

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, 16 April 2026 at 6.00 pm.

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

Councillor D Darby, Councillor A Freeman, Councillor P Harris,
Councillor S Haynes, Councillor J Kellas, Councillor D Moore, Councillor
P Peacock, Councillor M Shakeshaft and Councillor K Smith

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor R Cozens and Councillor N Allen

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor M Pringle

29 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.

30 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no declarations of interest.

31 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 FEBRUARY 2026

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2026 were a correct record and signed by the Chair.

32 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN NOTTINGHAM AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Transformation & Service Improvement Officer which sought to update Members as to the latest position in respect of local government reorganisation following the submission to Government in November 2025 of the North-South Proposal (Option 1e).

The report set out that following the submission, Newark & Sherwood DC had worked with other councils, beginning to focus on the next phases of work and planning the steps required between now and the Government's decision. Details of the Government's statutory consultation were reported and how organisations and members of the public could engage in the process. The Chief Executive had undertaken drop-in sessions with staff and held online briefings with town and parish councils. It was reported that a virtual listening meeting had taken place on 27 February with councils and the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG). Members were also advised that arrangements were being made for a visit and tour by the MHCLG. Details of the LGR Programme were reported which included: the interim overarching structure; thematic workstreams; LGR principles;

internal arrangements; establishment of an LGR working group and guidance from MHCLG. The report also set out the timeline of the next steps leading up to vesting day in April 2028.

In considering the report Members raised a number of queries, one of which related to how the uncertainty of the changes were affecting staff and whether there was an increase in staff looking for alternative positions. In response, the Transformation & Service Improvement Officer advised that the Chief Executive had sought to reassure staff as much as possible. She added that the annual staff survey would be launched in the summer which would provide the opportunity to share views and concerns. A Member asked that specific questions be included in the survey so that a track of responses may be made.

In response to whether there was any budget provision for future redundancies, the Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing, who was in attendance at the meeting, advised that any redundancies resulting from the reorganisation would be at the chief officer level. She added that in the interim the work of the Council needed to continue and that most likely, when appointed to the newly established unitary authority, the new Chief Executive and Chief Officers would determine the staffing structures.

In relation to the Thematic Workstreams, a Member queried when the democratic process would be conducted and how local members would be involved in that process. The Transformation & Business Improvement Officer advised that legal & governance and Information & data protection would all be considered.

In noting that the current list of thematic workstreams appeared to be inward facing, a Member queried as to whether outward facing workstreams would be considered. In response, Members were advised that the current 9 priorities would increase and that it was an iterative list.

In response to when work would commence to align services with other local authorities, Members were advised that the Council's Business Manager – ICT & Digital Services was joint lead on such issues with an officer from the County Council. They were currently setting a base line to enable work to commence as soon as the Government's decision was announced.

A Member referred to the issue of sensible geography for the unitary authority boundaries. He noted that the Council had followed Government guidance and had not attempted to amend the current district boundaries when formulating their submission, but that the Leader had included comment that the Council would wish for future consideration to be given to keeping the whole of the current Newark constituency within the proposed Sherwood Forest unitary boundaries. The Leader, who was a Member of the Committee, stated that he would expect to push for this consideration once the shadow council had been elected to, adding that any proposed change must be operationally effective. It was suggested that the issue of sensible geography be raised with the MHCLG at their visit and tour as referred to above.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee note the progress update provided in respect of local government reorganisation.

33 ENHANCING TENANT ENGAGEMENT - NEW ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Housing Services which set out the proposed changes to the tenant engagement structure and sought Members endorsement of the proposals and onward recommendation to Full Council to amend the Constitution to reflect the changes.

The report set out that the current governance arrangements had been in place since 2021 and that following engagement with the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), a proposed new structure for tenant engagement had been co-designed, details of which were provided at paragraph 2 of the report.

In considering the report, a Member queried what measures would be put in place to ensure a balanced and wide representation. The Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing, advised that the Board’s role was to take a strategic and generic view of issues and that officers of the Council would ensure that the Board were made aware of any under-represented people.

In relation to members of the Board, a Member sought clarity on whether officers would now be voting members, as this had not been the case in the past. The Director advised that it was not the intention and that the wording in the report required amendment to say that officers would attend in a supporting role only.

Members also sought clarity as to the use of the words Member and Councillor in relation to the intended membership of the Board. The Director advised that the wording would be amended to clarify the use of Member and Councillor.

AGREED (with 10 votes for and 2 abstentions) that:

- a) the proposed changes to the Council’s tenant engagement structure as set out in section 2 of the report be endorsed;
- b) the changes to the constitution be recommended for approval to Full Council on 19 May 2026; and
- c) the contents of Appendix A and the recognition proposals to Cabinet on 21 April 2026 for consideration be noted.

34 REVIEW OF MEMBER/OFFICER RELATIONS PROTOCOL

The Committee considered the report presented by the Council’s Monitoring Officer which sought to provide Members with an update on the work undertaken by the Working Group to update the Member/Officer Protocol.

The report set out that the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Working Group had been established to look at a number of documents, including the Member/Officer Protocol. The amended document had been circulated to members of the Working Group and no further amendments had been proposed.

In considering the report, a Member expressed his concern that no reference had been included to highlight that there was a duty on officers to ensure that information they give to Members was clear, accurate and followed through. The Monitoring Officer advised that she would insert additional text to reflect this.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee recommend the updated Member/Officer Protocol, subject to the inclusion of additional text to reflect that information given to Members by Officers was clear, accurate and followed through, to Full Council for adoption.

35 REVIEW OF THE LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Council's Monitoring Officer which sought Members' approval to refer an amended Code of Corporate Governance to Full Council for adoption.

The report set out the background to the establishment of a Local Code of Corporate Governance based in CIPFA/SOLACE Guidance and the amendments necessary to accurately reflect the current governance arrangements of the Council. It was proposed that the document be reviewed annually but that interim in-year amendments be delegated to the Monitoring Officer.

In considering the report, a Member queried how a challenge could be made if the Constitution was not correctly followed. He added that an incorrect decision had been made by the Chair of a Committee but that it was not challenged. The Monitoring Officer advised that she would require further detail to advise on the issue and agreed to speak to the Member following the close of the meeting.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the updated Code of Corporate Governance which forms part of the Councils Constitution, be recommended to Full Council for adoption;
- b) the Local Code of Corporate Governance would be reviewed annually going forward be noted;
- c) delegation from Council to the Monitoring Officer to make any necessary amendments to the document between annual reviews, if necessary, to reflect changes to governance arrangements be supported.

Councillor Jack Kellas left the meeting at 19:03 hours.

36 UPDATE OF CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

The Committee considered the report presented by the Council's Monitoring Officer which sought to provide an update for Members on the current position in relation to Code of Conduct Complaints.

The report set out the current situation with the number of ongoing complaints at the time the agenda was published, noting that this was 20 in number. Appendix 1 listed those complaints, providing detail of when the complaint was made, whether it was in relation to NSDC or a parish, whether it was made by a Councillor or a Non-Councillor and the current status. Appendix 2 of the report listed those complaints that had been completed since 5 February 2026. In presenting the report, the Monitoring Officer advised that she was unable to provide Appendix 3 as there were no concluded complaints where an informal resolution had been concluded.

In considering the report, Members agreed that complainants and the subject of the complaint be communicated with, so they were kept updated as to what was happening.

In response to a query as to how long the complainant and/or the subject of the complaint get to agree to an informal resolution, the Monitoring Officer advised that if no agreement was reached, consideration would be given to moving to an investigation in full. If the findings were in turn not accepted, the process would move on to a hearing. Should the outcome of the hearing not be accepted, it could potentially lead to a further breach of the code of conduct. The Monitoring Officer added, that on occasion a timeline for acceptance of a finding may be set, but this was not always the case.

A Member suggested that a change be made to who the complainant was. Rather than it saying Non-Councillor consideration be given to saying Member of the Public and Officer of the Council.

A Member queried whether it was possible to be informed as to the nature of the complaints made as this would enable Members to see any emerging patterns, perhaps by the use of a key or code. The Monitoring Officer advised that further information would be reported to the next meeting of the Committee as the information included in this meeting's agenda had only been compiled from February 2026.

AGREED (unanimously) that the contents of the report be noted.

37 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2026/2027 MUNICIPAL YEAR

NOTED the Work Programme for the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee for the 2026/2027 Municipal Year.

Meeting closed at 7.20 pm.

Chair