

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Policy & Performance Improvement Committee** held in the Civic Suite, Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, NG24 1BY on Monday, 1 September 2025 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor M Pringle (Chair)
Councillor N Ross (Vice-Chair)

Councillor A Brazier, Councillor C Brooks, Councillor A Freeman,
Councillor J Hall, Councillor S Haynes, Councillor R Holloway, Councillor
R Jackson, Councillor D Moore, Councillor P Rainbow and Councillor
T Thompson

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor N Allen and Councillor P Taylor

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor K Roberts, Councillor M Spoors and Councillor T Wendels

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

The Chair advised that the meeting was being recorded and live streamed from Castle House.

133 DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no declarations of interest.

134 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 JUNE 2025

The minutes from the meeting held on 30 June 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

135 BASSETLAW AND N&S CSP PROGRESS & PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Public Protection and Chief Inspector, Clive Collings of the Nottinghamshire Police Authority which sought to provide Members with an update on the work undertaken by the Bassetlaw and Newark & Sherwood Community Safety Partnership.

The report set out the performance for all crime and ASB in January to July 2025 when compared with the previous year.

In considering the report, Members asked the Business Manager and CI Collings a number of questions.

In noting the number of crimes committed, a Member queried as to the percentage of those which had resulted in an offender being charged and the percentage of those crimes which had been solved. CI Collings advised that detection rates in the Newark & Sherwood area for the period July and August 2025 was at 34% in comparison to the county figure of 26.4%.

In response to comment made about the use of microphones in CCTV cameras, the Business Manager advised that this was not available in the current cameras and that the main priority is the ability to view the footage and live feed information to the police.

A Member referred to the Domestic Homicide Reviews, querying the time period covered by the information provided at paragraph 5 of the report. The Business Manager advised this could be over quite a length of time as referrals and reviews could often be delayed whilst an active police investigation was carried out.

In noting the reduction in anti-social behaviour but that Newark & Sherwood remained the third highest in the county for such incidents, a Member queried whether the Council should consider additional investment to reduce the rates further. CI Collings noted the success of the Neighbourhood Teams in helping to reduce the number of incidents. Members agreed that a visual Police presence provided the public with a degree of confidence.

A Member queried whether any surveys were carried out in relation to public perception. CI Collings advised that a number of trust and confidence surveys were carried out by the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner, the results of which often fluctuated. He added that the results seen on the ground by the Police did not quickly translate to the public and that more could be done to communicate any positive changes, adding further that work on this issue was ongoing.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Community Safety Partnership performance information be noted.

Councillor P. Rainbow left the meeting partway through the following item, with the agreement of the Chair.

136 PRESENTATION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PUBLIC PROTECTION & COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The Committee considered the report of the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection & Community Relations, Councillor Paul Taylor.

As detailed in the report, the Portfolio Holder had been invited to attend Committee to respond verbally to four specific queries, as detailed within the report.

In relation to the work carried out by Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Officers and Community Protection Officers (CPO) in tackling ASB, the Portfolio Holder referred to the multi-agency work recently carried out on Yorke Drive. Officers had assisted in the gathering of intelligence and evidence to secure enforcement action. This type of action was also carried out in other areas throughout the district. The CPOs and ASB Officers dealt with complaints which are then triaged and signposted to the most appropriate recipient. The Portfolio Holder also noted that the officers dealt with reports surrounding safeguarding issues and that the Safer Streets initiative had resulted in a 40% in recorded incidents of ASB.

In referring to what the challenges were experienced when dealing with ASB, the Portfolio Holder stated that the main challenge was in relation to the volume of reported incidents and the complexity of the cases, noting that there were often underlying issues, for example, the mental health of the individuals involved.

In relation to the importance of the Council's working relationship with the Police and other partners in tackling youth ASB, the Portfolio Holder stated that the Council had a good working relationship with the Police. The aim was to reduce incidents of ASB as early as possible by attending primary schools to speak to young children about this.

In noting the question raised about tackling ASB in the Sherwood area, the Portfolio Holder advised that reported incidents were dealt with and processed in the same way across the district. He acknowledged that Newark received additional funding but that that was outside the control of the Council as it was based on crime data.

In response to whether the Council should consider increasing budget provision to assist in further reducing incidents of ASB, the Portfolio Holder advised that a budget bid would be submitted for additional funding and this would be primarily for diversionary work. He added that currently, investigations into domestic homicide reviews was funding from reserves but it was likely that an application for funding to assist with those would also be submitted.

In referring to the previous external organisation used to assist with Fixed Penalty Notices being disbanded, a Member queried as to the latest situation. The Portfolio Holder advised that the Council had appointed an alternative company who were in the process of mobilisation, but this was unfortunately taking longer than expected. The Chair requested that the Committee be provided with an update on how this would be progressed.

A Member queried whether the recent spate of anti-asylum seekers protests were affecting ASB figures and also the placement of flags on lighting columns. The Portfolio Holder responded by stating that he had not seen the level of protests that had happened elsewhere and the one that had taken place had been well policed and had seen no incidents. The Portfolio Holder explained that the undoubted patriotic intent in putting up flags was understood however, the placement of flags on lighting columns could be irresponsible, if they came loose and fell into the path of a motorist they could be the driver at risk.

CI Collings added that he had been appointed as the officer in charge of the recent protest at Castle House. He commented that such protests were likely to reduce in number as the season changed to autumn, adding that community cohesion was a challenge for the Police.

In referring to knife crime, a Member advised that she had attended an event at the YMCA which had been run by young people. She advised that they had presented some good initiatives to combat knife crime. The Portfolio Holder commented that such incidents were rare in Newark. CI Collings advised that his Officers attended primary schools to teach the students about being a good citizen and it was hoped that this would be the best way to educate them from a young age.

In concluding the debate, the Chair stated that it was the responsibility of adults that respected the Police to actively promote how to be a good citizen. He requested that Members be kept informed of any upcoming events, such as that held at the YMCA.

AGREED (unanimously) that the response of the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection & Community Relations to the questions raised be noted.

137 PROJECTED GENERAL FUND & HRA REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2026 AS AT 30 JUNE 2025

The Committee considered the report of the Business Manager – Financial Services which provided Members with the forecast position for the 2025/26 financial year for the Council's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account revenue and capital budgets. The report also provided Members with information as to the performance against the approved estimates of revenue expenditure and income and on major variances from planned budget performance, in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

Details were provided as to the current position (as at 30 June 2025) variances. Table 1 showed an unfavourable variance against the revised budget of £0.395m on service budgets with an overall favourable variance of £0.303m that would require transferring to the General Fund reserve. Table 2 provided an overview of projected Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn for 2025/26 with an 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. Details of the overview of the Projected Capital Outturn 2025/26 were also provided.

In considering the report, Members referred to the number of vacancies and if consideration had been given to whether local government reorganisation (LGR) would have an impact on these figures going forward in relation to budget provision. The Business Manager advised that the budgets had been built prior to LGR being implemented. He added that a reduction in staff numbers was not anticipated but that LGR would be factored into the budgets for 2026/2027.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the General Fund projected favourable outturn variance of £0.303m be noted;
- b) the Housing Revenue Account projected unfavourable outturn variance of £0.409m to the Major Repairs Reserve be noted; and
- c) the Capital Programme revised budget and financing of £55.240m be noted.

138 COMPLIANCE UPDATE - HOUSING PERFORMANCE Q1

The Committee considered the report presented by the Compliance Manager – Housing Maintenance & Asset Management which sought to provide Members with the performance position as of 30 June 2025 (Q1) for housing related compliance and to provide an update on activities in the service area.

The report set out how performance was rated, as recommended by the external auditors and the Regulator of Social Housing. It also included information on performance in relation to the reported cases of damp and mould. Paragraph 3 of the report set out the performance exceptions with these being noted as: gas servicing domestic; fire safety checks; fire door inspections; asbestos domestic and communal; water safety; stair lifts; EICR certifications less than 5 years old; and solid fuel and soil servicing, each with commentary as to the reason for the exception.

Members commented in general on the information contained in the report with the Chair thanking officers for their ongoing work in relation to reported cases of damp and mould.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

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

139 COMPLIANCE UPDATE - CORPORATE ESTATE ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the reported presented by the Development Manager – Corporate Property which sought to update Members on compliance management across the corporate estate, focusing on corporate estate and tenanted properties. The report provided a high-level overview of the core elements of the compliance related activities.

It was reported that the corporate compliance budget for the 2025/2026 financial year was £291,760.00 and was for the full programme of statutory compliance servicing across 22 corporate sites. Compliance servicing, inspections and testing included: fire, gas and electrical safety; legionella; asbestos; air conditioning systems; lifts and lifting equipment; and fall arrest systems with the servicing being carried out in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements. Details of service improvements; tenant compliance monitoring details; and the future work plan were all included within the report.

A Member raised the issue of poor performance by an external contractor, specifically in relation to gas inspections, and how this would be resolved. The Member also queried whether the Council had suitable protections in place should the situation occur. The Development Manager advised that prior to a contract being awarded, gas contractors were subject to interview and receipt of suitable references to ensure they would provide a robust service.

In considering the report, the Chair requested further information be included in future reports in relation to how the Council engaged with external contractors.

AGREED (unanimously) that the content of the report and the work being undertaken across the corporate estate be noted.

140 HOUSING OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINT HANDLING CODE SELF-ASSESSMENT

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Customer Services which sought to provide Members with an update of the completion of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

The report set out that the Housing Ombudsman (HO) Complaint Handling Code “the Code” set out best practice for landlord’s complaint handling procedures to enable a positive complaints culture across all landlords within the social housing sector. The Code became a statutory duty on 1 April 2024 with the HO having a legal duty to ensure landlords complaint procedures and response were compliant. Part of the Code requires landlords to submit an annual submission of a self-assessment, detailing their compliance against the Code. The report listed the 9 sections of the Code and detailed that the self-assessment had been completed and reviewed by the Council’s Tenant Engagement Board, noting that in all but one area the Council was compliant and that this was due to issues with reports being submitted to the appropriate committee, which the HO was aware of.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the completed Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment be endorsed; and
- b) the completed Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment be recommended to the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee for approval and that it be published on the Council’s website.

141 LOCAL GOVERNMENT SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Customer Services which sought to provide Members with information in relation to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Annual Review Letter.

The report set out that the LGSCO produced an annual review letter detailing the number, type and decisions made in relation to each authority. The review letter was attached as an appendix to the report and detailed that 16 complaints and decisions had been made relating to services provided by the Council. This was in comparison to 11 received and 9 decisions made for 2023/2024. An explanation of how complaints were dealt with was provided at paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3 of the report. Table 2 within the report set out the category of complaint and the outcome of each decision.

AGREED (unanimously) that the contents of the report be noted.

The Committee considered the report presented by the Waste & Recycling Manager which sought to provide Members with the Council's progress towards the new legislative requirements and the impact that the changes would have on the authority.

The report set out the key parts of the Government's Simpler Recycling Strategy and how this would directly impact on the Council. It was reported that the recycling policy was being introduced over a period of 2 and a half years with the requirements to beginning food waste collections being delayed by a further 18 months for contractual stated reasons. A summary of the timelines for implementation were provided at paragraph 1.11 of the report with paragraphs 2 and 3 detailing the future changes for both commercial and domestic waste collection services. The full financial implications were set out for the Committee at paragraph 4.1 onwards.

In noting the proposed changes to food waste collection and the impending local government reorganisation (LGR), a Member suggested that in order to realise costs savings and efficiencies, this should be a county-wide scheme. The Waste & Recycling Manager advised that the date for implementation of the new collections was before the date for LGR but acknowledged that efficiencies could be achieved thereafter.

In relation to the issue of battery disposal and vapes and the possible consequences therefrom, a Member requested that information as to their safe disposal be publicised. The Waste & Recycling Manager advised that the Council did collect batteries but that they must be left on the lid of the bin in a carrier bag. These would then be safely disposed of at the Veolia plant. He added that there was currently nothing in place for the collection of vapes and that there had been instances of fires in collection vehicles when they had been incorrectly disposed of.

Members agreed that recycling must be made as simple as possible for residents and queried whether consideration was being given to the size of bins issued to new properties. The Waste & Recycling Manager advised that this had not yet been discussed, noting that there would be issues with the storing of all the necessary bins at some addresses. He added that a review would be needed in the future to look at the composition of all waste products.

In closing the debate, the Chair welcomed the report and requested that continued updates be provided to the Committee.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the current status of the project be noted; and
- b) further update reports be provided to the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee.

The Chair agreed to amend the running order of the Agenda and to merge the reporting of the Digital Strategy Refresh Working Group Outcomes and the Digital Strategy 2025/2028.

143 DIGITAL STRATEGY 2025-2028 AND DIGITAL STRATEGY REFRESH WORKING GROUP OUTCOMES

The Committee considered the report presented by the Transformation & Service Improvement Officer which sought to update Members on the work and outcomes of the Digital Strategy Refresh Working Group.

The report set out the main areas which the group had considered, the membership of the group and the agreed objectives. The outcomes and recommendations of the group were detailed at paragraph 2.0 of the report.

The Committee also considered the report presented by the Data & Digital Innovation Team Leader together with the Business Manager – Customer Services which sought to update Members on the outcome of the Working Group; survey results of stakeholders; and how these had been used to develop the new Digital Strategy for 2025/2028.

The report provided a detailed explanation of how digital initiatives were increasingly vital to the wellbeing and progress of communities, shaping how residents' access essential services, engage with local government and participate in the digital economy and how all these aspects were reflected in the new Digital Strategy. The new strategy was appended to the report for Members consideration.

In considering the reports, Members made a number of observations.

In relation to the use of artificial intelligence (AI) a Member commented that its potential was not yet fully understood, adding that there would be a requirement for both staff and Members to be trained and supported to be able to use it effectively.

A Member queried whether online security in relation to AI had been factored into the Strategy, citing phishing and whaling and whether there was capacity to enhance training should gaps be identified. The Data & Digital Innovation Team Leader advised security underpinned all digital interactions and that training undertaken by Officers and Members was monitored.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the Digital Strategy for 2025/2028 be endorsed and forwarded to Cabinet for approval; and
- b) the findings of the Digital Strategy Refresh Working Group together with the results of the stakeholder surveys conducted and used to provide an insight for the 2025/2028 Digital Strategy be noted.

144 COMMUNITY PLAN PERFORMANCE Q1

The Committee considered the report presented by the Senior Transformation & Service Improvement Officer which sought to provide Members with the Q1 Community Plan Performance for 1 April to 30 June 2025.

In considering the report, Members asked a number of questions.

In relation to Yorke Drive, a Member queried whether works had commenced on the redevelopment. The Senior Transformation & Service Improvement Officer advised that she would provide a written response to the Committee.

In referring to the Measuring Success table (agenda page 160) a Member noted that traditionally Q1 was the most challenging period and queried whether there was potential for Officers to be reassigned to assist with a spike in calls. Members were advised that Business Managers had flexibility to focus on areas of high volume with the Director – Customer Services & Organisational Development adding that Officers worked additional hours to deal with the spike in work, noting that there was a high level of expertise required to deal with such calls.

AGREED (unanimously) that the report be noted.

145 UPDATE ON LIFE CHANCES FOR GIRLS WORKING GROUP

In the absence of the Chair of the Working Group, the Director – Customer Services & Organisational Development provided Members with a verbal update of the work undertaken by the group to-date.

146 CABINET FORWARD PLAN (AUGUST TO NOVEMBER 2025)

NOTED the Forward Plan of the Cabinet for the period August to November 2025.

147 8 JULY 2025 - CABINET MINUTES

NOTED the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 8 July 2025.

148 REVIEW OF HERITAGE & CULTURAL EXPENDITURE

The Committee considered the Topic Request Form to establish a Working Group to review the expenditure of Heritage & Culture. As was usual practice, all Members of the Council would be invited to express an interest in participating in the Working Group with the chair of the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee and the Chair of the Working Group determining the membership, which would be a maximum of 9 members.

AGREED (unanimously) that a Review of Heritage & Cultural Expenditure Working Group be established with the following Policy & Performance Improvement Members expressing an interest in participating in the Group.

Councillors: Alice Brazier
Celia Brooks
Andy Freeman
Jean Hall
Simon Haynes
David Moore (Chair)
Neil Ross

Neil Allen (PPIC Substitute)
Peter Harris (PPIC Substitute)

149 PROVISIONAL ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

NOTED the provisional items for future meetings of the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee.

Meeting closed at 8.35 pm.

Chair