

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, 12 January 2026 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 Jackson, Councillor
D Moore, Councillor P Rainbow, Councillor K Roberts, Councillor
K Smith, Councillor T Thompson and Councillor T Wendels

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor N Allen

APOLOGIES FOR Councillor R Holloway
ABSENCE:

177 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.

178 DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Councillor A Freeman declared an Other Registerable Interest in Agenda Item No. 8 – Life Chances for Girls - Final Report and Recommendations as a Chair of the Board of Directors for Active4Today.

179 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 DECEMBER 2025

The minutes from the meeting held on 1 December 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

180 EQUALITY, EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION REVIEW AND REVISED STRATEGY

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Transformation & Service Improvement which sought to update Members on the progress made through the review of the Council's Equality, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EEDI) Strategy with the revised Strategy being attached as Appendix A to the report.

It was reported that the Council must maintain a current EEDI Strategy in order to comply with legal duties under the Equality Act 2010; to demonstrate its commitment to fairness and inclusion. Following a recent audit of how the Council delivered services in alignment with the Equality Act 2010, it was noted that whilst meeting statutory requirements and all appropriate activities taking place, there were gaps documenting this with the appropriate policies and procedures. A targeted action plan was produced with an overview of this being attached as Appendix B to the report, noting that the actions within the plan had been completed.

In considering the action plan, a Member sought further information in relation to Recommendation 5 – Review the Council’s buildings and assess their accessibility against good practice; and Recommendation 6 – Review toilet facilities across the estate following the supreme court ruling. In response the Business Manager advised that all Council assets were accessible except for older buildings, citing the Palace Theatre. This, however, provided access to lifts to enable accessibility. In relation to toilet facilities, all signage was now compliant following the supreme court ruling.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the changes made to the Council’s EEDI approach be noted; and
- b) the revised Strategy be endorsed and recommended to Cabinet for approval.

Councillor S Hayes entered the meeting shortly after the presentation of the above item began and therefore did not take part in the debate or voting thereon.

181 CUSTOMER FEEDBACK REPORT - HALF YEAR 1 - 2025/2026

The Committee considered the report jointly presented by the Business Manager – Customer Services and the Senior Transformation & Service Improvement Officer which sought to provided Members with a summary of customer feedback in order to better understand how the customer was receiving the services delivered.

The report set out an overview of all types of customer feedback received between April and September 2025, including complaints, suggestions and compliments.

In considering the report, a Member noted that the majority of complaints were in relation to housing maintenance works. Officers advised that the newly appointed Business Manager was aware of the issues and had restructured his team in order to closely monitor the situation.

In relation to complaints received within Housing & Estates Management, it was noted that the most frequent category of complaints was poor quality work/service/repair. In acknowledging this a Member queried whether this was due to the works being outsourced. Officers advised that they would provide a written response.

Members noted that the Ombudsman had widely promoted the way in which complaints could be made and that this had likely led to an increase in the numbers lodged.

In summarising the debate, the Chair requested that further information be provided to a future meeting of the Committee in relation to the progression of complaints from Stage 1 to Stage 2.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the Customer Feedback Half Year 1 report be noted; and

- b) reports to a future meeting of the Committee be provided in relation to:
 - i) progression of complaints from Stage 1 to Stage 2; and
 - ii) further detail behind the most frequent complaint category of poor-quality work/service/repairs.

182 PRESENTATION BY PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Committee considered the report presented by the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Economic Development, Councillor Claire Penny.

As detailed in the report, the Portfolio Holder had been invited to attend Committee to respond verbally to six specific queries as at paragraph 2.2.

In relation to how the Council ensured that our area was prioritised for investment and resources to deliver economic growth, Councillor Penny advised that the Council had assisted in developing the framework for growth by providing evidence. Work had also been undertaken to ensure that the Council's strategy matched that of the East Midlands Combined County Authority, which included those areas which had been previously overlooked. The Council were proactive at applying for funding pots and had submitted three bids. Two of the bids had been successful with funding being granted of £4.25m. It was also hoped that a third would also be supported.

In relation to what the Council were doing to support town centres, Councillor Penny acknowledged the challenges recently faced citing the cost-of-living crisis and the covid pandemic. She noted that there had been a change in approach to how town centres were assisted with a move away from a retail only focus to now include leisure provision, open spaces, community led projects together with residential and hospitality. She advised that the Council provided free planning advice for key town centre sites, there was provision of discretionary rate relief to support new retailers and also charitable and community organisations. A number of capital projects had been instigated across the district and campaigns to promote retailers were also undertaken. Grant funding was also provided to restore historical shop fronts. There were active business forums within the district and an improved way in which to measure footfall had been launched all of which were done to support the district's town centres and high streets.

In relation to how the Council promoted the district to attract visitors, Councillor Penny noted that the area had a strong tourism offer. A project entitled the Rebel Rangers Tour had been instigated by Newark & Sherwood and involved other local authorities throughout the county. The tour enabled a person to visit a variety of locations and would promote the district as a whole rather than visiting a single point of interest in isolation. Work was also ongoing with the improvement and promotion of the district's green spaces and work was continuing with the Castle Gatehouse Project. She also advised that there had been a Happy Families promotion to encourage visitors and noted the continuing work of the Tourism Action Group, which included the promotion of the district both regionally and nationally. Councillor Penny also referred to the success of the shopper's gift card.

In relation to how the Council were supporting people with health issues into employment or training, Councillor Penny advised that much of this work was undertaken by partner organisations with the Council's role being that of influencing the project's direction, of supporting the projects and of providing funding. The work provided pathways and removed barriers to enable the district's residents to take up employment and/or training. The Council's health and wellbeing agenda was also aligned with this work to better support people into work who had existing health issues. The Council provided an annual Future First Expo which provided a forum for young people to engage with employers.

In referring to increased digitisation of processes arising from planning reforms and how the Council would meet the Government agenda for 1.5 million new homes, growth and investment whilst encouraging positive planning outcomes for local communities, it was noted that the reforms had resulted in the removal of some of the processes currently in place and Councillor Penny advised that the existing in-house process needed to be reviewed. She noted that the current local plan had been submitted some 2 years previously but was yet to be approved. Work had however already commenced on the development of the new plan which would cover a period of 36 months. Speculative applications were expected due to the situation with the current local plan and not having a 5-year housing delivery plan. She acknowledged the challenges this brought and noted that the Council were not able to compel developers to bring houses to the market.

In relation to what measure the Council may take to ensure that the voice of local residents continued to be heard following the planning reforms, Councillor Penny noted that this was a challenge for all local planning authorities and would continue to be following local government reorganisation. She commented that work would be required to encourage parishes to develop their own neighbourhood plans or planning statements. Also, that development of a process to allow community advocates to speak on planning applications would be required.

In considering the responses to the questions raised, a Member queried as to how successful the Shopper's Gift Card promotion had been. Councillor Penny advised that she would provide the Committee with a written reply.

In relation to attracting visitors to the district, a Member raised queries in relation to a number of issues in Newark including: the amount of budget spent on advertising outside of the district; what did the Tourist Action Group achieve; how was the data collected from the footfall sensors used; could consideration be given to producing physical information for the visitors rather than it being totally digital. In response, In acknowledging the comments, Councillor Penny advised that her remit was to consider the whole of the district. She added that discussions were held in relation to the provision of paper-based information and also the further enhancement of digital information. She also requested that, if possible, Members provide examples of how paper-based information was utilised in other areas.

In referring to a county-based tourist app called Visit Notts., a Member queried whether this was still in use and if so, how did Newark & Sherwood promote itself on there. He also queried what specific work was being carried out with local schools in terms of employment opportunities. In response, Councillor Penny commented that

she was not aware of the Visit Notts. App. but that the Rebel Rangers Tour was countywide and that the Council were at the heart of its development. In relation to working with the local schools, she advised of the opportunities for students to engage with businesses at the Future First Expo which was held annually at the Newark Showground.

In referring to economic growth in the district, a Member queried as to why funding was not allocated wider across the district than at present. In relation to promotion of the district, she stated that not all residents were able to use digital means and there should be, if possible, physical promotions or boards with QR codes on that took the user direct to a site with appropriate information. She also queried whether there was sufficient resource to allow Officers to assist parish councils with developing their neighbourhood plans as it was often very challenging for them to do so without assistance. In response, Councillor Penny advised that the allocation of funding was based on strict eligibility criteria and could not be extended beyond that which it was allocated for. In responding to the suggestion that Officers supporting the development of parishes neighbourhood plans, she advised that there was not sufficient resource to do this but that discussions with other organisations were ongoing who may be able to assist.

In closing the debate, the Chair thanked Councillor Penny for her attendance and detailed responses to the queries raised. He requested that reports be brought to future meetings of the Committee in relation to tourism in the district.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the responses to the questions raised be noted; and
- b) a report be brought to a future meeting of the Committee in relation to tourism in the district.

Councillor P. Rainbow left the meeting during discussion of the previous item and therefore did not take part in the vote thereon.

183 LIFE CHANCES FOR GIRLS - FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee considered the report presented by Councillor K. Roberts, Chair of the Life Chances for Girls Working Group, which sought to provide Members with an update and the findings of the work of the group.

The report provided a comprehensive overview of the work undertaken and those Members and Officers who had contributed. The remit and three key aims of the group were detailed at paragraph 1.1 of the report with Appendix 3 listing the 20 recommendations together with a narrative as to the reasoning behind them.

In considering the report, the Chair thanked all those who participated, noting that the group had generated a great deal of conversation from both Members and Officers.

Members of the group spoke of what they had taken from their work. It was acknowledged that every effort must be made to promote feelings of self-worth in children and that this should be done at an early age; and that misogyny in all its forms must be 'called out' on a daily basis, with Members agreeing that attitudes towards women and girls must change.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the findings and recommendations of the Working Group be noted; and
- b) the recommendations as outlined in Appendix 3 to the report be endorsed.

184 CABINET FORWARD PLAN (DECEMBER 2025 TO MARCH 2026)

NOTED the Forward Plan of the Cabinet for the period December 2025 to March 2026.

185 MINUTES OF CABINET MEETINGS

NOTED the Cabinet Minutes from the meetings held on:

11 November 2025; and
26 November 2025

186 PROVISIONAL ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

- General Fund Capital Programme 2026/2027-2029/2030
- General Fund Medium Term Financial Plan 2026/2027-2029/2030
- General Fund Revenue Budget 2026/2027
- Q3 Community Plan Performance Report
- Presentation by Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing & Leisure
- Planning Infrastructure – Overview of Projects and Commitments
- Newark Town Centre Masterplan and Design Code
- Q3 Housing Compliance Performance Report

Meeting closed at 7.42 pm.

Chair