

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 September 2025 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor P Peacock (Chair)

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor N Allen, Councillor P Rainbow and Councillor J Lee

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor L Brazier

293 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.

294 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no declarations of interest.

295 MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS HELD ON 8 JULY AND 15 JULY 2025

The minutes from the meeting held on 8 July and 15 July 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

296 PROJECTED GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2026 AS AT 30 JUNE 2025

The Business Manager- Financial Services presented a report regarding the projected General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Revenue and Capital Outturn Report to 31 March 2026 as at 30 June 2025, forecasting the outturn position for the 2025/26 financial year for the Council's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account revenue and capital budgets. The report detailed performance against the approved estimates of revenue expenditure and income; major variances from planned budget performance; and variations to the Capital Programme for approval; all in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

Members noted a projected unfavourable variance against the revised budget of £0.395m on Service budgets, representing 1.88% of the total service budgets, with an overall favourable variance of £0.303m that would need to be transferred to the General Fund reserve. The HRA accounts showed a projected unfavourable variance on the Net Cost of HRA Services against the revised budget of £0.355m and a reduced transfer to the Major Repairs Reserve of £0.409m. The Council had been fully compliant with all prudential indicators during the reporting period.

Members discussed performance in relation to recruitment, and queried whether the forthcoming Local Government Organisation (LGR) might have an impact, noting that recruitment could often take a while due to notice periods. The Chief Executive explained that there were pockets of recruitment that had always been challenging but LGR had the potential to give wider employment opportunities for staff. Members emphasised the importance of accurate and responsible communication with staff in the work towards the Reorganisation.

AGREED (unanimously) That Cabinet:

- (a) note the General Fund projected favourable outturn variance of £0.303m;
- (b) note the Housing Revenue Account projected unfavourable outturn variance of £0.409m to the Major Repairs Reserve;
- (c) approve the variations to the Capital Programme at Appendix C;
- (d) approve the Capital Programme revised budget and financing of £55.240m; and
- (e) note the Prudential indicators at Appendix F.

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.

297 QUARTER 1 2025/26 - HOUSING COMPLIANCE ASSURANCE REPORT

The Head of Housing, Health and Wellbeing was in attendance to present the Housing Compliance report for quarter 1 of 2025/26 to the end of June 2025. The report focused on exceptions performance, which is outside the Council's target parameters. During the presentation, Members heard the latest updated performance figures.

Members noted that the Council received a letter from the Government in June 2025 ahead of the introduction of new regulation relating to phase 1 of Awaab's Law, relating to damp and mould, and changes to electrical safety standards from the Autumn, which the Council are already preparing for.

Due to the move to the new Housing Management System, an interim reporting arrangement was in place as the new system was set up for Awaab's Law (Damp & Mould) and the associated reporting arrangements required. When Awaab's Law was in force, the system would report automatically from a specific contractor code that related only to damp and mould repairs, ensuring accurate information on

performance.

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.

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

298 COMMUNITY PLAN PERFORMANCE FOR QUARTER ONE - 2025/26

The Transformation and Service Improvement Officer presented a report which detailed the Quarter 1 Community Plan Performance Report for 2025/26.

The report and accompanying presentation highlighted various projects undertaken by Business Units and performance in including re-let times, tenant satisfaction, Active4Today and the National Civil War Centre, and Local Government Re-organisation.

Members discussed the delay in re-letting and rent arrears performance. The Head of Housing, Health and Wellbeing was in attendance and explained the reasons for the performance, as well as measures that had been taken, including re-focusing of teams and appointing an external resource to undertake voids work, to address the delay. Members noted officers were focussed on the performance measures and the anticipated timescales to see improvement.

Members also considered in detail the work experience offer, sickness absence, and enabling Councillors to proactively communicate resources within the District, including activities held at the National Civil War Centre and recycling.

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.

299 LAND TRANSFER, BOWBRIDGE ROAD - GENERAL FUND TO HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

The Development Manager - Corporate Property was in attendance to present a report which sought approval to transfer the residue land off Bowbridge Road, Newark from the General Fund to the HRA to facilitate the proposed new build development of 5 no large family 4 and 3 bed level access bungalows to meet the local housing need. The land had been held for the purpose of a car park, however was no longer required as the car park had been developed on the rest of the site.

The land had been valued as part of the Council's rolling valuation programme in 2024/25 at a value of £326,400, representing £65,280 per unit. The Cabinet welcomed the proposal, especially the type of housing that was proposed and suggested that parking measures may be required due to the proximity to the hospital and town centre.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet approve to appropriate the land at Bowbridge Road, Newark from the GF to the HRA at the current value of £326,400 with subsequent CFR adjustment of £224,976 and Capital Receipt transfer of £101,424 to enable construction of HRA properties to support the local housing need and meet the Council's business plan objectives.

Reasons for Decision:

To enable construction of 5 no HRA bungalows to support the local housing need.

Options Considered:

The options to dispose of the land to the YMCA and Arkwood Developments Limited were explored, neither of these options were viable and were discounted.

Leave the land in the General Fund for future currently unidentified potential development.

300 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - HOUSING COMMUNITY CENTRE POLICY

The Director- Housing, Health and Wellbeing was in attendance to present a report which set out the Council's approach to managing Housing Community Centres, financed and supported via the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The Council had 29 HRA community centres, located across the district either within or adjacent to areas of housing for older people. It was proposed that no charges be imposed for the use of the Council's HRA community centres as it would result in the properties being liable for business rates and to cover this charge, hire costs would have been prohibitive for many community-based groups across the district.

The Cabinet considered the report noting the importance of spaces within the community where people could take part in various activities.

AGREED (unanimously) That Cabinet:

- a) endorse the Policy;
- b) note that no charges will be levied for the use of HRA Community Centres; and
- c) note the alignment with the Community Plan Ambition Seven *“Be a top performing, modern, accessible Council that get its everyday services right for the residents and businesses that it serves”*.

Reasons for Decision:

To ensure effective management of the Council’s 29 HRA Housing Community Centres.

Options Considered:

Not having a policy in place could result in ineffective management and misuse of valuable community spaces.

301 ANNUAL REVIEW OF EXEMPT ITEMS

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report to consider the list of exempt business considered by the Cabinet for the period 24 September 2024 to date, and decide which, if any, reports can be released into the public domain.

The Cabinet considered the report, noting the Officer recommendations for the exempt reports.

AGREED that Cabinet note the report, with any items being released into the public domain if considered no longer being exempt.

Reasons for Decision:

To review previous exempt reports considered by the Cabinet over the previous 12 months.

Options Considered:

None, this report is a useful tool in reviewing previous exempt items of business in order to release any into the public domain if considered appropriate.

302 DIGITAL STRATEGY 2025-2028

The Business Manager – ICT and Digital Services and Business Manager- Customer Services, were in attendance to present the Digital Strategy for 2025-2028, including the outcome of the Members Digital Working Group and results of the stakeholders survey. The new digital strategy, gave a clear strategic direction for our digital initiatives, minimising resourcing and financial risks, ensuring our alignment with other authorities involved in local government reorganisation, and providing our communities with assurance that their needs were central to the development of our

digital initiatives.

The Cabinet welcomed the Strategy, particularly the commitment to ensure that no-one in the District would be left behind or unable to access services from the Council.

AGREED (unanimously) That Cabinet:

- a) approve the digital strategy (attached as an appendix) for 2025-2028; and
- b) note the findings of the working group and stakeholder surveys.

Reasons for Decision:

The proposed recommendation is to adopt the new digital strategy, which will offer clear strategic direction for our digital initiatives. This approach aims to minimise resourcing and financial risks, ensure alignment with other authorities involved in local government reorganisation, and provide our communities with assurance that their needs are central to the development of our digital initiatives.

Options Considered:

Extend the existing digital strategy. There is a need to do more than simply extend the existing strategy. The existing strategy is not current and will not sufficiently address community needs or align with central government directives. The expectations of the internal and external stakeholders together with rapid developments in digital technologies enable greater understanding and use of data. This necessitates a fresh strategy.

Take no action and therefore no digital strategy. This is not considered to be an acceptable option.

303 PROGRESSION OF BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN HABITAT BANKS FOR NEWARK & SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL (KEY DECISION)

The Biodiversity and Ecology Lead Officer was in attendance to present a report identifying existing Council land assets with the potential to be used for the purposes of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). Four sites, detailed within the report, map and exempt appendix had been identified for progressions to become biodiversity units. The Cabinet considered the report, noting the work undertaken and the intent to continue searching for possible BNG sites.

AGREED (unanimously) That Cabinet:

- a) note and welcome the updates on BNG and the Council's Land Assets review;
- b) approve the four 'NSDC BNG sites' identified be progressed for the purpose of generating biodiversity net gain (BNG) 'biodiversity units', to be used firstly for NSDC's own planning application BNG obligations; secondly for NSDC supported projects, and finally (and subject to unit capacity) for sale of BNG units to other third-party developments in discharge of their BNG responsibilities.
- c) approve a revenue budget of up to £25,000 to allow the implementation of the four NSDC BNG sites funded from the Change Management Reserve in 2025/26;

- d) approve a further revenue budget of £45,000 to allow the implementation of the four NSDC BNG sites in 2026/27 funded from the Change Management Reserve;
- e) approve delegated authority be given to the Director - Planning & Growth, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Strategy, Finance & Performance and Climate Change & Environment, to enter into necessary legal arrangements to secure the BNG Habitat Banks via the Governments Biodiversity Gain Site Register, including any appropriate habitat(s) to be created, as detailed below; and
- f) agree that a report is brought back to Cabinet prior to NSDC selling BNG units as detailed in recommendation b) above in order to set appropriate BNG unit fees.

Reasons for Decision:

To secure local and responsible BNG Habitats to mitigate the impacts of new developments and to enhance NSDC land-assets and the overall biodiversity of the District.

Options Considered:

NSDC could choose not to enter the BNG market in favour of the national credit route or awaiting a local market for BNG units becoming available. These are discounted on the basis of a need to proactively create a local mechanism to secure BNG enhancements, including demonstrable cost-savings for the Council's own developments.

Meeting closed at 8.20 pm.

Chair