

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 December 2025 at 6.00 pm.

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

Councillor N Allen, Councillor A Brazier, Councillor C Brooks, Councillor A Freeman, Councillor J Hall, Councillor R Holloway, Councillor R Jackson, Councillor P Rainbow, Councillor K Roberts, Councillor T Thompson and Councillor T Wendels

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor L Tift

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor S Haynes, Councillor D Moore and Councillor M Spoors

165 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.

166 DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no declarations of interest.

167 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 OCTOBER 2025

The minutes from the meeting held on 6 October 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

168 OUT OF REMIT ACTIVITIES WORKING GROUP - FINAL REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Business Manager – Transformation & Service Improvement and the Senior Transformation & Service Improvement Officer which sought to share with Members the recommendations put forward by the Working Group and also the Committee's endorsement where relevant.

Councillor Rhona Holloway, Chair of the Working Group, presented the report to Members which outlined the rationale for the establishment of the Working Group, which was consideration of activities outside the Council's remit and the balance of the benefit to residents with resource impact. Topics which the Working Group considered were detailed within the report with the proposals detailed in paragraph 2; including flooding – the effects and prevention; continuity of public health services delivered by the Council during local government reorganisation; and planning infrastructure. An agreed proposal was to extend an invitation to the Environment Agency (EA) to attend committee in order to provide Members with further insight into the EAs role within flood prevention, as well as key priorities and projects which

had been identified as areas of focus within the County, specifically the Newark & Sherwood district. Richard Cooper of the Environment Agency was in attendance at the meeting.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee note:

- a) that the Leader of the Council had written to the Mayor of the East Midlands Combined County Authority on the issue of Flooding; and
- b) that an invitation had been extended to representatives of the Environment Agency to discuss and understand the priorities and areas of focus for this agency within flood prevention in Newark & Sherwood;

AGREED (unanimously) that the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee endorse:

- c) the continuity of public health services provided by the Council during the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and through the transition process leading up to vesting day, recommending that the Health Active Lifestyles manager be appointed to Newark & Sherwood District Council's LGR implementation group, once established; and
- d) that an invitation be extended to Planning Infrastructure colleagues to a future meeting of the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee, to provide an overview of the service areas, including cases where operations extend beyond 'typical' district council responsibilities.

169 PRESENTATION BY THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

The Chair welcomed Richard Cooper, the Partnership & Strategic Overview Team Leader – Notts. & Tidal Trent, from the Environment Agency (EA) who had been invited to attend to speak to Members about flooding within the district.

The presentation covered a number of topics including: flood risk remit; challenges; maintenance works; for the future; and responses to submitted questions.

Mr. Cooper provided Members with the background to the establishment of the EA and their remit: flood risk (main rivers only); and environmental (all watercourses). He noted that the East Midlands was the only defined area without a coastline and that Newark & Sherwood District Council were 1 of approximately 30 local authorities within the area. The advised of areas of responsibility noting the organisations involved: EA, Nottinghamshire County Council, Severn Trent Water Authority, Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board. He provided Members with information as to the challenges faced which included climate change and consequences of storms. Details of maintenance works undertaken were provided together with projects planned for the future.

Members were asked to submit questions ahead of the meeting and details of these and the responses given can be found at Appendix A to these minutes.

In considering the presentation, Members raised a number of queries in relation to the wards they represented.

In referring to Lowdham, a Member suggested that communication between Flood Groups and the EA could be improved. Mr. Cooper advised that the EA dealt with the main river running through the area, but they had no remit to deal with issues in relation to surface water. However, it would be beneficial if the EA were aware of the areas which suffered with surface water flooding. This would enable the organisations involved to provide a co-ordinated response. He further advised that the Flood Resilience Teams were going to become a national team.

A Member queried whether the response from the EA during the development stage of housing was sufficient. Mr. Cooper advised that there should be a greater emphasis on the pre-application stage by developers. He commented that it was not the EA's responsibility to advise on what the development should be, but to comment on the proposal submitted. He added that developers were often reticent to seek pre-application advice as it resulted in additional costs. The EA made every effort to work closely with the Council's planners and that advice given was legislatively correct but noted that issues such as climate change had an impact on that legislative advice. In referring to the Middlebeck development, Mr. Cooper stated that national planning guidance prevented the EA from requesting any measures other than the minimum required and that it was difficult to say with any certainty as to the reason for its flooding. He noted that contributing factors could be from the close proximity of the river and the amount of water held in the ground. He added that effective communication would be vital when the dualling of the A46 commenced.

A Member raised the issue of the accuracy of maps used when determining developments in the district. Mr. Cooper acknowledged that the maps may be outdated, adding that it was difficult to include anecdotal evidence. He commented that the Newark & Sherwood district area had the highest number of applications in the functional flood plains.

In noting the success of the Lowdham Reservoir Project, a Member stated that surface water was a significant contributor to flooding. He queried as to the effectiveness of the relationship between the EA and Severn Trent Water (STW) and whether they were maintaining their infrastructure responsibilities. Mr. Cooper stated that it was rainwater which caused flooding and not the condition of the becks in the area. He advised that the EA could not hold STW to account but that both organisations worked in partnership. He added that he would forward any out of remit questions to the appropriate organisation.

A Member raised the issue of responsibility for the maintenance of ditches. Mr. Cooper advised that these were considered to be ordinary watercourses so their maintenance was mainly the responsibility of Nottinghamshire County Council, except where privately owned. He added that residents were also able to carry out repairs but that was not widely known. He further added that it had been agreed nationally that development could be undertaken in areas designated as being within Flood Zone 1.

In closing the debate, the Chair thanked Mr. Cooper for his attendance and for his presentation.

AGREED (unanimously) that the presentation by Richard Cooper, the Partnership & Strategic Overview Team Leader – Notts. & Tidal Trent, from the Environment Agency be welcomed and noted.

170 REVIEW OF HRA BUSINESS PLAN ASSUMPTIONS

The Committee considered the report of the Business Manager – Financial Services which sought to provide Members with an overview of the key assumptions to be made within the production of the 30-year Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan.

The report set out the background to the development and maintenance of the HRA Business Plan, setting out some of the key assumptions which would affect the Plan from an external perspective. The external factors would then be considered when looking at internal factors e.g. setting of rent, capital improvements or revenue services. The agreed assumptions would then be fed into the overall HRA Business Plan which in turn would form the basis of the HRA Budget and Rent Setting report.

AGREED that the assumptions presented, to be utilised in the update of the 30-year HRA Business Plan, be endorsed.

171 PROJECTED GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2026 AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 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 September 2025) variances. Table 1 showed a projected unfavourable variance against the revised budget of £0.359m on service budgets, with an overall favourable variance of £0.062m that would require transferring to the General Fund reserves. 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 £0.172m and a reduced transfer to the Major Repairs Reserve of £0.201m. Details of the overview of the Projected Capital Outturn 2025/26 were also provided.

In considering the report, a Member noted the slippage on schemes from 2024/25 and queried as to the reason for this. The Business Manager – Financial Services advised he would provide a written response to Members.

AGREED that the following be noted:

- a) the General Fund projected favourable outturn variance of £0.062m;
- b) the Housing Revenue Account project unfavourable outturn variance of £0.201m to the Major Repairs Reserve; and
- c) the Capital Programme revised budget and financing of £46.823m.

172 COMMUNITY PLAN PERFORMANCE FOR Q2

The Committee considered the report of the Senior Transformation & Service Improvement Officer which presented to Members the Quarter 2 Community Plan Performance Report (July to September 2025). Members were asked to review the Community Plan Performance Report attached as Appendix 1 together with the Compliance Report attached as Appendix 2.

In considering the report, Members referred to the ongoing works to deliver the enhanced in-house CCTV control room. The Director – Customer Services & Organisational Development advised that it was currently being modified and fitted out ready to receive the necessary equipment to become operational.

In relation to the rent arrears as a percentage of the annual rent debit, a Member noted that these had increased and queried as to whether the reason for this was known. A Member queried as to whether it could be attributed to the way in which benefits were now being paid to the Department for Work & Pensions and not directly to the tenant. The Senior Transformation & Service Improvement Officer advised that she would provide a written response to Members of the Committee.

AGREED that the Community Plan Performance Report Q2 be noted.

173 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT FOR TERMINALLY ILL RESIDENTS

The Committee considered the report of the Transactional Finance Manager and the Business Manager – Revenues & Benefits which sought to provide Members with information and options for supporting terminally ill residents by providing council tax support through discretionary measures.

The report set out that Full Council had unanimously supported a Motion to develop an appropriate policy for Council Tax Exemption for those with a terminal illness, or a partner or family member within the same household, as part of the local tax reduction scheme. Following this decision, Officers had developed four options for Members to consider, which were detailed within the report, with their recommendation being that Option 3 was the most appropriate scheme for the Council to adopt. In presenting the report, the Transactional Finance Manager advised that a letter had been forwarded to the Rt Hon Steve Reed, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government, urging him to consider the implementation of a national policy to provide council tax exemption to all residents diagnosed with a terminal illness or those council tax paying residents who reside with a person so diagnosed.

In considering the report, a Member commented that his preference would be to develop Option 1 but acknowledged that in order to do so it would require an agreement being reached with Nottinghamshire County Council, the Nottinghamshire Police & Crime Commissioner and the Nottinghamshire & City of Nottingham Fire Authority to reduce the precept they received from council tax demands. In response, Members were advised that an approach could be made but it would delay the commencement of the scheme recommended in Option 3.

Members agreed that the priority was to commence the scheme as soon as possible with a view to expanding it in the future. The Transactional Finance Manager advised that, subject to Cabinet's approval on 20 January 2026, the proposed scheme could be commenced on 1 April 2026 and then subsequent conversations with the other organisations could be held.

A referring to the current Council Tax Relief (CTR) Scheme, a Member noted that a terminal diagnosis may result in a person becoming eligible for that scheme and queried as to the speed with which their application would be processed. The Transactional Finance Manager referred to the SR1 form which was a medical report used for fast-tracking benefits claims for people who were terminally ill and expected to live for less than 12 months. He advised that the intention was to have the NHS submit the form to both the DWP and the Council. The Council would put in place measures to expedite such claims.

AGREED that the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee endorse and recommend to Cabinet:

- a) that approval be given to the preferred Option 3 as detailed in the report;
- b) that Officers be instructed to develop a Discretionary Council Tax Relief Scheme to support households facing the hardship of living with a terminally ill family member; and
- c) that, subject to approval by Cabinet of Recommendations a) and b), Officers be authorised to approach Nottinghamshire County Council, the Nottinghamshire Police & Crime Commissioner and the Nottinghamshire & City of Nottingham Fire Authority in relation to expanding Option 3 - the Discretionary Council Tax Relief Scheme.

174 CABINET FORWARD PLAN (NOVEMBER 2025 TO FEBRUARY 2026)

NOTED the Forward Plan of the Cabinet for the period November 2025 to February 2026.

175 MINUTES OF CABINET MEETING HELD ON 14 OCTOBER 2025

NOTED the Cabinet Minutes from the meeting held on 14 October 2025.

176 PROVISIONAL ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

- Half 1 Customer Feedback Report
- Presentation by Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Economic Development
- Life Chances for Girls Working Group Final Report
- Annual Review of Grant Funding Outturn
- Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

Meeting closed at 8.12 pm.

Chair