

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Governance, General Purposes & Local Government Reorganisation Committee** held in the Civic Suite, Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, NG24 1BY on Thursday, 27 November 2025 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor R Holloway (Chair)
Councillor P Rainbow (Vice-Chair)

Councillor L Brazier (Substitute), Councillor A Freeman, Councillor J Hall, Councillor S Haynes, Councillor J Kellas, Councillor D Moore, Councillor P Peacock and Councillor L Brazier

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor N Allen, Councillor R Jackson and Councillor K Smith

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor D Darby, Councillor P Harris and Councillor M Pringle

11 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.

12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no declarations of interest.

13 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2025

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

14 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN NOTTINGHAM AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which sought to provide Members with the latest position in respect of local government reorganisation. It was noted that the Cabinet had considered this matter at their meeting held on 26 November and had agreed the recommendations as detailed in Appendix A to this report, which was to endorse the submission of the Final Proposal for a new unitary structure of local government for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. The report set out the timetable of the next steps following the submission of the proposal to Government with details of the process undertaken in developing the Council's preferred option of 1e being provided in Appendix A.

In considering the report, Members agreed that the speed with which the final proposal for reorganisation needed to be submitted to central Government was rushed and did not provide sufficient time for local authorities to fully explore their submissions.

Members agreed that, if possible, they would wish to see the next steps detailed within a schedule of deadlines and the actions to be covered. It was suggested that Members could lend their support to Officers in the next stages of transition and that consideration be given to the creation of sub-committees to look at specific areas of work. In response, the Transformation & Service Improvement Officer advised that all the constituent local authorities now needed to reconvene to begin joint working on non-option specific activities.

A Member commented that the Council needed to continue to drive forward their priorities, querying as to when Chief Officers for the new unitary authority would be appointed, before or after the Shadow Authority elections, noting that it would be a catalyst for major change. The Leader of the Council advised that that level of detail had not yet been developed but that consideration must be given as to when and how the appointment process would be actioned. It was anticipated that the Government's decision on the preferred options submitted would be received towards the end of May/June 2026 with the elections to the Shadow Council being held in May 2027. The Transformation & Service Improvement Officer advised that the new Leaders of the Shadow Council would appoint the Chief Officers to the new unitary authority.

Members agreed that preparatory work for the elections to the Shadow Council was vital and that the creation of sub-committees to enable Members to assist Officers in this was essential.

AGREED that the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee:

- a) note the decision of the Cabinet in respect of local government reorganisation; and
- b) consider the next steps following the submission of the Final Proposal to Government.

Councillor Lee Brazier left the meeting part way through the following item and therefore did not take part in the discussion or voting.

15 ANNUAL REVIEW OF HOUSING SERVICE COMPLAINTS & IMPROVEMENT REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing which sought to provide Members with an insight into complaints performance and to confirm the Council's compliance with the Complaint Handling Code for 2024/2025. The report also highlighted themes, trends or risks identified through complaints and presented the Housing Ombudsman Service 2024/2025 Landlord Performance Report.

In considering the report a member sought clarity on the correct definition of maladministration in relation to the Council. The Director advised that the definition was that used by the Housing Ombudsman and that further information would be circulated to members of the Committee.

In referring to local government reorganisation, the Director advised that benchmarking work had already commenced with the other constituent authorities, whose preferred choice was Option 1e, to see how they responded to complaints and how they measured their tenant satisfaction levels.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the Annual Review of Housing Service Complaints report be approved; and
- b) the Housing Ombudsman Service Report 2024/2025 be noted.

16 REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR DEALING WITH CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS, MEMBER/OFFICER PROTOCOL AND SOCIAL MEDIA PROTOCOL FOR MEMBERS

The Committee considered the report of the Monitoring Officer which recommended some immediate changes to the Council's Arrangements for Dealing with Code of Conduct Complaints to enable complaints which were not deemed valid to be rejected before initial assessment. In addition, the report recommended that Members establish a Working Group to do a wider review of the arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct Complaints to enable the effective management of complaints. It was also proposed that the Working Group would review the Member/Officer Protocol, the Social Media Protocol for Members and proposals for a Member Development Plan.

The report detailed the rationale to the proposal to review the current arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct Complaints and the recommendation to establish a Working Group to review the Member/Officer Protocol, the Social Media Protocol for Members and proposals for a Member Development Plan.

In considering the proposed immediate amendment to the Code of Conduct Complaints process, a Member expressed concern as to the proposal not to inform the subject member being complained about when a complaint had been deemed not valid and that this be revised to ensure they were told. He requested that the Committee receive future reports providing details of numbers and trends of complaints made, including those deemed valid and not valid with the rationale for this being that it would inform requests for training. In response the Monitoring Officer advised that in some circumstances there was no subject Member, for example if a complaint had been made about a parish clerk and that the proposal could be amended to include a degree of flexibility for the Monitoring Officer.

In relation to the Government's response to the consultation on changes to the Standards regime, a Member referred to the powers being given to authorities to suspend elected members for a maximum of 6 months etc. (paragraph 1.7 – bullet point 5). He suggested that Officers give consideration to delegate this function to either the whole Council or a specific Committee. The Member also suggested that when a submitted complaint led to a counter-complaint, it would be useful to see them merged and defined as a single complaint. He noted that these were usually the same subject matter and should have a single assessment.

Members agreed that they would wish to see future reports containing numbers and trends of complaints submitted; the number submitted by the same person; whether any were classed as vexatious; the number in relation to district and parish.

In relation to Code of Conduct training, a Member queried whether this would be a mandatory requirement. In response, the Monitoring Officer advised that this could be looked at within the proposed Working Group. It was suggested that the training be undertaken online as this removes the need for Members to attend in person. It was however, acknowledged that not all Members were able to undertake online training and that separate provision would need to be made for them.

In closing the debate, the Chair advised that the membership of the Working Group would be set after the meeting due to the absence of some Committee Members.

AGREED that the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee:

- a) approve the Monitoring Officer to make the proposed amendments to the Arrangements for Dealing with Code of Conduct complaints as detailed within this report at para 1.5 with immediate effect, having considered the Members' comments as detailed above;
- b) approve the establishment of a cross-party Working Group, to support a wider review of the Council's Arrangements for Dealing with Complaints, the Member/Officer Protocol, Social Media Protocol for Members and proposals for a Member Development Plan; and
- c) subject to the approval of b), the Chair to determine the membership of the Working Group after the meeting with a recommended membership of up to six Members.

17 CHANGE IN COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

NOTED that Councillors Andrew Freeman and Maurice Shakeshaft had exchanged places on the Audit & Accounts and Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committees and that Councillor Shakeshaft was now a substitute member on the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee.

18 OPERATION OF NSDC DRONE ASSET

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Planning & Growth which sought to provide Members with an update on the Council's acquisition of a drone asset by the Council.

It was reported that Cabinet had approved the recommendation to purchase a drone asset at their meeting held on 11 November 2025. Details of the proposed usage of the drone were detailed within the report which included: tourism promotion; events; regeneration consultation; overt enforcement activity and recoding for emergency events such as flooding. The proposed usage broadly fell into two categories: investigatory activity and promotional activity with the present drone usage being commissioned on an as-and-when basis from the private market. As detailed in the

report, it was considered there was sufficient demand and benefits to develop a Council drone resource. Attached as Appendix A to the report was the appropriate governance and deployment arrangements in the form of a NSDC Drone Policy.

In considering the proposed Drone Policy a Member queried how responsive the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) were in relation to granting permission for the Council to commence operation of drones and further details of how many officers would receive the appropriate operational training. In response, the Principal Legal Officer advised that she would provide a written response in relation to the timeframe for permission being granted by the CAA and that it was proposed that 3 officers from different Business Units would undergo the training. She added that once the Council's drone was operational, the service could be offered to other organisations.

In noting paragraph 2.5 of the report, specifically in relation to drone recordings and the storage thereof, a Member queried as to what checks had been done to ensure that should the drone be taken, it could not be used to gain access to the Council's network. The Principal Legal Officer advised that she would provide a written response to the Committee.

AGREED that the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee note:

- a) the Drone Usage Policy as detailed in Appendix A to the report; and
- b) the purchase and use of drone assets, primarily for use by NSDC in the discharge of its relevant duties and services.

19 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

AGREED that the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee's Work Programme be noted.

Meeting closed at 7.40 pm.

Chair