

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, 5 February 2026 at 6.00 pm.

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

Councillor A Freeman, Councillor J Hall, Councillor P Harris, Councillor S Haynes, Councillor J Kellas, Councillor D Moore, Councillor K Smith, Councillor L Brazier and Councillor M Shakeshaft (substitute)

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor L Dales

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

20 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.

21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no declarations of interest.

22 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 NOVEMBER 2025

AGREED that the minutes from the meeting held on 27 November 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

23 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 following the submission to Government in November 2025.

It was noted that the Cabinet had considered this matter at their meeting held on 26 November and had agreed to endorse the submission of the Final Proposal for a new unitary structure of local government for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. All Members of the Council had been invited to attend a presentation on the content of the Final Proposal held on 18 November 2025. The report set out the timetable of the next steps following the submission of the proposal to Government.

MHCLG had provided an initial list of statutory consultees as contained in Appendix A to the report. The Council were working with them to ensure that all relevant parties were identified and contact details provided. There were a broad range of organisations across health, education, business, the voluntary sector, and other public sector and national bodies. To help guide councils with a starting point of what

the next steps were after submission, MHCLG had shared a list which was attached as Appendix B to the report, which had been developed with input from sector advisers, Local Partnerships and the Local Government Association. It was based on current and previous experience of LGR and was intended to be iterative rather than exhaustive.

A letter had also been received today regarding LGR from Alison McGovern – Minister of State for Local Government and Homelessness.

A Member raised concern regarding the design of the consultation and how it had been handled. Parish and Town Council representation needed to be taken into consideration. Concern was also raised regarding the proposed reduction of multi-Member Wards, it was felt unacceptable for multi-Member Wards to be reduced. It was commented that under LGR the new Council would have this Council and NCC to represent, Members could not work 24/7 on Council business, multi-Member Wards were required for Members to represent their constituents effectively.

The Chief Executive confirmed that ward arrangements in the 2027 shadow elections would be temporary and would be reviewed in the following two to three years.

A Member sought clarification regarding whether the Chief Executive would be involved with the MHCLG Listening Meetings and what emphasis would he be taking responsibility for. The Chief Executive confirmed that he would be involved in the Listening Meeting and would represent the feedback from local areas regarding their requirements. A presentation would be ready separated in different parts, showing sensible geography, neighbourhoods etc and would be well represented at that session. The Chief Executive commented that there were limitations with consultations, the Council needed to get into conversations with people face to face. The Business Manager for Elections and Democratic Services had met with the Boundary Commission and asked for the Council to have an input into the boundary warding. A lot of work had been undertaken and submitted to the Boundary Commission to date.

A Member sought clarification regarding any update or indication what will happen for NSDC Members between 2027/28. The Chief Executive confirmed that several exchanges had taken place with MHCLG and there was a clear assumption that there would be a Shadow election May 2027. Members terms of office would be extended by one year.

In answer to the Chair's question, the Transformation and Service Improvement Officer confirmed that briefings and communication would be cascaded to Town and Parish Councils.

AGREED that the progress update provided in respect of local government reorganisation be noted.

24 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 (RIPA) ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive, Director - Resources & S151 Officer which sought to provide Members with the latest position in respect of activity by the Council under Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) from January 2025 to December 2025; and on mandatory training for Officers.

A programme of monitoring and review was set out in the Council's RIPA policy and guidance. Annual reports of RIPA authorisations were made to the Audit & Governance Committee previously and now to this Committee.

There had been 0 authorisations sought by the Magistrates court during this period. The Council's use of authorised RIPA surveillance had always been and remained extremely low. This was in line with the majority of other authorities; particularly those who do not have services such as Trading Standards or Consumer Protection teams. The Council had already submitted the annual statistical return to the IPCO for 2025 which was a NIL return. There had been Nil returns to the IPCO since 2016.

Appropriate training had been provided to all Authorising officers. The last training was provided in July 2024. Ongoing advice and training was provided to investigating officers on a case-by-case basis throughout the year. More formal training was planned to be completed by April 2026 to investigating officers in relevant teams.

Sue Bearman was the named Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for the purposes of RIPA. Following her departure, Sanjiv Kohli had been appointed the new SRO. Appendix A provided an amended list of the Senior Authorising Officer; the Authorising Officers; Senior Responsible Officer and RIPA Co-Ordinator for the purposes of RIPA.

AGREED that the contents of the report and the minor amendment to the policy be noted.

25 WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Monitoring Officer which provided the annual report on the implementation of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy.

The Policy was clear and provided detailed information on how whistleblowing complaints would be dealt with. The Policy provided assurance to those raising a complaint that they would be treated fairly. Review of the Policy was previously a function of the Audit & Governance Committee. With the establishment of two separate committees to cover audit and governance functions, this annual report fell within the remit of the Governance, General Purposes & Local Government Reform Committee and as such the Policy needed to be updated to reflect that. Further amendments were required to reference sexual harassment as a protected disclosure under the policy and an update to contact details within the policy were required.

There had been two reports under the Whistleblowing Policy in 2025. Details of whistleblowing complaints were confidential, but a record of the complaints was available for internal and external auditors if inspection was required. One complaint related to staff and one to contractors, it was confirmed no further action was required. In order to ensure continued awareness of the Policy and reporting process for Whistleblowing complaints it was proposed that further communication of the Policy to staff would be undertaken in 2026.

A Member asked how the Council could ensure no detrimental effects on the whistleblower. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that there was a legal requirement, within the policy to protect whistleblowers following disclosure and the process was confidential. There was also support for the whistleblower which included Occupational Health if required.

A Member commented that in the list of external organisations the whistleblower could go to as contained within the report, there was nothing for the Council's HRA and housing function in the list. Clarification was sought regarding if there was a problem with housing allocation, where would that person go externally if they wanted to seek advice. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Housing Ombudsman could be the relevant body for housing allocation. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the whistleblower presents the case, and the Monitoring officer looks at how that should be dealt with. The process was to deal with serious wrong doings. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Housing Ombudsman could be included in the list of external organisations.

A Member commented on the importance for Managers to be trained and understand the importance of the whistleblowing process to spot a whistleblower and for the individual and Council to be protected under the policy.

AGREED that:

- a) the contents of the report be noted;
- b) minor changes to the Whistleblowing Policy to reflect changes to Committees and Monitoring Officer contact details and to reflect changes in employment legislation and inclusion of the Housing Ombudsman to the list of external organisations; and
- c) further promotion of the Policy to staff in 2026.

26 GIFTS & HOSPITALITY ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Monitoring Officer which provided an annual report updating Members on the implementation of the Council's Gifts & Hospitality Policies.

The Monitoring officer confirmed that having reviewed the Member's and Officer's Protocol on Hospitality and Gifts which were two separate policies, there were no proposed amendments. The process for reporting gifts and hospitality by Members and Officers was being followed and information published correctly. Reminders would be sent to Members and Officers to ensure that they maintained awareness of the requirements to declare gifts and hospitality.

Further promotional work would be undertaken in 2026 with Officers and Members to maintain awareness of the requirements to record offers of gifts and hospitality.

A Member commented that the current reporting system was not open and transparent and was difficult to find on the website and should be included in the annual report. It was further commented that the register declaration did not indicate whether the gift/hospitality had been accepted or refused, the current wording was that the gift had been offered, the assumption being the gift had been accepted but that might not be the case.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Member declaration was on their profile page, and the Officer declaration was on one spreadsheet, which could be replicated for Members. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that she would clarify the issue of the gift/hospitality being accepted or refused.

AGREED that:

- a) the report and the proposed actions for promotion of the Policy in 2026 be noted; and
- b) the issue of the gift/hospitality being accepted or refused be clarified.

27 UPDATE FROM GOVERNANCE, GENERAL PURPOSES & LGR WORKING GROUP - ARRANGEMENTS FOR DEALING WITH CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS, SOCIAL MEDIA PROTOCOL AND MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Committee considered the report of the Monitoring Officer which sought to update Members on the work undertaken by the Working Group to update the arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct Complaints, the Social Media Protocol for Members and the Member Development Plan.

The Working Group Chair – Councillor L Dales, provided an overview of the work undertaken by the Working Group and commented that excellent work had been undertaken by the Monitoring Officer and colleagues and that all three areas reviewed provided simpler and clear arrangements.

Members discussed the three areas individually.

Code of Conduct Complaints

The Chair sought clarification on what sanctions were in place if Members failed to undertake mandatory training. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that it was difficult to sanction Members for non-attendance of training, she hoped Members would welcome training. If there was a data breach or issue, that could lead to wider consequences or sanctions if mandatory training had not been undertaken. The Chair suggested the repercussions should be made clear regarding certain breaches.

A member asked that it be included in the assessment criteria for investigation that reasonable challenge of officers views should be listed.

Social Media Protocol

The Monitoring Officer thanked the Principal Legal Officer and Communications team for their work on this Protocol.

A Member commented that the list of examples of social media should include more examples including Whatsapp. A member also recommended that reference should be made to Two-factor authentication (2FA) in relation to improving safety and security of information.

Member Development Plan

A Member commented that two days allocated for all training in person was a problem and suggested that on-line training be made available.

The Monitoring Officer commented that more than one in-person training session would be offered to Members and confirmed that the in-person training could be recorded for Members to watch at their convenience or online training being made available as suggested. How training would be made accessible would be addressed by Democratic Services.

A Member commented that Appendix 2 paragraph 15 and 17, should be offered to all Members and not just those with special responsibilities as detailed. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that amendments to those paragraphs would be made so that a wider group of Members could attend that training.

A Member commented that due to LGR there would not be any future induction training in 2027 and hoped that budget had not been reduced. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that there would be a budget for training. A Member suggested that training was an investment and not a cost and that could be addressed at a future meeting.

AGREED that:

- a) the work undertaken to date by the Working Group be noted;
- b) the changes to the Council's Arrangements for Dealing with Code of Conduct Complaints at Appendix 1 of the report, subject to the proposed amendments by the Committee;
- c) the Member Development Plan at Appendix 2 of the report, subject to the proposed amendments by the Committee; and
- d) recommend the updated Social Media Protocol for Members at Appendix 3 to the report, subject to the proposed amendments by the Committee, to Full Council for adoption.

28 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that the Member, Officer Protocol was still outstanding and would be forwarded to this Committee.

AGREED that, subject to the inclusion of the Member, Officer Protocol, the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee's Work Programme be noted.

Meeting closed at 7.33 pm.

Chair