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Meeting	COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Time/Day/Date	6.30 pm on Thursday, 13 July 2023
Location	Room 101, Old Council Offices, Whitwick Road, Coalville, LE67 3FJ
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	
To receive questions from members of the public under rule no.10 of the Council Procedure Rules. The procedure rule provides that members of the public may ask any question on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties which affect the District, provided that three clear days' notice in writing has been given to the Head of Legal and Support Services.	
4. MINUTES	
To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 5 April 2023	3 - 6
5. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME	
To consider any items to be included in the work programme. The plan of forthcoming Cabinet decisions and the current work programme are attached for information.	7 - 20
6. RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND	
Report of the Head of Economic Regeneration	21 - 34
7. HERMITAGE RECREATION GROUND ECOPARK	
Report of the Head of Community Services	35 - 58

8. PROPOSALS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Report of the Strategic Director **59 - 68**

9. SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

Report of the Strategic Director **69 - 82**

Circulation:

Councillor T Eynon (Chair)
Councillor M Blair-Park (Deputy Chair)
Councillor M Ball
Councillor M French
Councillor K Horn
Councillor S Lambeth
Councillor P Lees
Councillor A Morley
Councillor E Parle
Councillor L Windram

MINUTES of a meeting of the COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Board Room, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 5 APRIL 2023

Present: Councillor J Hoult (Chairman)

Councillors R L Morris, C Benfield, T Eynon, J Geary, M D Hay, G Hoult and J G Simmons

Portfolio Holders: Councillors

Officers: Mr J Arnold, Miss E Warhurst, Mr J Bright, Mr L Mansfield, Mrs A Morgan, Ms C Proudfoot, Mr P Sanders, Mrs M Scott, Ms L Walker and Ms R Haynes

68. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor M Wyatt.

69. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no interests declared.

70. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no questions received.

71. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2022.

It was moved by Councillor J Geary, seconded by Councillor J Simmons and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2022 be approved as a correct record.

72. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the inclusion of any items on the work programme. The plan of forthcoming Cabinet decisions were set out in the agenda for information.

A member noted that they would like to see scrutiny of projects which were underway included on future work programmes, for example the demolition of the Hermitage Leisure Centre and the Marlborough Square project.

It was also noted that members would like to see topics of local importance featured on the work programme, for example the state of the highways, potholes, footpaths etc and stated that they felt it would be beneficial to invite a representative from Leicestershire County Council to meetings in order to scrutinise them. Officers confirmed that they would liaise with Leicestershire County Council and the work planning group with a view to facilitating this.

RESOLVED THAT:

The Committee's future work programme be noted.

73. DRAFT RESOURCE AND WASTE STRATEGY FOR LEICESTERSHIRE 2022-2050

The Head of Community Services presented the report and outlined the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy which will be delivered through the Leicestershire Waste Partnership. It was highlighted that North West Leicestershire District Council had been highly successful in terms of both recycling rates and the use of alternative fuels to reduce emissions from vehicles.

A member asked how the authority plans to tackle the problem of trade waste which had been fly tipped. Officers advised that it was not usually local residents who had been fly tipping but people travelling through the district, however the Council had been targeting businesses to try and reduce waste. It was noted that littering is a countrywide problem, however it was felt that this could be improved with the introduction of a deposit return scheme.

A member enquired whether it would be possible to target recycling centres to salvage items which had been disposed of with a view to selling these to raise money for charities. It was noted that a similar scheme exists in Derby and a member suggested that a visit be organised to see how this is successfully carried out. Officers agreed that this would be something the Council could consider.

Members felt that it was disappointing that Government delays in reaching decisions had been having a knock on effect in terms of Local Authorities making decisions. It was suggested that the authority would not be able to make a decision on the frequency of black bin collections until the issue of food waste had been tackled and also the link between carers disposing of child and adult nappies would need to be investigated further as less black bin collections would impact such carers unfairly.

A member expressed concern that in a time of food insecurity when many people are reliant on foodbanks that food waste was a problem. He suggested that people may need more education on how to utilise the food they have. Officers responded that this would be part of the plan going forward and confirmed that the Council has a designated Food Poverty Officer who would be able to deliver this.

A member enquired whether North West Leicestershire would be able to have a paint recycling facility whereby partially used cans of paint could be resold as opposed to being dumped.

It was disputed that the waste incinerator would be an environmentally friendly way to dispose of waste, however officers responded that there would be no option to dispose of waste in landfill now and that data had been requested regarding incineration as this would be part of the Council's carbon footprint. A member asked if the incineration plant had the potential for an energy recovery scheme and officers agreed to acquire technical details in order to answer this.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

Community Scrutiny Committee comment on the Draft Resources and Waste Strategy for Leicestershire 2022-2050 and the associated action plan and timeline, before consideration by Cabinet on 25 April 2023.

74. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

The Head of Community Services presented the report and outlined the robust procedures and training which are in place for this statutory duty.

A member commented that they found the use of targets concerning as this is not a target driven field, and wanted to know how effective the action taken is. Officers responded that the Council deals with referrals promptly and if a referral is made, then it will be thoroughly explored. It was highlighted that regardless of opinions, if someone seemed vulnerable or a referral is made then this would be investigated. It was noted that the Council received approximately 130 referrals a year which were dealt with by employees who were trained volunteers.

A member asked how a serious case review would be dealt with and was advised that the Council work with other agencies, for example, the police. If the council had found to be at fault in dealing with a safeguarding case, members would be informed and a confidential group meeting would be held with members, for which a process already exists.

A member questioned whether being on a rota as a volunteer for safeguarding referrals was suitable as a voluntary role and officers confirmed that they felt this had been highly successful and noted that it was a valued role for which officers received robust training and for which they received recognition, for example "Away Days". It was also noted that as most referrals come from Housing, 10 new volunteers from this department were being recruited.

RESOLVED THAT:

Community Scrutiny Committee provide comments on the content of the report.

75. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING POLICIES

The Head of Community Services presented the report and highlighted that the outlined policies would make the district's private sector homes safer and more energy efficient, with greater powers to carry out enforcement.

Members wanted to know the number of sites and the number of officers the Council had to carry out checks and enforcements. Officers advised that the Council had been looking for additional resources to carry out more pro-active work. It was confirmed that at present, only complaints are investigated, so it had been a reactive service as opposed to a pro-active one. It was noted that the Council interacts with tenants who have expressed that they are not happy in order to approach landlords. A member felt that a complaint driven system could leave tenants in a vulnerable position and they could be afraid that landlords would retaliate if they became aware that they had been complained about. It was asked whether the Council would act if it was found that tenants had suffered reprisals from landlords after making a complaint. Officers advised that they could facilitate a conversation between tenant and landlord, but it would be hard to know if there had been reprisals.

A member asked how many private tenants were aware of their rights and officers responded that there may be many who were not aware, although there had been advertising around tenants' rights. It was asked whether landlords are informed by the Council that they are being investigated due to a complaint from the tenant and this was the case, although officers confirmed that tenants are made aware of their rights and that Government is currently looking into legislation around retaliatory evictions.

Officers advised the Committee that if a tenant was served with a Section 21, then the Council would be able to offer help and support via the Housing Choices service. A member suggested that statistics for instances like this be measured so that data would be available for members' consideration.

It was suggested that the Council don't disclose they are investigating a complaint to landlords and claim to be carrying out an investigation. Officers agreed that this was something which could be looked into.

A member raised concerns that funding used to increase staffing numbers to carry out inspections had come from the Disabled Facilities Grant.

One member said that they had been involved in a case whereby a retaliatory eviction had taken place and noted that this was not illegal. It was felt that landlords are given more protection than tenants therefore pro-active enforcement would be preferable to the current complaint driven system. The member also stated that they weren't convinced EPC ratings were given correctly and asked whether officers had any means to check EPC ratings. It was also mentioned that there seemed to be a lack of community consultation and the views of private tenants should have been sought.

A member asked if there had been any improvement on energy ratings in privately rented accommodation since the Task and Finish group had focused on this subject and suggested that statutory checks should be carried out along with blanket inspections, in order to remove culpability from the tenants. Officers responded that pro-active inspection was dependent on capacity.

Members suggested that the penalties for first and subsequent offences were not clear and asked for clarification as to whether this applied to the landlord or the property. It was also noted that the fine would be limited to £5,000 and it was asked whether this would be over a period of time. Officers replied that as this was new legislation, they would review this to try and give more clarity.

RESOLVED THAT:

Community Scrutiny Committee comment on the following draft housing policies ahead of consideration by Cabinet:

- Housing Enforcement Policy
- Refresh of the General Enforcement Policy
- Civil Penalty Policy
- Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards
- Carbon Monoxide and Smoke Alarms
- Electrical Safety

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.46 pm

Community Scrutiny Committee – WORK PROGRAMME (as at 05/07/23)

Date of Meeting	Item	Lead Officer	Witnesses	Agenda Item Duration
September 2023				
28 September 2023	NWL Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and Strategy	Jason Knight, Leisure Services Team Manager, Paul Sanders, Head of Community Services	n/a	30 minutes
28 September 2023	Leisure Centres – Annual Review	Jason Knight, Leisure Services Team Manager, Paul Sanders, Head of Community Services		30 minutes
December 2023				
7 December 2023	The Effectiveness of Planning Enforcement - Update	Chris Elston, Head of Planning and Infrastructure		30 minutes
February 2024				
April 2024				
June 2024				

Requests for Items - NONE

Date request Received	Requested by	Summary of request	Consideration by scrutiny Y/N	Reasons

7

Principles and Criteria used for Assessing Items Put Forward

Identify Issues for consideration by Scrutiny

- Consulting with members of Scrutiny Committees, senior officers, Cabinet members – horizon scanning on policy development
- Looking at the corporate priorities, Council Delivery Plan and Cabinet Forward plan – identify key issues/topics for investigation/inquiry
- Considering events and decisions in the Council's calendar which could require an input/consultation via scrutiny – eg budget setting, CDP development
- Considering requests from members – eg via another forum or scoping report submitted
- Evaluating the Council's performance – eg quarterly reports, end of year reports, reviewing success of a particular scheme or initiative
- Reviewing any follow up work required after previous scrutiny work

Prioritise the potential list of scrutiny topics based on factors including

- ∞ • the resources required to deliver it (from members, offices and financially)
- the value and level of impact which could be achieved
- link to the council's priorities
- whether it is a regular recurring item which requires consideration before Cabinet/Council approval
- consideration of the guidance for selecting scrutiny topics

Topics are suitable for Scrutiny when	Topics are not suitable for Scrutiny when
Scrutiny could have an impact and add value	The issue is already being addressed elsewhere and change is imminent
The topic is of high local importance and reflects the concerns of local people	The topic would be better addressed elsewhere (and will be referred there)
The resources are available that would be required to conduct the review – staff and budget	Scrutiny involvement would have limited or no impact on outcomes
It avoids duplication of work elsewhere	The topic would be sub-judice or prejudicial to the councils interests
The issues is one that the committee can realistically influence	The topic is too broad to make a review realistic
The issue is related to an area where the council or one of its partners is not performing well	New legislation or guidance relating to the topic is expected in the next year

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DRAFT Notice of Executive Key Decisions

The attached notice lists the matters which are likely to be the subject of a key decision by the Council's executive and executive decision making bodies. This notice is produced in accordance with the Constitution adopted by North West Leicestershire District Council and will be published a minimum of 28 days before the date on which a key decision is to be made on behalf of the Council.

Key Decisions

A key decision means a decision taken by the Cabinet, a committee of the Cabinet, an area or joint committee or an individual in connection with the discharge of a function which is the responsibility of the executive and which is likely:

- (a) to result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the Council;
- (c) for the purposes of (a) and (b) above £100,000 shall be regarded as significant in terms of expenditure or savings, and any issue which, in the opinion of the Leader is likely to have an impact on people, shall be regarded as significant in terms of impact on communities.

The Council's Executive

The Council's executive committee is the Cabinet. The Cabinet comprises:

Councillor R Blunt	-	Leader	Councillor A Woodman	-	Housing, Property & Customer Services
Councillor M Wyatt	-	Deputy Leader and Community Services	Councillor N J Rushton	-	Corporate
Councillor T Gillard	-	Business and Regeneration	Councillor A SAffell	-	Planning
Councillor K Merrie MBE	-	Infrastructure			

Confidential Items and Private Meetings of the Executive

Whilst the majority of the Cabinet's business at the meetings listed in this notice will be open to the public and media organisations to attend, there will inevitably be some business to be considered that contains, for example, confidential, commercially sensitive or personal information. This is a formal notice under the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 that part of the Cabinet meetings listed in this Forward Plan may be held in private because the agenda and reports for the meeting contain exempt information under Part 1 Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. Those items where it is considered that they should be considered in private are identified on the Notice.

Access to Agenda and Related Documents

Documents relating to the matters listed in this notice are available at least 5 clear working days prior to the date of decision as indicated below. Other documents relevant to the matters listed in this notice may be submitted to the decision maker.

If you wish to request or submit a document, or make representation in relation to any issue contained within this notice, please contact Democratic Services on telephone number 01530 454512 or by emailing memberservices@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

Executive Decisions

Decision	Decision Maker	Status of Decision	Public or Private (and reason – where private)	Date of Decision	Contacts	Documents to be submitted to the Decision Maker	Considered by Scrutiny or other Committee
August 2023							
There are no items to be considered at this meeting							
Minutes of the Coalville Special Expenses Working Party	Cabinet	Key	Public	22 August 2023	Councillor Michael Wyatt Tel: 07773 341531 michael.wyatt@nwleicestershire.gov.uk	Minutes of the Coalville Special Expenses Working Party Minutes of the Coalville Special Expenses Working Party	The group is a sub group of Cabinet and therefore the report does not require scrutiny
September 2023							
2023/24 Quarter 1 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Finance Update	Cabinet	Key	Public	19 September 2023	Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk Head of Finance Tel: 01530 454492 anna.crouch@nwleicestershire.gov.uk	2023/24 Quarter 1 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Finance Update	31/08/23

Decision	Decision Maker	Status of Decision	Public or Private (and reason – where private)	Date of Decision	Contacts	Documents to be submitted to the Decision Maker	Considered by Scrutiny or other Committee
Former Tenant Rent Arrears, Current Tenant Rent Arrears, Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates and Sundry Debts	Cabinet	Non-Key	Public	19 September 2023	Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk Exchequer Services Team Leader andy.gould@nwleicestershire.gov.uk	Former Tenant Rent Arrears, Current Tenant Rent Arrears, Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates and Sundry Debts	Function delegated to Cabinet
Council Delivery Plan	Cabinet	Key	Public	19 September 2023	Councillor Richard Blunt Tel: 01530 454510 richard.blunt@nwleicestershire.gov.uk Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development Tel: 01530 454518 mike.murphy@nwleicestershire.gov.uk	Report Council Delivery Plan	To be confirmed
Review of Corporate Governance Policies	Cabinet	Key	Public	19 September 2023	Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk Solicitor - Contracts and Commercial Tel: 01530 454772 rebecca.elliott@nwleicestershire.gov.uk	Report and Policies Review of Corporate Governance Policies	Audit and Governance Committee - July 2023

Decision	Decision Maker	Status of Decision	Public or Private (and reason – where private)	Date of Decision	Contacts	Documents to be submitted to the Decision Maker	Considered by Scrutiny or other Committee
October 2023							
NWL Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and Strategy 14	Cabinet	Key	Public	24 October 2023	Councillor Michael Wyatt Tel: 07773 341531 michael.wyatt@nwleicester.gov.uk Leisure Services Team Manager, Head of Community Services Tel: 01530 454602, Tel: 01530 454832 jason.knight@nwleicester.gov.uk, paul.sanders@nwleicester.gov.uk	NWL Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and Strategy	Community Scrutiny - 5 April 2023
November 2023							
2023/24 Quarter 2 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Finance Update	Cabinet	Key	Public	21 November 2023	Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicester.gov.uk Head of Finance Tel: 01530 454492 anna.crouch@nwleicester.gov.uk	2023/24 Quarter 2 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Finance Update	23/11/23

Decision	Decision Maker	Status of Decision	Public or Private (and reason – where private)	Date of Decision	Contacts	Documents to be submitted to the Decision Maker	Considered by Scrutiny or other Committee
December 2023							
Former Tenant Rent Arrears, Current Tenant Rent Arrears, Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates and Sundry Debts	Cabinet	Non-Key	Public	12 December 2023	Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk Exchequer Services Team Leader andy.gould@nwleicestershire.gov.uk	Former Tenant Rent Arrears, Current Tenant Rent Arrears, Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates and Sundry Debts	Function delegated to Cabinet
January 2024							
Draft General Fund Budget 2024/25	Cabinet	Key	Public	9 January 2024	Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk Head of Finance Tel: 01530 454492 anna.crouch@nwleicestershire.gov.uk	Draft General Fund Budget 2024/25	04/01/24
Draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget and Rents 2024/25	Cabinet	Key	Public	9 January 2024	Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk Head of Finance Tel: 01530 454492 anna.crouch@nwleicestershire.gov.uk	Draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget and Rents 2024/25	04/01/24

Decision	Decision Maker	Status of Decision	Public or Private (and reason – where private)	Date of Decision	Contacts	Documents to be submitted to the Decision Maker	Considered by Scrutiny or other Committee
Draft Capital Strategy, Treasury Strategy and Prudential Indicators	Cabinet	Key	Public	9 January 2024	<p>Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Finance Tel: 01530 454492 anna.crouch@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Draft Capital Strategy, Treasury Strategy and Prudential Indicators	04/01/24
Draft Robustness of Budget Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves 16	Cabinet	Non-Key	Public	9 January 2024	<p>Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Strategic Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer) glenn.hammons@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Draft Robustness of Budget Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves	04.01.24
Council Tax Base 2024/25	Cabinet	Key	Public	9 January 2024	<p>Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Finance Tel: 01530 454492 anna.crouch@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Council Tax Base 2024/25	Approving the Council Tax Base is the responsibility of Cabinet. The Council Tax Base is calculated in line with legislation.

Decision	Decision Maker	Status of Decision	Public or Private (and reason – where private)	Date of Decision	Contacts	Documents to be submitted to the Decision Maker	Considered by Scrutiny or other Committee
Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget and Rents 2024/25	Cabinet	Key	Public	30 January 2024	<p>Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Finance Tel: 01530 454492 anna.crouch@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget and Rents 2024/25	Considered as part of the draft budget at Corporate Scrutiny on the 04/01/24
<p>Genera Fund Budget and Council Tax 2024/25</p> <p>17</p>	Cabinet	Key	Public	30 January 2024	<p>Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Finance Tel: 01530 454492 anna.crouch@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Genera Fund Budget and Council Tax 2024/25	Considered as part of the draft budget at Corporate Scrutiny on the 04/01/24
Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators 2024/25	Cabinet	Key	Public	30 January 2024	<p>Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Finance Tel: 01530 454492 anna.crouch@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators 2024/25	Considered as part of the draft budget at Corporate Scrutiny on the 04/01/24

Decision	Decision Maker	Status of Decision	Public or Private (and reason – where private)	Date of Decision	Contacts	Documents to be submitted to the Decision Maker	Considered by Scrutiny or other Committee
Robustness of Budget Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves	Cabinet	Non-Key	Public	30 January 2024	<p>Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Strategic Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer) glenn.hammons@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Robustness of Budget Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves	Considered as part of the draft budget at Corporate Scrutiny on the 04/01/24
February 2024							
2023/24 Quarter 3 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Finance Update	Cabinet	Key	Public	27 February 2024	<p>Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Finance Tel: 01530 454492 anna.crouch@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	2023/24 Quarter 3 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Finance Update	20/02/24

Decision	Decision Maker	Status of Decision	Public or Private (and reason – where private)	Date of Decision	Contacts	Documents to be submitted to the Decision Maker	Considered by Scrutiny or other Committee
March 2024							
Former Tenant Rent Arrears, Current Tenant Rent Arrears, Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates and Sundry Debts	Cabinet	Non-Key	Public	26 March 2024	Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk Exchequer Services Team Leader andy.gould@nwleicestershire.gov.uk	Former Tenant Rent Arrears, Current Tenant Rent Arrears, Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates and Sundry Debts	Function delegated to Cabinet
April 2024							
There are no items to be considered at the meeting.							
May 2024							

Decision	Decision Maker	Status of Decision	Public or Private (and reason – where private)	Date of Decision	Contacts	Documents to be submitted to the Decision Maker	Considered by Scrutiny or other Committee
Treasury Management Stewardship Report 2023/24 20	Cabinet	Non-Key	Public	21 May 2024	Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk Head of Finance Tel: 01530 454492 anna.crouch@nwleicestershire.gov.uk	Treasury Management Stewardship Report 2023/24	Audit and Governance Committee - 24/04/24

June 2024

Former Tenant Rent Arrears, Current Tenant Rent Arrears, Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates and Sundry Debts	Cabinet	Non-Key	Public	25 June 2024	Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk Exchequer Services Team Leader andy.gould@nwleicestershire.gov.uk	Former Tenant Rent Arrears, Current Tenant Rent Arrears, Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates and Sundry Debts	Function delegated to Cabinet
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NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – THURSDAY, 13
JULY 2023

Title of Report	RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND	
Presented by	Barrie Walford Economic Development and Regeneration Manager	
Background Papers		Public Report: Yes
Financial Implications	<p>The Council has been successful in being awarded Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) over two years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023/24 allocation - £117,272 • 2024/25 allocation - £351,818 • Total allocation - £469,090 <p>This funding is for the Council to deliver a North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grant Fund alongside the Council UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Investment Plan.</p> <p>Council Finance Officers will be directly involved in the Programme Management Board and have oversight of all the UKSPF Projects (including the REPF).</p> <p>The UKSPF Capital allocations will be managed through the Capital Strategy governance arrangements.</p>	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	<p>Council Legal Officers will directly be involved in the Programme Management Board and have oversight of all the UKSPF Project Boards (including the REPF) in order to provide advice on funding agreements, grant offers and Subsidy Control implications.</p>	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	<p>No additional funding has been made to local authorities to help deliver the REPF.</p> <p>The REPF North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grant Fund will be delivered inhouse by the Council's Economic Regeneration Service.</p>	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Reason Agenda Item Submitted to Scrutiny Committee	<p>To scrutinise recommendations to Cabinet that accept, and approve spend, of the REPF award to North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC).</p>	

Recommendations	THAT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE CONSIDERS AND COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSAL TO ACCEPT THE GRANT FUNDING FROM THE RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND, INCLUDING THE DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CABINET WITHIN THE REPORT.
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1.0 Background

- 1.1 In April 2022, the government launched a £2.6 billion UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) as part of the Levelling Up agenda. In July 2022, North West Leicestershire District Council's (NWLDC) Cabinet approved the submission of an investment plan to the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC). On the 11 January 2023, the Council were notified that the Investment Plan had been accepted and approved for which the Council will secure £2,414,817 over three years.
- 1.2 Furthermore, in September 2022, the government announced the new Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) that was to be integrated into the UKSPF. For eligible local authorities, the REPF is a rural top-up to UKSPF allocations and is seen as complementary to funding used to support rural areas within the UKSPF Investment Plans.
- 1.3 To access the REPF funding, eligible Local Authorities were required to submit an Addendum for the UKSPF Investment Plan to the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) before the 30 November 2022.
- 1.4 On 7 April 2023, the Council was notified that the Addendum was approved and that the Council will secure a further £469,090 of REPF funding to deliver a North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund alongside the existing programme of work under the UKSPF.
- 1.5 This report will be presented to Cabinet in July 2023 with the following draft recommendations:
 - 1.5.1 ACCEPTS THE £469,090 GRANT FROM THE RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND.
 - 1.5.2 AGREES TO ALLOCATE £117,262 TO THE GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET IN 2023/24 AND INCORPORATE THE £351,818 INTO ITS BUDGET PLANNING PROCESS FOR 2024/25.
 - 1.5.3 DELEGATES AUTHORITY TO THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR (PLACE) IN CONSULTATION WITH THE BUSINESS AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIO HOLDER TO REVIEW AND AMEND THE DELIVERY OF THE NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE RURAL BUSINESS GRANT FUND WHERE REQUIRED; TO RESPOND AND ADAPT TO THE CHANGING ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT AND/OR LOCAL NEEDS.
 - 1.5.4 DELEGATES AUTHORITY TO THE SECTION 151 OFFICER IN CONSULTATION WITH THE BUSINESS AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIO HOLDER TO SUBMIT THE REQUIRED FORMAL REPORTING AS REQUIRED BY THE DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD & RURAL AFFAIRS (DEFRA).

2.0 North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grant Fund

- 2.1 The REPF award provides funding for the Council to deliver a capital grants programme for eligible businesses in eligible rural areas.
- 2.2 DEFRA has specific eligibility criteria which has been incorporated into the North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grant Programme. This eligibility criteria includes the requirement that the businesses must be based in a rural area as defined by “for the purposes of REPF”. This criteria does mean that that businesses in parts of Bardon, Coalville, Hugglescote, Thringstone and Whitwick do not qualify as rural and will not be eligible for REPF grant funding.
- 2.3 Further details on eligibility are included in the draft North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grant Fund ‘Guidance Notes’, attached as **appendix 1.**
- 2.4 The REPF North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grant Fund will be delivered by the Council’s Economic Regeneration service.
- 2.5 Applications to the fund will be encouraged through an open call from eligible businesses. Applications will be subject to review and validation by the Economic Regeneration Service prior to being presented to a panel, for determination. The REPF grant panels will be made of a council officer, with no prior knowledge of the grant application, and external independent representatives from the Leicestershire Rural Partnership
- 2.6 To help shape the North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grant Fund, officers engaged directly with representatives from the National Farmers Union National Forest Charitable Trust and representatives of the Leicestershire Rural Partnership, who will remain involved in supporting the promotion and engagement of the grant programme.

3.0 Alignment to UKSPF

- 3.1 The REPF North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grant Fund will directly complement the programmes of work already committed through the UKSPF and, in line with the fund’s guidance, will not duplicate any of the Council’s existing rural commitments through the UKSPF.
- 3.2 The North West Leicestershire UKSPF Investment Plan already includes a number of planned rural investments:
- £300,000 of grants for rural communities delivered in consultation with NWL Parish Councils.
 - Investment in outdoor sports facilities and cycleways in the northern parishes.
 - The delivery of capital grant investment at Moira Furnace
 - A substantial investment to create a green web of improved and accessible cycling trails and walking routes within rural communities.
 - A new woodland management volunteer hub in the National Forest, creating visible volunteering opportunities in rural communities.

3.3 The North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grant Fund meets the specific business requirements of the REPF, with the UKSPF already delivering the specific community requirements of the REPF.

4.0 Capacity

4.1 No new funding has been made available to local authorities to help deliver the REPF.

4.2 The REPF North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grant Fund will be delivered in house by the Council's Economic Regeneration team.

5.0 Funding

5.1 In keeping with the REPF guidance, the business grant fund will be split into two awards with £117,272 (25%) ringfenced for the financial year 2023/24 and the remaining balance £351,818 (75%) ringfenced for 2024/25. This is a ringfenced General Fund revenue budget grant.

5.2 REPF awards will be made as annual payments to eligible local authorities. This will be at the beginning of each financial year using powers in the UK Internal Markets Act 2020.

5.3 The recommendations to Cabinet in paragraph 1.5.1 and 1.5.2 of this report seeks the approval to accept this funding award and incorporate the supplementary estimate of £117,272 into the General Fund Revenue Budget 2023/24. The allocation for year 2 of £351,818 will be incorporated into the budget planning process for 2024/25. This is in line with the Council's Constitution and Financial Regulations to bring these additional funds into council budgets.

5.4 Lead local authorities are asked to report on:

- Actual spend to date,
- Compare spend with previous forecasts, and;
- Provide updated forecasts, highlighting any changes from their original Addendum submission.

5.5 The REPF is part of the UKSPF and therefore will be reported to government alongside the existing UKSPF reporting obligation.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	Support for businesses and helping people into local jobs
Policy Considerations:	Council Delivery Plan
Safeguarding:	No safeguarding considerations.
Equalities/Diversity:	No equalities/diversity considerations.
Customer Impact:	The REPF, as part of the UKSPF Investment Plan sets out a series of actions that will support residents and businesses.
Economic and Social Impact:	The REPF, as part of the UKSPF Investment Plan sets out a series of actions to support residents and businesses.
Environment and Climate Change:	The REPF, as part of the UKSPF Investment Plan sets out a series of actions that contributes to achieving the council's Zero Carbon Roadmap.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	Officers will continue to engage with stakeholders to help further shape the delivery of the REPF and the accompanying projects identified within the NWL UKSPF Investment Plan.
Risks:	Risks have been considered within the preparation of the NWL UKSPF Investment Plan and the REPF Addendum.
Officer Contact	Barrie Walford Economic Development and Regeneration Manager barrie.walford@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

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North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund (£1,000 to £25,000)

Guidance Notes

The following guidance notes provide information to those interested in applying for funding from North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund.

North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC) are launching a Rural Business Grants Fund to fund capital projects for small businesses that will help to improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy.

This programme will provide capital grant funding for eligible businesses by providing one off grants of between £1,000 and £25,000 at a 50% intervention rate.

All grants are available at a 50% intervention rate. This means you will be required to pay for at least half of the costs of the project that you are applying grant funding for.

These grant values are approximations. The actual value of grant awards made may be reduced depending on the number of applications received.

The total grant pot for North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grant Fund is a maximum of £117,272 for financial year 2023/24.

Will my business be eligible to apply for a North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund?

To meet the eligibility criteria, your business must be:

- A Small /Micro /SME mid-sized enterprise employing between 1 and 249 staff;
- Based in North West Leicestershire i.e. you must pay business rates and/or council tax to North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC);
- Located in “**A RURAL AREA for the purposes of REPF**”, as defined by the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs Rural England Prosperity Fund eligibility [MAGIC map](#), (Please note that businesses in parts of Bardon, Coalville, Hugglescote, Thringstone and Whitwick do not qualify as rural and will not be eligible for North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund - Further advice on using MAGIC map are included at the end of these Guidance Notes);
- Be trading as a business whose company type is either: Limited Liability, Limited Liability Partnership, Partnership, Sole Trader, Franchise, Social Enterprise or Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee;
- Not have applied for other UK Shared Prosperity Funding for your project;

And

- Be in good standing with NWLDC. For example, fully paid up on any money owed to the council such as business rates.

Farm businesses may be eligible to apply for diversification projects away from traditional farming activities.

Note that this grant cannot be used to fund projects or investments that would be eligible for funding under the following DEFRA programmes:

- [DEFRA: Farming in Protected Landscapes programme](#)
- [DEFRA: Farming Investment Fund](#)
- [DEFRA: Farming Equipment and Technology Fund](#)
- [DEFRA: Farming Transformation Fund](#)
- [DEFRA: Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund](#)
- Any other DEFRA funded programmes for direct farming activities including contractors that carries out an agricultural or horticultural as a service.

Please contact the Economic Regeneration Team on email at businessgrowthgrants@nwleicestershire.gov.uk if you would like to discuss your eligibility.

Will I need to create new jobs?

No, the North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund does not require applicant to create new jobs.

However, applications that do create new rural employment or apprenticeship opportunities will be looked upon favourably. Equally grant funded projects that contribute to carbon reduction, increased tourism (including day trips and overnight stays) and nature recovery will be encouraged.

Who can apply?

Any individual, company or partnership that meets the Eligibility Criteria can apply. If a company or partnership is making the application, the person completing the form must be authorised to apply on behalf of that business.

If the grant application is successful the applicant will enter into a legal agreement which will set out specific and general terms and conditions relating to the North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund. This agreement will be between the business and NWLDC.

When can I apply?

The North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund will open for applications from Tuesday 2nd August 2023 for four months and will close to new applications at 17:00 on Thursday 30th November 2023. The scheme may close early, subject to the availability of funding.

We expect all projects to be completed as early as possible following you accepting your grant offer. At the latest, all grant awards must have been claimed within 12 months or no later than **31 January 2025**.

Any grant claims after this date will not be paid.

How can I use the money?

Grants are intended to fund investment projects that can demonstrate business growth, tourism and visitor economy development, contribute towards net zero or rural diversification. You will be required to demonstrate how the planned investment will support your business to grow. Examples of what the grant could be used for include:

- New equipment to modernise and improve the efficiency of your business
- Increased energy efficiency or increased productivity through automation
- Improvements to your business premises
- Creating event venues or farm tourism facilities such as accommodation, wedding venues and leisure facilities
- Development local tourist attractions and local visitor experiences
- Investment in energy efficiency or achieving zero carbon
- New technology, innovation, IT or telecommunications
- Diversification of farm businesses outside of agriculture to other commercial or business uses.
- Creation of multi-functional rural business hubs providing shared workspace for rural businesses.

Grant applications will not be considered for:

- Non capital expenditure
- Salaries / wages
- Agents and legal fees
- Consultancy fees
- Rent or rates
- Council fees
- Stock
- The purchase of vehicles

Applications for retrospective projects are also not eligible for funding.

Note that this grant cannot be used to fund projects or investments that would be eligible for funding under the following DEFRA programmes:

- [DEFRA: Farming in Protected Landscapes programme](#)
- [DEFRA: Farming Investment Fund](#)
- [DEFRA: Farming Equipment and Technology Fund](#)
- [DEFRA: Farming Transformation Fund](#)
- [DEFRA: Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund](#)
- Any other DEFRA funded programmes for direct farming activities including contractors that carries out an agricultural or horticultural as a service.

What will the application process involve?

Applications for the grant will be a simplified one stage application which can be found [here](#).

Once you have submitted your application we will review it to make sure what you are proposing meets the agreed eligibility criteria.

The application will ask you to provide some details of your business and the nature of the investment project that you are proposing. You will also need to provide a breakdown of the costs involved in the project, the sources of finance for the investment and what economic benefits your project will achieve.

In line with Subsidy Control Act 2022, we will ask you whether you have received financial support from any public sector organisation within the last three years. There are limits to the financial support that can be offered to individual private sector organisations and we need to make sure that you and the council stay within the law.

For further information on the Subsidy Control Act 2022 is available to view online: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/23/enacted

The application will ask you to clarify your project costs and ask you to outline a plan for the investment project, such as:

- Stages in the project and dates
- How the project will meet the criteria of the grant fund
- The key people involved in your business and in the investment project.

You will be asked to provide copies of a number of documents that will be important during the review of your application such as:

- Financial accounts
- Confirmation of other sources of finance.

We will also ask to see copies of documents related to your business premises, such as your lease agreement or title document.

All applications must be completed in full and all of the required information supplied. Incomplete applications will be rejected.

Can the grants help pay for a project or investment that has already started?

No. The application process will require you to describe the nature of the investment project that you are planning.

You will need to be able to show that the project could not go ahead without the financial support from NWLDC.

How do I submit my application?

Please send your completed application to businessgrowthgrants@nwleicestershire.gov.uk.

Is there support filling in my application?

For more information please contact the Economic Regeneration Team on email at businessgrowthgrants@nwleicestershire.gov.uk.

How will North West Leicestershire District Council decide whether my application is successful?

Your grant application, along with all of the requested supporting documentation, will be reviewed by a grants assessor. We will check to make sure your business meets the agreed eligibility criteria and that your investment project is in line with the intended purpose of the grant scheme.

Your application will be considered by a grants officer who, if your application meets the criteria of the fund, will present your application on your behalf to a panel for determination.

There will be frequent panel meetings scheduled to help speed up the grant application process.

The decision of the panel will be final. There is no opportunity to appeal against the panels' decision. If your application is not successful, we will give you feedback on the reasons behind the panels' decision.

We will keep you updated on the progress of your application throughout the assessment. We aim to give you a decision on your application within 4 weeks (twenty working days) of receiving your full and complete application.

Should we require any further supporting information for your grant application we will notify you as early as possible. While waiting for you to provide any additional information required this may delay us determining your application.

When will the grant be paid?

Once your application has been reviewed and approved by the grants panel, you will be asked to sign to confirm your acceptance of the conditions that will apply to the grant offer.

Once you have signed the grant agreement, we will expect the project to go ahead. Grant funding will only be paid once we have received evidence of eligible expenditure related to project.

This will be set out in your grant offer letter and will include, but not limited to, quotes, invoices and bank statements evidencing payment.

Will you pay VAT?

If your business is VAT registered, the grant can not be used to pay for VAT.

If your business is not VAT registered and you are including VAT in your grant request, you will need to provide a letter from a professionally qualified independent accountant to confirm that you are not VAT registered alongside your application form and as part of your supporting documentation.

What records do I need to maintain?

In addition to your usual accounting, you will be required to maintain complete financial records of your project. We will use the records as evidence to pay you the grant and monitor how your project is progressing.

As a minimum, for the duration of expenditure on your project, we insist that you maintain records of all of the following items associated with your project:

- Quotes for works/items
- All invoices
- All receipts of payments including any credit card payments.
- Bank statements showing payments associated with your project.
- Presentation of these documents must be produced in a clear and satisfactory manner and must be related to the project being funded.

It is your responsibility to maintain these records and you may be requested to present them to the Council as evidence for your grant claim in a clear and concise manner. If you do not, we look to clawback any grant payment.

We will also issue you with a letter informing of you of your Subsidy Control obligations.

We will monitor the progress of your project and the impact on your business and the economy. You may be required to participate in press and media coverage to promote the grant and the support you have received from NWLDC.

Is there a deadline?

Yes, as mentioned earlier the North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund will be split into two rounds. The fund will open for applications from Tuesday 1st August 2023 and close to new applications at 17:00 on Thursday 30th November 2023.

Applications received after this date will not be considered.

The scheme may close early, subject to the availability of funding.

Up-to-date information about this deadline for submission of applications will be provided on our website [here](#).

Applications will be considered on a 'first come first served' basis.

Can you take back the money after you've granted it?

Yes. During the application process, you will be asked to explain the nature of your investment and how it meets the eligibility criteria of the fund.

We will monitor the progress of your project to ensure the investment is made in accordance with your application and that you comply with all other conditions of the grant scheme.

We will consider whether to seek to recover some or all of the grant paid if you do not meet the conditions agreed with you when the grant was approved or if you fail to provide evidence of your projects expenditure or monitoring requirements.

Are there any other restrictions?

We've already explained that you'll be asked to confirm that the grant applied for will not result in breaking the laws about organisations receiving public money.

We will require your business and your investment proposal to comply with all regulations that apply to your business and the project for which the grant is requested.

If your project involves work on a property, in addition to planning permission, you will be expected to comply with all other usual legislation such as Building Regulations.

As mentioned previously, that this grant cannot be used to fund projects or investments that would be eligible for funding under the following DEFRA programmes:

- [DEFRA: Farming in Protected Landscapes programme](#)
- [DEFRA: Farming Investment Fund](#)
- [DEFRA: Farming Equipment and Technology Fund](#)
- [DEFRA: Farming Transformation Fund](#)
- [DEFRA: Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund](#)
- Any other DEFRA funded programmes for direct farming activities including contractors that carries out an agricultural or horticultural as a service.

What if I change my mind?

You will be free to withdraw from the application process at any stage.

As mentioned before, once your application has been reviewed and approved, you will be asked to sign to confirm your acceptance of the conditions that will apply to the grant offer. Once you have signed the grant agreement, we will expect the project to go ahead. Grant funding will only be paid once we have received evidence of eligible expenditure related to project. This will be set out in your grant offer letter and can include, but not limited to, quotes, invoices and bank statements evidencing payment.

Once you have received the grant you will be expected to comply with all conditions set out in the agreement between your business and North West Leicestershire District Council. As mentioned above, there will be a risk of clawback in certain situations.

Will there be further funding in the future?

Possibly.

A second and final round of North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund may be launched in 2024, subject to the availability of funds.

We will update our website should further funding become available. However, there is no guarantee that there will be future rounds of North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund.

You are advised to submit your application as early as you can to avoid missing out. This is a competitive programme and grants applications will be assessed on a first come, first served basis.

Who should I contact?

Please contact Economic Regeneration Team via email on businessgrowthgrants@nwleicestershire.gov.uk or alternatively call the team on 01530 454609.

Advice on how to use the DEFRA MAGIC map.

The following is step by step guide on how to access the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs MAGIC map to confirm Rural England Prosperity Fund eligibility status. As previously mentioned, that businesses in parts of Bardon, Coalville, Thringstone and Whitwick do not qualify as rural and will not be eligible for North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund

- Visit [MAGIC \(defra.gov.uk\)](https://defra.gov.uk/magic)
- Click "Get Started"
- Click on '+' under "Administrative Geographies"
- Click on '+' under "Other Administrative Boundaries"
- Select the box next to "Rural England Prosperity Fund"
- Enter your place, postcode or coordinates at the top of the page
- Zoom in to your businesses location
- Select the 'i' information button in the toolbar at the top of the screen
- Click the location of your business to identify if your business is based in an eligible rural area.

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – THURSDAY, 13
JULY 2023

Title of Report	HERMITAGE RECREATION GROUND ECOPARK	
Presented by	Paul Sanders Head of Community Services	
Background Papers	Cabinet Minutes 20 September 2022 Stakeholder Engagement Feedback Overview November 2019 – October 2021 Stakeholder Engagement Feedback Overview June – August 2022	Public Report: Yes
Financial Implications	<p>The Council has directly secured £182,860 of funding and has used this to leverage in a further £100,000 of investment to be delivered by third party partners to create a £282,860 scheme.</p> <p>The financial implications are set out in Section 5 of the report and are subject to the additional funding being approved by Cabinet and/or Council in line with the Financial Regulations.</p>	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	<p>Various legal agreements will need to be entered into to deliver the project. Legal Services are supporting the project.</p>	
	Signed off by the Deputy Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	None.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Reason Agenda Item Submitted to Scrutiny Committee	Community Scrutiny views are invited on the proposals highlighted within this report in advance of Cabinet's consideration at its meeting on 25 July.	
Recommendations	COMMUNITY SCRUTINY IS ASKED TO COMMENT ON THE PROPOSALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ECOPARK AT HERMITAGE RECREATION GROUND THAT ARE BEING CONSIDERED BY CABINET AT ITS MEETING ON 25 JULY 2023	

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In 2019, the Council entered into a formal partnership with its leisure partner, Everyone Active (EA), for the management of Hermitage Leisure Centre (HLC) and Ashby Leisure Centre and Lido, and for the design, construction, operation and maintenance of the new Whitwick and Coalville Leisure Centre (WCLC).
- 1.2 The new WCLC opened to the public on 14 February 2022, five months ahead of schedule, at which point HLC was taken back by the Council as a void property.
- 1.3 As part of the building of the WCLC, the Council Delivery Plan for 2021-23 identified the commitment to develop a framework of opportunities for the land adjacent to the new leisure centre, the Hermitage Recreation Ground (HRG) and the now demolished HLC Building, the intention being to create a destination site that retains and enhances the green and open space but also finds the best future use of the footprint of the HLC building and site.
- 1.4 Between November 2019 and August 2021, extensive stakeholder engagement took place to understand views on how the HLC building, site and HRG could be used and/or enhanced.
- 1.5 In June 2021, V4 Services was engaged by the Council to support an appraisal of the options available. Fundamental to this work was ensuring that the results from the stakeholder engagement were fully reflected within proposals made, and these were reflected in an Options Paper that was developed.
- 1.6 On 20 September 2022, a report was presented to Cabinet by the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Property and Customer Services on the future direction of the Hermitage Leisure Centre (HLC) building (see Background Papers). At the meeting Cabinet agreed to demolish the building and noted that it would, at future dates, receive business cases for the proposed improvements to the HRG. The final proposals in these business cases would be in line with the direction of travel outlined in section 3.26 of the Cabinet report and would be based on the Options Paper developed by V4 Services, shaped by the community engagement. Various other decisions were made in regard to the HLC footprint site which are not the topic of this report.
- 1.7 Section 3.26 of the Cabinet report highlighted the following two areas within the masterplan for further development;

Ecological Park Zone (Ecopark)

This area of the site is seen as one that could receive a positive regenerative boost to its environmental credentials whilst increasing biodiversity, with enhancements to improve the ecology and biodiversity of the lake and woodland area, including indigenous tree planting, defined footpaths, boardwalks, activity nodes, perimeter fencing with gated access and lakeside reed and iris planting.

Active Community Zone

Proposals for this area continue the focus on encouraging more people to become active in the outdoor environment building on the paths used in the Ecological Park Zone. It would provide a destination for the community with a series of features that promote activity, including a community and visitor centre including a small food and beverage operation, a flexible exhibition/event space, and controlled access to a pier feature accessing the lake, children's active play facilities, a community orchard and wildflower planting and an improved landscape. The concept retains the synthetic

training pitch (3G pitch), the miniature railway, the grass pitches, the car park and existing footpaths in their current configuration.

- 1.8 The report also noted that the future developments at HRG could be financially supported through the release of funds to the Council's general fund through the appropriation of the HLC site to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). As such the business case for the Active Community Zone will not be brought forward until there is a defined Council housing design for the old leisure centre site as it is only then that the potential funds could be identified for a future scheme to create the proposed Active Community Zone. This work is progressing and will be the subject of further engagement at a later date.

2. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- 2.1 Consultation took place with stakeholders between November 2019 and October 2021 to understand views on how the HLC site could be best used, and what improvements could be made to HRG to create more of a visitor destination. This took the form of an open session at HLC, an open to all online consultation, engagement with all schools in the district, and engagement with the local charity Coalville CAN.
- 2.2 In total, over 1,100 residents took part in the consultation, and whilst responses came from the entire district, over 50% came from the Whitwick and Coalville areas. In summary, the community appear to be very supportive of outdoor sports/leisure facilities, walking, cycling and running spaces, an area where friends and family can have fun, and the creation of a more biodiverse area, with increased tree planting and wildlife areas and nature trails.
- 2.3 Further engagement was undertaken between June and August 2022 on the proposals in the options paper developed by V4 Services to which over 1,000 residents responded. The results showed that over 80% of the respondents were supportive of the development of an Ecopark.
- 2.4 An overview of the feedback received from both engagements can be seen in the Background Papers

3. ECOPARK DESIGN OPTIONS

- 3.1 In June 2021, V4 Services and LA Architects were appointed by the Council to help develop a conceptual design and proposed direction of travel that could benefit the local community and the visitor economy, as well as responding to the comments and ideas that were gleaned from the various stages of community engagement.
- 3.2 Within the HRG site, two key zones within the overall masterplan were identified as potential focuses for future investment and improvement:
 - Ecological Park and Lake
 - Active Community Zone
- 3.3 Whilst the Active Community Zone development will be dependant upon funding released to the Council's general fund through the appropriation of the HLC site to the HRA, potential external funding streams are available that mean that elements of an Ecopark scheme on the HRG site could be delivered within 2023/24.

- 3.4 Based on the existing ecology of the area and the consultation feedback, V4 Services developed a proposed design option for the Ecopark which can be seen at **Appendix 1**.
- 3.5 The V4 Services design created a link from the new WCLC through the Ecopark to the Active Community Zone and the former HLC site, creating a biodiverse area that would serve as an attractive visitor destination for families. The proposal included;
- Additional tree planting
 - Additional footpaths
 - Activity nodes for children and families
 - An observation platform for the lake
 - Improved security and accessibility
- 3.6 It should be noted that whilst shown on **Appendix 1**, the proposed Visitor/Community Centre, the car park, and the Community Orchard were all included as part of the Active Community Zone design proposal and not the Ecopark. In addition, the land directly outside the WCLC, whilst linked to the Ecopark, was not included as part of it, and neither was the Trim Trail which was to be delivered by the Council's leisure partner, EA, as part of the contract for the building of the new WCLC.
- 3.7 The anticipated capital cost of delivering the proposed Ecopark was estimated by V4 Services to be £602,250.
- 3.8 Through funding secured from the National Forest to cover their costs, Leicestershire County Council (LCC) has been working closely with NWLDC officers and other partners to refine the proposed Ecopark scheme and to identify funding sources to be able to deliver the different elements.
- 3.9 The concept retains many of the features proposed by V4 Services, but has the following fundamental changes;
- Including the land directly outside WCLC so the leisure centre grounds are incorporated seamlessly as part of the Ecopark
 - Extending the Adventure Trim Trail from the new leisure centre grounds further into the Ecopark to reinforce the integration of the leisure centre grounds as part of the Ecopark and to enhance the offer within the park itself
 - The addition of a footbridge to enhance links between the WCLC site and the Ecopark
 - The addition of a Tiny Forest
 - Increased biodiversity enhancements
 - Removal of the observation platform for the lake due to capital, safety concerns and ongoing revenue costs
 - Removal of external fencing due to installation and ongoing revenue costs.
- 3.10 **Appendix 2** gives an overview of the proposed Ecopark design

4. ECOPARK DESIGN FEATURES

- 4.1 As highlighted in **Appendix 2**, the key features of the proposed Ecopark are;

Tiny Forest

- 4.2 A Tiny Forest is a dense fast-growing native woodland that brings the benefits of a forest into cities and urban spaces.

- 4.3 The intention is that local communities and volunteers maintain and monitor their forest over time, and that the area reconnects people with nature, enhances wellbeing, helps mitigate the impacts of climate change and provides nature-rich habitat patches to support urban wildlife.
- 4.4 Environmental and social data is collected for every forest planted, to help assess the benefits they provide over time and between different forests.
- 4.5 This element of the project would be delivered in partnership with Earthwatch who are responsible for the delivery of Tiny Forests.

Tree Planting

- 4.6 As part of the proposed design, an additional 3,500 trees will be planted in the Ecopark to complement the existing woodland on site.

Footpath Creation

- 4.7 It is proposed that in addition to retaining the existing footpaths, an additional five footpaths are created to improve accessibility and connectivity. These will be a mixture of grass mown and surfaced paths.

Adventure Trim Trail

- 4.8 This was included as part of the Council's masterplan for the site of the new leisure centre. Whilst initially proposed to be directly adjacent to the WCLC, it is proposed that the Adventure Trim Trail is extended into the Ecopark. It will consist of approximately 25 pieces of outdoor equipment that will create an obstacle course primarily for children of ages 3 to 18, encouraging them to be physically active. Examples of the type of equipment this could include can be seen at **Appendix 3**.

Interactive Nodes

- 4.9 At various locations along the footpaths it is proposed that the park will include minor punctuations. This might only be, as an example, a log or a boulder for a young child to balance and walk along or an interactive information board. The type and exact number of interactions are still to be determined and will be dependant upon the cost and budget available.

Footbridge Creation

- 4.10 It is proposed that a footbridge link between the WCLC site and the Ecopark is created in order to help improve accessibility and connectivity within the overall open space provision.

Accessibility/Security Improvements

- 4.11 It is proposed that access points are made more secure in order to prevent unauthorised vehicular access.

Enhanced Biodiversity Improvements

- 4.12 Biodiversity improvements within the proposed design include significant grassland improvements, meadow land with reduced grass cutting, wildflower planting, and the creation of scrubland to complement the existing site features. As there is no funding

currently available to deliver this element the proposal is that it would be delivered as a later phase once funding streams become available.

5. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The financial implications for the Council are set out below. In summary the Council has directly secured £182,860 of funding and has used this to leverage in a further £100,000 of investment to be delivered by third party partners to create a £282,860 scheme.
- 5.2 The additional trees planted will be managed as part of the Council's current tree stock by the Parks and Open Spaces team. This work will be underpinned by the developing North West Leicestershire District Council Tree Management Strategy and will include frequent visual inspections, recorded Tree Surveys being undertaken periodically, and any subsequent identified works then being delivered. In order to maintain a biodiverse and natural woodland nature area, it is anticipated that maintenance works required will be minimal and will be restricted to health and safety issues and disease. Consequently, the cost of these works will be offset by the savings made from the extensive grass cutting currently being undertaken on the site, most of which will no longer be required or will be reduced due to the area covered by the new tree planting, the development of grassland and meadow areas.
- 5.3 An element of the external funding received to undertake the tree planting is a revenue maintenance contribution of £20,600. Officers will seek approval from Cabinet/Council, in line with the Council's Constitution/Financial Regulations, to add this to the budget as an external contribution, and for an earmarked reserve to be created that will allow an additional annual maintenance contingency contribution of £1,000 per annum to be drawn down into the revenue budget for a period of almost 21 years, which will create additional support for any unforeseen maintenance costs.
- 5.4 The management, monitoring and maintenance of the Adventure Trim Trail equipment will be the responsibility of the Council's leisure partner, Everyone Active. They will also retain responsibility for maintaining elements of the Ecopark that fall within the boundary of the contract/lease. There will be no financial impact on the Council as these elements are included as part of the leisure contract between the Council and EA.
- 5.5 The cost of delivering the project is anticipated to be £262,260, although this doesn't include any biodiversity improvements or creations other than reduced grass cutting and meadow creation of existing areas. This will be delivered through the following funding streams;

Funding Source	Funding Amount	To Deliver	Funding Management
National Forest Changing Landscapes Scheme	£52,860	Tree planting and footpath creation	Funding to be issued to and managed by NWLDC, £32,260 as a capital project with approval for this being sought from the July meeting of the Capital Strategy Group prior to approval being sought from Cabinet and Full Council to add to the

			2023/24 Capital Programme. LCC to deliver this element as a capital project. £20,600, to be added to the revenue budget as an external contribution, an earmarked reserve to be created and then drawn down at £1000 per year.
Forestry Commission Local Authority Treescapes Fund	£23,000	Tiny Forest	Funding to be issued to and managed by LCC. LCC to deliver this element of the project
Everyone Active	£70,000	Adventure Trim Trail	Funding held by Everyone Active. LCC and Everyone Active to deliver this element of the project
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	£130,000	Interactive nodes, bridge creation, accessibility/security improvements	Funding held by NWLDC. NWLDC to deliver this element as a capital project with approval for this being sought from the July meeting of the Capital Strategy Group along with all other UKSPF projects prior to approval being sought from Cabinet and Full Council to add to the 2023/24 Capital Programme
NWLDC Parks and Open Spaces	£7,000	Tiny Forest	These works will be directly delivered by the NWLDC Parks and Open Spaces team
TBC	TBC	Grassland improvements, scrub land creation, and other biodiversity improvements	TBC
TOTAL	£282,860		

- 5.6 LCC colleagues have been liaising with the National Forest and the Forestry Commission regarding potential funding and both have agreed to in principle funding support. The Forestry Commission funding will go directly to LCC who will then be given formal approval by the Council to deliver the Tiny Forest works on NWLDC land. The National Forest funding will come to NWLDC who will then contract with LCC to deliver these elements of the project as a joint discharge of functions between the Council and LCC.
- 5.7 The NWLDC £7,000 contribution is a match funding requirement of the Local Authority Treescapes Fund. This is an in-kind contribution to clear the area required

for the Tiny Forest, and this work will be delivered directly by the Grounds Maintenance team as part of their maintenance of the area in 2023/24.

- 5.8 The total amount of funding available is potentially £282,860 against a potential project cost of £262,260. Whilst it's anticipated that the project will create no additional maintenance requirements due to the nature of the improvements, and ongoing maintenance can therefore be covered from existing revenue budgets, the Changing Landscapes Scheme funding does allow for a maintenance of £20,600. which will be allocated as a revenue contribution from LCC to NWLDC after the works have been completed and which will be utilised as per 5.3.
- 5.9 Although it will need minimal maintenance due to the nature of it, Earthwatch do require that the Tiny Forest is maintained by community groups and volunteers. The trees will be managed as part of the Council's current tree stock by the Parks and Open Spaces team to ensure the area is kept safe. This work will be underpinned by the developing North West Leicestershire District Council Tree Management Strategy and will include frequent visual inspections and recorded Tree Surveys being undertaken periodically. Maintenance works will be undertaken by the community groups and volunteers with the Council supporting on more significant works.
- 5.10 Whilst factored into the proposed design, costs and funding streams for the wider enhanced biodiversity improvements have not yet been identified. It is proposed that these elements are delivered as a separate strand to the project once funding has been identified and secured. It is also proposed that a further report is presented to Cabinet once funding has been identified and secured, highlighting the detail of the proposed scheme, the funding streams supporting its delivery, and seeking approval to progress this element of the project.
- 5.11 All costs associated to external project management and landscape design support will be covered through the external funding streams.
- 5.12 Officers will be seeking approval that, in line with the Council's Constitution, Cabinet/ Full Council approve the £130,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and £52,860 of funding from the National Forest be incorporated into the Council's Capital Programme or Revenue Budget for 2023/24. Both projects will be submitted to the July meeting of the Capital Strategy Group meeting for consideration and subject to sign off will then be reported to Cabinet and, if required, Full Council for approval and adding to the Capital Programme for 2023/24.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 In order for the project to be delivered, there will be a requirement for the Council to enter into a number of legal agreements. It is anticipated these will be;

Agreement With	Reason
Leicestershire County Council	Approval to deliver the Tiny Forest works on NWLDC owned land. The joint discharge of functions between NWLDC and LCC to deliver the National Forest funded improvements.
National Forest	Acceptance of the funding award to deliver improvements.
Earthwatch	Provision and maintenance of the Tiny Forest.

Everyone Active	Maintenance of all the Adventure Trim Trail equipment and elements of the Ecopark that fall within their boundary
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6.2 Legal Services is engaged in the project and will continue to provide support.

7. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

7.1 The project will be delivered in line with the Council's Project Management Framework.

7.2 The Project Team will consist of;

Project Team Member
NWLDC Head of Community Services
NWLDC Leisure Services Team Manager
NWLDC Parks and Open Spaces Team
NWLDC Finance Team
NWLDC Legal Team
NWLDC Communications Team
NWLDC Community Focus Team
LCC Operational Property Team
Exi Group
Earthwatch
Everyone Active

7.3 It is proposed the project be split into three separate strands, as per the table below, that can be delivered independently;

Strand	To Include	Funding Source
1	Tree planting, footpath creation, Adventure Trim Trail, Interactive Nodes, bridge creation, accessibility/security improvements	National Forest Everyone Active UK Shared Prosperity Fund
2	Tiny Forest	Forestry Commission
3	Grassland improvements, scrub creation, and other enhanced biodiversity improvements	TBC

7.4 Timescales for delivery of the project are;

Task	Timescale
Community Scrutiny Engagement	July 2023
Cabinet Decision	July 2023
Full Council Approval to add to 2023/24 Capital Programme	September 2023
Tree Planting and Footpath Creation	September 2023-February 2024
Trim Trail / Footbridge / Accessibility Improvements	August 2023-March 2024
Tiny Forest	November 2023-March 2024
Enhanced Biodiversity Improvements	TBC

8. FURTHER STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

8.1 Further stakeholder engagement on the proposed Ecopark design took place between 3 April and 15 May 2023 to seek views on the proposals. This engagement included;

- Writing to Whitwick Parish Council and attending their meeting on 16 March
- Writing to residents who live adjacent to the Hermitage Recreation Ground
- Contacting organised groups that use the Hermitage Recreation Ground
- Notices throughout Hermitage Recreation Ground for users of the area
- Displays in Whitwick and Coalville Leisure Centre and Whitwick Market Place
- Notification through social media, a press release, and the website

8.2 Stakeholders were invited to feedback views either in writing or via an online portal to help ascertain if they felt the proposed design reflected their idea of an Ecopark, and whether the designs would encourage people to use the area and help improve the health and wellbeing of residents.

8.3 An overview of the feedback received is attached as **Appendix 4**.

8.4 Whitwick Parish Council had no comments to make, and no responses were received from any user groups associated to the site.

8.5 The following results were returned from the online and paper surveys completed;

Statement	Agree or Strongly Agree	Disagree or Strongly Disagree
The plans reflect your idea of an Ecopark?	73%	17%
The plans will encourage people and families to visit the Ecopark?	73%	17%
The plans support the health and wellbeing of residents in the area?	74%	18%

8.6 The majority of the feedback was supportive of the proposed design with neutral and negative comments focussing predominantly on elements outside of the Ecopark that will be considered as part of the future use of the Hermitage Leisure Centre site and the Active Community Zone strands of the project.

8.7 Consequently, there is no intention to refine or change the proposed design at this stage.

8.8 Community Scrutiny is asked to feedback comments on the proposals.

9. Risks

9.1 There are number of risks associated with the delivery of the project which are summarised in the table below, along with the mitigations to help manage these;

Risk	Mitigation
Funding for the enhanced biodiversity improvements may not be identified	- No delivery of this element until funding has been identified and secured
Funding streams may not be forthcoming	- Liaison between LCC and the National Forest and Forestry Commission to mitigate against this

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investigate alternative funding opportunities if required - Value engineer the project down if required - Develop proposals to meet the budget available
Inability to engage community groups or volunteers to support the Tiny Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Obtain commitment prior to progressing
Design proposals may not meet stakeholder expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aligned to feedback from initial consultation - Further engagement supportive of proposals - Designs can be refined further

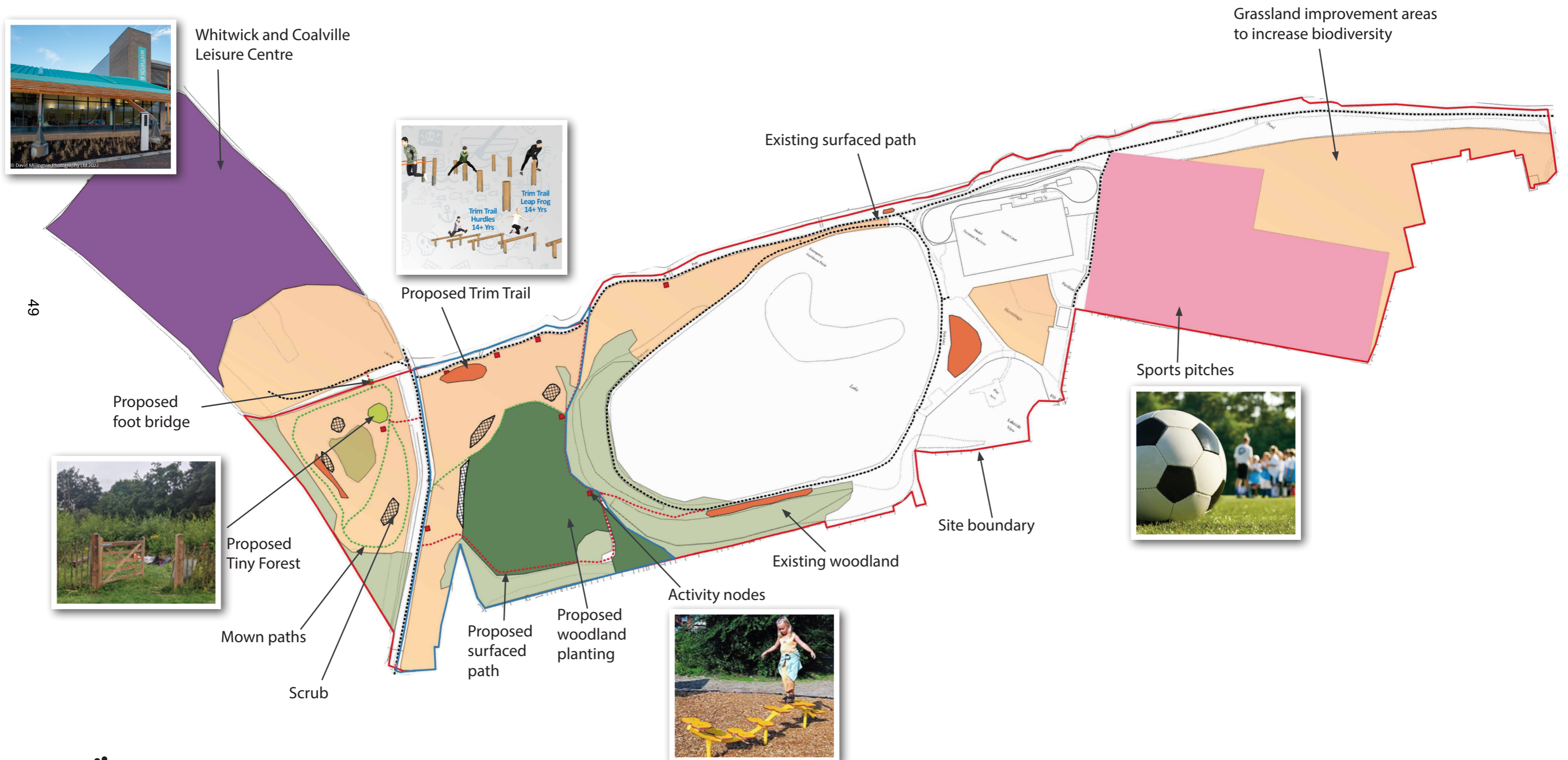
Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting Coalville to be a more vibrant, family-friendly town - Our communities are safe, healthy and connected - Developing a clean and green district
Policy Considerations:	Supporting delivery of the NWL Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the NWL Zero Carbon Policy and Roadmap.
Safeguarding:	None.
Equalities/Diversity:	Providing activities, facilities, and open spaces that all members of the community can access
Customer Impact:	Ensuring residents have access to high quality and affordable activities, facilities and open spaces. Engaging and supporting local community groups.
Economic and Social Impact:	Helping supporting the health and wellbeing of residents through encouraging increased levels of physical activity and creating spaces that help support mental health. Engaging local community groups to help support elements of the project.
Environment and Climate Change:	The creation of an Ecological Park will improve levels of biodiversity, and the planting of trees will support the Zero Carbon Policy and Roadmap.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	Undertaken with key stakeholders to understand their desires for the area, followed by further consultation on specific options as set out in the report.
Risks:	As highlighted in section 9.
Officer Contact	Paul Sanders Head of Community Services paul.sanders@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

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HERMITAGE ECO PARK PROPOSED DESIGN



49

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Everyone Active



Striding Stilts
5-14 Yrs



Rope Weaver
5-14 Yrs



Mini Web
3-14 Yrs



Vault
14+ Yrs

Trim Trail Parallel Bars
14+ Yrs



Trim Trail Leap Frog
14+ Yrs



Intertwine
3-14 Yrs



Jungle Walk
6-14 Yrs



Combo 3
3-14 Yrs



Spider Web
3-14 Yrs



Trim Trail Station Sign



Trim Trail Hurdles
14+ Yrs



Monkey Bars
6-14 Yrs



Tyre Traverse (x3)
6-14 Yrs



Roll 'n' Rope
6-14 Yrs



Tram Tracks
6-14 Yrs



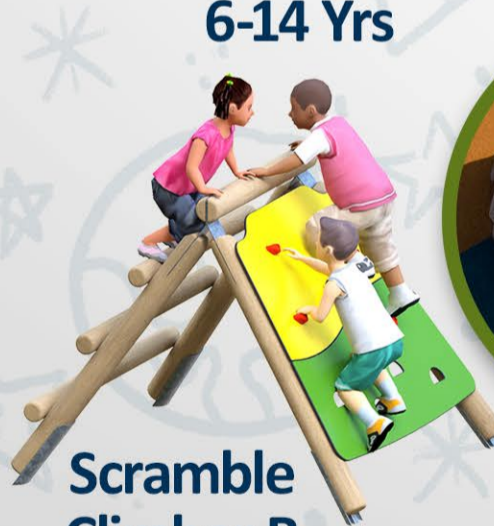
The Ledge (2 face)
5-14 Yrs



Trim Trail Sit Ups
14+ Yrs



Clatter Bridge
3-14 Yrs



Scramble Climber B
3-14 Yrs



Boulder



Tree Trunk



Zig Zag Stepper
3-14 Yrs



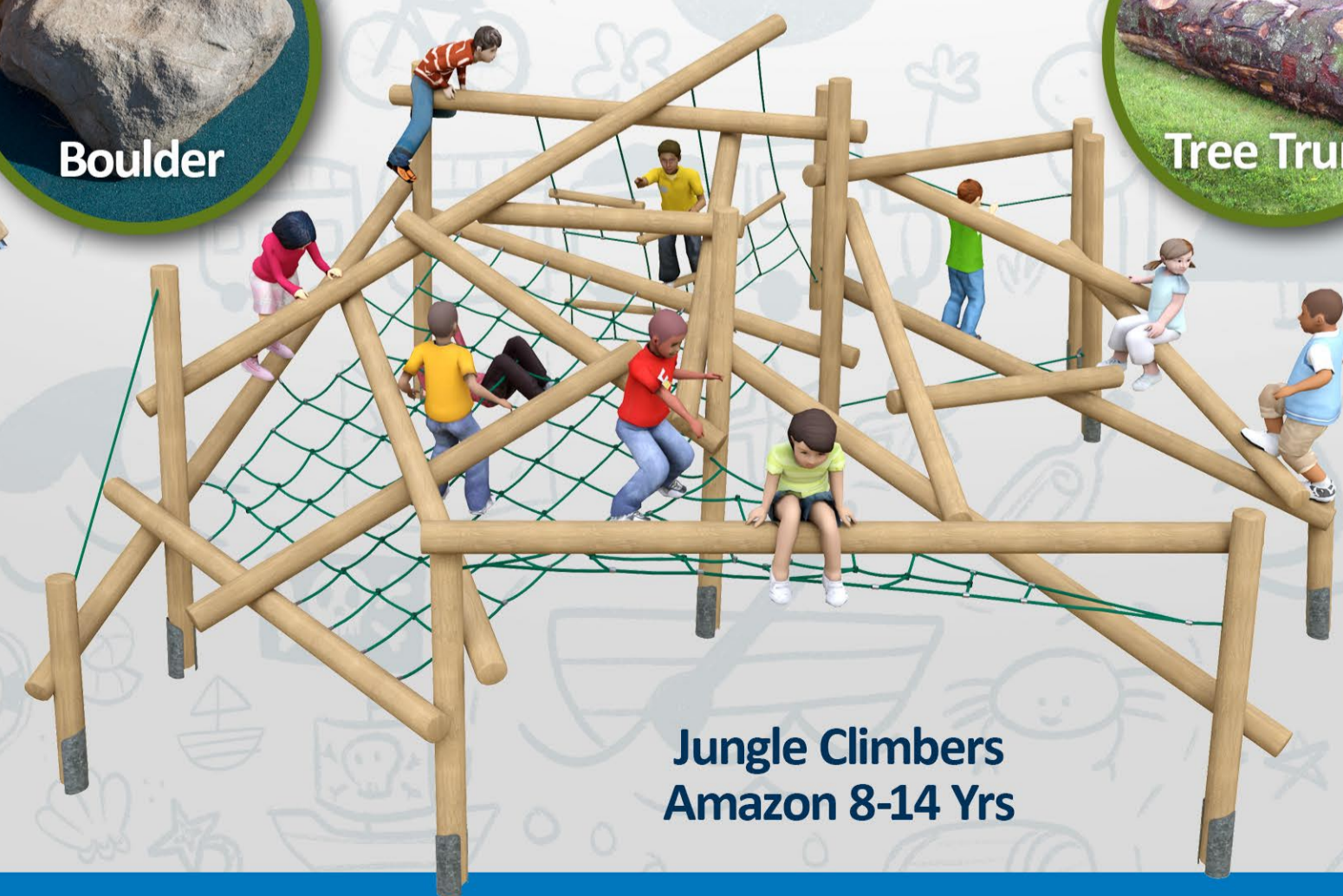
Trim Trail Chin Ups
14+ Yrs



Trapeze Walk
8-14 Yrs



Cartmel Table



Jungle Climbers Amazon
8-14 Yrs



Trim Trail Sign



Cross Beams
18 Months - 6 Yrs



Our steel in the ground fixing system offers superior guarantees. Ask your Area Manager for more information.



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Future of Hermitage Recreation Ground and former leisure centre site

Developing Hermitage Recreation Ground | Phase 1: An eco-park at Hermitage

Stakeholder engagement: Monday 3 April – 15 May 2023

Residents and stakeholders were asked to provide their feedback on the proposed plans to develop part of Hermitage Recreation Ground into an eco-park.

This summary details the feedback that we received from residents and key stakeholders such as Whitwick Parish Council through either written form or online survey responses:

Feedback opportunity	Date	Details	Responses
Comments in writing	3 Apr – 15 May	Residents and stakeholders were invited to submit their comments in writing to Community Focus or by email to community.focus@nwleicestershire.gov.uk .	2
Online survey	3 Apr – 15 May	Live online	95 returned
Total surveys returned through these methods:			97

In addition, **Whitwick Parish Council** was provided with a summary document and supporting documents. Officers attended its meeting on 16 March and the parish council was asked to provide formal feedback by Sunday 15 May.

Summary of feedback

Written feedback

Written feedback provided by two residents were supportive of the eco park and included suggestions for the improvements:

- Improved play equipment on the existing park with more picnic benches in this area
- Improved car park access for residents as the on street parking is very tight. Maybe a fob to be able to use out of hours
- An outdoor tennis court and skate park for older children and teens

- Fishing club for children who want to fish but parents don't!
- Sensory / herb garden
- Make the paths more wheelchair friendly and include play equipment such as a wheelchair swing and / or wheelchair accessible roundabout.
- Small cafe
- Information signs about the wildlife in the area.

The Community Focus team also wrote directly to other stakeholders and other users of the site asking them if they would like to provide feedback on the plans. These include:

- Hermitage Trail Club
- Ashby Angling
- Whitwick Athletic
- Bardon Juniors
- Power Play
- Ingles Football Club
- Coalville Town Football Club
- Ibstock United
- Ellistown Football Club
- Heather Hawkettes
- Four private bookings that use the site.

No comments or feedback were received following this communication.

Engagement method	Agreed / strongly agreed that the plans reflect their idea of an eco-park	Agreed / strongly agreed that the plans will encourage people to visit the eco-park	Agreed / strongly agreed that the plans support the health and wellbeing of residents
Online survey	73%	73%	74%
TOTAL (PEOPLE)	70	70	71

Engagement method	Disagreed / strongly disagreed that the plans reflect their idea of an eco-park	Disagreed / strongly disagreed that the plans will encourage people to visit the eco-park	Disagreed / strongly disagreed that the plans support the health and wellbeing of residents
Online survey	17%	17%	18%
TOTAL (PEOPLE)	16	16	17

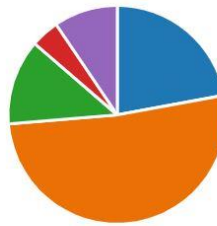
Engagement method	Had no preference that the plans	Had no preference that the plans will	Had no preference that the plans
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	reflect their idea of an eco-park	encourage people to visit the eco-park	support the health and wellbeing of residents
Online survey	9%	9%	7%
TOTAL (PEOPLE)	9	9	7

1. Do you think that the plans reflect your idea of an eco-park?

[More Details](#)

Strongly agree	21
Agree	49
Disagree	12
Strongly disagree	4
Neutral	9

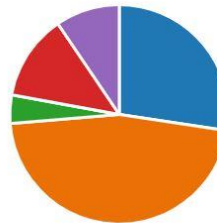


2. Do you think that the plans will encourage people and families to visit the eco-park?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Strongly Agree	26
Agree	44
Strongly disagree	4
Disagree	12
Neutral	9

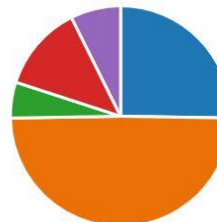


3. Do you think the plans support the health and wellbeing of residents within the area?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Strongly Agree	24
Agree	47
Strongly disagree	5
Disagree	12
Neutral	7



Summary of online comments

Residents and stakeholders were also asked if they had any further comments to make. Overall, they were fairly neutral with people saying that they agreed with the plans but had some suggestions as to how they could be improved.

Negative comments focussed on funding, the works at Cropston Drive and plans to develop Hermitage Leisure Centre (HLC), and in particular housing. Apart from the funding, these are separate to the plans to develop part of Hermitage Recreation Ground into an eco-park.



Positive

- They liked the designs
- Excited by the plans
- Will enhance the local area and benefit residents
- Looking forward to seeing plans develop
- Would really like the trim trail and things to get the kids outside
- Hermitage Recreation Ground is a perfect family location
- Will be good for the area

Neutral

- General comments about the use of HLC
- A ban on dogs off leads
- Concerns about ASB
- Maintenance of equipment
- Would like to see a café / tea room
- No information on facilities e.g. toilets
- Would like to see more seating
- Would like to see a skate park
- Parking concerns
- Congestion concerns
- Redevelopment of play area
- Wildflower planting
- Walking / running track
- Lighting to make people feel safe in the dark

- Considerations for wheelchair users for paths and trim trail
- Sensory garden
- More trees
- More activity wise
- Need a more detailed plan

Negative

- Comments about housing at HLC
- Comments about the works at Cropston Drive
- Funding could be better spent elsewhere
- Very little difference from what is there already
- Disappointing use / waste of the money
- Area should be kept as it is

Communications summary

Social media

Six posts were shared on Facebook to direct people to have their say on the online survey. This resulted in:

Total reach = 26,114

Total engagements (reactions, shares, comments) = 73

Comments include:

“Flat cycle track?”

“Is this going where the old hermitage centre was?”

“Will they be wheelchair accessible?”

“Isn’t there already or was a trim trail which no one used? This doesn’t include the site of the old hermitage is there a café? Toilets in this plan?”

“Am I missing something? Is Coalville the only place in NWL?”

“Are you stopping the council from cutting down trees in and around cities and towns, because we need trees for oxygen and carbon reduction, (photosynthesis nature’s carbon scrubber) will you save our trees, lives could depend on it. Tree branches block 5G signals and it’s why their cutting trees down in favour of 5G instead of our health n life quality. Personally ban 5G until it’s proved safe.”

Media coverage

To spread the word about the online survey, we issued a news release to our local distribution list. In total, we had four pieces of coverage including:

- Nub News (online)
- Leicester Mercury (print)
- Leicestershire Live (online)
- Coalville Times (print)



By LEE GARRETT
lee.garrett@nwleics.gov.uk
@leejarrett22

COUNCIL bosses have confirmed land next to a demolished former leisure centre will become an eco-park.

The fate of the Hermitage Recreation Ground had been unclear for several months, but officials say the first phase of the green project will start soon.

The recreation ground, which stands next to the former Hermitage Leisure Centre in Whitwick, is currently vacant, but residents had feared it could be turned into housing alongside the new flattened Hermitage building.

However, bosses at North West Leicestershire District Council always denied this would be the case and put forward a number of proposals for the area.

Among these was transforming part of the land into an eco-park in a bid to boost nature in the area. Exact costs for the scheme are not clear, but the council has said it will receive more than £500,000 in funding from five contributors.

The eco-park was one of several ideas put forward to the public by the council last year, with officials confirming that 92 per cent of people backed the idea.

If fully approved, it would see one-third of the land between the former leisure centre and its replacement on Stephenson Way transformed into three distinct zones.

The eco-park would be one such area and would include more trees, the installation of footpaths and an outdoor adventure trail.

The public is now being asked about these specifics to take the eco-park plan forward.

Paul Sanders, head of community services at the council, said: "Based on feedback, we're now ready to progress with plans to develop an eco-park."

"We already know that people are supportive, we now just need to know what they think of our vision."

"Feedback is really important to us and would encourage residents to take a look at the plans and let us know what they think."

Consultations run until mid-May. From there, the plan will be presented to cabinet in July and, subject to approval, work could start later this year.

The other two zones of land are not ready for public consultation.

Previously, the council laid out plans to turn these into an active community zone with new play equipment and cafe.

The fate of the former Hermitage Leisure Centre site is also yet to be finalised, with housing seen by council bosses as the most "likely" option.

More information on the plans can be found on the council website.

The consultation closes on May 14.

"We already know that people are supportive, we now just need to know what they think of our vision"

Paul Sanders



REPLACED: The old Hermitage Leisure Centre has been demolished and the fate of the site is still undecided - though housing looks to be the most likely outcome

PLANS UNVEILED TO TRANSFORM HERMITAGE RECREATION GROUND

By ADAM REID

NORTH West Leicestershire District Council have unveiled plans to transform a section of Whitwick's Hermitage Recreation Ground and are asking residents to give their opinion on the potential project.

The proposal would see a segment of the grounds turned into an eco-park in the first phase of the council's plans to develop the whole site.

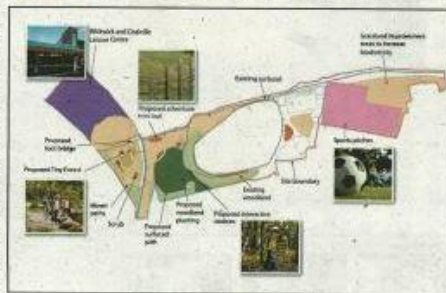
The eco-park could see more woodland, grassland, improved, a tiny forest, and an adventure trail.

The idea for the project stemmed from a survey conducted by North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC) in July last year, when residents were asked how they would like to see the recreation ground improved.

From the scheme listed, 92 per cent of respondents either supported or strongly supported the idea of an eco-park.

New local residents are being asked what they think the plans and how useful they are.

Paul Sanders, head of community services at NWLDC, said:



funding from the National Forest Changing Landscapes Scheme, the Forestry Commission Local Authority Treescapes Fund, Everyone Active, the Cragg, Devo and Waterworks Road housing developer in Coalville, and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The council has said that plans surrounding the second phase of the site's development - which will include an Active Community Zone and the future use of the former site of the Hermitage Leisure Centre site - are still being made, although NWLDC have confirmed that the development of the eco-park will not be impacted by these plans.

Feedback from the online consultation will be presented to NWLDC's Cabinet in July, and subject to Cabinet approval, it's likely the project could get underway later this year, the council have said.

Members of the public can submit feedback until Sunday, May 14, via the website www.nwleics.gov.uk/hermitage



ADVERTISING FEATURE

Website

A dedicated web page was created to outline the plans and invite people to share their feedback at www.nwleics.gov.uk/hermitage

From 4 April until 15 May, the dedicated web page received 196 page views.

The press release was also shared on the news section of the website at https://www.nwleics.gov.uk/news/2023/04/04/future_of_hermitage_recreation_ground_n_feedback_on_phase_one

From 4 April until 15 May, the press release had 55 views.

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – THURSDAY, 13
JULY 2023

Title of Report	PROPOSALS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SCRUTINY COMMISSION	
Presented by	James Arnold Strategic Director of Place	
Background Papers	Insert hyperlinks to any relevant background papers	Public Report: Yes
Financial Implications	None identified at this stage but as the process proceeds there is the possibility that a special responsibility allowance could be introduced for the Chair. Therefore, there would be an increase in the overall Members allowances costs at the point of establishment. If established this would be a pressure on the Council's budget and would need to be funded from corresponding savings to ensure financial sustainability.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	The introduction of a formal Scrutiny Commission would require changes to be made to the Constitution at Council to set out its composition and terms of reference.	
	Signed off by the Deputy Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	None identified.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Reason Agenda Item Submitted to Scrutiny Committee	To provide information and receive comment on the proposals to establish a Scrutiny Commission.	
Recommendations	<p>THAT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) PROVIDES COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT PROPSALS TO MOVE FORWARD WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION. 2) PROVIDES COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE PROPOSED SCRUTINY COMMISSION AT APPENDIX 1. 3) PROVIDES COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT JOB DESCRIPTION FOR THE CHAIR OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION. 4) PROVIDES A STEER ON THE IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION. 	

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Following the Corporate Peer Review in 2019, the Scrutiny Cross Party Working Group was established to deliver the outcomes in relation to the Council's scrutiny function. This group made the recommendation to establish an informal Scrutiny Work Programming Group to oversee the work programming for both Scrutiny Committees.
- 1.2 The Scrutiny Work Programming group was created in February 2022 following the agreement of both Scrutiny Committees. It was agreed that the group would operate for a year and that consideration would be given as to whether to formalise the group by the creation of a Scrutiny Commission during that time.

2. THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMMING GROUP

2.1 The terms of reference of the Group are:

Lead Officers	Strategic Directors
Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider requests for inclusion on the work programmes of each Scrutiny Committee; • Consider whether there are other ways of receiving information; • Consult with members of Scrutiny Committees, Senior Officers, Cabinet Members for horizon scanning on policy development; • Look at the corporate priorities, Council Delivery Plan and Cabinet Forward plan and identify key issues/topics for investigation/inquiry; • Consider events and decisions in the Council's calendar which could require an input/consultation via Scrutiny; • Review any follow up work required after previous scrutiny
Membership	Membership to comprise the chairs of the two Scrutiny Committees and an opposition scrutiny committee member from each group.
Meetings	The Work Programming Group will meet approximately every two months (six meetings a year).

- 2.2 The Group is made up of Scrutiny Chairs and an opposition scrutiny member from each group. Support to the group is provided by the Strategic Director of Communities, the Strategic Director of Place and the Democratic Services Officer.
- 2.3 Although the terms of reference allow for six meetings per year, once the group began its work it was felt by Members and Officers that meeting every three months was more appropriate as this falls in with each round of Scrutiny Committees.
- 2.4 At its meeting on 22 November, the views of the Group were sought about how the Group was working. They can be summarised as follows:

2.4.1 The Group felt that it added value to the scrutiny process and that it was necessary to have this work programming element as it was conducive to good scrutiny by the authority. However, they felt that more cross-party discussions were required before a formal view was taken and therefore requested that a report be considered by the Scrutiny Cross Party Working Group on the pros and cons of a Scrutiny Commission before being taken to Strategy Group.

2.5 Following this request, a meeting of the Scrutiny Cross Party Working Group was convened on 11 January to seek their views, which were:

- that a recommendation be taken to Council to create a formal Scrutiny Commission.
- the implementation timeline as detailed in section 5.0 of this report.
- that the current Scrutiny Work Programming Group continue during the implementation of the formal Scrutiny Commission and complete its full cycle of work.

2.6 Preparatory work on this matter was undertaken with the Scrutiny Cross Party Working Group ahead of the local elections in May 2023. This report now brings forward that work for consideration by this committee. The same report will be taken to both Scrutiny Committees.

3.0 PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 A draft terms of reference for the Scrutiny Commission is attached at Appendix 1. The draft has been modelled on the current terms of reference for the informal Work Programming Group and comments from the Scrutiny Cross Party Working Group. The draft follows the format of the Council's Constitution.

3.2 The proposed composition of the Scrutiny Commission is based on the current Scrutiny Work Programming Group of five Members. In accordance with the current political makeup of the Council, this would be:

Three Alliance Members
Two Labour Members

3.3 A job description for the Chair of the Scrutiny Commission has been drafted and is attached at Appendix 2, this will assist the Member who is appointed to this new role and be considered by the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP).

3.4 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require local authorities to establish independent remuneration panels in order to make recommendations in relation to allowances. The Council is required to have regard to the recommendations of the IRP when making any decisions on allowances. The composition and functions of the Council's IRP are set out in Section D9 of Part 2 of the Constitution, which confirms the following:

3.4.1 that the IRP is an independent body appointed by Council for a four-year term for the purpose of making recommendations to Council in relation to the Members Allowance Scheme;

3.4.2 it is comprised of five independent members (the current members were appointed in November 2020);

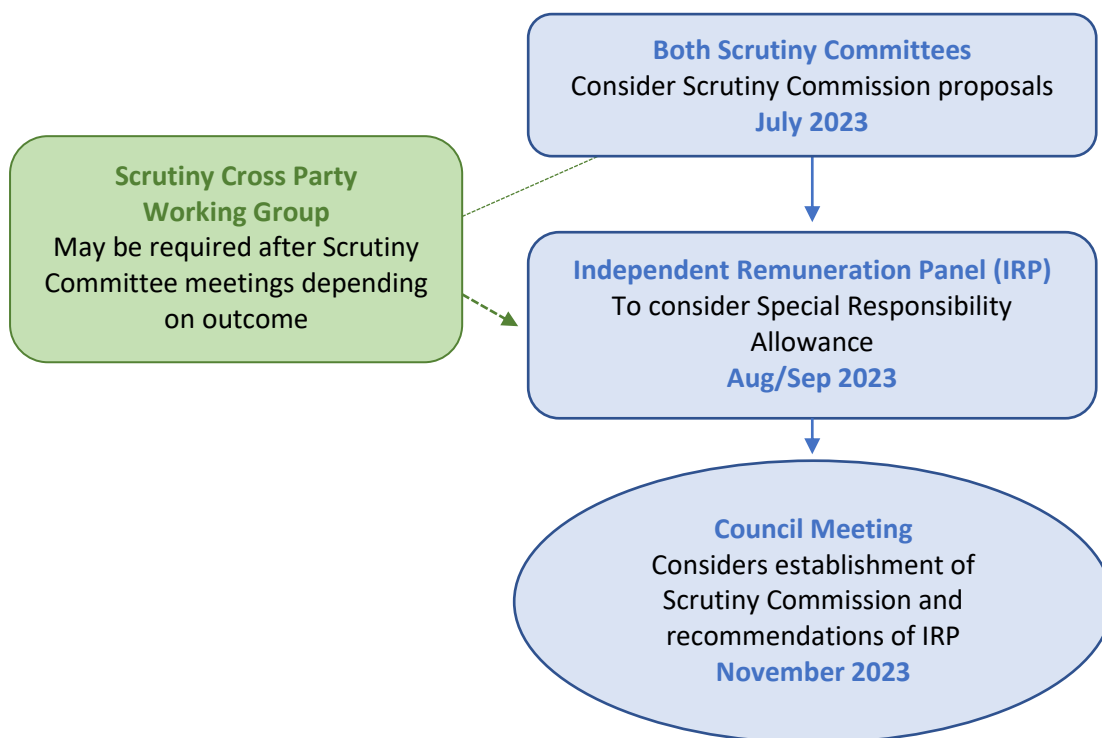
3.4.3 its functions include making recommendations about the responsibilities or duties which should lead to the payment of a special responsibility allowance and as to the amount of such an allowance.

The IRP would, therefore, consider the job description for the Chair of the Scrutiny Commission, the level of remuneration against the other Chairs that are in receipt of a special responsibility allowance and make recommendations to Council in relation to such allowances.

3.5 Both Scrutiny Committees are asked to consider the draft proposals and indicative timeline as presented at section 4.0.

4.0 TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 The proposed implementation timeline is detailed below and is based on discussions had by the Scrutiny Cross Party Working Group. As Members are being asked to comment on the proposals, this timeline is indicative only and there is flexibility to make adjustments dependant on the preferences of both Scrutiny Committees.



4.2 The initial discussions of the Scrutiny Cross Party Working Group in relation to the commencement of the Scrutiny Commission was that establishment be made as soon as practicable, therefore, the earliest date being November 2023. Members may decide to continue with the informal Scrutiny Work Programming Group arrangements for the remainder of the 2023/24 civic year and formally appoint to the Scrutiny Commission alongside all other committees and groups at Annual Council in May 2024 for the 2024/25 civic year.

5.0 NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 Should Members wish to progress as proposed, officers will convene a meeting of the IRP to consider any special responsibility allowance for the Chair's role. The chairs of Scrutiny Committees currently receive an allowance of £2,707.66.
- 5.2 Depending on the outcome at both Scrutiny Committees when considering this report, a further meeting of the Scrutiny Cross Party Working Group could be called, if necessary, to consider any comments made prior to consideration by the IRP.
- 5.3 Following the receipt of the IRP recommendations, a full report requesting the establishment of the Scrutiny Commission will be taken to Council for consideration.
- 5.4 Should it be agreed for the Scrutiny Commission to be established, the informal Scrutiny Work Programming Group will no longer be required and therefore disbanded.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	All
Policy Considerations:	Requirements of the Council's Constitution
Safeguarding:	No issues identified
Equalities/Diversity:	No issues identified
Customer Impact:	No issues identified
Economic and Social Impact:	No issues identified
Environment and Climate Change:	No issues identified
Consultation/Community Engagement:	Strategy Group, Scrutiny Cross Party Working Group, Scrutiny Work Programming Group and to be considered by both Scrutiny Committees.
Risks:	No issues identified
Officer Contact	Andy Barton Strategic Director of Communities andy.barton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

1 COMMITTEE FORM AND STRUCTURE

Committee Scope

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Commission is not able to make decisions but can make recommendations to either of the Scrutiny Committees.

Composition

- 1.2 The **Scrutiny Commission** will comprise five Councillors in **Political Balance** to include the Chairs of both Scrutiny Committees.
- 1.3 Members of the Scrutiny Commission will comprise Members from both Scrutiny Committees.
- 1.4 Members of the **Scrutiny Commission** must not be **Cabinet Members** or members of the **Audit and Governance Committee**.
- 1.5 The Chair and Deputy Chair will be appointed by **Full Council** annually.
- 1.6 The **Scrutiny Commission** will meet approximately every three months (four meetings a year).

Quorum

- 1.7 The **Quorum** for the **Scrutiny Commission** will be three **Councillors**.

2 MATTERS RESERVED TO THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION

- 2.1 To coordinate the work of the two Scrutiny Committees. This will be done by:
- 2.1.1 Reviewing the work programmes of both Scrutiny Committees.
 - 2.1.2 Considering requests for inclusion in the work programmes.
 - 2.1.3 Allocating specific issues on an ad-hoc basis.
 - 2.1.4 Looking at corporate priorities, Council Delivery Plan and Cabinet Forward Plan, and identifying key issues/topics for investigation/inquiry.
 - 2.1.5 Ensuring that scrutiny work takes account of officer and councillor capacity.
 - 2.1.6 Considering events and decisions in the Council's calendar which could require input/consultation via Scrutiny Committees.

- 2.2 To consult with members of Scrutiny Committees, Senior Officers and Cabinet Members for horizon scanning on policy development.
- 2.3 To take action on behalf of scrutiny committees in commenting on matters referred from the Cabinet which are of an urgent nature.
- 2.4 To review any follow up work required after previous scrutiny.
- 2.5 To consider scrutiny task and finish groups when required including the scope, terms of reference and timing, and refer to relevant Scrutiny Committee for formal establishment.
- 2.6 To oversee the preparation of the Scrutiny Annual Report.
- 2.7 To monitor the effectiveness of scrutiny through reviewing the implementation of recommendations.

DRAFT JOB DESCRIPTION OF A SCRUTINY COMMISSION CHAIR

Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the Council's Cabinet, officers and statutory partners are properly held to account, in line with legislation; • Ensure that scrutiny makes a positive contribution to the development of policy and the continuous improvement of the Council's operations; • Lead the scrutiny function and chair meetings of the Scrutiny Commission holding specific responsibility for the programming and direction of reviews, accessing professional advice, where appropriate, and the assembly and presentation of reports to Council; • Provide strong and fair leadership and clear guidance to members and officers in respect of the scrutiny function; • Liaise with the Leader and Chief Executive on issues of proposed policy or strategic issues affecting the Council.
Key duties and responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair the meetings of the Scrutiny Commission, enabling effective contributions from each Commission Member; • Propose an annual scrutiny work programme, drawn up after consultation with the Cabinet and Corporate Leadership Team; • Lead the investigation of policy proposals referred to the Commission by the Cabinet, in particular by leading the Commission in determining a timetable for investigation and obtaining preliminary background information, selecting witnesses and determining whether evidence is to be given orally or in writing; • Take a lead role in scrutinising policy decisions taken by the Cabinet or Portfolio Holder and monitor/use the Call-in Procedure as appropriate; • Take a lead role in scrutinising the decisions of officers; • Invite relevant Cabinet members to attend Commission meetings, coordinate the questions to be asked, submitting in advance a list of the issues to be discussed or requests for detailed information; • Liaise with the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and the Directors to make sure that scrutiny contributes to effective decision-making; • Oversee publication of reports, including the annual report on scrutiny and statements to council and elsewhere; • Be responsible for the constitutional arrangements relating to the taking of decisions on the grounds of urgency if they are not on the forward plan or are outside the budget and policy framework;

- Make sure that the work of the Commission and its Committees contribute to the delivery of continuous improvement in services and the implementation of best practice;
- Maintain an overview of the work of all the Scrutiny Committees in order to make sure effective co-ordination and progress of all work;
- Support and advise the Chairs the Scrutiny Committees;
- Maintain an overview of the scrutiny function and to learn from practice elsewhere, making sure of the continuing development of scrutiny through improving both practice and how it is organised;
- Encourage the involvement of all interested parties and stakeholders, individuals, voluntary and community groups in scrutiny matters.

Key skills and knowledge

- Advanced leadership skills;
- The ability to represent the Council and champion the scrutiny function in a variety of settings both inside and outside the Council;
- The ability to communicate effectively and to work constructively with officers, councillors, partners, members of the public, the media and other organisations;
- The ability to build effective relationships within and outside the council;
- Advanced listening and questioning skills;
- A high standard of communication skills with officers, councillors, co-optees, partners, external bodies and members of the public;
- Advanced presentation and public speaking skills;
- The ability to deal with complex strategic issues and problems on behalf of the Commission and the scrutiny function as a whole
- The ability to obtain and weigh up evidence and make decisions and recommendations based on that evidence
- A detailed understanding of the legal and constitutional arrangements relating to the scrutiny function and particularly those of the Commission Chairman;
- A detailed understanding of the Council's approach to scrutiny and its relationship with the other parts of the council's decision-making structures;
- A detailed knowledge of the challenges facing the scrutiny function and the role of the Chair in addressing them;
- An awareness of the strategic importance of the scrutiny function within the Council.

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NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – THURSDAY, 13
JULY 2023

Title of Report	SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT	
Presented by	James Arnold Strategic Director of Place	
Background Papers	Agendas and minutes of meetings of the Scrutiny Committees are available on the website.	Public Report: Yes
Financial Implications	None identified.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	None identified.	
	Signed off by the Deputy Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	None identified.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Reason Agenda Item Submitted to Scrutiny Committee	To consider and make comment on the annual report in order that it be presented to Council setting out the work of the Scrutiny Committees over the preceding 12-month period.	
Recommendations	THAT THE ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT BE RECEIVED FOR COMMENT AHEAD OF ITS SUBMISSION TO COUNCIL.	

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In accordance with the agreed scrutiny process, an annual report is submitted to Council which sets out the work of both the Scrutiny Committees over the preceding 12-month period. The annual report for 2022/23 is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The Scrutiny Work Programming Group, the Community Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate Scrutiny Committee will have the opportunity of making comment and suggesting changes to the report before it is reported to Council.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	All
Policy Considerations:	None identified but regard had to this during the scrutiny process.
Safeguarding:	None identified but regard had to this during the scrutiny process.
Equalities/Diversity:	None identified but regard had to this during the scrutiny process.
Customer Impact:	None identified but regard had to this during the scrutiny process.
Economic and Social Impact:	None identified but regard had to this during the scrutiny process.
Environment and Climate Change:	None identified but regard had to this during the scrutiny process.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	None identified but regard had to this during the scrutiny process.
Risks:	None identified but regard had to this during the scrutiny process.
Officer Contact	Clare Hammond Democratic Services Team Manager clare.hammond@nwleicestershire.gov.uk



North West Leicestershire District Council

SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

Contents

1. Foreword
2. Membership
3. Introduction
4. The Committees' Resources
5. The Work of Scrutiny
6. Scrutiny Cross Party Working Group
7. The Scrutiny Work Programming Group
8. Scrutiny Principles
9. The Scrutiny Year
10. Task and Finish Groups
11. Looking Ahead to 2022/23
12. Members' Attendance Record

1. Foreward

This report reflects the work of the Scrutiny Committees during the civic year 2022/23. During that year the Committees were chaired by Cllrs Smith and (former) Cllr Houlton.

2. Membership

Corporate Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Nigel Smith (Chair)
Councillor Virge Richichi (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Elliot Allman
Councillor Dave Bigby
Councillor Andrew Bridgen
Councillor Gill Houlton
Councillor Jenny Simmons
Councillor Tony Saffell
Councillor Sean Sheahan
Councillor Michael Wyatt
Councillor Carl Benfield (Substitute)
Councillor John Bridges (Substitute)
Councillor Rachel Canny (Substitute)
Councillor David Everitt (Substitute)
Councillor Terri Eynon (Substitute)
Councillor Marie French (Substitute)
Councillor Louise Gillard (Substitute)
Councillor Stuart Gillard (Substitute)
Councillor Daniel Harrison (Substitute)
Councillor Bertie Harrison-Rushton (Substitute)
Councillor Michael Hay (Substitute)
Councillor Russell Johnson (Substitute)
Councillor Ray Morris (Substitute)
Councillor Jake Windram (Substitute)

Community Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Jim Houlton (Chair)
Councillor Ray Morris (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Alexander Bridgen
Councillor Carl Benfield
Councillor Terri Eynon
Councillor John Geary
Councillor Michael Hay
Councillor Gill Houlton
Councillor Jenny Simmons
Councillor Michael Wyatt
Councillor Dave Bigby (Substitute)
Councillor Angela Black (Substitute)
Councillor Rachel Canny (Substitute)
Councillor John Clarke (Substitute)
Councillor Marie French (Substitute)
Councillor Louise Gillard (Substitute)
Councillor Stuart Gillard (Substitute)
Councillor John Legrys (Substitute)
Councillor Tony Saffell (Substitute)
Councillor Carol Sewell (Substitute)
Councillor Shean Sheahan (Substitute)

3. Introduction

North West Leicestershire District Council has adopted the Cabinet system to operate its decision making and there are two Scrutiny Committees comprising non-Cabinet members – the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and the Community Scrutiny Committee. Below is a non-exhaustive list of their respective areas of responsibility. Each Committee may receive reports and comment on matters of policy or items of business of a reasonably similar nature to those listed.

Corporate Scrutiny Committee

Asset Management
Estates and property
Review of Constitution
Communications
Customer Services
Finance

Community Scrutiny Committee

Business/Economy
Planning and Building Control
Tourism
Partnerships
Community Safety
Leisure

Human Resources
Equalities
ICT
Legal Services
Revenue and Benefits
Shared Services

Health and Wellbeing
Waste Services
Stronger Safer Communities
Environmental Health
Licensing
Environmental Protection
Statutory crime and disorder committee
Strategic Housing – Housing Strategy
Housing Management
Economic Development
Regeneration

Scrutiny is central to the Council's decision-making process and has two main roles.

- (1) The development and review of policies for a wide range of subjects and services.
- (2) The critical examination of the Council's performance and effectiveness of its decisions.

The Scrutiny Committees look into areas of local concern; they recommend improvements the Council can make to ensure quality of life is improved for all. The main tasks of the Committees are:

- **Performance Monitoring** – The Council has to meet corporate priorities set out in the Council Delivery Plan and report against those indicators. Scrutiny can examine any aspect of the Council's performance, including services that it delivers through partnerships with other organisations.
- **Holding the Cabinet to Account** - Decisions made by the Cabinet but not yet put into practice can be reviewed by the Scrutiny Committees and challenged.
- **Policy review and development** - Scrutiny can propose new policies or review existing policies and recommend changes to the Cabinet.
- **External Scrutiny** - Any issue directly affecting the residents of North West Leicestershire can be scrutinised by the Committees, including services provided by another organisation.

It is through demonstrating the value and impact that effective scrutiny can have in supporting councils and other organisations to deliver better, more cost-effective services, that scrutiny is a valued element of local democracy.

4. The Committee's Resources

Support to the Committees is provided by the two Strategic Directors who offer sound and practical advice on subject matters and help the Committees manage their respective work programmes with regular dialogue with the Chairmen of the two Scrutiny Committees.

Administrative support is provided by Democratic Services under the direction of the Democratic Services Team Manager.

Legal advice is provided by Legal Services under the direction of the Monitoring Officer.

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) is regarded as a focal reference point for professional advice and training; and East Midlands Councils has offered support, as required, to assist with Task and Finish Groups.

The Committee does not have its own dedicated budget and its work is funded from the Democratic Services budget.

5. The Work of Scrutiny

Scrutiny work is Councillor led. In addition to Councillors leading on which subjects they wish to consider in depth through Task and Finish Groups, they also set their own work programme which is populated with topics selected from the Cabinet's Forward Plan, matters relating to the Council's priorities and challenges, and issues of importance to local residents.

Scrutiny does not get involved in minor matters or individual concerns which are not of wider community significance. These need to be addressed through the appropriate service unit, Ward Councillor, or the Portfolio Holder responsible for the issue.

Scrutiny does not deal with individual complaints as these should be addressed through the Council's Complaints' Procedure.

The Council's Constitution sets out the rights of Scrutiny Committee Members to 'call in' a Cabinet decision if they feel it has not been made in accordance with decision-making principles set out in Part 2, section A of the Constitution. The Monitoring Officer is able to support and advise any members wishing to call in an item.

The 'call in' procedure may result in the convening of a special meeting to consider the matter unless the next programmed meeting falls within the deadlines set in the Council's Constitution. In the past 12 months there has been one 'Call in' request in relation to Cabinet item 'Hermitage Leisure Centre – Future Direction' at its meeting on 20 September 2022. In accordance with the Council's Constitution, following consideration of the request against the principles of decision making set out in the constitution, the call in request was declined by the Monitoring Officer.

6. Scrutiny Cross- Party Working Group

A Cross-Party Working Group was established in 2020 to deliver the outcomes of the corporate peer review. Whilst the Cross-Party Working Group is not be a decision-making body, the group is tasked with:

- Monitoring the progress of the project against the agreed action plan.
- Acting as 'critical friends' providing feedback and comments throughout the project.
- Acting as 'champions' for the successful delivery of the project within their respective groups by ensuring that the progress of the project was regularly reported back to all group members.
- Making recommendations to appropriate decision-making bodies based on the consensus of the Group.

Its membership for 2022/23 comprised:

- Councillor Robert Ashman, Deputy Leader
- Councillor Dan Harrison, Conservative

- Councillor Nigel Smith, Conservative
- Councillor Terri Eynon, Labour
- Councillor Sean Sheahan, Labour
- Councillor Tony Saffell, Independent

At its meeting on 26 October 2021, the Scrutiny Cross Party Working Group made a recommendation to establish a Scrutiny Work Programming Group to include the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees, the Directors and members of the opposition. This recommendation was agreed by both the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and the Community Scrutiny Committee at the meetings held on 5 January and 9 February 2022 respectively.

7. The Scrutiny Work Programming Group

The Terms of Reference are as follows:-

Lead Officers	Strategic Directors
Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider requests for inclusion on the work programmes of each Scrutiny Committee; • Consider whether there are other ways of receiving information; • Consult with members of Scrutiny Committees, Senior Officers, Cabinet Members for horizon scanning on policy development; • Look at the corporate priorities, Council Delivery Plan and Cabinet Forward plan and identify key issues/topics for investigation/inquiry • Consider events and decisions in the Council's calendar which could require an input/consultation via Scrutiny Committees • Review any follow up work required after previous scrutiny
Membership	Membership to comprise the chairs of the two Scrutiny Committees and an opposition scrutiny committee member from each group.
Meetings	The Work Programming Group will meet approximately every two months (six meetings a year)

It was initially agreed that the Scrutiny Work Programming Group would run for a year. This would allow time to determine whether a more formal arrangement, such as a Scrutiny Commission, would likely be an effective addition to the process. Following on from this, the Scrutiny Cross Party Working Group met in January 2023 and requested that work on establishing a Scrutiny Commission be paused until after the District Council Elections and the Scrutiny Work Programming Group continue in the meantime.

8. Scrutiny Principles

The following principles-based approach for identifying and managing the scrutiny work plan have been agreed.

Identify Issues for consideration by Scrutiny:

- Consulting with members of Scrutiny Committees, senior officers, Cabinet members – horizon scanning on policy development
- Looking at the corporate priorities, Council Delivery Plan and Cabinet Forward plan – identify key issues/topics for investigation/inquiry
- Considering events and decisions in the Council's calendar which could require an input/consultation via scrutiny – e.g. budget setting, CDP development
- Considering requests from members – e.g. via another forum or scoping report submitted
- Evaluating the Council's performance – e.g. quarterly reports, end of year reports, reviewing success of a particular scheme or initiative
- Reviewing any follow up work required after previous scrutiny work.

Prioritise the potential list of scrutiny topics based on factors including:

- the resources required to deliver it (from members, offices and financially)
- the value and level of impact which could be achieved
- link to the Council's priorities
- whether it is a regular recurring item which requires consideration before Cabinet/Council approval
- consideration of the guidance for selecting scrutiny topics

Scope and plan

- Decide which scrutiny topics/work will be done each year
- Add to the work programme for each year to ensure manageable agendas for each meeting
- Consider allowing some scrutiny time for ad hoc requests which arise mid-year
- Ensure that items on the work programme are clearly scoped, with clear objectives for the committee and officers (use scoping form where possible)

Recommend (if appropriate) based on the following:

- Be specific about the recommendations
- Ensure that they are evidence based and realistic
- Focus on measurable outcomes (where appropriate)
- Address a specific person or group
- Be realistic about any financing requirements
- Develop in partnership with the executive, council officers and partners

Respond – Cabinet should respond to recommendations made by Scrutiny within two months. The response should be:

- A commitment to deliver the measure within the timescale set out
- A commitment to be held to account on that delivery in six months or a year's time
- Where it is not proposed that a recommendation be accepted, the provision of substantive reasons as to why not
- Can be given by way of Cabinet report/meeting considering the recommendations.

Review and evaluate

- Regularly review progress and evaluate outcomes eg at Directors/Chairs meetings
- Produce an annual report which demonstrates the work the Committees have done and their impact.

Topics are suitable for Scrutiny when	Topics are not suitable for Scrutiny when
Scrutiny could have an impact and add value	The issue is already being addressed elsewhere and change is imminent
The topic is of high local importance and reflects the concerns of local people	The topic would be better addressed elsewhere (and will be referred there)
The resources are available that would be required to conduct the review – staff and budget	Scrutiny involvement would have limited or no impact on outcomes
It avoids duplication of work elsewhere	The topic would be sub-judice or prejudicial to the council's interests
The issue is one that the committee can realistically influence	The topic is too broad to make a review realistic
The issue is related to an area where the Council or one of its partners is not performing well	New legislation or guidance relating to the topic is expected in the next year

9. The Scrutiny Year

Over the nine meetings which the Scrutiny Committees held during 2022-23, several different topics were scrutinised, as shown in the table below:

Item	Considered by	Action of the Committee	Outcome
Zero Carbon Update	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 8 June 2022	Received the report and submitted a number of comments for Cabinet to consider when making the final decision.	Gained a better understanding of the progress made on the Council's Zero Carbon Roadmap and provided comments on the Actions/spend for year 3 of the plan.
2021/22 Quarter 4 Performance report	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 8 June 2022	Received the report and submitted a number of comments for Cabinet to consider when making the final decision.	Gained a better understanding of the Council's performance for Quarter 4 of 2021/22 and provided comments for consideration by Cabinet.
Scrutiny Annual Report	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 8 June 2022 and Community Scrutiny Committee on 29 June 2022	Received the annual report detailing the work of the Scrutiny Committees for 2021/22 prior to consideration by Full Council.	Noted the work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committees for 2021/22.
The future of Hermitage Leisure Centre and Recreation Ground	Community Scrutiny Committee on 29 June 2022	Considered the proposals, raised several concerns, and sought further information before a final decision was taken.	The item was deferred to allow a formal consultation with Whitwick Parish Council and, for officers to address concerns raised and provide further information as requested at a future meeting.

Air Quality Capital Grant Funding (DEFRA)	Community Scrutiny Committee on 29 June 2022	Noted the award of the DEFRA Air Quality Grant.	Gained a better understanding on the Air Quality Capital Grant Funding.
Establishment of Fuel Poverty Task and Finish Group	Community Scrutiny Committee on 29 June 2022	Agreed the establishment of the Fuel Poverty Task and Finish Group.	Set up the Fuel Poverty Task and Finish Group, and agreed the Terms of reference.
A Cinema for Coalville	Community Scrutiny Committee on 29 June 2022	Consideration was given to the proposals contained within the confidential report and comments were submitted for Cabinet.	Comments were considered by Cabinet when considering the report.
Linden Way, Coalville – Highway Extension	Community Scrutiny Committee on 29 June 2022	Consideration was given to the proposals contained within the confidential report and comments were submitted for Cabinet.	Comments were considered by Cabinet when considering the report.
Former Hermitage Leisure Centre Building Future Direction	Community Scrutiny Committee on 7 September 2022 (Extraordinary Meeting)	Consideration was given to the proposals with several opposing views, which included an alternative recommendation which following a recorded note was lost. All comments were submitted to Cabinet for consideration.	Comments were considered and noted by Cabinet when considering the report, however the original proposals as presented to the Community Scrutiny Committee were agreed.
Leisure Centres Annual review	Community Scrutiny Committee on 21 September 2022	Noted the report and the annual performance of the Leisure Partnership with Everyone Active.	Comments were made and considered by officers.
The Effectiveness of Planning Enforcement	Community Scrutiny Committee on 21 September 2022	Noted the report and the intention to engage the Planning Advisory Service to review the service and provide a progress update in Autumn 2023.	Gained a better understanding on the current and future plans for the Planning Enforcement Team.
Recommendations of the Fuel Poverty Task and Finish Group	Community Scrutiny Committee on 23 November 2022	Received the report of the Task and Finish Group and agreed that the recommendations be put to Cabinet.	Cabinet considered the recommendations and supported three out of the seven that were presented.
2022/23 Quarter 1 and 2 Performance report	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 7 December 2022	Received the report and submitted a number of comments for Cabinet to consider when making the final decision.	Gained a better understanding of the Council's performance for Quarter 1 and 2 of 2022/23 and provided comments for consideration by Cabinet.

Customer Services – Performance and Future Approach	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 7 December 2022	Received an update on the performance of Customer Services and commented on the future direction of the service.	Gained an understanding of the current performance of the Customer Services Team and agreed the proposals to include a session in relation to Customer Services in the Member Induction and receive an annual update on progress.
Draft Robustness of Budget Estimates and Adequacy Reserves	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 4 January 2023	Received the report and following a thorough discussion, submitted a number of comments for Cabinet to consider when making the final decision.	Gained a better understanding of budget process and policies/strategies involved and provided comments for consideration by Cabinet.
Draft Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 4 January 2023	Received the report and submitted a number of comments for Cabinet to consider when making the final decision.	Comments were considered by Cabinet and Council when considering the reports.
Draft General Fund Budget and Council Tax 2023/24	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 4 January 2023	Commented on the budgetary proposals to be taken forward as part of the developing 2023/24 budget.	Comments were considered by Cabinet and Council when formulating and agreeing the budget.
Draft Housing revenue Account Budget and Rents 2023/24	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 4 January 2023	Commented on the budgetary proposals to be taken forward as part of the developing 2023/24 budget.	Comments were considered by Cabinet and Council when formulating and agreeing the budget.
2022/23 Quarter 3 Performance Report	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 8 March 2023	Considered the proposals and submitted a number of comments for Cabinet to consider when making the final decision.	Gained a better understanding of the Council's performance for Quarter 3 of 2022/23 and provided comments for consideration by Cabinet.
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 8 March 2023	Considered the report and recommended to Cabinet that the two grants from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund be accepted, as well as submitted a number of comments.	Recommendations were received by Cabinet and were subsequently agreed.
Repairs Performance	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 8 March 2023	Received a report on the current performance and provided comments/suggestions for officers to consider.	Gained a better understanding on the operation of the Housing Repairs Service and agreed for an update in six months' time.

Draft Resource and Waste Strategy for Leicestershire 2022 – 2050	Community Scrutiny Committee on 5 April 2023	Considered the draft policy and made comments for consideration by Cabinet when making a final decision.	Comments were considered by Cabinet when considering the report.
Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults	Community Scrutiny Committee on 5 April 2023	Considered the report and made comments for consideration by Cabinet when making a final decision.	Gained a better understanding of Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults.
Private Sector Housing Policies	Community Scrutiny Committee on 5 April 2023	Considered the draft policies and made comments for consideration by Cabinet when making a final decision.	Comments were considered by Cabinet when considering the report.

10. Task and Finish Groups

The Scrutiny Committees can set up special working parties called Task and Finish Groups when they need to undertake a detailed, in-depth investigation into a particular issue. The work is undertaken by a small group of councillors appointed from the membership of the Scrutiny Committee.

During 2022/23 Scrutiny Members established the following Task and Finish Group: -

Fuel Poverty

The Group was tasked with reviewing the work that the Council was doing to minimise Fuel Poverty in North West Leicestershire and asked to make recommendations to Cabinet to this effect.

The membership was: -

- Cllr T Eynon (Chair)
- Cllr M Hay
- Cllr G Hout
- Cllr R Morris
- Cllr J Simmons
- Cllr M Wyatt

The Group held four meetings over the period from 15 September 2022 and 3 November 2022, which included attendance from several officers and external partners who were invited to give evidence.

The final findings of the group were reported to Community Scrutiny Committee on 23 November 2022, the ensuing debate resulted in recommendations for Cabinet which was subsequently considered on 31 January 2023. Following a thorough debate by Cabinet, three of the seven recommendations were supported.

11. Looking Ahead to 2023-2024

The year ahead will see both Scrutiny Committees being chaired by different Members, Councillor Terri Eynon and Councillor Simon Lambeth. The Committees will also welcome Members following the District Council elections in May 2023.

The Scrutiny Committees will continue to grow and develop in their role of holding the Council's decision makers to account. The Scrutiny Work Planning Group will continue to meet whilst work continues to develop proposals for a Scrutiny Commission.

12. Members' Attendance Record

Corporate Scrutiny Committee

Attendance	8 Jun 2022	7 Dec 2022	4 Jan 2023	8 Mar 2023	%
Nigel Smith	Y	Y	N	Y	75%
Virge Richichi	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%
Elliott Allman	Y	N	N	Y	50%
Dave Bigby	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%
Alexander Bridgen	Y	Y	N	N	50%
Gill Hout	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%
Jenny Simmons	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%
Tony Saffell	N	N	N	N	0%
Sean Sheahan	Y	Y	Y	N	75%
Michael Wyatt	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%

Community Scrutiny Committee

Attendance	29 Jun 2022	7 Sep 2022	21 Sep 2022	23 Nov 2022	5 Apr 2023	%
Jim Hout	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%
Ray Morris	N	Y	N	Y	Y	60%
Carl Benfield	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	80%
Alexander Bridgen	N	N	N	N	N	0%
Dr Terri Eynon	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%
John Geary	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%
Michael Hay	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%
Gill Hout	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	80%
Jenny Simmons	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%
Michael Wyatt	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	80%

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