

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, 16 March 2026 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor N Ross (Vice-Chair)

Councillor A Brazier, Councillor C Brooks, Councillor J Hall, Councillor S Haynes, Councillor R Holloway, Councillor D Moore, Councillor P Rainbow, Councillor K Smith, Councillor T Wendels and Councillor N Allen

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor L Brazier

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor M Pringle (Chair), Councillor A Freeman, Councillor R Jackson, Councillor K Roberts and Councillor T Thompson

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

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

199 DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no declarations of interest.

The Vice-Chair informed the meeting that agenda item 6 would move down the agenda to Item 11.

200 BASSETLAW, NEWARK AND SHERWOOD COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager - Public Protection to provide an update on the work undertaken by the Bassetlaw and Newark & Sherwood Community Safety Partnership.

The Business Manager - Public Protection and Inspector Charlotte Ellam provided a 6 monthly update to the committee, including the current status for Performance, BNS CSP Action Plan 26-27, DAHA, Domestic Homicide Reviews and Community Safety Activities - Situational Crime Funding, Hotspot Funding Patrols, Enforcement Activities, ASB Panel, CCTV and Diversionary Activities/Education Programmes.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee noted the Community Safety Partnership performance information.

201 GENDER PAY GAP REPORT - MARCH 2026

The Committee considered the report presented by the HR Business Partner to appraise the committee of the current position at NSDC in relation to the gender pay gap and would come back to the committee on an annual basis.

The GPG looks at the average earnings for both males and females across all roles in an organisation to see whether there is a disparity. This is based on a snapshot of data for the previous March so, in this case, the data is as of 31 March 2025.

Calculations are based on ordinary pay which includes basic pay and allowances such as market supplements, shift pay, on-call and stand-by. Payments that are excluded are: payments for overtime, redundancy payments, and sums relating to termination of employment. Also excluded are employees on reduced pay due to family or sick leave.

A positive number in relation to the GPG, mean or median, reflects that men are, on average being paid more than women. A negative number reflects that women are being paid, on average, more than men.

Councillor Moore enquired if there were apprenticeship opportunities in roles of a manual nature such as those in our trade teams and environmental services. The HR Business Partner advised that whilst these are available interest from males is more prevalent however steps are taken to widen the talent pool to encourage more female applicants.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee noted the content of the report in relation to the positive position of our gender pay gap.

202 PROJECTED GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2026 AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2025

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager for Financial Services to update Members with the forecast outturn position for the 2025/26 financial year for the Council's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account revenue and capital budgets.

The report also showed performance against the approved estimates of revenue expenditure and income; report on major variances from planned budget performance; and report on variations to the Capital Programme for approval; all in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

The Business Manager for Financial Services gave the current position (as at 31 December 2025): variances shown in Table 1 of the report.

Table 1 showed a projected favourable variance against the revised budget of £0.385m on Service budgets, with an overall variance of £0m that would need to be transferred to the General Fund reserve. This is based on meetings which took place with Business Managers during January, whereby they have analysed actual income and expenditure to 31 December 2025 and forecasted forward to the end of March 2026 the additional income and expenditure currently expected to be incurred. Further details of the variances projected against portfolio holder budgets are found in Appendix A.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the General Fund projected outturn variance of £0m;
- b) the Housing Revenue Account projected favourable outturn variance of £0.117m to the Major Repairs Reserve; and
- c) the Capital Programme revised budget and financing of £53.759m.

203 QUARTER 3 2025-26 - HOUSING COMPLIANCE ASSURANCE REPORT

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager for Building Safety & Asset Investment, to provide the performance position as of 31 December 2025 (Quarter 3) for Housing related compliance and update on activities in the service area.

This report provides Members with the performance of housing compliance services at the end of December 2025, focusing on exceptions performance, which is outside the Council's target parameters.

The full performance summary is shared with SLT; the Portfolio Holder for Housing and discussed as a standard agenda item for the Tenant Engagement Board meetings ensuring that Health & Safety are at the heart of our conversations and actions. Performance is also discussed at Policy and Performance Improvement Committee (PPIC) before being presented quarterly at Cabinet (Performance) to ensure there is oversight at Board level.

This report sets out the Council's performance against the Council's legal and regulatory landlord responsibilities for a range of building safety measures including fire protection, gas, asbestos, electrical and water.

Solid Fuel and Oil servicing compliance rates have improved with solid fuel currently at 90% compliant, and oil servicing compliance at 97.87%. Data held is under constant review improving asset data.

Councillor Rainbow referred to the Hoists of which 2 properties are without a valid certificate, noting that this was the same figure last year. PPIC to be advised if it is the same 2 properties for this year and last year or just a coincidence.

AGREED (unanimously) and noted that:

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

The recommendations were linked to two ambitions located in the Community Plan:

**Ambition 2:** Increase the supply of housing, in particular decent homes that residents can afford to buy and rent, as well as improving housing standards; and

**Ambition 7:** Be a top performing, modern and accessible Council that get its everyday services right for the residents and businesses that it serves.

## 204 Q3 COMMUNITY PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee considered the report presented by the Senior Transformation and Service Improvement Officer for the Quarter 3 Community Plan Performance Report 2025/26 (1 October – 31 December 2025).

The report continues to deliver an approach to performance that is used to drive improvement rather than being simply used as a counting device. This is done by analysing data and progress against key activities as well as building a picture of the context of performance using district statistics, customer feedback and workforce information.

- Clarification noted from Cllr Holloway on the Bilsthorpe Community Hub. Planning consent was granted in December but there has been a delay on reporting the outcome due to a legal document requiring a review.
- Cllr Moore's feedback was noted and shared with the team that he was really pleased to hear about the Farndon Underpass Mural transformation project. He noted it's fantastic to see the reinvestment of money recovered through successful fly tipping prosecutions back into the local community – he welcomes more of this type of activity taking place across the district.

**Question. From Cllr Allen:** Clarification on 14 Market Place in terms of the recent Cabinet Report in comparison to the Q3 Performance Report update.

**Response.** The Senior Transformation and Service Improvement Officer will provide a written response before the next committee meeting.

**Question. From Cllr Hall:** What were the attendance levels at the recent Flood Mary event? Is the location the correct one based on community flood impact?

**Response.** The Senior Transformation and Service Improvement Officer will provide a written response before the next committee meeting.

**Question. From Cllr Rainbow:** Clarity over the Performance Report ambition being described as 'Promote, maximise and celebrate the diversity of Newark and Sherwood's heritage, culture and community spirit' and whether reference to the arts had been removed.

**Response.** The Senior Transformation and Service Improvement Officer will provide a written response before the next committee meeting.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee reviewed the Community Plan Performance Report attached to the report as Appendix 1 and the Compliance report attached to the report as Appendix 2.

205 ENHANCING TENANT ENGAGEMENT AT NEWARK AND SHERWOOD

The Committee considered the report presented jointly by the Business Manager for Housing Services and Tenant Engagement Officer setting out a series of measures to build on and strengthen the role and influence of tenants in the management of their homes and neighbourhoods.

A review has taken place of the effectiveness of the current arrangements and this has been undertaken in conjunction with TPAS, Tenant Participation Advisory Service – the tenant engagement specialists - and involved tenants; offering their time, lived experience and skills to feedback and support the Council to improve housing services.

The aim has been to strengthen tenant influence and improve service outcomes, reflecting the Council's commitment to ensuring tenant insight shapes decision-making.

AGREED that:

- a) whilst some Committee members endorsed the report 'as is', a number required further clarification on a number of sections; and
- b) it was therefore agreed that the report would return to 13 April 2026 committee meeting for further consideration.

206 BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND BIODIVERSITY REPORT

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager for Planning Policy & Infrastructure providing a proposed Biodiversity Strategy and to present the statutorily required Biodiversity Report 2026-2027, noting the correction from 2024-2025 in the report.

The 4 June 2024 Cabinet approved publication of the Biodiversity Report – First Consideration with finalised agreed actions to be brought back to the Cabinet for approval within 3 months of publication of the First Consideration report.

The Council has a statutory obligation to publish a Biodiversity Report and the end date of the first reporting period should be no later than 01 January 2026 and reports should be published within 12 weeks of the reporting period end date.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) to endorse the proposed amended First Consideration Proposed Future Actions and Monitoring as the Council's Biodiversity Strategy;
- b) to endorse publication of the proposed Biodiversity Report 2024-2025; and
- c) to endorse that future Biodiversity Reports will be published annually.

207 PRESENTATION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING

The Committee considered the report presented by the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Lee Brazier.

As detailed in the report, the Portfolio Holder had been invited to attend Committee to respond verbally to three specific queries as at paragraph 2.1.

The Portfolio Holder advised the committee that he would be taking the questions in the order of 2, 3 and then 1.

Question 2

Members are aware that the Regulator of Social Housing is due to inspect the Council's housing service shortly. Can the Portfolio Holder outline how the Council is preparing for this inspection, what the inspection will focus on, and what it means for residents, members, and staff at this stage?

The response from the Portfolio Holder:

We are and have been for some time preparing for the Regulator of Social Housing inspection, with work underway across the Council to provide the inspection with key documents.

This inspection is about assurance to evidence that we are delivering against the regulatory standards that apply to us – these are the consumer standards around

- Quality and Safety
- Transparency, Influence and Accountability
- Tenancy

that is, how we know services are safe, compliant and tenant focused, this is not about operational day to day activity.

We expect the regulator to focus on governance, transparency and evidence of oversight, influence and scrutiny by tenants and members.

We have areas of strength – the TPAS reengineering project to build on how tenants engage and influence service delivery and reducing the barriers to participation through recognising the time, skills and effort tenants give us in huge amounts – and the need to have a mix of opportunities to suit their circumstance and ability to be involved. Increasing the tenant board members from 3 –5 is really exciting and I look forward to working with them.

We have been shortlisted at the Pineapple awards for our engagement with tenants on Yorke Drive, which is a complex regeneration project – we are in regular contact with tenants and working with the developer through the planning requirements, and once complete, we can give a firm start on site date. The Pineapple shortlisting recognises our ongoing commitment to keep residents informed and involved in this project.

Our Tenant Satisfaction Measures are strong in the main, and we perform well against our peers, but also know that Repairs, Complaints and ASB are key services we need to get right every time. This is reflected in Housing Service business plans that have been presented to me and involved tenants. We have grouped these activities by theme and launched our Foundation Five campaign to bring this alive for staff and members.

We are also self-aware and honest about where improvement is needed – our move to a new Housing Management System aims to improve how we deliver services, tailor services and show how we are performing – this has been really challenging over the past year and teams have been working with NEC, the provider, to ensure the systems does what we need it to.

The Repairs and Empty Homes service are improving and we are starting to see the improvements of the changes the team have put in place- I'll talk more about that later.

What does this mean for residents? This is an opportunity for external scrutiny of our services, to build on our existing performance and come out with an improvement plan that will help us to deliver even better services.

For us as a Council, it is an opportunity to show our understanding of services, and our progress with putting tenants at the heart of what we do, giving clear leadership and developing a customer centred culture.

### Question 3

As the Council continues to plan for Local Government Reorganisation, can the Portfolio Holder explain how housing services will be protected during the transition, and how the Council will ensure that tenants remain central to decision making throughout this process?

The response from the Portfolio Holder:

We are already working with LGR partners through our Housing Directors Strategic Group and equivalents at Bassetlaw, Mansfield and Ashfield to start looking at how we can work together to protect housing services through Local Government Reorganisation.

We are working to ensure that at day 1, we are safe and legal, and are using the time up to vesting day to align our services as much as we can ahead of this. We must ensure services remain available to tenants across all districts, particularly ensuring the safety of our tenants.

We have already identified areas we can be more effective – we are exploring sharing resources to complete our Supported Housing Strategy, align our approach in our preparations for the Competency and Conduct standard and have started to look at our data and systems.

For tenants, the Group is looking at creating a tenant engagement mechanism that crosses all districts – but for this to be effective we need confirmation from Government on who our new partners will be and we shall go from there.

LGR touches every team of the Council and we have officers on all workstreams and as you know and are adjusting our resources to ensure we can keep our day-to-day services running and be ready for LGR. We are engaged with other Councils who have been through LGR to learn from them.

We are still working on improving services – as you know we have a PPIC working group in place now to look at estate walkabouts, led by Cllr Rainbow, and look forward to hearing the outcomes and recommendations from this group.

#### Question 1

In light of the performance on time taken for housing repairs and turnaround of empty properties remaining well below target despite the restructuring of the Housing Team, what further measures do you intend to take to improve performance and meet these targets? When can we expect the targets to be met once again and please confirm that you will not be reducing the targets to make them easier to meet?

The response from the Portfolio Holder:

Members are right to note that relet times are below target - this is clearly visible in performance data – this frustrates me, officers and involved tenants as much as yourselves! I can confirm that the teams are working hard to turn this around – but it's not achievable overnight.

To be clear, we have invested in an additional Business Manager and a new Damp & Mould team following the split of one business unit into two, which are now:

Repairs and Empty Homes and Building Safety and Asset Investment -

The new Business Managers started in December 2025, and have made strong inroads into their services, with fresh eyes and a real passion for delivering great services. Already, they have made a real positive impact at Tenant Engagement Board with our involved tenants and myself and other board members, giving us collectively, confidence that with time and space to work their magic, we will return to the strong performance within the next financial year– and a high quality service that is modern and reflects tenants priorities. 9/10 tenants asked are satisfied with their home at letting – we are getting it right more, listening and responding where we don't.

There is pain before the gain and as we repair our empty homes and relet them, we know performance will appear worse – this is short term and am confident we will be reporting far more favourable performance by the summer. As said at full Council, to take on your challenge to improve our services across the board.

How do we improve our services? We have a Housing Services Strategic improvement plan – owned by the Director who briefs me on progress against the completion of actions in areas for improvement. These reflect our landlord strategy objectives and keep us focused on our priorities.

We do have to find a balance of setting stretching but achievable targets which is what we have done, to keep teams motivated and moving in the right direction. When we can make our key-to-key target shorter, you'll be the first to know and it will go through this committee for transparency. That's how democracy works.

Councillor Holloway asked for an update on the Stock Condition Surveys:

The Portfolio Holder advised that working collaboratively to understand the property conditions of other Councils and that our properties conditions are at the higher end.

Energy Performance Certificates were also discussed and the Portfolio Holder advised that EPCs and stock condition surveys to be carried out at the same time whilst the properties were empty.

Other questions asked at the meeting or comments that suggest clarification is needed:

What is the process for target setting against KPIs and when will Committee members be able to review any changes?

Response. The Senior Transformation and Service Improvement Officer will provide a written response before the next committee meeting.

Question. Arrears has gone up across the last 4 quarters, what process do we have in place to support our tenants and more information requested regarding the processes that are in place to bring down the level of arrears?

Response. Arrears are impacted by reference of universal credit on the arrears position, and this a full response was provided by the Business Manager in the Quarter 2 performance report. Officers will provide a written response providing more detail.

#### 208 UPDATE ON ESTATE WALKABOUTS WORKING GROUP

As Chair of the Estate Walkabouts Working Group, Councillor Penny Rainbow was pleased to share with members of PPIC the groups progress so far having had a second meeting on 25 February 2026.

At this meeting the three Tenant Champions attended who are part of the Tenant Engagement Board, two in person and one on 'Teams'.

Members were advised that requests at any time can be made for additional walkabouts as required.

The next meeting of the working group is expected to take place on 25 March 2026.

#### 209 UPDATE ON HERITAGE AND CULTURE WORKING GROUP

The Chair of the Heritage & Culture Expenditure Working Group, Councillor David Moore advised that the working group had not met again since the last Policy & Performance Improvement Committee on 23 February 2026.

The next meeting of the working group is expected to take place on 18 March 2026.

210 CABINET FORWARD PLAN (FEBRUARY TO MAY 2026)

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

211 MINUTES OF CABINET MEETINGS

NOTED the Cabinet Minutes from the meetings held on 20 January 2026

212 PROVISIONAL ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

- Attendance at Committee by the Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture & the Arts
- Planning Infrastructure Presentation – Follow On from Out of Remit Activities Working Group
- Heating and Gas Safety Policy
- Passenger Lift Policy
- Gas Meter Make Safe Policy
- Update on Estate Walkabouts Working Group
- Councillors Ward Fund Scheme
- CAB update on grant received
- Yorke Drive update

Meeting closed at 8.13 pm.

Chair