

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
THURSDAY, 19 FEBRUARY 2026

ADDITIONAL PAPERS

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Agenda Item 10

COUNCIL, THURSDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2026

ADDENDUM TO AGENDA ITEM 10 – 2026/27 ROBUSTNESS OF BUDGET ESTIMATES

Since the publication of the agenda, Cabinet at its meeting on 17 February 2026 considered a report which set out details of the Government's Final Finance Settlement 2026/27. Cabinet also reaffirmed revisions to the budget proposals.

As a result, the report has been updated, with all amendments highlighted in red.

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL – THURSDAY, 19 FEBRUARY 2026



Title of Report	2026/27 ROBUSTNESS OF BUDGET ESTIMATES	
Presented by	Cllr Keith Merrie MBE Finance and Corporate Portfolio Holder	
Background Papers	Council 20 February 2025: Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators General Fund Budget and Council Tax 2025/26 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget and Rent Setting Corporate Scrutiny Committee 20 January 2025: Draft Budget 2026/27	Public Report: Yes
Financial Implications	In accordance with statutory requirements the report provides the Section 151 Officer's advice on the robustness of budget estimates and the adequacy of reserves in the draft budget.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	The Council's Section 151 Officer is required to prepare this report under Section 25(1) Local Government Act 2003.	
	Signed off by the Deputy Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	None.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	To advise Cabinet on the robustness of the estimates in the budget and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.	
Recommendations	THAT COUNCIL: NOTES THE S151 OFFICER'S ADVICE SET OUT IN SECTION 7 OF THIS REPORT AND CAREFULLY CONSIDERS THE CONTENT OF THIS REPORT AS PART OF APPROVING THE GENERAL FUND BUDGET REPORT 2026/27, THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2026/27 REPORT AND THE CAPITAL STRATEGY AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2026/27.	

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Section 25(1) of the Local Government Act 2003 (the “2003 Act”) requires that the Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer under the Local Government Act 1972) reports to the Council when setting its Council Tax on:
- the robustness of the estimates in the budget.
 - the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.
- 1.2 Section 25(2) of the 2003 Act requires the Council to have regard to this report in approving the budget and Council Tax.
- 1.3 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Financial Management Code reinforces this requirement stating that the statement in relation to the proposed financial reserves should consider whether the level of general reserves is appropriate for the risks (both internal and external) to which the Council is exposed and give reassurance that the authority’s financial management processes and procedures are able to manage those risks.
- 1.4 While the statutory local authority budget setting process continues to be on an annual basis, a longer-term perspective is essential if local authorities are to demonstrate their financial sustainability.

2.0 CONTEXT

- 2.1 The Council is setting its budget at a time when it continues to face a range of issues to contend with. In broad terms these can be split into three categories: economic, local government and locally in North West Leicestershire.
- 2.2 The current economic climate presents significant challenges for the Council in formulating robust and sustainable budget estimates for 2026/27. Nationally, the UK continues to experience economic uncertainty stemming from moderate GDP growth, persistent inflationary pressures, and fluctuating interest rates.
- 2.3 The cost-of-living crisis, driven by elevated energy and food prices, continues to impact both households and the Council’s own operating costs. In addition, public sector pay settlements and supply chain disruptions remain key factors contributing to financial pressures across local government.
- 2.4 These economic headwinds have a direct effect on the Council’s income streams, including council tax and business rates, as well as on the demand for local services. The Council is also facing increased costs in service delivery, particularly in areas such as contract price increases, waste management and homelessness support.
- 2.5 At the same time, local authorities have now faced over a decade without a multi-year financial settlement. In 2025, there was considerable uncertainty regarding the Council’s future funding position, particularly in light of the scheduled business rates reset for 2026/27 and the extensive consultation taking place as part of the Government’s Fair Funding Review. Consequently, the budget estimates have been prepared with prudent assumptions to ensure the Council’s financial resilience and its continued ability to deliver essential services to the community.
- 2.6 In recent years the Council has seen growth in its business rate income as new companies have moved into the area due to its location and excellent communication links. This has led

to the Council being the largest beneficiary in England from the business rates growth retention scheme.

- 2.7 This presented the Council's highest financial risk as the Government indicated that it would reset the business rates growth baseline and redistribute resources to councils across the country with a fair funding review implemented in 2026. However, the provisional finance settlement 2026/27, published on 17 December 2025, demonstrates that the Council has benefited from growth in business rates, reflecting the positive impact of new businesses moving into the area and its strategic location with excellent communication links. Further details on this are provided in a later section of this report.
- 2.8 Given the uncertainty prior to the publication of the Provisional Settlement, the financial projections and financial modelling which took place over the summer/autumn 2025 indicated that the Council would have a funding gap over both the short and medium term. On this basis, the Council sought to identify areas of savings to support a balanced budget, details of which are set out in the General Fund Budget and Council Tax 2026/27 report.
- 2.9 In the period immediately preceding the announcement of the provisional finance settlement, the Council's financial modelling indicated that North West Leicestershire would emerge as a principal beneficiary of funding under the revised funding distribution model. This positive outlook has been underpinned by a prudent approach, with the Council adjusting its forecasts to reflect identified savings and ensuring that budget growth remains sustainable, particularly beyond 2028/29.
- 2.10 It is important to note that all transitional funding will be withdrawn over the next three years; therefore, restraint must be exercised to avoid over-investment in services that could lead to financial difficulties in future years.
- 2.11 The funding available for the next three financial years provides the Council with the means to respond to rising cost and service demand pressures, especially in areas such as homelessness and waste management, whilst also replenishing reserves earmarked for the capital programme and reducing the need for borrowing.
- 2.12 Furthermore, there are opportunities to pursue additional economic investment beyond the current capital programme, including the proposal of a legacy grant scheme to support community projects. Allocations have also been made to cover transitional costs associated with potential local government reorganisation and to provide additional short-term service capacity, enabling delivery of the Council Delivery Plan objectives.
- 2.13 The Provisional Finance Settlement, set along with the work the Council has undertaken on its transformation programme to make budget savings and efficiencies over the last three years, indicates that there is sufficient funding to enable the Council to set a balanced budget not only for 2026/27, but also for the following two financial years, 2027/28 and 2028/29. The Council Delivery Plan target to be financially sustainable by 2028 should, therefore, be achieved. It should be noted that the 2028/29 financial year may fall under the jurisdiction of a new strategic authority, depending on future local government restructuring. This provides a degree of stability and confidence over the medium term, despite the evolving landscape of local government finance and structures.
- 2.14 The Government released its Final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2026/27 on 9 February 2026. This announcement included a major change to the funding formula for local authorities, which will have a considerable effect on the Council's funding beyond 2026/27.
- 2.15 The timing and nature of the Government's Final Local Government Finance Settlement announcement for 2026/27 is unprecedented. Historically, such significant revisions to the funding formula have been subject to extensive consultation and phased implementation,

allowing councils time to plan and adapt. However, the scale and immediacy of the changes introduced as well as their release so close to the Council's own budget-setting deadlines mark a departure from established practice.

- 2.16 In relation to the period from 2027/28 onwards, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government has indicated that it will continue to work closely with HM Treasury to review and refine the funding arrangements for local authorities.
- 2.17 The Settlement introduces significant reforms, including consolidation of multiple grants and the continued rollout of Fair Funding Review methodology. A key change for districts relates to Business Rates pooling, where the Government has amended the methodology used within the Funding Floor baseline, resulting in a reduced level of anticipated pooling benefit compared with the provisional figures published in December 2025. This reflects a conscious policy decision to redistribute pooled gains and ensure that resources are more evenly shared across the system, rather than concentrated in a small number of areas that have historically benefited from pooling arrangements.
- 2.18 To offset some of the turbulence associated with these reforms, the settlement introduces a more generous-than-expected "Adjustment Settlement Grant" for 2026/27. This grant provides transitional support to councils facing significant reductions in core funding as a result of the new distribution formulas and pooling changes. The rationale is to give authorities time to adjust their budgets and service plans, thereby helping to maintain balanced budget positions and avoid disruptive service cuts in the short term.
- 2.19 The Adjustment Settlement Grant is particularly important for councils that are net losers from the new arrangements, such as North West Leicestershire, as it offers a buffer against immediate financial shocks.
- 2.20 The table below provides a comparison between the final settlement announced on 9 February 2026 and the Provisional Settlement disclosed in December 2025. Without the Adjustment Support Grant for 2026/27, the Council would have experienced a funding shortfall of £4.7m. Notably, the same loss of £4.7m is projected for each financial year 2027/28 and 2028/29, relative to the Provisional Settlement allocations from December 2025.

	Provisional Settlement			Final Settlement		
	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Business Rates	3,674,652	3,758,942	3,834,773	3,674,652	3,758,942	3,834,773
Revenue Support Grant	18,819,374	11,601,137	4,204,755	15,450,668	9,898,766	4,204,755
Council Tax*	6,508,273	6,757,778	7,016,084	6,508,273	6,757,778	7,016,084
Homelessness	383,933	442,345	531,349	444,455	485,795	562,210
95% income protection floor	4,894,878	11,613,083	18,469,692	3,536,712	8,584,057	13,731,666
Recovery Grant	11,940	11,940	11,940	11,940	11,940	11,940
Adjustment Support Grant				4,726,872		
	34,293,050	34,185,226	34,068,594	34,353,573	29,497,279	29,361,429

*Council Tax adjusted to reflect council tax base and proposed increase

3.0 FINANCIAL STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

- 3.1 To ensure the Council has clarity on its financial management objectives it is imperative to have a clear financial strategy in place for the short, medium, and long term. As part of setting the Budget for 2024/25 and beyond the following guiding principles have been developed for the budget setting approach:

- Financial Stability and Sustainability
- Resources Focussed on Priorities
- Maximising Sources of Income

- Managing Risk

Capital Strategy

- 3.2 The Capital Strategy has been significantly enhanced to make it fit for the future. To provide greater accountability, governance, and due diligence of the capital programme the Capital Strategy was updated in 2022 to improve the way the Council manages its capital schemes through their life cycle by splitting the programme into an Approved Programme for 'in flight' schemes and a Development Pool for schemes at business case stage. A Capital Strategy Group, chaired by the Director of Resources has been in operation for over 12 months and oversees this process and proposes schemes through the Council's governance processes for formal approval by Cabinet or Council in line with the Council's Constitution.

Treasury Management Strategy

- 3.3 The Treasury Management Strategy has been refreshed and improved in line with required national guidance to ensure the Council is appropriately managing risk in both its borrowing and investment portfolios. The introduction of the liability benchmark indicator which measures the Council's future borrowing liabilities to fund its capital investment against how these will be financed either through external borrowing or by using our surplus cash resources (internal borrowing).

Corporate Charging Policy

- 3.4 The Corporate Charging Policy, which contains the Council's fees and charges, reflects the Council's financial strategy and provides greater clarity for service users on the rationale for future changes in levels of fees and charges. The budget includes a range of proposed amendments to fees and charges, where it is appropriate to do so, in line with the Policy, which includes an inflationary increase in line with the Consumer Price Index.

4.0 GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2026/27

- 4.1 High levels of inflation, recruitment and retention, and high interest rates present a challenging and uncertain economic environment.
- 4.2 The Government's announcement of a multi-year settlement at the time of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2026/27 provides the Council with much-needed stability and certainty in its financial planning. This longer-term approach enables the Council to align its resources more effectively and deliver on its key priorities as outlined in the Council Delivery Plan. With improved visibility over future funding, the Council is better positioned to make strategic investments, manage risks, and maintain essential services for residents, despite ongoing financial pressures and increasing demand for services.
- 4.3 It is important to note that, despite previously paid grants such as the New Homes Bonus now being rolled into the Council's mainstream funding arrangements, this does not provide additional resources but rather consolidates existing grant streams into the core settlement. As a result, the Council must continue to manage its finances prudently, recognising that these grant allocations no longer represent extra income but are now embedded within the overall funding total moving forward.
- 4.4 The Council is in a strong financial position, with sufficient funding available over both the short and medium term to set a balanced budget each year. This means that there is no requirement for additional savings measures or cuts to services, ensuring the continued delivery of essential support to residents. Furthermore, this robust financial outlook enables the Council to introduce a legacy grant funding scheme, providing an opportunity for local communities to bid for funding to support projects of both a revenue and capital nature.

This approach not only secures the ongoing sustainability of Council services but also encourages community-led initiatives that can have a lasting positive impact across the area. In addition, the Council can build up its business rates reserve to support the funding of the capital programme.

- 4.5 Between 2013/14 and 2025/26 business rates pools have been successful across the country, as local authorities were able to collect more business rates than targets set by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Pooling allowed more of this “growth” to be retained locally, as authorities combined to reduce the levy that would normally have been paid across to central government. The reset of the business rates retention scheme for 2026/27 will see revised target amounts for each authority; with the new amounts increased in line with what will be collected and therefore growth removed. With no growth, there is no levy to pay and therefore no gains to be made from pooling. It is expected there will be no business rates pools in England in 2026/27. This view has been backed by the Council’s external advisors, with MHCLG also expecting no pools.
- 4.6 However, while the Council maintains a strong financial position, it is important to note that it will receive transitional funding to support the changes arising from the business rates reset and the fair funding review. A substantial proportion of the Council’s funding in the 2028/29 financial year is transitional, and this support will be withdrawn after that year, resulting in a significant ‘cliff edge’ reduction in funding. This transitional period is intended to allow local authorities to build up business rates growth to help sustain essential services beyond 2028/29.
- 4.7 The forecast outturn position for the general fund revenue budget 2025/26, as reported to Cabinet on 16 December 2025 is a forecast underspend of £496k. This demonstrates that the Council is managing its budgets effectively. This prudent approach, combined with robust financial planning and the implementation of targeted strategies, reflects sound budget management and supports the ongoing delivery of essential services to the community.
- 4.8 In setting the budget for 2026/27, key strategies were applied to budget development and these have continued for the budget process for 2024/25. These include:

Guiding Principles	Strategies for Developing Budget 2026/27 and MTFP 2026-30
Financial Stability and Sustainability	- Do not become overly reliant on Business Rates funding for on-going service provision - Use future surpluses in Business Rates funding for future one off investment to reduce ongoing revenue costs or generate income - Ensure a balanced budget over the short-medium term utilising government funding available - Prepare for the loss of transitional funding beyond 2028/29
Resources Focussed on Priorities	Align resources to Council Delivery Plan objectives
Maximising Our Sources of Income	Fees and Charges maximised in accordance with the Corporate Charging Policy (increased by inflation)

Managing our Risks	• Acceptable level of risk tolerance • Review of reserves strategy and position
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4.9 The forecast medium term position is set out in the table below.

	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £
Net Revenue Expenditure	19,828,130	19,327,556	20,271,656
Funding	34,341,843	29,497,283	29,361,429
Contribution to Reserves	14,513,714	10,169,727	9,089,772

4.10 The position shows a balanced budget for the next three years, providing sufficient financial support to meet inflationary and demand pressures.

4.11 The Council will continue to use the guiding principles set out in paragraph 4.8 to manage its budgets accordingly.

4.12 The Capital Programme has been developed in line with the guiding principles and a substantially improved Capital Strategy:

- The existing capital programme has been split into Approved schemes and Development Pool schemes which has been the case since the 2023/24 capital budget.
- No new borrowing, over and above that approved in the 2023/24 budget, is proposed to fund the capital programme. This is to ensure the Council does not create additional revenue pressures in the future arising from interest and capital repayment costs.
- The funding source for schemes over the medium term is government grants (£4.8m), business rates reserve (£13.2m) and revenue contributions (£324k).
- Schemes in the Development Pool will be worked up in more depth through the governance arrangements set out in the Capital Strategy and Constitution.

4.13 The budget is based on the Council having the following levels of reserves.

	Estimated Balance 1/4/26 £'000	Change during 2026/27 £'000	Estimated Balance 31/3/27 £'000
General Fund - Minimum Level of Reserves	1,544	0	1,544
Earmarked Reserves	4,150	(580)	3,570
MTFP Reserve	7,558	(264)	7,294
Business Rates Reserve	11,333	(599)	10,734
Legacy Reserve	0	1,000	1,000
Total	24,585	(443)	22,598

4.14 As part of preparing the reserves for the budget the following should be noted:

- The minimum level of reserves has been risk assessed and is considered to be set at an appropriate level.

- Earmarked reserves have been reviewed to assess if the risks/commitments continue to exist and if the amounts are still appropriate.
- The MTFP Reserve will be used for managing risks over the medium term, investing in projects to make the Council more efficient, reduce its revenue costs, generate income and fund the capacity for the Council to deliver its financial plans.
- The Business Rates Reserve includes the additional business rates revenues from growth in the district (including contributions from Business Rates Pool and Freeport) in excess of that included in the revenue budget to fund ongoing services. This additional growth will be prioritised to fund the capital programme and projects.

5.0 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2026/27

- 5.1 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a ringfenced account for the operation of the Council's housing stock. The Council has approx. 4,100 homes. The budget for the HRA is also experiencing the inflationary pressures seen in other areas of the Council's budget, particularly on its staffing, maintenance and capital budgets.
- 5.2 In 2012, the Council took on the debt associated with its housing stock under the nationally HRA Self Financing initiative. As part of this a 30-year business plan was developed. A core component of the business plan is for the HRA to repay the self-financing borrowing by 2042. The Council should continue to make provision in its HRA to repay this outstanding borrowing.
- 5.3 The forecast outturn position for the HRA budget 2025/26 is a break-even position.
- 5.4 The forecast medium term position is set out in the table below.

	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £
Income	(22,666,833)	(23,563,156)	(24,391,411)
Operating Expenditure	20,638,655	21,713,118	22,666,566
Operating (surplus)/deficit	(2,028,178)	(1,850,038)	(1,724,845)
Appropriations	2,028,178	1,850,038	1,724,845
Net (surplus)/deficit	0	0	0

- 5.5 The HRA budget for 2026/27 shows an operating surplus of £2,028k. This is an £800k decrease from 2025/26.
- 5.6 The appropriations in the table are the use of the HRA working balance to fund the capital programme as well as contributing to the loan repayment reserve.
- 5.7 The HRA Capital Programme is planned to spend £22.6m in 2026/27. Based on previous years' experience this is an ambitious level of estimated spend. The area of the capital programme at greatest risk of delay is the Housing Improvement Programme.

6.0 ROBUSTNESS OF BUDGET ESTIMATES AND ADEQUACY OF RESERVES

- 6.1 The table below provides an assessment of the key risk areas to determine the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of reserves included in the General Fund and HRA budgets:

Area	Y/N	Comments
Is performance against the current year's budget on track and where variances are evident, ongoing and unavoidable, are they appropriately reflected in the plans?	Y	The 2025/26 financial monitoring at quarter 2 is showing an underspend of £496k on the General Fund and a break-even position on the HRA. The 2025/26 budget includes investments in areas that previously had overspending. Additionally, extra resources have been allocated to departments experiencing increased demand. The on-going and unavoidable pressures, alongside potential reductions in reserve levels, have been factored into budget plans for 2026/27 and the medium term. The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement provides a multi-year settlement which will ensure that the Council sets a balanced budget over the medium term and is in a position to build its reserves to ensure investment in the capital programme without the need to borrow.
Are arrangements for monitoring and reporting performance against the savings plans robust?	Y	Prior to the 2024/25 financial year, the Council had not been required to make significant savings to maintain its financial position. To support closing the anticipated funding gap over the medium-term, the Council has developed a Transformation Programme that will continue to deliver savings to services, as well as improvements to service delivery. In addition, there are a range of budget options proposed for the General Fund Budget 2026/27. Delivery of savings/efficiencies will be monitored throughout the financial year and reported to the Corporate Leadership Team and Portfolio Holders alongside the financial monitoring reports on a quarterly basis, this being a key recommendation outlined in the external auditor's report for the 2022/23 Statement of Accounts. The Transformation Programme has monitoring and tracking arrangements to ensure that projects are delivering against intended outcomes. These are reported as part of the quarterly performance reports to Cabinet Members.

The reasonableness of the underlying budget assumptions	Y	All budget proposals have been justified by service managers, reviewed by the Finance team and subject to budget challenge sessions in the new process. There have also been several budget workshops with Cabinet Members. External review has also been undertaken by the treasury advisers, Arlingclose, on the Treasury Management Strategy.
The alignment of resources with the Council's service and organisational priorities	Y	Resources are aligned to the current priorities of the Council. The Council Delivery Plan (CDP) was approved by Council on 14 November 2023. The CDP is aligned to the resources available and risks faced by the Council. The Council's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030 is likely to require additional investment, however, the Council will look to maximise grant funding made available to it to support this priority. The Council is aware of the investment required over this period.
A review of the major risks associated with the budget	Y	The major risks within the budget have been assessed and are set out in the budget report, including mitigations and strategies about how these are being managed.
The availability of un-earmarked reserves to meet unforeseen cost pressures	Y	The Council has a minimum level of reserves for both its General Fund (£1.5m) and HRA (£1m). In the Audit Commission's 'Striking a Balance' report published in 2012, the majority of Chief Finance Officers at the national level regarded an amount of between three and five per cent of council's net spending as a prudent level for risk based reserves. Over the medium term the Council's forecast figure is 8%. The General Fund position has been risk assessed to take account of potential unforeseen pressures. The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement provides an opportunity for the Council to build reserves to support the capital programme and one-off investment.

Have realistic income targets been set and 'at risk' external funding been identified?	Y	An assessment of income targets has been undertaken as part of the development of the draft budget. The income areas which have the greatest risk (including business rates, council tax, planning and leisure) have had greater focus. Where income targets have been deemed unrealistic, these have been addressed as part of the 2026/27 budget. Fees and charges have been increased, where it is appropriate to do so, in accordance with the Council's Corporate Charging Policy.
Has a reasonable estimate of demand cost pressures been made?	Y	The enhanced budget process used in the development of the draft budget has improved the reasonableness of estimates.
Has a reasonable estimate of future income been made?	Y	The budget proposals presented by services were reviewed by finance and subject to budget challenge sessions. The Government's provisional finance settlement enables the Council to set a balanced budget without requiring any additional savings. However, it should be noted that there is likely to be a significant financial challenge, or 'cliff edge', following the end of the current settlement period in 2028/29.
Have one-off cost pressures been identified?	Y	All pressures have been reviewed to assess if they are one-off or ongoing in nature. One-off proposals are to be funded from reserves. Services will need to ensure exit plans exist for one off expenditure.
Are arrangements for monitoring and reporting performance against the budget plans robust?	Y	For 2025/26, portfolio holders were kept informed of the in-year position on a quarterly basis. Directors also held regular meetings with finance teams to ensure a clear understanding of the financial position throughout the year. Unit4 training is required for all budget holders.
Is there a reasonable contingency available to cover the financial risks faced by the Council?	Y	The Council has incorporated estimates for pay award, inflation and demand pressures into its budget. It has also made provisions for key income streams not materialising for business rates and council tax. It is prudent to create a contingency budget to meet unforeseen demand pressures and to support a balanced in-year budget position.

Is there a reasonable level of reserves, which could be used to mitigate any issues arising and are they reducing as the risks decrease?	Y	The Council has a range of earmarked, MTFP and minimum levels of reserves to ensure its financial stability.
The strength of the financial management function and reporting arrangements?	Y	The Council implemented a new financial system in April 2023 to improve its reporting. Enhancements to the system have been made, however, the Finance Teams are still catching up on delays caused by the system implementation. A move to a new supplier for support and maintenance of Unit4 provides an opportunity to enhance the reporting arrangements. Training for all budget holders in the use of Unit4 is planned. A review of the Financial Procedures Rules has been undertaken.
Have the previous years Accounts been signed off by external audit to verify balances?	N	The Council's position in respect of its completion of the Statement of Accounts has been reported to the Audit and Governance Committee. The Statement of Accounts 2023/24 and 2024/25 were published in August 2025 and January 2026 respectively ensuring compliance with the backstop dates.
Has there been a degree and quality of engagement with colleagues and councillors in the process to develop and construct the budget?	Y	There has been a continuation of the improvements introduced to the budget setting process in previous years. This has included a series of budget challenge sessions between the Directors and Heads of Service, as well as engagement with Corporate Leadership Team, Portfolio Holders and Strategy Group, with all Member briefings scheduled.

6.2 There are a number of specific actions arising from the table above that the Council needs to undertake, alongside the delivery of its draft budget, to ensure risks and issues associated with the budget are mitigated. These actions are:

Financial Strategy

- The financial strategy set out at paragraph 4.8 above is followed. This underpins the budget 2026/27 and provides a stable platform from which to build over the medium term.
- A robust corporate and financial plan is required to ensure the Council can balance its budget over the medium term. This plan is reliant on the delivery of a transformation programme which will focus on being more efficient with the aim of having the same service outcomes at a lower cost. However, it needs to be flexible enough to adapt to potential national changes to local government funding which may require reductions in service levels in the future.

- To ensure this plan is developed and delivered the Council will need to invest in the transformation programme to ensure a structured approach to achieving the desired outcomes.
- Special expense budgets must be in a balanced position for 2026/27.

Financial Reporting

- Present quarterly financial reports to Cabinet and Scrutiny to promote transparency and accountability of the financial position.
- It is proposed to sign-off both the 2023/24 and 2024/25 Statement of Accounts during the 2025/26 financial year ahead of the Governments backstop date of February 2026.

Financial Management and Control

- Implement enhancements to the new financial system to support enhanced reporting for budget holders and improve financial systems and processes.
- Services need to develop exit plans for government grant funding and one-off proposals funded by reserves.
- Continue to review and improve the Council's governance arrangements with a focus on improving the annual audit opinion to reasonable assurance from the current limited assurance.

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Corporate Scrutiny Committee considered a draft version of this report at its meeting on 22 January 2026.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Based on the assumptions made in its Budget 2026/27 and MTFP 2026-30 for income and expenditure, the Council can set a balanced budget for 2026/27.
- 8.2 The recent reset of business rates and the outcomes of the fair funding review have placed the Council in a strong financial position over the medium term. As a result, the Council is able to set a balanced budget for 2026/27 and the following two years, whilst continuing to meet ongoing cost pressures, such as contract price inflation, pay awards, and increasing demand for services. **Notwithstanding the Government's late change to the funding formula announced on 9 February 2026, which results in a reduction in funding of £4.7m in each of 2027/28 and 2028/29, compared to the Provisional Settlement, the Council remains in a position to set a balanced budget over the medium term while continuing to make contributions to reserves.**
- 8.3 This has been achieved without the need to identify further savings at this time, reflecting the stability and sustainability of the Council's current financial position.
- 8.4 However, the main challenge will arise after the 2028/29 financial year, when the Council's transitional funding will come to an end. Over the next three years, it will be crucial for the Council to focus on rebuilding its business rates growth to help support the base budget beyond 2028/29. The current funding settlement provides an opportunity, as it enables the Council to replenish its business rates reserve over the medium term. This reserve can then be used to support future investment in the capital programme and any pipeline initiatives the Council may wish to pursue, ensuring continued financial resilience and the ability to respond to emerging priorities.
- 8.5 Provided the Council carefully considers and acts upon the analysis in this report and officers robustly manage the implementation of the Revenue and Capital Budgets, a

positive opinion can be given under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 on the robustness of budget estimates and the level of reserves.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	The report encompasses the Council's budget, therefore, is relevant to all Council Priorities: - Planning and regeneration - Clean, green and Zero Carbon - Communities and Housing - A well-run council -
Policy Considerations:	None.
Safeguarding:	None.
Equalities/Diversity:	There have been equality impact assessments conducted by services on relevant proposals during this period.
Customer Impact:	Customers are likely to be impacted by the changes to fees and charges, Council Tax increase and special expenses precepts set out in this report.
Economic and Social Impact:	The General Fund capital programme allocates £7.1m to investing in Coalville Regeneration Projects over three years.
Environment, Climate Change and Zero Carbon:	There is £17.1m investment to support carbon zero initiatives in the HRA.
Consultation/Community/Tenant Engagement:	The draft budget was considered by Corporate Scrutiny Committee and has been subject to consultation with the public. In addition, the Housing Revenue Account draft budget was subject to engagement with the Tenants' Forum.
Risks:	This report provides the Section 151 Officer's view on the robustness of budget estimates and adequacy of reserves. The report identifies the key risks, provides an assessment of these and proposed mitigating actions to manage those risks.
Officer Contact	Paul Stone Director of Resources Paul.stone@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

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Agenda Item 12

COUNCIL, THURSDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2026

ADDENDUM TO AGENDA ITEM 12 – 2026/27 GENERAL FUND BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX

Since the publication of the agenda, Cabinet at its meeting on 17 February 2026 considered a report which set out details of the Government's Final Finance Settlement 2026/27. Cabinet also reaffirmed revisions to the budget proposals.

As a result, the report and Appendix 1, 2, 3a and 5 have been updated, with all amendments highlighted in red.

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL – THURSDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2026



Title of Report	GENERAL FUND BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2024/25	
Presented by	Cllr Keith Merrie MBE Finance and Corporate Portfolio	
Background Papers	Council 20 February 2025: General Fund Budget and Council Tax 2025/26 Corporate Scrutiny Committee 22 January 2025: Draft Budget 2026/27 Cabinet 3 February 2026: 2026/27 General Fund Budget and Council Tax Cabinet 17 February 2026: 2026/247 General Fund Budget and Council Tax	Public Report: Yes
Financial Implications	This report sets out the General Fund Revenue budget, Capital Programme and the Special Expenses budget for 2026/27 to 2028/29, which are needed for the Council to continue to deliver its services to residents and businesses. This is in line with the local government reorganisation. Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	There are no direct legal implications arising from the approval of the budget proposals, however, the Council must comply with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) when setting the Council Tax, and that the budget has been prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Prudential Code, Treasury Management Code and relevant local government finance legislation. Signed off by the Deputy Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	The report and its appendices set out plans to create new posts and remove vacant posts from the establishment. Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	To allow the Council to approve the 2026/27 budgets.	
Recommendations	COUNCIL IS RECOMMENDED:	

	1. TO APPROVE THE GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET FOR 2026/27 AS SUMMARISED IN SECTION 2 OF THIS REPORT. THIS INCLUDES INCREASING THE DISTRICT COUNCIL'S SHARE OF COUNCIL TAX IN 2026/27 BY 2.75% 2. TO NOTE THE GENERAL FUND REVENUE INDICATIVE BUDGET FOR 2027/28 AND 2028/29 (APPENDIX 1). 3. TO NOTE THE GENERAL FUND FEES AND CHARGES APPROVED BY CABINET ON 17 FEBRUARY 2026 (APPENDIX 3). 4. TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME (APPENDIX 4) FOR 2026/27 AND PLANNED FINANCING, AS SET OUT IN SECTION 3 OF THIS REPORT. 5. TO NOTE THE REMAINING ELEMENTS OF THE GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2027/28 AND 2028/29. 6. TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL EXPENSES REVENUE BUDGET FOR 2026/27 (APPENDIX 6) AS SUMMARISED IN SECTION 4, INCLUDING SETTING THE SPECIAL EXPENSE BAND D COUNCIL TAX AT THE LEVELS DETAILED IN TABLE 4 OF THIS REPORT. 7. TO APPROVE THE DRAWDOWN FROM RESERVES TO FUND THE ONE-OFF BUDGET PROPOSALS AS DETAILED IN THE GENERAL FUND BUDGET CHANGES (APPENDIX 2).
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1.0 BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

- 1.0.1 The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) sets out the financial strategic direction for the Council and is updated as it evolves and develops throughout the year, to form the framework for the Council's financial planning.
- 1.0.2 The purpose of the MTFP is to set out the key financial management principles, budget assumptions and service issues. It is then used as the framework for the detailed budget setting process to ensure that resources are effectively managed and are able to deliver the aspirations of the Council, as set out in the Council Delivery Plan, over the medium term.
- 1.0.3 At its meeting on 3 February 2026, the Cabinet reviewed the General Fund and Council Tax Budget for 2026/27 and made recommendations for the full Council's consideration on 19 February 2026. However, the Government released its Final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2026/27 on 9 February 2026, as outlined in section 2.5 below. This announcement included a major change to the funding formula for local authorities, which will have a considerable effect on the Council's funding beyond 2026/27. As a result, it was essential for the Cabinet to evaluate

these changes and ensure that full Council receives detailed information in an addendum report before the meeting on 19 February 2026.

- 1.0.4 The timing and nature of the Government's Final Local Government Finance Settlement announcement for 2026/27 is unprecedented. Historically, such significant revisions to the funding formula have been subject to extensive consultation and phased implementation, allowing councils time to plan and adapt. However, the scale and immediacy of the changes introduced—as well as their release so close to the Council's own budget-setting deadlines—mark a departure from established practice.
- 1.0.5 In relation to the period from 2027/28 onwards, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has indicated that it will continue to work closely with HM Treasury to review and refine the funding arrangements for local authorities.

1.1 Context

- 1.1.1 The Council is setting its budget at a time when it continues to face a range of significant and inter-related challenges. In broad terms these can be split into three categories: economic, local government, and local issues within North West Leicestershire. Each of these is explored below.

1.2 Economic

- 1.2.1 The most recent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) Economic and Fiscal Outlook indicates that the UK economy is expected to experience modest growth over the medium term, with real GDP growth forecast to remain around 1–1.5% per annum across the forecast period. Growth in 2026/27 is expected to remain below the UK's estimated long-term potential rate, reflecting weak productivity growth, subdued business investment and ongoing global economic uncertainty.
- 1.2.2 Inflation has continued to ease from the elevated levels seen in previous years, however the OBR forecasts that price pressures will remain volatile in the near term, with inflation expected to hover close to, but not consistently at, the Bank of England's 2% target during 2026/27. Fiscal measures announced in recent Budgets, alongside continued pressures on energy, housing and labour costs, are expected to limit the pace at which inflation fully stabilises.
- 1.2.3 The latest national data shows that the UK economy has experienced periods of very weak or flat growth, with output per head remaining broadly stagnant. This economic backdrop continues to present challenges for public finances, household incomes and demand for public services, all of which have direct and indirect implications for local government funding and financial resilience.

1.3 Local Government

- 1.3.1 Local authorities in England continue to face severe and sustained financial pressures that significantly affect their ability to deliver statutory and discretionary services. Core funding for local government has reduced substantially in real terms since 2010/11, resulting in long-term structural pressures and reduced financial flexibility across the sector.
- 1.3.2 Demand for key local government services, particularly adult social care, children's services, housing and homelessness, continues to rise. Demographic change, cost

inflation, labour market pressures and increasing complexity of need have combined to drive expenditure growth well above general inflation.

- 1.3.3 The Government undertook a wide-ranging consultation on its Fair Funding Review and the reset of business rates over the summer period. The consultation sought views from local authorities and stakeholders on proposals to update the formulae used to allocate funding, with a particular focus on ensuring that needs assessments and funding distribution better reflect current service pressures and local circumstances.
- 1.3.4 Key changes included the introduction of updated needs-based formulas, revised weightings for deprivation and population growth, and a move to simplify and integrate a number of historic grants into the main settlement. Significantly, the business rates reset marked a shift from the previous system, which allowed councils to retain a proportion of any growth in business rates income since the last reset, to a model where accumulated growth is redistributed nationally, effectively 'resetting' councils' baselines.
- 1.3.5 As with any major reform to funding distribution, these changes have produced clear winners and losers across the sector.
- 1.3.6 Some councils have seen their relative funding allocations increase as a result of higher assessed needs or favourable adjustments, while others have lost out due to revised formula factors or the redistribution of business rates growth.
- 1.3.7 For North West Leicestershire, the Council has benefitted from the business rates reset due to its strong historic growth in business rates since the last reset. This is because, under the new system, councils with above-average business rates growth have their higher baseline recognised and partially protected before national redistribution, resulting in a higher share of retained income compared to authorities with lower growth.
- 1.3.8 The Council's proactive approach in supporting local economic development and encouraging business expansion has translated into a tangible financial benefit under the reset arrangements, helping to sustain local services amid continuing funding pressures.
- 1.3.9 It should be noted that the transitional arrangements currently in place are scheduled to end after the 2028/29 financial year. As such, it is prudent for the Council to ensure that a balanced budget is maintained beyond this period. Investing heavily in ongoing or recurring expenditure at this stage would not be appropriate, as it risks creating an unbalanced budget once the transitional support is withdrawn, effectively deferring the financial challenge rather than addressing it.
- 1.3.10 Proposals regarding how the available funding is to be utilised are set out in further detail later in this report, ensuring that financial decisions are made with due consideration to long-term sustainability and the avoidance of future budgetary pressures.
- 1.3.11 Some local authorities continue to face financial stress within the sector has continued to be evidenced using Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) and other forms of short-term intervention by Government. A growing number of authorities, particularly those with social care responsibilities, have required additional flexibility within the financial framework to remain solvent. This has reinforced concerns that financial risk within local government is no longer isolated, but systemic in nature. In

addition, the Government has once again offered exceptional financial support to local authorities for 2026/27. This support is intended to provide councils facing acute financial challenges with access to additional resources or bespoke assistance, helping to maintain essential services and manage budgetary pressures during a period of heightened demand and ongoing economic uncertainty. The continuation of such exceptional measures reflects recognition from central government of the unprecedented pressures impacting the sector and the need for targeted interventions to safeguard critical local services.

1.3.12 The Autumn Budget 2025, announced in October 2025, contained several significant funding announcements for local government in 2026/27, including:

- A projected increase in Core Spending Power (CSP) for local authorities across England of approximately £3.9 billion (around 5.8%) in cash terms compared with 2025/26, assuming typical council tax increases, equivalent to an estimated 3.5% real-terms increase after accounting for inflation.
- As part of the multi-year Local Government Finance Settlement, total Core Spending Power for councils in 2026/27 is expected to rise to around £77.7 billion, an increase of more than £9.2 billion compared with 2024/25.
- Continued integration of grants into the core settlement and reform of the business rates retention and Fair Funding systems will take effect, intended to simplify funding streams and move to a fairer distribution of funding.
- The Autumn Budget reaffirmed flexibilities for council tax referendum rules, maintaining existing principles and supporting council tax income as a key element of Core Spending Power, with additional assumed council tax growth estimated to contribute around £2.4 billion of further revenue in 2026/27 if councils set tax at typical maximum levels.

1.3.13 While additional funding for homelessness and prevention activity is welcome, the continued failure to fully address temporary accommodation subsidy shortfalls and Local Housing Allowance constraints means that councils are likely to continue experiencing significant financial pressures in this area during 2026/27.

1.3.14 The Government's confirmation of a move towards multi-year funding settlements, with 2026/27 anticipated to form part of a longer-term arrangement for local government, is a welcome development. This approach provides greater certainty of funding over the medium term, which is invaluable in supporting the Council as it navigates the transition to local government reorganisation. By enabling improved financial planning and stability, multi-year settlements allow the Council to make more informed decisions regarding service delivery, investment, and resource allocation, thereby strengthening its capacity to manage change and maintain essential services throughout the reorganisation process.

1.4 Local – North West Leicestershire

1.4.1 The Council continues to face significant local financial and operational pressures. Forecasts for 2025/26 indicate that the Council has continued to rely on agency staffing in a limited number of essential roles to ensure continuity of service delivery. This reflects ongoing national labour market challenges within local government, as highlighted by recent Local Government Association (LGA) analysis. The recruitment market is showing signs of improvement, but some pressures remain in planning and specialist finance roles, where competition for suitably qualified staff continues to be strong. Despite these challenges, the Council continues to maintain a robust level of reserves and remains in a more resilient

financial position than a number of authorities that have required Exceptional Financial Support.

- 1.4.2 The move towards a multi-year funding settlement provides the Council with a valuable opportunity to invest in additional capacity where it is most needed, enabling a more strategic approach to resource planning and service delivery. This greater certainty over future funding allows the Council to target investment in key areas, supporting both operational effectiveness and the delivery of essential services without the need for savings or cuts to services.
- 1.4.3 In addition, the Council has implemented improvements to its recruitment procedures, which are already yielding positive results. These enhancements have supported better recruitment and retention outcomes, strengthening the organisation's ability to attract and retain skilled staff.
- 1.4.4 Forecasting income, particularly within planning and development services, continues to be challenging due to the inherent volatility in planning application volumes and wider economic conditions. The budget proposals for 2026/27 seek to reflect a more realistic assessment of income generation and cost pressures, including:
 - Providing for pay award assumptions
 - Adjusting budgets where income targets have proved unachievable
 - Continuing targeted investment in corporate and support services to improve recruitment, retention and resilience.
- 1.4.5 The Council's approach to budget setting for 2026/27 continues to emphasise long-term financial sustainability, reducing reliance on reserves for day-to-day services and strengthening the Medium Term Financial Plan. The Local Government Financial Settlement provides an opportunity for the Council to set a balanced budget in each of the next three years without the need for savings, whilst also maintaining reserves to fund the capital programme and to support economic investment in the district. The Council will retain a healthy and appropriate level of reserves, providing resilience against financial risk and supporting continued service delivery.
- 1.4.6 The Council's external auditors have previously issued disclaimed opinions on historic financial statements, reflecting national issues within the local government audit system. Importantly, these opinions did not identify significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements for financial sustainability, and work continues to strengthen financial reporting and governance arrangements.
- 1.4.7 This work has included enhancements to the core financial system, a move to a new support and maintenance contract for the core financial system, regular reporting on the council's in-year position to the corporate leadership team and members, and monthly meetings of the capital strategy group to oversee capital investment proposals. These initiatives have collectively strengthened the Council's financial oversight and facilitated more informed, timely decision-making, further underpinning the Council's commitment to transparency and effective resource management.

1.5 Principles Underpinning the Budget Strategy

- 1.5.1 The Council's principles as a basis for financial management and budget planning as follows:

Guiding Principles	Key Strategies for Developing Budget 2026/27 and MTFP 2026-29
Financial Stability and Sustainability	• Plan ahead for potential Government funding changes (including Business Rates Reset) • Do not become overly reliant on Business Rates funding for on-going service provision • Use future surpluses in Business Rates funding for future one off investment to reduce ongoing revenue costs or generate income
Resources Focussed on Priorities	• Align resources to Council Delivery Plan objectives
Maximising Our Sources of Income	• Fees and Charges maximised in accordance with the Corporate Charging Policy (increased by inflation)
Managing our Risks	• Acceptable level of risk tolerance • Review of reserves strategy and position

1.6 Budget Assumptions

1.6.1 The following budget assumptions have been built into the forecast:

- Pay award - 2026/27 onwards to remain as 3%. This appears prudent given recent pay awards and fluctuations in inflation seen in recent years.
- Contracts price increases have been linked to the Consumer Price Index (CPI)/Retail Prices Index (RPI) as per individual agreements
- Inflation – fuel and utilities inflation are very volatile. After reviewing the current prices and future indications based on the best information available, and allowing for reviewing utility contracts, a minimal level of inflation has been included.

Cost	Increase in 2026/27 Budget
Fuel	5%
Gas	5%
Electricity	5%
Water	5%

- Fees and charges – increased by the CPI as at September 2025. Using the CPI, ensures the Council's fees and charges keeps pace with inflation, covering the costs of providing services. See section 2.4 for more detailed information on fees and charges.
- In broad terms, other expenditure has not had any inflationary factor applied with a few exceptions where material costs have had to be increased to keep up with rising prices (e.g. Grounds Maintenance).

- 1.6.2 This approach is sensible in light of recent pay settlements and the volatility in inflation in recent years. In addition, the Council has incorporated a contingency budget within its financial plans to address any unforeseen price rises, including pay awards that may exceed expectations.

2.0 GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2026/27

2.1 General Fund Budget Summary

- 2.1.1 Appendix 1 shows the general fund budget position for 2025/26 and the budget for approval for 2026/27, as well as indicative budgets for 2027/28 to 2028/29 based on known information such as indicative pay awards.

- 2.1.2 Table 1 below highlights that in 2026/27 the net revenue expenditure has increased by £684k compared to 2025/26 and the anticipated funding has increased by £15.2m. However there has been some technical changes for example, the Extended Producer Responsibility Payment was included in funding in 2025/26 and in 2026/27 has been netted off the expenditure within the service.

Table 1: Changes to the General Fund budget from the previous year

	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	Movement £'000
Total Funding	(19,074)	(34,342)	(15,268)
Net Revenue Expenditure	19,074	19,828	754
Funding (surplus)/deficit	0	(14,514)	(14,514)
Contributions to/(from) reserves	0	14,514	14,514

- 2.1.3 As outlined in section 1.3 above, the Council has experienced strong business rates growth in recent years, largely due to the business rates reset. This positive outcome has resulted in surplus funding for 2026/27. The surplus of £14m will be split. £2m is being transferred to a new legacy reserve and £12m to the Business Rates Reserve. More information about the legacy reserve can be found below in section 2.6.7. This reserve will support the Council's capital programme and further investment initiatives across the district. The use of these funds ensures the Council can continue to invest in key projects and maintain financial resilience, as well as deliver on its strategic priorities. In addition, the Council is currently in the process of identifying the cost implications of achieving net carbon zero. This cost is expected to be significant and is not yet included within the current capital programme. Any proposals arising from this work will be presented to Council in due course.
- 2.1.4 Within the Net Revenue Expenditure, there are multiple one-off expenditure proposals and are being met from the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) reserve and Business Rates Reserve (BRR). These can be identified in Appendix 2. The MTFP reserve was created to maintain financial resilience, allowing it to continue funding important projects while safeguarding its ability to deliver strategic priorities, even in the face of future financial challenges or changes in government funding.
- 2.1.5 A robust corporate and financial plan is in place to ensure the Council can balance its budget for 2026/27 and over the medium term. This plan should initially focus on being more efficient with the aim of having the same service outcomes at a lower

cost. There is a Transformation Programme planned to support this which is detailed in section 2.3.1 below.

2.2 Budget Changes to the MTFP

2.2.1 Appendix 2 sets out the most significant planned changes to the general fund budgets for 2026/27 to 2028/29 and a summary of the significant budget proposals for 2026/27 are detailed below:

- **Savings Agreed (£1,251k) including:**
 - Reduction in Employer Pension Contribution Rate (Actuarial Review) – (£834k)
Following the latest actuarial review, the employer pension contribution rate has been reduced, generating significant savings without impacting employee benefits or long-term pension fund sustainability.
 - Everyone Active – Utility Benchmarking & NNDR – (£188k)
Benchmarking of utility costs and adjustments to National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) within the leisure contract should deliver cost reductions, reflecting improved contract management and energy efficiency measures.
 - Land Charges Search Fees – Increased Demand – (£129k)
Higher demand for land charge searches has generated additional income, contributing to overall savings and supporting the Council's financial sustainability.
- **Additional Income £2.57m including:**
 - Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Grant – (£2.1m)
The EPR Grant began in 2025/26 and was listed under the 'Funding' section of last year's budget summary, with an estimated value of £1.3 million. For the 2026/27 budget, the grant (£2.1) has been applied to reduce expenses within the Waste Services Budget.
 - Food Waste Roll-Out – DEFRA Funding – (£324k)
As part of the national initiative to improve recycling and reduce landfill, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has provided grant funding to support the implementation of the food waste collection service. This funding contributes towards the costs of new infrastructure, equipment, and communications associated with the roll-out.
 - Summons Income – Revenues – (£90k)
Increased income has been generated through the recovery of costs associated with the issue of summons for non-payment of Council Tax and Business Rates. This reflects both improved collection processes and a higher volume of enforcement activity, ensuring compliance and protecting the Council's revenue base.
- **Reduction in Income £246k including:**
 - Newmarket and Outdoor Market – Reduced Income – £83k

Income from market operations has fallen due to reduced trader occupancy and footfall, influenced by broader retail trends and cost-of-living impacts on discretionary spending.

- **Trade Refuse – Reduced Income – £67k**
Commercial waste income has declined as businesses seek cost reductions or adjust service levels in response to economic uncertainty, resulting in fewer contracts and lower tonnage collected.
- **Unavoidable cost pressures £4.8m including:**
 - **Food Waste Roll-Out – £600k**
The implementation of the new food waste collection service has resulted in an increase in staffing and operational costs to ensure compliance with the statutory requirement and will result in improved recycling performance.
 - **Refuse and Recycling – Increased Agency Costs Due to Sickness – £170k**
Higher-than-anticipated sickness levels within the waste collection workforce have necessitated the use of agency staff to maintain service continuity. This has led to additional expenditure beyond the original budget provision.
 - **Refuse and Recycling – Increased Overtime/Casual Cover Due to Sickness – £147k**
In addition to agency costs, overtime and casual cover have been required to ensure scheduled collections are completed on time, particularly during peak periods and to avoid service disruption.
 - **Refuse and Recycling – Hire of Vehicles Due to Ageing Fleet – £150k**
The ageing refuse fleet has experienced increased downtime due to mechanical failures, requiring the short-term hire of vehicles to maintain operational capacity and meet statutory collection obligations.
 - **Garage/Fleet Services – Increased Parts Costs Due to Ageing Fleet – £175k**
The maintenance of older vehicles has led to higher parts and repair costs, reflecting the need to keep essential fleet assets operational until replacement programmes can be delivered.
 - **Removal of Earmarked Reserve Funding for Environmental and Sustainability Programme Manager - £84k**
The Environmental and Sustainability Programme Manager, previously funded from earmarked reserves, now requires ongoing revenue funding to ensure delivery of the Council's climate action commitments and sustainability objectives.
 - **Local Plan Examination – £85k**
Costs associated with the statutory examination of the Local Plan, including inspector fees and legal support, have exceeded initial estimates. This is a critical step in ensuring compliance with national planning requirements.
 - **Insurance Premium Increase – £297k**
Market conditions and sector-wide risk adjustments have resulted in a significant increase in insurance premiums across all policy areas, impacting the Council's core operating costs.

- Transformation Officer (Previously Funded from MTFP) – £52k
The Transformation Officer post, essential for driving organisational change and efficiency programmes, now requires permanent funding following the expiry of Medium-Term Financial Plan allocations.
- IT Licences and Maintenance Adjustments – £80k
Inflationary pressures and contractual renewals have led to increased costs for essential IT licences and system maintenance, ensuring continued compliance and service resilience.
- Local Government Reorganisation – £2m
Preparatory work and transitional arrangements for local government reorganisation have generated significant costs, including programme management, legal advice, and stakeholder engagement, to ensure readiness for structural changes.
- Temporary Accommodation Fund Contingency - £444k
A contingency fund has been created within the Strategic Housing - Homelessness budget, which equates to the government funding. This will be used during the year to offset additional expenses incurred.
- Salaries Adjustments - £376k
Salary budgets have been increased to account for scheduled incremental raises and potential pay awards. Additionally, the vacancy factor has been eliminated in several frontline services because it is no longer feasible.
- **Avoidable cost pressures £616k including:**
 - Asset Protection Plans for Closed Churchyards, Parks, Play Areas – £65k
Development and implementation of asset protection plans to ensure the safety, maintenance, and long-term sustainability of closed churchyards, parks, and play areas. This proactive approach mitigates future liabilities and enhances community amenities.
 - Two-Year Term to Tackle Fly-Tipping and Litter – £99k
Establishment of a dedicated GRIT (Grime Reduction and Intervention Team) for a two-year period to address persistent issues of fly-tipping and littering. This initiative aims to improve environmental quality, reduce enforcement costs, and enhance public confidence in local services.
 - Community Focus Officer - £52k
Establishment of a two year fixed-term Community Focus Officer to assist with administering the Legacy fund.
 - Year-End Support for Accounts Production – £60k
Provision of additional resources to support year-end accounts production, ensuring timely and accurate financial reporting in compliance with statutory requirements and audit standards.
 - Mine Water Combined Heat and Power (CHP) Feasibility Study - £80k
Establishment of a fund to conduct a feasibility study regarding the potential utilisation of mine water within the district for Combined Heat and Power (CHP) applications.

2.3 The Year Ahead by Service Area

2.3.1 Transformation

- 2.3.1.1 The Council introduced its Transformation Delivery Plan in June 2024 to address significant financial challenges, including a projected funding gap caused by reductions in government funding, rising service demands, inflationary pressures, and the forthcoming reset of business rates in 2026/27. The plan is a strategic response aimed at ensuring long-term financial sustainability, improving service efficiency, and embedding a culture of continuous improvement across the organisation. It focuses on modernising processes, embracing digital innovation, and exploring new delivery models to maintain high-quality services for residents while achieving financial resilience.
- 2.3.1.2 Since its launch, the Transformation Delivery Plan has delivered substantial progress. Early measures, supported by an initial £0.5 million investment, have reduced the medium-term funding gap by approximately 50 percent. This achievement has lowered the projected shortfall for 2028/29 from over £4 million to around £2 million, providing a strong foundation for future savings and validating the Council's approach to transformation.
- 2.3.1.3 Work is continuing across a range of projects. Service process improvements are being implemented to streamline operations and deliver efficiencies. Digital transformation remains a priority, with initiatives such as expanding online services and digitising customer interactions to reduce manual processing and improve accessibility. In addition, a revised internet and intranet site is under development to enhance communication and user experience, and document management reviews are underway to improve information governance and operational efficiency. Governance enhancements, including compulsory training and strengthened oversight, are being embedded to support robust decision-making. The Council is also diversifying income streams through initiatives like the NWL Community Lottery, which has already generated significant funds for local causes. Alongside these, new service delivery models and technology-driven solutions are being developed to ensure the Council remains agile and responsive to future challenges.
- 2.3.1.4 The revised internet and intranet sites will provide a more intuitive and accessible platform for both residents and staff, improving engagement and enabling faster access to information and services. Document management reviews will ensure that records are stored and retrieved efficiently, reducing duplication, improving compliance with data protection requirements, and supporting a more streamlined approach to service delivery. Together, these initiatives will strengthen internal communication, enhance transparency, and contribute to the Council's overall efficiency goals.
- 2.3.1.5 The Transformation Delivery Plan is structured over short, medium, and long-term horizons. Immediate priorities focus on quick wins and cost reductions, while medium-term objectives include rolling out digital solutions and reimagined service models. Longer-term ambitions aim to embed continuous improvement and secure financial resilience well beyond 2028/29. Progress is monitored through regular performance reviews, ensuring transparency and accountability as the Council works towards closing the funding gap and delivering value for the community.

2.3.2 ICT

- 2.3.2.1 Hybrid/agile working operating model has meant that the service supports 550 officers, including councillors and remote offices, which is a pressure on ICT services to provide a first-class customer support service for the Council's staff and councillors. There have been staffing issues in 2025/26, resulting in the staffing resources being stretched. Staffing issues have now been resolved and the team starts 2026/27 with a fully resourced dynamic IT team to provide the necessary levels of service to the business.
- 2.3.2.2 There is a greater focus on IT security and IT audits which will continue over the medium to long-term, to ensure that the Council is compliant with ICT standards and practices. IT is a fundamental core pillar for the organisation. Cyber security is an ever-challenging task with new threats and vulnerabilities emerging daily. In 2025/26, ICT officers spent a lot of time in remediating security issues from previous IT health checks. In 2026/27, there will be investment in new endpoint security software to further protect the organisation and renew the Council's Cyber Security accreditation. AI security and threats is another area of focus for 2026/27. The Council will explore how the use of AI tools can support service improvements. For example, for a new Request for Information (RFI) document will be written to support the Customer Service centre telephony platform.
- 2.3.2.3 There are a large number of ICT systems which require upgrades as the software reaches end of life or end of contract. Work has already been undertaken in 2025/26 to get these systems updated. 2026/27 will be a further year to complete the remaining system upgrades and move to supported platforms and the cloud as part of the IT roadmap and strategy.
- 2.3.2.4 There are likely to be several projects emerging from the Transformation Programme which will require ICT support, for example artificial intelligence (AI). The idea of centralising IT budgets has been a topic of conversation for several years, with the aim of achieving greater commercial savings. In 2026/27, the Council intends to explore this further, recognising the significant potential to realise efficiencies by bringing together IT budgets from all services into a single, centralised IT function.
- 2.3.2.5 The service is in the process of reviewing the numerous ICT contracts in services across the Council with a view to moving them to cloud services, to reduce operating cost as well as ensuring that the systems deliver value for money. Work has already started in 2025/26, with a renewal of the data centre contract saving £480K over five years. Further contracts are due for renewal this year which should deliver savings.

2.3.3 Finance and Internal Audit

- 2.3.3.1 The Finance Team has continued to face recruitment and retention challenges, however, this seems to be easing during 2025. Despite these issues, the team successfully completed the Statements of Accounts for 2023/24 and 2024/25 ahead of the Government's backstop date.
- 2.3.3.2 Significant enhancements have also been made to the Unit 4 financial system and other associated systems to improve processes. In the next financial year, the focus will back to business as usual with the completion of the Statements of Accounts for 2025/26 in line with statutory requirements, as the Council aims to rebuild

assurance in its financial reporting. Additionally, there will be a continued focus on improving the exchequer and financial planning systems and processes.

- 2.3.3.3 An extra resource was incorporated into the Internal Audit team during 2025/26, resulting in a substantial increase in the annual number of audit days from 315 to 502.

2.3.4 Legal and Support Services

- 2.3.4.1 Priorities for the Democratic Services Team in 2026/27 will be to conduct the Community Governance Review by December 2026 and to start preparations for the election to the new unitary authority in 2027.

- 2.3.4.2 The Legal Services Team will continue to undertake external work to bring in income for the Council, along with conducting the annual constitution review and supporting the Council's regeneration projects.

- 2.3.4.3 The Communications team will deliver its annual campaigns plan to support on corporate projects, including the Council's transformation programme and local government reorganisation.

2.3.5 Organisational Development/ Human Resources

- 2.3.5.1 In the year ahead, the Human Resources team will focus on addressing recruitment and retention challenges in key parts of the workforce, ensuring the Council remains a place where people want to join and stay. The team will also continue work to reduce sickness absence, supporting a healthier and more productive workforce.

2.3.6 Strategic Housing

- 2.3.6.1 National demand for Homelessness services continues to increase and this is replicated, to some extent, locally. Although this is likely to mean greater costs to the Council, the Council continues to explore ways to manage demand, through its preventative work; look to reduce unit costs of Temporary Accommodation, through the use of local partnerships; minimise the use of expensive, unsupported Bed and Breakfast accommodation and recoup some of the costs through a charging pilot, which will require customers to contribute towards the costs of their temporary accommodation. It is hoped that this will also be a useful mechanism in managing demand. Some increases in costs, around salaries, are anticipated and further discussion around new government funding formulae will necessitate review from 2026/27 onwards.

- 2.3.6.2 Historically, funding for temporary accommodation and homelessness was provided to local authorities as ring-fenced grants, ensuring that these resources were dedicated solely to supporting households in need of such services. However, under the revised funding arrangements for local government, these grants have now been incorporated into the broader Revenue Support Grant. Although nominal calculations have been undertaken to estimate the adequacy of the transferred funding, the Council has taken proactive steps to allocate sufficient budget to temporary accommodation, recognising and responding to the increased demand and financial pressures experienced in recent years.

2.3.7 Community Services

- 2.3.7.1 Community Services includes waste collection, recycling and street cleansing, parks and open spaces, health and wellbeing, licencing, port health, environmental health, community safety, community focus, environmental protection and fleet management.
- 2.3.7.2 Plans are in train to roll out in late 2026 a new recycling container scheme in the district with twin bins and food waste caddies which will conform to the government's Simpler Recycling requirements.
- 2.3.7.3 Work continues with zero carbon measures across the Council and new schemes will be rolled out as business cases are developed for the Council's fleet and buildings particularly in order that the Council can meet its aspiration to be zero carbon by 2030 for its own operations.

2.3.8 Planning and Development

- 2.3.8.1 The key service issue for the Planning Policy team is to continue to progress the new Local Plan. There are associated risks with this complex workstream, including any unanticipated requirement for additional evidential work over and above that currently budgeted for. Resources have also had to be found for external consultants to help manage and support the Local Plan process following the retirement of the Planning Policy and Land Charges Manager in December 2025.
- 2.3.8.2 The new Local Plan needs to be submitted for Examination by December 2026 and in these circumstances the Local Plan Examination can be expected to start in Quarter 1/Quarter 2 in 2027. If the Local Plan is found 'unsound' at Examination, or if it is not possible to submit by December 2026, the Council will need to decide whether to prepare a Local Plan under the Government's new plan-making system. The costs of this are uncertain but can be expected to be substantial.
- 2.3.8.3 The key service issue for the Planning and Development Team is to maintain the high level of performance achieved in meeting government targets for the determination of planning applications. Planning application fee income dropped significantly in the first two quarters of 2024/25, but increased in the second two quarters of 2024/25, in particular due to the number of major applications received, so that at the end of 2024/25 fee income received was over and above the projected budget. This additional income will be put in reserve to manage workload peaks and troughs and to balance the Planning and Development budget in future years. The latest projections show that the Planning application fee income 2025/26 is on target for the projected fee income budget to be achieved.

2.3.9 Property Services and Economic Regeneration

- 2.3.9.1 The Council's portfolio of commercial properties offers an opportunity to generate significant income but the stock needs investment if potential is to be maximised. Consideration will also need to be given to investment in energy efficient measures to meet government regulations.
- 2.3.9.2 The continuing prioritisation of Regeneration Projects across the District creates a need for capital investment. Central Government grant support for this work would be welcomed and would unlock economic growth.

2.4 Fees and Charges

- 2.4.1 The Council provides a large number of services to local residents and businesses that incur a fee. Appendix 3(a) to 3(c) sets out key changes to fees and charges for 2026/27. In the main, the fees and charges have been increased by 3.8% which was the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) as at September 2025. There are a few other charges that have increased more than the inflation amount such as, Electrical Vehicle Charging charges. A more details breakdown of these charges can be found in Appendix 3. **The Fees and Charges were approved by Cabinet on 17 February 2026.**

2.5 Funding

- 2.5.1 **The Government published the Final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2026/27 on 9 February 2026, confirming the first year of a new multi-year funding package and implementing updated needs assessments, grant simplification, and revised distribution formulas. -year funding package and implementing updated needs assessments, grant simplification, and revised distribution formulas.**
- 2.5.2 **The Settlement introduces significant reforms, including consolidation of multiple grants and the continued rollout of Fair Funding Review methodology. A key change for districts relates to Business Rates pooling, where the Government has amended the methodology used within the Funding Floor baseline, resulting in a reduced level of anticipated pooling benefit compared with the provisional figures published in December 2025. This reflects a conscious policy decision to redistribute pooled gains and ensure that resources are more evenly shared across the system, rather than concentrated in a small number of areas that have historically benefited from pooling arrangements.**
- 2.5.3 **To offset some of the turbulence associated with these reforms, the settlement introduces a more generous-than-expected “Adjustment Settlement Grant” for 2026/27. This grant provides transitional support to councils facing significant reductions in core funding as a result of the new distribution formulas and pooling changes. The rationale is to give authorities time to adjust their budgets and service plans, thereby helping to maintain balanced budget positions and avoid disruptive service cuts in the short term.**
- 2.5.4 **The Adjustment Settlement Grant is particularly important for councils that are net losers from the new arrangements, such as North West Leicestershire, as it offers a buffer against immediate financial shocks.**
- 2.5.5 **The table provides a comparison between the final settlement announced on 9 February 2026 and the Provisional Settlement disclosed in December 2025. Without the Adjustment Support Grant for 2026/27, the Council would have experienced a funding shortfall of £4.7m. Notably, the same loss of £4.7m is projected for each financial year 2027/28 and 2028/29, relative to the Provisional Settlement allocations from December 2025.**

	Provisional Settlement			Final Settlement		
	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Business Rates	3,674,652	3,758,942	3,834,773	3,674,652	3,758,942	3,834,773
Revenue Support Grant	18,819,374	11,601,137	4,204,755	15,450,668	9,898,766	4,204,755
Council Tax*	6,508,273	6,757,778	7,016,084	6,508,273	6,757,778	7,016,084
Homelessness	383,933	442,345	531,349	444,455	485,795	562,210
95% income protection floor	4,894,878	11,613,083	18,469,692	3,536,712	8,584,057	13,731,666
Recovery Grant	11,940	11,940	11,940	11,940	11,940	11,940
Adjustment Support Grant				4,726,872		
	34,293,050	34,185,226	34,068,594	34,353,573	29,497,279	29,361,429

*Council Tax adjusted to reflect council tax base and proposed increase

2.5.6 Over the medium term, the Council remains well positioned to set a balanced budget, assuming the net annual budget can be maintained at approximately £20m. Nonetheless, Members are advised to anticipate additional financial pressures and inflationary effects in subsequent years. The current financial framework also permits contributions to the business rates reserve, supporting further investment within the district.

2.5.7 It is imperative that the Council sustains its discretionary expenditure at prudent levels, particularly given the anticipated reduction in funding after 2028/29 due to the cessation of Transitional Funding. Therefore, continued growth in business rates over the medium term is essential to support a balanced budget beyond 2028/29.

2.5.8 The key funding changes for 2026/27 are as follows:

- **New Homes Bonus:** The Council will no longer receive New Homes Bonus funding as a separate grant, as it has now been incorporated into the Revenue Support Grant allocation. Accordingly, no standalone income has been included within the budget or Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2026/27 onwards.
- **Council Tax increased by £249k to £6.5m** – Council Tax income assumptions are based on the approved Council Tax Base and proposed Council Tax increase of 2.75% for 2026/27.
- **Non Domestic Rates (Business Rates) decreased by £5m to £3.7m** – the 2026/27 financial year marks a significant Business Rates reset, primarily driven by a major nationwide revaluation of non-domestic properties, changing rateable values, alongside reforms to the 50% business rates retention system and adjustments to multipliers. In addition to this, the Council's new baseline and tariff funding strips out the growth accumulated from previous years.
- **Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)** - This grant has ceased and is no longer included within the funding settlement.
- **Extended Producer Responsibility Grant** – Funding for Extended Producer Responsibility has now been transferred to Waste Services, and a total grant of £2.1 million has been confirmed for 26/27. This is likely to reduce each year in line with sustainability drives.
- **Revenue Support Grant (RSG) increased by £15.3m to £15.4m** – The Council will receive RSG of £15.4m in 2026/27. This is now the only core government grant included within the settlement. The settlement confirms the cessation of a number

of previous specific grants, with some funding rolled into RSG, increasing the overall allocation but reducing transparency and certainty around future funding levels.

- **National Insurance Grant** – The specific grant previously provided to partially fund National Insurance increases is no longer paid separately. Government information indicates that this funding has been rolled into the Revenue Support Grant allocation. No separate income line has therefore been included within the budget.
- **95% Income Protection Floor of £3.5m** – Under the Local Government Finance Settlement, the government is introducing transitional protections to limit how far a Council's funding can fall as the new Fair Funding reforms are phased in. The 95% Income Protection Floor is one of these protections. In simple terms, it guarantees that a qualifying local authority will not see its post-reform income fall below 95% of its 2025-26 income baseline.
- **Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant - £444k** – In the settlement, the government has consolidated several previous funding streams into a single grant. The new consolidated grant brings together the prevention element of the Homelessness Prevention Grant, Rough Sleeping funding and Domestic Abuse funding.
- **Adjustment Support Grant - £4.7m** – new funding source introduced in the final settlement to offset the reduction in funding from the provisional settlement.

2.6 General Fund Reserves

- 2.6.1 The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) reserve is to help manage deficits and funding volatility. The value of this reserve is forecast to be £5.4m as at 31 March 2027.
- 2.6.2 In addition to this reserve, the Council also has earmarked reserves estimated to be £22.6m as at 31 March 2027, increasing to £34.7m by 31 March 2029 and general balances of £1.5m. A Legacy reserve of £2m is being created in 2026/27 from part of the surplus budget with spend forecast to be £1m in 2026/27 and £1m in 2027/28. A summary of these reserves can be found in Table 2 below.
- 2.6.3 In addition, the Council will build up its reserves over the medium-term to support the funding of the capital programme. This prudent approach will ensure that sufficient resources are available to meet future investment needs whilst maintaining financial stability. However, it should be noted that the announcement of the changes to the funding formula by the Government has resulted in the reserves position at the end of March 2029 reducing by approximately £10m compared to the previous balance considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 3 February 2026. This is in light of the reduced allocations in 2027/28 and 2028/29.

Table 2: Summary of estimated reserves 2026/27 – 2028/29

Reserve Name	Estimated Balance as at 1/4/26 £'000	Commitments & Budget Proposals 26/27 £'000	Estimated balance as at 31/3/27 £'000
Earmarked Reserves - General Fund	4,149	(580)	3,569
MTFP Reserve	7,558	(264)	7,294
Business Rates Reserve	11,333	(599)	10,734
Legacy Reserve	0	1,000	1,000
General Balance (minimum level of reserves)	1,544	0	1,544
Total Reserves	24,585	(443)	22,598

- 2.6.3 Earmarked reserves are those reserves that have been earmarked for a specific purpose. The estimated balances include items currently committed. A table showing details by service can be found in Appendix 5.
- 2.6.4 The MTFP reserve is expected to be £7.3m after taking into account the funding of one-off budgets for 2026/27. It will be used to mitigate unbudgeted pressures, pump-priming invest to save opportunities and the transformation programme, as well as funding capacity within services to ensure improved service delivery where appropriate.
- 2.6.5 The net reduction into the business rates reserve is expected to be £599k in 2026/27 and a contribution of £13.6m across the next three years. The spend is mainly to fund the capital programme and also some one-off revenue expenditure. The additional contributions into the reserve are from the surplus budget. This leaves an estimated balance of £24.5m at 31/3/29.
- 2.6.6 General balances are the minimum level of reserves that is prudent to hold.
- 2.6.7 As the Council prepares for Local Government Reorganisation, currently scheduled for 2028, there is a clear intent to make the most of the funds presently at our disposal to invest in important community projects across the district. The Council intends for this significant investment to be accessible, ensuring that every area benefits from the opportunities provided. This approach underlines the Council's commitment to supporting local priorities and delivering meaningful outcomes for residents throughout the district, both in the immediate term and as it transitions into the new governance arrangements.
- 2.6.8 Therefore, the Council's intention is to establish a £2m Legacy Grant Fund, designed to support projects that the Council may have delivered in the absence of Local Government Reorganisation. The fund will be available for the 2026/27 financial year, with grants ranging from £10k to £250k, and will be open to applications that align with existing Council strategies, such as regeneration, cycling and walking, and broader community enhancement objectives.
- 2.6.9 The scheme will offer both revenue and capital funding, providing flexibility to support a wide range of initiatives. Robust governance arrangements will be put in place, including the appointment of a Senior Responsible Officer and clear accountability

throughout the grant lifecycle. The application process will be accessible and well-publicised, with a strong emphasis on monitoring, evaluation, and value for money in line with government guidance.

2.6.10 Applications will be invited from May 2026, with a potential second call in October 2026 if funds remain. Grants will be processed efficiently, with small grants managed by Community Services and larger grants by the Economic Development Team. Up to £100k will be allocated for administration to ensure effective delivery.

2.6.11 The fund will be financed from the Business Rates Reserve. Consideration will be given to including areas subject to special expenses, with appropriate legal and procedural safeguards to ensure compliance and transparency.

2.6.12 A further, more detailed report will be brought back to Cabinet in due course, setting out the full operational details of the scheme, including eligibility, assessment criteria, and governance arrangements.

3.0 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2026/27 TO 2028/29

3.1 General Fund and Special Expenses Capital Programme

3.1.1 Capital Strategy

3.1.2 The Capital Strategy includes a few key changes and improvements for the 2026/27 and future years' programme.

3.1.3 A key change introduced in 2023/24, is the reduction in the use of external borrowing to fund programmes. This will minimise the Council's exposure to increases in interest rates. Schemes would be funded from internal sources such as reserves, (mainly the Business Rates Reserves), capital receipts, and revenue contributions. External grant applications would be made for schemes which qualify for such funding.

3.1.4 The capital programme is divided into two parts – active projects and schemes in a development pool. The active projects are schemes which have been approved by Council (in-year or in previous years) and currently being delivered. Some new schemes have been added to the active pool as part of the budget process.

3.1.5 Projects in the development pool are subject to a full business case being developed before moving to the active category. The business case is scrutinised by the Capital Strategy Group before going onto Cabinet or Council for full approval in line with the Constitution.

3.1.6 The Capital Strategy is available within the Capital Strategy, Treasury Strategy and Prudential Indicators report on the same agenda.

3.2.1 2026/27-2028/29 Capital Programme

3.2.2 The proposed General Fund capital programme is outlined in Appendix 4. The three-year programme totals £19.3m and £9.9m for 2026/27. A summary of the higher value schemes for 2026/27 are:

Active Programme

- **Marlborough Centre purchase and renovation:** The Marlborough Centre project commenced in 2021 following the acquisition of the building for conversion and refurbishment. At the time of purchase, the Council relied on an early cost estimate based on the building's known condition and acquisition price. Since then, planning permission for the conversion and refurbishment has been secured, and a contractor has been engaged under a Pre-Construction Services Agreement. Through this process, significantly more detail is now available regarding the scope of works and the constraints that must be managed, including impacts on neighbouring properties, existing tenants, and the need to protect Marlborough Square. Using this updated information, the Council's Cost Consultants and the contractor have developed a revised cost estimate at RIBA Stage 4. This latest estimate indicates that the likely cost to complete the project will be approximately £1.84 million higher than originally anticipated.

The key reasons for this increase are:

- Additional works identified following detailed inspections and surveys undertaken post-purchase.
 - Compensation payments required for tenants unable to trade during periods of conversion and refurbishment.
 - Construction cost inflation between 2021 and 2026.
- **Capitalisation of Salaries:** The salaries and on costs of the Economic Development and Regeneration Team who are supporting the implementation of Coalville Regeneration Projects will be capitalised. This is estimated to be £500k per year.
 - **HR/Payroll Project:** Capital investment is required in the Council's HR/Payroll system to move to more modern fit for purpose system, to replace the Council's existing iTrent platform, which reaches the end of its contract term in March 2026. The new system will provide improved automation, enhanced self-service capabilities for employees and managers, and reduced manual processing. It will also support the continuation of the Council's long-standing payroll services with Harborough District Council under a renewed delegation agreement. The total capital cost of the project is estimated around £95k, with implementation required ahead of the planned go-live date of July 2026. £30k of the capital costs will be recharged to Harborough District Council.
 - **Laptop replacements:** To maintain operational efficiency and security, outdated laptops that no longer meet performance standards or software requirements will be replaced. This ensures staff have reliable, secure devices to deliver services effectively and reduces the risk of system failures.
 - **Refuse bins:** Investment in new household waste bins is essential to support waste collection services. Many existing bins are damaged or at end-of-life, impacting service quality and compliance with health and safety standards. Replacements will improve durability and maintain cleanliness across the community.
 - **Property portfolio backlog maintenance:** This project addresses essential maintenance across the Council's property portfolio, tackling overdue repairs and compliance issues. Proactive investment will prevent further deterioration, reduce long-term costs, and ensure buildings remain safe, functional, and fit for purpose.

Development Pool (require further Cabinet approval)

- **Coalville Regeneration Framework – Wolsey Road Regeneration – Phase 2:** to deliver projects set out in the Coalville regeneration framework document which is one of the strategic business objective of the Council.
- **Fleet Replacement Programme:** A programme to replace old vehicles with environmentally friendly fleet for services such as waste, parks and housing. The old vehicles would be sold and the receipts from sales re-invested in the programme.
- **Stenson Square:** This is a £2m investment across two years to create a new public realm. This scheme will invest in Council-owned land at Stenson Square and London Road car park to create improved facilities for the general public. The first year investment was included in the 2025/26 Capital Programme.
- **Enterprise Park:** This is a £3.7m project across two years from 2025/26 which is to create serviced employment land and the Council in turn will rent or sell to end users thereby generating capital receipts and/or ongoing income. The first year investment was included in the 2025/26 Capital Programme. This project is unlikely to commence until 2026/27.

Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute (REFCUS)

- **Play Area Grants:** This is a grant of £750k over three years. This will provide grants to replace/upgrade play equipment across the district.

3.3 Funding the Capital Programme

- 3.3.1 The capital programme is funded from a variety of sources, including revenue, reserves, grants and borrowing. Table 3 below summarises the current identified funding sources for each year of the general fund capital programme.

Table 3: Sources of funding for the General Fund capital programme

Funding Sources	Total
	£ '000
Grants / Contributions	4,763
Revenue Contributions	355
Business Rates Reserve	14,209
Total	19,324

4.0 SPECIAL EXPENSES 2026/27

- 4.1 The Council currently operates six special expense accounts where it provides additional services specific to some areas of the district. The Council's Special Expense Policy sets out the criteria and services that are classified as special expenses.
- 4.2 The special expenses budget includes a three-year Planned and Preventative Maintenance (PPM) programme which should provide sufficient budget to cover future planned maintenance along with a programme for play equipment

replacement. The PPM programme has been reviewed and updated as part of the budget preparation.

- 4.3 It should be noted any increases in council tax for special expense areas are considered as part of the District Council's proportion of the council tax when calculating and considering the Referendum Principles for increases in council tax.
- 4.4 As part of the budget process the net expenditure requirements for each special expense area have been reviewed against the level of funding available through precepts, grants, S106 Funding and earmarked reserves. In line with statutory requirements for the Council it is important that each special expense area produces a balanced budget and is financially sustainable. A key element of good practice financial sustainability is to have a minimum level of balances for each special expense area, which is recommended at circa 10% of reoccurring expenditure.

4.5 2026/27 Budget Setting

- 4.5.1 A budget requirement covering the period 2026/27 to 2028/29 has been produced for each special expense area and is available at Appendix 6. Also included in Appendix 6, is the movement from the 2025/26 to 2026/27 base budget and details of the Planned and Preventative Maintenance (PPM) included in the budget.
- 4.5.2 All of the special expense areas include a budget for PPM which should provide sufficient funding to cover future planned maintenance along with a programme for play equipment replacement (where applicable). The PPM programme has been updated as part of the budget preparation.

4.6 Special Expense Precepts 2026/27

- 4.6.1 The Council is required to set a balanced budget for each special expenses account. It is good practice to have a minimum level of balances, which is recommended at circa 10% of reoccurring expenditure. With the exception of Whitwick, all special expense accounts have sufficient balances forecast for 2026/27.
- 4.6.2 For Whitwick, the deficit has arisen due to a reduction in previous years burial fee income. The proposal is to increase the precept over the next two years along with a review of the Planned and Preventative Maintenance (PPM) to enable the recovery of the deficit.
- 4.6.3 Table 4 below shows the proposed Band D Council Tax for the special expense areas.

Table 4 – Band D Annual Precept for each Special Expense Area

Special Expense Area	Council Tax Band D 2025/26	Increase/ (Decrease)	Council Tax Band D 2026/27
Coalville	81.20	1.62	82.82
Coleorton	2.88	(0.58)	2.30
Hugglescote/Donington-le-Heath	9.93	1.99	11.92
Oakthorpe, Donisthorpe and Acresford	12.20	(1.22)	10.98
Ravenstone with Snibston	1.04	(0.21)	0.83
Whitwick	8.41	4.21	12.62

- 4.6.4 Special expense budgets, just like all Council budgets, are subject to the inflationary pressures of the current economic environment. To ensure a balanced budget is proposed and mitigate any funding gaps, action has been taken to minimise PPM expenditure. As well as seeking to increase income from Section 106 contributions and fees and charges.
- 4.6.5 There are potential risks in these mitigating actions. For example, minimising PPM expenditure in 2026/27 by deferring non-essential spend to future years, may lead to higher routine maintenance in the short term. This may take time to implement the impact of reductions in service levels which could lead to short-term cost pressure on the wider general fund.

5.0 KEY RISKS TO THE BUDGET

- 5.1 Table 5 below provides an assessment of the key risk areas to determine the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of reserves included in the General Fund budgets:

Table 5: Key Risks to the Budget

Area	Y/N	Comments
Is performance against the current year's budget on track and where variances are evident, ongoing and unavoidable, are they appropriately reflected in the plans?	Y	The 2025/26 budget includes investments in areas that previously had overspending. Additionally, extra resources have been allocated to departments experiencing increased demand. The ongoing and unavoidable pressures, alongside potential reductions in reserve levels, have been factored into budget plans for 2026/27 and the medium term. The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement provides a multi-year settlement which will ensure that the Council sets a balanced budget over the medium term and is in a position to build its reserves to ensure investment in the capital programme without the need to borrow.
Are arrangements for monitoring and reporting performance against the savings plans robust?	Y	Prior to the 2024/25 financial year, the Council had not been required to make significant savings to maintain its financial position. To support closing the anticipated funding gap over the medium-term, the Council has developed a Transformation Programme that will deliver savings to services, as well as improvements to service delivery. In addition, there are a range of budget options proposed for the General Fund

Area	Y/N	Comments
		Budget 2026/27. Delivery of savings/efficiencies will be monitored throughout the financial year and reported to the Corporate Leadership Team and Portfolio Holders alongside the financial monitoring reports on a quarterly basis, this being a key recommendation outlined in the external auditor's report for the 2022/23 Statement of Accounts. The Transformation Programme has monitoring and tracking arrangements to ensure that projects are delivering against intended outcomes. These are reported as part of the quarterly performance reports to Cabinet Members.
The reasonableness of the underlying budget assumptions	Y	All budget proposals have been justified by service managers, reviewed by the Finance team and subject to budget challenge sessions in the new process. There have also been several budget workshops with Cabinet Members. External review has also been undertaken by the treasury advisers, Arlingclose, on the Treasury Management Strategy.
The alignment of resources with the Council's service and organisational priorities	Y	Resources are aligned to the current priorities of the Council. The Council Delivery Plan (CDP) was approved by Council on 14 November 2023. The CDP is aligned to the resources available and risks faced by the Council. The Council's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030 is likely to require additional investment, however, the Council will look to maximise grant funding made available to it to support this priority. The Council is aware of the investment required over this period.
A review of the major risks associated with the budget	Y	The major risks within the budget have been assessed and are set out in the budget report, including mitigations and strategies about how these are being managed.
The availability of un-earmarked reserves to meet unforeseen cost pressures	Y	The Council has a minimum level of reserves for both its General Fund (£1.5m) and HRA (£1m). In the Audit Commission's 'Striking a Balance' report published in 2012, the majority of Chief Finance Officers at the national level regarded an amount of between three and five per cent of council's

Area	Y/N	Comments
		net spending as a prudent level for risk-based reserves. Over the medium term the Council's forecast figure is 8%. The General Fund position has been risk assessed to take account of potential unforeseen pressures. The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement provides an opportunity for the Council to build reserves to support the capital programme and one-off investment.
Have realistic income targets been set and 'at risk' external funding been identified?	Y	An assessment of income targets has been undertaken as part of the development of the draft budget. The income areas which have the greatest risk (including business rates, council tax, planning and leisure) have had greater focus. Where income targets have been deemed unrealistic, these have been addressed as part of the 2026/27 budget. Fees and charges have been increased, where it is appropriate to do so, in accordance with the Council's Corporate Charging Policy.
Has a reasonable estimate of demand cost pressures been made?	Y	The enhanced budget process used in the development of the draft budget has improved the reasonableness of estimates.
Has a reasonable estimate of future income been made?	Y	The budget proposals presented by services were reviewed by finance and subject to budget challenge sessions. The Government's provisional finance settlement enables the Council to set a balanced budget without requiring any additional savings. However, it should be noted that there is likely to be a significant financial challenge, or 'cliff edge', following the end of the current settlement period in 2028/29.
Have one-off cost pressures been identified?	Y	All pressures have been reviewed to assess if they are one-off or ongoing in nature. One-off proposals are to be funded from reserves. Services will need to ensure exit plans exist for one-off expenditure.
Is there a reasonable contingency available to cover the financial risks faced by the Council?	Y	The Council has incorporated estimates for pay awards, inflation and demand pressures into its budget. It has also made provisions

Area	Y/N	Comments
		for key income streams not materialising for business rates and council tax. It is prudent to create a contingency budget to meet unforeseen demand pressures and to support a balanced in-year budget position
Is there a reasonable level of reserves, which could be used to mitigate any issues arising and are they reducing as the risks decrease?	Y	The Council has a range of earmarked, MTFP and minimum levels of reserves to ensure its financial stability.
The strength of the financial management function and reporting arrangements?	Y	The Council implemented a new financial system in April 2023 to improve its reporting. Enhancements to the system have been made, however, the Finance Teams are still catching up on delays caused by the system implementation. A move to a new supplier for support and maintenance of Unit4 provides an opportunity to enhance the reporting arrangements. Training for all budget holders in the use of Unit4 is in progress. A review of the Financial Procedures Rules has been undertaken.
Have the previous years Accounts been signed off by external audit to verify balances?	N	The Council's position in respect of its completion of the Statement of Accounts has been reported to the Audit and Governance Committee. The Statement of Accounts 2023/24 and 2024/25 were published in August 2025 and January 2026 respectively ensuring compliance with the backstop dates.
Has there been a degree and quality of engagement with colleagues and councillors in the process to develop and construct the budget?	Y	There has been a continuation of the improvements introduced to the budget setting process in previous years. This has included a series of budget challenge sessions between the Directors and Heads of Service, as well as engagement with Corporate Leadership Team, Portfolio Holders and Strategy Group, with all Member briefings scheduled.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 Consultation with Members

- 6.1.1 The Corporate Scrutiny Committee reviewed the General Fund budget during its meeting on 22 January 2026. Members raised several questions about the

proposals and made recommendations. Further details are available in the minutes, which can be found as a background paper.

6.2 Public Consultation

- 6.2.1 The Council hosted an online survey from 14 January to 1 February 2026 to gather feedback from residents and businesses on budget changes. The survey was shared on social media, outlined key proposals, and asked participants for their level of support and any additional comments. Appendix 7 summarises the consultation responses, with a full analysis in Appendix 8. Responses were also received from Ashby Town Council (Appendix 9) and a Ratepayer (Appendix 10).

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 Based on the assumptions made in the Budget 2026/27 and MTFP 2026-29 for income and expenditure, the Council can set a balanced proposed budget for 2026/27.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	The budget provides funding for the Council to deliver against all its priorities.
Policy Considerations:	None
Safeguarding:	None
Equalities/Diversity:	Equality impact assessments have been conducted by services on relevant proposals during the budget setting period.
Customer Impact:	Customers are likely to be impacted by the changes to fees and charges and District and special expenses precepts set out in this report.
Economic and Social Impact:	The General Fund capital programme allocates £7.1m to investing in Coalville Regeneration Projects over three years.
Environment, Climate Change and Zero Carbon:	The Council is currently in the process of identifying the cost implications of achieving net carbon zero. This cost is expected to be significant and is not yet included within the current capital programme. Any proposals arising from this work will be presented to Council in due course.
Consultation/Community/Tenant Engagement:	Corporate Scrutiny Committee – 22 January 2026. Public consultation ran from 14 January to 1 February 2026.
Risks:	The budgets will be monitored throughout the year to ensure the Council remains within its funding envelope and planned budget savings are delivered. Key risks to the budget are discussed in further detail in section 5 of the report.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Officer Contact	Anna Crouch Head of Finance anna.crouch@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL GENERAL FUND SUMMARY BUDGET 2026/27

2025/26 Budget £	Service	2026/27 Indicative £	2027/28 Indicative £	2028/29 Indicative £
201,490	Chief Executive	228,200	234,530	241,050
756,780	Human Resources	778,040	796,960	813,710
1,866,830	Legal & Support Services	2,002,820	2,050,500	2,118,590
2,825,100	Total Chief Executive	3,009,060	3,081,990	3,173,350
137,970	Strategic Director of Place	150,210	154,520	158,950
1,264,315	Property & Economic Regeneration	1,927,800	1,971,695	2,031,015
1,099,730	Planning	1,024,710	1,097,256	1,163,906
(4,600)	Joint Strategic Planning	(3,130)	(2,800)	(2,450)
2,497,415	Total Place	3,099,590	3,220,670	3,351,420
110,990	Director of Communities	122,560	125,840	129,220
5,792,340	Community Services	5,393,960	6,751,000	7,126,370
540,188	Strategic Housing	1,043,920	1,103,310	1,198,310
6,443,517	Total Community Services	6,560,440	7,980,150	8,453,900
237,130	Strategic Director of Resources	319,690	327,480	335,510
130,030	Internal Audit	148,640	209,100	214,720
1,011,180	Customer Services	1,101,200	1,131,310	1,160,800
1,110,460	Finance	1,190,270	1,364,070	1,498,410
1,211,620	Revenues & Benefits	1,232,700	1,277,950	1,301,460
1,252,280	ICT	1,471,080	1,521,890	1,539,930
0	Business Change	55,260	56,890	58,570
4,952,700	Total Resources	5,518,840	5,888,690	6,109,400
116,120	Non Distributed - Revenue Expenditure on Surplus Assets	120,060	121,080	121,080
71,330	Non Distributed - Retirement Benefits	72,710	74,120	74,120
108,500	Corporate & Democratic Core	109,810	109,810	109,810
1,656,601	Pay Award, Employers NI and Utilities Contingency	102,350	157,100	214,410
478,573	Contingency	500,000	0	0
0	Local Government Reorganisation	2,000,000	0	0
19,149,856	NET COST OF SERVICES	21,092,860	20,633,610	21,607,490
(1,713,876)	Net Recharges from General Fund	(2,441,030)	(2,441,030)	(2,441,030)
17,435,980	NET COST OF SERVICES AFTER RECHARGES	18,651,830	18,192,580	19,166,460
CORPORATE ITEMS AND FINANCING				
Corporate Income and Expenditure				
1,788,070	Net Financing Costs	1,387,167	1,345,843	1,316,063
(150,360)	Investment Income	(210,867)	(210,867)	(210,867)
19,073,690	NET REVENUE EXPENDITURE	19,828,130	19,327,556	20,271,656
0	Contribution to/(from) Balances/Reserves	14,513,714	10,169,727	9,089,772
19,073,690	MET FROM GOVT GRANT & COUNCIL TAX (Budget Requirement)	34,341,843	29,497,283	29,361,428
(0)	ANTICIPATED BASELINE FUNDING GAP	0	(0)	(0)

2025/26 Budget £	Service	2026/27 Indicative £	2027/28 Indicative £	2028/29 Indicative £
Financed By				
(679,330)	New Homes Bonus	0	0	0
0	Council Tax - Previous year's Surplus/(Deficit)	11,734	0	0
(6,268,350)	Council Tax	(6,508,273)	(6,757,778)	(7,016,084)
(8,673,560)	Non Domestic Rates	(3,674,652)	(3,758,942)	(3,834,773)
(1,577,320)	Minimum Funding Guarantee	0	0	0
(1,574,000)	Extended Producer Responsibility	0	0	0
(131,200)	Revenue Support Grant	(15,450,668)	(9,898,766)	(4,204,755)
(169,930)	National Insurance Grant	0	0	0
0	95% Income Protection Floor	(3,536,712)	(8,584,057)	(13,731,666)
0	Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse	(444,460)	(485,800)	(562,210)
0	Recovery Grant	(11,940)	(11,940)	(11,940)
0	Adjustment Support Grant	(4,726,872)	0	0
(19,073,690)	TOTAL FUNDING AVAILABLE	(34,341,843)	(29,497,283)	(29,361,428)

BUDGET PROPOSALS

Appendix 2

		2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Funding Source (if Reserves)
Revised Budget		18,724,013	19,553,532	20,056,106	
Savings					
Reduction in the Employers Contribution Pension Rate following the actuarial review	All	- 834,499	- 834,499	- 834,499	
Housing keeping savings from vacant post within Community Services	Community Services	- 28,680	- 28,680	- 28,680	
Staff Savings from Waste Service Review.	Community Services	-	- 115,990	- 238,410	
Equipment & Service contracts no longer required	Community Services	-	-	- 9,000	
Recycling bags (no longer required)	Community Services	- 3,000	- 24,000	- 30,000	
Air Quality Monitoring Equipment	Community Services	- 5,000	- 15,000	- 15,000	
Everyone Active - utility benchmarking and business rates	Community Services	- 188,000	- 185,000	- 182,000	
Vehicle & Fleet Maintenance - reduced gas/swap to bio LPG	Community Services	- 11,000	- 11,000	- 11,000	
Trade refuse - reduced disposal costs	Community Services	- 32,000	- 32,000	- 32,000	
Removal of the Professional Fees budget in Planning and Policy Teams	Place	- 20,000	- 20,000	- 20,000	
Land Charges Search Fees - increase in demand for service with more houses expected to be build	Place	- 129,000	- 129,000	- 129,000	
Previous budget request for Microsoft licences in 27/28 no longer required	Resources	-	- 10,000	- 10,000	
Total Savings		- 1,251,179	- 1,405,169	- 1,539,589	
Additional Income					
Extended Producer Responsibility	Community Services	- 2,094,900	- 1,675,920	- 1,256,940	
Charnwood Burial contract increase in income due to full cost recovery.	Community Services	- 24,150	- 24,150	- 24,150	
On-street enforcement (increase in income - fully reimbursed by LCC)	Community Services	- 20,880	- 20,880	- 20,880	
Food Waste Roll Out - DEFRA Funding	Community Services	- 324,490	-	-	
Summons Income - Revenues	Resources	- 90,000	- 90,000	- 90,000	
Internal Audit - additional income from Charnwood and Blaby	Resources	- 7,010	- 9,650	- 16,620	
Joint Strategic Planning - additional income from partners	Place	- 7,360	- 8,290	- 9,280	
Total Additional Income		- 2,568,790	- 1,828,890	- 1,417,870	
Reduction in Income					
Everyone Active - contract income	Community Services	49,240	59,520	74,010	
Coalville Car Parks and Moneyhill (Ashby) Car Park- 2hrs free parking	Community Services	23,000	23,000	23,000	
Newmarket & Outdoor market - reduced income budget	Community Services	83,000	83,030	83,030	
Trade refuse -reduced income	Community Services	67,000	67,000	67,000	
Reduced income - Loss of contract for sweeping at Bardon	Community Services	17,000	17,000	17,000	
Reduced Housing Benefit Admin Grant	Resources	6,410	6,410	6,410	
Total Reduction in Income		245,650	255,960	270,450	
Unavoidable Cost Pressures					
Moving the Council's democratic services system (ModGov) from maintaining on premise to the cloud	Chief Executives	5,550			
Food waste roll out - implementing the Government's food waste initiative. This is the revenue costs, but there are also associated capital costs	Community Services	599,880	840,650	840,650	
Tacho technology for O license compliance and driver fobs	Community Services	20,000	20,000	20,000	
Blaby District Council - Revenue contribution for administering Disabled Facilities Grant's	Community Services	27,440	27,440	27,440	
Refuse & Recycling - increased agency due to sickness	Community Services	170,000	170,000	85,000	
Refuse & Recycling - increased overtime/casual cover due to sickness	Community Services	147,000	147,000	73,000	
Refuse & Recycling - hire of vehicles. Increase due to ageing fleet and purchase of new vehicles delayed	Community Services	150,000	50,000	50,000	

		2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Funding Source (if Reserves)
Garage/Fleet services - purchase of parts, increase due to ageing fleet and increased repairs and maintenance	Community Services	175,000	88,000	-	Business Rates Reserve
Removal of Earmarked Reserve which currently funds Environmental and Sustainability Programme Manager post and working budget. This ensures ongoing funding for the post in future years	Community Services	83,980	83,980	83,980	
Increase in electricity budget to cover costs of Electrical Vehicle Charging in car parking	Community Services	35,000	35,000	35,000	
CCTV contract due for retender during 26/27, expected increase in cost	Community Services	8,000	8,000	8,000	
Net adjustment from deletion of old budgets for Port Health exp & income and increased income from full cost recovery	Community Services	28,910	28,910	28,910	
Increase in pest control contract charges	Community Services	9,000	9,000	9,000	
Refuse & Recycling - Increase in repairs & maintenance of equipment due to age	Community Services	11,000	11,000	-	
Local Plan Examination	Place	85,000	-	-	Business Rates Reserve
Electricity - Electric Vehicle Charge Point Feeder Pillar Whitwick Business Centre	Place	17,000	17,000	17,000	
Cash Receipting System - increase in licence fees	Resources	-	-	-	
Insurance - increase in premium	Resources	297,240	441,340	606,840	
Transformation Officer (previously funded from MTFP)	Resources	52,030	52,030	52,030	
Internal Audit Staffing - 2 year funded post made permanent	Resources	-	53,190	53,190	
Access PaySuite Licence Fees - inflationary increases	Resources	11,500	12,500	13,500	
IT Licences - to bring budget in line with forecasted costs	Resources	33,940	33,940	33,940	
IT Maintenance - to bring budget in line with forecasted costs	Resources	28,290	28,290	28,290	
Iken licences for Legal - already purchased in 25/26	Resources	6,120	6,120	6,120	
Local Government Reorganisation	Corporate	2,000,000	-	-	
Contingency for increased cost of temporary accommodation (Funded by Grant Income)	Community Services	444,460	485,800	562,210	
Removal of vacancy factor against some services	All	196,120	196,120	196,120	
Salaries - Pay Award, increments	All	179,596	373,997	587,437	
Total Unavoidable Cost Pressure		4,822,056	3,219,307	3,417,657	
ICT					
Avoidable Cost Pressure					
Flex Collect; trial continuation funded by Extended Producer Responsibility Fund	Community Services	40,180	-	-	
Asset protection plans for closed churchyards, CV park depot, sports pavilions, play areas	Community Services	65,230	87,640	40,950	
Public Conveniences - redecoration at CV & Ashby and new flooring at CV	Community Services	7,000	-	-	
Love Your Neighbourhood	Community Services	10,000	10,000	-	Business Rates Reserve
Two staff and a caged vehicle for a two year term to tackle litter fly tips and sweeping	Community Services	99,250	98,250	-	Business Rates Reserve
Befriending Service	Community Services	23,000	23,000	23,000	
Community Focus Officer (2 year contract 26/27 & 27/28)	Community Services	52,280	53,870	-	Business Rates Reserve
Ashby Museum conditional grant - provision of ICT equipment and services	Place	1,015	-	-	Business Rates Reserve
HRA Procurement Officer - reduction in recharge - original figure net of est recharges	Resources	27,440	27,440	27,440	
Replacement of Touchpoint contact centre	Resources	-	18,000	18,000	
Sophos XDR is an Extended Detection and Response	Resources	37,000	37,000	37,000	
Microsoft CoPilot Licences - roll out	Resources	22,950	38,250	38,250	
Phase 3 Development of Unit 4	Resources	50,000	50,000		Medium term Financial Plan
Year-end support for the production of the 25/26 and 26/27 accounts.	Resources	60,000	60,000		
ICT Service Desk Analyst - fixed term post to permanent	Resources	40,740	40,740	40,740	
Mine Water Combined Heat Power (CHP) Feasibility Study	Resources	80,000	-	-	Business Rates Reserve
Total Avoidable Pressure		616,085	544,190	225,380	
Other					
Contingency		500,000	-	-	
Below £5k changes		59,922	59,922	59,912	
Housekeeping		- 270	- 270	- 270	

		2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Funding Source (if Reserves)
Recharges increase (within Net Cost of Services, e.g. Grounds Maintenance, Insurance, printing etc)	-	158,130	- 158,130	- 158,130	
Recharges increase (Service Management)	-	195,844	- 195,844	- 195,844	
Financing Costs	-	352,331	- 356,424	- 385,638	
Investment Income	-	60,507	- 60,507	- 60,507	
Total Other	-	207,160	- 711,253	- 740,477	
Proposals Funded from Reserves					
Medium Term Financial Plan	-	50,000	- 50,000	-	
Business Rates Reserve	-	502,545	- 250,120	-	
Total Proposals Funded from Reserves	-	552,545	- 300,120	-	
Transfer to Reserves					
Capacity Reserve		500,000	500,000	500,000	
Legacy Reserve		2,000,000	-	-	
Business Rates Reserve		12,013,714	9,669,727	8,589,772	
Total Transfer to Reserve		14,513,714	10,169,727	9,089,772	
BUDGET REQUIREMENT		34,341,843	29,497,283	29,361,429	
FUNDING					
Total Funding as per Council 20/02/25		18,175,000	17,410,300	16,690,820	
Council Tax	-	11,147	- 22,762	- 36,036	
Non Domestic Rates	-	6,617,668	- 5,804,128	- 4,986,707	
Extended Producer Responsibility	-	1,259,000	- 1,007,000	- 806,000	
Revenue Support Grant		15,346,408	9,839,076	4,193,535	
Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse		444,460	485,800	562,210	
95% income protection floor		3,536,712	8,584,057	13,731,666	
Recovery Grant		11,940	11,940	11,940	
Adjustment Support Grant		4,726,872	-	-	
Collection Fund Deficit	-	11,734	-	-	
TOTAL FUNDING		34,341,843	29,497,283	29,361,429	

North West Leicestershire District Council
Proposed Fees & Charges 2026/27 - Place Directorate

Service	Fee/Charge	Charging Policy	2025/26 Fees	2026/27 Proposed Fees	Percentage Change in	
					Fees	Basis for Change
Property Services	Rent of Commercial Property	Rent agreement	No change	No change	n/a	Where new lease negotiated.
Property Services	Maintenance Charge for Commercial Property	% of rent	Various	Various	n/a	Where new lease negotiated.
Property Services	Service Charges for Commercial Property	Actual cost	No change	No change	n/a	Based on actual costs
Property Services	Electrical Vehicle	Profit Generating	70p kwh	80p kwh	14.0%	Free parking in EV spaces but increase by 10p per kwh
Property Services	New Market	Subsidised	Fees vary from £17.50 to £60	Fees vary from £17.50 to £60	0.0%	No increase
Property Services	Car Parking	Full Cost Recovery	Fees vary from £0.65 to £38	Fees vary from £0.65 to £38	0.0%	No increase, first two hours free in Coalville and Moneyhill (Ashby) car parks
Property Services	Public Conveniences - Ashby & Coalville	Subsidised	flat rate of £0.30p	flat rate of £0.30p	0.0%	No increase
Property Services (Leisure Services - Special Expenses)	Burial fees	Full Cost Recovery	Fees vary from £80 to £2,279	Fees vary from £83 to £1,778	17.0%	Removal of triple fees and increase other fees as part of benchmarking exercise
Property Services (Leisure Services - Special Expenses)	Monument and other Cemetery Charges	Full Cost Recovery	Fees vary from £25 to £2,110	Fees vary from £26 to £2,190	3.8%	September CPI
Planning	Copy Planning/ Planning App Documents		No change	No change	0.0%	
Planning	Search fees CON29		No change	No change	0.0%	
Planning	Planning Application Fees	Set Nationally	Various	Various	n/a	Set Nationally
Planning	Planning Conditions Discharge	Set Nationally	Various	Various	n/a	Set Nationally
Planning	Pre-application fees	Individually determined	Individually determined	Individually determined	n/a	Individually determined

North West Leicestershire District Council Estimated Reserves 2026/27 to 2028/29

TEAM	Estimated Balance as at 1/4/26 £	Commitments & Budget Proposals 26/27 £	Estimated balance as at 31/3/27 £	Future commitment incl budget proposals 27/28 to 28/29 £	Estimated Balance as at 31/3/29 £
Earmarked Reserves:					
Chief Executive	28	(14)	14	(14)	0
Human Resources	17	0	17	0	17
Legal & Support Services	116	45	161	(110)	51
Community Services	683	(455)	228	(170)	58
Strategic Housing	394	0	394	0	394
Planning & Infrastructure	1,462	(12)	1,450	(4)	1,446
Property and Economic Regeneration	487	(43)	444	(43)	402
Joint Strategic Planning	147	0	147	0	147
Director of Resources	79	0	79	0	79
Customer Services	4	(3)	1	(1)	0
Business Change	431	(74)	356	0	356
ICT	23	(23)	0	0	0
Internal Audit	0	0	0	0	0
Finance	279	0	279	(75)	204
MTFP Reserve	7,558	(264)	7,294	(107)	7,187
Business Rates Reserve	11,333	(599)	10,734	13,616	24,350
Legacy Reserve	0	1,000	1,000	(1,000)	0
Total earmarked reserves - General Fund	23,040	(443)	22,598	12,092	34,690
Other reserves General Fund:					
General Balance (minimum level of reserves)	1,544	0	1,544	0	1,544
Total other Reserves - General Fund	1,544	0	1,544	0	1,544
TOTAL ALL RESERVES - GENERAL FUND	24,585	(443)	24,142	12,092	36,234
Total earmarked reserves - Special Expenses	64	(8)	56	(7)	49
Other reserves Special Expenses:					
General Balance	57	2	59	0	59
Total other Reserves - Special Expenses	57	2	59	0	59
TOTAL ALL RESERVES - SPECIAL EXPENSES	121	(6)	115	(7)	108

Agenda Item 14

COUNCIL, THURSDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2026

ADDENDUM TO AGENDA ITEM 14 – COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION 2026/27

Since the publication of the agenda:

- Cabinet at its meeting on 17 February 2026 considered a report which set out details of the Government's Final Finance Settlement 2026/27. Cabinet also reaffirmed revisions to the budget proposals.
- The precept for the Police and Crime Commissioner for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland was approved by the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Crime Panel on 12 February 2026. The precept approved was higher than initially anticipated.

As a result, the report and Appendix C have been updated, with all amendments highlighted in red.

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL – THURSDAY, 19 FEBRUARY 2026



Title of Report	COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION 2026/27	
Presented by	Cllr Keith Merrie MBE Finance and Corporate Portfolio Holder	
Background Papers	Cabinet – 13 January 2026 Council Tax Base 2026/27	Public Report: Yes
Financial Implications	This is a statutory report which is required to set the total level of Council Tax for North West Leicestershire. It includes the precepts for Leicestershire County Council, Leicestershire Police and Crime Commissioner, Leicestershire Combined Fire Authority, North West Leicestershire District Council, Parish/Town Councils and Special Expenses.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	The Council has a statutory duty under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to calculate the Council Tax requirement, basic amount of Council Tax and amounts for each valuation band for the 2026/27 financial year.	
	The Council Tax Resolution set out in Section 2 has been drafted to meet the detailed requirements of Sections 30–36 and 40 of the Act, and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012.	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	The Council is also required, under the Localism Act 2011, to determine whether its Council Tax increase is excessive in accordance with the referendum principles issued by the Secretary of State.	
	Signed off by the Deputy Monitoring Officer: Yes/	
Purpose of Report	There are no direct staffing and corporate implications arising from this report.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes/No	
Purpose of Report	To enable Full Council to comply with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Localism Act 2011 in respect of setting Council Tax.	
	Under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended), the Council must set its Council Tax requirement and basic amount of Council Tax for 2026/27, taking into account the precepts issued by major precepting authorities. This resolution is presented alongside the 2026/27 General Fund and Housing	

	Revenue Account budget reports.
Recommendations	COUNCIL IS RECOMMENDED TO: 1. APPROVE THE COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION 2026/27 AS SET OUT IN SECTION 2. 2. NOTE THAT CABINET AGREED ON THE 9 JANUARY 2025 TO IMPLEMENT THE SECOND HOMES PREMIUM AT 100% FROM DAY ONE, EFFECTIVE FROM 1 APRIL 2026.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report asks Council to approve the rate of Council Tax for 2026/27. Although the legal requirement is that the Council must have set a balanced budget and Council Tax charge by 11 March, it is important the Council Tax rates are approved at this meeting to allow sufficient time to produce and post Council Tax bills and meet all statutory deadlines.
- 1.2 This report sets out the resolution based on the assumption that the budget as set out in the General Fund Budget 2026/27 and Housing Revenue Account 2026/27 reports are approved.
- 1.3 Members are reminded that the individual Council Tax bill is comprised of six elements – the amount levied by North West Leicestershire District Council, the amount precepted by Leicestershire County Council, Leicestershire Police and Crime Commissioner, Leicestershire Combined Fire Authority and for properties in a parished area of the district, the amount precepted by the individual Town or Parish Council and Special Expenses.
- 1.4 The Localism Act 2011, requires the billing authority to calculate a Council Tax requirement for the year. This is to help the Council determine if it has set an excessive Council Tax increase that would in turn require a local referendum. Principles set by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government determines that an increase in a Council's basic rate of Council Tax of 3% or more than £5 is excessive.
- 1.5 Members are reminded that the Council must word the resolution in precise language, as directed by legislation.
- 1.6 The precept for Leicestershire County Council was approved at its meeting on 18 February 2026.
- 1.7 The precept for the Police and Crime Commissioner for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland was approved by the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Crime Panel on 12 February 2026.
- 1.8 The precept for the Leicester Combined Fire Authority was approved at its meeting on the 11 February 2026.

2.0 COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION

- 2.1 That it be noted that the Council Tax base for 2026/27 has been calculated:
 - a) for the whole Council area as 37,927 [Item T in the formula in Section 31B(1) of the Local Government Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")] and,

- b) for dwellings in those part of its areas to which a Parish precept as in Appendix A.
- 2.2 That the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2026/27 (excluding Special Items) is calculated as £6,508,273.
- 2.3 That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2026/27 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
- £85,468,370** being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) (a) to (f) of the Act (gross expenditure including parish precepts, the Housing Revenue Account and the additions to reserves).
 - £74,866,710** being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in 31A(3) (a) to (d) of the Act (gross income including the Housing Revenue Account and use of reserves).
 - £10,601,660 being the amount by which the aggregate at 2.3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 2.3(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year (net expenditure to be met from Council).
 - £279.53 being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (average Council Tax for a Band D property for the District including Parish/Town Council Precepts and Special Expenses).
 - £6,508,273 being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (Parish/Town Council Precepts and Special Expenses).
 - £171.60 being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special item relates (average Council Tax for a Band D property for the District excluding Parish/Town Councils Precepts and Special Expenses), the amounts being for each of the categories of dwellings shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Basic Amount of Council Tax to which no special item relate

District Council – Council Tax by Band							
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
114.40	133.47	152.53	171.60	209.73	247.87	286.00	343.20

- g) In accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, the basic amount of Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a special item relates are shown by addition of the amounts for Band D for the District Council in Table 2.

Table 2: District Council and Special Items Council Tax – Band D

Parish Area	£
Appleby Magna	222.60
Ashby-de-la-Zouch	303.74
Ashby Woulds	270.80
Bardon	171.60
Belton	276.70
Breedon-on-the-Hill	234.15

Parish Area	£
Castle Donington	342.57
Charley	332.78
Chilcote	171.60
Coalville	254.42
Coleorton	230.68
Ellistown and Battleflat	280.93
Heather	225.36
Hugglescote and Donington-le-Heath	251.65
Ibstock	299.31
Isley Walton-cum-Langley	185.25
Kegworth	276.88
Lockington-cum-Hemington	287.45
Long Whatton and Diseworth	225.14
Measham	286.65
Normanton-le-Heath	171.60
Oakthorpe, Donisthorpe and Acresford	320.24
Osgathorpe	239.43
Packington	231.11
Ravenstone	289.70
Snarestone	241.04
Staunton Harold	174.81
Stretton-en-le-Field	171.60
Swannington	260.31
Swepestone	262.18
Whitwick	304.70
Worthington	214.12

- h) In accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of the categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands are shown in Appendix B.

- 2.4 That it be noted that for the year 2026/27 Leicestershire County Council, Leicestershire Police and Crime Commissioner and the Leicestershire Combined Fire Authority have stated the following amounts in precepts to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Act 1992, for each category of dwellings in the Council's area indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Council Tax Precepts 2026/27

	Combined Fire Authority	Leicestershire County Council	Leicestershire Police and Crime Commissioner
	£	£	£
Precept	3,476,116	65,681,535	11,955,736
Band A	61.10	1,154.53	210.15
Band B	71.28	1,346.95	245.18
Band C	81.47	1,539.37	280.20
Band D	91.65	1,731.79	315.23
Band E	112.02	2,116.63	385.28
Band F	132.38	2,501.47	455.33
Band G	152.75	2,886.31	525.38
Band H	183.30	3,463.58	630.46

- 2.5 That the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the amounts shown in Appendix C as the amounts of Council Tax for 2026/27 for each of the categories of dwellings.
- 2.6 The Council determines that the Council's basic amount of council tax for 2026/27 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB and 52ZY Local Government Finance Act 1992: Referendums relating to Council Tax increases.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	The Council Tax provides funding for the Council to deliver all of its priorities: - Planning and regeneration - Communities and housing - Clean, green and Zero Carbon - A well-run council
Policy Considerations:	The Council has agreed a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and the effect of the scheme, in particular the effect on the Council Tax Base, is taken into account in determining the District's Council Tax. The Council Tax Requirement of this Council includes the impact of Parish/Town Council precepts, although the Council does not have any role in the setting of these, other than determining the Tax Base for each parish. The Council does not have any role in the setting of Council Tax for Leicestershire County Council, Leicestershire Police and Crime Commissioner and the Leicestershire Combined Fire Authority. Their decisions do, however, feed into the overall Council Tax Resolutions.
Safeguarding:	None
Equalities/Diversity:	Not applicable.
Customer Impact:	Council Tax payers within the district are likely to be impacted by the increase in Council Tax.
Economic and Social Impact:	Not applicable.
Environment, Climate Change and zero carbon:	There are no environmental implications arising directly from the report.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	The Council consulted local taxpayers during its budget process, details of which are set out in the General Fund and Council Tax report for consideration on this agenda.
Risks:	Failure to agree the Council Tax Resolution would delay the preparation of Council Tax bills and the collection of the payments from residents. The cost of such delay would be borne solely by the Council.
Officer Contact	Anna Crouch Head of Finance anna.crouch@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

APPENDIX C

COUNCIL TAX 2026/27 - COUNTY PRECEPT, FIRE PRECEPT, POLICE PRECEPT, DISTRICT, TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL AND SPECIAL EXPENSES

PARISH / SPECIAL EXPENSE AREA	BAND A	BAND B	BAND C	BAND D	BAND E	BAND F	BAND G	BAND H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
APPLEBY MAGNA	1,574.18	1,836.55	2,098.90	2,361.27	2,885.99	3,410.72	3,935.44	4,722.54
ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH	1,628.27	1,899.66	2,171.03	2,442.41	2,985.16	3,527.92	4,070.67	4,884.82
ASHBY WOULD'S	1,606.31	1,874.04	2,141.75	2,409.47	2,944.90	3,480.34	4,015.77	4,818.94
BARDON	1,540.18	1,796.88	2,053.57	2,310.27	2,823.66	3,337.05	3,850.44	4,620.54
BELTON	1,610.25	1,878.62	2,146.99	2,415.37	2,952.12	3,488.86	4,025.61	4,830.74
BREEDON-ON-THE-HILL	1,581.88	1,845.53	2,109.17	2,372.82	2,900.11	3,427.40	3,954.69	4,745.64
CASTLE DONINGTON	1,654.16	1,929.86	2,205.54	2,481.24	3,032.62	3,584.01	4,135.39	4,962.48
CHARLEY	1,647.63	1,922.24	2,196.84	2,471.45	3,020.66	3,569.87	4,119.07	4,942.90
CHILCOTE	1,540.18	1,796.88	2,053.57	2,310.27	2,823.66	3,337.05	3,850.44	4,620.54
COALVILLE	1,595.39	1,861.30	2,127.19	2,393.09	2,924.88	3,456.68	3,988.47	4,786.18
COLEORTON	1,579.56	1,842.83	2,106.08	2,369.35	2,895.87	3,422.39	3,948.90	4,738.70
ELLISTOWN & BATTLEFLAT	1,613.07	1,881.91	2,150.75	2,419.60	2,957.29	3,494.97	4,032.66	4,839.20
HEATHER	1,576.02	1,838.69	2,101.36	2,364.03	2,889.37	3,414.70	3,940.04	4,728.06
HUGGLESCOTE & DONINGTON LE HEATH	1,593.55	1,859.14	2,124.73	2,390.32	2,921.50	3,452.68	3,983.86	4,780.64
IBSTOCK	1,625.32	1,896.21	2,167.09	2,437.98	2,979.75	3,521.52	4,063.29	4,875.96
ISLEY WALTON-CUM-LANGLEY	1,549.28	1,807.50	2,065.70	2,323.92	2,840.34	3,356.77	3,873.19	4,647.84
KEGWORTH	1,610.37	1,878.76	2,147.15	2,415.55	2,952.34	3,489.12	4,025.91	4,831.10
LOCKINGTON CUM HEMINGTON	1,617.41	1,886.99	2,156.55	2,426.12	2,965.25	3,504.39	4,043.52	4,852.24
LONG WHATTON and DISEWORTH	1,575.87	1,838.52	2,101.16	2,363.81	2,889.10	3,414.39	3,939.67	4,727.62
MEASHAM	1,616.88	1,886.36	2,155.84	2,425.32	2,964.28	3,503.23	4,042.19	4,850.64
NORMANTON-LE-HEATH	1,540.18	1,796.88	2,053.57	2,310.27	2,823.66	3,337.05	3,850.44	4,620.54
OAKTHORPE, DONISTHORPE and ACRESFORD	1,639.27	1,912.49	2,185.69	2,458.91	3,005.33	3,551.75	4,098.17	4,917.82
OSGATHORPE	1,585.40	1,849.64	2,113.86	2,378.10	2,906.56	3,435.03	3,963.49	4,756.20
PACKINGTON	1,579.85	1,843.17	2,106.47	2,369.78	2,896.39	3,423.01	3,949.62	4,739.56
RAVENSTONE	1,618.91	1,888.74	2,158.55	2,428.37	2,968.00	3,507.64	4,047.27	4,856.74
SNARESTONE	1,586.47	1,850.89	2,115.29	2,379.71	2,908.53	3,437.35	3,966.17	4,759.42
STAUNTON HAROLD	1,542.32	1,799.38	2,056.42	2,313.48	2,827.58	3,341.69	3,855.79	4,626.96
STRETTON-EN-LE-FIELD	1,540.18	1,796.88	2,053.57	2,310.27	2,823.66	3,337.05	3,850.44	4,620.54
SWANNINGTON	1,599.32	1,865.88	2,132.42	2,398.98	2,932.08	3,465.19	3,998.29	4,797.96
SWEPSTONE	1,600.57	1,867.33	2,134.09	2,400.85	2,934.37	3,467.89	4,001.41	4,801.70
WHITWICK	1,628.91	1,900.41	2,171.88	2,443.37	2,986.33	3,529.31	4,072.27	4,886.74
WORTHINGTON	1,568.53	1,829.95	2,091.37	2,352.79	2,875.63	3,398.47	3,921.31	4,705.58

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Additional Paper - Review of the Arrangements for Dealing with Complaints about Councillors

Purpose

This additional paper has been prepared in response to the Audit and Governance Committee's request at its meeting on 4 February 2026 for further explanation as to why a three-month time limit is being proposed rather than the six-month period referenced in LGA guidance in respect of the proposed additional initial test being added to the current Arrangements for Dealing with Complaints about Councillors. It is intended to support Full Council's consideration of the amendment by setting out the rationale discussed by the Working Group and the practical reasons for adopting a shorter timeframe.

The Proposed Amendment

The proposed amendment is to introduce a fourth stage into the initial tests, such that if the events or behaviour to which the complaint relates took place more than 3 months ago, the complaint would not proceed unless there were exceptional circumstances.

The LGA Guidance on Member Model Code of Conduct Complaints Handling discusses the criteria for complaints handling, and suggests "[an] authority may therefore wish to set a time limit for receiving complaints of say six months under normal circumstances."

Some questions were raised in the Audit and Governance Committee meeting as to why we were not proposing a timeframe which aligned with this guidance.

The guidance, however, is not mandatory and itself makes it clear that the six-month time limit is a suggestion which does not have to be followed. When the proposed amendment was discussed in the Working Group, research was presented to show how other Councils manage the filtering of complaints due to the passage of time, with some not including a time frame at all, and a variety of different timeframes for those who did utilise this, ranging from one month to one year. Various Councils which do refer to a time limit express the importance of ensuring those involved are able to remember the incident clearly enough to provide credible evidence, and ensuring there is no unfair prejudice as a result of the delay. This was also emphasised by the Monitoring Officer, who explained that older complaints often arise as a reaction to a new disagreement or incident, rather than the original issue itself, which risks unfair retrospective scrutiny of conduct long after recollections have faded. Complaints should be made promptly as delay risks reliability and can be unfair to those involved.

The proposed three-month timeframe therefore reflects the importance of ensuring that investigations are based on reliable memory and evidence, that councillors are not unfairly prejudiced by stale allegations and that the complaints process remains timely and effective. The proposed amendment to the Arrangements does allow for

complaints outside of the timeframe to be allowed in “exceptional circumstances”. A careful assessment of the initial tests is already undertaken for all complaints received, so the addition of the fourth test would be considered in the same way.

The Working Group therefore reached the consensus that a three-month time limit for complaint submission would be reasonable and fair, which would help to maintain clarity and integrity in the process. It also reflects good administrative practice by encouraging prompt reporting, aligning with several other local authorities who have adopted shorter time limits for similar reasons.