

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, 21 April 2026 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor P Peacock (Chair)

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor N Allen, Councillor S Haynes and Councillor P Rainbow

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor C Penny

376 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.

377 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no declarations of interest.

378 MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 24 MARCH 2026

The minutes from the meeting held on 24 March 2026 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

379 CHAIR'S UPDATE

There was no update from the Chair, but as the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection & Community Relations, Councillor P Taylor updated the Cabinet on the Knife Angel sculpture which was in Newark from today as part of the UK National Youth Anti-Violence Tour.

380 GLYPHOSATE FREE PLAY AREAS (KEY DECISION)

The Director - Communities & Environment presented a report which sought approval for a proposed pilot program to reduce the use of glyphosate-based herbicides across Newark & Sherwood District owned playgrounds and housing owned playground areas from April 2026 to the end of March 2027. The proposal focused on introducing spray-free zones across approximately 34 playground sites, while maintaining a targeted weed management approach where required to ensure public safety and site usability. The Cabinet referred to the importance of engagement with residents and monitoring the success of the pilot.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet approve:

- a) the introduction of spray-free weed management zones across 34 council-owned playgrounds, including housing playground areas;
- b) the continuation of glyphosate use in targeted operational areas where alternative methods are not viable or would pose safety risks;
- c) the adoption of mechanical and manual weed control methods, including the use of NoMix Dual applicator systems where herbicide use is still required; and
- d) a review of the operational and financial impacts, including any additional labour costs, herbicide savings and site condition assessments, to enable a decision to be made about whether the approach becomes business as usual from April 2027.

Reasons for Decision:

The introduction of spray-free zones within playground environments will provide visible evidence of the Council's commitment to reducing chemical use, whilst still maintaining operational practicality. The introduction of spray-free zones within playground environments provides a balanced and proportionate approach to reducing the Council's reliance on glyphosate-based herbicides while maintaining safe and accessible public spaces.

Playgrounds represent some of the most sensitive and highly visible areas within the Council's public realm, frequently used by children and families. Removing routine herbicide application in these locations supports the precautionary principle, responds to increasing public concern regarding chemical use in recreational areas, and demonstrates the Council's commitment to environmentally responsible land management.

The proposal builds upon the Council's existing spray-free areas and forms part of a wider strategy to gradually reduce glyphosate use across the district. By focusing reductions within targeted locations, the Council can continue to manage operational risks such as trip hazards, accessibility issues and excessive vegetation growth while still progressing towards environmental and sustainability objectives.

The proposed approach can be delivered within existing operational resources and will contribute towards a measurable reduction in annual glyphosate usage across the district.

Options Considered:

Consideration was given to maintaining the current weed management programme using glyphosate across all operational sites.

While this approach remains the most cost-effective and operationally efficient method of weed control, there has been increasing public concern regarding herbicide use in sensitive locations such as playgrounds and residential areas.

An alternative option of eliminating glyphosate across all council land was also considered. However, this was not recommended due to:

- A. Significant increases in labour costs
- B. Reduced weed control effectiveness
- C. Potential deterioration in site standards and safety
- D. Increased carbon emissions associated with repeated mechanical treatments

Therefore, a targeted reduction approach focused on highly visible and sensitive areas such as playgrounds has been proposed as a balanced solution.

381 ADOPTION OF THE RENTERS RIGHTS ACT 2025 (KEY DECISION)

The Business Manager - Public Protection presented a report which sought approval for the adoption of the updated Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy and associated Civil Penalty Matrix, reflecting the requirements of the Renters' Rights Act 2025 ahead of its implementation in May 2026. The adoption of the policy and matrix would provide clarity to landlords, tenants and agents on how the Council would exercise its powers and what the Council can impose as civil penalties for new offences. It was noted that the four-week public consultation ended on 6 April 2026, with just one question being raised relating to park homes which was responded to.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet:

- a) approve the adoption of the updated Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy, incorporating duties placed on the Council under the Renters' Rights Act 2025 for inclusion in the Councils existing Enforcement Policy;
- b) approve the adoption of the Civil Financial Penalties Policy and associated penalty matrix to enable the Council to impose civil penalties for breaches under the new legislative framework; and
- c) delegate authority to the Director - Communities & Environment in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing to make minor operational amendments to the policies to reflect future updates to statutory guidance.

Reasons for Decision:

To ensure the Council can undertake the new legal duties from May 2026. This directly links to the Community Plan Objective - Increase the supply of housing, in particular decent homes that residents can afford to buy and rent, as well as improving housing standards.

Options Considered:

Do nothing – failure to adopt a legally compliant enforcement and penalty framework would prevent the Council from meeting statutory duties under the Renters' Rights Act 2025.

Delay adoption pending further national guidance – the legislation comes into force in May 2026 and the Council must have a robust enforcement framework in place for day one of implementation.

382 ENHANCING TENANT ENGAGEMENT - RECOGNITION SCHEME

The Business Manager - Housing Services presented a report which set out proposals for introducing a recognition scheme to support widening the participation and representation of tenants. At their meeting held on 13 April 2026, the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee considered proposals to refresh the current Tenant Engagement Board by renaming this as the Tenant Influence and Assurance Board and changing its composition. A report was also considered by the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee on 16 April in respect of the required changes to the Constitution which would require Full Council approval.

The report to Cabinet sought approval for the introduction of a structured recognition and incentives scheme for involved tenants and leaseholders which was set out in section two of the report to the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee. The scheme introduced modest financial recognition alongside non-financial incentives such as training and acknowledgement, ensuring involvement remained accessible and inclusive. The recommended proposal resulted in an annual cost of £9,750 in 2026/27 which could be accommodated within the existing tenant engagement budget.

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

- a) approve the proposed recognition and incentivisation scheme set out in Section Two of Appendix A to the report; and
- b) note that proposed changes to the Tenant Engagement structure are to be presented to the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee on 16 April 2026, with the requisite changes to the Constitution being considered by the Full Council on 19 May 2026.

Reasons for Decision:

The proposed recommendations strengthen tenant influence, participation and assurance within housing services and directly support the delivery of the Council's Community Plan 2023–2027 by placing tenants at the heart of decision-making, and recognising the contributions of time, skills and experience to improve and scrutinise housing services to ensure they are responsive to the needs of Newark and Sherwood District Council tenants.

Options Considered:

To maintain current arrangements of voluntary, unpaid tenant support.

383 NEWARK PARTNERSHIP HUB - A NEW APPROACH FOR PLACE BASED PARTNERSHIP WORKING IN TOWN CENTRE AREAS (KEY DECISION)

The District Housing Manager presented a report which provided a review of the Chatham Court facility with a proposal to refocus the hub providing a base for partners and the community. It was recommended that the facility be renamed the 'Newark Partnership Hub' which would see a transformation into a wider strategic base for dealing with anti-social behaviour and criminality as well as still allowing a community base to flourish in the area. The objectives were to encourage joint working with the police to identify joint initiatives to tackle issues across the town centre and, in particular, at key housing sites.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet:

- a) agree to refocus Chatham Court Hub to continue providing a base for the community but increase strategic partnership working in and around Newark Town Centre, specifically on high ASB hot spot housing and communal areas;
- b) agree to rename the facility "Newark Partnership Hub";
- c) approve funding for 24 months as a pilot under its new remit and allow an application to the Pride of Place scheme; and
- d) note the continuation of HRA financial support of £11,000 per annum from existing budgets.

Reasons for Decision:

To provide a wider focus for the community and strategic partnership working in and around Newark Town Centre.

Options Considered:

Continuing use of the facilities at Chatham Court Hub on the same basis for a further 12 months, post March 2026.

Wind-up and decommission the Hub and return to residential accommodation using capital budget of circa £40,000 from within the Investment Programme resources.

384 OPTIONS APPRAISAL FOR TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION IN OLLERTON (KEY DECISION)

The Senior Housing Options Manager presented a report which set out options for the temporary accommodation site at Wellow Green, Ollerton as the site was considered no longer fit for purpose. The three options presented to the Cabinet were to refurbish Wellow Green for continued use as temporary accommodation; to redevelop a purpose built temporary accommodation on the existing site; or to dispose of Wellow Green to generate a one-off capital receipt.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet:

- a) approve the refurbishment of Wellow Green as the preferred option and add £536,000 to the Capital Programme in 2026/27 financed by the Homelessness reserve; and
- b) as part of LGR transition work, request the Director - Housing, Health & Wellbeing impresses on future partner Councils this Council's priority to identify a suitable site for new temporary accommodation and report back on progress to Cabinet.

Reasons for Decision:

Refurbishment provides the most affordable, proportionate and deliverable option.

The refurbishment directly responds to resident feedback and improves the quality of housing, supporting the Community Plan commitment to improving wellbeing, safety and housing standards.

Aligning with Mansfield's emerging Temporary Accommodation (TA) approach contributes to stronger partnership working and more consistent service delivery across the future unitary footprint, reinforcing the Community Plan's priority of collaborating effectively across localities.

Options Considered:

New build temporary accommodation – not viable; disposal – viable but discounted; use of Local Authority Housing Fund properties – viable but discounted; use of Housing Revenue Account stock – viable but discounted; and purchasing on open-market – viable but discounted.

385 WARM HOMES SCHEME UPDATE (KEY DECISION)

The Director - Housing, Health & Wellbeing presented a report which provided an update on plans for the delivery of the Warm Homes Programme for 2026-27 to 2027-28 and sought approval for an increase in the Capital Programme for 2027-28 in preparation for an additional bid being successful, subject to match funding. The Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund (WH:SHF) programme would deliver the upgrade of oil boilers to low carbon heating, with solar panels and battery storage to maximise the benefits of solar power and be used to target low performing properties with targeted measures to improve the thermal comfort and efficiency of homes.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet:

- a) approve acceptance of £2,428,408 grant from the Department of Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ) for the WH:SHF programme in line with paragraph 3.5 of this report, to improve the energy efficiency and thermal comfort of the Council's housing stock;
- b) approve the increase in capital programme of £1.4m for 2027-28 financed by £700,000 grant funding from DESNZ and £700,000 from the Major Repairs Reserve, taking the total budget for 2027-28 to £2,990,680;

- c) note the Portfolio Holder decision taken on 13 April 2026 to accept an additional £500,000 grant funding, match funded with £500,000 from a favourable variance in the Capital programme for 2025-26 to extend the WH:SHF programme for the current year, taking the total budget for 2026-27 to £2,551,880;
- d) approve acceptance of £1,056,000 grant from DESNZ the Warm Homes:Local Grant (WH:LG) programme targeting homes in the private rented sector to be administered in conjunction with Nottinghamshire County Council;
- e) approve the addition of £960,000 to the Capital Programme as per paragraph 3.6, financed fully by the grant; and
- f) delegate authority to the Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing in consultation with the S151 Officer and Portfolio Holder for Housing to enter into a contract for both schemes following a compliant procurement process.

Reasons for Decision:

To continue the Council's progress to low carbon heating, improving the energy efficiency of tenants' homes and to maximise the opportunities presented by Government funding to contribute to the financial cost.

Options Considered:

None, given the wide benefits that the Warm Homes Programme delivers.

Meeting closed at 7.15 pm.

Chair