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Meeting	CABINET
Time/Day/Date	5.00 pm on Tuesday, 25 June 2024
Location	Abbey Room, Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN
Officer to contact	Democratic Services (01530 454512)

AGENDA

Item	Pages
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS	
Under the Code of Conduct members are reminded that in declaring interests you should make clear the nature of that interest and whether it is a disclosable pecuniary interest, registerable interest or other interest.	
3. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION	
4. MINUTES	
To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2024	3 - 6
5. TRANSFORMATION DELIVERY PLAN	
The report of the Strategic Director of Resources Presented by the Corporate Portfolio Holder	7 - 24
6. PRODUCTIVITY PLAN	
The report of the Strategic Director of Resources Presented by the Corporate Portfolio Holder	25 - 40
7. FREEPORT BUSINESS RATES RELIEF	
The report of the Strategic Director of Resources Presented by the Corporate Portfolio Holder	41 - 52

- 8. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH - FOOD SAFETY SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2024/5**
- The report of the Strategic Director of Communities
Presented by the Communities and Climate Change Portfolio Holder **53 - 80**
- 9. CORPORATE COMPLAINTS**
- The report of the Strategic Director of Resources
Presented by the Housing, Property and Customer Services Portfolio Holder **81 - 120**
- 10. SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, VIREMENTS AND CAPITAL APPROVALS**
- The report of the Strategic Director of Resources
Presented by the Corporate Portfolio Holder **121 - 128**
- 11. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**
- The officers consider that the press and public should be excluded during consideration of the following items in accordance with Section 100(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 as publicity would be likely to result in disclosure of exempt or confidential information. Members are reminded that they must have regard to the public interest test and must consider, for each item, whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption from disclosure outweighs the public interest in making the item available.
- 12. HOUSING CONTRACTS**
- The report of the Strategic Director of Communities
Presented by the Housing, Property and Customer Services Portfolio Holder **129 - 134**
- 13. WHITWICK COURTYARD ROOF REPAIRS**
- The report of the Strategic Director of Place
Presented by the Housing, Property and Customer Services Portfolio Holder **135 - 138**

Circulation:

Councillor R Blunt (Chair)
Councillor M B Wyatt (Deputy Chair)
Councillor T Gillard
Councillor K Merrie MBE
Councillor N J Rushton
Councillor A C Saffell
Councillor A C Woodman

MINUTES of a meeting of the CABINET held in the Abbey Room, Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN on TUESDAY, 21 MAY 2024

Present: Councillor R Blunt (Chair)

Councillors M B Wyatt, T Gillard, K Merrie MBE, A C Saffell and A C Woodman

Officers: Mrs A Thomas, Mr A Barton, Miss E Warhurst, Mr P Stone and Mr T Devonshire

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor N Rushton.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no interests declared.

3. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Ms S Dillon asked the following question:

“There is an accumulation of debris - soil and vegetation - along the pavements and the gutters of the road all through many areas of the District and in particular Coleorton. Some pavements are made very narrow as a consequence. Plants and even young saplings are growing in this accumulation. Cycling is more hazardous, with the need to avoid debris often unrecognised by vehicle drivers and there is a greater risk of punctures. At times of high rainfall some of the debris gets washed into the sewers and increases the chances of blockage and flooding.

I have contacted the street cleaning department and they have said that they have a 13 week schedule for Coleorton, a rural area, however this is not maintained due to staff shortages and machinery failure. There are pathways and gutters that have not been swept for over a year.

Many local policies have national and international influences and insufficient streeting cleaning and maintenance seems to be a policy held more broadly than within the area of Leicestershire. However, poor street maintenance is inconsistent with many other notable policies surrounding environment, resilience and planning, which often cite desires to promote modes of active transport and improve resilience to weather events such as flooding.

On the NWLDC website, the opening two lines on the Street Cleaning Programme page make uncomfortable reading as residents do notice the absence of the street cleaning team and they raise the question:

Is the 13 person and 10 vehicle team properly functioning and sufficient for the tasks they need to do?”

The response of the Communities and Climate Change Portfolio Holder was as follows:

“Leicestershire County Council is responsible for the maintenance of the highways in the county including the removal of soil and vegetation that may obstruct the proper use of the highway. The District Council carries out cleansing duties that remove roadside litter and leaves and the sweeping schedule is published on the website at the following link:

[Street cleaning programme - North West Leicestershire District Council \(nwleics.gov.uk\)](https://www.nwleics.gov.uk)

The street cleansing team is adequately staffed and the vehicles that are operated are sufficient for the work that the team carries out.

To report a problem to Leicestershire County Council Road Maintenance please follow the below link or call 0116 305 0001

[Road maintenance | Leicestershire County Council](#)

The district council does have an online “report it” function if there is a particular street cleansing location to which Ms Dillon is welcome to access.

<https://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/report>”

Ms Dillon suggested that Highway Maintenance had many subdivisions and an uncoordinated approach to tackling the problem, meanwhile street cleaning was a district responsibility, and she felt that the Council had not been adequately carrying this out. So, as a supplementary question, she asked whether this “was a question of the Council and Leicestershire County Council playing ping pong and attempting to pass on the responsibility to each other?”

The Chair encouraged Ms Dillon to contact Councillor Rushton, in his capacity as the County Councillor for the area in question, with specific evidence with regards to the roads, and Councillor Wyatt as the relevant Portfolio Holder, with specific evidence of the need for the street cleaning element. He was confident that if she did so the Councillors would be able to better consider the issues.

The Communities and Climate Change Portfolio also encouraged Ms Dillon to contact him with the details and he would pay a visit to the streets in question.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2024 were considered.

It was moved by Councillor T Gillard, seconded by Councillor T Saffell and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2024 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings.

5. KEGWORTH QUIET LANE

The Communities and Climate Change Portfolio Holder presented the report.

The Chair complimented the proposed scheme.

It was moved by Councillor M Wyatt, seconded by Councillor R Blunt, and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The entering into an agreement to pass on £150,000 of UKSPF Grant to Leicestershire County Council to deliver the UKSPF Quiet Lane Scheme in Kegworth, and the transfer of £150,000 from the development pool to the active pool in the Capital Programme 2024/25, be approved.
2. Authority be delegated to the Head of Community Services in Consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community Services to approve all necessary agreements to give effect to the grant transfer.

Reason for decision: given the value of the agreement, Cabinet is required to authorise entering into the agreement to pass on the grant.

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm

The Chair closed the meeting at 5.12 pm

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NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – TUESDAY, 25 JUNE 2024



Title of Report	TRANSFORMATION DELIVERY PLAN	
Presented by	Councillor Nick Rushton Corporate Portfolio Holder PH Briefed <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
Background Papers	Transformation Approach - Corporate Scrutiny Committee 20 February 2024 Minutes of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, 20 February 2024	Public Report: Yes
		Key Decision: No
Financial Implications	<p>Council on 22 February 2024 approved an allocation of £0.5m to provide resources to support transformation initiatives. Spend against this allocation will be monitored through performance and budget monitoring reports on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>One of the main priorities, as set out in the Council Delivery Plan, is to close the funding gap over the medium-term that has resulted from reduced central government grants, the planned business rates reset, increased demand for services and rising costs.</p> <p>Implementing a transformation of this scale demands considerable investment in time, resources and finances. Each transformation proposal will be subject to a robust business case to ensure that it delivers value for money.</p> <p>The Medium-Term Financial Plan of the Council has highlighted a funding shortfall. Significant progress been made towards closing this deficit, the Council's Delivery Plan includes a performance measure to guarantee the Council's financial health for the foreseeable future.</p>	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	There are no legal implications arising from this report. Legal advice will be provided on projects in the Transformation Programme as required.	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan is projecting a £1.9m funding gap by 2028/29. The Council Delivery Plan	

	has a key performance indicator to deliver a balanced budget over the medium term which means reducing the funding gap each year.
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes
Purpose of Report	To provide details of the Council's Transformation Delivery Plan.
Reason for Decision	To enable Cabinet to consider the Transformation Delivery Plan and arrangements for Cabinet oversight of the Plan.
Recommendations	<p>THAT CABINET:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NOTES AND APPROVES THE TRANSFORMATION DELIVERY PLAN. 2. NOTES THE OVERALL APPROACH TO TRANSFORMATION OVER THE MEDIUM-TERM TO ENSURE THE COUNCIL IS FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE. 3. NOTES THE PROJECTS IDENTIFIED FOR DELIVERY IN 2024/25.

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 The General Fund Budget Report considered by Council on 22 February 2024 highlighted the need for the Council to develop a transformation programme to support the Council's aim to be financially sustainable by 2028 as set out in the Council Delivery Plan. The purpose of the programme is to improve service performance, efficiency, and effectiveness through process, system, and structural redesign, as well as cultural and workforce changes. It will deliver improved citizen outcomes, cost savings, and productivity gains, in line with the Council Delivery Plan. Full Council agreed a sum of £0.5m investment to implement and sustain these changes, which are crucial for closing the funding gap caused by reduced grants and increased costs. Responsibility for spending from the £0.5m fund was delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Director of Resources and the relevant Portfolio Holder by Council on 22 February 2024. Addressing this gap is vital to prevent financial instability and service decline. The programme is intended to achieve this by streamlining operations, fostering innovation, and aligning services with community needs.

2.0 TRANSFORMATION DELIVERY PLAN

- 2.1 The Transformation Delivery Plan, shown at Appendix One, is a strategic document drafted in response to the need for transformation within the Council's operations. It serves as a blueprint for change, addressing the critical challenges of financial sustainability that the Council currently faces. The Plan is not just a fiscal roadmap but also a commitment to improving service delivery and aligning the Council's functions with the needs of the community it serves.
- 2.2 On 20 February 2024, Corporate Scrutiny Committee considered a report in respect of the Council's Approach to Transformation, which provided details of the work completed to date. The report described the focus of each of the three themes, customers, organisation and people and resource.

- 2.3 Members of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee highlighted the importance of measuring and monitoring performance. It was also suggested to explore how any capital could be invested to increase revenues for the Council. A copy of the minutes from the meeting is shown at Appendix Two.
- 2.4 Financial constraints, operational demands, and strategic considerations have converged to necessitate this transformation. During the budget planning for the 2023/24 financial year, the Council pinpointed a medium-term shortfall of approximately £4 million. Significant progress has been achieved in mitigating and halving this deficit, but additional measures are required to secure a balanced budget for the forthcoming periods.
- 2.5 The Plan, therefore, transcends financial concerns, aiming to elevate the Council's efficiency, effectiveness, and overall performance. This, in turn, is expected to lead to enhanced outcomes for residents, service users, and stakeholders.
- 2.6 It identifies workstreams already in train which are expected to deliver savings, details of which will be reported to Cabinet in due course.
- 2.7 The Plan outlines the mandate for the Transformation Steering Group, which is comprised of officers tasked with the broad supervision of various transformation initiatives. This Group is responsible for overseeing the strategic direction and implementation of these schemes, ensuring they align with the overarching objectives of the Council. Their role is crucial in guiding the transformation process, from conception through to execution, and in maintaining the integrity and coherence of the Plan's goals.
- 2.8 The Steering Group has met three times and has completed the following work to date:
- Developed the terms of reference for the Steering Group
 - Refreshed the Council's project management framework
 - Drafted a Transformation Delivery Plan
 - Agreed to support the Plan with additional communications resource
 - Agreed additional HR resource to support the waste review process
- 2.10 The Transformation Delivery Plan is a pivotal element in the Council's commitment to service excellence and operational effectiveness.
- 2.11 Progress on the delivery of the transformation programme will be reported as part of the Council's regular performance and budget monitoring to Cabinet and Corporate Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.12 The Plan outlines the projects identified for the first year and provides a general approach to transformation across the organisation. Further proposals will be considered, initially, on a case-by-case basis by the Transformation Steering Group and where appropriate, further consideration by Cabinet in line with governance arrangements set out in the Council's Constitution.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	- A well-run council
Policy Considerations:	None.
Safeguarding:	None.

Equalities/Diversity:	None.
Customer Impact:	Impact on customers and other key stakeholders will be considered at the business case stage for each transformation initiative.
Economic and Social Impact:	Economic and social impact will be considered at the business case stage for each transformation initiative.
Environment, Climate Change and Zero Carbon:	Environment, Climate Change and Zero Carbon will be considered at the business case stage for each transformation initiative.
Consultation/Community/Tenant Engagement:	None.
Risks:	If the Council does not achieve substantial savings through its transformation programs, it will face challenges in maintaining a balanced budget in the medium term due to excessive dependence on reserves. Relying on diminishing reserves is not a viable long-term financial strategy.
Officer Contact	Paul Stone Director of Resources Paul.stone@nwleicestershire.gov.uk



TRANSFORMATION DELIVERY PLAN

DATE	VERSION	DESCRIPTION	SECTION	AUTHOR
25/3/2024	Draft	Draft Document	All	Paul Stone

Introduction

North West Leicestershire District Council is at a pivotal juncture where transformation is not merely an option but a necessity. This Delivery Plan outlines the imperative for change and sets the stage for a comprehensive transformation strategy. The Delivery Plan is designed to address the financial sustainability challenges identified by the Council, enhance service delivery, and ensure the Council's operations align with the evolving needs of the community.

The need for transformation within the Council is underscored by a combination of financial, operational, and strategic factors. The Council faces a projected funding gap, alongside the pressures of delivering high-quality services to the community. Transformation is not solely a financial imperative but is also about enhancing the efficiency, effectiveness, and overall performance of the Council to ensure better outcomes for citizens, customers, and stakeholders.

The Council's Delivery Plan sets out the priorities for the Council over a five-year period, emphasising financial sustainability, regeneration, housing improvements, and environmental commitments. The Delivery Plan will support these priorities by enabling more efficient resource allocation, fostering innovation, and ensuring that the Council's operations are aligned with its strategic objectives.

Reason for Transformation

The primary reason for the Council's transformation is to ensure financial sustainability over the medium term. With a significant funding gap looming and the uncertainty of the impact of a proposed business rates reset in 2026/27, the Council must act swiftly to secure its financial future. In setting the budget for 2024/25, the Council took several measures to address the funding gap, identifying a range of budget options which included general budget housekeeping, a Council wide challenge to find additional savings, maximising income where it was appropriate to do so and increasing Council Tax. This helped to halve the funding gap previously identified over the medium term. Moreover, transformation transcends fiscal consolidation; it is about reimagining how the Council operates to improve performance, efficiency, and effectiveness, ultimately delivering better outcomes for citizens, customers, and stakeholders.

Strategic Objectives

1. **Financial Stability:** Implement measures to close the funding gap and build a resilient financial framework that can adapt to future economic challenges.

2. Service Excellence: Enhance the quality and accessibility of services provided to the community, leveraging technology and innovative practices.

3. Community Engagement: Foster a collaborative environment where community input is integral to shaping the Council's policies and initiatives.

4. Organizational Agility: Develop an agile organizational structure capable of responding rapidly to changes in the external environment.

The intention will be to focus on the following:

CUSTOMERS	ORGANISATION AND PEOPLE	RESOURCE
Customer should have a positive experience of Council services whether that is face to face, on the telephone or digitally.	Leaders across the Council will lead by example.	The Council will be financially sustainable over the medium term.
The Council's website is easy to navigate and customer friendly.	Staff will feel trusted and valued.	The Council will have an appropriately skilled workforce.
The Council will be honest about what we can and can't deliver recognising that it can't do everything or support what everyone wants.	Staff will be empowered to serve customers well	Additional capacity will be provided to support transformational change.
Customer feedback will help improve services.	Staff will be given the tools to communicate effectively	Support functions will have the capacity to provide assistance when it is needed.
Customers will be signposted to the services they need.	Regular communication with staff will be provided.	Staff will be given appropriate training to deliver their roles.
	We will share and celebrate our successes.	The Council's workforce will be resilient.
		Investment will be provided where the outcomes improve the customer experience.

Key Initiatives

- Financial Review: Conduct a comprehensive review of the Council's financial operations to identify areas for cost optimisation and revenue enhancement.
- Digital Transformation: Invest in digital infrastructure to streamline processes, improve service delivery, and facilitate data-driven decision-making.
- Community Collaboration: Establish forums for ongoing dialogue with residents and businesses to align the Council's efforts with community priorities.

- Workforce Development: Equip Council staff with the skills and tools necessary to excel in a rapidly evolving public service landscape.

Implementation Plan

- Short-term (1-2 years): Focus on quick wins through process improvements and cost-saving measures.
- Medium-term (3-5 years): Implement digital transformation initiatives and develop new service delivery models.
- Long-term (5+ years): Embed a culture of continuous improvement and innovation within the Council.

Details of schemes identified for the first 12 months are summarised below with further detail included in Appendix Three:

- ICT contracts – rationalising the number of contracts to deliver best value and synergies in operational effectiveness across the Council.
- Procurement – delivering best value from contractual arrangements.
- Workforce support – reducing sickness absence and agency spend to ensure services operate effectively.
- Service Reviews – waste and parking are already in train.

To foster innovation and progress, services are being actively encouraged to submit project proposals that contribute to transformational change. This proactive approach is designed to identify and implement initiatives that can significantly enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness.

A Project Proposal Form, detailed in Appendix One, is required to be completed by the relevant service area or wider department. This form serves as the initial screening tool for the Transformation Steering Group, which plays a pivotal role in evaluating the potential impact and feasibility of each proposal. The Terms of the Reference for the Group are shown at Appendix Two. The Group's expertise and strategic oversight ensures that only the most promising projects, those with the potential to drive substantial improvements and deliver tangible benefits, are selected for implementation.

Project Management

The Council's adoption of the latest project management guidance and templates signifies a strategic move to enhance efficiency and accountability in managing organisation-wide projects. By implementing these updated resources, the Council is positioned to better track progress, monitor project milestones, and allocate resources effectively. This proactive approach not only streamlines project management processes but also ensures that all projects align with the organisation's goals and objectives, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and excellence. <https://nwleicestershire.sharepoint.com/services/Pages/Project-Office.aspx>

Monitoring and Evaluation

A robust monitoring and evaluation framework will be established to track the progress of the transformation initiatives, with regular reporting to Cabinet and Corporate Scrutiny Committee via its regular performance monitoring arrangements.

Conclusion

The transformation of the Council is a strategic imperative that requires a concerted effort across all levels of the organisation. By embracing the principles outlined above and committing to a path of continuous improvement, the Council can secure its financial position, deliver excellent services, and build a skilled workforce to support a thriving district.

Project Proposal for Transformational Change

This form is designed to provide the Transformation Steering Group with enough information to make informed decisions while remaining succinct enough to facilitate a quick review. It should be accompanied by any additional documentation that supports the proposal.

PROJECT TITLE:

Service:

PRIMARY QUESTIONS:

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM YOU ARE TRYING TO SOLVE?

WHAT IS THE VALUE TO THE CUSTOMER?

WHAT SUPPORT DO YOU NEED AND FROM WHOM TO DELIVER THIS PROJECT?

PROJECT SUMMARY:

PROJECT DEFINITION / OBJECTIVES

PROJECT SCOPE / DELIVERABLES

PROJECT BENEFITS / OUTCOMES – INCLUDING ZERO CARBON

PROJECT EXCLUSIONS / LIMITATIONS

PROJECT RISKS

ESTIMATED PROJECT COSTS

CHECKLIST:

Does this project contribute to the CDP priorities?	
Is the project mandate complete / robust i.e. are the needs of the business met?	
Have all the options been explored?	
Is the project affordable?	
Is the project realistic?	
Will it deliver Value for Money?	
Is the scope clear and unambiguous?	
Are the benefits correctly anticipated?	
Are the risks correctly anticipated?	

PROJECT MANAGER / OWNER:

PROJECT MANAGER	
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Transformation Steering Group Terms of Reference

Objectives

The Transformation Programme aims to improve the performance, efficiency and effectiveness of the Council. It may involve redesigning processes, systems and structures, as well as changing the behaviours and skills of the workforce aligning with the values of Council i.e. One Team, One Council.

To act as a steering group for the Council's Transformation Programme to ensure that it is aligned with the Council Delivery Plan and can be delivered effectively.

It is established to oversee and guide the successful execution of transformation initiatives and will provide strategic direction to prioritise projects.

The Transformation Programme will help to ensure that the Council financially sustainable by 2028.

Responsibilities

1. To agree an overall programme to achieve the objectives of the Council
2. Coordinate the programme with the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and agreed saving targets
3. Agree, support and drive forward the delivery of transformation initiatives, providing strategic oversight, direction and challenge in line with that programme
4. To review the top-level transformation portfolio including benefits realisation, milestones, accountabilities and capacity.
5. Authorise individual projects in the programme to continue at each decision point
6. To monitor and comment on the extent to which the current and future portfolio of transformation is on track to deliver the right outcomes and cultural change.
7. Facilitate change and champion the programme to internal/external stakeholders
8. Monitor the planned savings for each programme against delivery
9. Resolve strategic and directional issues between projects that need the input and agreement of senior stakeholders to ensure progress
10. Review the programme risk register and proposals for mitigation (aligned with the Corporate Risk Register)
11. Ensure that where resources are necessary they are provided in accordance with project need, project outputs and business requirements

Accountability

The Group is an officer Group and is accountable to Cabinet. The Group will also provide information as required to Corporate Scrutiny and Audit and Governance committees.

Scope

The Group will cover both General Fund and Housing Revenue Account transformation programmes.

Frequency of Meetings

Meetings will be arranged to take place on a monthly basis. Meetings to be held either in person or via Teams. The Chair may call additional meetings which are deemed necessary.

Secretariat

An agenda for each meeting and any associated papers will be distributed at least seven days ahead of the meeting with an action log maintained.

Membership

- Allison Thomas – Chief Executive (Chair)
- Andy Barton – Director of Communities
- Paul Stone – Director of Resources
- James Arnold – Director of Place
- Mike Murphy – Head of Human Resources
- Elizabeth Warhurst – Head of Legal and Support Services

Proposed Transformation Projects – Year 1

Waste Services Review

The Council is currently reviewing its waste services to enhance efficiency, improve recycling practices, and better serve the community. The Council's commitment to sustainability and community engagement drives this review, ensuring that waste services align with residents' needs and environmental goals.

Parking Review

In summary, the Council will review its parking services to ensure that parking services align with community needs, legal requirements, while also optimising efficiency and effectiveness.

Procurement

In reviewing its procurement contracts the Council has identified the potential for savings where contracts can be amalgamated. Managing multiple contracts can be resource-intensive and costly. A single, well-constructed contract minimises ambiguity. Dealing with fewer suppliers allows for better relationships. Negotiation and collaboration are easier when dealing with fewer suppliers. A single contract enables better monitoring.

ICT Contracts

The Council will assess all its ICT systems to ensure that they meet operational needs efficiently. It will look at streamlining processes, eliminating waste and optimising workflows which lead to better service delivery. This will help to identify cost saving measures, particularly where systems can be amalgamated and align with the Council's ICT Strategy to move its systems to cloud based operations.

Workforce Support

Lower sickness levels mean fewer staff absences ensuring consistent service delivery to residents. High sickness rates lead to increased costs e.g. sick pay and temporary staff. Agency costs are high therefore reducing agency spend allows investment in other critical areas.

Pipeline Projects

- **Customer Contact Improvement** – residents now expect on-demand services from local authorities. Improving customer contact ensures timely responses and aligns with residents' needs.
- **Corporate Landlord** – the concept involves centralising ownership and management of all property assets. In doing so, the Council can maximise the use of resources and ensure efficient utilisation of properties.
- **Getting the Basics Right** – the Council's recent staff roadshows and transformation workshops with Corporate Leadership Team identify a number of areas, which, whilst not transformational, they ensure that fundamental aspects of governance, service delivery and operations are effectively managed. These include:
 - Financial Stewardship – remembering that the Council is a 'gatekeeper' of the public finances. The Council needs to manage budgets effectively which means avoiding wasteful spending and ensuring financial sustainability. Therefore, the Council will continually review all budget line items and undertake budget housekeeping as part of its budget setting processes.
 - Transparent communication – keep residents informed about local policies, decisions and changes. Providing clear accessible information through various channels.
 - Responsive customer service – addressing enquiries, complaints and requests promptly
 - Knowledge sharing – this allows best practice to be shared, fostering collaboration among departments. It builds a network for mutual support and problem-solving.

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CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 20 FEBRUARY 2024

41. APPROACH TO TRANSFORMATION

The Strategic Director of Resources presented the report.

A discussion was had about the £500,000 budgeted within the report. Members felt that it was a large amount of money and seemed a somewhat arbitrary figure. The Strategic Director of Resources advised that this was a preparatory budget for the steering group, which had only met once.

A Member was concerned that asking Heads of Service did not seem that proactive, that the steering group might struggle with capacity, and that she would expect to see a clearer plan. The Strategic Director of Resources advised that Officers would develop clear intentions throughout the Transformation Programme and that the report before them was a starting point. He also clarified for Members that the process would be director-led, but Officers would be invited to contribute at appropriate junctures.

Several Members discussed the importance of monitoring the Transformation Programme, including a breakdown of how the budgeted £500,000 was spent, what the aims of the process were as they developed, and how successfully these aims were achieved. The Strategic Director of Resources concurred and repeatedly emphasised to Members the importance of having robust monitoring procedures in place. The Corporate Scrutiny Committee would play an important role in this process, savings would be tracked by the Finance Team, and efficiencies would be targeted with clear KPIs. The Strategic Director also advised that Officers had been and would be consulting with the Local Government Association and other Local Authorities.

A Member suggested that it was important to examine how capital could be invested to increase revenues for the Council, so the focus was not solely on cutting spending on services.

The Chair felt that the Transformation Steering Group's terms of reference were actually just aims and that greater consideration needed to be given to how performance would actually be measured and monitored.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments.

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NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – TUESDAY, 25 JUNE 2024



Title of Report	PRODUCTIVITY PLAN	
Presented by	Councillor Nick Rushton Corporate Portfolio Holder PH Briefed <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
Background Papers	None.	Public Report: Yes
		Key Decision: No
Financial Implications	No financial implications arising from this report.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	No legal implications arising from this report.	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	No staffing or corporate implications arising from this report.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	To provide Cabinet with details of the Government's requirement to produce a productivity plan by 19 July 2024 and to provide Cabinet with a copy of the Council's Plan for approval prior to its submission to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.	
Reason for Decision	To ensure that the Council is complying with the Government's requirement to publish and submit a Productivity Plan by the deadline of 19 July 2024.	
Recommendations	THAT CABINET: 1. NOTES THE DETAILS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S REQUIREMENT TO PRODUCE A PRODUCTIVITY PLAN AS SET OUT IN APPENDIX ONE. 2. NOTES AND APPROVES THE COUNCIL'S PRODUCTIVITY PLAN AS SET OUT IN APPENDIX TWO.	

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report outlines the requirements, background, and completion timescales of the Government's Productivity Plans. These plans are a strategic initiative aimed at enhancing productivity across the public sector, with a focus on long-term investment and promoting a dynamic economy.

2.0 GOVERNMENT REQUIREMENTS

- 2.1 The Final Local Government Finance Settlement 2024/25 announced on 5 February 2024, confirmed the requirement for local authorities to develop and share productivity plans. This is part of the Government’s efforts to return the sector to sustainability in the future.
- 2.2 The requirement was for plans to be published by 19 July 2024 before the House of Commons rises for the summer recess and despite the call of the General Election this requirement is still in place. Plans must be agreed by Council Leaders and Members and published on local authority websites, together with updates on progress. The Government expects them to cover four main areas:
1. Transformation of services to make better use of resources.
 2. Opportunities to take advantage of advances in technology and make better use of data to inform decision making and service design.
 3. Ways to reduce wasteful spend within systems, including specific consideration of expenditure on consultants and discredited staff Equality, Diversity and Inclusion programmes designed to promote integration and civic pride, and counter-extremism.
 4. Barriers preventing activity that Government can help to reduce or remove.
- 2.3 Alongside this, the Government will establish a new productivity review panel, made up of sector experts including the Office for Local Government and the Local Government Association.
- 2.4 The Government has requested that the Plans should be short and draw on work which councils have already completed.
- 2.5 On 16 April 2024, the Minister for Local Government, wrote to local authorities, providing further information on the requirements confirming that the plans should consider a range of themes which are set out in further detail in the letter. Where appropriate, the Plans should reference the work councils undertake alongside other public services, such as the NHS and police. A copy of the letter is shown at Appendix One

3.0 PRODUCTIVITY PLAN

- 3.1 The Council has developed a Productivity Plan in response to the requirements set out by the Government. This Plan underscores the Council's commitment to collaborating with local partners to foster development throughout the area. Furthermore, it highlights the barriers currently faced by the Council, such as funding uncertainty and difficulties with staff recruitment and retention. The Plan can be reviewed in detail in Appendix Two.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	A well-run council
Policy Considerations:	Council Delivery Plan.
Safeguarding:	None.
Equalities/Diversity:	None.

Customer Impact:	None.
Economic and Social Impact:	None.
Environment, Climate Change and Zero Carbon:	None.
Consultation/Community/Tenant Engagement:	None.
Risks:	The Council is required to submit its response by 19 July 2024.
Officer Contact	Paul Stone Director of Resources paul.stone@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

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Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

Simon Hoare MP
Minister for Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

16 April 2024

Dear Chief Executive

Productivity in Local Government

As you know, the Government is reviewing productivity across all public services and local government is, of course, part of that exercise. The recent [Local Government Finance Settlement](#) announced that councils would be asked to produce productivity plans. This letter formally begins that process.

May I first thank you for your very helpful engagement with my officials. Your views and thoughts have been valuable in shaping this approach to make it as useful as possible for all of us.

Local government has already done a huge amount in recent years to improve productivity and efficiency. However, lockdown and post-lockdown has proved challenging, and you are looking for new ways to go further. These new plans will help us understand what is already working well across the whole country, what the common themes are, whether there are any gaps and what more we need to do to unlock future opportunities. We will share these important lessons across the sector.

Productivity is not one-dimensional, and I would encourage you to consider the various facets that encompass the drive for greater productivity. When developing your plans, please think broadly and include reference to not only how you run your organisation, but also how you run the public services you provide and how you provide place leadership. It is with this wide view that we can ensure we are providing value for money for residents.

I am not looking to impose excessive burdens. I am not issuing you with a formal template or a detailed list of criteria to meet. I expect your plans to be three to four pages in length, and to set out what you have done in recent years, alongside your current plans, to transform your organisation and services. I do not want to specify a list of metrics you must report, but I do want to understand how you will monitor and assess your plans to assure yourselves and your residents that they will be delivered.

The plans should consider the below themes and where appropriate, should reference the work your council undertakes alongside other public services, such as the NHS and police.

1. How you have transformed the way you design and deliver services to make better use of resources.

Questions to consider:

- how has the organisation changed in recent years to become more productive? You may wish to consider what you have done around staffing, structures, operating models etc;
- how do you measure productivity in your organisation?
- what changes have you made to improve services, and what effects have those had?
- what are your current plans for transformation over the next two years and how will you measure the effects of those changes?

- looking ahead, which service has greatest potential for savings if further productivity gains can be found? What do you estimate these savings to be?
- what role could capital spending play in transforming existing services or unlocking new opportunities? If you have already used capital spending to boost growth or improve services, we would be interested in learning more;
- what preventative approaches you have undertaken and can the value of these be quantified?
- are there wider locally-led reforms that could help deliver high quality public services and improve the sustainability and resilience of your authority?

2. How you plan to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources.

Questions to consider:

- what are your existing plans to improve the quality of the data you collect; how do you use it and how do you make it available to residents?
- are there particular barriers from legacy systems?
- how often do you share data with other organisations, and do you find this useful?
- Are there opportunities to use new technology to improve workflows and systems, such as predictive analytics and AI?

3. Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems.

I know we will share the aim to reduce waste wherever we can and, while you have all made huge strides in recent years, no organisation is ever 100% efficient. You should set out your plans to reduce wasteful or “gold-plated” spend.

Questions to consider:

- how do you approach identifying and reducing waste in the organisation? How do you monitor progress?
- where have you followed invest to save and what was the result?
- how much time and money do you spend on staff EDI training (internal and external), networks, and other programmes? How many EDI Champions do you have as an organisation? How do you log and report the time and money spent on EDI related activity? How do you assess the effectiveness of that training?
- what percentage of total staff budget is spent on a) agency and b) consultants? How do you assess value for money on agency & consultancy spend and what are your plans to reduce use / costs? How many of those consultants or agency staff have been in place for over a year?
- what governance structures do you use to ensure accountability of spend?
- do you share office functions with other councils and if so, how useful do you find this?
- if you share external training costs with neighbouring councils, how do you factor out duplications of service between your council and your upper-tier council (if you have one)?

- if you have one, what is your assessment and experience of working with an elected mayor, combined authority, or devolution deal?
- what proportion of your paybill is spent on trade union facility time?

4. The barriers preventing progress that the Government can help to reduce or remove.

There will be barriers preventing you from going as far or as fast as you would like to. I would like your plans to set those out, so that we can understand how government, or the market, can help you overcome these barriers to go even further.

Questions to consider:

- what are the barriers preventing you from improving productivity further within your organisation?
- what are the barriers preventing you from improving services further?
- are these barriers consistent across multiple services?
- what would you need to remove those barriers? What do you need from government, the market or elsewhere?

Your plans must be returned by 19 July 2024, by email to productivityplans@levellingup.gov.uk.

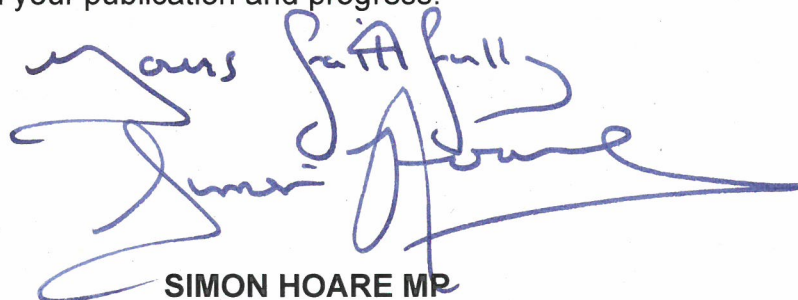
You must ensure that there is member oversight and endorsement of the plan before it is submitted, and the plan must also be uploaded to your website so that residents can see it. You should consider how you will update the plans and report on progress on a regular basis. The plans should also contain relevant metrics and key performance indicators to allow you and your residents to monitor progress.

Once received, we will review the plans to identify common themes and issues across the sector. We are keen to highlight best practice that others can learn from.

Individual plans will not be rated or scored, and we will not produce any kind of league tables. We are interested in understanding what is happening across the sector.

We are setting up a panel to consider the themes and evidence that comes from the plans. I will chair the panel and bring together experts from the sector and beyond, including Oflog and the LGA. They will consider the issues emerging from the plans, the implications for future national policy design, the role of government in supporting further change and the role of the sector in going further. The panel will advise national government and local government, and I believe this collaborative approach will ensure the most effective outcomes.

I look forward to updates on your publication and progress.



SIMON HOARE MP
Minister for Local Government

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Productivity Plan

Introduction

North West Leicestershire is a semi-rural district with a population of approximately 104,705. Most people live in the district's two main towns - around 37,800 in Coalville and 15,100 in Ashby de la Zouch.

North West Leicestershire is one of the fastest growing economies in the East Midlands and sits at the axis of the Midlands, strategically located 25 miles from Birmingham, Derby, Leicester and Nottingham and at the centre of the national transport network. As of 2018, 52 of the top 200 Leicester and Leicestershire businesses are based in North West Leicestershire representing variety of sectors.

Investment has continued at key sites supporting the local logistics sector, including alongside the A42 at Appleby Magna in the south west of our district and around J24 of the M1 motorway to the north.

Parts of our district around East Midlands Airport have been included within the East Midlands Freeport. This designation is expected to attract additional employers to our doorstep but may also create land use pressures for the council to resolve.

During 2022/23 we worked with the LGA to develop a clear narrative for our organisation. This has informed the development of the Council Delivery Plan with high levels of inward investment, low unemployment and significant housing growth.

We have a sound financial position as a direct result of this growth, but we recognise the challenges that local government faces with the uncertainty over future financing, in particular the business rates reset scheduled for 2026/27 and we are responding to these through our transformation programme and governance processes.

Our organisation has changed significantly over the last two years. We've completely changed the way we work and now fully embrace hybrid working, using our modern offices in Coalville as a space to collaborate and our central Customer Centre to support those people who need us most.

There is a renewed focus on our customers and a robust assessment of our financial sustainability and governance.

We recognise the importance of working collaboratively and using our unique position within the region to influence the wider economic landscape, and we have led the work to develop the Strategic Growth Plan for Leicestershire. Our challenge is to manage growth; balancing the needs of our communities and enabling the strategic infrastructure required to support the necessary growth.

We know we have a challenging agenda for improvement and have focused on key priorities in our Council Delivery Plan, supporting regeneration through our priority for Coalville and our emerging regeneration framework for the whole district.

We recognise the importance of a collaborative approach in tackling some of the key challenges within North West Leicestershire and in positioning ourselves around the right tables to influence wider regional and national agendas.

The plan will be evaluated against a set of performance indicators and targets on a quarterly basis, as part of the council's performance management framework.

Transforming services

NWLDC has been actively pursuing a range of strategies to enhance productivity and service delivery in recent years. Our approach has been multifaceted, focusing on staffing, structural adjustments and the implementation of new operating models.

We have taken on a significant transformation in the design and delivery of our services to optimise how we use resources. This transformation has been driven by a need to adapt to the changing needs of the community and the evolving expectations and demands on council services.

Our channel shift journey has been led by two fundamental drivers. The first is simplicity - it needs to be as easy as possible for residents to do what they want online. The second driver is availability of services - so our website must be easily accessible whilst simple and intuitive to use.

Our journey was accelerated by Covid and the need for residents to access online services to transact with us. This, along with our two main drivers, has meant that we have transitioned our high-volume, low complexity processes to digital forms, which are fully integrated to our back-office systems and have no requirement for a 'middle office' touch.

Examples of these are missed bins, requests for new waste containers, garden waste, bulky household waste collections and online payments. The statistics around these processes show that 65% of residents choose to carry out these transactions themselves instead of contacting the council.

We have in the last two years been working to bring some of the more complex service requests online, and there is a clear desire amongst our teams to embrace channel shift using digital forms to enhance the customer experience.

This has primarily been our Licensing, Environmental Protection, Environmental Health and Health and Wellbeing teams. These processes have full integration into our back-office systems and have removed double keying by officers, saving time and ultimately meaning the resident has a quicker resolution to their transaction.

In the last year our Customer Services team has moved into a town centre location, away from where the council's back-office services are located, to be more accessible to residents.

We offer a self-service area where those residents who want to self-serve can do so. The area is also used for the Customer Services team to educate and demonstrate to those who want to try to self-serve, so they can access our services in this way in the future. Those residents who wish to interact with our team face to face can still do so at their convenience and we have seen an increase in people who come to see us face to face, mainly with complex needs, due to the more accessible location of our team.

Our model is digital by choice and convenience, as we recognise that residents often just want to do what is convenient for them at that point in time that they need to access our services.

Staffing and structural changes

We have made significant changes to our staffing and structures to improve productivity. A key component of this transformation has been the restructuring of the Senior Management Team, which is responsible for overseeing the council's various departments and services.

The restructuring aimed to create greater synergy between services and ensure that the council structure is fit for purpose in the current landscape. Moreover, we have adopted a more flexible

working model, which was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to a review of occupation levels.

Measuring productivity

Productivity within the council is measured through performance against the Council Delivery Plan, which outlines our priorities and objectives.

Performance is reported to Cabinet four times a year, ensuring transparency and accountability. Customer service standards are also continuously reviewed to identify areas for improvement.

We continue to use the feedback we receive from complaints to generate ideas for service improvements, both in the short and long term. We work hard to view complaints we receive as a positive opportunity whilst remaining focused on trying to resolve them to the satisfaction of residents as quickly as it can.

Service improvements

We have implemented various service improvements, such as the introduction of an Housing Improvement Board to oversee changes in process, new IT systems and engagement with tenants to enhance the management of council housing repairs. Additionally, planned improvements in council homes, including kitchen and bathroom replacements, have been carried out through annual capital upgrade programs.

Transformation plans

NWLDC laid out a Local Plan for 2011-2031, which provides current planning policies for the district and outlines a strategy for delivering homes, jobs, and infrastructure. The Strategic Growth Plan, prepared by partner organisations in Leicester and Leicestershire, sets a long-term vision to address challenges and opportunities up to 2050.

In addition, we have developed a transformation programme which is designed to enhance our performance, efficiency, and effectiveness. This may entail reengineering processes, systems, and structures, in addition to transforming the workforce's culture, behaviour and skills.

The council has agreed to commit £500,000 to its delivery. A number of key projects are underway, including waste and parking reviews.

Potential for savings

In terms of services with the greatest potential for savings, we have identified areas that will save money in the longer term, such as the demolition of former Council Offices to remove maintenance costs and free up land for sale, earmarking funds for future projects.

Despite being consistently one of the highest recycling performers in the county as recently recognised by Oflog, costs of our waste management service are higher than our nearest neighbours, so we are currently conducting a comprehensive review of this service.

This evaluation is underway, and we expect to identify and implement considerable cost-saving measures. The objective is to enhance efficiency and sustainability, while also reducing expenses. By scrutinising current practices and exploring innovative solutions, we aim to optimise waste services for the benefit of the community and the environment. The anticipated financial benefits from this review are significant, reflecting the council's commitment to fiscal responsibility and environmental stewardship.

Capital spending impact

Capital spending plays a crucial role in transforming services and unlocking new opportunities.

We have invested in new contracts to speed up repairs and developed policies to address issues like damp and mould in council housing.

Significant investment has also been made in the district, including £7.9 million to invest in Coalville regeneration projects over five years, as well as £3.7 million in council-owned land to support regeneration and bring employment to the district. NWLDC has been awarded £1.3 million in government grants for regeneration projects in the district.

Preventative approaches

We have undertaken preventative approaches, particularly around homelessness and rough sleeping, with strategies in place from 2019 to 2024 to address these issues. Efforts include revised housing allocations, engaging young people, and fast-tracked money advice services.

Locally-led reforms

Locally-led reforms are essential for delivering high-quality public services. We have engaged in partnership working arrangements, such as the Growth Collaboration Agreement with Leicestershire County Council, to ensure the successful delivery of infrastructure and services required to support growth.

At the Heart of the National Forest, our partnership with the National Forest Company has been key to the development of a masterplan for the area.

We also have strong links with key businesses e.g. Donington Race Track, home to the Download festival, attracting 75,000 visitors to the district every year. And we have positive relationships with our parish and town councils, tenants and our wider customer base whose feedback is key to assist us in delivering the priorities for the district.

Technology and data

We recognise the challenges posed by legacy systems, which can impede the seamless flow of information. To address this, we're exploring strategies that include system integration and the adoption of cloud-based solutions, facilitating better data management and sharing capabilities and this is outlined in our ICT Strategy and Roadmap.

Collaboration with other organisations is a regular practice as highlighted above, allowing us to enrich our services and decision-making processes. This synergy is not only beneficial but essential in crafting policies that reflect the needs and aspirations of our residents.

We use our Performance Management Framework to make sure the priorities set out in the Council Delivery Plan are directly linked with our service performance. We continually monitor our performance against these priorities, allowing us to celebrate achievement, seek out any challenges and retain our focus.

Our adopted Customer Experience Strategy (2022) sets the context for our customer approach. The strategy places customers at the heart of our organisation and seeks to modernise and improve our approach to customer service through investing in material, human and technological resources in response to the rapidly changing customer expectation.

We are poised to initiate a comprehensive evaluation of our customer engagement strategies, acknowledging the significance of diverse communication channels. In this process, we will conduct a thorough analysis of our website content to ensure it aligns with our commitment to excellence in customer service.

We acknowledge the significant role artificial intelligence (AI) can play in enhancing the efficiency of local government operations, especially in the realm of customer service. We will explore its possibilities as part of our Transformation journey.

In April 2023, we made a significant technological advancement by implementing a new financial system known as Unit4. This move positioned the NWLDC as one of the pioneers in adopting a cloud-based version of this financial system.

Despite facing initial challenges, which are common with the adoption of new technologies, this strategic decision is aimed at revolutionising its financial reporting capabilities. As we continue to refine this financial reporting processes, the potential benefits include improved budget management, increased fiscal accountability, and the ability to leverage financial data for strategic planning. With these planned enhancements we are well-positioned to meet the evolving financial management needs of our stakeholders.

Reducing wasteful spend

Achieving financial sustainability is a complex endeavour, particularly in the context of local government budgeting. The 2024/25 budget setting process appears to have been a pivotal moment, with significant progress made in bridging the funding gap. This achievement involved a meticulous examination of expenditures, ensuring that each penny spent contributes to the overarching goal of efficiency and fiscal prudence.

This approach to budget housekeeping—scrutinising costs, enhancing efficiency, and carefully considering revenue adjustments—lays the groundwork for a robust financial strategy. It is a strategy that not only addresses immediate fiscal challenges but also sets a precedent for long-term financial health. By taking these steps, we are demonstrating a commitment to responsible stewardship of public funds, which is essential for maintaining public trust and ensuring the delivery of vital services.

Moreover, the focus on budget housekeeping can lead to innovative practices that further streamline operations and reduce waste. It encourages a culture of continuous improvement, where every aspect of the council's operations is regularly evaluated for potential enhancements. This can lead to more effective service delivery, better resource allocation and ultimately, a stronger financial footing for the council.

Invest to save

Invest-to-save initiatives have been a part of our approach to financial management. For example, the council has allocated funds for projects that promise long-term savings, such as reimagining our member and officer accommodation leading to the planned demolition of former Council Offices to eliminate maintenance costs and generate revenue from the sale of the land. These measures not only save money in the long run but also contribute to the council's sustainability goals.

The move to more efficient eco-friendly office accommodation and created a modern Customer Centre, which has brought services closer to the community and benefited local businesses who co-locate with us at our new office base.

Staffing

Regarding staff budget allocation, we are mindful of the costs associated with agency and consultancy spend.

The Council is committed to ensuring value for money. We assess the effectiveness of agency and consultancy spend by reviewing the impact and outcomes of the services provided. Plans to reduce use and costs include scrutinising long-term engagements and exploring alternatives that may offer better value or efficiency.

We are constantly reviewing our recruitment advertising strategies. The Indeed platform is used to provide national coverage and the Ashby and Coalville Nub news local websites are used for all vacancies. Specialist journals and their associated websites are also used depending on the role. For example, when seeking roles at Corporate Leadership Team level, we will often use the Local Government Chronicle or other specialist professional journals. LinkedIn, Twitter and other social media, and Forces families' jobs are also used.

The Human Resources team works closely with the Communications team to further improve job advertisements and approaches including wider use of social media options. The use of social media and methods / approaches to ensure our job roles appeal to the younger generations when seeking to fill roles are also being reviewed.

Our recruitment processes have been reviewed to try to make the process easier for potential applicants by accepting CVs and a reduced application form. This is to try to make the application process more customer friendly, particularly for roles where applicants may have low levels of literacy. In areas of high-volume regular recruitment, managers have been encouraged to have 'rolling' adverts.

The costs associated with equality, diversion and inclusion and trade union facility time are negligible.

Governance of spending

To ensure accountability of spend, we have established governance structures that include a senior management team, consisting of Head of Paid Services, Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer, and a detailed Constitution outlining the responsibilities and procedures for financial decision-making.

These structures are designed to maintain transparency and accountability in all financial activities. We have strengthened our capital governance structures recently and have recently been recognised as an exemplar by the Local Government Association for our governance arrangements.

By effectively overseeing investment arrangements, the Capital Strategy Group can ensure that funds are allocated in a manner that maximises returns or minimises costs. The recent grant funding for swimming pools means photovoltaic (PV) panels can be installed at one of our swimming pools. These panels not only reduce energy costs but also align with environmental sustainability goals.

Barriers and challenges

NWLDC is currently grappling with two predominant issues: the unpredictability of funding and the difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff, with the latter adversely affecting all service areas within the organisation. It is imperative for the Government to pledge sustained financial support over multiple years, which will grant us the stability needed for more effective service planning in the foreseeable future.

The ongoing struggle with recruitment and retention remains a significant hurdle. Despite the implementation of various strategies to mitigate these issues, our teams are operating under considerable strain, which compromises both the capacity and resilience of our service delivery.

District councils have seen their spending power significantly reduced in recent years. Despite significant pressures on services such as housing and homelessness we have not benefited directly from uplifts in 2019/20 and 2020/21 that upper and single-tier authorities received for social care for example.

Whilst specific grants to deal with the above pressures are welcome, the current preference for allocating funding to upper-tier authorities first, necessitates that district councils engage in a bidding

process to secure necessary funds, which can be a complex and competitive process. Further direct receipt of funding could potentially streamline the allocation process, allowing for more efficient and targeted use of resources at the district level.

In addition, it would also be helpful if Government was to engage directly with district councils in discussions regarding the devolution of powers, with their associated funding streams, given the track record we have in delivery and in shaping places.

In summary, overcoming productivity barriers within NWLDC requires a combination of financial support, regulatory reform, market collaboration, and internal cultural shifts. With these elements in place, we can strive towards delivering services more effectively and meeting the evolving needs of the community it serves¹.

¹ For detailed information on our performance and strategic planning, the Council Delivery Plan and performance reports to the council's Cabinet can be referenced.

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NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – TUESDAY, 25 JUNE 2024



Title of Report	FREEPORT BUSINESS RATES RELIEF	
Presented by	Councillor Nick Rushton Corporate Portfolio Holder	
	PH Briefed <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
Background Papers	East Midlands Freeport Update - Cabinet 26 April 2022 East Midlands Freeport Business Rates Relief Policy - Cabinet 26 April 2022 East Midlands Freeport Update - Council 18 June 2024	Public Report: Yes Key Decision: No
Financial Implications	<p>The East Midlands Freeport Business Rates Relief Policy is largely technical in terms of operation and application. The Policy closely follows Government Guidance, which has gone through appropriate due diligence, and provides for five years of relief from businesses moving into or expanding (under strict criteria) within the Freeport designated areas</p> <p>Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes</p>	
Legal Implications	<p>The Government has confirmed that it will not introduce legislation in relation to the administration of rate reliefs for freeports and expects local authorities to rely on their discretionary powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. A policy is necessary to demonstrate how the Council will exercise those discretionary powers in relation to the East Midlands Freeport.</p> <p>External legal advice has been provided to the Council (and the other Billing Authorities) by DWF in relation to the establishment of the EMF company and associated governance documents, subsidy control and reports to Council and Cabinet.</p> <p>Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes</p>	

Staffing and Corporate Implications	There are no staffing and corporate implications arising from this report.
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes
Purpose of Report	For Cabinet to agree the East Midlands Freeport Business Rates Relief Policy.
Reason for Decision	As part of the formal creation of the East Midlands Freeport the Council is required to have in place a Business Rates Relief Policy for eligible organisations outlining the eligibility criteria, operation and delivery of Business Rates Relief for East Midlands Freeport Tax Sites.
Recommendations	THAT SUBJECT TO COUNCIL APPROVING JOINING THE EMF COMPANY, CABINET APPROVES THE COUNCIL'S EAST MIDLANDS FREEPORT BUSINESS RATES RELIEF POLICY AND DELEGATES AUTHORITY TO THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES/S151 OFFICER TO FINALISE THE DOCUMENT.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 On 26 April 2022, Cabinet considered a report in respect of an East Midlands Freeport Business Rates Relief Policy highlighting that relief will be available to eligible business for the East Midlands Freeport Tax Sites once they were designated. At that time, the report stated that relief will be available to all new businesses, and certain existing businesses where they expand, until 30 September 2026. Relief will apply for five years from the point at which each beneficiary first receives relief.
- 1.2 The Policy outlined the eligibility criteria, operation and delivery of business rates relief. However, since that time significant progress has been made with key milestones achieved in governance, infrastructure planning, and strategic partnerships in respect of the Freeport. Details of this were reported to Council on 18 June 2024.
- 1.3 For the billing authorities (North West Leicestershire District Council, South Derbyshire District Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council) to approve the final Business Rates Relief Policy, the approval of a subsidy control scheme was a prerequisite, followed by the subsequent agreement on the business rates relief policy. The Policy considered by Cabinet on 26 April 2022, referenced subsidy control, however, since that period, it has become clear that additional efforts were required concerning the establishment of a subsidy control scheme for the Freeport. There was a necessity for a comprehensive review and enhancement of the existing framework to ensure its effectiveness and alignment with the overarching objectives of the Freeport initiative. The development and implementation of such a scheme is crucial for maintaining the integrity and competitiveness of the Freeport, necessitating a meticulous approach to its design and governance. This is further outlined in section 2.0 below.

2.0 SUBSIDY CONTROL

- 2.1 One of the key elements of the Business Rates Relief Policy is the consideration of subsidy control. Freeport Business Rates Relief is subject to the UK's domestic and international subsidy control obligations. Businesses located in the Tax Site will need to fulfil any requirements in place to ensure compliance with those obligations in advance of, during, and after claiming relief
- 2.2 There has been a delay relating to Subsidy Control which can be attributed to the Government announcing that it would publish guidance which sets out the conditions which apply to the award of Freeport business rates relief. This was published in late April 2024 in the form of government guidance.
- 2.3 This guidance states that billing authorities, when awarding relief, will need to meet the conditions of the stated legacy subsidy scheme. This operates in a similar manner to other council business rates relief schemes, with Government reimbursing the billing authority for the amount of relief awarded.
- 2.4 The issue of a subsidy scheme has been the subject of legal advice from DWF, which confirms that any legal risk around the establishment process has in theory passed (as the challenge window has now expired, even if that is dated back to April 2024). The Subsidy Control Act 2022, introduces new legal considerations, including legacy subsidy schemes. It is improbable that the Freeport scheme, endorsed by central government as the preferred exemption method, would face legal challenges. If the Council adheres to the scheme's conditions and maintains proper records, the risk of further challenges is minimal.
- 2.5 Based upon this development, the billing authorities are now in a position to consider the East Midlands Freeport Business Rates Relief Policy which involves assessing whether this aligns with the broader subsidy control regime including that it meets the legal obligations set out in the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

3.0 ELIGIBILITY PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 Freeports business rates relief is available to new businesses moving into the freeport after the date on which the relevant freeport tax site has been formally designated and occupying both existing and new hereditaments on the rating list.
- 3.2 Freeports business rates relief is available for five years from the date it is first claimed. At the time of approving the East Midlands Freeport Business Rates Relief Policy on 26 April 2022, the policy included the criteria for granting the relief from the establishment of the Freeport area until 30 September 2026. However, at the Autumn Statement on 30 November 2023, the Government announced that the window to claim Freeport tax relief would be extended from five to ten years, until 30 September 2031 for English Freeports.
- 3.3 This means that if a business first received relief on 30 September 2026, the relief may be applied up to 29 September 2031. Where a business first receives relief on 30 September 2031, the relief may be applied up to 29 September 2036. This has been reflected in the revised East Midlands Freeport Business Rates Relief Policy.
- 3.4 Enclosed at Appendix One is the updated version of the East Midland Freeport Business Rates Relief Policy. This document includes amendments made since the Policy was approved on 26 April 2022. The Policy operates in a similar manner to the Council's business rates relief schemes, with the decision on award of the relief resting with the Council.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning and regeneration - A well-run council
Policy Considerations:	None.
Safeguarding:	None.
Equalities/Diversity:	None.
Customer Impact:	None.
Economic and Social Impact:	The East Midlands Freeport Business Rates Relief Policy although largely technical in terms of operation and application forms a key element in the Freeport offer, incentivising businesses to relocate into the Freeport or existing businesses to expand.
Environment, Climate Change and Zero Carbon:	Environmental and climate impact will need to be assessed as part of the wider Freeport operation and expansion and if appropriate mitigated through appropriate measures.
Consultation/Community/Tenant Engagement:	None.
Risks:	Risks associated with the approval of the East Midlands Freeport Rates Relief Policy are minimal. The policy is closely aligned to national guidance and compliant with Government parameters.
Officer Contact	Paul Stone Director of Resources paul.stone@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

Business Rates Relief Policy for the East Midlands Freeport

Adopted by North West Leicestershire District Council, Rushcliffe Borough Council and South Derbyshire District Council

3 July 2024

1. Purpose of the Policy

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to determine the level of discretionary relief which may be granted to certain defined ratepayers within the tax site located within the East Midlands Freeport area. The policy takes account of the criteria for granting the relief from the establishment of the Freeport area until 30 September 2031¹ for a five year period (**Last Relief Commencement Date**) and takes account of the '[Freeports business rates relief: local authority guidance](#)' published on 26 April 2024. A map of the Freeport area is available at the following link: [Map of East Midlands Freeport customs site - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- 1.2. Central Government is not changing the legislation relating to the reliefs available to businesses and has produced guidance for local billing authorities to use their discretionary powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended) to grant business rate relief in relation to Freeport tax sites to those ratepayers who are eligible. This policy follows the principles in the government guidance.
- 1.3. Where relief is granted correctly, the government will fully reimburse billing authorities and major precepting authorities for the actual cost to them under the rates retention scheme for the local share of the discretionary relief, using a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- 1.4. This policy outlines the eligibility criteria, operation and delivery of this discretionary business rates relief within the East Midlands Freeport area. It aligns with the Freeports' Subsidy Control Scheme, that government guidance states was made on 19 November 2021². This policy has been jointly developed and adopted by all three billing authorities that cover the area of the Freeport - North West Leicestershire District Council, Rushcliffe Borough Council and South Derbyshire District Council (collectively known as the "EM Freeport Billing Authorities").
- 1.5. This policy only applies to sites within this area, provided that the Applicant also meets the other requirements in this policy.

¹ Relief will be available to all new businesses, and certain existing businesses where they expand, until 30 September 2031. Relief will apply for five years from the point at which each beneficiary first receives relief. This means that if a business first received relief on 30 September 2026, the relief may be applied up to 29 September 2031. Where a business first receives relief on 30 September 2031, the relief may be applied up to 29 September 2036.

² prior to the Subsidy Control Act 2022 coming into full force and effect from 4 January 2023. This is therefore regarded to be a legacy scheme and the subsidy control requirements set out in the Act do not apply except for the requirements as to transparency in Chapter 3 of Part 2 of the Subsidy Control Act 2022. This policy shall not be inconsistent with the terms of the legacy scheme.

2. Discretionary Relief – Legislative Background

- 2.1. The original purpose of discretionary relief was to provide assistance where the property did not qualify for mandatory relief or to top up cases where ratepayers already receive mandatory relief.
- 2.2. Over recent years and particularly since 2011, the discretionary relief provisions as defined by section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended) have been used by government to provide assistance to certain specified categories of business ratepayers without the need to change the legislation. However, whilst government provides general guidance, it is for the Billing Authority to ensure that all relief is granted strictly in line with the primary legislation and the Non-Domestic Rating (Discretionary Relief) Regulations 1989.
- 2.3. Unlike mandatory relief, ratepayers are obliged to make a written application to the Billing Authority. The Billing Authority will carefully consider every application on its merits, taking into account Government guidance and legislation.
- 2.4. The decision to grant or not to grant relief is a matter purely for the Billing Authority, however an unsuccessful applicant has the right to request a review. Please see Section 14 regarding the review process.

3. Provision of Relief

- 3.1. The purpose of providing this relief is to incentivise investment into the EM Freeport. An Applicant will therefore only be eligible for relief where they can demonstrate that they will be committing to investment on the relevant property of at least an equivalent amount to the relief to be provided under this scheme. A pre requisite to be eligible for the relief will be that the applicant has been accepted into the EM Freeport through the TSIGR process.
- 3.2. Applicants will be asked to disclose as part of the application process any other subsidies that they are in receipt of (or likely to be in receipt of in the near future) that will contribute towards investment in the relevant property and to keep the relevant EM Freeport Billing Authority informed of any potential subsidies in relation to investment in the relevant property during the period of the relief. Any such subsidies will be taken into account when the relevant EM Freeport Billing Authority is determining the application for discretionary relief and whether there are circumstances that could result in withdrawal of reduction or relief.
- 3.3. Discretionary relief under this policy will apply for a maximum of five years from the date on which each beneficiary receives the relief for the first time on or after the date on which the Tax Site is designated (and on or before the Last Relief Commencement Date). This means that if a business first received relief on 1 July 2024 . The relief may be applied up to 30 June 2029. Where a business first receives relief on 30 September 2031, the relief may be applied up to 29 September 2036. This will be subject to any changes in circumstances as set out in Section 13 below.

4. Eligibility Principles – Awarding relief to new businesses locating to tax sites within the Freeport

- 4.1. Freeport business rates relief is available to new businesses moving into designated Freeport sites in the East Midlands Freeport area after the date on which the Tax Site has been formally designated and on or before the Last Relief Commencement Date, and occupying existing or new hereditaments on the rating list.
- 4.2. Existing businesses within a Tax Site that seek to relocate within the East Midlands Freeport area are unlikely to be eligible for the relief, subject to consideration of the following:
- The business must occupy the hereditament – both existing and any new hereditaments must be shown on the local rating list.
 - New businesses which expand after moving into the Freeport area (whether into new or existing buildings) will, in addition to any existing relief, be eligible for relief on any additional hereditaments they occupy in the Tax Site.
- 4.3. In considering what is a new business, the Billing Authority will lift the corporate veil and consider groups of companies to be single businesses.
- 4.4. The Billing Authority will retain discretion to apply additional tests for discretionary relief in order to avoid or not incentivise displacement of business activity from within the freeport or the surrounding area. This may include reducing the award of relief in cases where a ratepayer’s occupation of a space arises in whole or in part from them vacating another space in the Freeport or surrounding area.

5. Eligibility Principles – Awarding relief to existing businesses within the Freeport tax sites

- 5.1. Subject to 5.3 to 5.7 below, full relief is available on a hereditament where a person has occupied the property comprising that hereditament for the first time on or after the date on which the Tax Site is designated (22 September 2022) and on or before the Last Relief Commencement Date. This, for example, would include existing businesses expanding into a further property.
- 5.2. Subject to 5.3 to 5.7 below, partial relief is available on a hereditament where a person has occupied a room or similar within a hereditament for the first time on or after the date the Tax Site is designated (22 September 2022) and on or before the Last Relief Commencement Date 30 September 2026. For example, where an existing business builds an extension or takes on new rooms or floors in their building leading to an expansion of the hereditament.
- 5.3. Ratepayers cannot generally claim Freeport Relief merely by expanding their use of an existing room or similar within a hereditament. However, partial relief is available to a person in respect of part of a hereditament on which they were already the occupier or owner prior to the date on which the Tax Site is designated, provided that the space is within an existing room of a building and has become useable for the first time following development commenced on or after the date on which the Tax Site is designated (and on or before the Last Relief Commencement Date), e.g.

installation of a mezzanine or access/fire control improvements to bring an existing space into use.

- 5.4. General refurbishment improvements to space already or previously in use by the person prior to the date on which the Tax Site is designated are not eligible for discretionary relief.
- 5.5. Service improvements (e.g. heating and air conditioning) to space already or previously in use by the person prior to the date on which the Tax Site is designated are not eligible for discretionary relief.
- 5.6. The relevant EM Freeport Billing Authority will need to determine the value of any part of the hereditament where partial relief is applied for – the VOA may be able to advise on this. Where the relevant EM Freeport Billing Authority is unable to reasonably ascertain the increase in rates liability attributable to these factors, no relief shall be awarded.
- 5.7. The relevant EM Freeport Billing Authority will retain the discretion to apply additional tests for discretionary relief in order to avoid or not incentivise displacement of business activity from within the freeport or the surrounding area. This may include reducing the award of relief in cases where a ratepayer's occupation of a space arises in whole or in part from them vacating another space in the Freeport or surrounding area.

6. Principles for establishing the value of the Freeports Business Rates Relief

- 6.1. Subject to 6.3 below, the value of full relief for hereditaments falling within 5.1 above is 100% of the bill.
- 6.2. Subject to 6.3 below, the value of partial relief should be 100% of that part of the rates bill attributable to the part of the hereditament falling within 5.2 above where that increase is reasonably ascertainable. In establishing the part of the rates bill attributable to the part of the hereditament falling within 5.2 above, the Billing Authority may have regard to:
 - the survey and rating valuation of the hereditament provided by the ratepayer if available (e.g., for hereditaments valued by area on the rental comparison basis).
 - a change to the rateable value where it is clear that the change is solely due to the addition to the valuation of the parts of the hereditament falling within 5.2 above.
 - any other information the Billing Authority deems appropriate to determine the extent of the parts of the hereditament falling within 5.2 above.
- 6.3. The Billing Authority may withhold or reduce the discretionary relief in cases of displacement (see 5.7 above)

7. Sequence of Reliefs

- 7.1. The relief will be applied after mandatory reliefs and other discretionary reliefs have been applied, excluding those where the relevant EM Freeport Billing Authority has used its wider discretionary relief powers introduced by the Localism Act 2011. The relevant EM Freeport Billing Authority may use its discretionary powers to offer further discounts outside this scheme but where the Billing Authority applies a locally funded relief, this will be applied after the Freeport relief scheme.

8. Financing Reliefs

- 8.1. The government has indicated that it will fully reimburse billing authorities and major precepting authorities for the actual cost to them under the rates retention scheme for the local share of the discretionary relief, using a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. However, this is not automatic, and the Billing Authority will ensure that relief is only granted strictly in line with government guidance.

9. Subsidy Control

- 9.1. The EM Freeport Billing Authorities will use the Freeports' Subsidy Control Scheme, which the government states was made on 19 November 2021. Businesses located within the Tax Site will be required to provide information to evidence that they meet the eligibility criteria and the terms and conditions of the scheme.

10. Administration of Discretionary Relief - Applications and Evidence

- 10.1. Relief must be applied for in writing by the ratepayer to the relevant EM Freeport Billing Authority. The EM Freeport Billing Authorities will ensure that the application forms for discretionary rate relief are made available to ratepayers upon request as well as through their respective websites. Reliefs will be administered by each EM Freeport Billing Authority's revenue and benefits function.
- 10.2. Ratepayers are required to provide a completed application form plus any evidence, documents, accounts, financial statements, etc. necessary to allow the relevant EM Freeport Billing Authority to make a determination. Application forms and guidance notes will set out the evidence requirements that need to be met for a decision to be made. Failure to provide the necessary evidence will delay the decision-making process and/or could result in no relief being granted.
- 10.3. Business rate payments remain legally due and payable in accordance with the most recent bill until such time as any relief is awarded. Written applications will be required for each individual property.
- 10.4. The Billing Authority will provide this service and any guidance free of charge. Ratepayers are encouraged to approach the EM Freeport Billing Authorities direct and not pay for such services through third parties.

11. Administration of Discretionary Relief – Granting of Relief

- 11.1. The Billing Authority will notify the ratepayer in writing of any decisions made.
- 11.2. Where an application is successful, the ratepayer will be notified of the following:

- The amount of the relief granted and the date from which it has been granted;
 - If relief has been granted for a specified period, the date on which it will end;
 - The new chargeable amount;
 - The details of any planned review dates and the notice that will be given in advance of a change to the level of relief granted; and
 - A requirement that the ratepayer should notify the Billing Authority of any change in circumstances that may affect entitlement to relief.
- 11.3. The rate relief will be awarded by means of a reduction in liability shown on the business rates bill issued to the ratepayer. Where this puts the account in credit for the year, a refund will be made by the relevant EM Freeport Billing Authority. A new Rate Demand Notice will be issued as confirmation.
- 11.4. Where relief is not granted then the ratepayer will be notified of the following:
- An explanation of the decision within the context of the relevant EM Freeport Billing Authority's statutory duty; and
 - An explanation of the appeal rights (see section 16 below).
- 11.5 The Billing Authorities under legislation from 1 April 2023, can receive backdated applications at any time and are no longer restricted to six months.

12. Administration of Discretionary Relief – Variation of a decision

- 12.1. Where it is necessary to vary any decision on rate relief, the relevant EM Freeport Billing Authority will notify the ratepayer as soon as practicable and will confirm the following amount of increase or reduction in rate relief, including when such changes will take effect.
- 12.2. An EM Freeport Billing Authority has discretion to revoke rate relief where it considers it appropriate to do so and in such circumstances, the relevant EM Freeport Billing Authority will notify the ratepayer of the reasons for such revocation and the date by which it will take effect.

13. Reporting changes in circumstances

- 13.1. Where a ratepayer has been awarded relief, they will be required to report any changes in circumstances which may affect the relief as soon as practicable and, in any event, no more than 21 days from the event occurrence. Such changes may include (but are not limited to) circumstances where the premises become unoccupied or are used for a purpose other than that determined by the relevant EM Freeport Billing Authority as eligible for relief.
- 13.2. Where a change of circumstances is reported, the EM Freeport Billing Authority will have discretion to vary or revoke the relief in accordance with section 13 above.

- 13.3. [Without prejudice to the above, the EM Freeport Billing Authorities will require ratepayers that are in receipt of relief to reaffirm their eligibility on an annual basis.]

14. Right of Review

- 14.1. A ratepayer may request a review of any relief decision. Any such review will be carried out by the respective EM Freeport Billing Authority's Director who has not been involved in the original decision.
- 14.2. Details of how to request such a review will be provided in the refusal letter. Any request for review will need to set out evidence as to why the applicant considers that the matter warrants a review, including but not limited to any further evidence in support of how the Applicant meets the eligibility and terms and conditions of the scheme.

15. Fraud

- 15.1. Where a ratepayer falsely applies for any relief, or where the ratepayer provides false information, makes false representation, or deliberately withholds information in order to gain relief, prosecutions will be considered under the Fraud Act 2006.

16. Enquiries

- 16.1. In the event that a ratepayer has any queries on this scheme or the application process, they can contact:

For North West Leicestershire District Council – Head of Partnership

For Rushcliffe Borough Council –

For South Derbyshire District Council –

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NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – TUESDAY, 25 JUNE 2024



Title of Report	ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH - FOOD SAFETY SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2024/5	
Presented by	Councillor Michael Wyatt Communities and Climate Change Portfolio Holder PH Briefed <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
Background Papers	Food Standards Agency – The Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities. THE FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT ON LOCAL AUTHORITY FOOD LAW REGULATION	Public Report: Yes
	Food Standards Agency – Food Law Code of Practice (England) (Issue: June 2023) Food Law Code of Practice	Key Decision: Yes
Financial Implications	There is a risk that additional staffing resource will be required to carry out the checks on imported food entering Great Britain through East Midlands Airport. Additional costs will however be recovered through inspection income from the importers.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	If the authority fails to discharge its duty imposed by the Food Safety Act 1990 the enforcement functions may be transferred to another authority. Adverse publicity, both locally and nationally may be received.	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	There is a risk that additional staffing resource will be required to carry out the checks on imported food entering Great Britain through East Midlands Airport. This will initially be managed through the contract in place to supply the official veterinary surgeon.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	To inform Cabinet of the content of the Food Safety Service Delivery Plan 2024/25 as required by the Food Standards Agency.	

	To inform Cabinet of the performance against the 2023/24 service delivery plan.
Reason for Decision	To approve the content of the Food Safety Service Delivery Plan 2024/25 as required by the Food Standards Agency.
Recommendations	<p>(1) THAT THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FOOD SAFETY SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2024/25 APPENDED TO THIS REPORT BE APPROVED</p> <p>(2) THAT THE PERFORMANCE AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023/24 BE NOTED</p>

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Council’s Food Safety function is delivered by the Environmental Health team. When providing the Food Safety function, the Council must have regard to the ‘Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement’ (“the Framework Agreement”) which sets out the standards agreed with the Food Standards Agency.
- 1.2 The Framework Agreement requires each food safety service to document and implement a Food Safety Service Delivery Plan (the “Service Plan”) in accordance with a specified standard. In addition, a documented performance review of the plan is required to be carried out at least once a year. The Framework Agreement requires the Service Plan, together with the performance review, to be submitted for member approval to ensure local transparency and accountability.
- 1.3 The Environmental Health Food Safety Service Delivery Plan 2024/25 is attached at **Appendix 1.**

2.0 MAIN FOCUS OF THE 2024/25 SERVICE PLAN

2.1 Planned Activities:

- Carrying out of a programme of 355 food safety interventions consisting of inspection, auditing and sampling at high and medium risk food establishments (Categories A, B, C, D and unrated).
- Undertaking a programme of official and non-official food controls at 219 low risk food establishments (risk category E).
- Providing support to Avolta UK Limited under a Primary Authority Partnership.
- Investigating of food and food premises complaints and all outbreaks and incidents of food related illnesses.
- Providing information and advice on food safety to businesses and customers.
- Providing a coordinated food, water and environmental sampling programme.
- The promotion of the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme for food establishments within the district. Food establishments will be encouraged to display their rating.
- Issuing of export certificates, organic certification and catch certificates (fish) to facilitate international trade.
- Operating the inspection facility at East Midlands Airport. All products of animal origin and certain foods not of animal origin entering Great Britain for the first time via East Midlands Airport originating from the European Union and the rest of the world will undergo risk-based checks from 30 April 2024.

2.2 Government policy on Managing Britain’s Borders and implications for operating the border control post at East Midlands Airport are:

- When the UK left the EU, it regained the right to manage its own borders in a way that works for Britain. This includes how imports are managed into the country from overseas.
- The Government published a target operating model in 2023 which sets out the new regime of border import controls. The new approach applies equally to goods from the EU and goods from the rest of the world. The new risk-based checks started on 30 April 2024. The service delivery will be closely monitored during 2024/25 to ensure that the service is adequately resourced and that the income from fees and charges fully covers the cost of delivering the service.

3.0 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND TARGETS 2024/25

Indicator	Target
Percentage of due food interventions completed at food establishments within risk category A and B (high risk)	100%
Percentage of food establishments rated as 5 (very good) using the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme	81%

4.0 SUCCESSES AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023/24

- 4.1 100% of interventions due at high-risk establishments (within risk categories A, B) were completed.
- 4.2 The number of food establishments less than broadly compliant with food hygiene law reduced from 13 on 1 April 2023 to nine on 1 April 2024.
- 4.3 The percentage of food establishments achieving a hygiene rating of five (very good) using the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme was 81% on 1 April 2024.
- 4.4 The Council received £54,602.59 of grant funding from DEFRA to assist in preparing for the introduction of new imported food checks resulting from the implementation of the Government’s border target operating model.
- 4.5 The Council received £16,994.25 of grant funding from the Food Standards Agency which fully funded additional surveillance of imported foods resulting in greater legal compliance from importers and a substantial increase in the number of consignments being presented for checks at the border control post.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The current year revenue budget to deliver the Food Safety Function is £331,095. The proposed Service Plan can be delivered within the existing budget. There are no capital costs associated with the delivery of the Service Plan.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for businesses and helping people into local jobs - Our communities are safe, healthy and connected

Policy Considerations:	None
Safeguarding:	All inspectors trained in safeguarding essentials
Equalities/Diversity:	Equality Impact Assessment already undertaken; issues identified actioned.
Customer Impact:	Food consumed within the district is safe.
Economic and Social Impact:	Facilitate vibrant hospitality sector within the district. Facilitate frictionless movement of controlled goods arriving at GB through East Midlands airport.
Environment, Climate Change and Zero Carbon:	None
Consultation/Community/Tenant Engagement:	None
Risks:	If the Council fails to discharge its duty imposed by the Food Safety Act 1990 the enforcement functions may be transferred to another authority. Adverse publicity, both locally and nationally may be received.
Officer Contact	Paul Sanders Head of Community Services paul.sanders@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

FOOD SAFETY
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2024-25



As Required By the Food Standards Agency

FOOD SAFETY SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2024-2025

CONTENTS

	PAGE No
1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SERVICE	2
3. BACKGROUND	4
4. SERVICE DELIVERY	6
5. RESOURCES	13
6. QUALITY ASSESSMENT	14
7. COMMUNICATION	15
8. REVIEW 2023/2024	16

FOOD SAFETY SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2024-2025

1. INTRODUCTION

This service plan has been produced in accordance with the Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls By Local Authorities.

This plan provides the basis on which the authority will be monitored and audited by the Food Standards Agency.

2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF SERVICE

2.1 Aim

To protect public health in North West Leicestershire and ensure that the food imported, prepared, stored, sold and consumed in the district is safe to eat, through enforcement and education.

2.2 Objectives

- To undertake quality programmed interventions of food establishments (in land and point of entry) in line with their risk rating and intervention policy.
- To undertake an alternative enforcement strategy in low risk premises.
- To investigate all reports of food poisoning in line with service standards and take appropriate action.
- To investigate all service requests in line with service standards and inform complainants of outcomes and the reason for the outcomes.
- To undertake a programme of food sampling to demonstrate the importance of good hygiene and to check food safety systems are working.
- To further develop Primary Authority partnerships
- To maintain an accurate database.
- To undertake a programme of education aimed at the public and businesses.
- To undertake surveillance, inspection and sampling of imported foods.

2.3 Strategic Aims

The work of the food safety team makes an important contribution to the Council's priorities 'Communities - keeping our communities safe'

2.4 Performance Indicators

Indicator	Target
Percentage of due food interventions completed at food establishments within risk category A, B and C (high and medium risk)	100%
Percentage of food establishments rated as very good (rating 5) using the national food hygiene rating scheme	81%

2.5 Service Standards

All service users can expect and will receive an efficient and professional response.

Officers will identify themselves by name in all dealings with service users.

Officers will carry identification cards and authorisations at all time.

Service users will be informed of the name and telephone number of the officer who is responsible for their need.

All service requests will be responded to; however, anonymous requests may not be dealt with.

The following initial response times to service requests can be expected by service users:-

Immediate

Vermin in food premises.
Food poisoning outbreak.
Case of suspected food poisoning.
Mouldy food complaint.
Situations likely to result in an imminent risk to health.

Within 24 hours

Collection of a food complaint.
Inspection of imported food at East Midlands Airport
IUU – catch certificates

Within 3 days

Imported food enquiries – request for advice
All other food hygiene related complaints.

Within 5 days

Confirmed cases of all other food related illness or communicable disease.

Within 14 days

Following a food hygiene intervention food business operators will receive a letter within 14 days. The letter will contain details of how to make representations to the Environmental Health Safety Team Leader or Environmental Health Team Manager.

All enforcement action will be taken in accordance with the Council's Enforcement Policy.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Profile of the Authority

North West Leicestershire District Council services an estimated population of 104,704 (2021 Census, ONS) covering an area of 27,933 hectares. It is a predominately rural district with 2 main urban areas, Coalville and Ashby de la Zouch with other main settlements being Castle Donington, Ibstock, Kegworth and Measham.

3.2 Organisational Structure

3.2.1 Democratic Structure

The Council is composed of 38 Councillors elected every four years. All Councillors meet together as the full Council. Meetings of the Council are normally open to the public. Councillors decide the Council's overall policies and set the budget each year. The Council will appoint a Leader, scrutiny committees, regulatory bodies, an Audit and Governance Committee and other statutory, advisory and consultative bodies.

The Cabinet is responsible for most day-to-day decisions and comprises the Leader and his appointed Portfolio Holders. The Cabinet has to make decisions which are in line with the Council's budget and policy framework.

The scrutiny committees may make recommendations which advise the Cabinet and the Council on its policies, budget and service delivery as well as monitoring the decisions of the Cabinet.

3.2.2 Food Safety Team Structure

The Food Safety Team sits within the Environmental Health Safety Team which forms part of the Community Services Team. The team is managed by the Environmental Health Team Manager. In addition the following staff contribute to the food safety service:

Environmental Health Safety Team Leader
Environmental Health Officers (2 FTE)
Environmental Health Officer (Career Graded Full-Time)
Food / Safety Officer / Primary Authority Officer (Full-Time)
Food Safety Officer (Full-Time)

In addition there is 1 Business Support Officer and 1 Business Support Assistant who support the work of the Food Safety Team.

The team submits any samples for microbiological analysis to the Public Health Laboratory Colindale, London and all other samples for analysis to the County Public Analyst (Wolverhampton Scientific Services and ALS).

Eville & Jones Ltd provide the Official Veterinary Surgeon services at the border control post at East Midlands Airport. The Lead Official Veterinary Surgeon (OVS) is Patrik Vazan. Madalina Tudorie is a part-time OVS.

3.3 Description and Scope of Service

Proactive	Reactive
Programmed inspections Programmed surveillance visits Food sampling (including imported foods) Water sampling Primary Authority Partnerships Flight manifest checks (imported food) Advice / Coaching	Food hygiene complaints Food complaints Food poisoning investigations/outbreaks Food alerts / Incidents Advice / Coaching Food Import enquiries Catch certificates Export certificates Organic certificates New Business enquiries / Business Support Inspections of products of animal origin and high risk foods of non-animal origin at the border control post/designated point of entry

3.4 Demands on the Service

The food safety service is based at offices situated at Whitwick Business Centre Coalville. The hours of opening are 8.45 – 5.00 Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and 9.30am – 5.00 Thursday. Officers from the Food Team operate a hybrid working model and working normal office hours as the need arises.

The border control post situated at East Midlands Airport is open for business on a full-time basis (Monday to Friday 9am until 5pm. As a significant proportion of tasks are able to be carried out remotely, the BCP is not permanently manned.

3.4.1 There are 1011 food establishments known to the team in the district. These comprise of:

4%	Manufacturers
4%	Distribution / Importer / Exporter
19%	Retailers
73%	Caterers

Of these there is 1 dairy product manufacturer and 1 cold store which has been approved as required by EC Regulation 853/2004.

3.4.2 East Midlands Airport is within the district. The border control post at East Midlands Airport (EMA) is managed by the Environmental Health Team.

3.4.3 All food establishments are categorised according to their intervention frequency in accordance with the Statutory Food Law Code of Practice.

At 1 April 2024 the profile of premises within the district was:

Category	Number	Intervention Frequency
A (high risk)	3	At least every 6 months
B (high risk)	24	At least every 12 months
C (medium risk)	120	At least every 18 months
D (medium risk)	375	At least every 2 years
E (low risk)	423	A programme of alternative enforcement strategies at least every 3 years
Unrated	66	
Total registered food establishments	1011	

Note: Category E premises must be subject to an alternative enforcement strategy or intervention, at least once during any three year period.

All transit sheds and importers not currently importing foodstuff will be contacted every three months.

The number of businesses owned by ethnic minorities whose first language is not English has no significant impact on the service.

3.5 Enforcement Policy

Officers within the Food Team take into account the principles of good enforcement set out in the Regulators' Code. The Council's general enforcement policy and specific food control enforcement policy incorporates the content of the Regulators' Code.

4. SERVICE DELIVERY 2024/2025

4.1 Programmed Food Hygiene Inspections

4.1.1 Intervention Programme

The following table displays the food premises risk category and the number of premises due, as of 1 April 2024, that are required to be inspected by 31 March 2025. This number also includes any outstanding food inspections due before 31 March 2024.

Council Policy: "that all food establishment interventions will be carried out in accordance with the Statutory Food Law Code of Practice and internal procedure: PN1.0 Food Interventions. Interventions will take place unannounced wherever possible."

Risk Category	Inspections due 2024/25	Carried forward from previous year	Total Programmed 2024/25
A	3	0	3
B	24	0	24
C	60	4	64
D	183	15	198
E	111	108	219
Unrated	66	-	66

Total	447	127	574
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Priority will be given to establishments within risk category A, B, unrated and non broadly compliant* C and D. It is estimated that 30% of establishments will receive one or more revisits. In addition to the above programme, all new food establishments will receive an initial inspection.

*NOTE: A 'broadly complaint' establishment is one that has an intervention rating score of not more than 10 points under each of the following parts of Annex 5, Part 2: level of (Current) Compliance, hygiene and level of (Current) Compliance – Structure and Part 3: Confidence in Management.

Intervention Policy

Category	Planned Intervention
A (non compliant)	Full/Partial inspection/audit
B (non compliant)	Full/Partial inspection/audit
C (non compliant)	Full/Partial inspection/audit
D (non compliant)	Full/Partial inspection/audit
	monitoring / verification / official sampling or education/advice/ coaching
A (compliant)	Full/Partial inspection/audit
B (compliant)	Full/Partial inspection/audit
C (compliant)	Full/Partial inspection/audit
	Or
D (compliant)	Monitoring / verification / official sampling Full/Partial inspection/audit
	monitoring / verification / official sampling or education/advice/ coaching
E (compliant)	Self assessment questionnaire
Unrated	Full/Partial inspection/audit
Non food ETSF / Importers	Telephone questionnaire Liaison with UKBF

4.1.2 Better Business for All - Earned Recognition Scheme

The service will follow an earned recognition scheme when targeting resource to food hygiene controls large public gatherings such as the Download Music Festival. Those mobile food vendors that have a Food Hygiene Risk Rating score of four or above on the national food hygiene rating scheme will not receive an intervention unless the registering authority requests that an intervention is made or a concern is identified or received. The objective of this approach is to reduce unnecessary regulatory burden on compliant businesses.

4.1.3 Inspection of aircraft

Aircraft are included within the definition of premises. The Food Law Code of Practice states that primary consideration should be given to the origin of the food on board, including water and other drinks, and the transport to, and loading of, the aircraft. An audit of the sampling programme for the water on board aircraft will be undertaken.

4.1.4 Specialised Processes

The manufacture of dairy products, in-flight catering, the inspection of imports of products of animal origin and high-risk foods of non-animal origin, the production of carbonated drinks and the production of crisps and snacks are all specialist areas of work undertaken within North West Leicestershire. The current post holders within the Food Safety Team hold adequate expertise within these specialist areas of work. When devising the departmental training needs, maintaining adequate knowledge in these areas of work is a priority.

Donington Park is situated within North West Leicestershire. A number of international sporting and musical events are held at the park. Officer time will be spent assisting with the planning of large events such as the Download music festival. This work will include the partial inspection of a proportion of food establishments trading at these events. Where water provision involves a temporary installation, work to ensure water safety will be undertaken.

A street trading consent scheme operates within North West Leicestershire. All mobile food establishments and static units trading within the District hold a 'consent' under the scheme.

4.2 Food Complaints

Council Policy: **“that all food complaints received are investigated in accordance with the Statutory Food Law Code of Practice and internal procedure note Food Complaints.”**

Based on previous years' figures it is estimated that the team will receive in the range of 20 food complaints.

4.2.1 Food Hygiene Service Requests

Council Policy: **“that the Food Safety Team undertakes unprogrammed visits as a result of a complaint about the standards of hygiene at a food establishment, a new establishment opening, new management taking over or due to a request by another agency”** e.g. Defra, Ofsted.

This will include most service requests received by the food team regarding standards of hygiene e.g. including complaints about:-

- cleanliness in premises
- drainage defects
- pest problems
- service requests for inspections by other statutory bodies, e.g. Ofsted, Animal Health
- service requests for guidance from new owners of food establishments

These interventions do not form part of the programmed interventions.

Based on previous years' figures it is estimated that the number of service requests received relating to standards of hygiene will be approximately 30.

4.3 Primary Authority

Council Policy: **“to have regard to the Primary Authority Scheme”**.

Council Policy: **“to have regard to the information (national inspection plans and approved assured advice) provided on the Primary Authority website before undertaking an intervention at an establishment with a Primary Authority.”**

The Council has a Primary Authority partnership with Avolta (formally HMS Host UK Limited).

4.4 **Support and Advice to Business (including import enquiries)**

Council Policy: **“to provide advice to both established and new food establishments”**.

The Leicester and Leicestershire Regulatory Services Partnership and Better Business for All (BBfA) Steering Group was established in 2011. The overriding objective of the Partnership and the BBfA programme is to improve engagement with local businesses and provide them with advice and guidance to assist in reducing the burden of regulation on compliant business.

In 2024/25 the following food safety support is available to businesses:

Inspection – An officer will provide advice to every business during a routine food hygiene inspection.

Food safety advice is available on the Council’s website. Advice is also available on the food standards agency website.

Any business requesting advice and guidance in other areas of regulation or non regulatory support will be signposted to the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Business Gateway advice line or website.

4.5 **Sampling Programme**

4.5.1 **Food Sampling**

Council Policy: **“to take part in National and Local Food Sampling Programme.”**
The food items which form part of this programme are selected by the Leicester and Leicestershire Food Best Practice Group based on known or potential problem areas. All samples are taken in accordance with the Statutory Food Law Code of Practice.

In addition to the sampling programme, food samples may be submitted for examination as part of a programmed intervention, complaint, infectious disease investigation or imported food surveillance.

Using sampling as an Official Control intervention is highlighted in the Statutory Food Law Code of Practice. Some samples may be sent to the Public Analyst for analysis. The authority is charged for this service.

The number of samples that can be submitted for examination free of charge is allocated by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA).

4.5.2 **Water Sampling (Commercial Premises & Aircraft)**

Council Policy: **“that routine sampling of mains water is not undertaken.”**

However, sampling of mains water may take place as a result of a complaint or concern.

Council Policy: “to periodically audit the sampling and monitoring programme in place to ensure the quality of water on-board aircraft at East Midlands Airport.

4.5.3 Private Water Supplies

The district has the following private water supplies and distribution systems in its area:

	Large	Small	Single domestic
Private Water Supplies	3	1	11
Distribution Systems	2		

The Authority has a statutory duty to risk assess private water supplies within its district, excluding those to single dwellings or on request from the supply owner. It will then conduct a sampling program based upon the risk assessment.

Sampling Programme 2024/25

The three large supplies will be sampled twice during the year

One small supply will be sampled every five years. The small supply will not be sampled during 2024/25.

Single domestic supplies will not routinely be sampled but sampling can be carried out on request.

Private Distribution Systems will be sampled based on the outcome of the risk assessment.

4.6 Infectious Disease Control

Council Policy: “to investigate all food borne diseases.”

The team receives notifications from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) relating to residents/visitors within the district suffering from a notifiable infectious disease. The team may also receive informal notifications of suspected food poisoning from members of the public. Non food related infectious diseases are investigated based on advice from the Consultant for Communicable Disease Control (CCDC).

Based on previous years’ figures it is estimated that the team will receive in the range of 40-60 formal or informal notifications of food related infectious diseases.

4.7 National Food Safety Incidents

Council Policy: “to deal with food alerts in accordance with the Statutory Food Law Code of Practice.

The Food Standards Agency issues a ‘Product Withdrawal Information Notice’ or a ‘Product Recall Information Notice’ to let local authorities and consumers know about problems associated with food. In some cases, a ‘Food Alert for Action’ is issued. This provides local authorities with details of specific action to be taken.

The team receives food alerts via the FSA Enforcement mailbox. Food Alerts: Alerts 'For Action' are referred for the urgent attention of the Environmental Health Team Manager or Environmental Health Safety Team Leader.

Based on previous years' figures the section is likely to receive less than 10 alerts for action.

4.8 Food Export Health Certificates

Export Health certificates are issued to food businesses who wish to export certain foodstuff from Great Britain to the European Union Countries and other Non-EU Countries. They are provided to help local exporters meet the food safety requirements. The team checks that the business is registered with the Council and that it is satisfied with the food hygiene standards before issuing the certificate.

Based on previous years' figures the team is likely to issue approximately 100 export certificates.

4.9 Imported Foods at Point of entry (East Midlands Airport)

4.9.1 Border Control Post (BCP) – Products of animal origin

The service manages and operates the border control post (BCP) at East Midlands Airport (EMA). The BCP is subject to audits and verification visits by Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA).

The OVSs inspects all other products of animal origin entering GB via the border control post. Support is provided by officers of the food safety team.

4.9.2 Catch certificates (Fish and Fishery Products)

Illegal fishing has environmental, social and economic impacts. Europe wide import controls, introduced by the EC in 2008 and retained in UK legislation from 1st January 2021, aim to cut out Europe and the UK as a market for illegal fish. In order to prove that an imported consignment is compliant with regulations, it must be accompanied by a catch certificate. Checking catch certificates at East Midlands airport is the responsibility of the food team within Environmental health.

Based on previous year's figures the team is likely to issue approximately 250 catch (exemption) certificates.

4.9.3 Border Control Post (BCP) – High risk foods not of animal origin

Controls are in place under UK law to make sure products imported into Great Britain meet GB standards.

The BCP at EMA is approved to handle food products for human consumption not requiring temperature control and chilled and feed and other products not for human consumption both not requiring temperature control and chilled.

The officers of the food safety team are responsible for checking all 'high risk' foods of non-animal origin from a rest of the world country entering GB via the border control post.

Based on previous years' figures the team is likely to process less than 10 consignments.

4.9.4 **Organic Products**

Controls are in place to check that organic products imported into GB are compliant with organic production standards. Importers of consignments of organic products must submit the require documentation to the food team within Environmental health for checking prior to importation.

4.9.5 **Surveillance**

A risk-based programme of surveillance will be carried out. This will involve officers carrying out checks of flight manifests and visits to transit sheds. Sampling of foodstuffs found may be undertaken.

Each of the importers / ETSF and transit shed operators that do not currently handle foodstuffs will be contacted periodically to ensure that the database remains up to date.

Due to the flight schedule the monitoring of 'live' manifests has to be undertaken outside normal office hours. In addition, some manifests checked will not be 'live'. They will be viewed after the freight has left the airport. The checking of such manifests provides a useful surveillance tool.

4.9.6 **Sampling**

A sampling programme will be carried out, being informed by the national monitoring plan and local intelligence and information.

4.9.7 **Liaison/Management of Port Health**

In 2008, a multi-agency East Midlands Airport Port Health Group was established. Membership of this group includes UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), North West Leicestershire DC, East Midlands Airport and UK Border Force.

Council Policy: **“To contribute to the delivery of the multi-agency Port Health Group at East Midlands Airport.”**

A representative from the Environmental Health will attend meetings of this group.

Regular communication with Border Force is in place.

4.10 **Other non-official control interventions**

Council Policy: **“to raise the awareness of the public to the potential causes of food poisoning.”** Throughout the year articles will be published in the local press and on the Council web pages regarding food safety matters.

Once again the Council will be communicating the key messages as suggested by the Food Standards Agency during national food safety week.

To raise the awareness of the importance of hand washing in preventing the spread of disease such as covid-19 the hand washing machine with ultra violet light will be

available for hire (without charge) to workplaces, schools and child nurseries around the district.

4.11 Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

North West Leicestershire District Council operates the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) in accordance with 'The Brand Standard'. The scheme provides consumers with information regarding the hygiene standards identified in food establishments at the time of the last intervention.

Council Policy: **“To communicate and issue a food hygiene rating in accordance with the brand standard. Officers have discretion over the timing of the issue of the rating.”**

The data is managed by the Environmental Health Safety Team Leader on an ongoing basis and a data upload carried out a minimum of every 13 days.

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme – appeal applications, Re-score visit applications and Right to Reply requests will be processed in accordance with the brand standard.

The profile of the scheme will be maintained through the issue of press releases and social media messages with compliance standards at businesses being recognised by issuing certificates/stickers.

4.12 Licensing/Consents

The team is consulted prior to the issue of premises licences (new and variations) under the Licensing Act 2003. All take-away premises and food mobiles trading between 11.00 p.m. and 5.00 a.m. require licensing under the Act. The Safety Team will respond to any new applications and variation applications received and make representations if there are public safety or public nuisance concerns.

Officer time will be spent assisting with the planning of large events such as the Download Music Festival, Timber festival and the World Superbikes motor racing event.

The team is consulted prior to the issue of new consents and existing non compliant traders under the Street Trading Scheme. All mobile food establishments and static units trading within the District hold a 'consent' under the scheme.

4.13 Liaison with Other Organisations and Internal Communication

A member of the Environmental Health Service is represented on the following groups/meetings:

External/Multi-agency Groups:

- Leicestershire and Rutland CIEH Food Best Practice Group
- Association of Port Health Authorities Liaison Groups
- East Midlands Airport multi-agency Port Health Group
- Leicestershire CIEH Environmental Health Managers Group
- UK Health Security Agency Liaison Group
- Idox Uniform User Group
- NWL Safety Advisory Group
- Better Business for All Partnership
- UK Border Force liaison meetings

Internal Groups:

- Safety Team Meeting
- Monthly 121's/Performance meetings
- NWLDC Idox Uniform user group

5. RESOURCES

5.1 Financial Allocation

The budget for the provision of the food safety service is £331,095. The general expenses incurred by the service such as training, salaries and administrative costs are budgeted for as part of the budget for Environmental Health.

5.2 Staffing Allocation

It is the Council's policy to authorise officers appropriately in accordance with their qualifications and experience having regard to the Statutory Food Law Code of Practice.

The nominated lead officer for food safety is the Environmental Health Safety Team Leader. The lead officer for food safety has assessed the competency of all authorised officers. Individual officer authorisations have been signed and issued by the Environmental Health Team Manager based on recommendations made by the lead officer for food safety.

5.2.1 The details of the staffing levels in the section are as follows:

Environmental Health Team Manager – The post holder is an Environmental Health Officer with responsibility for the food hygiene, health and safety, port health, pest control, animal welfare, licensing and community safety functions of the council.
Food related work = 0.2 FTE (Imported foods= 0.1FTE) (Operational Manager)

Environmental Health Team Leader – The post holder supervises the operational work of the team, and undertakes food safety work.
Food related work = 0.7 FTE (Imported foods= 0.05FTE) – This post is currently filled by an interim part-time Team Leader.

Environmental Health Officer – The post holder undertakes food safety work and also carries out duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
Food related work = 0.7 FTE (Imported foods= 0.05FTE)

Environmental Health Officer – The post holder undertakes food safety work and also carries out duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
Food related work = 0.7 FTE (Imported foods= 0.05FTE)

Environmental Health Officer (Unregistered) – The post holder undertakes food safety work and also carries out duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
Food related work = 0.7 FTE (Imported foods= 0.05FTE)

Food / Safety Officer (Part time – 18.125 hours) – The post holder undertakes food safety work and also carries out duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
Food related work = 0.3 FTE (Imported foods= 0.05FTE)

Primary Authority Officer (Part time – 18.125 hours) The post holder undertakes the Primary Authority role, working with Avolta UK Limited (HMS Host).

Food Safety Officer – The post holder undertakes food safety work and also carries out limited duties supporting an appointed inspector under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

Food related work = 0.9 FTE (Imported foods= 0.05FTE)

There is one Business Support Officer and one Business Support Assistant providing support to the food safety section. Food related work = 0.1 FTE and 0.1 FTE

5.3 **Staff Development/Training**

The Environmental Health Team has embraced the principles of the Best Employee Experience (B.E.E). The individual Performance Review meetings are a key element of North West Leicestershire District Council's aim to support its employees by providing them with the development and learning required. Additional training requirements will be identified during the performance review meetings and regular one to one meetings and will form a training plan for the team. Officers from the team will be given training which will take into account any changes in legislation or guidance as and when required.

NOTE: Each Food Officer is required by the Statutory Food Law Code of Practice to do a minimum of 10 hours core training.

6. **QUALITY ASSESSMENT / INTERNAL MONITORING**

6.1 A performance management system is in place within the Environmental Health Team in order to assess the quality of the service provided and the performance against agreed standards and how this information is communicated.

The system involves:

- The Environmental Health Team Manager (EHTM) and Environmental Health Team Leader (EHTL) monitoring the team performance against the SDP on a monthly basis.
- One accompanied inspection will be carried out for each Authorised Officer each year by the Environmental Health Team Leader.
- Additional checks to assess the adequacy of the post inspection paperwork will be carried out by the EHTL on a monthly basis and the check will be on a minimum of two inspections each month.
- All statutory notices will be checked by the EHTL or in their absence the EHTM before service.
- The EHTL will check the notice log on a monthly basis to ensure all outstanding notices have been checked off.
- Monitoring of service requests will be carried out by EHTL. A minimum of one service request will be checked every month.

- Periodically customer satisfaction surveys will be carried out. The EHTM will receive all completed customer satisfaction forms and will reply to any questionnaires requesting a response.
- The EHTL will check the sampling log every quarter to ensure its completeness and accuracy and to ensure that appropriate follow action has been taken.

When undertaking the above checks will be made to ensure the Code of Practice and internal procedures are being complied with.

Internal procedures have been and will continue to be developed in consultation with the Leicester and Leicestershire Food Best Practice Group to ensure consistency across the County.

7. COMMUNICATION

7.1 Communication within the Team

7.1.1 Every month the EHTM meets with the Head of Community Services.

7.1.2 Every month the EHTM meets with the EHTL to discuss any issues and the previous month's performance. In addition, on-going issues are discussed as and when they arise.

7.1.3 The EHTL meets with the officers individually to discuss performance and development.

7.1.4 At least every month there is a team meeting where specific issues are discussed with the Food Team.

8. REVIEW 2023/2024

8.1 Review against the Service Plan

8.1.1 Programmed Inspections (Inland)

Risk Category	Total Programmed 2023/24	Interventions remaining due on 31 March 2024	% completed
A	2	0	100%
B	17	0	100%
C	92	4	96%
D	181	15	92%
Total	292	19	93%
E (outside of statutory inspection programme)	232	108	53%
Unrated	37	66	100% - All 37 due at start of year were completed. 66 new businesses await inspection

100% of inspections programmed at high risk food establishments (risk category A and B) were completed.

93% (273 of 292) of the full statutory inspection programme (risk category A to D) was completed.

In addition to the statutory inspection programme, 124 of the 232 food establishments rated as low risk (risk category E) received an inspection or alternative enforcement strategy.

On 1 April 2023, the complete intervention programme consisted of 561 interventions. On 31 March 2024, 193 interventions remained outstanding/due.

8.1.3 Food Hygiene Service Requests

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Food Hygiene Service Requests including drainage	37	50	51	53
Regarding problems with pests and rubbish	3	3	1	4
Total	40	53	52	57

8.1.4 Food Complaints

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Foreign bodies in food	13	14	15	8
Mouldy foods	4	3	4	10
Chemical issues	5	0	0	0
Labelling of food	0	1	4	1
Allergy related	0	5	5	2
Total	22	23	28	21

8.1.5 Advice to Businesses

The Safety Team and Customer Contact Centre gave advice over the telephone to customers. Detailed figures for this work are not recorded.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Requests for food safety advice	136	117	72	56

8.1.6 Sampling

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Food Samples - Total	17	0	0	0	7
Food Samples - unsatisfactory (number)	3	0	0	0	0
Environmental Samples - Total	5	0	0	0	0
Environmental Samples - unsatisfactory (number)	3	0	0	0	0

Private Water Supply Samples - Total	7	8	8	9	11
Private Water Supply Samples - % unsatisfactory	43% (3)	25% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	18% (2)
Large Public Event Samples - Total	27	0	15	4	0
Large Public Event - % unsatisfactory	0	0% (0)	13% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)

8.1.7 Infectious Disease

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Reported suspected food poisoning cases	18	32	33	24
Infectious Disease notifications	14	26	27	31
Most common disease and number	Giardia - 6	Crypto – 10	Salmonella - 10	Crypto – 12

8.1.8 Responding to National & Serious Localised Food Safety Incidents

If there is a problem with a food product that means it should not be sold, then it might be 'recalled' (when the product is taken off the shelves or customers are asked to return the product). If the problem presents a serious risk to public health the Food Standards Agency issues a 'Food Alert For Action' requiring all local authorities to take direct action. The Environmental Health – Food Safety Team responds to all alerts for action.

8.1.9 Border Control Post (POAO)

Year	Catch (exemption) Certificates Issued	Total consignments CHED	Fish	Other POAO products	Total Rejected	% Rejected
2005/06	N/A	86	28	58	18	21
2006/07	N/A	149	76	73	21	14
2007/08	N/A	129	41	88	53	41
2008/09	N/A	172	31	141	107	62
2009/10	N/A	161	20	141	83	52
2010/11	255	154	13	141	62	40
2011/12	246	84	15	69	33	39
2012/13	251	67	6	61	22	33
2013/14	258	68	8	60	9	13
2014/15	256	71	16	55	6	9
2015/16	249	52	8	44	6	11
2016/17	254	52	1	51	7	13
2017/18	255	68	11	57	28	41
2018/19	251	33	3	30	12	40
2019/20	242	41	5	36	27	66
2020/21	245	39	12	27	16	41
2021/22	203	98	29	69	63	64
2022/23	220	171	29	143	117	68

2023/24	211	610	80	530	465	76
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8.1.10 Imported High-Risk Foods of Non- Animal Origin

The table below lists the number and nature of consignments categorised as high-risk foods of non-animal origin handled at the border control post at East Midlands airport.

	Number of consignments presented	Product description	Number cleared
2016/17	3	Pistachio nuts	3
2017/18	23	Tea – China (21), dried grapes – Turkey (2)	23
2018/19	7	Tea - China	7
2019/20	1	Tea – China	1
2020/21	11	Beans – kenya (10) Tea – China (1)	11
2021/22	14	Figs – Turkey (3) Tea – China (5) Hazelnuts Turkey (2) Peanuts – USA (2) Goji berries – Hong Kong (1)	5
2022/23	15	Tea – China (7) Hazelnuts – Turkey (1) Pistachio – (1) Peanuts – USA (3) Pepper (2) Melon seeds (1)	12
2023/24	34	Tea – China (19) Mushrooms – Turkey (2) Hot Sauce – China (1) Pepper – India (1) Figs – Turkey (1) Hazelnuts – Turkey (2) Melon/Egusi seeds – Nigeria (1) Rice Noodles – China (1) Peanuts – USA (5) Pistachio – Iran (1)	30

8.1.11 Surveillance of flight manifests

A risk-based programme of surveillance was carried out in 2023/24 to identify any foodstuffs subject to import controls.

An enhanced level of surveillance was carried out during September, October, November and December 2023 as a result of a grant from the Food Standards Agency.

264 flight manifests were checked during the reporting period.

Summary of the outputs from manifest checks -

- 78 commercial shipments of restricted commodities were found.
- 86 commercial shipments of potentially restricted commodities with a generic description were found.
- 135 private shipments of potentially restricted commodities with generic description were found.

More effective engagement with carriers at East Midlands airport, Trading Standards and Border Force, the enhanced manifest surveillance and education of carriers, resulted in a border control post throughput increase of more than 400% in 2023 compared to 2022. In other words, the protection/biosecurity of the borders at East Midlands Airport has increased by more than 400% in 2023.

8.1.12 Food Export Health Certificates

	Number of export certificates issued	Number of customers
2016/17	98	1
2017/18	210	4
2018/19	122	5
2019/20	37	4
2020/21	20	4
2021/22	51	2
2022/23	45	2
2023/24	80	2

8.1.13 African Swine Fever Project

Grant funding received from Defra was used to enforce the emergency measures in place relating to African Swine Fever. Monitoring activity included the viewing of flight manifests and joint enforcement operations with Border Force.

0 seizures of illegal pork were carried out.

8.1.14 Liaison with Other Organisations

During 2023/24 the following liaison took place:-

Leicestershire and Rutland CIEH Food Best Practice Group / Technical Sub-Committee: Quarterly meetings. The Environmental Health Team Leader attended the quarterly meetings.

East Midlands Airport Multi-agency Port health Meeting: This group did not meet.

Leicestershire CIEH Environmental Health Managers Group: The Environmental Health Team Manager attended the monthly meetings.

Leicestershire Better Business for All Steering Group / Partnership: The Environmental Health Team Manager attended the quarterly meetings.

UK Health Security Agency Group: The Environmental Health Team Leader attended all of the scheduled meetings.

East Midlands Airport – Port Health Authorities Capability Delivery Forum – The Environmental Health Team Manager attended the fortnightly meetings.

8.1.15 Education and Awareness Initiatives (Other Non-Official Controls Interventions)

National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

The food hygiene rating scheme was promoted using press releases and social media (Twitter).

8.2 Staffing Allocation

A permanent full-time Primary Authority/EHO post was vacant for three months. A permanent full-time Environmental Health Team Leader post was vacant from November to April. A part-time temporary Team Leader was appointed.

8.3 Food Hygiene training Undertaken by Staff

All authorised officers continued to undertake a programme of continuous professional development.

8.4 Enforcement Actions Taken

Hygiene Improvement Notices were served	0
Prohibition related notices	0
Seizure of food notices	0
Detention / Remedial Action Notices	0
Enforcement Notices (Regulation 20) under The Trade and Related Animal Product Regulations – Fail Veterinary checks at BIP	465
Enforcement Notices (Regulation 32(6)) under The Trade and Related Animal Product Regulations – Introduced in breach of regulations	0
Regulation 32 Notices under Official Feed and Food Controls (England) Regulations	1
Cautions for offences under food hygiene legislation	0
Conviction for offences under food hygiene legislation	0
Prohibition of Person from managing a food business	0

8.5 Performance Outcomes

100% of interventions due at high risk establishments (within risk categories A, B) were completed.

The number of food establishments less than broadly compliant with food hygiene law reduced from 13 on 1 April 2023 to 9 on 1 April 2024.

The percentage of food establishments achieving a hygiene rating of 5 (very good) using the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme was 81% on 1 April 2024.

8.6 **Issues for 2024/25**

- To effectively prepare for the introduction of a new imports' regime following publication of the target operating model
- To appoint to the vacant Environmental Health Team Leader post
- To complete a review of food operational procedure notes
- To undertake a review of officer authorisations
- To undertake a review of the food law enforcement policy

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NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – TUESDAY, 25 JUNE 2024



Title of Report	CORPORATE COMPLAINTS	
Presented by	Councillor Andrew Woodman Housing, Customer Services and Complaints	
	PH Briefed	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Background Papers	Corporate Complaints policy	Public Report: Yes
		Key Decision: No
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications in respect of this report.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	There are no legal implications arising from this report.	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	There are no staffing implications arising from this report.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	The purpose of this report is to present a comprehensive overview of the complaints received by the Council from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, spanning all areas of the Council's services. It details the outcomes of these complaints, including the decisions made by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman. Importantly, the report serves as a tool for the Council to enhance customer service by using the feedback from these complaints to identify areas of improvement and to take actionable steps to better serve the community.	
Reason for Decision	The Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Code requires the Council to report on complaints annually to the governing body.	
Recommendations	THAT CABINET: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NOTES THE COMMENTS MADE BY CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON 23 MAY 2024 2. NOTES THE DETAILS OF THE ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24 3. REVIEW THE SELF-ASSESSMENT AT APPENDIX 1 AND CONFIRM IT IS IN AGREEMENT THAT THE COUNCIL IS COMPLIANT. 	

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 Each year, the Council is required by both the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman to prepare an annual summary of complaints dealt with under the formalised Complaints Policy (the year runs from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024).

1.2 A complaint is defined within the Council as: *'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the organisation, its*

own staff, or those acting on its behalf affecting an individual/resident or a group of individuals/residents’.

- 1.3 The Council provides a wide range of services to its residents and receives relatively few complaints, the Council seeks to learn from them and look for patterns of service failure. The Council continues to use the feedback it receives from its complaints to generate ideas for service improvements both in the short and long term.
- 1.4 The Council works hard to view the complaints it receives as a positive opportunity, whilst remaining focused on trying to resolve them to the satisfaction of customers as quickly as it can.
- 1.5 This is a report on all Council services’ formal enquiries which are:
 - Complaints
 - Member Enquiries
 - MP Enquiries
- 1.6 Many service requests and enquiries are resolved informally by officers and managers every day without the need for the formal complaints process to be followed. Officers are urged to address customer grievances and proactively rectify issues as part of their normal business. These are not all formally logged or reported on, though services are encouraged to record these informal enquiries in some way to inform the way they deliver and improve their services in the future. Managing complaints informally as soon as possible represents best practice.
- 1.7 Where a request for service has been sent via the complaints process but is not deemed as a corporate complaint, these are logged as a ‘Request for service’ and are recorded and reported on a quarterly basis to team managers and the Corporate Leadership Team.
- 1.8 The Council’s complaint’s procedure is designed to address those issues that necessitate a formal reply and, as such, could not be resolved during the earlier stages of the process. The Complaints Policy and procedure are detailed in the documents located in the 'Background Papers' section above.
- 1.9 As of the 1 January 2023, all stage 1 complaints are now reviewed and signed off by a Strategic Director. Stage 2 complaints are signed off by the Chief Executive to ensure that everything that could have been done to resolve the matter has been investigated prior to the response being sent to the complainant. The stage 2 responses include information about the relevant Ombudsman should the complainant remain unhappy with the outcome.. Complaints are determined with one of the following statuses:
 - Upheld- following investigation – the Council has found in favour of the complainant.
 - Not upheld- following investigation the Council has not found in favour of the complainant.

Sometimes complaints have more than one issue to be investigated on occasion these can have a mixture of the two above determinations.

- 1.10 This report focuses not only on volumes and timeliness of responses but also aims, when it is possible, to identify themes and lessons learnt that result in service improvements.
- 1.11 The Council has a commitment to learning and improvement. Complaints and other formal enquiries are important information, providing an opportunity to understand where

and why things sometimes go wrong and provide a basis for the Council to make positive changes, informed by data and the resident voice.

2.0 Complaints overview

2.1 Number of Complaints and Enquiries - all stages

Level	2022/2023	2023/2024
Stage 1	274	263
Stage 2	70	74
Housing Ombudsman and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (that have reached formal investigation stage)	14	11
MP enquiries	197	131
Member enquiries	518	634
Compliments	202	240

2.2 There was a total of 263 stage 1 complaints which is a 4% decrease on the previous year. There was an increase of 5% on the previous year in stage 2 complaints with a total of 74.

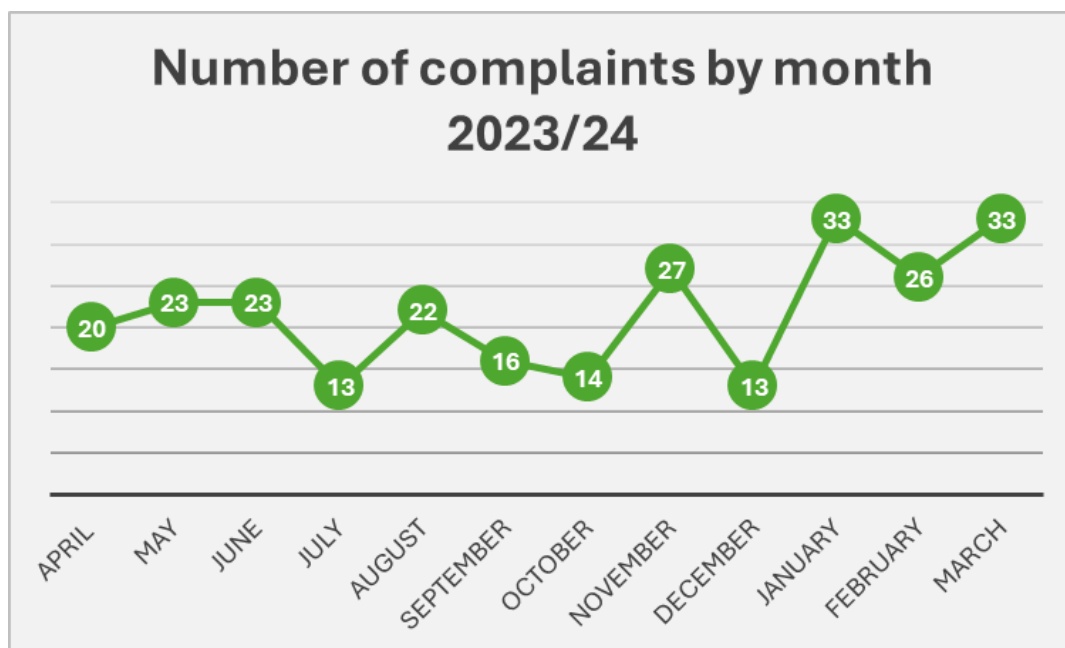
2.3 The Council provides a wide variety of services to over 97,200 residents. In this context, 377 complaints (stage1 and 2 combined) are only a fraction of the number of customer interactions occurring each year. For example, the Council's Customer Service team received 99,455 customer interactions alone in 2023/24.

2.4 The number of compliments recorded by the Council also increased, from 202 in 2022/23 to 240 (an increase of 19%). Improved efforts by Council departments to capture more of the positive feedback of residents is reflected in this increase. There is better engagement of staff in the process of recording the compliments they receive.

2.5 The number of stage 1 complaints received can be broken down by service as follows:

Service	Number of Complaints	As a % overall
Waste Services	38	14.43
Environmental Health and Protection	8	3.04
Leisure Services	3	1.14
Community Safety	4	1.5
Customer Services	3	1.14
Finance	1	0.4
Housing Assets	26	9.88
Housing Repairs	98	37.26
Housing Management	27	10.26
Housing Strategy and Systems	13	4.93
Human Resources	1	0.4
Legal and Support Services	1	0.4
Planning and Infrastructure	23	8.74
Revenues and Benefits	16	6.08
Democratic Services	1	0.4
Stage 2 escalations from the stage 1 level complaints	83	28.1

- 2.6 The number of complaints for each service does not, necessarily provide a direct correlation with the standard of customer service provided, and these overall results cannot be treated in isolation. Each of these service results are heavily influenced by the type of business transacted by that service, for example, the number of customers facing transactions carried out, the public profile of the actions carried out by that service, and whether the customer has alternative formal routes for redress or appeal.
- 2.7 Housing Repairs received the highest number of complaints, but when considering the number of interactions it has with the tenants, this is to be expected. For example, in 2023/24, Housing Repairs had 34,342 contacts with tenants. Against this background, the figures show that the number of complaints received against the volume of work undertaken by the Housing Repairs equates only to approximately 0.28% of the transactions completed.
- 2.8 Waste Services received the second highest number of complaints, but these are very low when considering the number of interactions, it has with residents. In 2023/24, Waste Services provided waste and recycling collections to around 48,640 properties within the District each week. This totals around 3,720,960 collections a year. Using this example, the number of complaints received as a proportion of total collections equates to just 0.001%.
- 2.9 Stage 1 complaints received by month for the Council.



- 2.10 The number of complaints received per month averages around the range of 20-23 with some months considerably lower. In the last quarter of 2023/24 the Council saw a significant increase in the number of stage 1 complaints received. This increase was primarily in the housing repairs and planning and infrastructure service areas. Planning and infrastructure received a number of complaints about one application, all of which were not upheld. The housing repairs increase was mainly due to damp and mold complaints which can be due to seasonal changes, this can also be seen when a comparison is made to the same time period in 2022/23 which also saw an increase over the same three months.
- 2.11 The number of stage 1 complaints upheld and responded to within timescales broken down by service are as follows:

Service	Stage 1 upheld	% upheld	Stage 1 responded to within deadline
Waste Services	33	87%	74%
Environmental Health and Protection	2	25%	88%
Leisure Services	0	0%	100%
Community Safety	0	0%	100%
Customer Services	1	33%	100%
Finance	0	0%	100%
Housing Assets	10	38%	73%
Housing Repairs	68	69%	72%
Housing Management	6	22%	92%
Housing Strategy and Systems	4	31%	100%
Human Resources	0	0%	100%
Legal Services	0	0%	100%
Planning and Infrastructure	1	4%	65%
Revenues and Benefits	6	37%	100%
Democratic Services	0	0%	100%

2.12 A total of 49% (131) of complaints were upheld when investigated at stage 1 of the complaints process.

2.13 The Council's service standard is to respond in full to a complaint within 10 working days of receipt, or if this is not possible within that time (for example, because of the complexity of the complaint, the number of parties involved or awaiting additional information), a holding response is sent to the customer. This standard was met in 80% of complaints at stage 1 (210 complaints), processed in the year 2023/24.

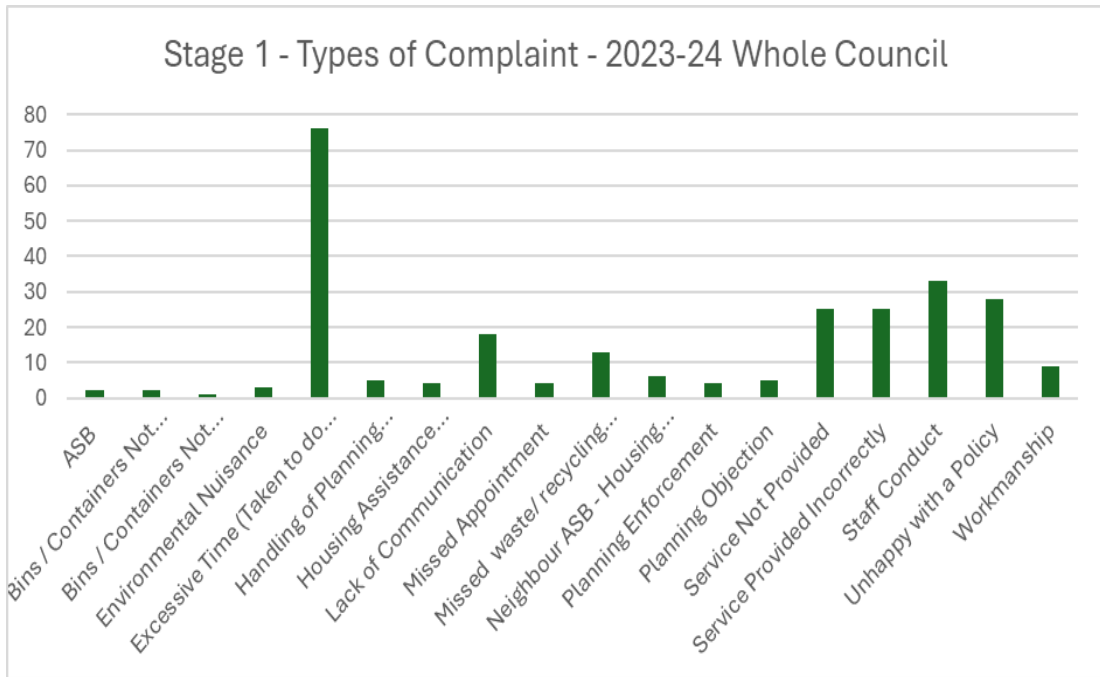
2.14 When a complaint is escalated to stage 2, the investigating head of service has 10 working days to respond. This standard was met in 73% of escalated complaints.

2.15 All services endeavor to focus on providing a high-quality response that resolves all the issues raised and finding a suitable outcome in a timely way, whilst keeping the complainant informed and up to date with progress. Responding to complaints within the timeframe is a key performance indicator within the Council Delivery Plan and something that has been highlighted as an area for improvement in 2024/25.

3. Complaint Trends

3.1 As part of the process of monitoring and handling customer feedback, the Complaints Team is responsible for categorising complaints based on the subject matter. The following diagram outlines the categories of complaints received in 2023/24.

3.2 Stage 1 - Types of Complaint - 2023-24 Whole Council



3.3 A total of 76 (29%) of all complaints were categorised as excessive time taken to carry out a service. Complaints within this category have increased from 51 in 2022/23. (an increase of 49%)

3.4 Staff conduct accounted for the second highest category of complaints, with 33 (12%) complaints. Complaints within this category have marginally changed from 36 in 2022/23. These are where the complainant considers that an employee has behaved poorly either in person or on the phone. These are front facing roles such as repair operatives, housing officers, community safety officers, customer services officers and are usually related to a disagreement over a decision or action taken. Out of the 33 complaints recorded as staff conduct 16 were upheld (found in favour of the complainant)

3.5 Although the numbers of complaints in the categories of excessive time taken and staff conduct were seen as reasons across all services, the majority of the complaints categorised as excessive time taken were attributed to Housing Repairs Service, with 62 of the 76 complaints in this category. This directly correlates with the number of repairs identified as outstanding in the housing improvement plan. Housing Services as whole are undergoing significant change as reported already to this Committee, Cabinet and through the Housing Improvement Board.

4 External Bodies

- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)
- Housing Ombudsman (HOS)

4.1 If complainants are not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint as investigated through the Council's complaints' procedures, they can escalate their complaint to the Ombudsman. This section of the report provides information on cases that the Ombudsman has made decisions on in the 2023/24 period.

4.2 The Housing Ombudsman (HO) manages enquiries and complaints that are related to services provided by the Council as a social landlord e.g., repairs to properties.

4.3 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) handles enquiries and complaints that are related to all other Council services. This includes non-landlord housing issues such as housing allocation, homelessness and temporary accommodation which is categorised in LGSCO reports as "Housing".

4.4 The HO and LGSCO produce annual review reports and the data, feedback and

recommendations and remedies made in these are reviewed by the feedback team who ensure the relevant service areas act on them in a timely manner.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

- 4.5 In February 2024, the LGSCO introduced a complaint code as “advice and guidance” for all local councils in England under section 23(12A) of the Local Government Act 1974. This means that councils should consider the Code when developing complaint handling policies and procedures and when responding to a complaint. The complaint code can be found at: [LGSCO Complaint code](#)
- 4.6 The LGSCO has not yet published its annual Report for 2023/2024 therefore all data presented below is from the Council’s systems.
- 4.7 In 2023/2024, the LGSCO formally investigated one case, which was not upheld. There were a further three cases received by the LGSCO but did not reach formal investigation stage as the feedback officer work with the investigators at an early stage to ensure that only valid cases go to formal investigation. The LGSCO produces an annual letter each summer with reference to the previous year’s complaints, this is taken to the next available Audit and Governance Committee by the Monitoring Officer.

Housing Ombudsman

- 4.8 The Housing Ombudsman Service is set up by law to look at complaints about the housing organisations that are registered with them. It resolves disputes involving the tenants and leaseholders of social landlords (housing associations and local authorities) and voluntary members (private landlords and letting agents who are committed to good service for their tenants).
- 4.9 On the 1 April 2024, the HO published its revised Complaint Handling Code which was first introduced in June 2020. This sets out requirements for member landlords that will allow them to respond to complaints effectively and fairly.
- 4.10 The Code ensures complaint handling data is being used consistently across landlord members, promotes engagement at different levels within a landlord and sets out expectations for boards or equivalent governance, senior executives and frontline staff.
- 4.11 Compliance with the Code forms part of the membership obligations. Members are obliged to complete a self-assessment to measure the level of compliance. The Council’s latest self-assessment based upon the latest code can be found in appendix 1 of this report.
- 4.12 When carrying out a complaint investigation the Ombudsman will consider whether the landlord addressed the complaint in accordance with the Code. Any failure identified could result in a finding of:
- Severe maladministration
 - Maladministration
 - Service failure.
 - Mediation
 - Redress

Following an investigation where some level of maladministration has been found the HO could put an order and or recommendations in place to correct matters. The HO can also make recommendations on any case that has been investigated and determined by them to help improve service delivery and promote learnings from outcomes and ensure compliance with the Code.

- 4.13 The HO's Complaint Handling Code for 2024/25 can be found at: [Housing Ombudsman complaint code](#)
- 4.14 The Housing Ombudsman has not yet published its Landlord Reports for 2023/2024 so all data presented below is from the Council's systems.
- 4.15 In 2023/2024 the HOS formally investigated 11 cases. The 11 cases are not all from the financial year of 2023/24 due to the HOS having a backlog on their investigations of up to 18 months. The determinations found by the HOS on the 11 cases are as separated into years and are as follows:

2021/22

- One case of maladministration

2022/23

- Three cases of maladministration
- One case of service failure
- Three cases of no fault found, and the complaint was not upheld
- One case HOS did not reach formal investigation.

2023/24

- Two cases of maladministration

The Council also has two further cases currently under investigation from 2023/24 which it is awaiting a decision and therefore will form part of the HO annual report for the following year of 2024/25.

- 4.16 In 2023, the HO introduced a portal for all their complaints which is where the Council is notified of any formal complaint investigations as well as where the Council uploads any evidence requested by the HO. The portal also allows the Council to see any complaints that they are yet to look at and determine if they will carry out formal investigations. The portal suggests that there are 10 complaints awaiting this determination for 2023/24, however this can change as the Ombudsman considers each case. If any of these are investigated as formal complaints these determinations will form part of 2024/25 annual report.
- 4.17 As a result of the HO determinations a number of recommendations and orders were put in place by the HO some of which were:
- The landlord is to carry out safeguarding training with all officers dealing ASB.
 - The landlord should consider increasing knowledge on external support services such as bereavement, adult social care etc. to ensure officers know who they can seek assistance from when required.
 - The landlord should consider the effectiveness of unannounced visits on tenants and the impact these unannounced visits may have on residents.
 - The landlord should review its compensation policy to ensure it is in line with good industry practice and the Ombudsman's established approach.
 - The landlord should provide bereavement training.
 - The landlord should improve record keeping.
- 4.18 As part of the HOS new complaint code and self-assessment the Council is required to report upon the last annual letter received from the Ombudsman which is from 2022/23. The full report can be viewed at [Housing Ombudsman](#) and then selecting North West Leicestershire District Council.
- 4.19 This information has been added following consideration of the report by the Scrutiny

Committee due to late notification by the HOS that it is required to be included in our annual report even though it relates to the previous year. The HOS are going to try and bring annual reports forward to align more to landlords annual reporting.

5 Learning points

- 5.1 The Council treats every complaint as an opportunity to identify learning outcomes and improve service provision. Complaints are valuable not only in identifying service improvements but in improving public perception and satisfaction with the Council as a whole. Each complaint can be an opportunity to make changes or service improvements on a small or greater scale.
- 5.2 Examples of some of the learning points and improvements made as a result of complaints during 2023/24 include:
- Ensuring continuity in communication for ongoing complaints and keeping the complainant informed on updates.
 - Speaking directly to customers to outline any potential delays in dealing with their request, whatever the reason might be.
 - Supporting staff to raise awareness of how to handle sensitive and confidential matters.
 - Seeking to understand the wider context relating to a customer's situation.
 - Raising staff awareness of appropriate communication and behaviours when dealing with members of the public
 - Undertaking mandatory complaints training for all officers.
 - Surveying customers who have been through a corporate complaint.
 - Introducing new corporate KPI's and reporting on complaints quarterly.
 - Producing a quarterly complaints report to corporate leadership team and portfolio holder.
 - Establishing a housing improvement board and Improvement Plan.
- 5.3 Looking back to the last years HO cases, there are a number of themes that have come forward when we consider these cases. Whilst each is unique there are some common threads which we are addressing -
- 5.4 **The timeliness of repairs** – a broad theme around repairs times which largely stems from the issues of service interruption around COVID. The Council is addressing this through the service review of housing and its associated Improvement Plan. Corporate Scrutiny and Cabinet have seen and commented on the Plan, and it is also being tracked through the Cross-Party Housing Improvement Board. There are a number of interventions specially aimed at timeliness, the largest of which related to the appointment of a 'Whole Home' contractor to help address these issues.
- 5.5 **Training** – there are a number of instances where the HO has asked the Council to refresh training on specific issues in the service. This has included ASB, bereavement, safeguarding, and the new regulatory standards. These have been added to the Council's renewed focus on skills and training staff which now occur quarterly.
- 5.6 **Policy updates** – as part of the Housing Improvement Plan, the Council has undertaken a review of a number of policies to bring them up to modern standards. Community Scrutiny and Cabinet has approved the first tranche of these including ASB, a revised repairs policy, compensation policy and tenancy.
- 5.7 **Record keeping** – a number of changes to Council systems have taken place to help improve records of interactions with tenants. These range from Tenancy Audits, through to Stock Condition and the increased use of handheld devices by staff to enable greater on-the-spot reporting and record updating. This will continue to be a focus of the Improvement Plan going forwards.

5.8 Improvements for the forthcoming year of 2024/25 are:

- Focusing on the timeliness in responding to complaints to accord with the Council's Delivery Plan targets of 100% within timeline.
- Developing a communication plan on importance of complaints across the Council.
- Working with the housing improvement board to provide both a greater understanding of the service and also to provide a cross-party consideration to the actions the service is focusing on at the moment.

6 Member and MP enquiries

6.1 Member and MP Enquiry data is included in the annual formal enquiries report as it is acknowledged that there is great similarity between the types of complaints submitted and the types of Member/MP enquiries received. It is not uncommon for a resident to make a complaint and then contact their Councillor about the same issue.

6.2 For the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, the total number of Member Enquiries received was 634, compared with 518 in the previous period. This is a 22.5% increase in the number of Member Enquiries compared with the previous year's figures.

6.3 For the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, the total number of MP Enquiries received was 131, compared with 197 in the previous period. This is a 33% decrease in the number of MP Enquiries compared with the previous year's figures.

6.4 Member and MP enquiries by service.

Service	Number of Member enquires	Number of MP enquires
Community Services	278	22
Customer Services	6	2
Economic Regeneration	9	0
Finance	2	2
Housing services	204	68
Human Resources	1	1
Legal and Commercial Services	8	3
Planning and Infrastructure	82	13
Revenues and Benefits	8	12
Not NWLDC function	36	8
Totals	634	131

7 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

7.1 The reporting of complaints is embedded in the Council's performance management process, giving further opportunity for issues to be raised throughout the year, and for wider corporate trends to be identified should they arise.

7.2 A robust and effective complaints process ensures the Council is able to meet its

vision, working collaboratively to deliver high quality services that support all communities in the District.

- 7.3 Reviewing and learning from complaints ensures the Council is committed to delivering its values. Delivering high standards in everything the Council does which shapes behaviours and builds trust with its residents.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 Complaints at service level remain low, particularly when compared to the overall volume of interactions the Council has had with the public in the same period, this does not negate from the fact that the Council takes each complaint seriously when investigating and act upon any learning that has been identified. The Council is not complacent about the matters raised.
- 8.2 The consistency of complaints reporting suggests that the complaints process continues to work effectively, and that the public can make a complaint with ease. Where necessary, trends are identified by the feedback team and managed by individual services. The Customer Services Team Manager and Customer Experience Team Leader will continue to work closely with Services to identify ways to effectively manage and resolve complaints.
- 8.3 At the meeting of Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 23 May 2024, the Annual Complaints Report was considered and several observations and comments were made which have been incorporated into the paragraphs above. A copy of the minutes from that meeting are shown in Appendix Two.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	A well-run council
Policy Considerations:	Corporate Complaints policy
Safeguarding:	None.
Equalities/Diversity:	None
Customer Impact:	<p>Customer feedback, particularly from complaints, is an invaluable resource for the Council in seeking to enhance its processes.</p> <p>By actively listening and responding to this feedback, the Council can identify specific problems, understand the customer's perspective, and take targeted actions to improve.</p>
Economic and Social Impact:	None.
Environment, Climate Change and zero carbon:	None.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	None.
Risks:	Complaints provide valuable feedback that can help the Council improve its services. Ignoring this feedback can lead to missed opportunities for improvement.
Officer Contact	<p>Nichola Oliver Customer Services Team Manager nichola.oliver@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p>

Appendix 1

Appendix A: Self-assessment form

This self-assessment form should be completed by the complaints officer and it must be reviewed and approved by the landlord's governing body at least annually.


Once approved, landlords must publish the self-assessment as part of the annual complaints performance and service improvement report on their website. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.

Landlords are required to complete the self-assessment in full and support all statements with evidence, with additional commentary as necessary.

We recognise that there may be a small number of circumstances where landlords are unable to meet the requirements, for example, if they do not have a website. In these circumstances, we expect landlords to deliver the intentions of the Code in an alternative way, for example by publishing information in a public area so that it is easily accessible.

Section 1: Definition of a complaint

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
1.2	A complaint must be defined as: <i>'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.'</i>	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Page 1 Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) (nwleics.gov.uk)	
1.3	A resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction landlords must give them the choice to make complaint. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must be handled in line with the landlord's complaints policy.	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) (nwleics.gov.uk)	Feedback officer and Customer Services are independent of any service.
1.4	Landlords must recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. This must be set out in their complaints policy. A service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) (nwleics.gov.uk)	All 'requests for service' are logged on our complaints system and reportable. They are monitored and reported in our quarterly reports. Acknowledgement letter has time frames for

	be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.			monitoring of response and any escalation details to corporate complaint.
1.5	A complaint must be raised when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. Landlords must not stop their efforts to address the service request if the resident complains.	Yes	Template available upon request	Acknowledgement letter has time frames for monitoring of response and any escalation details to corporate complaint.
1.6	An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to. Where landlords ask for wider feedback about their services, they also must provide details of how residents can complain.	Yes	 Q1 Customer Service satisfaction survey 2024-25 (office.com)	

Section 2: Exclusions

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
2.1	Landlords must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If landlords decide not to accept a complaint they must be able to evidence their reasoning. Each complaint must be considered on its own merits	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) (nwleics.gov.uk)	Feedback officer and Customer Services are independent of any service.
2.2	<p>A complaints policy must set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint or escalated, and these circumstances must be fair and reasonable to residents. Acceptable exclusions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago. • Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court. • Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy. 	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) (nwleics.gov.uk)	

2.3	Landlords must accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issue, unless they are excluded on other grounds. Landlords must consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) (nwleics.gov.uk)	
2.4	If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, an explanation must be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion has been fairly applied, the Ombudsman may tell the landlord to take on the complaint.	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) (nwleics.gov.uk)	
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	Feedback officer is independent of any service and therefore there is no bias to the complaint.	

Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
3.1	Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which they can make a complaint. Landlords must consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments of residents who may need to access the complaints process.	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) (nwleics.gov.uk)	
3.2	Residents must be able to raise their complaints in any way and with any member of staff. All staff must be aware of the complaints process and be able to pass details of the complaint to the appropriate person within the landlord.	Yes	Mandatory complaints training. Internal communications about everyone's responsibility. This is an internal eLearning system	
3.3	High volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain.	Yes	This is an internal report and can be provided upon request.	Quarterly and annual complaints report acknowledge this point.
3.4	Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and	Yes	Corporate complaints policy	

	accessible format for all residents. This will detail the two stage process, what will happen at each stage, and the timeframes for responding. The policy must also be published on the landlord's website.		Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) (nwleics.gov.uk)	
3.5	The policy must explain how the landlord will publicise details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code.	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) (nwleics.gov.uk)	
3.6	Landlords must give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord.	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) (nwleics.gov.uk)	
3.7	Landlords must provide residents with information on their right to access the Ombudsman service and how the individual can engage with the Ombudsman about their complaint.	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Website Acknowledgement letter Stage response letters Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) (nwleics.gov.uk) Complaints, compliments, comments - North West Leicestershire District Council (nwleics.gov.uk) Letter templates are available upon request	

Section 4: Complaint Handling Staff

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
4.1	Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the governing body (or equivalent). This Code will refer to that person or team as the 'complaints officer'. This role may be in addition to other duties.	Yes		Feedback Officer administers all complaints. Customer Experience Team leader is Ombudsman liaison. Customer Service Team Manager CLT/ Member liaison
4.2	The complaints officer must have access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints. They must also have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.	Yes		Feedback officer does not have authority or autonomy. Clarified with HOS, Our policy accounts for director and CEO signoff of complaints within the relevant time frames
4.3	Landlords are expected to prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. All relevant staff must be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling. It is important that complaints are seen as a	Yes	Mandatory complaints training. Internal communications about everyone's responsibility. This is an internal eLearning system	

	core service and must be resourced to handle complaints effectively			
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Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.1	Landlords must have a single policy in place for dealing with complaints covered by this Code. Residents must not be treated differently if they complain.	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) (nwleics.gov.uk)	
5.2	The early and local resolution of issues between landlords and residents is key to effective complaint handling. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'informal complaint') as this causes unnecessary confusion.	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) (nwleics.gov.uk)	
5.3	A process with more than two stages is not acceptable under any circumstances as this will make the complaint process unduly long and delay access to the Ombudsman.	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) (nwleics.gov.uk)	
5.4	Where a landlord's complaint response is handled by a third party (e.g. a contractor or independent adjudicator) at any stage, it must form part of the two stage complaints process set out in	Yes	All housing complaints are handled internally where a third party needs to be involved due to HR for example we as the	

	this Code. Residents must not be expected to go through two complaints processes.		landlord would respond to the resident still.	
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Yes		
5.6	When a complaint is logged at Stage 1 or escalated to Stage 2, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. The Code will refer to this as “the complaint definition”. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification.	Yes	Template available upon request	
5.7	When a complaint is acknowledged at either stage, landlords must be clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.	Yes	Acknowledgement template available upon request	Acknowledgement letter gives a summary of complaint
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind; b. give the resident a fair chance to set out their position; 	Yes	Corporate Director sign off of Stage 1 complaints Chief Executive sign off of stage 2 complaints ensures compliance.	

	<p>c. take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and</p> <p>d. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.</p>			
5.9	Where a response to a complaint will fall outside the timescales set out in this Code, the landlord must agree with the resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint.	Yes	<p>Corporate complaints policy</p> <p>Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004)</p> <p>nwleics.gov.uk</p>	
5.10	Landlords must make reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. Landlords must keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a resident has disclosed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments must be kept under active review.	Yes	Information shared by residents where appropriate under the equalities act are captured initially when registering to go on the housing register before being transferred to our housing system QL on signup for a tenancy. They are also clarified with tenants at annual tenancy audits.	
5.11	Landlords must not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure unless it has valid reasons to do so. Landlords must clearly set out these reasons, and they must comply with the provisions set out in section 2 of this Code.	Yes	General letter template	Letter would be sent to complainant advising of the reasons and directed to the Ombudsman
5.12	A full record must be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each	Yes	Corporate complaints system House on the Hill	

	stage. This must include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.			
5.13	Landlords must have processes in place to ensure a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Landlords must ensure appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation.	Yes		Where possible complaints are resolved at the Request For Service stage.
5.14	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives. Landlords must be able to evidence reasons for putting any restrictions in place and must keep restrictions under regular review.	Yes	Unreasonable communications policy Microsoft Word - NWL Unreasonable Behaviour and Communications Policy V2 25.9 (nwleics.gov.uk)	
5.15	Any restrictions placed on contact due to unacceptable behaviour must be proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.	Yes	Unreasonable communications policy EIA on policy Microsoft Word - NWL Unreasonable Behaviour and Communications Policy V2 25.9 (nwleics.gov.uk)	

Section 6: Complaints Stages

Stage 1

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.1	Landlords must have processes in place to consider which complaints can be responded to as early as possible, and which require further investigation. Landlords must consider factors such as the complexity of the complaint and whether the resident is vulnerable or at risk. Most stage 1 complaints can be resolved promptly, and an explanation, apology or resolution provided to the resident.	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) (nwleics.gov.uk)	
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure <u>within five working days of the complaint being received.</u>	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Website Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) (nwleics.gov.uk) Digital Feedback form Service choice, Service choice or Complaint about a service that you have received - North West Leicestershire District Council (achieveservice.com)	

6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <u>within 10 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) nwleics.gov.uk	
6.4	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) nwleics.gov.uk	
6.5	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Yes	Holding letter template available upon request	
6.6	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.	Yes		Support services manager monitors tracking of actions.
6.7	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant	Yes	Letter templates available upon request	The letter templates guides the responder to give a comprehensive response

	policy, law and good practice where appropriate.			
6.8	Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.	Yes		Additional complaints that are raised after the initial one are incorporated into the original complaint where possible, and the complainant is informed if this will delay the initial response.
6.9	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response. 	Yes	Letter templates are available upon request	

Stage 2

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.10	If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage 1, it must be progressed to stage 2 of the landlord's procedure. Stage 2 is the landlord's final response.	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) nwleics.gov.uk	
6.11	Requests for stage 2 must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received.	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) nwleics.gov.uk	
6.12	Residents must not be required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration. Landlords are expected to make reasonable efforts to understand why a resident remains unhappy as part of its stage 2 response.	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) nwleics.gov.uk	
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) nwleics.gov.uk	
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 <u>within 20 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Corporate complaints policy Microsoft Word - Feedback Policy Updated Feb 2024 (004) nwleics.gov.uk	Our policy is remaining at 10 working days for stage 2.

6.15	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes		Responders will liaise with the Feedback Officer when an extension is required for guidance, if 20 days is exceeded the responder will call the complainant to gain their approval
6.16	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Yes	Holding letter template is available upon request	
6.17	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.	Yes		Support services manager monitors tracking of actions.
6.18	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes	Letter templates are available upon request	
6.19	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; 	Yes	Letter templates are available upon request	

	<p>d. the reasons for any decisions made;</p> <p>e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right;</p> <p>f. details of any outstanding actions; and</p> <p>g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.</p>			
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Yes		

Section 7: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
7.1	<p>Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologising; • Acknowledging where things have gone wrong; • Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons; • Taking action if there has been delay; 	Yes	Letter templates are available upon request	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconsidering or changing a decision; • Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum; • Providing a financial remedy; • Changing policies, procedures or practices. 			
7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Yes		
7.3	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.	Yes	Response templates are clear as to how remedies should be set out. Feedback officer follows through to completion.	
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Yes		

Section 8: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
8.1	<p>Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements. b. a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept; c. any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman; d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints; e. any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the 	Yes	<p>Annual report Self assessment Report to scrutiny Response templates have an office use only part where lessons learnt and changes are recorded for the feedback officer to transfer to our internal system.</p>	

	Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.			
8.2	The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.	Yes	Website and report if required.	Link to report will be provided after Cabinet meeting in June 2024
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	Yes		
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	Yes		
8.5	If a landlord is unable to comply with the Code due to exceptional circumstances, such as a cyber incident, they must inform the Ombudsman, provide information to residents who may be affected, and publish this on their website Landlords must provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code.	Yes		

Section 9: Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
9.1	Landlords must look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from the complaint.	Yes	Lessons learnt and service reviews	
9.2	A positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness with which landlords resolve disputes. Landlords must use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.	Yes		
9.3	Accountability and transparency are also integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as residents' panels, staff and relevant committees.	Yes	Scrutiny Portfolio holder updates Tenant panels Tenant InTouch newsletter	
9.4	Landlords must appoint a suitably senior lead person as accountable for their complaint handling. This person must assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.	Yes	Customer Experience Team leader Customer service team manager. See complaints policy.	

9.5	In addition to this a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC').	Yes	Portfolio holder for housing, property and Customer services	
9.6	The MRC will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight on the landlord's complaint handling performance. This person must have access to suitable information and staff to perform this role and report on their findings.	Yes	Portfolio holder for housing, property and Customer services	
9.7	As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance; b. regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling; c. regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and 		Quarterly complaints report is sent to portfolio holder for housing, property and customer services.	

	d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report.			
9.8	<p>Landlords must have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments; b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body. 	Yes		When required Housing and Customer Experience work collaboratively to establish the best outcome for complainants.

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CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 23 MAY 2024

6. CORPORATE COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK

The Customer Services Team Manager presented the report.

A Member suggested that due to the prevalence of housing complaints, they could be broken down to a more concrete level of detail. Officers confirmed that this was available and provided internally.

A Member asked several questions of the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Customer Services. The Portfolio Holder said that he felt it was important to analyse trends in complaints for signs of where things might be failing, and felt that the process for handling complaints had improved in recent years; he had recently requested stronger democratic oversight of complaints and more Portfolio Holder awareness of stage 2 complaints; and in terms of staff conduct he was kept informed, as appropriate within the HR process.

Committee Members and the Portfolio Holder discussed the data around complaints against staff. They concluded that the data did not show a meaningful decrease and wondered what might be done to improve this in the future.

A discussion was had about the use of satisfaction surveys. The Customer Services Team Manager advised that they were working on centralising and integrating their feedback mechanisms between services, as part of the Ombudsman's Code. They were working to get satisfaction across the board.

The Chair requested that in the future the data tracking complaints month-by-month, where it was suggested that seasonal factors impacted this, there be a comparison with previous years to evidence this claim. The Customer Services Team Manager said that she would provide this in future iterations of the report.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments, which would be presented to the Cabinet on 25 June.

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NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – TUESDAY, 25 JUNE 2024



Title of Report	SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, VIREMENTS AND CAPITAL APPROVALS	
Presented by	Councillor Nick Rushton Corporate Portfolio Holder PH Briefed <input type="checkbox" value="yes"/>	
Background Papers	Council – 22 February 2024	Public Report: Yes
	General Fund Budget and Council Tax 2024/25 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget and Rent Setting 2024/25	Key Decision: Yes
Financial Implications	The financial implications arising from this report are detailed in the body of the report and the attached appendices.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	The staffing implications arising from this report are detailed in the body of the report and the attached appendices.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	To seek approval of the supplementary estimates, virements and capital scheme movements.	
Reason for Decision	As required by the Council's Constitution.	
Recommendations	THAT CABINET: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NOTES THE DECISION MADE BY THE HEAD OF SERVICE AND SECTION 151 OFFICER IN RESPECT OF SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES DETAILED ON APPENDIX 2 WHICH ARE BELOW £100K AND ARE EXTERNALLY FUNDED. 2. APPROVES THE SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES DETAILED ON APPENDIX 2 WHICH ARE BETWEEN £100K AND £250K AND ARE EXTERNALLY FUNDED. 3. RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL FOR APPROVAL THE 	

	<p>SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES DETAILED ON APPENDIX 2 WHICH ARE ABOVE £250K AND ARE EXTERNALLY FUNDED.</p> <p>4. APPROVES ALL SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES DETAILED ON APPENDIX 2 WHICH ARE COUNCIL FUNDED</p> <p>5. APPROVES THE MOVEMENT FROM THE DEVELOPMENT POOL TO THE ACTIVE PROGRAMME FOR THE CAPITAL SCHEMES DETAILED IN TABLE 2.</p>
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for virements and supplementary estimates as required under the Council's Constitution. This will be a regular report to Cabinet to enable the approval of virements and supplementary estimates in a timely manner for the efficient operation of the Council.
- 1.2 The report also seeks approval for the movement of capital schemes from the development pool to the active programme as required in the Council's Capital Strategy approved by Council on 22 February 2024.
- 1.3 The report covers both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account.

2.0 VIREMENTS

- 2.1 A virement is where one or more budget(s) are reduced to fund an increase in another budget(s). There is no net change in the total budget agreed by Council arising from a virement.
- 2.2 Virement approval levels were approved as part of the Constitution by Council in February 2024. These approval levels are detailed in Appendix 1.
- 2.3 There has been no virement requests during the first two months of the year that require approval by either Cabinet (over £100k) or Council (over £250k).

3.0 SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

- 3.1 A supplementary estimate is an addition to the Council's agreed budget and should only be considered after all other options such as virements or savings have been considered.
- 3.2 Supplementary estimates include budgets fully funded by external grants or contributions.
- 3.3 Supplementary estimate levels were approved as part of the Constitution by Council in February 2024. These approval levels are detailed in Appendix 1.
- 3.4 All supplementary estimates which require Council funding require Cabinet approval whereas those fully externally funded are reported to Cabinet below £100k but require approval over £100k.

- 3.5 Appendix 2 details all supplementary estimates grouped by value and funding with details of the reasons for the requests which are summarised in the table below.

Table 1: Supplementary Estimates

	General Fund		HRA	
	Revenue	Capital	Revenue	Capital
Externally Funded Between £0 and £99,999 (for info)	104,663	-	-	-
Externally Funded Between £100,000 and £249,999 (For Cabinet Approval)	100,000	-	-	-
Externally Funded Over £250,000 (Requires Council Approval)	304,136	351,818	-	-
Total Externally Funded	508,799	351,818	-	-
Council Funded Between £0 and £249,999 (For Cabinet Approval)	156,633	-	-	-
Total Council Funded	156,633	-	-	-
Total Supplementary Estimates	665,432	351,818	-	-

4.0 CHANGES TO THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME

- 4.1 Schemes in the capital programme are grouped under two categories and these are:

Development Pool: These are schemes not yet fully costed or funding sources identified. A full business case is required to be prepared and presented to the Capital Strategy Group for consideration before the scheme can go ahead.

Active Programme: Schemes in this category have been approved (by Capital Strategy Group, Cabinet or Council), fully funded and are being delivered.

- 4.1 Table 2 below provides details of schemes for Cabinet approval to move from the development pool to the active projects.

Table 2 – Capital Scheme Movements

Scheme	Fund	Budget £	Reason for Movement
Existing Schemes - movement from Development Pool to Active Programme			
Laptop Replacement	General Fund	49,000	Business Case approved by Capital Strategy Group to enable the project to commence.
Firewall Replacement	General Fund	50,000	Business Case approved by Capital Strategy Group to enable the project to commence.
		99,000	

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	A well-run council
Policy Considerations:	The Council's Financial Procedure Rules, sections A24 – A28, set out the details of the virement and supplementary estimates, as shown at Appendix One of this report.
Safeguarding:	None
Equalities/Diversity:	None
Customer Impact:	None
Economic and Social Impact:	None
Environment, Climate Change and Zero Carbon:	None
Consultation/Community/Tenant Engagement:	Capital Strategy Group
Risks:	As part of its Corporate Governance arrangements, the Council must ensure that Risk management is considered and satisfactorily covered in any report put before elected Members for a decision or action.
Officer Contact	Anna Crouch Head of Finance & Deputy S151 Officer anna.crouch@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

Extract from 'The Council's Constitution' May 2024 Version

Virement

- A.1 **Full Council** is responsible for agreeing procedures for **Virement** of expenditure between **Budget** headings. The definition of a Virement is set out in Section 5 of the **Policy & Budget Framework** as follows:

*Steps taken by the **Cabinet**, a **Cabinet Member**, a group of the Cabinet, or Officers, or **Joint Arrangements** to implement Council policy shall not exceed the budgets allocated to each relevant **Budget** head. However, such bodies or individuals shall be entitled to vire across Budget heads within such limits as shall be laid down in the **Financial Procedure Rules**. Beyond those limits, approval to any **Virement** across Budget heads shall require the approval of the **Full Council**.*

*A **Virement** is defined as where one or more **Budget(s)** are reduced to fund an increase in another **Budget(s)**. There is no net change in the total Budget agreed by Council arising from a Virement.*

- A.2 The table below sets out the approval level required based on the value of the **Virement**.

Value	Approval Level Required		
	Within a Budget Head	Between Budget Heads in same Directorate	Between Directorates
Between £0 - £4,999	Heads of Service	Heads of Service	Heads of Service
Between £5,000 and £24,999	Heads of Service and Strategic Directors	Strategic Directors and Portfolio Holder(s)	Strategic Directors and Portfolio Holder(s)
Between £25,000 and £99,999	Strategic Directors and Portfolio Holder(s)	Strategic Directors and Portfolio Holder(s)	Strategic Directors and Portfolio Holder(s)
Between £100,000 and £249,999	Cabinet	Cabinet	Cabinet
£250,000 and over	Full Council	Full Council	Full Council
Notes:			
1. In all circumstances Virements require approval by the S151 Officer.			
2. All relevant parties listed above must be in agreement.			
3. Virements should not be artificially disaggregated.			
4. Virement rules apply to capital and revenue.			

Supplementary Estimates

- A.3 A supplementary estimate is an addition to the Council's agreed **Budget**. Supplementary estimates can be one-offs, or recurring. In either case, supplementary estimates should only be considered after all other options, such as **Virements**, or savings, have been considered. Supplementary estimates include budgets fully funded by external grant or contribution.
- A.4 The table below sets out the approval level required based on the value of the supplementary estimates.

Value	Approval Level Required	
	Fully Externally Funded	Requires Council Funding
Between £0 and £9,999	S151 Officer	S151 Officer
Between £10,000 and £99,999	Head of Service [then reported to Cabinet at next meeting]	Cabinet
Between £100,000 and £249,999	Cabinet	Cabinet
£250,000 and over	Full Council	Full Council
Notes:		
1. In all circumstances Supplementary Estimates require approval by the S151 Officer.		
2. Council funding includes (but is not limited to) revenue budget, reserves, Section 106, capital receipts and borrowing. S151 Officer decision will undertaken an assessment.		
3. Supplementary Estimates should not be artificially disaggregated.		
4. Supplementary Estimates rules apply to capital and revenue.		

- A.5 Where in exceptional or unexpected circumstances a Directorate is faced with a material increase in its net expenditure, which cannot reasonably be contained within its resource allocation figure for the year, the **Chief Executive** or **Strategic Directors** must (wherever possible, prior to incurring the expenditure) submit a request to **Cabinet** or **Council** for a supplementary estimate to cover the additional expenditure. The Cabinet or Council will also decide how the expenditure will be funded, e.g. from grant, revenue, reserve, loan or otherwise.

Supplementary Estimates - General Fund, HRA & Special Expenses (Capital & Revenue)

Capital/ Revenue	General Fund/ HRA / Special Expenses	Directorate	Service	Service Area	Recurring/ One-Off	Amount £	Funded By	Reason For Request
Externally Funded Between £0 and £99,999 (for info)								
Revenue	General	Place	Economic Regeneration	Economic Regeneration	One off	8,215	Grant	Grant funding from Bardon Community Fund for Art & Time Capsule Project 125 years of Coalville Park
Revenue	General	Chief Executive	Legal & Support Services	Planning	One off	5,907	New Burdens Funding	Electoral Integrity Programme New Burden Grant
Revenue	General	Community Services	Planning & Development	Benefits	One off	26,807	Grant	Biodiversity Net Gain Defra Grant
Revenue	General	Resources	Revenues & Benefits	Benefits	One off	8,654	Grant	Business Rates Retention Scheme Grant Funding
Revenue	General	Resources	Revenues & Benefits	Benefits	One off	40,188	New Burdens Funding	Benefits New Burden Funding
Revenue	General	Chief Executive	Legal & Support Services	Finance	One off	14,892	New Burdens Funding	Elections New Burdens Funding(General Election)
						104,663		
Externally Funded Between £100,000 and £249,999 (For Cabinet Approval)								
Revenue	General Fund	Place	Planning & Development	Planning	One off	100,000	Grant	Nutrient Neutrality Grant
						100,000		
Externally Funded Over £250,000 (Requires Council Approval)								
Revenue	General Fund	Place	Property and Economic Regeneration	Economic Regeneration	One off	304,136	Grant	UKSPF Revenue Year 3
Capital	General Fund	Place	Property and Economic Regeneration	Economic Regeneration	One off	351,818	Grant	Rural England Prosperity Fund Year 2
						655,954		
TOTAL EXTERNALLY FUNDED						860,617		
Council Funded Between £0 and £249,999 (For Cabinet Approval)								
Revenue	General Fund	Resources		ICT	One off	26,633	MTFP Reserve	Increase in Microsoft Licence Fees
Revenue	General Fund	Resources	Finance		One off	130,000	MTFP Reserve	Additional staffing to support with the backlog in the Statement of Accounts and Statutory Returns
						156,633		
TOTAL COUNCIL FUNDED						156,633		
TOTAL SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES						1,017,250		

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