

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, 13 April 2026 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 S Haynes, Councillor D Moore, Councillor P Rainbow, Councillor K Roberts, Councillor K Smith and Councillor T Wendels

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor I Brown and Councillor R Cozens

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor R Holloway, Councillor R Jackson and Councillor T Thompson

213 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.

214 DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no declarations of interest.

215 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 FEBRUARY 2026 AND 16 MARCH 2026

The minutes from the meetings held on 23 February and 16 March 2026 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Prior to transacting the business on the agenda, the Chair referred the Committee to Agenda Item No. 18 – Provisional Items for Future Agendas.

He advised that the Yorke Drive Update and the Councillors' Ward Fund Scheme would be reported to 14 September 2026 meeting due to the size of the agendas for both the June and July meetings.

He also advised that in relation to the Sherwood & Newark Citizens Advice Update, the Business Manager – Healthy Places would be presenting a report to the 1 June 2026 meeting on a Review of Grant Schemes. Within the report would be a proposal to establish a working group to review the Council's current approach to grant funding and that invitations would be issued to organisations that already benefited from Council funding. It was considered that this would provide each group with an equal opportunity to address members, thereby avoiding any suggestion that one organisation was being unfairly favoured ahead of another.

216 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY 2023/2027 PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Customer Services which sought to provide Members with an update on the progress made by the Council in relation to embedding the Customer Experience Strategy.

The report set out the background to the establishment of the Strategy and its incorporation into the Council's Community Plan. Inclusion within the Plan provided the Council with a mechanism to review performance in relation to the customer experience when interacting with the Council. Some of the key outputs as a result of the strategy implementation included: ensuring the Customer Experience Strategy was fully embedded in the operations and culture of the Council; to reinvigorate the Residents' Panel to ensure it was representative of the demographic profile to help drive service improvement across the Council; to expand the range and quality of services available online, whilst ensuring accessibility to all with continued telephony and face to face options for all residents; and to expand customer satisfaction measures, both internally and externally, through regular surveys and other means.

The report also set out how the Performance Management Framework enable measurement of the customer experience and provided data insights to drive performance improvement. Several strands to the Framework were noted as: awareness and action; engagement and first contact; service delivery; and resolution.

It was reported that the next steps to deliver the actions set out in the strategy included: deliver the next phase of customer service training; development of service standards for individual business units; and further promotion of the Customer Promise.

AGREED (unanimously) that the progress of the delivery of the Customer Experience Strategy 2023/2027 and the ongoing work be noted.

217 REVISITING - TENANT ENGAGEMENT AT NEWARK & SHERWOOD

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Housing Services which sought to advise Members of a series of measures to build on and strengthen the role and influence of Newark & Sherwood tenants in the management of their homes and neighbourhoods and to seek endorsement for their introduction.

The report, having been considered at the meeting held on 16 March 2026, was re-presented to Committee in order to provide further clarification on a number of sections as requested by Members.

As previously reported, the review had taken place as to the effectiveness of the current arrangements, the aim of which was to strengthen the tenant influence and to improve service outcomes, reflecting the Council's commitment to ensuring tenant insight shaped decision-making.

In considering the report and the accompanying Terms of Reference, a Member raised a number of queries in relation to: what was the process to be followed when it was considered necessary to remove a Board Member; who would be appointed as the

Vice-Chair of the Board; what time of day would the Board meetings be held; and what was the difference between a Tenant Champion and a Tenant Scrutineer. In response, the Business Manager advised that the Vice-Chair could be any Board member; the meetings would be held when it was mutually convenient for all Board members; and a Scrutineer differed from a Champion in that they would be assigned specific areas to review.

Members discussed in general the issue of incentivisation, as referred to in paragraph 2.2.5 of the report, with a difference of views being expressed. Officers provided clarity on the remuneration that an involved tenant could expect to receive.

In response to how tenants across the whole of the district would be engaged with, the Business Manager advised that the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) were assisting the Council with their recruitment process. Engagement was further supported by the use of the existing community link groups. Members were also advised that it would not be necessary for Champions and Scrutineers to live in an actual area as they would be given specific areas to target, noting that the framework would be iterative.

In referring to the issue of removal of Board members, the Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing, who was in attendance at the meeting, advised that it was not possible to include every scenario that may lead to such an action. She suggested that information referring to the removal of a Board member remain in the Terms of Reference, but that further detail be provided in a supporting document.

AGREED that:

- a) (unanimously) the progression of tenant engagement arrangements and the clear service improvements resulting from tenant insight and involvement be noted;
- b) (unanimously) the refresh of the current Tenant Engagement Board in the following ways be endorsed:
 - Increase the number of tenant representatives from three to five;
 - Reallocate the Chair of the Board to a tenant representative; and
 - Rename the current Tenant Engagement Board to Tenant Influence & Assurance Board.
- c) (unanimously) the proposed Tenant Engagement Framework including noting the proposed programme of recruitment be endorsed;
- d) (with 12 votes for and 1 abstention) the proposed recognition and incentivisation to widen the participation and representation of tenants as Tenant Engagement Champions with five places on the Tenant Influence & Assurance Board be endorsed;
- e) (unanimously) the report would progress to Cabinet on 21 April 2026 for decision on the recognition of the scheme be noted; and

- f) (unanimously) the amended report which would progress to the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee on 16 April 2026 with a recommendation for endorsement and an onward recommendation to Full Council on 19 May 2026 for approval of the proposed changes to the constitution be noted.

218 PLANNING & INFRASTRUCTURE - PRESENTATION

The Committee considered the report and presentation delivered jointly by the Director – Planning & Growth and the Business Manager – Planning Policy & Infrastructure which sought to update Members on the involvement of the Council in planning and infrastructure matters, including detail on the complexity of the infrastructure landscape and examples of ‘out of remit’ work beyond traditional areas of district council responsibility.

As detailed in the report, following the conclusion of the Out of Remit Working Group, Members had requested a presentation be delivered on planning and infrastructure issues which the Council had been involved with, but which were not a statutory duty.

The presentation set out what was meant by infrastructure, what that entailed and how the Council was involved, either directly or indirectly. It also provided Members with examples of work undertaken in grey areas, noting that infrastructure in England was significantly fragmented, often with a mix of service providers with separate regulation and oversight making change difficult to achieve. It was further noted that if the Council did not become involved in out of remit areas, the ultimate result would be that strategic infrastructure would not be delivered.

In considering the presentation, a Member queried whether following the establishment of the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) and their responsibility as the Transport Authority, had it made lobbying for change more efficient. In response, the Business Manager explained that the Mayor had already led a comprehensive consultation on the Transport Plan and informed that the EMCCA was in the early stages of its role as the Transport Authority, with ongoing work to establish its responsibilities underway.

In noting the out of remit work undertaken by Officers, a Member queried as to whether there was sufficient resource to sustain this work. The Business Manager advised that the Council had an Infrastructure Lead Officer but that it was often difficult to contact the correct person in the various organisations the Council dealt with due to their size. He added that the final delivery of some projects would fall to external organisations.

In closing the debate, the Chair stated that the work undertaken to engage with external organisations and develop a vision for the district was vital and that work must continue.

AGREED (unanimously) that the report and presentation be noted.

219 HEATING & GAS SERVICING POLICY

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Building Safety & Asset Management which sought to update Members on the development of the Heating & Gas Servicing Policy to manage the Council’s heating and gas servicing.

The report set out that this Policy was one of a suite of policies that covered all aspects of compliance which were designed to ensure that the Council had a robust approach to compliance and customer safety. This Policy would align to current legislation, regulation and industry best practice to ensure that services delivered were in line with the Policy and were both effective and efficient.

In considering the report and Policy, a Member sought clarity on when it would be considered necessary to mechanically seal a gas meter. In response, the Business Manager advised that any meter that had not had a service carried out within a set timescale would be deemed to be unsafe and this in turn would be regarded as an emergency by the Council.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the Heating & Gas Servicing Policy to ensure legal compliance and improved service delivery in line with legislation, regulation and industry best practice be noted and endorsed; and
- b) the Heating & Gas Servicing Policy be recommended to Cabinet for approval.

220 THE GAS METER MAKE SAFE POLICY

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Building Safety & Asset Management which sought to update Members on the development of the Gas Meter Make Safe Policy.

The report set out that this Policy was one of a suite of policies that covered all aspects of compliance which were designed to ensure that the Council had a robust approach to compliance and customer safety. This Policy would align to current legislation, regulation and industry best practice to ensure that services delivered were in line with the Policy and were both effective and efficient.

In considering the report and in line with comments from the previous report, the issue of capping a gas meter was raised with a Member seeking assurances that, should such a course of action be necessary, every effort would be made to consider the practicalities of leaving a property without a gas supply. In response, Members were advised that a very detailed assessment would be undertaken before such action was taken and that often the threat of the meter being capped was sufficient for the situation to be resolved.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the Gas Meter Make Safe Policy to ensure legal compliance and improved service delivery in line with legislation, regulation and industry best practice be noted and endorsed; and

- b) the Gas Meter Make Safe Policy be recommended to Cabinet for approval.

221 PASSENGER LIFTS, STAIR LIFTS & HOISTS POLICY

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Building Safety & Asset Management which sought to update Members on the development of the Passenger Lifts, Stair Lifts & Hoists Policy.

The report set out that this Policy was one of a suite of policies that covered all aspects of compliance which were designed to ensure that the Council had a robust approach to compliance and customer safety. This Policy would align to current legislation, regulation and industry best practice to ensure that services delivered were in line with the Policy and were both effective and efficient.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the Passenger Lifts, Stair Lifts & Hoists Policy to ensure legal compliance and improved service delivery in line with legislation, regulation and industry best practice be noted and endorsed; and
- b) the Passenger Lifts, Stair Lifts & Hoists Policy be recommended to Cabinet for approval.

222 PRESENTATION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HERITAGE, CULTURE & THE ARTS

The Committee considered the report and verbal presentation given by the Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture & the Arts, Councillor Rowan Cozens.

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

In relation to the new Equality, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2025/2029 and how this had been implemented, Councillor Cozens advised that since the launch of the new Strategy, a Equalities Steering Group had been established whose role was to oversee this area of work and helped to guide progress. There has been an introduction of several equalities advisors in key departments who played a crucial role in ensuring the Council's day-to-day decision-making was inclusive and reflective of the diverse needs within the community. The measures had enabled a greater consistency in equalities-related decisions.

In relation to the work being undertaken on the Castle Gatehouse which included a new entrance and multi-function space. Information was sought on how residents and potential visitors were being engaged throughout the build phase to enable people to be involved as much as possible and how that approach would benefit the Castle once the new visitor offer officially opened. Councillor Cozens advised that there had been a great deal of consideration given to making the Castle as accessible to everyone as possible, highlighting just some of these as: accessibility guide; accessible parking; accessible toilet facilities; ambulance accessible toilet; active moments; welcome of assistance animals; audio handsets; soundscapes; AV alternative to dungeon tour; AV tables – Castle view explorer; information in braille; door openings; quiet hours; and sensory backpacks.

In relation to the ongoing work of the Heritage & Culture Working Group and how the Heritage & Culture Business Unit (H&CBU) was regarded both regionally and nationally, the question of how the service may be developed to further improve the offer in the context of local government reorganisation, specifically the risks and opportunities. Councillor Cozens advised that the H&CBU already had a solid foundation from which to build on. Once the unitary authority was operational, it would be possible to create a triangle of cultural hubs with Bassetlaw and Mansfield. Newark & Sherwood, Mansfield and Inspire were all Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations and had achieved funding of £7m over the current funding period and being part of the unitary authority would provide an opportunity to develop a unitary-wide cultural strategy, thereby delivering a coherent, place-based cultural identity. In noting that provision of cultural services was a driver to health, wellbeing and civic pride, a unitary authority would be able to make heritage and culture central to prevention, wellbeing and community resilience agendas. Members were advised that work was ongoing to raise the profile of the Council on a national level. Councillor Cozens advised that the Council needed to lobby for improved transport routes to allow those without their own vehicles to visit attractions in other parts of the district and eventually the wider unitary authority area.

In considering the verbal presentation Members all agreed that the team working on the Castle Gatehouse project were to be praised for their enthusiasm and knowledge. Members noted that this enthusiasm was not only displayed by Officers of the Council but also contractors, for example the stonemasons.

In referring to the health and wellbeing benefits heritage and culture can bring to individuals, a Member queried how this was actioned. Councillor Cozens advised that the H&CBU Business Manager gave consideration as to how outreach activities could target groups in need of assistance. She added that the business unit had established links with GP surgeries.

In praising the Hard Hat Tour of the Castle earlier that day, a Member commented that he would wish to see, in the future, all of the county's heritage and cultural assets supporting each other. In response, Councillor Cozens advised that she would also welcome the development of one ticket allowing access to all venues.

In closing the debate, the Chair thanked Councillor Cozens for her presentation and the ongoing work within the Heritage & Culture Business Unit.

AGREED (unanimously) that the report and verbal presentation be noted.

223 UPDATE ON ESTATE WALKABOUTS WORKING GROUP

The Committee considered the report presented jointly by the Chair of the Estate Walkabouts Working Group, Councillor Penny Rainbow and the Transformation & Service Improvement Graduate Trainee which sought to provide an update and the recommendations following a comprehensive review of the Council's Estate Walkabouts.

The report set out the rationale for the establishment of the Working Group, listing the members who participated at paragraph 1.3. Details of the sessions held, the work undertaken and the outcome of those sessions were provided together with the next steps and the timelines for implementation. Paragraph 8 of the report provided full details of each of the six recommendations being present to the Committee for consideration.

In considering the report, Members thanked both Councillor Rainbow and Councillor Holloway for requesting the group be established and to officers who facilitated the work of the group. A Member commented that the work of the group demonstrated to tenants that their areas and communities were important to the Council.

AGREED (unanimously) that the following actions be endorsed:

- a) the re-naming of Estate Walkabouts to Community Walkabouts;
- b) the reduction of the walkabout schedule;
- c) the newly developed supporting documentation;
- d) the introduction of a refined assurance pathway;
- e) the timeline as detailed in Section 6 of the report; and
- f) all recommendations be forwarded to Housing Services for implementation.

224 UPDATE ON HERITAGE & CULTURE WORKING GROUP

The Chair of the Heritage & Culture Working Group, Councillor David Moore, advised that the next meeting of the group was to be held the following day, Tuesday, 14 April 2026.

225 CABINET FORWARD PLAN (MARCH TO JUNE 2026)

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

226 MINUTES OF CABINET MEETINGS

NOTED the Cabinet Minutes from the meetings held on 24 February and 24 March.

227 PROVISIONAL ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

- Review of Grant Schemes
- Sherwood & Newark Citizens Advice Update
- Councillors Ward Scheme
- Q4 Housing Compliance Update
- Appointment of Members to Tenant Engagement Board and Planning Policy Board
- Tenant Engagement Strategy – Full Review with Substantial Changes

- Housing Repairs & Empty Homes - Annual Report
- Performance Framework
- Yorke Drive Update

Meeting closed at 8.18 pm.

Chair