

MEETING OF THE CABINET

TUESDAY, 3 FEBRUARY 2026

ADDITIONAL PAPERS

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Agenda Item 9

CABINET, 3 FEBRUARY 2026

Addendum to Item 9 – 2026/27 General Fund Budget and Council Tax

When the meeting agenda was published, the 2026/27 Budget public consultation was still ongoing.

The consultation closed on 1 February. Appendix 9 now includes all responses, and Appendix 10 summarises the budget survey results.

Three additional responses outside the survey are also attached for Cabinet's review.

Appendix 11 – Ashby Town Council Response to NWLDC Budget Consultation

Appendix 12 – Ratepayer Response to the Draft Budget 2026/27

Appendix 13 – Comments from Scrutiny Committee

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Responses Overview Closed

Responses

621 

Average Time

16:36 

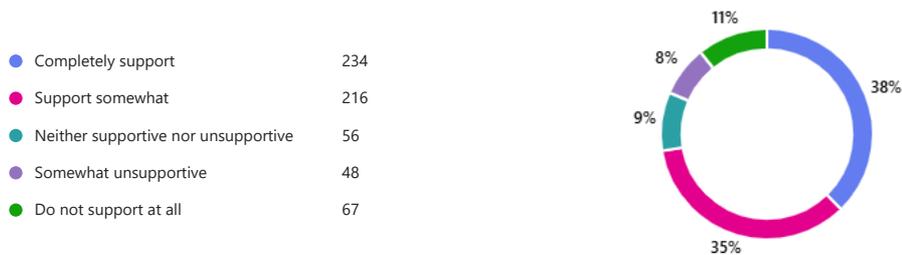
Duration

22 Days 

1. How confident are you that you understand where the council's money comes from?



2. Do you support the idea of a Legacy Fund for community projects?



3. Please provide any comments regarding your support for the Legacy Fund.

253
Responses

Latest Responses
"Focus on creating green spaces, improving walking paths etc for community well ..."
...

4. Do you agree that community groups should provide match funding for Legacy Fund projects?



5. Please provide any comments regarding match funding for Legacy Fund projects.

250
Responses

Latest Responses

"I do not think the community should have to contribute, we pay enough tax as it ... "
"Some communities may not be able to afford to match fund, these need more su... "

...

6. What types of projects would you like to see funded through the Legacy Fund?

381
Responses

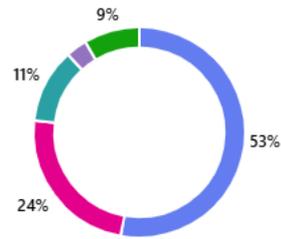
Latest Responses

"Sporting facilities or public transport"
"Restoration of community buildings and areas."
"Projects for our water ways and canals, green spaces, wildlife preservation. Litter ... "

...

7. Do you agree that it is important to invest in long-term community projects and council services before the district council merges into a unitary authority?

● Completely agree	328
● Agree somewhat	149
● Neither agree nor disagree	71
● Somewhat disagree	20
● Do not agree at all	53



8. Please provide any comments regarding investing in Long-term community projects and council services before the district council merges

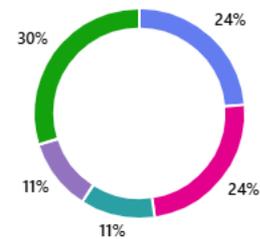
236
Responses

Latest Responses

...

9. Do you agree with the proposed Council Tax increase of 2.75%?

● Completely agree	147
● Agree somewhat	149
● Neither agree nor disagree	71
● Somewhat disagree	69
● Do not agree at all	185



10. Please provide any comments regarding the council tax increase of 2.75%

351
Responses

Latest Responses

"No just no! We pay enough as it!!!!!!"

...

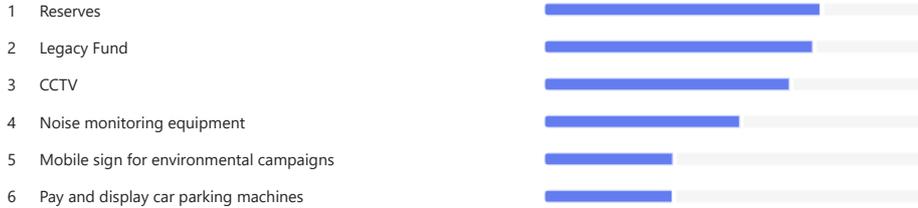
11. If you disagree, what alternative would you suggest to increase our ongoing income to maintain essential services?

213
Responses

Latest Responses

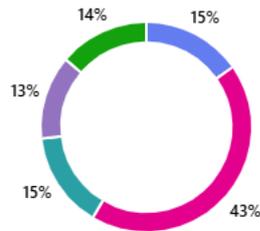
"Cut costs on unnecessary spending such as replacing silly cardboard sacks and ri... "
 "Smaller increase bearing in mind rises expected from other services. Cost of living..."
 ...

12. Which of these areas should be our top priority for investment? (Please rank in order of priority)



13. Do you agree with our proposals to invest one-off capital money in existing services as listed above?

● Completely agree	95
● Agree somewhat	268
● Neither agree nor disagree	92
● Somewhat disagree	80
● Do not agree at all	86



14. Please provide any comments regarding our proposal to invest in one-off capital money in existing services

221
Responses

Latest Responses

...

15. Are there any proposed capital investments listed above that you do not agree with? Please state which.

234
Responses

Latest Responses

"Signage funding"
 "Mobile sign for environmental campaign, seriously?! That money should be spent..."
 "Mobile Sign"
 ...

16. Why do you not agree with this investment?

211
Responses

Latest Responses

"Seems entirely unnecessary compared to other proposals"
 "£20,000 on a mobile sign is stupid. That money could go into improving services ... "
 "I doubt a mobile sign saying 'don't throw litter' doing the job! Enforcement and e..."
 ...

17. Which of these areas should be our top priority for investment? (Please rank in order of priority)



18. If you believe other areas should be our top priority for investment (please specify)

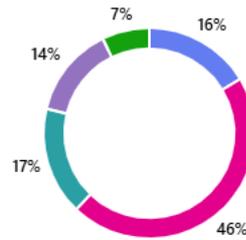
618
Responses

Latest Responses

"No"
"A"
"Na"
...

19. Do you agree with our proposals to invest revenue money in existing services as listed above?

Completely agree	102
Agree somewhat	284
Neither agree nor disagree	103
Somewhat disagree	87
Do not agree at all	45



20. Please provide any comments regarding our proposals to invest revenue money in existing services

179
Responses

Latest Responses

...

21. Are there any proposed revenue investments listed above that you do not agree with? Please state which.

178
Responses

Latest Responses

"Free parking"
"£7000 on public toilets"
...

22. Why do you not agree with this investment?

155
Responses

Latest Responses

"Why should parking charges be given for free in one town but increased in the ot..."
"No one is using public toilets for anything other than drug taking. Absolutely poi..."
...

23. Do you have any final comments on the proposals in the draft budget?

156
Responses

Latest Responses
...

24. Please insert your Postcode in this format - LE67 3EP

567
Responses

Latest Responses
"Le65 2rb"
"LE67 1FX"
"DE74 2HS"
...

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Budget consultation 2026/27`

Introduction

The consultation on budget proposals for 2026/27 ran from 15 January to 1 February.

- 621 people chose to respond to the survey

The survey was publicised widely:

- Dedicated web page established, with an alert on all pages of the NWLDC website. 3,206 people visited the web page
- 1 x news release resulting in four pieces of media coverage (BBC Leicester, Leicestershire Live, Ashby Nub News, Coalville Times)
- 3 x customer emails to those subscribed to receive surveys and consultations (total distribution:
 - Email 1: Opened by 28,662 people, 1,372 people clicked on the link
 - Email 2: Opened by 27,785 people, 1,171 people clicked on the link
 - Email 3: Opened by 23,981 people, 1,066 people clicked on the link
- 2 x Facebook posts
 - Post 1: Reached 2,984 people
 - Post 2: Reached 1,923 people
- Screen in the Customer Centre viewed by all visitors to the centre.

Summary of quantitative responses

Confidence in council income

- Most respondents (93%) said they are very confident or somewhat confident that they understand where the council's money comes from

Legacy Fund

- 73% of respondents either completely support or support somewhat the idea of a Legacy Fund for projects, with a further 9% saying they were neither supportive nor unsupportive
- 19% of respondents were either somewhat unsupportive or do not support the idea at all
- In relation to match funding, 54% of people stated that they either completely agree or agree somewhat that groups should match fund
- 29% stated that they did not agree at all or somewhat disagreed that groups should match fund, with a further 18% remaining neutral on the issue
- When asked whether the council should invest in long-term projects ahead of local government reorganisation, 77% of respondents either completely agreed or agreed somewhat
- 12% somewhat disagreed or did not agree at all with the idea of investing in long-term projects before a new unitary is created
- 11% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the idea

Council tax

- 48% of respondents said they completely agree or agree somewhat with the proposed council tax increase
- 41% said they somewhat disagreed or did not agree at all with the proposed increase
- 11% said they neither agreed nor disagreed

Capital investment

- 58% of respondents completely agreed or agreed somewhat with the proposed capital investment
- 27% of respondents said they somewhat disagreed or did not agree at all with the capital proposals
- A further 15% were neutral on the matter

Revenue investment

- 58% of respondents completely agreed or agreed somewhat with the proposed revenue investment
- 21% said they somewhat disagreed or did not agree at all with the revenue proposals
- A further 17% were neutral on the matter

Summary of qualitative responses

Overview

The qualitative responses from the budget survey highlight concerns about fairness, priorities, and value for money.

Many respondents wrote that the council should focus on essential services, such as street cleaning, litter, safety, and support for vulnerable people, before funding new initiatives.

Some comments mentioned clearer transparency and equitable investment across the district.

The most consistent concerns relate to car parking charges, particularly the combination of free parking in Coalville and higher charges elsewhere, which people view as unfair and harmful to local high streets.

Waste and recycling proposals also attract some criticism, with respondents questioning costs, practicality and reduced income under the new system.

Support for the council tax increase was slightly higher than opposition to it, with supporters accepting the increase is needed to protect services.

Of those who oppose the increase and chose to comment, they cite household financial pressures and the council's growing reserves as the reason for their objection.

Legacy Fund

General comments about the principle of a Legacy Fund

Of the 621 respondents who answered the question 'Do you support the idea of a Legacy Fund for community projects?', 253 chose to comment when asked 'Please provide any comments regarding your support for the Legacy Fund'.

Several themes emerged from these comments:

1. Essential services should be prioritised

A major theme is that the council should prioritise core services, such as street cleaning, litter, weed removal and basic maintenance, as well as services for vulnerable people, like supported housing.

2. Scepticism towards council spending

Some comments expressed opinions of 'wasted' money on past projects e.g. Coalville regeneration and in Measham. There was some concern that the Legacy Fund could become hidden, misused or diverted during local government reorganisation, and comments were submitted suggesting that spending must be transparent, tightly monitored and audited.

3. Fairness and geographic distribution

Those respondents who live outside of Coalville expressed a desire that the legacy fund should seek to address rural villages like Castle Donington, Diseworth, Worthington and areas north of Coalville.

4. Support for community projects

There was support in the comments for community projects, so long as they really are long-lasting. There was particular support for projects that improve quality of life, support active travel, improve youth facilities, or focus on green spaces and heritage.

Specific suggested areas include:

- Cycling / walking routes (with safety improvements)
- Green and biodiversity projects
- Upgraded community buildings
- Facilities for older people
- Youth sports, recreation, and social spaces
- Heritage preservation
- Arts and cultural facilities (e.g., Century Theatre).

5. Transparency

Some respondents used comment to ask for:

- A simpler application process
- Clear assessment criteria
- Public involvement in decision-making
- Robust monitoring and safeguards against “consultant waste”, fraud or poor value for money
- Transparent long-term planning.

Comments regarding match funding of Legacy Fund

Of the 621 people who responded to the question ‘Do you agree that community groups should provide match funding for Legacy Fund projects?’, 250 people chose to provide a comment when asked ‘Please provide any comments regarding match funding for Legacy Fund projects.’

Supportive of match funding (but with comments)

Most comments are show that respondents believe match funding is positive but only if the community group can afford it and the threshold is realistic.

- Some respondents wrote that match funding shows commitment and proves a group is serious about its project
- They believe it encourages community ownership of the project

- They believe it helps to stretch the Legacy Fund further, allowing more projects to benefit
- Some say a lower contribution than 50% (e.g., 25%) would be realistic
- Some think certain projects (e.g., private sports clubs) should contribute.

Not supportive or concerned about match funding

A smaller number of respondents are not supportive of match funding, with respondents believing that it could exclude those who need the fund most and may be unworkable in many communities.

- Smaller or less affluent groups will be excluded
- 50% match funding is seen as too high
- Cost-of-living pressures affecting group fundraising efforts
- Equity concerns that match funding could penalise poorer areas and may prevent projects that need most support from going ahead
- Burden on volunteers, who would have to give time and money (and time to raise money)
- Community groups already pay council tax
- Administrative difficulty with fundraising in terms of grant applications and capacity in smaller groups and

Neutral comments / suggestions

Some comments don't take a side but suggest there isn't a 'one size fits all' solution and that the Legacy Fund should consider:

- Flexibility depending on the project
- Means testing
- Consideration of deprivation levels
- Assessment of project impact
- Allowing exceptions where groups cannot realistically contribute
- Recognising volunteer time as an in-kind contribution.

Ideas for Legacy Fund

When asked 'What types of projects would you like to see funded through the Legacy Fund?' 381 people chose to comment.

The top ten ideas for Legacy Fund projects are as follows (some of which are not directly in the district council's remit):

1. Improve walking and cycling routes (safe, offroad, joined-up)
Safe crossings, off road trails, better maintained paths
2. More youth clubs and spaces for teenagers
Especially in Coalville, Ashby, Castle Donington and rural villages
3. Community buildings / halls / hubs
New or upgraded buildings for meetings, social groups, warm spaces, classes, heritage groups etc.
4. Repair and upgrade parks and playgrounds
Better equipment, safer play areas, more green spaces, all-weather surfacing. Maintenance of existing facilities
5. Enhanced leisure facilities
e.g. indoor bowls, leisure facility in the north of the district, better timetables and accessibility at existing leisure centres
6. Environment and nature projects
Tree planting, green corridors, biodiversity recovery, habitat restoration
7. Safe walking routes
Particularly where footpaths have been cut by roads
8. Children's activities
SEN, after-school clubs, toddler groups, safe indoor and outdoor spaces
9. Mental health and wellbeing support
For adults, men, carers, young people, to tackle loneliness
10. Improve community cleanliness
Bins, litter, village / town clean-up programmes

Other ideas included:

- Regenerating derelict or disused buildings for community use
- Support for local sports clubs

- Better roads, safety improvements, pothole repairs
- Improved public transport links
- Community events and festivals
- Projects supporting elderly residents
- Improved local retail areas and town centre appearance
- Creating larger strategic green spaces
- Heritage preservation and cultural projects
- Support for small local businesses.

Comments about creation of a Legacy Fund in relation to local government reorganisation

Support for spending money allocated to the Legacy Fund now

Most respondents to this question support investing or committing the Legacy Fund now, before the 2028 move to a unitary council, driven by a fear that North West Leicestershire will lose funding, influence and local focus after reorganisation.

These respondents want to guarantee the investment stays local and make sure that long-term projects are underway before structural change happens.

There is concern amongst some respondents that funds will ‘disappear’ into a bigger pot, that local needs will be diluted by regional priorities and that North West Leicestershire will be deprioritised in favour of larger or wealthier areas such as Loughborough, Melton or Rutland.

Concern about spending money allocated to the Legacy Fund now

A smaller minority of respondents believe this money should only be spent once the council has clarity on the future structure post-reorganisation, believing that spending before reorganisation could lead to waste or unsustainable projects.

These people believe that uncertainty about local authority structures makes long-term commitments risky and that projects may later be stopped when the new authorities take over.

Common themes across all comments

Almost all comments emphasised the need for projects to be robust, long-term and sustainable, with broad benefits for the community.

There is general concern around local government reorganisation in terms of losing local control, identity and representation, and a worry that decisions will favour more politically influential areas.

A large number of comments seek assurance that money allocated to North West Leicestershire is spent within the district and that any projects should have accountability beyond 2028.

Council tax increase

General comments about the proposed council tax increase

The majority (48%) of respondents to this question are in support of the proposed council tax rise.

These respondents believe the rise is small, reasonable or in line with inflation, and understand that councils face rising costs like everyone else.

There was a smaller, but clear, group of respondents who oppose the increase, primarily due to household financial pressures, concerns about the cost of living and the large reserves the council has.

Alternative income suggestions

When asked 'If you disagree [with the proposed council tax increase], what alternative would you suggest to increase our ongoing income to maintain essential services?', 213 respondents chose to comment.

Most respondents to this question believe the council should find alternative income by improving efficiency, cutting waste and using existing resources, rather than increasing council tax.

The most common alternative suggestions were:

- Cut waste, inefficiency and unnecessary projects
- Use reserves, higher Government grant and the Legacy Fund

- Generate income from council assets and commercial activity
- Grow the local economy to increase business rates
- Use targeted fees and enforcement instead of blanket tax rises.

There is a recurring theme in the comments, with respondents believing residents already pay enough.

A majority of respondents believe that a small increase is reasonable, as inflation makes rises unavoidable, but services must be maintained

However, a number of comments add that the council must prove value for money, that improvements must be visible and spending should be better targeted, with protection crucial for vulnerable households.

Capital investment

General comments on proposed capital investment

Of the 621 overall survey respondents, 221 chose to provide comments 'regarding our proposals to invest in one-off capital money in existing services'.

From these comments, a series of themed emerged.

Of all the proposals, CCTV has the most support and the mobile sign has the least. Pay-and-display replacement is seen as unjustified by some who chose to comment.

Respondents to this question believe the following things should be prioritised:

- Roads and potholes (not a district council service, but this comment appears a lot in our survey)
- Town centres supported
- Parking made fair and accessible
- Litter and fly-tipping properly enforced, not monitored
- Clear evidence that any capital investment has real community benefit

Objections to proposed capital investment

234 people responded to the question 'Are there any proposed capital investments listed above that you do not agree with? Please state which.'

Respondents disagreed with the following (ranked most frequently mentioned to least frequently mentioned).

1. Pay and display machine replacement

2. Mobile environmental sign
3. Noise monitoring equipment
4. CCTV upgrades
5. Legacy Fund spending
6. Reserves / business rates reserve use.

Reasons for objections to proposed capital investment

211 respondents chose to provide detail on the reasons they objected to the proposed capital spending.

Many respondents describe the proposals - especially the mobile environmental sign, noise monitoring equipment, and pay and display machine replacement - as a 'waste of money'.

This question also generated comments about spending that should benefit the whole district, with many respondents expressing frustration that spending is concentrated in Coalville and a lack of comparable investment in Ashby, Castle Donington, Kegworth and rural areas.

The most frequently cited objection across all categories was opposition to pay-and-display machine replacement, with respondents stating:

- Existing machines are fine
- £40,000 cost seen as excessive
- Fears about app-only, card-only or smart phone-dependent machines (exclusion of older people, digital exclusion)
- Parking charges seen as harming local high streets
- Calls for free parking instead
- Frustration that Coalville has free parking while Ashby does not

When describing opposition to investment in the mobile environmental signs, reasons include:

- Seen as ineffective i.e. litterers won't change their behaviour
- Signs are unattractive
- Many people have not seen the existing signs
- Cheaper alternatives exist (social media, static signage, education)

A lot of comments in this section related to services residents believe should be prioritised that are outside the remit of the district council, namely:

- Road repairs and potholes
- Flooding and drainage
- Public services like healthcare, schools, social care

- Youth facilities
- Policing and enforcement.

Priorities for capital investment

We asked survey respondents 'If you believe other areas should be our top priority for investment (please specify)'. 618 people chose to provide a comment in response to this question.

Ranked in order, according to frequency of mentions, respondent's top alternative priorities for investment were:

1. Waste, recycling system improvements and better collections
2. Street cleaning, litter removal and fly-tipping prevention
3. Parking (free parking, fair charges, more spaces, enforcement)
4. Community safety, crime reduction and CCTV
5. Parks, open spaces, green areas and environmental protection
6. Town centre regeneration (especially Coalville and Ashby)
7. Social housing, homelessness support and quality of council housing
8. More enforcement officers (parking, ASB, environmental offences)
9. Leisure facilities, sports pitches and community recreation spaces, parks and children's play equipment.

A number of things received a high level of support for investment, but lie outside of the district council's remit:

- Roads, potholes and general highway maintenance
- Youth services, youth clubs and activities for young people
- Public transport improvements (buses, rail links, school transport)
- Social care and health-related investment
- Traffic calming, speed cameras and safer roads
- Better street lighting for safety and visibility
- Flooding and drainage improvements
- Investment in local shops, high streets and support for small businesses

Revenue investment

General comments on proposed revenue investment

Of the 621 overall survey respondents, 179 chose to provide comments 'regarding our proposals to invest in revenue money in existing services'.

From these comments, a series of themed emerged.

Car parking charges

The strongest objections were to car parking charge increases, with respondents overwhelmingly opposed to any increases. There are strong calls for free or low-cost parking, or at minimum harmonised charges across the district.

Key concerns include:

- Damage to high street footfall
- Coalville receiving free two hours- parking while Ashby and other towns face increases is seen as unfair and unequal
- Many say people will simply go to Swadlincote or Fosse Park, where parking is free
- Respondents believe increased charges will lead to more on-street parking, causing congestion and safety issues

Inconsistency of investment

Another theme coming through in this question is widespread frustration about perceived unfairness towards Ashby and other towns, with many respondents believing that NWLDC favours Coalville, especially regarding free parking, facilities and investment.

Waste and recycling

Investment in waste and recycling proposals cause mixed reactions

Some respondents question or oppose the waste-related investment proposals, with key objections being:

- Investment in existing refuse lorries ahead of them being replaced next year
- Moving to mixed recycling when it reduces income / recycling quality
- Concerns about recycling boxes blowing away and littering streets.

Objections to proposed revenue investment

We asked survey respondents whether there were any proposed revenue investments listed above that they did not agree with. 178 respondents chose to provide an answer to this question.

Respondents disagreed with the following (ranked most frequently mentioned to least frequently mentioned).

1. Parking charge increases district-wide

2. Coalville free parking (due to unequal treatment across the district)
3. Waste and recycling (investment in bin lorries and containers)
4. Public toilet redecoration
5. Burial fee increases.

Reasons for objections to proposed revenue investment

155 respondents chose to provide detail on the reasons they objected to the proposed revenue spending.

Car parking charges

In relation to car parking charges, which was the main investment people objected to, the following reasons were given:

- Reduce footfall in Ashby and other towns and not being equitable with Coalville
- Drive shoppers to free-parking alternatives (Fosse Park, supermarkets, Swadlincote)
- Damage local businesses and the high street
- Encourage dangerous or inconsiderate parking in residential streets
- Penalise workers on low incomes who must drive.

Waste and recycling

When considering investment in waste and recycling, respondents didn't think that £175,000 spent on repairing bin lorries that will be replaced soon was justified, and had financial concerns about losing recycling income under a mixed recycling system.

Public toilets

Some respondents queried the investment in public toilets, not believing that this should be a priority and thinking that the same could be achieved for less money.

Final comments

We gave respondents the chance to provide any additional comments in a free text box at the end of the survey.

The topics most mentioned by the 156 respondents to this question are as follows:

1. Car parking policy (charges, fairness, free parking in Coalville)
2. Fairness across towns (Ashby, Castle Donington, villages vs Coalville)

3. Waste and recycling services (new bins, purple bags, costs, income loss)
4. Council tax increases (opposition, reliance on reserves, value for money)
5. Community safety (CCTV, ASB, police presence, lighting)

The two strongest themes coming through in this question, and in the rest of the survey are

1. Frustration about car parking charges
A major theme is objection to free parking in Coalville and higher charges elsewhere, which is seen as unfair, harmful to Ashby, and damaging to local businesses. Some support Coalville's free parking, but most call for consistency.
2. Calls for greater fairness across the district
Calls for investment outside of Coalville.

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Ashby Town Council Response to NWLDC Budget Consultation

1. Legacy Fund

Ashby Town Council supports the proposed establishment of a Legacy Fund.

However, we believe that it should be substantially larger than currently envisaged, considering the large levels of reserves forecast over the next three years. A fund of £4m and a maximum award of £500k, with potential to top up in next year's budget, would be much more likely to facilitate delivery of the type of Project needed.

Also, it is essential to ensure that the funds are distributed fairly around the District taking into account the considerable funding for Coalville regeneration projects proposed elsewhere in the capital programme (£7.1m over three years, 40% of General Fund capital budget).

The awarding mechanism must be fair and transparent with published scores against pre-agreed criteria which have cross-party support.

We do not support a requirement for match funding. The availability and degree of match funding could be considered in the scoring of projects but should not be a prerequisite as this would rule out a significant number of potential bidding groups and projects. Of course, for projects with costs above the maximum grant level proof of sufficient additional funding to ensure completion, including an adequate contingency, would be essential.

Projects should be sufficiently ambitious to ensure a lasting legacy for NWLDC. They should predominantly involve building, improving or acquiring physical infrastructure, though funding for feasibility studies and design stages for such projects should be included with the chance of following up with a larger award for construction if feasibility proves positive.

2. Investment in Community Projects and Services

The government's Fair Funding Review has provided NWLDC with a wonderful opportunity to leave a significant legacy both in terms of long-term community projects and improved services. It is important speedily to establish a higher than the current standard for the Council's services with a view to ensuring that is taken as the benchmark for service delivery by the new Unitary council going forward. This should apply across the board to council housing, planning, enforcement, community support, leisure provision and refuse, waste and recycling services. The council also needs to up its investment towards achieving Net Zero for its daily activities, across its property portfolio and its council housing.

We welcome the announcements of additional capital expenditure in existing services made since publication of the original budget, particularly the Concurrent Grant scheme for closed churchyards, the additional Community Focus Officer, and the reinstatement of the Age UK and Ashby Museum grants and the funding of the next stage of the feasibility studies into Mine Water Heating. However all but the latter scheme should be added to the base revenue stream to ensure that they are maintained following LGR.

3. Council tax

It is advisable for councils in general to seek to increase their council tax by around the annual level of inflation. This ensures that services can be adequately maintained and improved where needed though efficiency savings should always be pursued. We understand that 2.75% is close to the maximum allowed by the current rules given that increases in special expenses must be taken into account and it is well below current inflation.

NWLDC put itself into extreme financial jeopardy by pursuing a council tax freeze for a significant period, as it allowed its revenue funding stream to become increasingly reliant on central funding and business rate income. This situation has only been alleviated by a change in central government and the generous 3-year award received this year. This situation must not be allowed to reoccur.

4. General Fund Capital Programme

The establishment of an enhanced legacy fund (see above) should be a top priority for the capital programme, but this should not be to the detriment of the other capital investments included in the budget.

We understand that the council has announced a parking review and possible introduction of a pay on exit system. There should be no investment in new payment machines until that review is completed and consulted upon though inclusion of an appropriate sum in the budget is prudent. All replacement machines should include a cash payment option for those without credit cards or smart phones and revenue investment is required for the staff to service this facility.

The parking review should also seriously consider capital investment in new or extended car parking locations including multi-storey or underground, particularly in Ashby which may be losing the Co-op carpark.

The forecast level of reserves appears more than adequate to include further important capital infrastructure investments across the District as was envisaged in the district wide regeneration framework, published in December 2024. These should balance the current heavy bias towards schemes around Coalville town centre. Funding for implementation of the highest priority parts of the LCWIP would be particularly welcome, especially the much-needed off road connection between Ashby and Hicks Lodge, as well as investment in the Ashby Canal and Moira Furnace.

We hope that any unspent funds allocated to Moira Furnace in last year's capital budget are carried forward.

It is essential that adequate funding from reserves is made available for achieving Net Zero in Council owned property. This includes property directly occupied by the council and that rented or leased to third parties. Speedy development and implementation of appropriate schemes for solar generation, improved insulation, non-fossil fuel heating and cost reduction through use of battery storage are required.

It is particularly important to reduce the use of fossil fuels at the Council's leisure centres. We welcome the recently announced addition to the budget of funding

for the next feasibility phase of the mine water CHP scheme. The potential to use mine water as an energy source needs to be fast tracked as it has significant implications for the Coalville and Whitwick Leisure centre in the first instance and much wider potential benefits across the District, much of which is located above flooded mine workings.

The council also needs to speed up its migration to electric vehicles for its own use wherever possible.

We are shocked to see an additional £2.4m is needed to complete Coalville's Marlborough Centre refurbishment. This indicates a past failure in due diligence by NWLDC. A similar large overrun also occurred on the Marlborough Square project. These funds could have been invested elsewhere in the District where they could have made a big difference. We trust that such failures will not be allowed to happen again.

5. General Fund Revenue Budget

All four of the areas for revenue investment mentioned for prioritisation in the consultation are equally deserving but, whilst investment in car parking is certainly required, we strongly oppose the current parking proposals.

No changes to parking arrangements should be made until the parking review, recently announced by Cllr Wyatt, is completed and consulted open, and this review should cover the whole District and include both revenue and capital investment. It should ensure that all areas of the District are treated equitably

Both a 10% increase in parking charges and introduction of two hours free parking in more Coalville car parks are completely unacceptable in their obvious bias against Ashby. They would result in those visiting Ashby having to pay even more for their first two hours, effectively subsidising the free parking in Coalville.

Coalville already has one-hour free parking in several council car parks and two hours free parking at the Market Hall and the private Belvoir shopping centre, which have plenty of spare capacity. Ashby's parking arrangements need urgent reconsideration with a positive incentive for long stay at Money Hill by reducing the charge and reassignment of current town centre long stay spaces.

We strongly welcome the closed churchyard scheme which has recently been added to the budget, as it will address the current inequitable double taxation which has been imposed upon Ashby, Castle Donington and Kegworth. It is essential that the mechanism for drawing down from the fund is designed and agreed swiftly but with proper consultation with the affected Town and Parish councils and ward members. We note that it is currently listed as a capital project and point out that it should cover revenue costs of maintenance as well as capital items. We also question the short-term funding of the scheme from reserves. It needs to be incorporated into the base revenue funding stream to ensure its continuation beyond LGR.

We also welcome that the Community Focus team is to be restored to 3 officers plus a team leader and assistant through funding from reserves. The Community Focus team provide an excellent service and are a valuable conduit to Town and Parish councils but has been eroded by recent cuts. This team, at full strength, needs to be funded for the long term rather than on a temporary basis as currently proposed.

Similarly, the Age UK befriending service and Ashby Museum grants are welcomed but should both be incorporated into the base revenue stream to ensure their continuation after LGR.

We also welcome the inclusion of the Net Zero officer post into the ongoing revenue expenditure on salaries

6. HRA

The consultation document does not seek input on the Council's housing budget. This omission is unfortunate.

We note that NWLDC continues to suffer a net loss of properties through Right to Buy despite its New Supply programme. This trend needs to be reversed particularly as 100% RTB proceeds can now be used for stock replenishment and RTB discounts have been significantly reduced by the new government. We welcome the increased New Supply budget this year but believe it should be larger and at least adequate to maintain the overall level of council housing stock.

We welcome the increase in investment in housing repairs, stock improvements and Net Zero work in this budget.

Ratepayer Response to the Draft Budget 2026/27

As a local ratepayer, I welcome the opportunity to comment on the Council's Draft Budget for 2026/27 and the associated Cabinet reports. My comments focus on transparency, value for money, service impact, and the long-term financial sustainability of the Council.

1. Transparency and Accessibility

The cover report provides a clear outline of the four budget documents being considered. However, as a resident and council taxpayer, I find it difficult to understand the overall financial position without a concise summary of:

- The main pressures facing the Council
- The key assumptions behind the budget
- The headline changes in spending and income

A short, plain-English overview would make the process more accessible to the public and improve confidence in the Council's financial management.

2. Value for Money and Efficiency

As a ratepayer, I expect the Council to demonstrate that it is:

- Reducing avoidable costs
- Improving efficiency
- Protecting frontline services
- Avoiding unnecessary borrowing

I would welcome clearer evidence of:

- What efficiency savings have already been achieved
- What further savings are planned
- How the Council ensures that service reductions are a last resort

Residents need assurance that every pound collected in Council Tax is being used responsibly.

3. Council Tax and Affordability

Any proposed increase in Council Tax must be justified with:

- A clear explanation of why it is necessary
- Evidence that alternative options have been explored

- An assessment of the impact on households already facing cost-of-living pressures

Ratepayers deserve transparency about how much additional revenue the increase will generate and how it will be used.

4. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Rent Setting

For tenants, rent increases must be:

- Fair
- Justified
- Clearly linked to improvements in housing quality

Residents want reassurance that:

- Repairs and maintenance will improve
- Investment in housing stock is being prioritised
- The HRA remains financially sustainable without placing undue burden on tenants

5. Capital Strategy and Borrowing

The Capital Strategy should clearly explain:

- How much the Council plans to borrow
- The risks associated with borrowing
- How the Council will ensure affordability in future years

Ratepayers need confidence that borrowing is being used for essential, value-adding projects rather than discretionary spending.

6. Risks and Financial Resilience

The Council should provide a clear, public-facing explanation of:

- The main financial risks
- How these risks are being managed
- The adequacy of reserves

Residents want assurance that the Council is prepared for unexpected pressures and is not relying on one-off funding to balance the budget.

Conclusion

As a ratepayer, I appreciate the complexity of setting a balanced budget in challenging financial circumstances. However, I believe the Council must strengthen:

- Transparency
- Public communication
- Evidence of value for money
- Long-term financial planning

Resident within North West Leicestershire District Council

Name and address redacted

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NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET – TUESDAY, 13 JANUARY 2026



Title of Report	SCRUTINY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CABINET	
Presented by	Councillor N Rushton Infrastructure Portfolio Holder PH Briefed <input type="checkbox"/>	
Background Papers	Corporate Scrutiny Committee – 4 December 2025	Public Report: Yes
	Community Scrutiny Committee – 11 December 2025	Key Decision: No
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications arising from this report as all recommendations will be considered as part of the Council's budget setting process for 2026/27.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications		
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications		
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	To consider the recommendations made by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and Community Scrutiny Committee at their meetings in December.	
Reason for Decision	To comply with the Cabinet/Scrutiny Protocol for Cabinet to formally consider scrutiny recommendations.	
Recommendations	FOR CABINET TO CONSIDER THE SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS AND OFFICER RESPONSES AS DETAILED WITHIN THE REPORT.	

1.0 CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 4 DECEMBER 2025

1.1 The Corporate Scrutiny Committee considered the annual Zero Carbon update report at its meeting on 4 December. During discussions in relation to the investigations into the use of mine water around Whitwick and Coalville Leisure Centre to provide low carbon heat, Members stressed the importance of the project and strongly felt funding should be made available for the next phase of feasibility studies. They also discussed the funding of the Climate Change Programme Manager post.

1.2 RECOMMENDATION 1

THAT CABINET MAKE THE PROVISION TO FUND THE £80,000 COST OF THE STAGE 3 FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE MINE WATER HEATING SOLUTION AS PART OF THE 2026/27 BUDGET PROPOSALS.

1.3 RECOMMENDATION 2

TO ENSURE SUFFICIENT FINANCES FOR FUTURE ZERO CARBON PROJECTS, THAT CABINET AGREES TO:

A) INCREASE THE FUNDS IN THE ZERO CARBON RESERVE; AND

B) FINANCE THE CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRAMME MANAGER POST FROM THE GENERAL FUND ACCOUNT INSTEAD OF THE ZERO CARBON RESERVE;

AS PART OF THE 2026/27 BUDGET PROPOSALS.

2.0 COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 11 DECEMBER 2025

2.1 The Community Scrutiny Committee considered the annual leisure centres review at its meeting on 11 December. Discussions were had on the investigations into the use of mine water around Whitwick and Coalville Leisure Centre to provide low carbon heat. Reference was made to the recommendation made by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, as detailed at paragraph 1.4 above. The Community Scrutiny Committee made the same recommendation in support.

2.2 RECOMMENDATION 1

THAT CABINET MAKE THE PROVISION TO FUND THE £80,000 COST OF STAGE 3 FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE MINE WATER HEATING SOLUTIONS AS PART OF THE 2026/27 BUDGET PROPOSALS.

2.3 At its 11 December meeting, the Community Scrutiny Committee also considered the annual community grants report and discussions were had on the services provided by Age UK. It was felt that the cuts made to grant funding in previous financial years had had a detrimental impact to the service provided to the community.

2.4 RECOMMENDATION 2

THAT CABINET REINSTATES THE £22,000 GRANT FUNDING AS PART OF THE 2026/27 BUDGET PROPOSALS.

2.5 RESPONSE OF LEAD OFFICER

The Council is currently in the process of setting its budget for 2026/27. The recommendations outlined above will be taken into account as part of the wider budget proposals and cost pressures for the 2026/27 financial year. Cabinet will formally consider these matters at its meeting scheduled for 3 February 2026.

3.0 CABINET CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet is asked to consider the Scrutiny recommendations followed by the officer response, and decide which recommendations it wishes to agree, if any. Any comments and decisions made by Cabinet will be reported back to the Scrutiny Committees at their next meeting.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	- A well-run council
Policy Considerations:	None
Safeguarding:	None
Equalities/Diversity:	None
Customer Impact:	None
Economic and Social Impact:	None
Environment, Climate Change and Zero Carbon:	None
Consultation/Community/Tenant Engagement:	None
Risks:	None
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