

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL



newark-sher

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INTRODUCTION TO NEWARK AND SHERWOOD

We, Newark, and Sherwood District Council (NSDC), are one of seven district councils in Nottinghamshire. We are the middle layer of local government in this area with Nottinghamshire County Council covering the whole County and 77 parish and town councils sitting within the NSDC area.

For every £1 a resident pays in Council Tax, 7.9 pence is allocated to NSDC and the remaining funds go to Nottinghamshire County Council, Nottinghamshire Police, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue and parish/town councils.

Our area

Our district is the largest in Nottinghamshire and covers a third of the county with an area of over 65,000 hectares. Below is a map of the district showing the main urban areas and key transport connections.



Key statistics on Newark and Sherwood from the 2021 Census:

- A resident population of 122,956 made up of 50.8% female and 49.2% male.
- Newark and Sherwood are the largest district in Nottinghamshire with an area of 65,132 hectares.
- Newark and Sherwood have an aging population. 6.2% of the district’s population are between 70 and 74. This is 1.2% higher than the English average.
- In 2011, 19.2% of the district’s population was over 65. This has risen by 3.4% and in 2021, with 22.6% of the district’s population being over 65. This is predicted to rise further, with 27.7% of the district’s population set to be 65 or above by 2040.
- 17.1% of the district’s population are schoolchildren and full-time students.
- There are 53,331 dwellings, of which around 10% are owned by the district council (social housing).

Our services

We deliver a wide range of services for our residents and the diagram below summarises these.



We are also a landlord to over 5,500 council homes. As a landlord we carry out the housing management functions for these homes, allocating tenancies, undertaking repairs and maintenance, maintaining housing estates and collecting rent.

FOREWORD

I am delighted to present this report describing the work of the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee. It includes a wide range of information about the work councillors have undertaken over the past year and most importantly the impact this has had.

Over the past year the committee have welcomed the opportunity to work closely with officers as they carry out the business of the council. We have sought to focus on the important issues and provided constructive input in finding ways to improve outcomes for residents, consistently providing constructive challenge and recommendations for the Cabinet.

The committee has a keen interest in improving the lives of our tenants. Whether that is around improving tenant engagement and our tenant satisfaction measures or updates to our Damp & Mould Policy. We continue to support the work to improve the lives of those seeking help or asylum with our resettlement and homelessness programmes. I would also like to thank fellow councillors for the work on the Working Groups who have delivered some good recommendations that officers will take forward in the next year.

A warm thank you goes to the officers that support this committee as they continue to bring energy and enthusiasm to their roles. I would also like to note my thanks to my Vice Chair Councillor Nick Ross for his support over the past year and the wide range of officers and partners who present at the committee.

I look forward to another year of working on this committee to help ensure improved outcomes for all customers, residents, and businesses within Newark & Sherwood.



Councillor Mike Pringle

Chair of the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee



OVERVIEW OF THE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

Our Policy and Performance Improvement Committee (PPIC) fulfils the 'scrutiny' function required in the Cabinet model, as well as serving as an integral role in improving the work of the council. It is an open meeting, meaning public and press can attend, and the committee meets at least six times a year.

PPIC itself is not a decision-making body, it makes recommendations that are taken to the appropriate Portfolio Holder, Cabinet, or committee for decision. The recommendations made by PPIC enable improvements to be made to policies and services and how they are implemented. PPIC also plays a valuable role in developing policy and strategy. A work programme is developed for the year but has suitable capacity to ensure issues can be considered as they arise.

PPIC may also choose to look at a specific issue, decision, or topic by adding a review to the work programme. For example, they may review a service pilot, scrutinise progress of a key project or review an area where performance is not as expected. This can be done after a decision has been made or they may choose to feed into the decision making by reviewing the topic to ensure a decision is well made.

Where more detailed work is required, such as the development of a policy or the detailed review of a service area, a working group is set-up to undertake this work. Working groups meet 3 to 5 times, listen to evidence, and examine data, then develop recommendations which are forwarded for a relevant decision.

PPIC also has statutory powers to scrutinise decisions that Cabinet is planning to take and those that have already been taken.

Composition of membership

PPIC consists of 15 councillors, including a chair and vice chair, who are appointed by full council, which will reflect the political balance of the council. The committee has had a busy year examining a broad range of issues affecting the council, its services, and local people. PPIC has also had a watching brief of all items going to Cabinet for decision, raising queries as appropriate and providing comments. This has led to a variety of topics being reviewed, both in committee and by working groups. Any councillors can submit a topic to be examined and any councillor can request to join a working group.

2023/24 in Numbers



REVIEW OF WORK

PPIC have been involved in developing and shaping council policies and strategies, questioning the council's performance, and driving improvement to services. During the year PPIC received information in the form of presentations, updates, and reports. Here is a snapshot of the work PPIC have been doing in the last 12 months, separated into the 4 key areas that demonstrate PPIC's responsibilities:

1. **Working groups**
2. **Shaping policy and strategy**
3. **Driving service improvement**
4. **Scrutinising and questioning performance**

This report does not list every item that has been to the committee (87) but chooses to highlight some key areas of work.

1. Working Groups

Working groups are set up to carry out detailed pieces of work, such as a piece of development or a review, outside of the main committee agenda. So that this can happen, any working group must have a clear aim as part of its set-up. The aims must:

- Improve the quality of life of residents, or
- Enable value for money of local services.

The topic of a working group can be proposed by the committee or by a councillor completing a 'Topic Request Form.' This form will be considered by officers who will add further information as required before being considered by PPIC.

Working groups can be put in place to develop a policy or strategy, undertake a piece of development work such as shaping a bid, or undertake a review of an area experiencing poor performance.

Two working groups were completed in 2023-24.

Information Sharing with Members

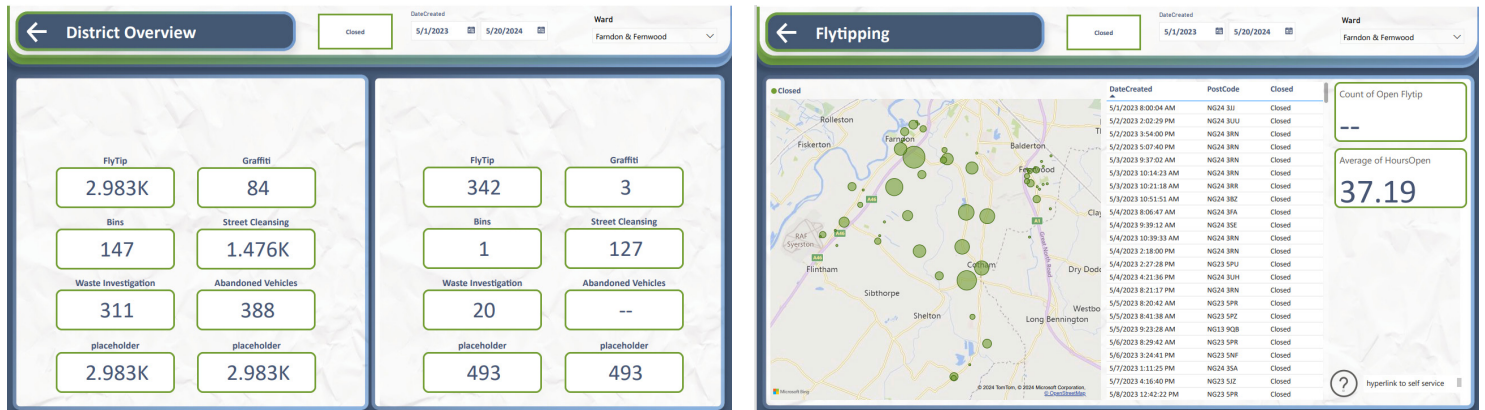
In response to a topic request form, a cross party working group was formed with the aim of establishing guidance around which information could be shared with councillors and when. The group was chaired by Councillor Jack Kellas who was supported by one of our Transformation & Service Improvement Officers and it consisted of 6 councillors. The working group met 4 times between November 2023 and March 2024, with a 5th session an online demonstration of Power Bi for all councillors held in May.



Outcome

A key consideration was what information members would find useful to help them undertake their ward councillor role, and how could that be shared. The working group looked at the legal case for sharing information, considering the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and made a number of recommendations on improving how the council shares information with councillors. These include:

- 'Signposting' complainants through the complaints process on who their Ward councillor is.
- Sending all council newsletters to all councillors and then councillors can unsubscribe if they no longer wish to receive them.
- Encouraging councillors to contact the communication team if they require help in using social media to help them with their ward role.
- Democratic Services will publicise to councillors the allocated DSO list and to encourage councillors to use Democratic Services to help them locate officers, provide other information, support, and help they can give them in their role.
- A 'Post Code' search has been added to NSDC Website to help residents to find their Ward councillor.
- The key development is a self-serve tool for all councillors using Microsoft 'Power Bi,' which will allow them to see their own Ward data and District wide data, drawing down 'live' data from NSDC CRM.



Details of these recommendations and the outcomes were presented to PPIC in June 2024.

Active Lifestyles

In August 2023, a topic request form was received by the Policy and Performance Improvement Committee, the proposed topic was 'Support for Active Lifestyles'. Subsequently, a cross party working group, chaired by Councillor Celia Brooks, and supported by a Transformation and Service Improvement Officer, was formed. The working group has two key aims:

1. To establish the active lifestyles baseline for all residents across the district.
2. Once the baseline is understood, work to identify any areas in which the council can make recommendations to add value to the active lifestyles offering. Whether that be by identifying a need that is not currently being met or looking at ways to remove barriers to accessing an active lifestyle for all.

The working group met on three occasions between December and April. One of those sessions involved inviting a number of officers to talk through key workstreams which are currently ongoing, this included strategy and policy development, as well as the offering provided by Active4Today and channels of communication.

Outcome:

Through information sharing between councillors and officers, the working group pieced together a comprehensive overview of what is currently on offer across the District and the demographic of whom the activities on offer are aimed at. This enabled conversations to take place to identify the areas in which the working group felt could be better supported to encourage and remove barriers for as many residents as possible so that they have access to an active lifestyle. The detail of these recommendations and the outcomes will be presented at a future PPIC meeting.

2. Shaping Policies and Strategies

2.1 2022 Residents & Tenants Survey (Sept 2022)

Every year, the council conducts a Survey of Tenants & Residents (STAR). This allows us to gather tenants' opinions about the services they receive. The survey provides an annual benchmark covering a range of measures relating to council homes, tenancies, communal services, and neighbourhoods.

The Director of Housing Health and Wellbeing presented the report with the results of the survey to the committee.

The report covered the survey methodology and how the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) collected and used to align to STAR. Councillors were also taken through the highlights of the STAR survey findings in these key areas:

- Repairs
- Anti-social behaviour
- Lettings
- Complaints and queries
- Neighbourhood
- Home
- Empowerment
- Value for money

The views of our tenants are important and a further survey was brought which looked at Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM). The report set out the background to the requirement for landlords with 1000+ properties to conduct an annual TSM with the results being submitted to the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH).

Tenants were also asked some additional questions in relation to their satisfaction with lettings and gas servicing. The survey methodology was provided with a table showing progress in comparison to previous surveys undertaken.

Outcome

Councillors noted the overall positive levels in satisfaction for housing services and the work that will be ongoing to understand areas with lower satisfaction.

In considering the TSM report councillors referred to the response of the time taken for repairs. Most comments they received were in relation to how long it took for repairs to be carried out and this was an area that housing colleagues would be working on over the next year.

2.2 Damp & Mould Policy (Dec 2023)

The Business Manager for Housing Maintenance & Asset Management presented a report outlining the revision to the Damp & Mould Policy for the committee to review. It set out the council's approach to tackling and preventing damp and mould in council owned homes.

The Housing Ombudsman had issued a "Spotlight on Damp and Mould" in October 2021. This highlighted the approach expected of social landlords when dealing with tenants who complained about damp.

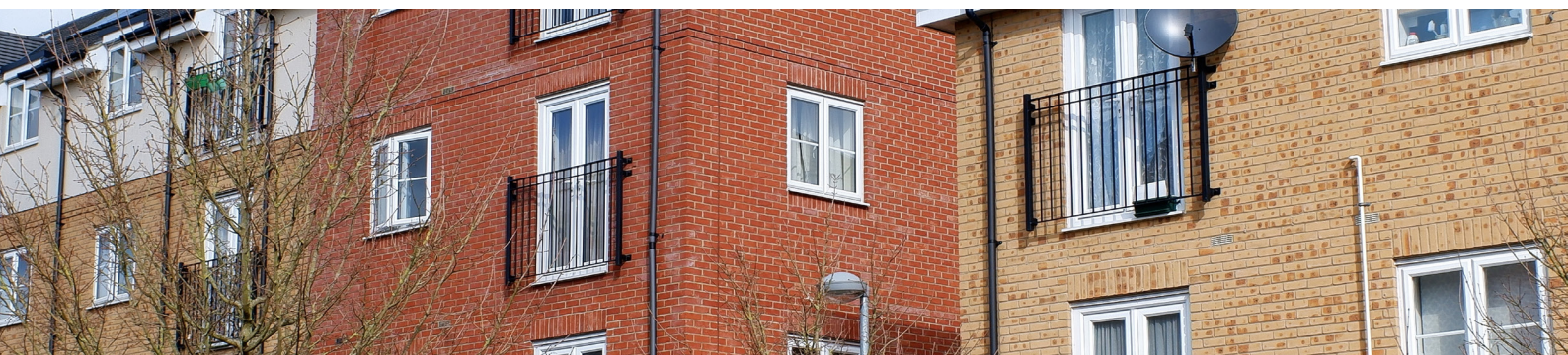
In answer to the Regulator of Social Housing, who wanted information and assurances that the right approach was being taken by social housing providers, the council's response was well received. It was also reported that the revisions to the Damp & Mould Policy had been positively received by both the Tenant Engagement Board and the Local Influence Network.

Outcome

In considering the report councillors noted that one of the objectives within the Policy was to have a rolling programme of stock condition surveys which would maintain accurate data on 5-year anniversary cycle.

The Business Manager advised that to-date, 50% of the council's stock had been inspected with this increasing to 70-75% by the end of the financial year. It was hoped that the remaining stock would be inspected in the following year and of the 50% inspected, only 2 cases of damp and mould had been reported.

It was agreed that the Damp & Mould Policy be endorsed and recommended to Cabinet for approval. This Policy was approved by Cabinet on the 19 December 2023.



2.3 Building Safety in the Home Policy (Dec 2023)

The Business Manager for Housing Maintenance & Asset Management shared with councillors to share with councillors the draft Building Safety in the Home Policy.

The aim of the Policy is to provide tenants and leaseholders assurance of the steps the council takes in keeping them safe in their homes. It also identifies actions they could take to help the council deliver safer homes.

The document also showed how the council has adopted policies over and above statutory requirements for buildings over 11 meters in height and identified their location. Ways for tenants to get involved in scrutinising the service in general or by attending the Local Influence Networks were presented as part of the report.

Outcome

Councillors agreed that the Building Safety in the Home Policy be endorsed and recommended to Cabinet for approval. This Policy was approved by Cabinet on the 19 December 2023.

2.4 Climate Emergency Update (Jan 2024)

The committee considered the Environmental Policy & Projects Officer's report which provided councillors with an update on the progress of the Climate Emergency Strategy and associated Action Plan.

The report set out the background to the declaration of a climate emergency in 2019 and the work undertaken since that time. This resulted in the council agreeing a target for carbon reduction and the development of the Action Plan to deliver the vision outlined in the Climate Emergency Strategy.

Details were provided in relation to the ongoing projects:

- The Green Rewards App
- Accelerator training workshops
- Solar PV installation
- Decarbonisation plan
- Climate awareness training
- Electric vehicle charge points
- Energy efficiency improvements to homes
- Tree planting
- Local Area Energy Plan

Councillors asked about the limiting factors around installing solar panels on council owned buildings. They were particularly interested to understand if the limiting factors were economic or to do with the building structures. In response, councillors were advised that it was likely both would impact on any decision. Options were being explored to fit panels retrospectively on older buildings and whether their installation could be included during the development stage of any new builds.

The Green Rewards app was also considered. Councillors suggested it could have greater ambition and growth. It was requested that the next update report contain details of how the app could be improved and become more challenging in comparison to how easy it was to reach the existing targets.

Outcome

In closing the debate, the Chair stated that officers made every effort to deliver the vision outlined in the Climate Emergency Strategy within known financial constraints, noting that the committee were required to scrutinise the performance. Councillors agreed that the progress on the Climate Emergency Strategy Action Plan was sustainable and achievable.



2.5 Tenant Engagement Strategy (June 2023)

The Director for Housing, Health & Wellbeing presented a report which included a draft Tenant Engagement Strategy for consideration by councillors and onward recommendation to Cabinet for approval.

The Tenant Engagement Strategy sits alongside the council's Consultation & Engagement Strategy 2022/2027 which sets out how the council sought out, listened, and acted on the views of tenants and leaseholders. The council's strategy outlined the importance of tenant engagement in every aspect of housing services and what the approach looked like. This includes how the tenant engagement team could support effective engagement; supporting the council to create vibrant and self-sufficient local communities where residents looked out for each other and actively contributed to the local area.

The committee were informed about the work undertaken by Local Influence Network (LINs). An explanation was provided as to how tenants could be engaged, for example, by a door-knock or a letter drop. Also, the Community Link Groups who meet in community centres. Tenant Engagement Officers would sometimes attend these meetings to speak to the tenants present.

Outcome

It was requested that PPIC is provided with the Action Plan when available, this should include the number of tenants who returned following initial engagement and those who chose not to engage further. Councillors also requested that a future report be presented to committee providing statistical information on the take-up of the options to engage and as a follow-up of the above comments.

Councillors endorsed and recommended to cabinet for approval subject to the comments made during the meeting. The Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 7 July 2023.

2.6 Homelessness Prevention & Rough Sleepers Strategy 2024/2029 (Jan 2024)

The Business Manager for Regeneration & Housing Strategy and the Homelessness Strategy & Safeguarding Officer gave councillors an opportunity to review the draft Homelessness Prevention & Rough Sleeper Strategy 2024/2029 prior to it being presented to Cabinet for approval.

It was reported that the production of a Homelessness Strategy, every five years, was a statutory requirement. Additional duties had been introduced via the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018. Newark & Sherwood District Council have brought together the duties to create a collective Homelessness Prevention & Rough Sleeper Strategy 2024-2029.

Councillors were advised that should an individual be identified as needing mental health support, they would be referred onwards to the appropriate partner organisation.

Outcome

The Chair confirmed that there would be a general review of the Strategy each year which would be presented to the committee for consideration. Councillors noted the draft Homelessness Prevention & Rough Sleeper Strategy 2024-2029, and it was approved by Cabinet on 20 February 2024.

3. Driving Service Improvement

Review the Executive Forward Plan

It is a standard item that the committee reviews the Council's Executive Forward Plan and the minutes from Cabinet. This enables the committee to see what decisions are being made across the council, review and comment on progress and performance and request more information and updates from officers as required.

3.1 Air Quality Monitoring in Newark & Sherwood (Dec 2023)

At the request of the committee, the Business Manager for Public Protection provided councillors with an overview of air quality requirements and how air quality was being monitored and managed within the district.

The report set out the legislative requirements which the council operated under in relation to air quality. It also covered diffusion tubes, particulate matter, smoke control areas, environmental permitting, and the role as a statutory consultee in planning applications.

It also explained a county wide approach which would see a bid to DEFRA for grant funding to undertake wider real time monitoring, including particulate matter.

Outcome

The subject generated considerable discussion, with councillors querying and commenting on a number of key areas.

In closing the debate, the Chair noted that all councillors agreed that the education of people as to the consequences of their actions in relation to air quality was key. The committee agreed that the work undertaken by Newark & Sherwood District Council in monitoring air quality across the District be noted, that the creation of the 'Anti-Idling Campaign' be supported and the countywide DEFRA bid submission in 2024 to include particulate monitoring be supported.

3.2 Resettlement Update (Sept 2023)

The Assistant Business Manager for Housing & Estate Management presented a report updating councillors on the resettlement programmes operated by the council.

The report set out the schemes currently available within the UK, this included how long a family or individual could remain in the UK and the type of accommodation they were provided with, together with a note of the number of households and individuals included under each one.

Support was available for local authorities to meet additional housing needs related to resettlement and homelessness and the council had submitted a successful funding application which supported the purchase of 14 homes to assist with alleviating housing pressures.



Outcome

Whilst the work of the Council was acknowledged by the committee, councillors commented that there could be further pressures in the future should the council be required to provide accommodation for asylum seekers.

The Assistant Business Manager advised that there was not currently any specific request in relation to this, but they would keep councillors updated should this change. They also provided a brief outline of the process to ensure families are supported within the community.

3.3 Customer Engagement Strategy (Jan 2024)

The Customer Services Manager and the Transformation & Service Improvement Officer presented a report on the results of the pilot opening hours within the Customer Contact Centre and Housing Repairs, together with the feedback received on the Customer Promise.

The report set out the background to the decision to pilot the extended opening hours on a Monday between 8am and 9am. It was reported that the trial ran for a 12-week period between September and November 2023, with the wind down period running through to 28 November.

The Customer Promise had arisen from the 2022 Resident Survey consultation when residents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the council.

Following this, a Working Group had been established to develop a Customer Experience Strategy. The Customer Promise was set out in a document designed to deliver the message generated from the Customer Experience Strategy. It had been displayed for a period of four weeks with customers offered the opportunity to comment or suggest how it could be improved.

Outcome

Councillors welcomed the feedback from the pilot and the proposal to resume the current opening hours. Councillors noted that the provision for out of hours emergency repairs remained unaltered and they agreed that the Customer Services Team be praised for their expertise, knowledge, and approach, providing an excellent service to the council's customers.

Councillors agreed that the recommendation to resume the council's opening hours of 9am to 5pm within the Customer Contact Centre and Housing Repairs be endorsed and that the results of the customer feedback about the Customer Promise be noted.

3.4 Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge (March 2024)

The Director for Customer Services & Organisational Development provided councillors with an update on the council's Peer Challenge, its approach and timeline.

It was reported that the Local Government Association (LGA) operated a peer challenge programme which supported continuous improvement by providing effective insight, guidance, and challenge to enable continuous improvement, as well as assurance to local leaders and residents.

Outcome

Councillors agreed with the rationale and practicalities for an LGA Peer Challenge and welcomed and endorsed the progress and provisional arrangements and welcomed being part of the process.

4. Scrutinising and Questioning Performance

Performance Reporting

It is also the role of the committee to review how the council is performing in two key areas:

1. Financial performance

How we are performing against the Medium-Term Financial Plan

2. Service performance

How the council is performing against its Community Plan

The committee received quarterly reports reviewing the council performance both operational and financial. Councillors actively engage and review these reports every quarter. The committee asked questions, scrutinised, and requested more information and updates from officers on areas of improvement as required. These are reported back to committee from the relevant service and progress is monitored.

4.1 NSDC Community Lottery (June 2023)

A report was presented by the Director for Housing, Health & Wellbeing which provided councillors with an update on the progress of the Newark & Sherwood Community Lottery since its launch in May 2021.

The report set out the impact of the scheme since its launch, providing information as to the number of 'good causes' registered with the lottery who were receiving financial support through ticket sales. Regular marketing and promotion of the lottery was undertaken together with the number of supporters purchasing tickets each week.

Outcome

The committee were pleased that the membership target of 60 good causes had been achieved and asked whether there would be any further promotion of the lottery. They stated that it would be beneficial to have an illustrative graph to identify the geography of where the lottery tickets were being purchased and which organisations had signed up.

It was also requested information from charities that had benefited from funding in an area with a high purchase rate and from one with a lower purchase rate, thereby enabling councillors to consider what further promotions could be carried out. The Business Manager for Housing Services advised she would forward the comments to the Sports, Community Facilities & Events Manager for response.

4.2 Property Repair and Letting Arrangements for Council Owned Homes (Sept 2023)

The committee considered a report presented by the Business Manager for Housing Services, setting out the process of repairing and allocating the council's rented housing and temporary accommodation. It also included details of the performance and satisfaction with the services and the seeking of recommendations to shape further improvements and investigation.

The report provided details of the work undertaken by the team who were dedicated to the repair of properties. Details of the 're-let journey' were reported together with statistical information as to the council's performance.

The report also provided information as to tenant scrutiny and the lettings standards for temporary accommodation. And details of the development of an "Empty Homes Improvement Plan", which would include temporary accommodation.

Councillors queried as to why the 'Starting Well Fund' had a take-up of less than 50%, officers advised that not all tenants required the help and that it was only available to new lettings.

Lessons were learned from complaints made by Tenants, with complaints reported to the Tenant Engagement Board for consideration and what lessons could be learned and any themes that were emerging.

Outcome

The Chair requested that following submission of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures to the Regulator of Social Housing, a report be presented to the next meeting of the committee, showing the results of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey. The report should also include any changes to the Home Standard brought about by the current consultation.

The committee endorsed the following recommendations:

- There are discussions in the housing sector about furniture poverty and the value of carpeting homes as part of the landlord's lettable standard. It is proposed to take this initiative to the Local Influence Networks to explore the benefits and challenges of providing floor coverings in all new lettings.
- Recognition that there is no simplified version of the 'Fit to Let' standard currently available to applicants and tenants to ensure we do what we say we will. This committee supports a request to involve tenants to design a simplified 'Fit to Let' standard to hold the service to account and promote feedback including complaints.
- To support the introduction of a satisfaction measure for quality of temporary accommodation.
- To support the development of a policy to enable a pilot for the council to assist tenants with maintaining trees within their gardens using funds available from efficiency savings.
- These recommendations align to the council's objective of creating more and better-quality homes through our roles as landlord, developer, and planning authority.



4.3 Community Plan Performance Framework (Dec 2023)

A report was presented providing an update on the Performance Framework, the planned improvements and the draft indicators that would be used to monitor and measure performance against the 2023/2027 Community Plan.

The presentation set out:

- The purpose of managing performance
- Objective setting cycle
- Performance framework
- Contextual district data
- Performance indicators
- Further improvements.

Requesting councillors provide comment on what they would wish to see within the district and the customer element of performance reports.

The Director for Customer Services & Organisational Development reiterated that the role of the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee was to scrutinise how the council performed and asked councillors to consider whether the proposed performance indicators in the framework would provide the information to enable the committee to carry out that function. They advised that the presentation would be circulated to councillors to enable them to feed their comments into the Transformation Team.

Outcome

Councillors considered the report and raised a number of areas of concern that they would wish to link with future actions the council may take, these included:

- Improvement in productivity
- Areas of deprivation
- Very high disability levels
- Health indicators
- Low levels of satisfaction with life.

They noted the indicators within the Performance Framework and that they will consider the presentation given and feed any comments back into the Transformation Team for consideration.

4.4 Attendance of Portfolio Holders to future meetings of the PPIC (Jan 2024)

Committee members had requested that Portfolio Holders be invited to future meetings, to enable the Portfolio Holder to brief them on their remit and to present key activity and outcomes they are leading on. It would also offer the committee opportunity to ask focussed questions of the Portfolio Holder.

The committee considered the report of the Democratic Services Officer in relation to a proposed schedule of attendance by Portfolio Holders at future meetings of the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee.

This provided a suggested calendar of attendance by the Portfolio Holders, subject to their availability. Councillors agreed that it would be beneficial to receive a presentation from each of the Portfolio Holders.

Outcome

The Chair set out his vision for how the committee would engage effectively with Portfolio Holders to ensure the session was constructive. He added that should councillors not wish to adopt that approach he would consider a positive alternative which fulfilled the scrutiny function of the committee. The proposed schedule of attendance by Portfolio Holders was agreed.

4.5 Presentation by the Leader of the Council - Councillor Paul Peacock (March 2024)

The Leader of the council, Councillor Paul Peacock, Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Performance & Finance delivered a presentation to the committee. The committee was provided with details of the remit for the portfolio together with information as to the latest position with the East Midlands Council's and East Midlands Combined Authority devolution. Councillor Peacock also provided the council's framework, detailing delivery themes, connecting aims, objectives, and outcomes.

He stated that the East Midlands Council's Combined Authority would offer opportunities for funding, with the first year being focussed on transport. He added that the leader represents the whole of the District, and part of that role was to determine how best Newark & Sherwood could benefit from the new Authority.

He took a number of questions from councillors on:

- Commercialisation
- Portfolio Holders responsibilities
- Days of action
- Paper-light authority
- Number of officer vacancies
- Kerb side glass which would commence on 8 April 2024.

In relation to the devolution deal, councillors expressed concern that county functions may be devolved upwards and queried how that could be counteracted. In response, the Leader advised that the council needed to make the process of investing in Newark & Sherwood as simple as possible. The council needed to explain their requirements and what the benefits would be if investment was allocated. Any bid for investment must be well rounded and balanced.

In closing the debate, the Chair thanked the Leader for his attendance and for responding to queries raised by the committee.

4.6 Review of Grant Funding (March 2024)

The Business Manager for Regeneration & Housing Strategy presented a report which provided councillors with the opportunity to review the range and impact of regular council funding through Service Level Agreements (SLAs) supporting charities and community groups.

The report set out the scope of the grants reviewed and the vision of the council, as set out in the Community Plan 2023/2027. The review included consideration of whether funding should continue to the organisations listed and therefore the impact of each SLA was included.

Outcome

In considering the report councillors welcomed the proposed 10% inflationary uplift, with a 3% increase in subsequent years, to the current SLA values for:

- Citizens Advice
- Home-Start
- Newark & Sherwood CVS
- The Furniture Project.

The committee recommended the report to Cabinet, and it was approved by Cabinet on 4th June 2024.

4.7 Community Plan Performance Targets (March 2024)

The Transformation & Service Improvement Manager provided an update on the performance framework, the improvements and the indicators that would be used to monitor and measure council performance against the 2024/27 Community Plan.

Following the development of the new Community Plan it was necessary to revisit the overarching framework and how performance was monitored and measured. As part of that process, it was proposed that both the district and customer sections would be enhanced with the indicators also being reviewed to reflect the new objectives and ambitions including:

- Improve health & wellbeing.
- Increase the supply, choice, and standard of housing.
- Raising of peoples' skill levels and create employment opportunities for them to fulfil their potential.
- Reduce crime and Anti-Social Behaviour.
- Reduce the impact of climate change.
- Celebrate and invigorate community spirit, pride of place and sense of belonging.
- To be a top performing, modern and accessible council.
- Complaints/feedback/customer.

In relation to new indicators, specifically total footfall across all heritage and culture services and site, councillors queried how the proposed target had been derived. The Transformation & Service Improvement Manager advised that additional sensors had been installed and were able to capture additional footfall.

Outcome

In closing the debate, the Chair welcomed the report and strongly encouraged all councillors of the committee to scrutinise the information presented to them.



SCRUTINY ROLE

Scrutiny is a statutory requirement for local authorities which operate a Leader and Cabinet (Executive) model of decision making. PPIC does not make decisions but instead monitors, influences and makes recommendations on the work of Cabinet. The overview and scrutiny role, conducted by PPIC councillors, is designed to support the work of the council and its Cabinet, and ensure there is the opportunity for checks and balances. The committee also looks to constructively scrutinise the work of our partners and how we deliver better when we deliver together.

Bassetlaw & Newark Community Safety (June 2023)

The committee considered a report, presented by the Business Manager for Public Protection, updating on the work undertaken by the Bassetlaw and Newark & Sherwood Community Safety Partnership (BNSCSP). The report set out the background behind the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and how it operated in practice. At the invitation of the committee, Inspector Charlotte Elam attended to give further information on the local approach by Nottinghamshire Police Authority.

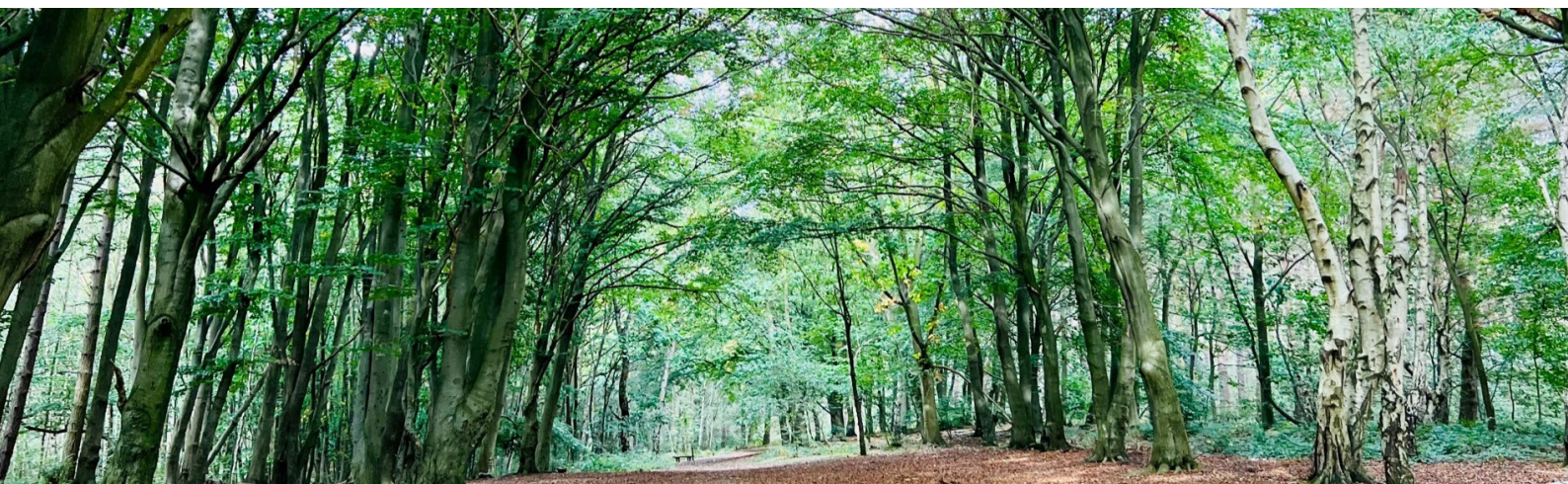
Councillors noted the 9% variance in crime for 2022/2023 and queried the reason for that. They were advised that there had been 727 additional crimes recorded compared to the previous year and to identify the specific reasons for that would require a lengthy and complex discussion. In relation to additional funding for CCTV cameras, councillors asked whether the recordings from those were being used as evidence to prosecute offenders and it was confirmed that evidence was used as appropriate.

Councillors enquired about the action the Police were taking to combat the increase in Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in Newark Town Centre. Inspector Ellam informed the committee that the Police's Town Centre Strategy had been updated with one aspect of that being a review of how known individuals could be targeted through a recently established Anti-Social Behaviour Panel. Also, the number of Beat Managers had been increased to four. Newark Town Council had provided an office space in the Buttermarket and this would be where the Town Centre Beat Managers would be based.

Councillors stated that there was a perception that the reporting of low-level crime and ASB was low and queried how the reporting of an incident could be better communicated. They were advised that the Police's Engagement Strategy had been reviewed, and that effective communication was vital. There is a review on how social media could be used, this could involve the reporting of operations the Police had conducted so that the public could see that action was being taken.

Outcome

In closing the debate, the Chair advised that he would welcome a further report in 6 months as to what plans there were to tackle the issues rather than a statistics led report. The committee thanked the Business Manager and Inspector Ellam for their attendance at committee and noted the performance and priorities of the Community Safety Partnership.



Newark Town Investment Plan (June 2023)

The committee were presented with a report by the Director of Planning and Growth, on the work done to date to develop the Town Investment Plan (TIP) and an update on the delivery of the identified priority projects in the plan through the Newark Town Deal.

The process undertaken in developing the TIP was set out and that the final Newark TIP had captured a clear ambition to target legacy projects across the following four pillars of intervention:

1. Skills, education & business
2. Connectivity
3. Town centre, regeneration & culture
4. Town centre residential.

The pillars of intervention then helped define the ten priority projects, together with a further thirty potential future projects.

The committee was provided with details of the latest position of the projects and their associated finances and how those were monitored, evaluated and the next steps for the project. It was also reported that the council's auditors had been asked to conduct an audit of the Towns Fund process and Levelling Up process to provide an additional level of scrutiny and to identify any issues which could be learned for possible future projects.

Councillors commented on the work that had gone into securing the funding and developing the projects to their current stage and asked whether there had been any issues/lessons learnt that could help with any similar projects in the future.

The Director advised that speed and cost inflation had been reflected upon as had the fact that it was challenging to make progress at an early stage when dealing with a £47m capital programme, noting that any impact of the projects was not immediate and could be generational.

In relation to the YMCA project, councillors asked that they would like to see more in-depth information as to the outputs, aims and what was deliverable, as they had concerns about the long-term viability of the project. The Director advised that the Full Business Case went into that detail and could provide information to the committee after the audit had been conducted.

Outcome

Councillors welcomed the progress made in the delivery, assurance and monitoring of the Town Deal and proposals within the Town Investment Plan

Attendance at committee by NHS Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) (Jan 2024)

At the invitation of the committee the NHS Nottingham & Nottinghamshire ICB was represented by Alex Ball, Director of Communications and Engagement, Lucy Dadge, Accountable Emergency Officer and David Ainsworth, Director of Strategy & Partnerships from the NHS Nottingham & Nottinghamshire ICB (NNICB), to discuss the outcome of the listening exercise for the Newark Hospital Minor Injuries Unit opening hours and the wider plans for the services within the district.

The presentation was in relation to the current and future provision at Newark Hospital and how a 'listening exercise' was undertaken with stakeholders. Details of the findings of the exercise were provided together with a summary of the findings of the Clinical Senate. It was stated that the ICB Board would decide in the Spring of 2024 on the next steps.

Councillors considered the presentation and asked about the decision of the Lincoln ICB to provide a 24-hour urgent care service to the people of Grantham and that the Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) would offer clinical assessment and stabilisation.

They noted that the people of Newark had concerns about the journey to Kings Mill Hospital in the event of what they may perceive as a serious illness or injury and that they would wish to be offered the same provision of urgent care as that provided at Grantham.

In response to the above comments, councillors were advised that the NNICB commissioned care for Nottinghamshire and that any decision taken by Lincoln ICB would be based on their collection and interpretation of their local data. Grantham Hospital had a different configuration to that of Newark Hospital and the NNICB had reached a different conclusion, noting that the proposed care provision would continue to be monitored.

In noting the projected growth of Newark and its residents, councillors queried whether the future proofing of the service provided at Newark Hospital had been considered. Councillors were advised that all decisions and proposals had been taken within current NHS guidelines.

The need to provide an A&E facility was partially determined using a threshold of people in the area. When determining provision, forecasting was undertaken for a period of 10 years forward, considering housing provision and the age of the population.

Outcome

In closing the debate, the Chair thanked the NNICB representatives for their attendance and requested that an update report be presented to the committee in 2025.

FUTURE WORK

Officers and councillors work with committee members to create a work programme for 2024-25.

However, we know for certain that over the next 12 months PPIC will continue to:

- Review and challenge the performance of the council.
- Hold Cabinet to account as critical friend.
- Consider topics raised by councillors.
- Scrutinise the budget and review performance.
- Undertake reviews and develop strategies and policies.
- Scrutinise large-scale projects such as the Newark Town Investment Plan.

PPIC will also continue to work alongside its key public sector partners and key stakeholders within the council.



Appendix One: Policy & Performance Improvement Committee Members

1.	Councilor Mike Pringle (Chair)	Ward: Ollerton
2.	Councilor Neil Ross (Vice-Chair)	Ward: Devon
3.	Councilor Alice Brazier	Ward: Ollerton
4.	Councilor Celia Brooks	Ward: Edwinstowe & Clipstone
5.	Councilor Simon Forde	Ward: Balderton South
6.	Councilor Andy Freeman	Ward: Edwinstowe & Clipstone
7.	Councilor Roger Jackson	Ward: Dover Beck
8.	Councilor David Moore	Ward: Beacon
9.	Councilor Penny Rainbow	Ward: Southwell
10.	Councilor Karen Roberts	Ward: Southwell
11.	Councilor Maurice Shakeshaft	Ward: Farnsfield
12.	Councilor Tom Smith	Ward: Rainworth South & Blidworth
13.	Councilor Jack Kellas	Ward: Farndon & Fernwood
14.	Councilor Tina Thompson	Ward: Rainworth South & Blidworth
15.	Councilor Tim Wendels	Ward: Lowdham

Alternates

•	Councillor Neil Allen	Ward: Farndon & Fernwood
•	Councillor Debbie Darby	Ward: Bridge
•	Councillor Phil Farmer	Ward: Collingham
•	Councillor Jean Hall	Ward: Balderton South
•	Councillor Peter Harris	Ward: Southwell
•	Councillor Linda Tift	Ward: Rainworth North & Rufford

Officer Support

- Deborah Johnson - Director of Customer Services & Organisational Development
- Carl Burns - Transformation Manager
- Mark Randle - Transformation & Service Improvement Officer
- Helen Brandham - Democratic Services Officer