations as outlined in Appendix 3 to the report.
Alternative Options Considered	The decision could have been to dismiss the topic request and not establish the Life Chances for Girls Working Group.
Reason for Recommendations	To ensure that the findings of the Life Chances for Girls Working Group are formally acknowledged and acted upon. This is in addition to Policy Performance and Improvement Committee, which will be presented the report on 12 January 2026. By noting the outcomes and endorsing the recommendations, Cabinet can also support targeted actions that improve opportunities and outcomes for girls. This will be whilst working with our partners who can contribute to improving the life chances for girls. This approach demonstrates a commitment to addressing identified challenges and supports a number of the Council's Community Plan ambitions.

Women and Girls in the UK

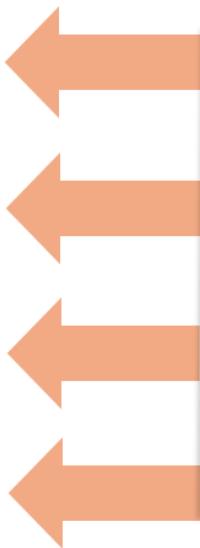


Women have been **underrepresented in STEM** (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) for many years (1)

Girls are **less likely** to be considered as **thriving** and feel a sense of **belonging** in school (2)

Domestic violence is the leading cause of **foetal death** (3)

93% of girls and young women **do not feel completely safe** in public places (2)



Women and Girls in Newark and Sherwood



25% of girls **leave school without good grades** (5)

1 in 6 people **feel very unsafe** alone at night (5)

Women working full-time **earn less** than **men** (6)

There are **currently 6 Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR)** open and under review (7)

Every 3 days, a women in the UK is killed by a man (4)

1.0 Background

In January 2025 a topic request form was proposed by Cllr Rowan Cozens (**Appendix 1**) and submitted to the Policy and Performance Improvement Committee. The proposed topic was supported and subsequently a cross-party working group was formed.

The Working Group

The working group met on five occasions between April 2025 and September 2025, with input from the following working group elected councillors: -

- Cllr Karen Roberts – Chair
- Cllr Alice Brazier
- Cllr Celia Brooks
- Cllr Andy Freeman
- Cllr Jean Hall
- Cllr David Moore
- Cllr Emma Oldham
- Cllr Irene Brown
- Cllr Linda Tift

Councillor Karen Roberts, Life Chances for Girls working group chair says:

"It has been a real privilege to chair the Working Group on Life Chances for Girls over the past several months. Working alongside fellow Councillors and hearing from a wide range of speakers, from colleagues at the District Council to partners across our wider network, has been insightful, humbling and inspiring. We left politics at the door, coming together with a shared commitment to

prioritise the subject of life chances for girls. It has been a valuable opportunity to learn more about the excellent work and activities already being delivered by the District Council and our partners. As a result of our work, we can now add to that and take some more positive steps forward as a recommendation to the Policy and Performance Improvement Committee.”

Councillor Paul Taylor, Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Community Relations says:

“As the Public Protection and Community Relations Portfolio Holder, I want to say how impressed I’ve been with the work of the life chances for girls working group. They have truly illuminated the challenges that girls and young women face today. It is particularly alarming to learn that domestic violence is a leading cause of foetal death. This stark reality underscores the urgent need for continued support and funding for programmes we already have in place, such as healthy relationships training in schools and the “Prison Me No Way” programmes. These programmes are crucial in helping young people feel more confident, informed, and supported, and they play a vital role in tackling behaviours that lead to violence against women and girls.”

Councillor Rowan Cozens, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture & the Arts says:

“I’m really pleased that the working group has taken the time to explore the important issue of life chances for girls. The recommendations coming forward are thoughtful and promising, and I look forward to seeing them put into action. It’s encouraging to see such a focused effort on improving life chances for girls. I’m delighted with the recommendations and the positive direction they set for future work.”

- 1.1 The working group identified three key aims based on the topic request form, which formed the basis of the review initiation document. The three stages of the working group were as follows:
 1. Firstly, we reviewed the data set published by Plan International and considered its merits. We developed a fuller picture of the life chance for girls in Newark and Sherwood, by identifying and supplementing with more up to date and relevant data, that the Council holds and from partners or wider, national sources too.
 2. We collated a summary of the activities, area of work and key achievements that the Council delivers or facilitates with partners to support this agenda around girls and young women.
 3. Once the working group had reviewed all the relevant information and gained a better understanding of the landscape for girls and young women, the review began to explore whether changes could be made, or if work in this area could be approached differently. The aim was to identify ways in which the Council and its partners could intervene, improve, and advocate for better life chances for girls and young women across the district, and present this them to PPIC for consideration.
- 1.2 Plan Internation Report

The report and data tool, detailed further in Section 2, drew the interest of Cllr Freeman’s daughter, Emily. With several councillors also taking notice, the initiative laid the foundation for a new working group. Emily was invited to the introductory session to share her reflections on the report and offer her perspective as a young woman.

The working group was supported by officers who gathered information and data from other sources to build a bigger picture for Newark and Sherwood and data to inform the sessions. Key officers also contributed, helping to inform the working group, on specialist topics such as Public Safety, Domestic Abuse, Health and Wellbeing Homelessness and Communications and Marketing.

- Jenny Walker, Public Protection Business Manager
- Christie Conroy, DAHA Accreditation Coordinator (Nottinghamshire Women's Aid)
- Hellen Ellison, Senior Health and Wellbeing Officer
- Cheska Asman, Homeless Strategy and Safeguarding Officer
- Sarah Lacey, Communications and Marketing Manager

External colleagues from partner organisations were also invited to attend to share their experiences and views on the topic.

- Inspector Charlotte Ellam, District commander for Newark and Sherwood,
- Penny Taylor, Head of Newark College and the Air and Space Institute
- Holly Youd, Youth Engagement Programme Manager (YMCA)
- Kelly Evans, Head of Partnerships & Community (Active4Today)
- Alexis Knock, Director of Business and Finance (Active4Today)

Each session proved to be valuable, with speakers and data collected offering the opportunity to valuable insights and some practical takeaways. A comprehensive summary of each session, including key discussion points is provided in **Appendix 2** for further reference.

2.0 Proposal /Options Considered

State of the Girls Rights Report

Plan International UK, a global children's charity committed to creating an equal world, published "The State of Girls' Rights in the UK" report in 2024. The report highlights significant challenges faced by girls, including safety concerns, educational inadequacies, and societal pressures, while calling for urgent action to achieve gender equality.

Between May and June 2023, they surveyed 2,963 UK girls and young women aged 12-21, which was the highest number in the report's eight-year history, to identify their most pressing concerns. The report acknowledges that, while efforts were made to ensure a representative sample, the views of 2,963 girls and young women cannot fully reflect the experiences of millions across the UK, some demographic groups and perspectives may not have been captured.

2.1 Data tool

Further to the report, Plan International developed an online tool. This tool is powered by a Local Authority index that Plan International have collated, based on indicators available nationally. Users can search by their postcode or council and learn about the reality of growing up as a girl in specific areas, and the injustices girls.

According to the data tool, girls and young women living in the Newark and Sherwood district, are living in the bottom 20% of places in the UK, whilst the rest of the county is rated as follows:

- Rushcliffe, Bassetlaw, Mansfield – falling short
- Gedling – bottom 50%
- Nottingham, Broxtowe – bottom 20%
- Ashfield - bottom 10%

2.2 Building a bigger picture for Newark and Sherwood

The group has used the Plan International Report and data tool as a springboard to gather local data and insights. The group have undertaken in depth exploration of key areas to better understand the scale of the issue affecting girls and women in Newark and Sherwood, as well as the work already underway by us and partners.

2.3 Identifying what can be done differently to intervene, improve and advocate the life chances for girls and young women in the district by the Council and by our partners

The working group recognises that girls and young women experience layered disadvantages stemming from concerns around public and online safety, health inequalities, educational barriers, and other systemic challenges. Such issues can be further compounded by entrenched societal norms and structural discrimination.

Where you live also plays a critical role in shaping life chances. It is therefore essential that local support, services, and initiatives are not only well-communicated but also purposefully designed and effective.

2.4 From understanding the initiatives and activities already being delivered, there is much to celebrate. The following are examples of the positive and partnership work that has been and continues to be undertaken by the Council and our Partners:

Feelings of safety

- **Police culture:** Inspector Charlotte Ellam - District Commander for Newark and Sherwood says: *“Policing culture has transformed significantly over the course of my career. In the early days, opportunities for women were often limited and lacked meaningful support. Today we see stronger mentorship frameworks that genuinely empower young women. From my initial role specialising in sexual offences to leading as Neighbourhood Inspector in Newark, I've always prioritised being a supportive leader and a positive role model. Mentoring others, especially women entering the service, remains one of the most fulfilling aspects of my journey.”*
- **Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation (DAHA):** The Council is actively working towards achieving accreditation from the DAHA, a nationally recognised benchmark for housing providers committed to supporting survivors of domestic abuse. A key component of the accreditation is the delivery of comprehensive workforce training. All staff who come into contact with customers are required to complete an eLearning module, with additional in-person sessions for operational teams, which covers critical topics such as recognising different forms of abuse, responding appropriately to disclosures, avoiding victim-blaming, and referring survivors to specialist services. The accreditation process involves a rigorous audit of the Council's policies, procedures, and practices. The accreditation process is expected to drive meaningful change and to ensure that survivors receive the right response first time, every time. Crucially, staff will be empowered to signpost survivors to specialist support services, reinforcing the Council's ambition to be domestic abuse aware.

- **Violence Against Women and Girls:** VAWG remains a critical issue both nationally and locally. According to the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), VAWG accounts for nearly 20% of all recorded crime in England and Wales. In response to this, in October 2024 the Council unanimously passed a motion committing to do all within its power to highlight the issue and improve the safety of women and girls across the district.
- **Walk in My Shoes:** a campaign by Nottinghamshire Police, attempting to encourage people to report instances of feeling unsafe to get a better understanding of feelings of safety in the city and county.
- **Community Safety Partnership (CSP):** a statutory body which the Council chairs, which is aimed at protecting the public and make you feel safe while living in and visiting our districts. The CSP are required to undertake Domestic Homicides Reviews (DHRs). In May 2025, there were 6 DHR running across our local CSP, which is the most we have ever had together at the same time. Alongside this there is wider case related, campaigns and strategic level working, district and countywide meetings related to Community Safety, Crime and Anti-social Behaviour.
- **Independent Domestic Violence Advocates:** organised by Nottinghamshire Women's Aid, provides support to pregnant women, such as to help to train midwives in issues such as:
 - why would being pregnant not be a protective factor to mum?
 - why do victims stay even when there might be harm to their baby?
 - encouraged to disclose in a safe and open environment, to ensure that victims and their children are safer, sooner.

The Council's Housing Options Team have an independent domestic violence adviser (IDVA) for three days a week, some of that time with the officers at Alexander Lodge and Castle House.

It was reported to the group that domestic violence has overtaken gestational diabetes and pre-eclampsia as the leading cause of foetal death.

Around 30% of domestic abuse begins during pregnancy, while 40–60% of women experiencing domestic abuse are abused during pregnancy. 12% of the 378 women whose deaths were reported to the Confidential Enquiry on Maternal Deaths (2001) had voluntarily reported domestic violence to a healthcare professional during their pregnancy. None had routinely been asked about domestic violence, so this is almost certainly an under-estimate. (3)

- **CCTV Project:** As outlined in the Council's Community Plan, to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, improving community feelings of safety, significant progress is being made to bring the management of CCTV operations in-house. This strategic move is designed to improve responsiveness, accountability, and operational efficiency. One of the key outcomes of this transition is the ability to focus proactive surveillance and intervention efforts more effectively across Newark and Sherwood. By centralising control, the Council can better target areas of concern, respond swiftly to incidents, and support wider community safety initiatives. This approach also opens up opportunities for closer collaboration with local enforcement teams and community partners, ensuring that CCTV is used not only as a deterrent but as a tool for early intervention and evidence gathering.

- **Safer Gyms:** A survey conducted by the Office of the Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner found that women are often made to feel uncomfortable in a gym or fitness setting, with experiences of being stared at while exercising, receiving unsolicited advice or overly flirtatious comments, being followed and even being photographed or recorded without consent. The scheme aims to increase feelings of safety for women and girls within fitness centres and gymnasiums.
- **Prison Me No Way:** Interactive and education programme to think carefully about the decisions they make throughout their lives, stay safe, positively manage the temptations of modern society, and increasing risks posed through social media, develop into law-abiding citizens, and achieve their full potential. Collectively helping young people and their communities to reduce crime, reoffending and anti-social behaviour and contribute towards creating safer communities for all.

Health and Wellbeing

- **Delivering food clubs:** A diversionary activity which provides opportunities for young people to learn how to cook nutritious, healthy meals. These sessions consistently attract high levels of interest and are frequently oversubscribed, highlighting their popularity and impact. In addition to their core purpose, these sessions present a valuable opportunity to apply the principles of 'Make Every Contact Count', enabling staff to engage with young people on broader wellbeing topics, signpost to additional support services, and reinforce positive lifestyle choices in a relaxed and informal setting.
- **National Women's Census Pilot:** is a pioneering initiative led by Solace Women's Aid and the Single Homeless Project, designed to uncover the hidden reality of women's homelessness in the UK. Traditional rough sleeper counts often miss women due to their tendency to avoid visible street homelessness, instead experiencing "hidden homelessness" such as sofa surfing or staying in unsafe accommodation. Nottinghamshire, including Newark and Sherwood, actively participated in the 2023 and 2024 pilots. The next pilot is taking place September 2025.
- **Women's Severe Multiple Disadvantage (SMD) Group:** Nottinghamshire took part in a pilot women's homelessness census in 2023 and 2024 which has led to the creation of a women's SMD group. This group is focused on building a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by women experiencing multiple disadvantages. The collaboration involves gathering insights to create a whole-system picture. The Councils involved are actively working on women's focussed activities, with shared learning emerging across the partnership to inform future practice and support.
- **Leisure centres deliver activities:** Active4Today is making a meaningful impact on the lives of girls and young women by offering free school holiday activities, female-only swimming and self-defence sessions, and ensuring female instructors are available across all programmes. Through initiatives like VISPA (Volunteering in Sport and Physical Activity) and targeted bursaries for mental health, special educational needs, and unemployment, they are creating inclusive, supportive opportunities that empower girls to thrive physically, socially, and emotionally. Data from September 2025 comparing the number of live memberships between males and females, across the four leisure centres, shows an 82% increase in women from April 2024 to August 2025. The data also highlights a higher and increasing number of women participating in group workouts in comparison to individual activities.

Empowerment and future prospects

- **College enrolment:** Enrolment data for Newark College and the Air and Space Institute (ASI) for the academic year 2024/2025 indicates that 393 women are currently enrolled, representing 42% of the total student population. While both institutions offer a broad range of courses including Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), female participation in these subjects remains significantly lower than that of their male peers. This trend reflects ongoing gender-based course selection patterns, with many students continuing to follow traditionally gendered pathways.
- **Holistic support at college:** Beyond education and formal qualifications, colleagues at Newark College and the ASI are deeply committed to supporting students through this transition stage of life and preparing them for their future. These include initiatives aimed at empowering women, fostering self-worth and self-belief, and building confidence, particularly for those who may face barriers to participation or progression. In addition, colleges provide practical support such as employability skills training, pastoral care, access to a food bank, and counselling services. Students can also benefit from sexual health support and tailored careers advice, ensuring their wellbeing and future prospects are nurtured alongside academic achievement.
- **Mentoring and coaching project and local employers to empower the next generation:** The Council has supported the empowerment of female students through a coaching and mentorship programme organised by Newark College to pair experienced female business leaders with female students studying on an industry-based course. The initiative is designed to empower women across various sectors by offering structured mentorship and coaching. It focuses on building confidence, enhancing technical and leadership skills, and supporting career progression. The programme creates pathways into traditionally male-dominated industries, helping women overcome barriers and thrive professionally. A specialised strand of the wider project is the Women in Plumbing trial which encourages and supports women to enter and succeed in the plumbing trade. Through hands-on training, industry exposure, and one-to-one mentoring, participants gain practical experience and build the confidence needed to pursue careers in plumbing. There are several success stories as a result of some of these initiatives, such as:
 - 'Ellie' will begin her training as a fighter jet pilot with the RAF in November, showcasing the programme's impact beyond plumbing and into high-skilled, high-impact roles.
 - 'Grace' has started an engineering apprenticeship with Rolls Royce, demonstrating how mentoring and coaching can lead to prestigious technical career opportunities.
 - 'Cheryl' has successfully secured employment with a local plumbing company, a direct result of her participation in the Women in Plumbing trial and the support she received from mentors.
- **Changemakers:** is a service that provides skills workshops, action projects and youth voice sessions at the YMCA. These activities empower young people and provide opportunities for further learning and development and employment. Participants were encouraged to explore causes that they care about. Some of the events that young people have chosen to take up include:
 - Afternoon tea event at Gladstone House to help combat loneliness
 - A litter pick event to help protect their environment
 - Teaming up with local vets, RSPCA rescue and stray dog services to promote helping animals.

Communication and Engagement

- **Communications and Social media strategy:** as part of our evolving communications strategy, we are placing a strong emphasis on engaging younger audiences through targeted and platform-specific social media initiatives. A standout example is the Recycling with NSDC campaign, which has been carefully crafted to reflect Gen Z's digital preferences and values. (Gen Z was born between 1997 and 2012.) Importantly, both the platform choice and the involvement of young people in content creation have been central to its success. This co-creation approach not only ensures the messaging feels genuine but also builds trust and increases the likelihood of engagement and behavioural change. The impact has been clear: the video generated 12,000 views, demonstrating strong resonance with the target audience and validating the strategy's effectiveness.
- Also, the Open Doors Creative Influencers programme, a successful community initiative focused on arts and culture, have been showcased in a 'takeover' video which aims to actively amplifying the voices of young people and improve access and opportunities for young people to engage in arts and culture in Newark. More broadly, our approach to communication should prioritise gender-inclusive language, such as using 'everyone' instead of gendered terms like 'ladies' or 'gents' to ensure that all individuals feel respected, included, and represented, regardless of their gender identity.
- **Internal communication campaigns:** The Council is currently running an internal campaign titled "It's Not Just Banter". Delivered through plain and simple communications, the campaign seeks to raise awareness about the impact of seemingly trivial comments and interactions, emphasising that what may be perceived as 'banter' can in fact contribute to a hostile or uncomfortable environment. This initiative is particularly important in addressing experiences of women and girls, who are disproportionately affected by casual sexism, public harassment, and gender-based microaggressions.
- **Resident Panel:** As of June 2025, the Resident Panel comprises 255 members who are invited to participate in consultations aligned with their interests. However, residents aged 16 to 25 remain the least represented demographic. To address this gap, efforts are underway to promote the panel as a meaningful opportunity for younger residents, including targeted outreach marketing and communications through Newark College and the ASI, with a focus on improved signposting and engagement.

2.5 Recommendations

Whilst there is much to celebrate, there are multiple areas the group have identified and have been cited in the recommendations. Several elements focus on enhancing existing initiatives. Notably, these include improvements in communication strategies aimed at better promotion and signposting. The full set of recommendations developed by the working groups is presented in **Appendix 3**. Some recommendations are already underway or being addressed through other workstreams, as clearly noted in the document where applicable.

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Implications Considered			
Yes – relevant and included / NA – not applicable			
Financial	Y	Equality & Diversity	NA
Human Resources	NA	Human Rights	NA
Legal	Y	Data Protection	NA
Digital & Cyber Security	NA	Safeguarding	NA
Sustainability	NA	Crime & Disorder	NA
LGR	NA	Tenant Consultation	NA

3.1 Financial Implications (FIN25-26/800)

From the list of recommendations detailed in Appendix 3 – Life Chances for Girls, the following are highlighted for awareness:

Recommendation No.	Financial Comment
1, 2 & 3	Any increase of resource or costs for Active 4 Today, could increase the costs to the Council through the management fee, however this along with all other costs are offset by income generated.
16 & 17	A sum of £50,000 has been included in the proposed 2026/27 as a requested change, intended to replace the financial support previously provided by the OPCC for localities, and to facilitate the continuation of related activities throughout the 2026/2027 and future financial years.

All other recommendations listed are expected to be delivered within existing budgets, therefore no additional funding is required to implement these actions, and they fall within the scope of current operational budgets and staffing capacity.

3.2 Legal Implications LEG2526/270

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report and any applicable ones have been considered.

4.0 **References:**

1. STEM Women, 2023. **Women In STEM Statistics: Progress and Challenges.** [online] Available via: [Women In STEM Statistics: Progress and Challenges - Stem Women](#)
2. Education Policy Institute, 2025. **No room for battle of the sexes: Why boys AND girls matter** [online] Available via: [No room for battle of the sexes: Why boys AND girls matter - Education Policy Institute](#)

3. SafeLives, no date. **Idvas in maternity units**. [online] Available via: [Idvas in maternity units - SafeLives](#)
4. NPCC, 2024. **Violence Against Women and Girls**. [online] Available via: [Violence Against Women and Girls](#)
5. Plan International UK, 2024. **The State of Girls' Rights in the UK 2024**. [online] Available via: <https://act.plan-uk.org/page/150206/data/1?locale=en-GB>
6. Office for National Statistics, 2024. **Labour Market Profile - Newark and Sherwood** [online] Available via: [Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics](#)
7. Newark and Sherwood District Council, 2025. **Domestic homicide reviews (DHR)** [online] Available via: [Domestic homicide reviews \(DHR\) | Newark & Sherwood District Council](#)

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None

Appendix 1: Topic Request Form

Available on Mod.Gov or by contacting the Democratic Services lead for PPI. To be considered at the next PPI Committee the form must be submitted 20 working days before the next meeting.

Topic Request Form	
Please complete the first section of this form to request that a topic is considered by the Policy and Performance Improvement Committee. Please send the completed form to Helen Brandham	
Section 1: Member Request	
Proposed Topic	Life Chances for Girls
I would like to understand (Key lines of enquiry)	<p>Based on the findings of a report by Plan International, Newark and Sherwood are in the bottom 20% of places in the UK to be a girl;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10 fewer years in good health• 25% leave school without good GCSE results• 1 in 3 live in poverty• Women earn 23% less than men <p>As such the priority is to examine the data set in more depth and consider its merits.</p> <p>Build on this and develop a fuller picture of the life chance for girls in Newark and Sherwood, by identifying and supplementing with more up to date and relevant data, that the Council holds and from partners or wider, national sources too.</p> <p>To collate a summary of the activities, area of work and key achievements that the Council delivers or facilitates with partners to support this agenda around girls and young women. In many cases it is acknowledged that the Council has a place to influence by working with community groups, education, health care providers and business, but cannot directly and independently address all the challenges highlighted.</p> <p>Finally, by reflecting on all of this, to make recommendations of what changes, or work in this area that can be done differently to intervene, improve and advocate the life chances for girls and young women in the district by the Council and by our partners.</p>
I think this topic should be considered because	<p>Girls and young women are telling us that it remains tough to be a girl up and down the country, from their safety in public and online, health inequalities, disparity in education, future job prospects and a culture of misogyny.</p> <p>Where you live fundamentally affects your life chances. The support your community can provide, and the local services you can draw on, can impact your quality of life and help or hinder access to your rights.</p>

Appendix 1: Topic Request Form

	<p>Plan International, a global children's charity striving for a fairer world, prioritising girls and their rights, have recently surveyed 3,000 girls and young women aged 12 to 21.</p> <p>The State of Girls' Rights in the UK 2024 was the biggest ever exercise in listening to girls' voices ever.</p> <p>With the results, Plan International have developed and published an online tool, you can search by postcode or council and learn about the reality of growing up as a girl in a specific region.</p>	
(If applicable) High level evidence supporting the reason for consideration	<p>Source: How tough is it to be a girl where you live? Source: state-of-girls-rights-report.pdf</p>	
Proposed by (Name of member)	Cllr Rowan Cozens	Ward: Beacon Party: Independents for Newark
Seconded by (Name of member)	Cllr Susan Crosby	Ward: Beacon Party: Independents for Newark
Date Form Submitted	03.02.25	
Section 2: Officer Recommendation		
Officer Comments	<p>It is important to note that this working group is not about identifying more work for the Council to deliver, but to identify how we can possibly change some of the current approaches to support this agenda. Plus, engage and have open conversations with our partners to recognise their role and change any of their approaches too.</p> <p>It would be appropriate for the working group to carry out a scoping exercise only. It is not envisioned that any more resource is required by the Council but may indicate value of redeploying it, so we better support the life chances for girls across the district.</p>	
Officer Recommendation	Do undertake scoping work – Working Group Recommended	
Officer Name	Deborah Johnson	Director, Customer Services and Organisational Development
Date Information Added	24.01.25	
Section 3: PPI Chair Recommendation		
PPI Chair Comment	I fully support that this will be a worthwhile piece of scoping work and agree with the officer comments	
PPI Chair Recommendation	Do undertake a review	
Date Information Added	24.01.25	Role: Chair, PPIC
Next step	Completed form to be taken to PPI on 10.02.25	

Appendix 2: Working Group Headlines

Session 1: 3 April 2025.

This session outlined the significance of the working group and focused on setting the scene and expectations for future meetings. Key to this was the acknowledgement of the emotive nature of the topic.

The Plan International Report was discussed in depth as the basis of the of the working group. Plan International UK, a global children's charity striving for an equal world. One where every child can reach their full potential, and every girl can choose her own future.

Between May and June 2023 2,963 UK girls and young women aged 12-21 were surveyed, the highest number in the report's eight-year history, to identify their most pressing concerns. The key themes included:

- Feeling of safety (in person and online)
- Education and future prospects
- Gender inequalities and gender norms
- Cost of living
- Health and wellbeing
- Representation and role models
- Having little trust in politicians and institutions

Plan International online tool: The tool asks, "How tough is it to be a girl where you live?" This tool is powered by a Local Authority index that Plan International have collated, based on a number of indicators available nationally. You can search by postcode or council and learn about the reality of growing up as a girl in your area, and the injustices girls.

Based on the tool, for girls living in the Newark and Sherwood t, they are living in the bottom 20% of places in the UK.

The rest of the district:

- Rushcliffe, Mansfield and Bassetlaw – falling short
- Gedling – bottom 50%
- Nottingham – bottom 20%
- Broxtowe – bottom 20%
- Ashfield - bottom 10%

The merits of the report and data tool: The group noted that Plan International conducted a horizon scanning exercise prior to the survey. This involved workshops with 24 girls and young women (aged 12–20) across the UK, both online and in person, recruited via local networks in Norwich, Torfaen, Perthshire, and Belfast. The resulting survey exceeded their target of 2,600 responses, reaching 2,963. While they aimed for a representative sample using open and closed questions across all UK nations, they acknowledged that this cannot fully reflect the experiences of millions of girls and young women.

Building a fuller picture of Newark and Sherwood: The session was particularly data heavy. Members were presented with wider sources of data and information, including:

- Serious Violence Profile – Newark & Sherwood, including nature and victim profile for different types of crimes
- Domestic Homicide Reviews being undertaken

- Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment, January 2025 (Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire Violence Reduction Partnership (NNVRP), including controlling and coercive behaviour
- Data from Domestic Abuse charities Refuge and Safe Lives – 1 in 4 women in England and Wales will experience domestic abuse in her lifetime. On average, one woman is killed by an abusive partner or ex every five days in England and Wales.
- Healthcare gender gap, including life span vs health span
- Leisure centre enrolment and participation
- Education attainment, NEET (Not in education, employment or training)
- Representation in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects
- Department for Work and Pensions data on Employment rate gap and claimant counts for Universal Credit
- Representation in homelessness counts
- Demand and provisions by food banks

A closer look at the Council: The group considered the support in places and initiatives that enable colleagues to a healthy work/life balance while enabling excellent services to residents. The session highlighted various policies and initiatives designed to promote more effective working, such as Flexible working, including compressed hours, job share, hybrid working, generous annual leave, special leave, time off for dependents and maternity and adoption support. Although they are not all exclusively aimed at women, they reflect the Council's broader commitment to supporting all staff.

To conclude, the key themes from the session were acknowledged, and guest speakers were agreed to be invited to future sessions.

Session 2: 12 May 2025

There were 4 guest speakers in attendance at this session.

- Christie Conroy from Nottinghamshire Women's Aid, supporting NSDC gain the DAHA accreditation.
- Jenny Walker, the Business Manager for Public Protection at NSDC
- Cheska Asman, Homeless Strategy and Safeguarding Officer at NSDC
- Helen Ellison, Senior Health Improvement Officer at NSDC

Christie Conroy focused on Domestic Abuse. Nottinghamshire Women's Aid are the commissioned specialist domestic abuse support provider for women, children and teenagers who live in Bassetlaw, Mansfield and Newark and Sherwood. Domestic abuse affects the whole family, and it can have a serious impact on children.

Christie discussed the challenges, namely being volume of work in general but specifically requests for sanctuary. Sanctuary is a scheme that aims to reduce homelessness and improve safety for survivors of domestic abuse. Instead of requiring individuals to flee their homes, the scheme enables them to remain safely in their current residence by installing security measures such as locks, alarms, and other protective interventions.

Other services provided include counselling, refuge, family court, support for women and children. For example:

Medium Risk Intervention Service – referrals from the police when there has been a police incident, that has been assessed as medium risk and consent has been obtained to refer into service.

Maternity independent domestic violence advisors IDVA service is available to pregnant women or women who have been pregnant or had a child in the last 6 months (including birth, miscarriage, termination, adoption, still birth and infant loss).

Christie highlighted the opportunities for additional education and training in schools, specifically Healthy Relationships training, but other demands and budget pressures restrict their ability to facilitate additional learning.

Jenny Walker focused on Community Safety. The data discussed mirrored information provided by Christie. A number of successes and activities were provided:

- Close partnership working
- CCTV initiatives, increasing feelings of safety amongst all residents.
- Supporting the Healthy Relationship training in schools.
- Prison me no way, to raise awareness among young people about the causes, consequences, penalties, and impact of crime
- Safer Streets, a scheme which has supported the implementation of a 'youth pod' in Balderton.

Jenny highlighted the challenges associated with this area of work. Demand for services is always increasing but funding for activities or support is decreasing. When discussing opportunities and areas to improve, Jenny provided that all school age children should receive Healthy Relationships training.

Cheska Asman focused on Homelessness. She highlighted the number of women sleeping rough, is low. However, outlined that women can often be less visible when homeless. Cheska provided a number of successes:

- National Women's Census Pilot
- Nottinghamshire Women's Severe Multiple Disadvantage Group
- Housing Options Team are supported by an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor

Cheska discussed the challenges in this area. As women are less visible when homeless, evidencing their experiences can be difficult. To improve this area, more cross-functional working is required but additional resource would be necessary.

Helen Ellison focused on Health and Wellbeing. Helen discussed a number of successes and activities:

- Best Start groups
- Development of a Young Person Volunteer task and finish group
- BFF Scheme
- Voluntary Sector Support, focusing on food support and hygiene banks
- RSPH Level 2 Young Health Champs, engaging with young girls
- Dove Body Image Sessions, working to deliver sessions in primary schools
- Food club programmes, which are hugely popular

Helen highlighted that capacity and not having a statutory responsibility can cause challenges in this area. She raised that working with health partners to access data to understand inequalities and having more resource to support schools would be beneficial.

Session 3: 11 June 2025

There were three external speakers in attendance at this session:

- Inspector Charlotte Ellam, Divisional Commander for Newark and Sherwood, from Nottinghamshire Police
- Alexis Knock, Director of Business and Finance and Kelly Evans, Head of Partnerships & Community, from Active 4 Today.

Each speaker focused on their career, the initiatives they have been involved in and how their experiences as women.

Charlotte Ellam first spoke of her personal life, how she began her career and how she learned to separate her work life from her home life. Charlotte worked in many different areas within the policing sector, qualifying as an officer specialising in sexual offences to becoming a Demand Management Inspector and eventually working as the Neighbourhood Inspector for Newark. Throughout her career, Charlotte highlighted the emphasis she placed on being a good leader and role model, mentoring many young women. She outlined a number of successes and initiatives:

- Culture has changed significantly throughout Charlotte's career; there is less tokenism and good systems of mentorship available for young women.
- More awareness and understanding of mental health, societal expectations and boundaries among the new generation
- Higher reporting levels
- Ask for Angela, a scheme aimed at supporting the safety of people.
- Violence Against Women and Girls initiatives
- Safer Gyms accreditation

Charlotte emphasised that increased police presence would be greatly beneficial but unrealistic due to capacity, resources and a demand for officers in certain areas.

Alexis Knock and Kelly Evans focused on Active 4 Today, leisure centres in Newark, Southwell, Blidworth and Dukeries in Boughton. They discussed the aims of the organisation, to be financially viable, provide healthy and active opportunities and to ensure access to all where possible.

Data received at the time of the working group meeting (August 2025), of the 2,706 total memberships, 42% were held by women and 58% by men, a 16% higher proportion for male members. Women tend to dominate group workout areas, while men are more prevalent in the fitness space.

Alexis and Kelly discussed the number of initiatives they have been involved in:

- Free activities for children during the school holidays
- VISPA (Volunteering in Sport and Physical Activity) a volunteer scheme dedicated to sports volunteering in Newark and Sherwood
- Offering bursaries for mental health, SEN and those who are unemployed
- Providing female instructors across all areas
- Providing female only swimming sessions
- Offering self-defence sessions

Alexis and Kelly provided the challenges with this sector. It is widely acknowledged that drop out of sports is at age 14 and encouraging participation can be difficult with many barriers, such as confidence and lack of representation.

Active4Today works closely with schools and share messaging from trusted sources such as Sport England, including [This Girl Can](#) and [Studio You](#). This Girl Can is a national campaign by Sport England that celebrates active women of all shapes, sizes, and abilities. It aims to break down barriers like fear of judgement that prevent women and girls from getting involved in sport and physical activity. Studio You is an extension of the This Girl Can campaign, specifically designed for schools, which offers PE lessons tailored to teenage girls, making it more inclusive, fun, and accessible, especially for those who feel disengaged or intimidated by traditional PE formats.

Alexis and Kelly outlined that they had recently worked with Nottingham Trent University with students studying communications and marketing, which is part of the university's broader programme that partners students with local businesses over several months to help identify strengths and areas for improvement in their communications and marketing strategies.

One of the key findings from the student-led report was the need to improve branding and the use of imagery. It was noted that customers and prospective members respond more positively to marketing materials that feature real, recognisable members rather than generic stock images. This approach fosters authenticity and relatability. The working group agreed and felt that it is important the images reflected a range of people, to promote inclusivity.

Session 4: 5 August 2025.

There were two external speakers:

- Penny Taylor the Head of Newark Campuses
- Holly Youd Youth Engagement Programme Manager at the YMCA

Penny Taylor shared some of career journey and highlights across health, criminal justice, youth offending and education.

She discussed data from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities highlighting that Newark and Sherwood were in the top 10% most deprived areas in England for education, skills, training and employment. Penny provided a number of initiatives they have employed in the Newark campuses:

- Mentoring and coaching projects by women in industry.
- Women gaining experience with local employers whilst attending college.
- Peer learning
- Working with the GRT community to engage those who do not align themselves with traditional learning methods

Penny evidenced the success of these initiatives through case studies and emphasised the importance of colleges providing technical and vocational learning. Colleges provide an opportunity beyond education to empower women, develop self-worth and belief, gain employability skills and receive advice in a range of areas from careers support and sexual health. Alongside this, Penny noted the importance of girls being part of local community groups from a young age such as Brownies in order to foster self-confidence.

Holly Youd shared insights from her recent experience as a science teacher, having only left the profession in late 2024. She reflected on her time teaching STEM subjects and spoke about her perspective as a woman working in the field.

Holly discussed the support young people received through ChangeMakers. Changemaker's is a service that provides skills workshops, action projects and youth voice sessions at the YMCA. These activities empower young people and provide opportunities for further learning and development and employment. Participants were encouraged to explore causes they care about. Some of the events that young people have chosen to take up include:

- Afternoon tea event at Gladstone House to help combat loneliness
- A litter pick event to help protect their environment
- Teaming up with local vets, RSPCA rescue and stray dog services to promote helping animals.

Holly discussed the Developmental Assets Project, an attitude and behaviours survey completed, developed from the Search Institute's Developmental Assets Framework, which identifies 40 research-based, positive experiences and qualities that influence young people's development, helping them become caring, responsible, and productive adults.

YMCA ran the Developmental Assets project in 2023 to survey pupils at 3 secondary schools: Magnus, Newark Academy & Suthers. A single year cohort (Year 8) – circa 300 students took part and the survey is due to be conducted again shortly for comparative purposes. This is with a view to better understand what it's like to grow up in Newark and Sherwood, and highlight any strengths or gaps, to appropriately tailor support for young people.

Session 5: 3 September 2025

In the final session, the working group reflected on data sets and insights shared by both internal and external speakers throughout the previous sessions.

Also, the group invited Sarah Lacey, the Council's Comms and Marketing Manager.

Sarah first shared her background in local government, experiences as a working mum and how she approaches leading her team.

Sarah provided insights into the Council's communications strategy, such as:

- Data insights to engage with a specific target audience
- Gender inclusive language such as "everyone" over "ladies and or "gents"
- Internal campaigns "it is not just banter" through plain and simple communications

Sarah outlined a range of activities and how targeted messaging could support future work in this area. Two videos were shared as part of the presentation:

- A social media video showcasing how the council currently engages younger audiences, specifically through the *Recycling with NSDC* campaign, written by and styled to appeal to Gen Z (Gen Z was born between 1997 and 2012)

It should be noted that Sarah shared with the group that the government introduced a ban of the TikTok app on all UK government phones in 2023. As such the Council have to date taken a stance of not using the social media app.

- An example from the Open Doors Creative Influencers programme, a successful community initiative focused on arts and culture, which places young people's voices at the heart of its messaging

Finally, members were invited to reflect on the recommendations collated so far and highlight any questions or gaps.

All members of the working group will have the opportunity to reflect individually and share additional feedback ahead of the final report being presented to PPIC.

Appendix 3: Life Chances for Girls – Recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Further information	Lead Officer to deliver
1	<p>Active4Today branding material with a focus on representative images</p> <p>As part of a planned update to their branding and promotional materials, Active4Today to focus on using images from the local community.</p> <p>These images should include a diverse range of individuals to reflect the district's population and promote inclusivity, particularly in how girls and young women are represented.</p>	<p>Following the recent work carried out by communications and marketing students from Nottingham Trent University as part of a long-term university programme, the report highlighted the need to enhance branding and imagery. It was recommended that marketing materials feature real, recognisable members to foster authenticity and relatability.</p> <p>The Life Chances for Girls Working Group agreed, emphasising the importance of using inclusive imagery that reflects a diverse range of people.</p> <p>Active4Today is initially seeking specialist advice from Communications and Marketing Business Manager on this and a wider scheme of comms and marketing works.</p> <p>It is anticipated that Active4Today will look to increase resource with a focus on strategic marketing.</p>	Active 4 Today
Agenda Page 17	<p>Celebrate the success of existing Active4Today programmes</p> <p>Active4Today to regularly share good news stories and programme successes to highlight the positive impact on members and the wider community. Emphasis should be placed on showcasing outcomes for girls and women, helping to inspire participation and demonstrate inclusive engagement.</p>	<p>The team at Active4Today are actively working on their approach this and share these updates consistently across communications platforms.</p> <p>Active4Today is initially seeking specialist advice from Communications and Marketing Business Manager on this and a wider scheme of comms and marketing works.</p>	Active 4 Today

3	<p>Report on performance and programmes with specific focus on outcomes for girls and women</p> <p>To work collaboratively Active 4 Today to agree the best way to provide clearer insights into how girls and women are engaging with the leisure facilities and targeted group programmes.</p> <p>To include gender specific user numbers to ensure we understand how women and young girls are using our services</p>	<p>It is anticipated that Active4Today will look to increase resource with a focus on strategic marketing.</p> <p>Active4Today will submit their draft Business Plan in November as part of the annual cycle. This presents a timely opportunity to introduce the proposed context and direction, with any agreed changes to be implemented from the 2026/2027 period.</p> <p>Any changes to the existing reporting arrangements must be communicated in advance, with appropriate context provided. This should include reference to the Life Chances for Girls Working Group to ensure alignment and transparency to the Board and Shareholders.</p>	Active 4 Today and Performance Team
4	<p>Promote Healthy Relationships through targeted awareness programmes</p> <p>To make it a requirement as part of supporting and funding community settings (e.g. sports pitches) that our partners deliver a targeted awareness programme.</p> <p>These sessions should aim to include topics such as mutual respect, and breaking down gender stereotypes, and support healthy relationships between boys and girls.</p>		Health Improvement and Community Relations Manager
5	<p>Promote online safety education</p> <p>To work with our partners to identify ways to promote online safety education for young people and parents/carers highlighting specific risks and pressures associated with consuming digital media.</p>	<p>To be delivered as part of existing Communications Strategy, with a focus on trusted partners messaging that the Council can signpost and share.</p>	Communications and Marketing Business Manager

6	<p>Support actions based on public safety survey results</p> <p>To review and work collaboratively with Nottinghamshire Police on the findings on the 'Walk in my shoes' survey, focusing specifically on the identified hotspots within our district.</p>	<p>The survey closed 26 May.</p> <p>https://nottssvss.org.uk/walk-in-my-shoes/</p> <p>The police have gathered the data and discussed with the Designing Out Crime Officer (DOCO). A report, including recommendations for improvements has been referred to the Council for supporting actions.</p>	Community Safety Manager
7	<p>Domestic Abuse training</p> <p>To ensure that council communications and public-facing materials clearly convey that staff are trained in domestic abuse awareness and that the council offers a safe, supportive environment for residents seeking help or information.</p> <p>The working group identified that there is a benefit for members training session too, which will be built into the wider programme of works.</p>	<p>This is being delivered as part of the wider DAHA accreditation work and communications plan, such as DA messaging and visible indicators to be include on the website, signage, service points and social media,</p>	DAHA operational group
8	<p>Domestic Abuse resources and information online</p> <p>To continue work on reviewing and strengthening the Council's website content on Domestic Abuse, to ensure that we clearly communicate the support pathways to anyone affected.</p> <p>This includes signposting survivors to Nottinghamshire's Women Aid Co-Production Service 'Better Together', which invites survivors of domestic abuse, including men, women, and young people to share their experiences and shape future support services through small group or 1:1 sessions. These sessions are facilitated by Nottingham Trent University.</p>		DAHA operational group
Agenda Page 10	Spaces suitable for girls		Director of Communities and Environment

	To work with suppliers and architects to ensure that when the Council is designing future parks or outdoors spaces, the criteria should reflect the needs and voices of girls and young women.		
10	<p>Expand the food clubs through community volunteers</p> <p>To continue to deliver and consider possible expansion of the delivery of food clubs and cookery skills programmes, which have proven to be popular, inclusive, and oversubscribed. This would be achieved through recruiting a cohort of volunteers, that the council upskills and supports to deliver in their own communities, and need some initial resources such as Level 3 Food Hygiene Certificate, plus materials e.g. gas stoves, chopping boards, pans.</p> <p>These programmes offer safe spaces for diverse groups, including girls, GRT communities, SEN young people, and boys and provide valuable opportunities to engage on wider issues by “making every contact count.”</p>	<p>Between June 2024 and July 2025, over 140 teens participated on the sessions run by the Council (up to 15 per class).</p> <p>With this demand, it has been a longer-term aspiration to widen the delivery model as such will be built into the Council’s Business Planning cycle to implement from 2026/2027.</p>	Healthy Active Lifestyle Manager
11	<p>Council’s Gender Pay Gap report to PPIC</p> <p>To present the Council’s Gender Pay Gap report to PPIC on an annual basis for scrutiny.</p> <p>The report is currently shared with SLT and JCC. Presenting the report to a scrutiny committee annually would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable oversight of how well the council is progressing toward gender equity in pay and leadership. Align with broader equality goals, such as Equality, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion 	<p>The most recent report was published for 2024:</p> <p>https://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/media/nsdc-redesign/documents-and-images/your-council/access-to-our-information/publication-scheme/transparency/Gender-Pay-Gap-Reporting-for-March-2024.pdf</p>	HR and Training Business Manager
Agenda Page 120	<p>Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) prioritised</p> <p>To embed Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) into all council projects, policies, and decisions to ensure that activities do not inadvertently disadvantage girls and young women.</p> <p>This may include:</p>		Equality, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Operational Group

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make EIA completion a clear step in project initiation and policy development. • Include a specific prompt in the EIA template to assess gender-based impacts, with a focus on girls and young women. • Review completed EIAs annually to identify patterns and areas for improvement. 		
13	<p>Member understanding of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)</p> <p>To equip elected Members with the knowledge and confidence to interpret and embed Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to carry out any of their decision-making responsibility.</p> <p>This will ensure that there is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater scrutiny of gendered impacts in council reports and strategies. • Stronger alignment between council actions and its commitment to equality and inclusion. 		Equality, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Operational Group
14	<p>Member training to empower and ensure all voices are heard</p> <p>To add to the member training programme a supportive session aimed at creating a safe and inclusive space where all councillors can build confidence, develop practical tools, and feel empowered to express their views more actively in council settings.</p> <p>While the session will be open to everyone, it will be especially supportive of those who tend to be quieter in these environments, who are, though not exclusively, often women.</p>	<p>Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee holds responsibility for member training, they have been invited to consider this recommendation and incorporate it into the forward plan for member development. The nature of the timeline means that by agreement this has been included on the G&GP&LGR committee agenda.</p>	Elections and Democratic Services Business Manager
15	<p>Members to receive training to support and target grant funding bids and opportunities</p> <p>To empower elected Members with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to effectively communicate grant funding opportunities and criteria to</p>		Healthy Places Business Manager

	<p>residents and community groups, thereby improving the quality and targeting of applications.</p> <p>This could cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligibility criteria, including examples of successful applications. • Key deadlines and decision-making timelines. • Contact details for the Community Team for direct support. • The grant application process and assessment criteria. • Common pitfalls and how to avoid them. • How Members can proactively identify and support eligible groups in their wards. 		
16	<p>Continue support and funding of 'Prison me no way'</p> <p>To actively support the Council's continued funding of the awareness programmes 'Prison Me No Way,' to see that each cohort receives the same benefits year on year.</p> <p>'Prison Me No Way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • raises awareness among young people about the causes, consequences, penalties, and impact of crime. • promotes positive decision-making and personal responsibility <p>The sessions are interactive that simulate real-life scenarios, helping participants understand the realities of criminal behaviour and the justice system.</p> <p>Young people involved have engaged positively and provided feedback that they have been valuable.</p>	<p>https://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/latest-news/2025/february/programme-aimed-at-educating-young-people/</p> <p>The sessions cost around £2.5k per day per school. For all secondary schools and some of the alternative provisions within the district, approximately £20k.</p> <p>NSDC funded this previously out of the Safer Greener Cleaner pot.</p> <p>It is well known that feelings of safety and reducing ASB are really important area to residents.</p> <p>NSDC is allocating budget to support these and other activities in 2026/27 and beyond.</p> <p>This funding forms part of a broader budget for diversionary initiatives, totalling approximately £50,000, and will replace</p>	<p>Director of Communities and Environment, Community Protection Business Manager, Portfolio Holder of Public Protection and Community</p>

		previous financial support provided through the Police and Crime Commissioner's Locality Fund.	
17	<p>Commissioning the delivery of behaviour change programmes such as 'Healthy Relationships' within schools and a wider diversionary programme of activities</p> <p>The Healthy Relationship programme was rolled out in some secondary schools in previous years, delivered by charity Equation.</p> <p>This is comprehensive training tailored for all secondary students, with a strong emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education around Violence Against Women and Girls • Challenging current trends in misogyny and incel propaganda • Promoting understanding of consent and respect • Providing guidance on phone and image safety <p>This programme is seen as a proactive measure to educate all young people about healthy relationships and reduce harmful behaviours.</p>	<p>NSDC is allocating budget to support these and other activities in 2026/27 and beyond.</p> <p>This funding forms part of a broader budget for diversionary initiatives (extreme wheels roadshows, amateur boxing, mending lines community fishing project and others) totalling approximately £50,000 and will replace previous financial support provided through the Police and Crime Commissioner's Locality Fund.</p>	Director of Communities and Environment, Business Manager for Community Protection and Portfolio Holder of Public Protection and Community
18	<p>Attend annual expo event with a focus on life chances for girls</p> <p>To reach and engage with a large and diverse cohort of young people at the annual expo event, sharing clear and accessible information, interactive resources and tools, and offering support and signposting which focuses on the life chances and outcomes of girls.</p> <p>The annual event is attended by approximately 1,500 children and is already well established. It presents a unique and high-impact opportunity to engage directly with young people from across the district. Establishing a dedicated stall at this event aligns with the working group's emphasis on improving communication and signposting strategies, particularly those aimed at younger audiences.</p>	<p>Arrangements are underway for officers to attend the next expo event on 13 November 2025 to share key messages about safety, wellbeing, and opportunity in a format that is accessible and engaging. This initiative can be delivered with minimal additional resource by leveraging existing materials and staff presence.</p> <p>https://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/latest-news/2025/june/future-first-expo-2025/</p>	Transformation, HR Communications and Health and Wellbeing Teams

19	<p>Developmental assets data sharing</p> <p>To explore data intelligence gathered by YMCA for the Developmental Assets work, including comparative data between 2023 and 2025.</p> <p>Comparative data from 2025 would allow the council to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track progress or regression in youth wellbeing. • Identify which interventions have worked and where gaps remain. • Prioritise resources for the most at-risk groups. 	<p>The YMCA data reflects the unique strengths and challenges of Newark's youth, rather than relying on national averages. This localised intelligence is essential for tailoring services and avoiding one-size-fits-all approaches.</p>	YMCA
20	<p>Promoting female role models through school volunteering</p> <p>To explore the feasibility and interest of launching a targeted volunteering initiative that encourages female professionals to speak in secondary schools and colleges, particularly at GCSE and A-Level stages. This initiative should be marketed to both school staff and council teams, with a clear message: "You can't be what you can't see."</p> <p>Showcasing diverse female role models, especially from underrepresented backgrounds, is important to help young women visualise broader career paths, challenge stereotypes, and build confidence in their future potential.</p>	<p>All council staff have access to a volunteering day, which can be used to participate in this initiative. The council already maintains a strong network of school and college contacts. It is proposed that the Working Group Chair and Management Sponsor issue a joint communication to these contacts to generate interest and identify opportunities for staff to get involved.</p> <p>Where possible, this programme should prioritise a specific female cohort in schools, where these networks in school already exist.</p>	Life Chances for Girls Working Group Chair and Director of Customer Services and Organisational Development



Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

This EIA relates to:

Life Chances for Girls Working Group

Details are set out:

Life Chances for Girls Report

Officers undertaking the assessment:

Carina Tona, Transformation and Service Improvement Officer,
Philene Eason-Bacon, Transformation and Service Improvement Graduate Trainee

The Public Sector Equality Duty which is set out in the Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The purpose of carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment is to assess the impact of a change to services or policy on people with protected characteristics and to demonstrate that the Council has considered the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Part A: Impact, consultation and proposed mitigation

1 What are the potential impacts of the proposal? Has any initial consultation informed the identification of impacts?

The aim of the Life Chances for Girls working group was to identify how opportunities for women and girls in Newark and Sherwood are impacted by their location. The working group recognised that girls and young women experience layered disadvantages stemming from concerns around public and online safety, health inequalities, educational barriers, and other systemic challenges. Such issues can be further compounded by entrenched societal norms and structural discrimination.

It is essential that local support, services, and initiatives are not only well-communicated but also purposefully designed and effective. Following this, the working group focused on understanding the initiatives and activities already being delivered and how they can be further supported. (Appendix 3)

Appendix 4

2 Protected Characteristics: Is there a potential positive or negative impact based on:

Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Positive	<input type="checkbox"/> Negative	<input type="checkbox"/> Neutral Impact
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive	<input type="checkbox"/> Negative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neutral Impact
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive	<input type="checkbox"/> Negative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neutral Impact
Pregnancy & maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Positive	<input type="checkbox"/> Negative	<input type="checkbox"/> Neutral Impact
Race Including ethnic origin, colour or nationality	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive	<input type="checkbox"/> Negative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neutral Impact
Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive	<input type="checkbox"/> Negative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neutral Impact
Sex (gender)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Positive	<input type="checkbox"/> Negative	<input type="checkbox"/> Neutral Impact
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive	<input type="checkbox"/> Negative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neutral Impact
Marriage or civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive	<input type="checkbox"/> Negative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neutral Impact

3 Where there are potential negative impacts for protected characteristics these should be detailed including consideration of the equality duty, proposals for how they could be mitigated (where possible) and meaningfully consulted on:

How do the potential impacts affect people with protected characteristics <i>What is the scale of the impact?</i>	How might negative impact be mitigated or explain why it is not possible	How will we consult
This working group focuses on opportunities for women and girls. The initiatives and activities outlined within the report and supporting recommendations (appendix 3) aim to improve the educational, health, safety and systemic barriers that women and girls face.		These issues have been identified from data gathered by Plan International which has been outlined in the Life Chances for Women and Girls Report.
This working group positively supports the development of our communities through recommending programmes which aim to challenge harmful behaviour and encourage mutual respect, and breaking down gender stereotypes, and support healthy relationships		

4 Are there other impacts e.g., socio-economic or environmental?

Appendix 4

What are the potential impacts and who is affected? <i>What is the scale of the impact?</i>	How might negative impact be mitigated or explain why it is not possible	How will we consult
<p>Within the report, the financial implications of the recommendations have been documented.</p> <p>There is a potential neutral impact regarding accessibility to the online learning recommended in appendix 3. This could include access to electronics and considerations surrounding language barriers in all communications.</p> <p>A potential negative impact through the Domestic Abuse training, due to recognised disabilities such as dyslexia, ADHD, and autism. In addition to consideration for general learning styles.</p>	<p>This will be mitigated through ongoing work in the Digital Strategy which aims to ensure digital inclusivity.</p> <p>This will be mitigated through considering these potential impacts when developing training packages. Training will be provided in various forms / methods to ensure inclusivity wherever possible.</p>	<p>A consultation on our Digital Strategy was conducted in May and June 2025.</p> <p>Communication on learning and development is regular and includes pre training and post training feedback opportunities. There is also a live staff feedback section on the intranet where staff can submit feedback / suggestions on any topic.</p> <p>All staff are invited to complete an annual staff survey which includes questions around their understanding of their role and expectations; this includes their access to their learning and development opportunities.</p>
<p>A potential negative impact on members of staff without access to online resources.</p>	<p>All line managers have online access and are encouraged actively to share information and resources with members of staff who do not have access. Additionally, key messages are always circulated in multiple forms. I.e., through posters and drop-in sessions where suitable.</p>	

Part B: Feedback and further mitigation

4 Summary of consultation feedback and further amendments to proposal / mitigation

N/A – we will not be consulting as part of this working group.

Appendix 4

It should be noted that the working group is to embed EIAs into all projects and policies, train members to interpret EIAs, and empower all voices in council settings. These are directly about strengthening the EIA process itself and ensuring gendered impacts are scrutinised.

Please retain completed EIAs in your business area.

Appendix 5: Life Chances for Girls – Future First Careers Expo 2025



Newark and Sherwood colleagues attending the Future First Careers Expo 2025

Background

Newark and Sherwood District Council, in partnership with the Lincoln College Group host the annual Future First Careers Expo 2025. Now in its eighth year, the Expo continues to be a cornerstone event for students in Years 11 to 13 across the district and Lincolnshire, offering them a unique opportunity to explore a wide range of career and educational pathways.

The idea behind the Careers Expo is to enable businesses to meet and engage with their future work force. To talk about apprenticeship pathways that they may offer as well as raise the aspiration and inspiration of the young people who attend therefore opening up the world of work from many different sectors.

On Thursday 13 November 2025, officers from Newark and Sherwood District Council hosted a stall at the annual Future First Expo 2025, held at the Lady Eastwood Centre, Newark Showground. The Expo is well established and is attended by approximately 1500 students in years 11 to 13 from schools across Newark, Sherwood, and Lincolnshire, providing them with access to a diverse range of career and educational opportunities through various organisations. A team of officers from Newark and Sherwood District Council already attend this event annually to promote apprenticeships, healthy lifestyles and other key messages.

Alignment to the working group

The Life Chances for Girls working group recognised this event as a valuable opportunity to connect with a broad and diverse group of young people from across the district, providing them with resources, guidance, and support specifically aimed at enhancing the life chances and outcomes of girls. As such, one of the recommendations of the working group was to attend and

share key messages about safety, wellbeing and career opportunities in an accessible and engaging manner.

Approach

While preparing for the expo, the team prioritised challenging gender stereotypes by showcasing roles typically linked to a specific gender. To support this, a female staff member from the Housing Maintenance & Asset Management Business Unit, working in a sector traditionally seen as male-dominated, attended the event serving as a real-life example and role model by sharing professional experiences with attendees.

In addition to this, we shared resources and handouts that young people could take away from the event including NSDC branded water bottles, stress balls, notebooks, and highlighters. We also offered customised wristbands, with a QR code linking to the council's apprenticeship webpage.

Reflections

The Future First Careers Expo was established with the aim of empowering students with a clear understanding of the wide range of opportunities available to them after school, and to help them map out a path to future success.

Focusing on life chances for girls, the event showcased real-world career pathways and opened conversations about opportunities, making them feel tangible and achievable.

A key theme was the abundance of opportunities within the district and at the Council itself. Many girls visited the stand, showing interest in fields such as mechanics, construction, and joinery. Having a female staff member in a similar role, demonstrating that women can and do succeed in these sectors, proved both inspiring and empowering for attendees.

Looking ahead

Building on the success of this year's stall, our aspiration is to strengthen efforts that improve life chances for girls, including more interactive opportunities at future events to showcase diverse career pathways and increased representation of female role models from non-traditional sectors to inspire confidence and ambition.

By taking these steps, this is another way we ensure that every girl sees a future full of possibilities.



Report to: Cabinet Meeting - 20 January 2026

Portfolio Holders: Councillor Simon Forde, Climate & the Environment
Councillor Paul Peacock, Strategy, Performance & Finance

Director Lead: Matthew Finch, Director - Communities & Environment

Lead Officers: Matt Adey, Development Manager Environmental Services, Ext. 5253
Ash Kitchen, Street Scene Manager, Ext. 5738

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open Report / Key Decision
Report Title	Parks and Open Spaces Development Plan
Purpose of Report	To put forward a programme that will further improve parks and open spaces across Newark & Sherwood in line with resident aspirations and objectives set out within the Council's Community Plan. The proposals will enable parks and open spaces in the district to be future-proofed ahead of Local Government Reorganisation in 2028 and leave a positive legacy for the Council.
Recommendations	<p>That Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) endorse the allocation of £100,000 in 2026/27 for parks and open spaces legacy fund for Towns and Parish Councils to bid into on a match-funded basis, to drive improvement in parks and open spaces across the district, and delegate authority for the implementation and administration of the fund to the Director - Communities & Environment; b) agree that £30,000 is committed within the budget for 2026/27, to enable investment in a number of Council-owned sites which have the potential for future development, including some for future Green Flag status; c) agree that three strategic sites are identified for potentially significant investment in new facilities, with consultation due to take place about those developments within 2026/27; and d) Once c) above is complete, bring a report back to Cabinet in 2026/27 about detailed development at those sites, together with a funding package, for delivery in 27/28 – the last operating year of NSDC ahead of Local Government Reorganisation.

Alternative Options Considered	Given the growing importance residents attach to parks and open spaces, doing nothing was not deemed a viable option. In the context of LGR, future decisions about investment in parks and open spaces in Newark and Sherwood will be taken by a new entity with a much broader geographical footprint and set of delivery responsibilities. Cabinet could choose to press on with developments at the three strategic sites in 2026/27, but given the potential costs it is deemed prudent to understand community support and explore sources of funding that may be available. There is no requirement to create a Town and Parish Council Park Legacy Fund, but this would fail to address the reality that many parks and open spaces across the district are not owned by NSDC and would be a missed opportunity to facilitate improvement in these valued facilities.
Reason for Recommendations	The recommendations align with the Community Plan objectives in relation to health and wellbeing, protecting and enhancing the environment and promoting community spirit. The proposals are also in line with resident feedback as evidenced through the latest resident survey and the increasing importance being placed on parks and open spaces.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Newark & Sherwood District Council has five award-winning Green Flag parks in its ownership – Sconce and Devon Park, the Castle Grounds and the Queen Elizabeth Memorial Gardens in Newark, Sherwood Heath at Ollerton and Vicar Water in Clipstone.
- 1.2 In addition, the Council has a total of 30 play parks that it owns and maintains across the district, including some at the award-winning parks above, some in our local communities and some on the housing revenue account land.
- 1.3 Over recent times, the Council has been undertaking some improvement works at these play parks to ensure that they are fit for purpose. This has included a programme of re-surfacing several, to ensure that they are fit for purpose and are safe to use, and the inclusion of accessible play equipment.
- 1.4 In 2023, the Council invested £350,000 across ten sites in Newark and Sherwood, installing modern, accessible play equipment and new fitness equipment and a Castle - themed playground in Sconce and Devon Park. Other parks to benefit from that investment round included Vicar Water, Clipstone; Mead Way, Balderton; Lincoln Road Recreation Ground Play Area, Newark; Thorpe Oaks Play Area, Coddington; Hillcote Drive, Clipstone; Old Tannery Drive, Lowdham; Cleveland Square, Newark and Turner Lane in Boughton.
- 1.5 Most recently, of course, the Council led the re-development of the Newark Town Council-owned Sherwood Avenue Park. This £500,000 development was made possible as a result of the Council's successful bid to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Section 106 monies and the sale of a town council asset, which had an overage attached to it. This summer the park re-gained the Green Flag status it had lost and continues to receive positive feedback from users and the wider community.

1.6 The recent investments in parks and open spaces should be seen in the context of many residents re-connecting with these spaces during the pandemic and the cost of living challenge which continues to affect many. Play parks and our wider park offerings have the ability to offer children and families engaging places to visit at no cost to them. Evidence for this growing importance in parks and open spaces was seen in the Council's latest resident survey with a notable increase in the survey undertaken after the pandemic compared to the one before.

2.0 Proposal/Details of Options Considered

2.1 Town and Parish Council Legacy Fund

2.1.1 Whilst the Council owns and operates a number of parks in its own right, many parks and open spaces within the District are owned and maintained by town and parish councils. Whilst such facilities are valued, they carry costs to run them and require investment in parts and equipment as facilities become older. Without investment, modern parks can also start to make older ones look tired.

2.1.2 As such, the Parks and Open Spaces Development Plan includes the creation of a fund specifically for town and parish councils with the aim of improving facilities across Newark and Sherwood.

2.1.3 During 2026/27, the Council will create a £100,000 fund for Town and Parish Councils to submit match-funded bids of up to £10,000 for investment in parks, play equipment and open spaces within their town or parish. For towns and parishes, this could see investment of up to £20,000 in their facilities and for NSDC a potential £200,000 investment in parks and open spaces across the district.

2.1.4 Subject to approval, a formal grant application process would need to be established as well as award criteria, which as well as the match-funding principle and maximum £10,000 award, will require delivery in 27/28 – the last year of NSDC before LGR. In the event the fund is oversubscribed, additional weighting may be given to communities which have a play area shortfall based on analysis contained within the latest Open Spaces Strategy. Administration of this fund would be overseen by the Director of Communities and Environment.

Parks and Open Spaces Development within our own sites (two phases)

2.2 Phase 1 – 26/27 (biodiversity improvements and strategic development)

2.2.1 There are a number of sites within the Council's ownership that present opportunities for new planting and features as well as future development into Green Flag parks. Below is a precis of those sites, the opportunities and costs required to deliver them. Some images of each site are also contained in **Appendix 1**. The proposals outlined are for the most part the views of officers only. Before any major works commence, we will be seeking the views of the local community on the proposals.

Clay Lane (improvements and development towards Green Flag - General Fund
High Level Schematic in Appendix 1)

2.2.2 Over the last 5 years the site which covers an area around 22,800m² has been transformed from a short-mown grass field to a landscape with meadow areas and large areas of tree planting and seating areas. Recently we have been working closely with local residents who have formed a Friends of Clay Lane Park Group. This group has raised some concerns with antisocial behaviour reported along the borders of the site and reports of alcohol use, drug taking and rough sleepers.

2.2.3 We are working with the Friends' Group to create a new vision for the site with improvements being made to reduce antisocial behaviour, including the cutting back of the bordering hedgerow, installation of a bund to prevent vehicle access and new litter bins at heavily littered locations.

2.2.4 The site is primarily used by dog walkers, so we propose new facilities by installing a dog agility course at the southern end of the site. This will consist of a number of fixed pieces of equipment including jump hoops, weaving posts and under and over bars. This is estimated to cost around £10,000

2.2.5 The site is prone to seasonal flooding which has on occasion covered the footpath, so we are also keen to look at the drainage on the site with the potential to create a new pond/wetland area or to divert water away from the footpath. Historic mapping indicates that there were a number of ponds in this area in the past and it is well documented that the addition of water to any site will provide a great boost to biodiversity both in terms of aquatic flora and fauna and terrestrial animals such as foxes, badgers and even deer visiting the site to drink. In Phase 1 we want to work with experts to conduct some investigation work into the drainage of the site and to gauge the response from the community to the proposed solutions.

2.2.6 We also want to explore the possibility of new options to create a new sensory planting area on adjacent land. This will prevent vehicles cutting across this space and with sensory planting focusing on smells and textures. With the above improvements and the cooperation of the local residents we think this site could become a future Green Flag Park.

Thorpe Oaks/Stirling Drive (planting at Stirling Drive and development towards Green Flag - High Level Schematic in Appendix 2 – General Fund)

2.2.7 Thorpe Oaks is a well-equipped and much-loved park in Coddington covering an area of around 22,500 m².

2.2.8 Having benefited from previous investment, the site has a well-equipped play area including some accessible equipment a casual football pitch with fixed goal posts and some teenage/ young adult provision in the form of a small climbing wall.

2.2.9 Historically the site was prone to unauthorised encampments, however the creation of bunds and ditches around the boundary of the site has prevented this and we have had no new encampments since they were installed. The bunds were hydroseeded with a mix of wildflower and grasses providing great habitat for pollinating insects.

- 2.2.10 This is a prime site for further improvement and with an area which has the scope to become community orchard has potential to become Green Flag Park if community involvement can be encouraged.
- 2.2.11 Just around the corner from Thorpe Oaks on the corner of Stirling Drive is a small open space which is suitable for a smaller orchard with some carefully selected shade tolerant fruit trees.
- 2.2.12 In 2026 we want to gauge the demand from the residents of the surrounding estate and see if there is scope for a Friends of Thorpe Oaks group to be led by the community. Feedback from such a group will be helpful to further develop the site.

Hawtonville Tree Equity Scheme

- 2.2.13 The following sites have been identified as potential additional locations for tree planting as part of the Tree Equity Scheme, a project being run by the Woodland Trust in partnership with Newark and Sherwood District Council. The international Tree Equity Score has identified the Hawtonville estate as one of our areas with the lowest levels of tree cover. Costs for both schemes will be met from existing budgets and the Trees for Climate scheme.

Cherry Holt – NSDC Housing

- 2.2.14 This is one of the larger green spaces on the Hawtonville estate (circa 10,000m²) and is enclosed by houses on all sides. It currently consists of a well-equipped play area with some accessible play equipment. New tree planting through the Tree Equity Project will create both habitat and shade on this site whilst retaining the prevailing open spaces as areas for ball games.

Fairfax Avenue - NSDC Housing

- 2.2.15 This small (~1,000m²) pocket park tucked into the corner of Fairfax Avenue has an anecdotal history of antisocial behaviour centred around a bench which was once on site. The bench was removed many years ago and in recent years it has been completely given over to nature, however there is potential to turn it into an appealing space for local residents. We are working with the Woodland Trust to plant 1 or 2 trees on this site which will be later complemented with some sensory planting focusing on smells and textures.
- 2.2.16 The budget to deliver this phase of the Parks and Open Spaces Development Plan is **£30,000**. Funding has been committed within the Environmental Services Business Unit, to deliver these works in 2026/27.

2.3 Phase 2a – 26/27 (consultation with residents and stakeholders over opportunities at three strategic sites)

- 2.3.1 In preparing this plan, site visits were undertaken across Newark and Sherwood. Whilst some sites lend themselves to improvements in biodiversity, some have space available which would warrant consideration of more substantial investment in play facilities.

Cedar Avenue, Newark (High-level schematic in Appendix 3)

2.3.2 Cedar Avenue is a substantial area of green space located off Lincoln Road in Newark. It is bordered by housing on three sides and to Lincoln Road on the east. The land is owned by the Gilstrap Charity which affects opportunities for future development. On the site there is a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) and a small youth shelter. However, the substantial extent of the site is given over to grassland which is maintained by NSDC.

2.3.3 The site sits over the road from the Yorke Drive estate which is due to undergo an extensive regeneration plan. It is also relatively close to the Beacon Hill Woodland Trust reserve. Over recent times, the Trust has tried to reduce use of part of the reserve which is essentially being used as an unstructured BMX track, which carries risks in terms of potential injuries being sustained in a location emergency services may struggle to access.

2.3.4 Alongside the MUGA, the availability of space and the local context, there may be a case for investing on the site in form a 'pump-track' for BMX, skateboard and scooter usage. Whilst NSDC would need to seek Gilstrap Trust consent for such an installation, we hope the Trust might agree to a contribution to such a development given possible links with its charitable objects. Some images of pump tracks are contained in Appendix 5.

Cherry Holt, Newark (High level schematic in Appendix 4 & 5)

2.3.5 This site sits within Hawtonville which faces high levels of deprivation when compared against the rest of the district. The table below shows this in some detail.

Indicator	Hawtonville	Newark and Sherwood
Household is deprived in one dimension	36.5%	33.3%
Residents in employment	52.1%	56%
Residents without qualifications	30.1%	19.1%
Residents in bad health	6.3%	4.5%

2.3.6 The site is an extensive piece of open space, surrounded on all sides by housing. There is a play park on the site at present and some tree planting is due to take place at the site as part of the Woodland Trust Tree Equity scheme in conjunction with NSDC and the Reach Charity.

2.3.7 In the *Hawtonville Neighbourhood Study 2018* Cherry Holt Greenspace was identified as potential Development Zone. With the potential to create a landscaped pocket park and options for playing pitch provision highlighted.

2.3.8 Across the entirety of the estate, there is currently only one Multi Use Games Area (MUGA), which is next to the Hawtonville Community Centre. It was constructed over 20 years ago and is in reasonable condition. Health outcomes within Hawtonville are comparatively poor when compared with the rest of the district as shown above. Whilst there is access to sporting and leisure provision within easy reach at both the YMCA and Active 4 Today facilities, those activities take place behind a pay barrier which is a challenge to meet for many given the economic outlook for the estate. By providing new opportunities for outdoor activities which are free at the point of use, we can help to improve the health outcomes of the area.

2.3.9 This site may provide a location for a new, modern fit for purpose MUGA, subject to decision and consultation with the community. Although expensive to fund, the Council has experience from Sherwood Avenue of successfully accessing third party funding and may be able to do the same at this location. The installation of a second MUGA is only our initial suggestion as officers are keen to provide a facility that the community wants rather than being seen to impose our own views.

Turner Lane, Boughton (High level schematic in Appendix 6)

2.3.10 The Ollerton and Boughton Neighbourhood study in 2019 showed health outcomes on the Retford Road estate to be some of the worst in the district. In 2021, the Council opened a new £3-million pool at the Dukeries Leisure Centre and the Turner Lane Park which is close by benefitted from the last round of play park investments in 2023.

2.3.11 There is scope to build on those developments with the creation of an additional 'pump track', similar to that suggested for Cedar Avenue, or alternative facilities such as outdoor gym equipment which could sit alongside the existing park and youth shelter. This may provide a positive outlet for young people in the estate to use a dedicated space with complimentary facilities surrounding it. The land is HRA-owned and, as with Cedar Avenue, a funding package could be put together to deliver the facility, subject to decision and consultation with the community and the local police. The *Asset Based Community Development Project Report (April 2024)* cited 53% of Boughton residents never used the leisure centre based on cost. By providing new opportunities for outdoor activities which are free at the point of use, we can help to improve the health outcomes.

2.3.12 The Neighbourhood Study is due to be revised in 2026 and we anticipate that the community consultation for these play area improvements would be run in a complementary fashion. This may result in the precise location of any new provision being amended as plans develop.

2.3.13 Total costs for delivery of all Phase 2 sites are currently estimated at **£552,500** (excluding inflation for undertaking the works in 27/28 and contingency) but opportunities exist to talk to landowners for contributions as well as exploring avenues of further funding as was the case with Sherwood Avenue Park.

2.3.14 As Members will be aware, two of the schemes, Cedar Avenue and Cherry Holt, are within the boundary for the Pride in Place programme of investment, which has £1.2-million earmarked for community grants aligned to the strategic objectives in the plan which include parks, open spaces and health and wellbeing. Bids are being capped at a maximum of £100,000 with projects bringing match-funding being a key criterion towards successful awards. As such, NSDC would seek grant funding for £200,000 towards the £400,000 forecasted cost of the pump track and MUGA. As such, the NSDC requirement could be £200,000, or 50% of the total cost.

2.3.15 Additionally, there is currently an uncommitted Section 106 grant available for Ollerton and Boughton which was originally intended to support the development of open space. £110,000 of this grant could be committed towards the pump track at Turner Lane, leaving £40,000 to be met by the Council.

2.3.16 Whilst the three sites would offer the greatest opportunity for significant investment, the Council is also looking at the potential development of a pond at Clay Lane and the potential for future use and investment in Southfield in Balderton. Costs would be far more modest with budgets for some of that feasibility work in 2026/27 available within existing budgets.

2.3.17 Before a decision on any of the above developments was undertaken, Cabinet would no doubt want to also assure themselves that the proposals had support from local communities as well as key stakeholders, as well as detail on successful funding bids. Hence, it is proposed that consultation takes place over the summer of 2026 and funding bids are submitted, to enable a report to be considered by members over the Autumn period and ahead of budget setting for 2027/28.

2.3.18 Were the proposals to be approved, however, they would potentially represent an investment in parks and open spaces in excess of £750,000 with more than half of that sum being met through grant, Section 106 and match-funding. On top of investments in parks in 2023 and Sherwood Avenue Park, NSDC would have delivered or facilitated an investment in excess of £1.5-million in parks over recent times.

2.4 Phase 2b – 27/28 (tender and install solutions at the sites)

2.4.1 Subject to consideration and approval by Cabinet, costs would be included within the capital programme for 27/28 to deliver at those sites ahead of LGR in April 2028.

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations officers have considered the following implications; Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding, Sustainability, and Crime and Disorder and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Implications Considered			
Yes – relevant and included / NA – not applicable			
Financial	Yes	Equality & Diversity	Yes
Human Resources	N/A	Human Rights	N/A
Legal	Yes	Data Protection	N/A
Digital & Cyber Security	N/A	Safeguarding	N/A
Sustainability	N/A	Crime & Disorder	Yes
LGR	N/A	Tenant Consultation	N/A

3.1 Equalities Implications

During the roll out of these schemes full consultation will take place with user groups where appropriate. Consideration will be given to suitability of any inclusive play equipment.

3.2 Financial Implications - FIN25-26/4763

Town and Parish Council Legacy Fund

3.2.1 As described in paragraph 2.1, the budget required of £100,000 for Towns and Parish Councils to bid into on a match-funded basis, will be added to the proposed revenue budget to Council in March 2026 and would be funded by the Council's reserves.

Parks and Open Spaces Development within our own sites (two phases)

3.2.2 There are two sites identified in phase 1 for development and improvements towards a green flag status: Clay Lane, Newark and Thorpe Oaks/Sterling Drive, Coddington.

3.2.3 As per paragraph 2.2.16, a budget of £30,000 has been added to the proposed 2026/27 revenue budget to fund phase 1. Consultation with the public will be carried out, followed by a more detailed report being brought back to SLT with the findings.

3.2.4 Cherry Holt and Fairfax Avenue are both HRA play areas, therefore any works carried out here will be at a cost to the HRA rather than the General Fund.

Phase 2

3.2.5 Phase 2 includes 2 parts, consultation during 2026/27, and works to be carried out in 2027/28. There are three sites identified:

Cedar Avenue Park, owned by Gilstap Trust
Turner Lane Park, owned by the HRA
Cherry Holt Park, owned by the HRA

3.2.6 There are a number of uncommitted S106 receipts (in excess of £440k) that could be used towards the works in phase 2, which would need to be discussed at the Developer Contributions meeting, but as per paragraph 2.3.15, £110,000 of the above has been identified which would be suitable to contribute to the works at Turner Lane.

3.2.7 Once all the consultations are complete, a report will be brought to Cabinet in 2026/27 about detailed development at those sites, together with a funding package, for delivery in 2027/28.

3.3 Legal Implications - LEG2526/8723

3.3.1 Any grant scheme administered by the Council shall apply the appropriate criteria to ensure openness, fairness, non-discrimination and value for money. Legal advice should be sought in developing the funding criteria. Any S106 monies to be used should accord with the relevant S106 conditions. Any consultation should be carried out in accordance with established principles. Appropriate delegations for the scheme need to be in place to ensure the Executive is not overburdened.

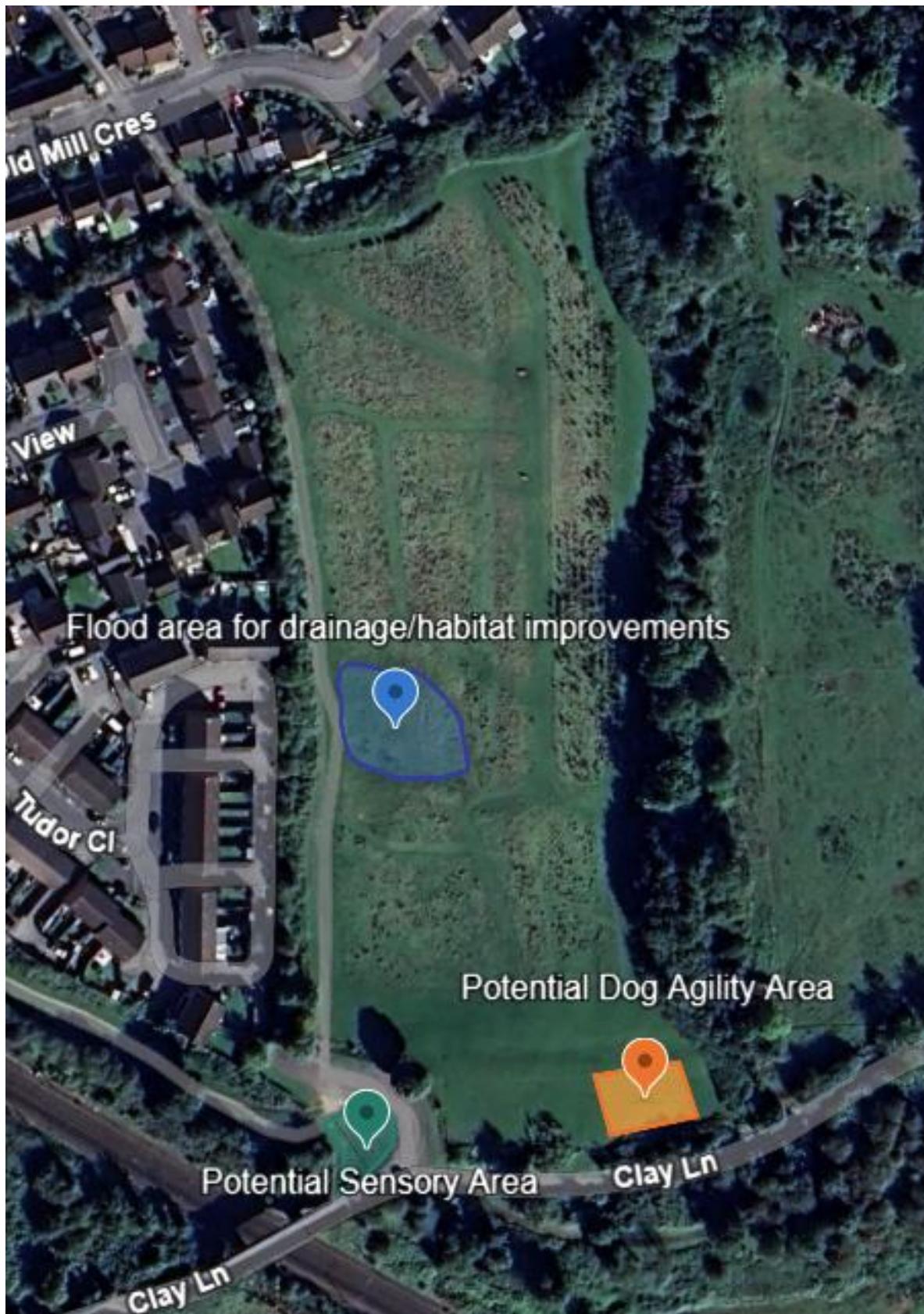
Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None

Appendix 1

Clay Lane Open Space



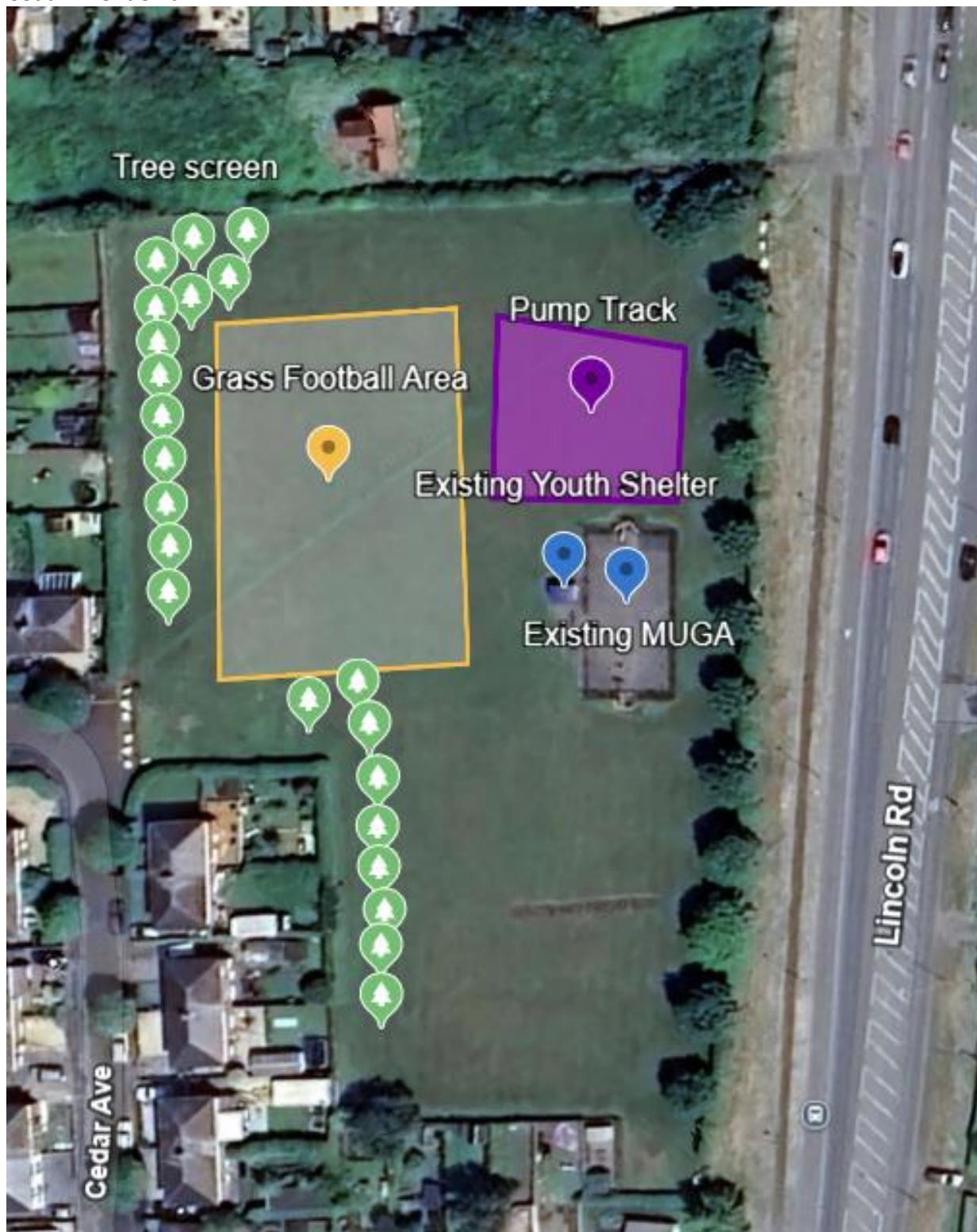
Appendix 2

Thorpe Oaks/Sterling Drive



Appendix 3

Cedar Avenue Park



Appendix 4
Cherry Holt



Appendix 5

Artist's impression of the type of MUGA and pump tracks which could be installed



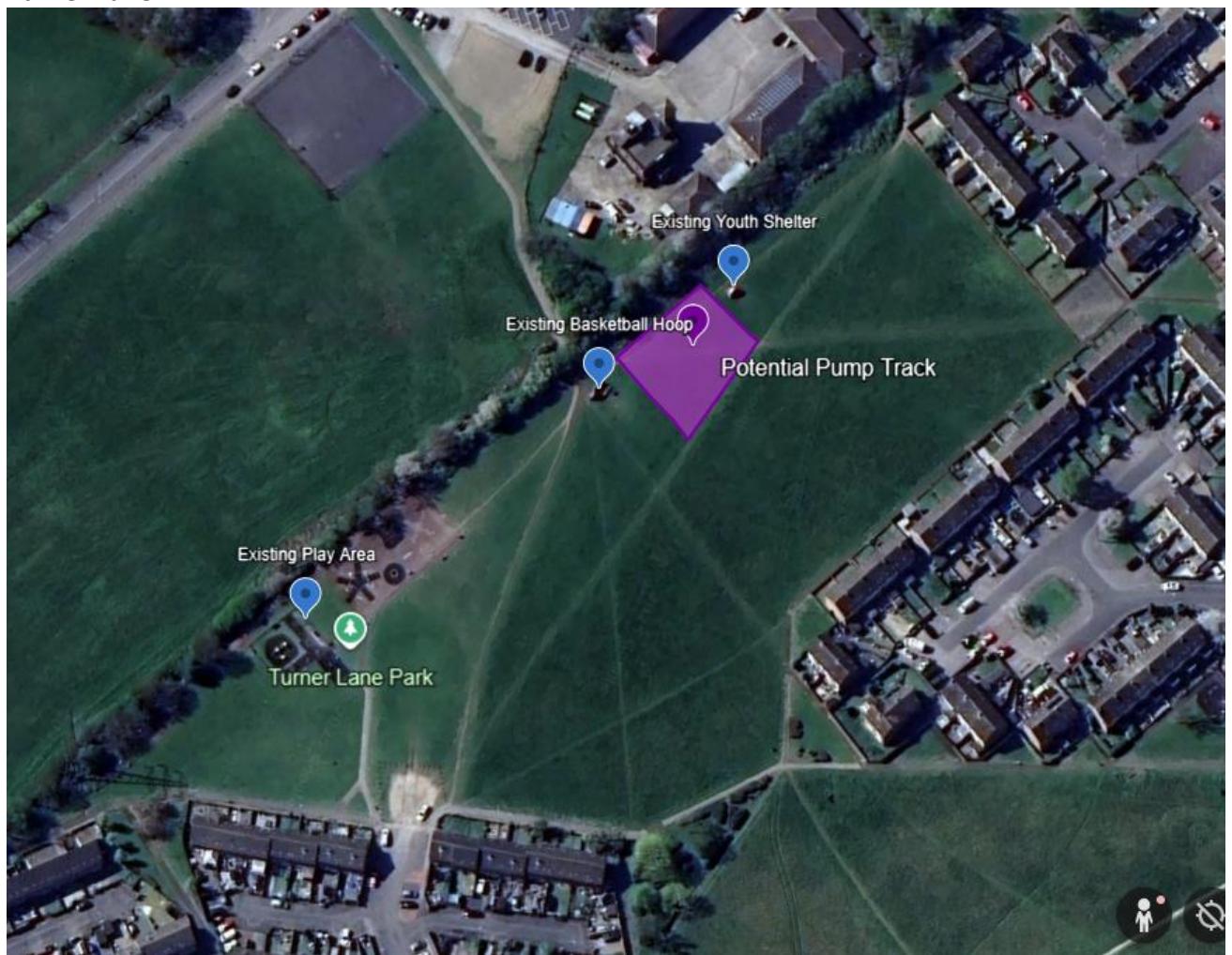
MUGA's are multiuse games areas with space for sports like football, basket ball and Netball



Pump tracks are looped tracks where the riders use up and down body movements to generate momentum rather than pushing or pedaling. Tracks can also be used for skateboards and even wheelchairs.

Appendix 6

Turner Lane





Report to: Cabinet Meeting - 20 January 2026

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Lee Brazier, Housing

Director Leads: Sanjiv Kohli, Deputy Chief Executive, Director – Resources and S151 Officer
Suzanne Shead, Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing

Lead Officer: Nick Wilson, Business Manager – Financial Services, Ext. 5317
David Price, Business Manager – Housing Income & Leasehold Management, Ext. 5538

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open Report / Key Decision
Report Title	2026/27 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget and Rent Setting
Purpose of Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To examine the proposed income and expenditure on the HRA for the 2026/27 financial year for both revenue and capital income and expenditure, in accordance with Section 76 (Duty to prevent debit balance on the Housing Revenue Account) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. b) To provide indicative amounts of income and expenditure for the 2026/27 to 2028/29 financial years for both revenue and capital income and expenditure; and c) To set rent levels and service charges for 2026/27 (with effect from the first Monday in April 2025).
Recommendations	<p>That Cabinet recommend to Council at its meeting on 10 February 2026:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the HRA budget for 2026/27, as set out in Appendix A to the report; b) an increase of 4.8% in the 2026/27 rents of all current HRA tenancies will be applied from 6 April 2026; c) the 2026/27 service charges, as set out in Appendix C to the report; and d) the Capital Budget set out in Appendix D to the report are committed expenditure in the Capital Programme for 2026/27 to 2029/30.
Alternative Options Considered	<p>Various modelling was undertaken to assess the impact of different rent levels on the viability of the HRA 30-year business plan to arrive at the recommendation above.</p> <p>Consideration was also given to varying increases between general needs and supported (sheltered and extra care) accommodation,</p>

	but no rationale was found to support this, alongside the equitable nature of any decision to do so.
Reason for Recommendations	To advise Members of the proposed HRA budget and charges in rent and service charge levels for 2026/27 and for these to be recommended to Council at its meeting on 10 February 2026.

1.0 Background Information

- 1.1 The setting of the HRA budget and the approval of rent levels must be completed within the required time to notify tenants of proposed changes to rents in accordance with legislation.
- 1.2 The key dates in the budget setting timetable are detailed in the table below:

Council determination of HRA budget and rent setting	10 February 2026
Newark & Sherwood District Council update of rent systems	12 February 2026
Generation of rent cards and letters to notify tenants of variation of their rent levels (tenants are required to be given four weeks' notice of the changes).	By end of February 2026

- 1.3 Any slippage from these key dates would jeopardise the implementation of rent changes from the first Monday in April 2025, and therefore, pose a risk to the sustainability of the 30-year HRA Business Plan (BP).

2.0 Proposal/Details of Options Considered

Statutory Duty

- 2.1 Section 76 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989 requires local housing authorities to set a budget annually for their HRA, and that implementation of the budget proposals will not result in a debit balance (deficit position) at year-end.
- 2.2 Following housing financing reforms (self-financing) in April 2012 the Council's HRA has been operating within a 30-year business plan. The inputs and assumptions in the Business Plan are key to setting the HRA budgets annually for each year of the HRA's four-year medium-term financial plan (MTFP).

Rent Standard 2020

- 2.3 In February 2019, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government published a Direction to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) to set a Rent Standard which would apply from 2020 for five years. This was published alongside a Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing 2018 (Rent Policy Statement) for the Regulator to have regard to when setting its Rent Standard.
- 2.4 The Rent Standard 2020 specifies that rents must be set in accordance with the Rent Policy Statement. The Government's Rent Policy Statement allows annual rent increases to social rent and affordable rent properties by the maximum of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rate published for September of the preceding financial year plus 1%.

2.5 The policy was extended in April 2024 for 2025/26 pending consultation with Government confirming that the policy of increases of up to CPI plus 1% being extended for the next 10 years or until 2036/37.

2.6 This was confirmed in the Autumn Budget Statement in November 2025. The September CPI rate was 3.8% meaning that the rent standard allows for a 4.8% increase in rent.

2.7 The below table shows the weighted average rents for socially rent properties in December 2025 and impact of applying the maximum permitted increase of 4.8% for 2026-27 as per the rent standard.

Unit Size	Average Rent 2025/26	With increase of 4.8% applied
1 Bedroom	£88.23	£92.46
2 Bedroom	£96.77	£101.41
3 Bedroom	£102.21	£107.12
4+ Bedroom	£111.20	£116.54
Weighted Average of number of properties	£97.14	£101.80

Borrowing Cap

2.8 As part of the national self-financing arrangements, Newark & Sherwood District Council took on £36.078m of national housing debt in March 2012, bringing the total Housing Revenue Account (HRA) debt to £104.373m. This is forecast to increase to £109.050m by the end of March 2026, based upon the current agreed budget.

2.9 Following the Government's removal of the HRA debt cap on 30 October 2018, the Council adopted the Interest Cover Ratio (ICR) as the borrowing limit for the Housing Revenue Account (as approved annually by Council within the Treasury Management Strategy). The ICR measures how well the HRA's net cost of service can cover its annual interest costs. Setting a minimum ICR ensures that, even if income were to fall or operating costs were to rise unexpectedly, there would still be enough capacity to meet interest payments. The Council proposes a minimum ratio of 1.50 to be the most prudent approach.

2.10 The HRA Capital Programme shows the Council's commitment to invest further in existing housing stock and build new homes to replace those sold through the RTB scheme through the 30-year business plan.

2.11 The Treasury Management Strategy will be presented to Council on 5 March 2026. This will include the borrowing requirements of the HRA. The HRA Capital financing requirement (CFR) position is shown below which includes principal repayments due on existing loans and the borrowing requirement of the HRA to facilitate the proposed Capital Programme:

	2026/27 £'m	2027/28 £'m	2028/29 £'m	2029/30 £'m
Estimated Opening CFR Balance	109.050	124.005	138.315	143.012
Capital Programme Borrowing	17.999	20.356	13.742	5.571
Debt Repayments	-3.044	-6.046	-9.045	-1.045
Estimated Closing CFR Balance	124.005	138.315	143.012	147.538

30-year HRA Business Plan (BP)

2.12 The BP summarises the viability of the Council's plans to fulfil its management, maintenance, and investment responsibilities to its HRA assets over the next 30 years. Key assumptions are made in the BP based on the council's strategic priorities and policies, detailed stock data and other factors.

2.13 The assumptions in the BP are key to setting the HRA budgets annually for each year of the HRA's four-year MTFP. The main assumptions that are fed into the HRABP were noted by the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee on 1 December 2025 and from the Corporate Annual Budget Strategy approved by Cabinet on 8 July 2025.

2.14 The proposed rent increase of 4.8% for 2026/27 is essential to maintain a financially sustainable Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and deliver safe, high-quality homes. Rising costs in repairs, compliance, and service delivery - driven by new legal requirements such as Awaab's Law and the Social Housing Regulation Act - means we must invest in faster response times for damp and mould, improved empty homes standards, and enhanced tenant support. This adjustment also underpins our long-term 30-year business plan, ensuring we can fund day-to-day maintenance, planned works, and energy efficiency improvements while continuing initiatives like the Empty Homes Lettable Standard and Starting Well scheme. In short, the increase safeguards compliance, improves tenant experience, and secures the future of our housing stock.

2.15 Other scenarios of rental increase have been modelled against the 30-year business plan in order to test the strength and validity of the plan. The table below sets out the proposed increase of 4.8% (with a 3% rental increase thereafter being the rent standard of CPI plus 1% where CPI is based on the Government's target of 2%), compared against a 3.8% increase in 2026/27 with 3% thereafter. It also shows whether the base assumptions of 4.8% for 2026/27 meets the ICR test over the life of the 30 year plan together with whether the current plans for capital and revenue (over the life of the plan) are fully funded.

Description	Base 30 Year Business Plan	2026/27 rental increase at 3.8%
ICR Ratio	Within Limits across the whole 30 years	Breach of limit in FY 2026.27 through to 2030.31
Revenue	Fully funded	Fully funded
Capital	Fully funded	Fully funded
Financial variance to base plan (loss / gain (-))	N/A	£19.330m

2.16 As can be seen from the table above, available resources, over the 30 years would be significantly reduced (by £19.330m) based on the alternative option which would limit the ability of the HRA to be able to meet future responsibilities that may be placed upon Local Authorities from government policy announcements. This is due to a reduction in rental income, together with increased interest payments as further borrowing would need to be taken in order to fund both the capital programme and the revenue account. The ICR would also be breached, meaning the headroom of net cost of service over interest cost is forecast to be compromised, hence should there be an unexpected spike in expenditure or reduction in income, the capacity to meet the interest obligations may cause stress on the HRA 30 year Business Plan.

2.17 Therefore, a rent increase of 4.8% on current tenants, across all stock types is recommended in this report.

2.18 Priorities remain the safety and decency of council homes, modernisation of service delivery, future development of new homes to replace those lost through Right to Buy as well as meeting energy efficient homes by 2030 increasing those serviced by green energy.

2.19 As can be seen from the table at paragraph 2.15, currently the assumptions made within the BP together with future forecasts of income and expenditure (both capital and revenue) are affordable and sustainable and comply with the ICR ratio identified, within the 30-year plan, based on the recommendations within this report.

Rent Cycle

2.20 Rent is currently charged over 48 weeks, giving tenants four “rent free weeks” albeit that the full years rent charge is the same as if charged across 52 weeks. The non-charge weeks for 2026/27 will be weeks commencing 25 May 2026, 31 August 2026, 21 December 2026 and 29 March 2027.

Affordability Considerations

2.21 This section provides information regarding the impact of the proposed changes to rent and services charges, as well as data on how tenants pay their rent and the support they receive from Housing Benefit and Universal Credit.

Rent Level Comparable Data

2.22 *Table 1* compares data on average rent levels for the private rented sector (PRS) in Newark & Sherwood and in England as at November 2025 to the Council's average social housing rented stock as at December 2025.

Table 1: Comparison of data on weekly average rent levels for the PRS in Newark and Sherwood, the PRS in England, and NSDC's social rented stock

	Newark and Sherwood Private Rented (as at November 2025)	England Average Private Rented (as at November 2025)	NSDC Social Rented Stock (as at December 2025)
One Bed	£124.15	£268.38	£88.23
Two Bed	£163.85	£299.77	£96.77
Three Bed	£197.54	£333.92	£102.21
Four Bed plus	£293.77	£488.77	£111.20
Average for all categories	£180.69	£328.15	£97.14

2.23 For all sizes of accommodation, the Council's average social housing rents are significantly lower than those in the private rented sector.

2.24 *Table 2* compares 2024/25 data on average rent levels for Private Registered Providers (PRPs) in Newark & Sherwood to the Council's average social housing rents, split for each by whether properties are for general needs tenants or supported housing tenants.

Table 2: Comparison of 2024/25 data on average rent levels for PRPs in Newark and Sherwood and NSDC's social housing rents, split by general needs tenants and supported housing tenants

Type of Accommodation	Social Rent: General Needs		Social Rent: Supported Housing/Housing for Older People	
	NSDC	Private Registered Providers	NSDC	Private Registered Providers
Non-self-contained	-	-	-	£198.62
Bedsit	£70.82	£71.61	£67.53	£138.78
1 bedroom	£78.40	£92.96	£87.14	£135.50
2 bedrooms	£87.25	£110.09	£97.39	£113.86
3 bedrooms	£99.70	£112.42	£104.18	£138.66
4 bedrooms	£108.29	£123.71	-	-
5 bedrooms	£114.12	£117.44	-	-
Average self-contained	£96.32	£107.98	£93.06	£132.04
Average all types	£96.32	£107.98	£93.06	£148.97

2.25 For all sizes of accommodation, NSDC's average social housing rents are lower than those of the PRPs.

2.26 The average 2024/25 social rent levels of £107.98 (general needs tenants) and £148.97 (supported housing tenants) by PRPs in *Table 2* excludes service charges.

Housing Benefit and Universal Credit

2.27 A snapshot of data taken in December 2025 estimates that of the 5,323 current tenants, 3,731 (70.1%) received some help from benefits towards paying their rent.

2.28 Overall, this has remained unchanged compared to this time last year. However, the number of tenants receiving Housing Benefit (HB) has reduced from 1673 (31%) last year to 1193 (22.4%), with 2538 (47.7%) tenants receiving help from Universal Credit (UC), an increase from 2084 (39%) this time last year. The remaining 1,592 (29.9%) of tenants paid their rent without receiving help from benefits.

2.29 With the roll out UC due to be completed by March 2026, and with limited cases due to migrate to UC before this deadline, we would expect to see limited variation in the proportion of tenants claiming HB or UC.

2.30 We have seen an increase in the proportion of tenants claiming UC having their rent paid direct to the council due to being vulnerable or being in arrears or at risk of accruing arrears. Currently, around 50% of UC claimants have their rent paid. This is an increase from around 45% this time last year.

Supporting Tenants

2.31 We offer a range of support to tenants to help them meet their housing costs and help sustain their tenancy and will continue to provide additional support with cost-of-living challenges:

- We continue with our commitment to not move to evict tenants for rent arrears if they continue to engage with us to address their debt with us;
- We recognise the importance of supporting tenants at an early stage to sustain their tenancies, especially around rent collection, benefit entitlement and arrears management;
- We also promote the use of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's) where appropriate and refer tenants to partner advice agencies for specialist financial support and advice

Service Charges

2.32 In addition to rent, local authorities can charge for other services they provide (service charges). Section 93 (Power to charge for discretionary services) of the Local Government Act 2003 requires charges to be set such that taking one financial year with another, the income from charges for a service does not exceed its costs of provision.

2.33 The Policy Statement on Rent for Social Housing (February 2019) sets out an expectation that service charge increases remain within the limit of rent charge of CPI + 1% to keep service charges affordable. Appendix C details the current (2025/26) and proposed (2026/27) service charges, with proposed increases to current charges of 4.8%. Subsequent paragraphs provide details about the services that tenants are charged for.

Housing-Based Services for Supported Housing and Extra Care Services

2.34 The main housing-based support service provided is a community alarm service, to help tenants live more independently. Tenants with lifeline units in their properties can raise an alarm call from anywhere in the home if they require this. Around half of the council's social housing properties have these lifeline units.

2.35 Tenants in properties with Careline units currently pay £2.56 per week for the service and this report proposes to increase £2.68 per week.

2.36 In addition to these support services, tenants in the extra care housing schemes receive additional housing management and housing-related services due to their specialist needs. The council currently has four extra care housing schemes. These are at Gladstone House, The Broadleaves, Vale View and the Bilsthorpe Bungalows.

Other Housing-Based Services

2.37 Other weekly service charges applied to tenants are for the costs of water and sewerage provided to properties at Vale View (£4.77 per week) and for the costs (where appropriate) of landscaping, lighting and drainage provided to 79 general needs properties.

Consultation with Tenants

2.38 The assumptions used in this paper to propose the HRA budget and rent setting for 2026/27 were presented to the Tenant Engagement Board on 18 December 2025.

2.39 The tenants who sit on the Tenant Engagement Board were supportive of the assumptions used in the HRA budget and the proposal to increase of rent and service charges by the 4.8%.

Revenue Budget

2.40 The budget increases reflect the focus on improving existing services that are important to our customers, repairs, building safety, responding to complaints (and learning from them) whilst always being as efficient and value for money as possible. We are increasing staff resources to better co-ordinate our front-line services and give a better customer experience to tenants including investment in damp, mould and disrepair and in responsive repairs. Details of the revenue budget can be found at **Appendix A and B**.

Capital Budget

2.41 The Council intends to spend £83.311m from the HRA from 2026/27 to 2029/30. This is made up of £58.807m on existing property investment and £24.504m on additional Affordable Housing.

2.42 Major schemes included in the HRA are:

Scheme Name	Summary of Proposed Financing
Kitchen & Bathroom Replacements	MRR and borrowing
Roof Replacements	MRR and borrowing
Heating Renewals	MRR and borrowing
Decarbonisation	Government Grant, MRR and Borrowing
Yorke Drive Estate Regeneration	Borrowing plus external grant
New Phases 6 of the Council House Development Programme	S106 where appropriate, Capital Receipts and Borrowing

2.43 Details of individual schemes are shown in **Appendix D**.

Capital Resources Available

2.44 External Grants and Contributions can provide additional resources to the Capital Programme and is subject to a detailed bidding process. Officers continue to liaise with external parties to secure the maximum available inward investment to contribute towards the delivery of the capital programme.

2.45 There is one grant currently forecast over the medium term which relates to Decarbonisation. It has been assumed that 50% of the budget will be available in grant.

Capital Receipts

2.46

	Right to Buy £'m	Right to Buy 1-4-1 £'m	Total £'m
Estimated Balance @ 1 Apr 2026	0.006	0.941	0.947
Estimated Receipts 2026/27 – 2029/30	1.588	2.382	3.112
Approved for Financing 2026/27 – 2029/30	-0.897	-1.750	-2.647
Unallocated Capital Receipts Balance	0.697	0.715	1.412

2.47 The other receipt is the sale of a building on Lombard Street, Newark which is a property within the HRA but not a Council House, therefore is listed separately to the Right to Buy.

2.48 The Right to Buy (RTB) and RTB 1-4-1 figures above relate to forecast RTB sales. The Council has a Retention Agreement with the Secretary of State governing the use of retained receipts (1-4-1 receipts) from RTB sales for the delivery of replacement social housing. Government guidance on retained RTB receipts was most recently updated in July 2025, and now incorporates the reforms confirmed on 2 July 2025, which extend and simplify the flexibilities originally introduced in July 2024. These updated arrangements will generally apply from 2026/27 onwards including the following key provisions:

- The increased flexibilities introduced in July 2024—such as the ability to combine RTB receipts with other funding sources—are extended indefinitely, with RTB receipts explicitly permitted to be combined with grant funding from 2026/27 onwards;
- Local authorities may continue to apply up to 100% of retained RTB receipts towards the cost of replacement affordable housing;
- The previous cap on acquisitions is permanently removed, giving authorities discretion to determine the balance between acquisitions and new-build delivery;
- Newly built social homes being exempt from RTB for 35 years;
- The qualifying tenancy period increasing from 3 to 10 years;
- Reformed discount structures, with discounts starting at 5% and capped at 15% of property value;
- Stronger post-sale protections, including an extended repayment period and an indefinite right of first refusal for councils.

2.49 If the council is unable to spend its retained receipts within five years of receiving them, it must return these to Government with interest of 4% above the base rate (currently 4.75%). Use of the receipts is monitored closely to maximise where practicable and appropriate.

Major Repairs Reserve

2.50 The table below shows the estimated contributions to and the use of the Major Repairs Reserve (MRR) in terms of Capital Financing.

	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	2029/30 £m
Estimated Opening Balance	3.870	0.500	0.501	0.502
Depreciation Contribution to the MRR	6.364	6.624	6.788	6.686
Revenue Contribution to the MRR	2.095	2.278	2.654	3.277
Debt Repayments	-3.044	-6.046	-9.045	-1.045
Capital Financing	-8.785	-2.855	-0.395	-8.918
Unallocated MRR Balance	0.500	0.501	0.503	0.503

Capital Financing

2.51 Subject to the approval of the proposals outlined above, the current plan for financing the HRA capital programme is shown below.

HRA	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	2029/30 £m
Government Grants	0.776	0.795	0.000	0.000
Contributions from Third Parties	0.592	0.218	0.000	0.000
Capital Receipts non 1-4-1	0.290	0.200	0.000	0.000
Capital Receipts 1-4-1	1.500	0.250	0.202	0.204
RCCO	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Revenue Support	8.785	2.855	0.396	8.918
Borrowing	17.999	20.356	13.742	5.571
Total	29.942	24.674	14.340	14.693

2.52 At the end of the financial year, once all capital expenditure has been finalised (including accrued expenditure) the financing of the Capital Programme is arranged by the Section 151 Officer, in line with the Council's Constitution.

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding, Sustainability, and Crime and Disorder and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Implications Considered			
Yes – relevant and included / NA – not applicable			
Financial	Yes	Equality & Diversity	Yes
Human Resources	N/A	Human Rights	N/A

Legal	Yes	Data Protection	N/A
Digital & Cyber Security	N/A	Safeguarding	N/A
Sustainability	N/A	Crime & Disorder	N/A
LGR	N/A	Tenant Consultation	Yes

Equalities Implications

3.1 The proposed rent increase would apply to all occupied council social housing, rather than to the tenants themselves or to tenants in specific properties. The proposed rent increase is therefore not expected to discriminate against any of the characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010.

3.2 The proposed rent and service charge increases are not expected to adversely impact tenants in receipt of benefits. The increase in rent and most service charges will be met by an increase in Housing Benefit or Universal Credit Housing Element.

3.3 The increase of state pension of 4.8% and increase of working age benefits of 3.8% in 2025, will compensate for the small number of service charges not fully eligible for increased Housing Benefit or Universal Credit Housing Element.

3.4 As outlined in the report, council housing tenants claiming benefits in need of help with housing costs can request a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) from the council. The Government has not yet announced how much DHP it will be giving councils for 2026/27. Officers recognise the importance of supporting tenants of all ages to sustain their tenancies.

Financial Implications

3.5 All of the financial implications are set out in the body of this report or its appendices.

Tenant Implications

3.6 A presentation on the 2026/27 capital and revenue budgets and rent setting proposal was presented to the Tenant Engagement Board on 18 December 2025. The rationale for the proposed increase to rent and service charges was understood and supported by the Board.

Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

3.7 The implementation of the proposals in this report will directly support the council's HRA to meet multiple objectives of the Community Plan 2023-2027, such as to:

- Improve health and well-being
- Increase the supply, choice, and standard of housing and
- Reduce the impact of Climate Change

3.8 Some of the actions the council is taking to achieve the Community Plan objectives are:

- Refreshing stock condition information so the Council reprofile capital budgets to provide data driven improvement works inc. lifting the energy performance of homes and looking at green energy opportunities;
- Build on our successful decarbonisation project, renewing over 100 oil heating systems with air source heat pumps and solar panels as part of the Warm Homes initiative currently in consultation; and

- Implement the recommendations from TPAS on how to build on existing arrangements to engage with and involve tenants in scrutiny and improving housing services;
- Deliver the Housing Strategy, 2023-2028;
- Embed new Housing Management System to increase efficiencies in our operations, to free up officer time to focus on engagement with tenants

Legal Implications - LEG2526/5279

3.9 As set out in the report, the Council is under a statutory obligation to set an annual budget for the HRA. Full Council must set the budget; the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules set out in the Council's Constitution provide for Cabinet to finalise proposals for the budget and submit them to Full Council, taking into account any recommendations made by Policy and Performance and Improvement Committee.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None

	2025/26 BASE BUDGET £	SUMMARY	2026/27 BASE BUDGET £	2027/28 BASE BUDGET £	2028/29 BASE BUDGET £	2029/30 BASE BUDGET £
	(27,870,270)	INCOME				
	(156,190)	Rents: dwellings	(29,077,350)	(30,031,630)	(31,040,180)	(32,001,330)
	(1,430,950)	Rents: non-dwellings	(154,280)	(158,910)	(163,680)	(168,580)
	(1,883,370)	Charges for services	(1,294,140)	(1,331,980)	(1,370,980)	(1,411,120)
		Contributions to expenditure	(1,719,640)	(1,769,610)	(1,821,810)	(1,822,180)
	(31,340,780)	Sub Total - Income	(32,245,410)	(33,292,130)	(34,396,650)	(35,403,210)
		EXPENDITURE				
	7,735,620	Repairs & maintenance	8,809,580	8,901,770	9,164,390	9,383,990
	8,906,430	Supervision & management	8,418,710	8,910,560	9,132,130	9,377,100
	1,319,560	Rents, rates, taxes & other charges	1,577,970	1,627,530	1,679,110	1,732,800
	6,368,700	Depreciation & impairment	6,363,980	6,623,390	6,787,550	6,685,810
	26,780	Debt management costs	14,000	14,350	14,710	15,080
	368,000	Efficiency savings: prospective revenue initiatives	368,000	0	0	0
	250,000	Improving Places Fund	0	0	0	0
	24,975,090	Sub Total - Expenditure	25,552,240	26,077,600	26,777,890	27,194,780
	(6,365,690)	NET COST OF SERVICES	(6,693,170)	(7,214,530)	(7,618,760)	(8,208,430)
	4,243,380	Interest payable/(receivable)	4,230,410	4,549,680	4,856,480	5,221,820
	13,000	(Profit)/loss on sale of non-current assets	13,000	7,800	7,800	7,800
	(2,109,310)	NET OPERATING EXPENDITURE	(2,449,760)	(2,657,050)	(2,754,480)	(2,978,810)
		APPROPRIATIONS				
	(13,000)	(Profit)/loss on sale of non-current assets	(13,000)	(7,800)	(7,800)	(7,800)
	123,750	Pension-related costs	118,000	122,250	126,750	126,750
	2,248,560	Revenue contribution to/(from) Major Repairs Reserve	2,344,760	2,542,600	2,635,530	2,859,860
	(250,000)	Contributions to/(from) earmarked reserves	0	0	0	0
	0	HRA (SURPLUS)/DEFICIT FOR YEAR	0	0	0	0
	(2,000,000)	WORKING BALANCE brought forward (b/f)	(2,000,000)	(2,000,000)	(2,000,000)	(2,000,000)
	(2,000,000)	WORKING BALANCE carried forward (c/f)	(2,000,000)	(2,000,000)	(2,000,000)	(2,000,000)

	2025/26 BASE BUDGET £	SUMMARY	2026/27 BASE BUDGET £	2027/28 BASE BUDGET £	2028/29 BASE BUDGET £	2029/30 BASE BUDGET £
	137,060	STORES	144,930	149,800	154,850	160,070
	4,326,910	CENTRAL CHARGES INCL SLA'S	4,030,980	4,094,310	4,187,440	4,294,180
	567,520	HOUSING CHOICE	561,390	584,730	602,820	627,480
	988,460	INCOME MANAGEMENT	894,280	916,780	947,730	979,690
	78,000	INVESTMENT TEAM	0	0	0	0
	268,330	COMMUNITY CENTRES	292,630	306,860	321,800	337,480
	213,210	VALE VIEW	193,020	198,050	203,220	208,690
	174,930	STREET WARDENS	179,450	185,930	192,610	199,570
	0	LOCAL HOUSING OFFICES	(560)	(570)	(580)	(590)
	0	PLANNED MAINTENANCE	250,000	256,250	262,660	269,230
	1,240,940	VOIDS MAINTENANCE	1,079,830	1,099,380	1,119,520	1,140,470
	2,868,260	RESPONSIVE REPAIRS	3,112,280	3,162,490	3,231,560	3,303,310
	1,544,510	TENANCY & ESTATES	1,695,540	1,719,620	1,781,150	1,844,610
	(239,330)	GLADSTONE HOUSE	(239,490)	(250,590)	(262,090)	(277,670)
	2,306,140	COMPLIANCE SERVICES	2,144,150	2,094,650	2,193,730	2,297,510
	(82,040)	BOUGHTON EXTRA CARE SCHEME	(75,130)	(77,340)	(79,570)	(81,710)
	268,280	CARELINE SERVICES	319,450	328,010	337,480	347,160
	26,740	CPOOL/SEWAGE EMPTYING/REPAIRS	0	0	0	0
	391,550	YORKE DRIVE SCHEME	446,820	458,000	469,450	481,190
	19,830	COMMUNITY HUBS	26,370	27,550	28,770	30,040
	0	DAMP, MOULD & DISREPAIR	872,780	898,580	925,170	952,510
	0	HRA VACANCY FACTOR & SAVINGS	(559,110)	(572,290)	(588,290)	(600,830)
	(21,464,990)	HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT	(22,062,780)	(22,794,730)	(23,648,190)	(24,720,820)
	(6,365,690)	NET COST OF SERVICES	(6,693,170)	(7,214,530)	(7,618,760)	(8,208,430)

Newark and Sherwood District Council (NSDC) proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) charges for 2026/27

Service charge	2025/26 Charge (£)	Proposed 2026/27 charge (£)	Frequency	Other information
<u>CareLine service</u> Lifeline alarm monitoring. Advice, contact of next of kin or emergency service if required by tenant	2.56	2.68	per week	All tenants
Sensor rental and monitoring for two to five sensors	1.50	1.50	per week	All tenants. Lifeline customers only
Additional Tenancy Assistance (opt-in service)	6.21	6.51	per week	
<u>Gladstone House</u>				
Support Charge	2.56	2.68	per week	
Intensive Housing Management Charge	83.70	87.72	per week	
TV Licence	0.21	0.22	per week	
Meal Charge	45.48	47.66	per week	
<u>Broadleaves</u>				
Support Charge	2.56	2.68	per week	
Intensive Housing Management Charge (Apartment)	84.49	88.55	per week	
Intensive Housing Management Charge (Bungalow)	70.49	73.87	per week	
TV Licence	0.27	0.28	per week	
Meal Charge	57.10	59.84	per week	
<u>Vale View</u>				
Intensive Housing Management Service	96.34	100.96	per week	
Support Charge	2.56	2.68	per week	
Water Charge	4.55	4.77	per week	
<u>Extra Care Bungalows, Bilsthorpe</u>				
Intensive Housing Management Service	70.49	73.87	per week	
Support Charge	2.56	2.68	per week	
<u>Other charges relating to dwellings or tenants</u>				
New build landscaping, lighting and drainage	2.25-8.56	2.36-8.97	per week	
<u>Leasehold</u>				
Annual Leasehold Management Fee	150.15	157.36	per annum	
<u>Garages</u>				
Garage Rent	10.85	11.37	per week	VAT added if let to non-council tenant
Garage Plot	51.00	53.45	annually	VAT added if let to non-council tenant
Garage Port	4.83	5.06	per week	VAT added if let to non-council tenant

CODE	SCHEME	EXTERNAL FUNDING	NSDC COSTS	TOTAL SCHEME COST	BEFORE 2024/25 INC FORECAST FOR 2025/26	PROPOSED BUDGET 2026/27	PROPOSED BUDGET 2026/28	PROPOSED BUDGET 2026/29	PROPOSED BUDGET 2026/30
HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT									
PROPERTY INVESTMENT PROGRAMME									
S91100	Roof Replacements		7,412,250	7,412,250		1,785,000	1,829,630	1,875,370	1,922,250
S91218	Kitchens & Bathrooms		9,686,250	9,686,250		2,332,620	2,390,940	2,450,710	2,511,980
S91300	External Fabric		1,608,910	1,608,910		387,450	397,140	407,070	417,250
S91412	Doors & Windows		1,220,830	1,220,830		294,000	301,350	308,880	316,600
S91500	Other Structural		928,700	928,700		223,650	229,240	234,970	240,840
S93100	Electrical		3,620,510	3,620,510		840,000	882,000	926,100	972,410
S93300	Passenger Lifts		390,340	390,340		94,000	96,350	98,760	101,230
S93500	Heating		6,481,340	6,481,340		1,500,000	1,575,000	1,661,630	1,744,710
S93622	Pv Invertors		907,240	907,240		218,480	223,940	229,540	235,280
S93626	Decarbonisation	2,783,657	2,717,244	5,500,901	2,358,341	1,551,880	1,590,680	0	
S93628	Epc		1,744,050	1,744,050		420,000	430,500	441,260	452,290
S95200	Estate Improvements		2,751,460	2,751,460		578,980	649,440	723,070	799,970
S95400	Void Works		4,983,020	4,983,020		1,200,000	1,230,000	1,260,750	1,292,270
S97100	Asbestos		1,038,126	1,038,126		250,000	256,250	262,656	269,220
S97200	Fire Safety		3,529,640	3,529,640		850,000	871,250	893,030	915,360
S97400	Disabled Adaptations		4,391,500	4,391,500		1,057,550	1,083,990	1,111,090	1,138,870
S97500	Legionella		348,810	348,810		84,000	86,100	88,250	90,460
S98100	Building Safety		1,594,450	1,594,450		383,970	393,570	403,410	413,500
S99100	Property Investment Contingency		400,000	400,000		100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
S99102	Investment Programme Fees		2,966,150	2,966,150		698,560	723,640	785,320	758,630
SUB TOTAL PROPERTY INVESTMENT		2,783,657	58,720,820	61,504,477	2,358,341	14,850,140	15,341,010	14,261,866	14,693,120
AFFORDABLE HOUSING									
SA1031	Site Acquisition (Incl RTB)		2,310,125	2,310,125	661,700	1,648,425			
SA1033	Yorke Drive Estate Regeneration	1,938,150	16,379,433	18,317,582	4,029,713	9,345,894	4,941,975		
SA1090	Phase 6		5,155,540	5,155,540	66,983	697,557	4,391,000		
SA1093	Phase 6 Cluster 3 - Church Circle		1,000,000	1,000,000		1,000,000			
SA1094	Phase 6 Cluster 4 - Bowbridge Road		1,000,000	1,000,000		1,000,000			
SA1095	Phase 6 Cluster 5 - Lowfield Lane		1,200,000	1,200,000		1,200,000			
SC2001	Asset Data Migration Software		78,780	78,780				78,780	
SC2002	New Housing Management System		856,000	856,000	656,000	200,000			
SUB TOTAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING		1,938,150	27,979,878	29,918,028	5,414,397	15,091,876	9,332,975	78,780	0
TOTAL HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT		4,721,807	86,700,698	91,422,505	7,772,738	29,942,016	24,673,985	14,340,646	14,693,120



Report to: Cabinet Meeting: 20 January 2026

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Paul Taylor, Public Protection & Community Relations

Director Lead: Matthew Finch – Communities & Environment

Lead Officer: Richard Bates – Safety, Risk & Insurance Manager, Ext. 5593

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open Report / Non-Key Decision
Report Title	Corporate Risk Management Strategy and Policy Review
Purpose of Report	To present the reviewed Corporate Risk Management Strategy and Policy for approval
Recommendations	That Cabinet review and approve the updated Corporate Risk Management Strategy and Policy as attached at Appendix A to the report
Alternative Options Considered	If deemed unsuitable, Cabinet should provide feedback and not approve the revised policy
Reason for Recommendations	To ensure the Council has a current policy, therefore ensuring the continued management of risk within the Council in accordance with its policies

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Risk Management function is the process of identification and management of significant risks faced by the Council, which have the potential to prevent it from achieving its key/agreed objectives. Proactively identifying potentially significant risks and implementing suitable control strategies, helps to prevent these risks from being realised. If this is not possible, to mitigate the risk to a tolerable level.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Corporate Risk Management Strategy and Policy is to ensure suitable systems are in place to manage significant risks.
- 1.3 The council's Corporate Risk Management Strategy and Policy is required to be reviewed periodically. This review has been undertaken in accordance with this requirement.
- 1.4 A copy of the revised policy is attached as **Appendix A** to the report. All significant amendments are highlighted in red text.

- 1.5 Although there are a number of alterations within this revision, they are generally housekeeping matters and mainly capture changes in roles/responsibilities and titles.
- 1.6 SLT have recently reviewed the attached draft policy and agreed all highlighted revisions.
- 1.7 In accordance with the Council's Constitution, the Audit & Accounts Committee, prior to consideration by Cabinet, have also recently reviewed this policy. No comments were provided.

2.0 Proposal/Options Considered

- 2.1 It is proposed that Members review the revised policy in Appendix A and approve in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Implications Considered			
Yes – relevant and included / NA – not applicable			
Financial	n/a	Equality & Diversity	n/a
Human Resources	n/a	Human Rights	n/a
Legal	yes	Data Protection	n/a
Digital & Cyber Security	n/a	Safeguarding	n/a
Sustainability	n/a	Crime & Disorder	n/a
LGR	n/a	Tenant Consultation	n/a

Legal Implications - LEG2526/7586

- 3.1 Responsibility for approving the Risk Management Strategy and Policy sits with Cabinet. The amendments have been reviewed by Senior Leadership Team and the Audit & Accounts Committee in line with constitutional requirements.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None



Document Name: Corporate Risk Management Strategy and Policy

Effective Date:

Date of Last Review: DEC 2025

Date for Next Review: DEC 2027

Version Number: 3

Approved by SLT: NOV 2025

Responsible Business Manager: Business Manager - Public Protection

Corporate Risk Management Strategy and Policy

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Risk management is the management of business risk in a manner consistent with the virtues of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. In essence it is about making the most of opportunities, making the right decisions and about achieving objectives once those decisions are made. This is achieved through:

- Identifying risk
- Controlling and managing risks
- Transferring risks (including insurance)
- Living with risks

1.2 A certain amount of risk taking is both inevitable and essential if the Council is to achieve its objectives. The Council recognises that the way it manages the many risks facing it contributes towards the successful implementation and achievement of its objectives/priorities.

1.3 Risk management is as much about getting the right balance between innovation, change and exploiting opportunities on the one hand as it is managing threats and the avoidance of shocks and crises on the other. If correctly managed it can be a positive driver to encouraging innovation in existing service delivery and entrepreneurship in developing new services or new methods of delivery.

1.4 Risk management benefits an organisation and the performance of its managers by giving a clear sense of priorities and focus on objectives and a tool to aid more effective and efficient handling of resource distribution. It increases the likelihood of success and reduces the probability of failure and the uncertainty of achieving the organisation's overall objectives.

1.5 The Council recognises that risk management is an essential part of securing the "health" of the organisation and is an integral part of corporate governance.

2.0 RISK MANAGEMENT STATEMENT, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Risk management is a vital activity that underpins and forms part of the council's vision, values and strategic objectives. Effective risk management helps ensure the council operates effectively and efficiently and provides confidence to its community.

2.2 Risk is present in everything the Council undertakes, and it will identify, assess and manage significant and key areas of risk on a proactive basis. Risk management needs to be embedded throughout all processes, projects and strategic decisions. This includes partnerships and third-party relationships.

2.3 The aim of this risk management framework is to ensure the council fit for purpose and utilises its available skills and capabilities to the full. Risk management is most effective as an enabling tool, so a consistent, communicated and formalised process is essential. It is important to define the level of risk exposure considered acceptable for the organisation. This creates a clear picture of those risks that may threaten the ability of the council to achieve its objectives.

2.4 The Council's risk management objectives are to:

- a) Create an environment where risk management is fully embedded and forms an integral part of planning, management processes and the general culture of the Authority rather than being viewed or practised as a separate function.
- b) Achieve better quality decision making that will see a reduction in costs and an increase in the probability of delivering the quality services which the Council is aiming for.
- c) Minimise possible failure through forward planning and a thorough knowledge and acceptance of potential impacts of each major decision taken.
- d) Enable innovation and opportunity taking, not stifle them.
- e) Ensure that those who create risks manage them responsibly and understand that failure to manage real significant risks responsibly is likely to lead to robust action including, where appropriate disciplinary action.
- f) Work with partners, elected members, providers and contractors to develop awareness and a common understanding of the Council's expectations on risk management.

2.5 To achieve these objectives, the Council will develop a systematic and consistent approach to the management of risk that will:

- a) Implement effective risk management as a key element of good governance and rigorous performance management.
- b) Consider risk is an integral part of corporate and business planning and service delivery.
- c) Encourage considered and responsible risk taking as a legitimate response to opportunity and uncertainty.
- d) Achieve better outcomes for the Council through a more realistic assessment of the challenges faced, through improved decision-making and targeted risk mitigation and control.
- e) Engender, reinforce and replicate good practice in risk management.

3.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 All Councillors, employees, service providers, partners, and stakeholders are expected to play a positive role in embedding the culture, ethos and practice of effective risk management in all activities. The following identifies their specific roles and responsibilities.

The Risk Management Guidance Document provides an overview of this Council's risk management framework and the roles and responsibilities associated with implementing it.

3.2 **Risk Owners**

A risk owner is the person with accountability and authority to manage a risk. For strategic risks this will always be a member of the SLT.

Risk owners shall ensure that risks are always managed in accordance with this policy.

3.3 **Risk Assignees Support Officers**

A risk ~~assignee~~ Support Officer is an officer, who ~~usually~~ has specialist ~~and or~~ operational knowledge relating to specific risks. Risk-~~assignees~~ Support Officers are required to support the risk owner in ensuring that the risk is suitably managed.

3.4 **Senior Leadership Team**

- a) Review on an annual basis, in conjunction with the Business Manager - ~~Human Resources and Training~~ ~~Public Protection and the Safety, Risk and Insurance Manager~~, the Corporate Strategic Risk Register and identify new risks that may impact on the Council and the community and agree relevant risk mitigation.
- b) Determine and allocate ownership for each identified strategic risk.
- c) Annually review the Council's risk appetite statement.
- d) Receive minutes and reports from the Risk Management Group, including details of new/emerging risks from the Risk Management Group.
- e) Review reports and provide corporate comment/direction.
- f) To provide corporate commitment to the embedding of risk management within the Council.
- g) Provide strategic oversight in relation to risk management performance.

3.5 **Director of Communities and Environment**

- a) To Chair the Risk Management Group and direct its activities in accordance with its remit and the Risk Management Policy.
- b) To be the corporate Risk Champion and to promote a risk management culture within the Council.

3.6 **Risk Management Group**

The Risk Management Group is the Council's main forum for risk management issues. This group is chaired by the Director ~~responsible for risk management of Communities and Environment~~ and supported by specialist lead officers and representatives from each of the business units.

The group will meet formally on a quarterly basis.

The main aims/objectives of the group are:

- a) To promote implementation of the Risk Management Policy on a corporate basis.

- b) To promote use of the risk management process across all aspects of service delivery.
- c) To consider, evaluate and recommend actions to address significant risks identified by group members.
- d) To maintain and enhance specialist skills across the Council and access additional skills as required.
- e) Bring to the attention of SLT, all relevant new/emerging risks and/or risk management issues that are raised via this group, including:
 - Those that may have potential strategic impact on the ability of the Council to achieve its objectives and/or have, or are likely to have significant financial implications.
 - Those of such a nature that cannot be managed by the Risk Management Group ~~and/or the Business Manager - Human Resources and Training~~.
 - That may expose the Council and/or its officers and Members to ~~severe and/or~~ imminent risk of civil and/or statutory liability.
- f) To identify and appropriately fund relevant corporate risk management proposals/initiatives that have demonstrated to the Risk Management Group the potential for risk control/mitigation.
- g) Through minutes of the meetings, report significant issues to SLT.

3.7 **Business Manager - Public Protection**

The Business Manager - Public Protection is responsible for managing the risk management process.

The Business Manager - Public Protection is specifically responsible for ensuring:

- a) The Risk Management Policy is suitable and appropriately implemented.
- b) The risk management function is suitably resourced.
- c) To facilitate a review of the Corporate Risk Register via workshops with SLT and where necessary senior Members.
- d) ~~Provide reports as necessary to SLT, Risk Management Group, Cabinet and Audit and Accounts Overview and Scrutiny Governance Committee.~~
- e) ~~Bring to the attention of SLT all new risks and risk management issues that are relevant. These will be:~~
 - ~~Of potential strategic impact on the ability of the Council to achieve its objectives and/or have, or are likely to have significant financial implications.~~
 - ~~Of such a nature that cannot be managed by the Risk Management Group and/or the Business Manager - Human Resources and Training Public Protection.~~

- ~~Issues that may expose the Council and/or its officers and Members to severe and/or imminent risk of civil and/or statutory liability.~~

f) ~~To monitor and provide an assessment of the effectiveness (or otherwise) of:~~

- ~~The robustness of corporate arrangements for risk management.~~
- ~~The implementation of corporate/departmental risk management arrangements.~~

g) ~~To manage the budget for corporate risk management initiatives agreed at the Risk Management Group.~~

3.8 **Safety, Risk and Insurance Manager**

The Safety, Risk and Insurance Manager is the lead officer providing technical advice, assistance and support to assist in ensuring that risk management is fully embedded within the organisation.

- a) To provide advice and guidance to assist the Council in ensuring effective risk management processes are in place and adherence to this policy.
- b) To assist the Business Manager – Public Protection in undertaking the duties as defined in this policy.
- c) To closely liaise with Risk Management Group and other lead officers to coordinate corporate risk management initiatives and delivery of the policy.
- d) To liaise with on a regular basis, the Council's Insurers to ensure that future premiums reflect fully the risk management performance of the Council and to receive advice from them to feed into the Risk Management Group.
- e) To monitor and provide an assessment of the effectiveness (or otherwise) of:
 - The robustness of corporate arrangements for risk management.
 - The implementation of corporate/departmental risk management arrangements.

~~To manage the budget for corporate risk management initiatives agreed at the Risk Management Group.~~

- f) To arrange all Council insurance on behalf of all services to ensure compliance with the Council's financial regulations.
- g) Providing SLT and the Risk Management Group with quarterly assurance reports regarding the status of strategic and operational risks. These reports will be on an exception basis and include:
 - Risks not reviewed within the last period or longer.
 - Those risks identified as "red".
 - Risks that have increased in score.
 - Outstanding actions not completed within specified completion date.
 - Red risks with no mitigating actions

- h) Provide reports as necessary to SLT, Risk Management Group, Cabinet and the Audit and Accounts Overview and Scrutiny Accounts Committee.
- i) Bring to the attention of SLT all new risks and risk management issues that are relevant. These will be:
 - Of potential strategic impact on the ability of the Council to achieve its objectives and/or have, or are likely to have significant financial implications.
 - Of such a nature that cannot be managed by the Risk Management Group and/or the Business Manager - Human Resources and Training Public Protection.
 - Issues that may expose the Council and/or its officers and Members to severe and/or imminent risk of civil and/or statutory liability.

3.9 **Business Manager - Finance**

- a) To manage the Insurance fund.
- b) ~~To liaise with on a regular basis, the Council's Insurers to ensure that future premiums reflect fully the risk management performance of the Council and to receive advice from them to feed into the Risk Management Group.~~
- c) In conjunction with the ~~Business Manager - Public Protection Safety, Risk and Insurance Manager~~, coordinate corporate risk management initiatives and deliverance of the policy, especially that part related to the transfer of risks by external insurance and the internal acceptance/transfer of others using the internal self-insurance fund.
- d) ~~To arrange all Council insurance on behalf of all services to ensure compliance with the Council's financial regulations.~~
- e) ~~To closely liaise with the Council's Safety, Risk and Insurance Manager and together coordinate corporate risk management initiatives and deliverance of the policy~~

3.10 **Transformation Manager**

~~The Transformation Manager is responsible for providing SLT and the Risk Management Group with quarterly assurance reports regarding the status of strategic and operational risks. These reports will be on an exception basis and include:~~

- a) Risks not reviewed within the last period.
- b) Those risks identified as "red".
- c) Risks that have increased in score.
- d) Outstanding actions not completed within specified completion date.

3.11 **Business Managers**

Business Managers are required to ensure risk management is an integral part of service delivery/ planning and is fully embedded within their business unit. To ensure this they shall:

- a) Ensure that operational business risks are identified, evaluated and appropriately controlled as they arise and ensure that all operational business risks are embedded within their own area's Service Plans.
- b) Review all their operational risks on a 3 monthly basis.
- c) In consultation with SLT and Risk Management Group, assist with the compilation and maintenance of the Council's Risk Management Register and profile.
- d) Ensure adequate representation and attendance at Risk Management Group where required.
- e) Notify, in a timely manner, the Safety, Risk and Insurance Manager ~~SLT and the Business Manager - Human Resources and Training~~ of all new potential strategic risks that may require addressing.
- f) Ensure all business insurance matters are conducted via the Council's Insurance Officer.

3.12 Employees

The Council is committed to the effective management of risk. It is the responsibility of all employees to carry out their duties and responsibilities with adequate regard for risk management, as outlined within this policy.

3.13 Internal Audit

Internal Audit shall, where appropriate, report upon the effectiveness of the Council's internal control environment and therefore help managers in minimising risk levels.

3.14 Policy and Finance Committee

- a) ~~Consider the effectiveness and adequacy of the Council's risk management arrangements, the control environment and associated anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements. To consider the adequacy of the action being taken on risk related issues identified by auditors and inspectors.~~
- b) ~~Be satisfied that the Council's assurance statements properly reflect the risk environment and any controls in place to manage it.~~
- c) ~~Be assured that an effective policy and strategy is in place to manage risks throughout the Council.~~
- d) ~~To receive reports as necessary relevant to the corporate management of risk and key strategic risks and incidents.~~
- e) ~~Be aware of the risk management implications during formulation/agreement of strategic decisions, objectives, etc.~~

3.15 Cabinet

- a) Approve Risk Management Strategies and Policies.

- b) Reviewing the effectiveness of Risk Management arrangements.

3.16 Audit and Accounts-Governance Committee

- a) Assurance of the Council's governance, risk management framework and associated control environment and policies including the Council's Risk Register, Risk Management Strategy, and anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements.
- b) ~~To review the Council's corporate governance arrangements to ensure that efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place.~~
- c) ~~Consider the effectiveness and adequacy of the Council's risk management arrangements, the control environment and associated anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements. To consider the adequacy of the action being taken on risk related issues identified by auditors and inspectors.~~
- d) ~~Be satisfied that the Council's assurance statements properly reflect the risk environment and any controls in place to manage it.~~
- e) ~~To receive, examine and determine efficacy of the Council's risk management process and performance.~~
- f) ~~To consider and comment on the Strategic Risk Register.~~

3.16 Elected Members

Elected Members suitably consider risk management implications whilst decision making.

4.0 RISK APPETITE

- 4.1 The term 'Risk Appetite' is used to describe the amount of risk an organisation is willing to take in managing and controlling risk to maximise their chances of successful delivery of corporate objectives.
- 4.2 Given the breadth of services and functions, the Council undertakes it will inevitably have a variable appetite to risk. Decisions will depend on the context, nature of potential losses or gains and extent to which information available regarding risks is complete, reliable and relevant.
- 4.3 It is essential that the Council's appetite for risk is appreciated by all involved in the risk management process. Along with the availability of limited resources, this will be an important determining factor when deciding on a response to the risks identified.
- 4.4 Risk appetite will be assessed annually by SLT to determine suitability as part of the risk profiling process.

4.5 COUNCIL'S AGREED RISK APPETITE STATEMENT

The organisation operates within a strict regulatory framework and does not recognise any appetite for risk taking with regard to compliance and governance, and adherence to policies and procedures such as the General Data Protection Regulations and the

Health and Safety Act. Tolerance to risk events in these areas is extremely low and any incidents or breaches will be swiftly and robustly addressed.

This means that reducing to reasonably practicable levels the risks originating from various systems, products, equipment, and our work environment, and meeting our legal obligations will take priority over other business objectives.

Quality of service delivery is also of paramount importance, and we will strive to support the people we care for by tolerating only minimal risk with regard to business continuity, project management and maintaining staff skills and competency.

We are prepared to take an acceptable level of financial risk to achieve our objectives, providing it is appropriately managed in accordance with this policy and without compromising service quality or financial viability.

We are prepared to embrace viable risk-taking in order to remain innovative and competitive and to realise opportunities.

4.6 Due to the nature of Council's priorities, different types of risk will potentially be more acceptable than others. Further guidance re risk categories and appetite can be found within the "Risk Management Guidance Document".

5.0 RISK OWNERSHIP

5.1 All risks shall have a designated risk owner. Risk owners have overall responsibility for the maintenance, monitoring and implementation of action(s) to remedy or mitigate the risk.

5.2 Ownership for the different risks is detailed below:

- **STRATEGIC RISK:** Strategic risks shall only be owned by a member of SLT who will be assisted by relevant risk ~~assignees~~ **Support Officers**. SLT will agree and determine the risk owner for all strategic risks.
- **OPERATIONAL RISK:** Unless otherwise identified the Business Manager shall be the owner of those operational risks identified.
- **PROJECT RISK:** The nominated project lead will, unless otherwise stated, be the risk owner of all project based risk assessments. The risk owner shall be identified within the Project Initiation Document.

5.3 Where required risk owners will be assisted by risk ~~assignees~~ **support officers**. Risk ~~assignees~~ **support officers** are officers that are required to assist the risk owner in maintaining the risk.

6.0 RISK MANAGEMENT PROCESS

6.1 A standardised procedure will be utilised. The overall process followed for risk management is set out within the Risk Management Guidance Document.

7.0 IDENTIFYING SIGNIFICANT RISK

7.1 The Council will identify all significant **OPERATIONAL, STRATEGIC** and **PROJECT** risks to which it is exposed.

7.2 Risk management shall be an integral part of the annual business planning process and shall be explicit within service plans.

7.3 Strategic Risk Identification

7.3.1 A strategic risk identification workshop shall be undertaken on an annual basis by SLT. This exercise shall be organised and facilitated by the ~~Business Manager - Human Resources and Training~~ Safety, Risk and Insurance Manager. The purpose of this workshop is to:

- a) Ensure that the current strategic register remains effective.
- b) Identify new strategic risks facing the Council, and
- c) Ensure the register only contains current/relevant risks.

7.3.2 Strategic risks identified in the interim period between annual strategic risk reviews shall initially be presented at SLT for consideration, by the relevant risk owner.

7.3.3 New or future strategic risks identified should be forwarded to SLT and where appropriate, the Risk Management Group, for discussion and agreement before inclusion within the corporate risk profile.

7.4 Operational Risk Identification

7.4.1 Business Managers shall consider the significant operational risks that may affect their business units. Special consideration shall also be given to significant projects/contracts and all partnerships.

7.4.2 Business Managers shall ensure that new foreseeable and significant operational risks are identified and suitably developed as and when they arise. Great care should be taken in determining risks for inclusion. Only relevant and current risks should remain active.

7.5 Project Risk Identification

7.5.1 Project leads shall ensure that project risks are identified throughout the project life. This should include:

- At the project conceptual/development stage so that significant risks can be included within any PID submission or business case.
- Once the project is agreed and prior to commencement, and
- At significant points/changes/failures within the project life.

7.6 Risk owners shall ensure that each risk identified has:

- ~~An original~~, current and target risk score.
- A suitable description of the risk.
- A determination of the management status i.e. controlled, over controlled, control pending, under controlled.

8.0 DETERMINING, DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS

- 8.1 Prioritisation of risks will be determined using the agreed risk management risk matrix. Agreed risk tolerances can be found within the risk management guidance document.
- 8.2 All risks shall be suitably developed to identify both current controls in place to mitigate the risk and future actions required to reduce the level of risk to acceptable risk.
- 8.3 All risks shall have a target risk level assigned. Target risks level for strategic risks shall be determined by SLT. Owners of other risk types shall be responsible for setting their own target risk.

Target risks should be realistic and achievable. When determining target risks, risk owners shall consider to what degree mitigation measures can influence either likelihood or severity and score accordingly.

- 8.4 The Council's agreed risk appetite statement shall be utilised in determining and prioritising a suitable response.

9.0 CONTROLLING RISK

- 9.1 Risk owners shall ensure all identified mitigating controls are appropriate to allow the target risk to be achieved.
- 9.2 All relevant current controls should be listed within the risk assessment. Risk owners shall consider these and determine if they are appropriate to suitably control/mitigate the risks to a tolerable level. If not the risk owner shall ensure further actions are developed.
- 9.3 It is essential that risk owners ensure that all risks are controlled in accordance with the Council's appetite for risk.
- 9.4 Risk owners are responsible for ensuring that action plans are developed and managed. It is essential that actions are "SMART" and that ownership is assigned.
- 9.5 In consideration of the risk analysis, profiling and prioritisation, the most favourable course of action will then be determined. The options for action with risk will include **TRANSFER, TREAT, TERMINATE or TOLERATE**.
- 9.6 Risk owners shall evaluate the suitability of controls and actions during every review.

10.0 MONITORING, REPORTING AND REVIEW

- 10.1 Key risk indicators shall be stated within the risk profile section along with mitigating controls, key target dates and review deadlines. Progress in managing risks shall be monitored by the risk owner in accordance with the action plans and recorded so that losses are minimised and intended actions are achieved. Reporting upwards on all risks in the risk profile (not just on those being controlled or treated) will be essential.
- 10.2 All strategic and operational risks shall be recorded and maintained.
- 10.3 Risk owners are required to ensure that all risks remain relevant and that scores identified within this system are evaluated at least every 3 months.

10.4 Monitoring and reporting arrangements:

10.4.1 Strategic risks:

- a) Reviewed at least every 3 months by the risk owner.
- b) Considered by SLT on an annual basis or sooner should those risks change in significance and likelihood in the interim period.
- c) Red risks shall be reported to SLT monthly.
- d) All new/emerging strategic risks shall be reported to SLT.
- e) Failing risk and/or actions shall be reported to SLT on a quarterly basis.
- f) Annual assurance report to Audit and Accounts Committee.

10.4.2 Operational risks:

- a) Reviewed at least every 3 months by the risk owner.
- b) Red operational risks shall be reported to SLT quarterly.
- c) Failing operational risks shall be reported to SLT quarterly.

10.4.3 Project risks:

- a) Reviewed at least every 3 months by the project lead.
- b) Red risks shall be reported to project board quarterly.
- c) Failing risks shall be reported to project board quarterly.
- d) Failing risks shall be notified to SLT at least quarterly.

10.5 The ~~Transformation Business Unit~~ are Safety, Risk and Insurance Manager is responsible for ensuring that SLT are provided with suitable assurance regarding risk performance. They shall provide:

- a) Quarterly assurance reports to SLT identifying the above.
- b) Monthly reports of red risks and failing risks.

11.0 A CONTINUING CULTURE

- 11.1 Risk management is dynamic, the nature and potential of risks will change and the identification and analysis of risk needs to be done continuously. To this end, the Council will ensure an effective, well-resourced and representative Risk Management Group that will be tasked to drive the strategy across all business units in the Council.
- 11.2 Equally important in developing and maintaining a risk management culture shall be the need for appropriate expertise and awareness within the Council. To this end, adequate foundation and refresher training will be provided as necessary for Members and officers.
- 11.3 Risk identification, management and planning shall be an essential component prior to the commencement of all significant organisational change, new service provision or projects. The management and review of risks shall be explicit in the delivery of the change, service provision and/or project.

Safety, Risk and Insurance Manager
December 2025

Agenda Item 16

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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