

## 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, 20 January 2026 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor P Peacock (Chair)

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor N Allen, Councillor J Hall, Councillor S Haynes, Councillor R Holloway, Councillor S Michael, Councillor P Rainbow and Councillor K Roberts

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor S Forde

### 337 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.

### 338 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Sanjiv Kohli - Director - Resources and Deputy Chief Executive declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 8 - Arkwood Loan Facility, as a Director of Arkwood Developments.

### 339 MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 9 DECEMBER 2025

The minutes from the meeting held on 9 December 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### 340 CHAIR'S UPDATE

There was no Chair's update, however the Cabinet paid tribute to former Councillor Laurence Goff who had passed away the previous week.

### 341 CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE PROGRESS REVIEW OUTCOME

The Business Manager - Transformation & Service Improvement introduced a report which presented the findings of the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge following the progress review return visit by the Peer Challenge Team from 11 to 12 December 2025.

The Team met selected groups of officers for discussions on the Council's progress against the original recommendations from their initial visit in October 2024. The full findings of the Progress Review were set out in Appendix C to the report. The report again highlighted several strengths while also encouraging the Council to continue making improvements.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet review and note the Peer Team's feedback and associated appendices of the report.

Reasons for Decision:

The Peer Team's feedback offers an independent view of how the Council is performing including areas where it can strengthen its approach. Reflecting on this feedback helps ensure the Council continues to improve, stays focused on delivering for residents and remains aligned to its strategic priorities.

Options Considered:

Not applicable.

342 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT FOR TERMINALLY ILL RESIDENTS

The Business Manager - Financial Services presented a report which recommended the establishment of a discretionary Council Tax Relief Scheme to support households facing the hardship of living with a terminally ill family member.

Four options for such a scheme were presented to the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee at their meeting held on 1 December 2025. The Committee endorsed and recommended option 3 to the Cabinet which was to develop a scheme to provide 100% council tax relief to all households who were in receipt of relief through the local council tax relief scheme (LCTR) within Newark & Sherwood District impacted by having a relative living in the household who had been diagnosed as receiving end of life care. This option aligned with the recommendation of the Marie Curie charity and was estimated to cost between £33,005 and £49,507 per year and it was recommended that the budget for 2026/27 be set at £50,000.

The Cabinet welcomed the report and were hopeful that this would act as a catalyst for other local authorities to adopt similar schemes. It was requested that an update on the implementation of the scheme be brought to the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee and Cabinet as appropriate.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet approve:

- a) Option 3 as detailed in paragraph 2.4.3 of the report; and
- b) the Discretionary Council Tax Relief Scheme to support households facing the hardship of living with a terminally ill family member, as set out at Appendix A to the report.

Reasons for Decision:

The recommended option supports the recommendation of Marie Curie to develop schemes to provide support to households on a low income that include someone living with a terminal illness. The recommended option is affordable to the Council, as identified in the report and the financial implications.

The recommended option aligns to Ambition 3 in the Community Plan to 'Improve health and wellbeing, with an emphasis on communities with lower levels of life expectancy'.

Options Considered:

Option 1 - 100% council tax relief to all households within the district impacted by having a relative living in the household who has been diagnosed as receiving end-of-life care.

Option 2 - 100% council tax relief to all households within the district impacted by having a relative who has been diagnosed as receiving end-of-life care. This would be provided irrespective of where the individual who has been diagnosed lives.

Option 3 - 100% council tax relief to all households who are in receipt of relief through the local council tax relief scheme (LCTR) within the district impacted by having a relative living in the household who has been diagnosed as receiving end-of-life care.

Option 4 - Develop a scheme to provide 100% council tax relief to all households who are in receipt of relief through the local council tax relief scheme (LCTR) within the district where the council tax liable party, subject to the LCTR claim, has been diagnosed as receiving end-of-life care.

343 ARKWOOD LOAN FACILITY AGREEMENT (KEY DECISION)

The Business Manager - Financial Services presented a report which provided an update on the current credit facility with Arkwood Developments Ltd. and sought approval to extend the loan cap to accommodate the company's current development programme. It was noted that there was an exempt report which contained commercially sensitive information which had been redacted from the open version.

In order to accommodate the current developments progressing, there was a need to increase the maximum permitted facility. Currently the maximum amount that could be loaned to the company was £11,408,071. Based on Arkwood's forecast Medium Term Financial Plan, they were expecting a spike in borrowing requirement which was forecast to be in excess of the current facility cap over the next half year. There was a need to increase the current cap to a proposed £25m. The £25m included head room of £3.787m against the current forecast maximum point, meaning should sales receipts not materialise, or earlier than expected spend occur, there was sufficient head room within the agreement to accommodate the additional borrowing requirement.

The Cabinet considered the risks around increasing the loan facility but these were mitigated by way of a debenture on all assets of the company and performance will be continued to be monitored by the Executive Shareholder Committee.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet approve:

- a) the additional £13,591,929 to be added to the Capital programme, making a total capital budget of £25m;
- b) the variation to the Facility Agreement to accommodate the power to vary the agreement and the extension to the cap on the facility from £12m to £25m; and

- c) subject to the subsidy control advice, to delegate responsibility to the Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Performance & Finance to amend the Facility Agreement to ensure the agreement remains subsidy control compliant.

Reasons for Decision:

To ensure that the Council's wholly owned company are able to meet their contractual commitments and complete the existing developments. This aligns with Ambition two within the Council's Community Plan ensuring which has a specific action relating to 'Develop new homes for open market sale or rent through Arkwood Developments Ltd'.

Options Considered:

Should the recommendation not be approved, this would impact on Arkwood's ability to be able to progress the sites they are contractually obliged to complete and would force the company to seek external finance.

344 THE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF THE COUNCIL'S LEISURE FACILITIES UNDER AN AGENCY MODEL (KEY DECISION)

The Senior Accountant presented a report which sought approval for moving to an agency model of delivery for leisure services by Active 4 Today Ltd (A4T). The current contractual arrangements with A4T reflected a long-established and widely adopted model for leisure outsourcing within local authorities which was considered the most VAT-efficient at the time.

Following consultation with our tax advisors and legal specialists it was being proposed to amend the existing Leisure Management Agreement between the Council and A4T. The proposed restructure would designate the Council as the 'Principal' in the agreement, with A4T acting as 'Agent' on its behalf. This change would mean that income generated by the leisure centres would be treated as income belonging to the Council and therefore included in the Council's VAT returns. As a result, VAT that was previously irrecoverable (in the region of £236,000) could now be recovered going forward. The Council would, in turn, pay a management fee to A4T to cover the costs of operating the services.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet:

- a) approve a change to the Leisure Management Agreement between Newark & Sherwood District Council and Active 4 Today such that the company becomes an 'Agent' of the Council in the delivery of Leisure Services; and
- b) delegated authority be given to the Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Resources and S151 Officer to vary the existing contract to an Agency Model arrangement and enter into all necessary agreements to implement the proposals.

Reasons for Decision:

This opportunity follows the successful litigation taken by Chelmsford City Council (and others) "the Chelmsford ruling"). The ruling confirmed as being non-business all supplies of local authority leisure services that were previously taxable (liable to VAT at the zero rate, reduced or standard rate) or VAT exempt are now non-business.

Options Considered:

That the Council would continue under the existing contract with Active 4 Today acting as Principal and therefore would continue to incur irrecoverable VAT.

345 EQUALITY, EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY - REVIEW AND REVISED STRATEGY

The Business Manager - Transformation & Service Improvement presented a report which provided the Cabinet with an update following a review of the Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and sought approval for the revised Strategy. The last strategy covered the period for 2021-23 and the revised strategy was attached as Appendix A to the report.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet:

- a) note the changes made to the Council's Equality, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EEDI) approach; and
- b) approve the revised Strategy, attached as Appendix A to the report.

Reasons for Decision:

The previous EEDI Strategy was developed in 2019 and the Council have experienced significant changes in workforce, commitments and legislation since this time. Whilst the Council have maintained their commitment to operating within the framework of the Public Sector Duty, due to these changes the Strategy and associated documentation was overdue a review. This has now been completed and is presented for approval.

Options Considered:

None, a District Council must maintain a current EEDI Strategy to comply with legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, demonstrate its commitment to fairness and inclusion, and reduce risks of reputational and operational harm. It ensures policies and services are equitable, fostering trust and engagement across the community.

346 LIFE CHANCES FOR GIRLS

The Transformation & Service Improvement Officer presented a report which set out the findings from the work of the Life Chances for Girls Working Group that was established by the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee. The Chair of the Working Party, Councillor K Roberts, also provided the Cabinet with a summary of what they had achieved. The recommendations of the Working Group were set out in Appendix 3 to the report, and these had been recommended to the Cabinet by the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee at their meeting held on 12 January

2026.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet:

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

**Reasons for Decision:**

To ensure that the findings of the Life Chances for Girls Working Group are formally acknowledged and acted upon. This is in addition to Policy Performance and Improvement Committee, which will be presented the report on 12 January 2026.

By noting the outcomes and endorsing the recommendations, Cabinet can also support targeted actions that improve opportunities and outcomes for girls. This will be whilst working with our partners who can contribute to improving the life chances for girls. This approach demonstrates a commitment to addressing identified challenges and supports a number of the Council's Community Plan ambitions.

**Options Considered:**

The decision could have been to dismiss the topic request and not establish the Life Chances for Girls Working Group.

**347 PARKS AND OPEN SPACES DEVELOPMENT PLAN (KEY DECISION)**

The Director - Communities & Environment presented a report which put forward a programme which would further improve parks and open spaces across the district. The Parks and Open Spaces Development Plan included the creation of a fund specifically for town and parish councils with the aim of improving facilities. The proposal was to create a £100,000 fund for town and parish councils to submit matched funding bids of up to £10,000 for investment in parks, play equipment and open spaces within their area. A formal grant application process would need to be established for this grant funding as well as award criteria.

In addition, there were a number of sites within the Councils ownership that presented opportunities for new planting and features as well as future development into Green Flag parks. The outline proposals for the various sites identified were detailed in the report.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet:

- a) endorse the allocation of £100,000 in 2026/27 for parks and open spaces legacy fund for Town and Parish Councils to bid into on a match-funded basis, to drive improvement in parks and open spaces across the district, and delegate authority for the implementation and administration of the fund to the Director - Communities & Environment in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate and the Environment;

- b) agree that £30,000 is committed within the budget for 2026/27, to enable investment in a number of Council-owned sites which have the potential for future development, including some for future Green Flag status;
- c) agree that three strategic sites are identified for potentially significant investment in new facilities, with consultation due to take place about those developments within 2026/27; and
- d) once c) above is complete, to bring a report back to Cabinet in 2026/27 about detailed development at those sites, together with a funding package, for delivery in 27/28 – the last operating year of NSDC ahead of Local Government Reorganisation.

**Reasons for Decision:**

The recommendations align with the Community Plan objectives in relation to health and wellbeing, protecting and enhancing the environment and promoting community spirit. The proposals are also in line with resident feedback as evidenced through the latest resident survey and the increasing importance being placed on parks and open spaces.

**Options Considered:**

Given the growing importance residents attach to parks and open spaces, doing nothing was not deemed a viable option. In the context of LGR, future decisions about investment in parks and open spaces in Newark and Sherwood will be taken by a new entity with a much broader geographical footprint and set of delivery responsibilities. Cabinet could choose to press on with developments at the three strategic sites in 2026/27 but given the potential costs it is deemed prudent to understand community support and explore sources of funding that may be available. There is no requirement to create a Town and Parish Council Park Legacy Fund, but this would fail to address the reality that many parks and open spaces across the district are not owned by NSDC and would be a missed opportunity to facilitate improvement in these valued facilities.

348 **2026/27 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND RENT SETTING (KEY DECISION)**

The Business Managers - Financial Services and Housing Income & Leasehold Management presented a report which examined the proposed income and expenditure on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the 2026/27 financial year for both revenue and capital, in accordance with Section 76 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The report also provided indicative amounts of income and expenditure for the 2026/27 to 2029/30 financial years for both revenue and capital income and expenditure, and proposed rent levels and service charges for 2026/27, with effect from the first Monday in April 2026.

The setting of the HRA budget and the approval of rent levels would be presented to the Full Council Meeting in February 2025, which would allow the required time to notify tenants of proposed changes to rents in accordance with the legislation.

AGREED (with 6 votes for and 1 abstention) that Cabinet recommend to Council at its meeting on 10 February 2026:

- a) the HRA budget for 2026/27, as set out in Appendix A to the report;
- b) an increase of 4.8% in the 2026/27 rents of all current HRA tenancies will be applied from 6 April 2026;
- c) the 2026/27 service charges, as set out in Appendix C to the report; and
- d) the Capital Budget set out in Appendix D to the report are committed expenditure in the Capital Programme for 2026/27 to 2029/30.

Reasons for Decision:

To advise Members of the proposed HRA budget and charges in rent and service charge levels for 2026/27 and for these to be recommended to Council at its meeting on 10 February 2026.

Options Considered:

Various modelling was undertaken to assess the impact of different rent levels on the viability of the HRA 30-year business plan to arrive at the recommendation above.

Consideration was also given to varying increases between general needs and supported (sheltered and extra care) accommodation, but no rationale was found to support this, alongside the equitable nature of any decision to do so.

349 CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND POLICY REVIEW

The Safety, Risk & Insurance Manager presented a report which sought approval for the Corporate Risk Management Strategy and Policy which had been subject to recent review by officers. The purpose of the strategy was to ensure that suitable systems were in place to manage significant risks. The revised policy was attached as Appendix A to the report.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet review and approve the updated Corporate Risk Management Strategy and Policy as attached at Appendix A to the report.

Reasons for Decision:

To ensure the Council has a current policy, therefore ensuring the continued management of risk within the Council in accordance with its policies.

Options Considered:

If deemed unsuitable, Cabinet should provide feedback and not approve the revised policy.

350 BILSTHORPE VILLAGE HALL COMPLEX - CAPITAL CONTRIBUTION

In accordance with Section 100(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair has agreed to take this item as a late item of business to enable the Bilsthorpe Village Hall Complex to progress without delay.

The Business Manager - Healthy Places presented a report which sought approval for a capital contribution towards the delivery of the Bilsthorpe Village Hall complex. Bilsthorpe Parish Council secured UK Shared Prosperity Fund grant in 2022-23 which was used to undertake a community asset report which recommended a new community hub, rationalising the existing community assets (the Miners Welfare, museum, and village hall) into one central, fit for purpose, asset. The parish council went onto commission architects to develop proposals for a community village which culminated in the submission of a planning application for the construction of a new parish hall, new multi-use games area outdoor court, new phased playground, bin and bicycle store and new car park.

It was proposed that the District Council provides a capital contribution of £1m from reserves towards the delivery of the Village Hall Complex. It is further proposed that this capital contribution was made available from 2026-27, with a schedule for draw down, spend by dates and outputs and outcome delivery to be contractually agreed through an agreed business case and programme.

Councillor R Holloway as the local Ward Member attended the Cabinet to set out her support for the project.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet:

- a) approve the creation of capital budget within the Capital Programme 2026-27 of up to £1,299,097.16 financed by £1,000,000 from the Change Management Reserve and £299,097.16 S106 Contributions listed in the table at paragraph 2.4 of the report; and
- b) approve that grant be released following the submission of a business case by Bilsthorpe Parish Council which would be subject to approval by the Council's Section 151 Officer in agreement with the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Community Relations.

Reasons for Decision:

The Community Plan has a specific action within the Portfolio for Public Protection and Community Relations to 'work alongside Bilsthorpe Parish Council and other partners, to continue to support the development of the Bilsthorpe Community Hub'.

Options Considered:

The option to not support Bilsthorpe Parish Council with a capital contribution has been discounted, reflecting the project's priority with the District Council's Community Plan, and the opportunity to improve outcomes for the residents of Bilsthorpe through the provision of a village hall complex that meets needs now and in the future.

Meeting closed at 7.40 pm.

Chair