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Meeting	CABINET
Time/Day/Date	5.00 pm on Tuesday, 17 December 2024
Location	Abbey Room, Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN
Officer to contact	Democratic Services (01530 454512)

AGENDA

Item	Pages
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS	
Under the Code of Conduct members are reminded that in declaring interests you should make clear the nature of that interest and whether it is a disclosable pecuniary interest, registerable interest or other interest.	
3. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION	
4. MINUTES	
To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2024	3 - 4
5. LGA PEER REVIEW	
The report of the Chief Executive Presented by the Infrastructure Portfolio Holder	5 - 44
6. CONSULTATION ON ENABLING REMOTE ATTENDANCE AND PROXY VOTING AT LOCAL AUTHORITY MEETINGS	
The report of the Chief Executive Presented by the Infrastructure Portfolio Holder	45 - 54
7. DRAFT LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY	
The report of the Strategic Director of Place Presented by the Planning Portfolio Holder	55 - 60

8. EXTENSION OF THE COALVILLE CONSERVATION DEVELOPMENT ORDER

The report of the Strategic Director of Place
Presented by the Business and Regeneration Portfolio Holder

61 - 92

9. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The officers consider that the press and public should be excluded during consideration of the following items in accordance with Section 100(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 as publicity would be likely to result in disclosure of exempt or confidential information. Members are reminded that they must have regard to the public interest test and must consider, for each item, whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption from disclosure outweighs the public interest in making the item available.

10. PURCHASE OF LAND AT WOOD ROAD AND VICTORIA ROAD, ELLISTOWN

The report of the Strategic Director of Place
Presented by the Housing, Property and Customer Services Portfolio Holder

93 - 104

Circulation:

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

MINUTES of a meeting of the CABINET held in the Abbey Room, Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN on TUESDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2024

Present: Councillor R Blunt (Chair)

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

In Attendance: Councillors J Geary, S Lambeth, J Legrys and P Moulton

Officers: Mrs A Thomas, Mrs A Crouch, Ms K Hiller and Mr T Devonshire

65. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor N Rushton.

66. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no interests declared.

67. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no questions received.

68. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2024 were considered.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2024 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings.

69. MINUTES OF THE COALVILLE SPECIAL EXPENSES WORKING PARTY

The Business and Regeneration Portfolio Holder presented the report.

Members expressed their thanks to the Officers responsible for organising and overseeing the successful Christmas in Coalville event on 23 November, in spite of the challenging weather.

It was moved by Councillor T Gillard, seconded by Councillor M Wyatt, and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the Coalville Special Expenses Working Party at Appendix 1 be noted.

Reason for decision: so that the decisions of the Coalville Special Expenses Working Party can be considered.

70. FORMER TENANT RENT ARREARS, CURRENT TENANT RENT ARREARS, COUNCIL TAX, NON-DOMESTIC RATES AND SUNDRY DEBTS WRITE OFFS

The Infrastructure Portfolio Holder presented the report on behalf of the Corporate Portfolio Holder. Additionally, he noted an error in Appendix A but this did not affect the recommendations of the report.

It was moved by Councillor K Merrie, seconded by Councillor A Woodman and

RESOLVED THAT:

The non-national domestic rates and sundry debtors that are over £10,000 be approved.

Reason for decision: to comply with proper accounting practices.

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 5.05 pm

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – TUESDAY, 17 DECEMBER 2024



Title of Report	LGA PEER REVIEW	
Presented by	Keith Merrie MBE Infrastructure Portfolio Holder	
Background Papers	N/A	Public Report: Yes Key Decision: No
Financial Implications	None directly relating to the Peer Review feedback, however, the Council will need to assess any specific resource implications where applicable to addressing the recommendations contained in the report.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	None directly relating to the Peer Review feedback. Where actions to address the recommendations in the report require changes to the constitution, these will be addressed through the Council's annual constitution review, which is currently ongoing.	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	None arising from this report.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	To seek Cabinet approval for the proposed action plan in response to the Council's Corporate Peer Challenge Review Feedback report from the Local Government Association.	
Reason for Decision	For Cabinet to consider the report from the Local Government Association's Peer Review Team on its Corporate Peer Challenge and Action Plan that has been prepared to address the recommendations made.	
Recommendations	THAT CABINET: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) NOTES AND ACCEPTS THE LGA PEER REVIEW TEAM'S FEEDBACK AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL FOLLOWING ITS CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE IN JUNE 2024. 2) APPROVES THE ACTION PLAN PREPARED IN RESPONSE TO THE PEER REVIEW FEEDBACK. 	

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) is an improvement and assurance tool that is delivered by local government for local government. It is underpinned by the principles of sector led improvement put in place by councils and the Local Government Association (LGA) to support continuous improvement and assurance across the sector. CPC assists councils in meeting part of their Best Value Duty, with the UK Government expecting all local authorities to have a CPC at least every five years. It involves a team of senior local councillors and officers undertaking a comprehensive review of key finance, performance and governance information of the Council. North West Leicestershire District Council was subject to its last CPC in June 2019. However, since 2019 there have been a series of high-profile local government failures; and this has been recognised in a strengthened CPC assessment to provide more assurance to government that councils are being managed effectively.
- 1.2 The review process was an intensive but positive experience for members, staff and key stakeholders and the outcome will help shape the Council's improvement over the coming years. A copy of the full report is attached at Appendix 1 to this report with a proposed Action Plan at Appendix 2. Many of the recommendations made had already been identified by the Chief Executive and her Corporate Leadership Team and were already in train at the time of the review.

2.0 PEER REVIEW PROCESS

2.1 The Council's CPC took place from 26-28 June 2024. The Peer Review team, who spent three days with the Council, comprised:

- **Cllr Abi Brown, Chair of LGA Improvement & Innovation Board & Leader, Stoke on Trent City Council, 2019-23**
- **Tony Dale, Cabinet Member for Economy & Tourism, Car Parking & Transformation, Cotswold District Council**
- **Larissa Reed, Chief Executive, Swale Borough Council**
- **Adam Broome, LGA Finance Associate**
- **Paul Bellotti, Executive Director of Communities and Environment and Deputy Chief Executive, East Riding of Yorkshire Council**
- **Becca Singh, Regional Adviser, East Midlands Regional Team, LGA**
- **Katie Goodger, Regional Adviser, South East Regional Team, LGA**

The five key areas that were covered by the review are set out below:

- **Local Priorities and Outcomes**
Are the Council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the Council delivering effectively on its priorities? Is there a robust organisational-wide approach to continuous improvement, with regular monitoring, reporting on and updating or performance and improvement plans?
- **Organisational and Place Leadership**
Does the Council provide effective local leadership? Are there strong and effective relationships with partner organisations and local communities?
- **Governance and Culture**
Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of openness, transparency, challenge and scrutiny?
- **Financial Planning & Management**

Does the Council have a clear understanding of its financial position? Does the Council have a strategy and a plan to address its financial challenges? What is the relative financial resilience of the Council like?

- **Capacity for Improvement**

Is the organisation able to bring about the improvements it needs, including delivering on locally identified priorities? Does the Council have the capacity to improve?

In addition, the LGA was also asked to look at Regeneration and Housing (particularly Repairs) within these five themes.

2.2 Ahead of the CPC, the Council provided the peer team with a self-assessment of its current position which contained key facts, figures and background information. The process was very robust with the peer team carrying out 110 interviews during the three days they were on site. They spoke to a whole range of key partners and stakeholders across Leicestershire, community and voluntary sector and other partners in addition to staff and councillors. They also looked around the Council's offices and scrolled through the intranet / internet, reading key documents, policies and strategies.

2.3 The initial informal feedback following the review was very positive with the peer team highlighting a number of recommendations for the Council to consider. By its very nature, the CPC was a snapshot in time and it is recognised that some of the feedback may be about things the Council was already aware of and was in the process of addressing.

3.0 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Peer Review team felt that there is a renewed energy in the Council after the peer challenge in 2019 with a new Chief Executive and a refreshed and partly new group of senior officers, new headquarters and a new approach to communication. They felt that staff were positive about the new Council offices and staff reported it was a good place to work and were motivated and enthusiastic about delivering good work.

3.2 The Peer Review team also recognised that the district had experienced some political changes after the 2023 election following a long period of stable administration and whilst the Alliance was working well together, and member/officer relationships were good, it had been a period of adjustment for both members and staff alike as the new arrangements bedded in.

3.3 In addition, the Peer Review team recognised:

- Good relationships with district councils in Leicestershire, with Leicestershire County Council with other partners
- A good record of engagement with local businesses
- Positive engagement with parish councils by the Community Focus Team
- Conditions for growth in the district are outstanding
- Great progress has been made on the development of Coalville and the emergence of a district-wide regeneration programme
- Strong engagement with residents and members on the waste review
- Highly valued leisure provision with improvements to existing facilities and new facilities are well received.
- Ambitious targets for affordable homes
- Good performance against benchmarking data for council tax collection, planning and recycling and other key metrics.

- No major current risks on financial sustainability with good levels of income
- Good engagement with members on corporate and service risk management with Corporate and Service risk registers in place
- Ambitions for reaching net zero and the plans in place to ensure that these are fully costed and form part of the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- Commitment to apprentices, learning and development, ambitions to be a gold accredited Investor in People and a graduate from the LGA's new graduate development programme.
- Recognition that the Council is on an improvement journey in its Housing Service.

3.4 The following are the Peer Review team's key recommendations to the Council:

Recommendation 1 - Build relations between councillors, and between councillors and officers through a programme of development workshops to build trust and openness - The Alliance could be strengthened through top team development to enable councillors in the Cabinet to better step up to their role and provide a collegiate front for the Council. Building on the developing relationships between the political leadership and the Corporate Leadership Team, there could be further development sessions helping to introduce more honest conversations about ways of working, so that councillors and officers all recognize and accept their specific role in the Council moving forwards.

Recommendation 2: Use the Risk Register and the Annual Governance Statement to raise situational awareness and future concerns - These documents could be better used to manage the Council's risk appetite. Review the approach to both and consider the sector's best practice to make both documents work for you, as well as a strategic communications tool.

Recommendation 3: Ensure that financial transactions and contracts are under consistent and robust review - This includes fees, charges, the Leisure contract and commercial property investments. Regular robust reporting at Corporate Scrutiny of all major financial transactions, or actions that will have an impact on finance (such as the Transformation Programme and the Finance Improvement Programme) will help ensure that councillors are fully abreast of financial, commercial and savings matters when looking to establish corporate strategies. The Council uses PowerBI as a benchmarking tool, but the Peer Team was not shown how this was being used to inform strategic and operational planning.

Recommendation 4: Establish a thorough two-way Corporate Communications and Engagement Plan – The Chief Executive communicates frequently and regularly internally and this is appreciated by staff. However, staff reported that this is mostly information giving, rather than encouraging two-way engagement. The recent staff roadshows provided valuable feedback on how to improve this and the Council has taken this on board. The skilled staff in the Communications Team can advise and lead on how to ensure that internal communications are engaging and empowering. Explore how two-way

engagement with internal and external stakeholders can maximise benefits for residents and businesses.

Recommendation 5: Enhance the newly adopted Transformation Plan with a clear set of financial outcomes, deliverable dates, benefits, third party dependencies and risks across all programme areas

- Enhance the recently agreed high level transformation plan to ensure that aims, deliverables and expected outcomes are agreed between Cabinet and senior officers, with appropriate levels of flexibility, as soon as possible. Involve communications professionals from the start of the process to help identify how staff can be genuinely engaged with the process, and potential or perceived impacts can be communicated.

Recommendation 6: Conduct a wholesale process mapping and review of systems in Housing Repairs

- The Peer Review team recommends a wholesale process mapping and review of systems and processes as part of the Transformation agenda. Inefficient processes are reported to be hampering the Council's determination to clear the backlog of repairs. The Council has begun to address the issues in Housing, particularly through Scrutiny and Cabinet. It has established a Housing Improvement Board which has a plan for action. The Housing Regulator will look at repairs and tenant satisfaction, so it is imperative that the cultural issues within the service are tackled, alongside setting up clear, efficient systems and processes as a matter of urgency as soon as possible after the mapping exercise.

Recommendation 7: Engage more proactively in partnership working in all settings, ensuring the maximum benefit for the district's businesses and residents

- The Council is in a strong position to lead some of the partnership working, such as the network of councils directly affected by the Freeport. This involves building relationships with other councils involved, but also other partners. This will help to ensure that the Council influences and directs the economic development in the district. Maximise the opportunities afforded by the different large-scale developments to enable the Council to deliver what it wants for its residents.

3.5 In response to the Peer Review feedback report a draft action has been developed at Appendix B.

4.0 PROPOSED WAY FORWARD

- 4.1 The report and action plan was considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 5 December and a copy of the minutes of the meeting are attached at Appendix C.
- 4.2 The Council has developed an Action Plan to respond to the comments and recommendations within the Peer Review report, attached for Cabinet's consideration. Subject to Cabinet's approval the Action Plan will be published on the Council's website, alongside the report. Quarterly reports on progress against the action plan will be monitored by the Chief Executive and Corporate Portfolio Holder, Councillor Merrie.

4.3 The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge process includes a follow up visit. The purpose of the visit is to help the Council assess the impact of the CPC and demonstrate progress it has made against the areas of improvement and development identified by the Peer Review Team. It is a lighter touch version of the original visit. Arrangements are being made for the visit to take place in the spring of 2025.

4.4 The Corporate Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet will be updated on the outcome of this visit.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	The report relates to all aspects of the Council Delivery Plan and its key priorities of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning and regeneration - Communities and housing - Clean, green and Zero Carbon - A well-run council
Policy Considerations:	Medium Term Financial Plan Risk Management Strategy Housing Revenue Account Housing Asset Management Housing Repairs Policy Coalville and District-wide Regeneration Frameworks Communications Strategy Constitution Treasury Management Strategy Equality and Diversity Strategy Transformation Plan
Safeguarding:	None arising from this report
Equalities/Diversity:	The Council was commended for its work on Equality and Diversity and support provided by the Human Resources team. However, the Council needs to demonstrate the added value that Equality Impact Assessments are providing.
Customer Impact:	None arising from this report
Economic and Social Impact:	None arising from this report.
Environment, Climate Change and zero carbon:	The Peer Review team recognised the ambitions of the Council on net zero and that the Council is currently in the process of building robust costings to deliver these ambitions into its Medium Term Financial Plan.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	The Peer Review Team conducted 110 interviews over the three days they were on site. They spoke to elected members, partners and staff as part of the process. The Peer Review report will be published on the website.

	Any changes made as a result of the Review recommendations that require more formal consultation or engagement will be conducted in accordance with existing policies.
Risks:	That the report is not adequately considered to assist in the Council's continuous improvement activities. That there are insufficient resources to deliver the action plan.
Officer Contact	Allison Thomas Chief Executive allison.thomas@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

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LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

North West Leicestershire District
Council

26th – 28th June 2024

Feedback report



Corporate Peer Challenge



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1. Introduction

Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) is a highly valued improvement and assurance tool that is delivered by the sector for the sector. It involves a team of senior local government councillors and officers undertaking a comprehensive review of key finance, performance and governance information and then spending three days on site at North West Leicestershire District Council to provide robust, strategic, and credible challenge and support.

CPC forms a key part of the improvement and assurance framework for local government. It is underpinned by the principles of Sector-led Improvement (SLI) put in place by councils and the Local Government Association (LGA) to support continuous improvement and assurance across the sector. These state that local authorities are: Responsible for their own performance, Accountable locally not nationally and have a collective responsibility for the performance of the sector.

CPC assists councils in meeting part of their Best Value duty, with the UK Government expecting all local authorities to have a CPC at least every five years.

Peers remain at the heart of the peer challenge process and provide a 'practitioner perspective' and 'critical friend' challenge.

This report outlines the key findings of the peer team and the recommendations that the council are required to action.

2. Executive summary

North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC) is in the centre of England, at the heart of various key centres of economic development. It has enjoyed a strong period of growth, maximising the benefits of the business rates locally. Partly as a result of this growth, and because of the political stability, it did not raise council tax for 15 years until an increase was implemented in 2024/25.

There is a renewed energy in the council after the peer challenge in 2019. There is a new Chief Executive with a refreshed and partly new group of senior officers, new headquarters, a new approach to communications. There is a positive feel in the

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council offices, and staff reported it was a good place to work.

The 2023 election left no party in overall control. This was the first time in sixteen years that the council was not a Conservative majority administration. The council is now led by an Alliance of Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Independent councillors, but has retained the same Leader as under the previous Conservative administrations, providing some stability at a time of flux. The administration is working well together, although there have been some challenges between officers and councillors getting used to their new roles and relationships. The council has demonstrated a willingness to address this. Councillors described the Alliance to the peer team as “a loose affiliation of political groups”, whilst at the same time clearly working well together. This can be disconcerting to officers and to partners when the Alliance uses language that sound like the administration is fragile, even though they are confident that it is stable. The peer team suggest that the Alliance use language that demonstrates the stability of the administration.

Several partners (public and private) told the peer team that they would like to work closer with the council and see more councillors active in the regional arena. NWLDC is confident that it has a good relationship with district councils in the county as well as Leicestershire County Council as well as a range of other partners. Some work may be needed to address perceptions externally to ensure that others view the council’s partnership commitments the way NWLDC would like them to.

There are no major current risks on financial sustainability, with good levels of income but, like many councils, there is significant delay on statutory financial reports. It is important to ensure a good transition to the new auditor and the council reported that onboarding discussions have already taken place. Corporate and Service Risk Registers are in place, however, there were some fundamental risks that the team expected to see which weren’t on the Corporate Risk Register for example, the East Midlands Freeport delivery. It is important that councillors understand corporate risks and are providing challenge to ensure that Officers are taking mitigating actions where needed. The risk register is considered at every Audit and Governance meeting to provide councillors with the information they need.

The council could make more of its use of its Annual Governance Statement each

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year to provide a narrative to the council's priorities and actions. This would help to link strategic issues together, eg risk management and governance arrangements.

The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is currently high-level and does not allow for scenario planning for different future possibilities. Some flexibility will need to be built in. The ambitions for reaching zero carbon need to be built into the MTFP. At the time of the review, this was being done but had not been completed.

3. Key Recommendations

There are several observations and suggestions within the main section of the report. The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the council:

3.1 Recommendation 1: Build relations between councillors, and between councillors and officers through a programme of development workshops to build trust and openness

The Alliance could be strengthened through top team development to enable councillors in the Cabinet to better step up to their role and provide a collegiate front for the council. Building on the developing relationships between the political leadership and the Corporate Leadership Team, there could be further development sessions helping to introduce more honest conversations about ways of working, so that councillors and officers all recognise and accept their specific role in the council moving forwards.

3.2 Recommendation 2: Use the Risk Register and the Annual Governance Statement to raise situational awareness and future concerns

These documents could be better used to manage the council's risk appetite. Review the approach to both and consider the sector's best practice to make both documents work for you, as well as a strategic communications tool.

3.3 Recommendation 3: Ensure that financial transactions and contracts are under consistent and robust review

This includes fees, charges, the Leisure contract and commercial property investments. Regular robust reporting at Corporate Scrutiny of all major financial

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transactions, or actions that will have an impact on finance (such as the Transformation Programme and the Finance Improvement Programme) will help ensure that councillors are fully abreast of financial, commercial and savings matters when looking to establish corporate strategies. The council uses PowerBI as a benchmarking tool, but the peer team was not shown how this was being used to inform strategic and operational planning.

3.4 Recommendation 4: Establish a thorough two-way Corporate Communications Engagement Plan

The Chief Executive communicates frequently and regularly internally, and this is appreciated by staff. However, staff reported that this is mostly information giving, rather than encouraging two-way engagement. The recent staff roadshows provided valuable feedback on how to improve this and the council has taken this on board. The skilled staff in the Communications Team can advise and lead on how to ensure that internal communications are engaging and empowering. Explore how two-way engagement with internal and external stakeholders can maximise benefits for residents and businesses.

3.5 Recommendation 5: Enhance the newly adopted Transformation Plan with a clear set of financial outcomes, deliverable dates, benefits, third party dependencies and risks across all programme areas

Enhance the recently agreed high level transformation plan to ensure that aims, deliverables and expected outcomes are agreed between Cabinet and senior officers, with appropriate levels of flexibility, as soon as possible. Involve communications professionals from the start of the process to help identify how staff can be genuinely engaged with the process, and potential or perceived impacts can be communicated.

3.6 Recommendation 6: Conduct a wholesale process mapping and review of systems in Housing Repairs

The peer team recommends a wholesale process mapping and review of systems and processes as part of the Transformation agenda. Inefficient processes are reported to be hampering the council's determination to clear the backlog of repairs.

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The Council has begun to address the issues in Housing, particularly through Scrutiny and Cabinet. It has established a Housing Improvement Board which has a plan for action. The Housing Regulator will look at repairs and tenant satisfaction, so it is imperative that the cultural issues within the service are tackled, alongside setting up clear, efficient systems and processes as a matter of urgency as soon as possible after the mapping exercise.

3.7 Recommendation 7: Engage more proactively in partnership working in all settings, ensuring the maximum benefit for the district's businesses and residents

NWLDC is in a strong position to lead some of the partnership working, such as the network of councils directly affected by the Freeport. This involves building relationships with other councils involved, but also other partners. This will help to ensure that the council influences and directs the economic development in the district. Maximise the opportunities afforded by the different large-scale developments to enable the council to deliver what it wants for its residents.

4. Summary of peer challenge approach

4.1 The peer team

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced councillors and officer peers. The peer team reflected the focus of the peer challenge and peers were selected by the LGA for their relevant expertise. The team was:

- Councillor Abi Brown OBE, former leader, Stoke-on-Trent City Council
- Councillor Tony Dale, Cotswold District Council
- Larissa Reed, Chief Executive, Swale Borough Council
- Paul Bellotti, Executive Director, East Riding Council
- Adam Broome, LGA Finance Associate
- Katie Goodger - Regional Adviser, LGA
- Becca Singh - Peer Challenge Manager, LGA

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4.2 Scope and focus

The peer team considered the following five themes which form the core components of all Corporate Peer Challenges. These areas are critical to councils' performance and improvement.

1. **Local priorities and outcomes** - Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the council delivering effectively on its priorities? Is there an organisational-wide approach to continuous improvement, with frequent monitoring, reporting on and updating of performance and improvement plans?
2. **Organisational and place leadership** - Does the council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?
3. **Governance and culture** - Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of challenge and scrutiny?
4. **Financial planning and management - Does the council have a grip on its current financial position?** Does the council have a strategy and a plan to address its financial challenges? What is the relative financial resilience of the council like?
5. **Capacity for improvement** - Is the organisation able to bring about the improvements it needs, including delivering on locally identified priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve?

As part of the five core elements outlined above, every Corporate Peer Challenge includes a strong focus on financial sustainability, performance, governance, and assurance.

In addition to these themes, the council asked the peer team to provide feedback on Housing repairs, regeneration and economic growth. This feedback has been included in the main five themes.

4.3 The peer challenge process

Peer challenges are improvement focused; it is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals and nor is it an inspection. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

The peer team prepared by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the council and the challenges it is facing. This included a position statement prepared by the council in advance of the peer team's time on site. This provided a clear steer to the peer team on the local context at NWLDC and what the peer team should focus on. It also included a comprehensive LGA Finance briefing (prepared using public reports from the council's website) and a LGA performance report outlining benchmarking data for the council across a range of metrics. The latter was produced using the LGA's local area benchmarking tool called LG Inform.

The peer team then spent three days on site at NWLDC, during which they:

- Gathered evidence, information, and views from more than forty meetings, in addition to further research and reading.
- Spoke and listened to around 110 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external stakeholders.
- Collectively spent nearly 300 hours working on the peer challenge. This is the equivalent of one consultant spending nearly nine weeks in the council full time.

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. In presenting feedback, they have done so as fellow local government officers and councillors.

5. Feedback

5.1 Local priorities and outcomes

Conditions for growth are outstanding in North West Leicestershire, which is one of the fastest growing districts in the country. The peer team saw great progress on the development of the principal town of Coalville, and a district-wide regeneration plan is in the final stages of its development, reflecting the diverse towns and villages across the area. Some voices from local communities are concerned about the understandable strong focus on regenerating Coalville; consultation on the new strategy should ensure that residents and businesses clearly understand the council's district-wide approach. There was strong engagement with residents on the Waste Services Review. This is a good learning opportunity to help improve engagement on other issues and reviews.

The council has been part of a national pilot on design coding and is developing a new local design code. The team heard good feedback on this work.

The council has an ambitious target for an increase in 1,000 new affordable homes by 2026. This depends on ongoing partnership working, as they will need to be delivered by a variety of partners, including Registered Providers, Section 106 money and any direct building work the council may be able to do. NWLDC faces substantial challenges with reduced supply from planning gain due to viability and reduced take up by registered providers. Council resourcing issues have also slowed the roll-out of the delivery of new affordable Council homes. This is critical and important work to provide decent affordable homes for families, children and older residents on the Council's waiting list to secure their future well-being.

The council has a good record on relationships with local businesses, prioritising start-up businesses and a growing apprenticeship programme. Currently the council has ten apprentices in post, plus four employees undertaking apprenticeship-funded training. It is also benefiting from the LGA's New Graduate Development Programme

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with a graduate recruited and due to commence in September 2024. The council engages with several training providers to support a range of skills development amongst local communities.

The new leisure centre and improvements to the Ashby Leisure Centre have been well-received by residents and are highly valued. However, given the long-term nature of the leisure contract it will be important to ensure that established close working relations include robust reporting arrangements to help early identification of any risks.

Relationships with Parish and town councils are mixed. Feedback is very good for the staff in the Community Focus team whose role it is to liaise with Parish Councils, but the parish councils would feel more included in discussions if senior staff and councillors attended meetings when there is a particularly contentious issue, or something which requires more technical understanding.

There is an ambitious zero carbon policy, with a roadmap to achieve by 2030. At the time of the review, there was no clear link to the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). This is in development to ensure a clearer, direct link to the finances of the council. The LGA's [sustainability hub](#) includes a range of resources to help the council measure, monitor and reduce emissions, as well an opportunity to network and share experiences with other councils. The LGA's [Councillor Workbook on the local pathway to net zero](#) could assist councillors in developing their skills further to help the authority progress this agenda.

There is scope for better and more widespread understanding of the needs of different communities in the district. At the last census, 4.1% of the population are from a black or minority ethnic background, and 7.9% described themselves as non-white UK. 20% of the population is over 65 years of age and 19.9% are under 18.

According to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, NWLDC is ranked 214 out of 326 authorities in England, with 1 being the most deprived. At the time of the peer challenge, Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) issues were not fully embedded in strategies, such as economic growth and waste management, nor were those issues included in action planning for service delivery. A new EDI Strategy is due to be

presented to councillors later this year. The recent waste review, with considerable resident responses, were analysed by gender, ethnicity and a range of other indicators which should assist in action planning for the new service. The new district-wide regeneration framework will need to ensure that EDI, and the needs of different communities, is reflected adequately.

5.1.1 Performance

The Council's performance metrics are good against the benchmarking data from LG Inform (mostly 2022/23 performance data except where stated) although there are several areas where data is missing including spending on health and leisure, housing levels of spend, net budget on economic development (2023/24 data), unemployment levels, and community safety spending. The full [LG Inform report](#) prepared for this CPC is available online.

Council tax collection rates are good, with 97.15% collected compared to 97.9% in the CIPFA group of nearest neighbours. Non-domestic rates collections are also good with 99.1% of business rates collected compared to 96.76% in England and average of 98.13% within the CIPFA group.

There were 17.5 households per thousand households on the housing waiting list, compared to 70.89 nationally, and an average of 38.2 households per thousand in the CIPFA group. 0.47 households per thousand were living in temporary accommodation compared to 4.7 households per thousand nationally, and an average of 1.03 in the CIPFA group. 73 affordable homes were built compared to 125 in the CIPFA comparison group.

Planning Services in 2023 Q4 demonstrated that NWLDC processed 91.4% of planning applications for major developments on time compared to 87.7% in England and 86.2% in the CIPFA group. On non-major developments, the council processed 86.5% of applications compared to 86.8% in England and 85.6% of in the CIPFA group. The new Local Plan has been out to consultation, resulting in around 650 responses. After these have been analysed and considered, the intention was to submit the plan for examination in mid-2025. In response to the new Government's priorities, this timetable has shifted appropriately.

Recycling and waste figures are good compared to the council's CIPFA nearest

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neighbour median amounts: 43% of household waste recycled (CIPFA group median 42.9%), residual waste (non-recycled) collected per household was 465.1kg CIPFA group median amount of 469.5kg). No data was available for recycling contamination.

There were 51.4 new businesses registered per 10,000 of the registered population aged 16 and above. This compared to 64.6 per 10,000 nationally and 55.8 per 10,000 in the CIPFA group.

Council Tax, along with fees and charges, has increased for 2024/25 after a long freeze period, with increases planned for future years. The council uses Power BI for benchmarking, which led them to identify the need for reviews of Waste and Parking. However, this was not made available to the Peer Team at the time of the peer challenge. The council could make more of the benchmarking so that residents, businesses and partners understand how NWLDC compares to other similar councils, for example through performance information on its website. The peer team recommends that NWLDC demonstrates its use of benchmarking to identify further opportunities for service efficiencies and financial savings.

Staff reported that there is a new performance management system which is bedding in. Staff the peer team engaged with, reported a lack of understanding how their role fits in with the wider picture, and a sense that councillors are not aware of the pressures that different roles have, particularly at different times of year.

The Council Delivery Plan (CDP) sets out the Alliance's eighteen key objectives. The Leader, Deputy Leader and Cabinet appear well aligned with their priorities. However, these priorities have not been turned into a strategic vision. Most of the 'business as usual' work of the Council consciously does not appear in the CDP. This is set out in Business and Service Plans, which councillors are briefed on at their regular portfolio and shadow portfolio briefings. Councillors could, however, be made more aware of the daily pressures staff face at these briefings. The peer team heard several times from staff that there is a lack of 'golden thread' between high level priorities and the day-to-day business of the council and its services. The peer team heard from councillors that they don't always see progress on their priorities and staff reported not being able to see what they are aiming for, nor how their own

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work fits in. All staff have access to an individual development review, where this can be explored in more depth. The peer team recommend reinforcing the links between the Council Delivery Plan, the Business and Service Plans, and individual Development Reviews, and ensure that the CDP, and associated business and service plans, continue to reflect the priorities for residents and businesses.

5.1.2 Housing Repairs

The council's concerns about Housing Repairs were a focus for this peer challenge, and the peers took time to consider this area carefully. It was not always clear whilst the team was on site what was known about, and what was already planned. This was because the Director with responsibility for Housing was on leave during the onsite work, and although there was a very positive and useful Teams meeting with the housing lead on the peer team before they were on leave, this did not allow for the usual further discussions at a senior level as evidence was collated.

The feedback below is to encourage NWLDC to continue along its path, and to be aware of the long-term nature of some of the changes it wants to make. The team also wants to ensure that councillors are aware of the depths of the challenges, and how much this may take officers away from some of the council's other priorities. In addition, the peer team would like to strongly encourage NWDLDC to work with others, including the LGA's transformation programme, and other councils that have been in similar situations, to enable them to advance quickly on its improvement journey.

It is important to note that the peers were impressed with the dedication of Housing staff, who are passionate about the role of housing services but are very concerned about the quality and the impact of the housing repairs service.

NWLDC is aware of the need to improve the service, and has set up a Housing Improvement Plan, supported by a Board of councillors, to oversee the recovery of the service. New managers are in place, and a service restructure is beginning to take shape. The backlog of repairs is significant, and the council has appointed an external contractor specifically to clear this. The peer team agreed that this was a

good way forward.

Staffing, systems, processes and culture in the service mean that repairs are not adequately recorded or managed, and this leads to errors at all stages. Staff reported that the council cannot currently satisfy itself that the repairs backlog or current planned repairs lists are accurate. Whilst on site, live examples of this inefficiency were provided to the peer team involving separate incidents on the same day. A new team manager role has been created as part of the restructure to address this issue specifically. The technology that is already available is not being maximised, and staff reported little transactional capability on the tenant portal.

Furthermore, there is a disconnect between those taking repairs calls, and operatives carrying out those repairs. The repairs are reported to be not always allocated in a way which maximises the skills and time of the operatives, which can lead to inefficiencies and delays. The peer team heard that poor behaviours were being reported but changes in behaviour were not always apparent or leading to improved efficiency. At the time of the review, there were also vacancies across two management tiers, leading to understandable reduced management support for improvement to the culture of the service.

The peer team recommends a wholesale process mapping and review of systems and processes as part of the Transformation agenda to satisfy the council that the issues will not recur. Since the review, the council reported that this is in place. When this exercise is completed, and relevant changes implemented, this should lead to a marked improvement in efficiency and productivity.

Twelve tenant satisfaction measures are much lower than the council would want to hear from its tenants, for example, 36% of tenants are dissatisfied with the repairs service. This is an area that the Housing Regulator will explore. The Council is working to address this; however, no comparator data was available to compare the Council with at the time of the review.

Culture change takes time, and usually meets with resistance before it embeds in any organisation. The peer team encourages NWLDC to continue apace with its plans for Housing Repairs but to be patient about how long it might take for plans to

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be fully realised.

5.1.3 Economic Growth

This was one of the focus areas for the council, and the peer team spent considerable time on this area. The peer team feel that the council is taking advantage of its good fortune being centrally located and has excellent road transport links to the rest of the country. There are several key development zones within the district and the council is in the enviable position of having one of the highest economic growth rates in the country.

These circumstances are beneficial to the council and its residents, partly with the income from Business Rates retention, but also because of the employment opportunities this provides for the residents of the district. Local firms in supply chains could benefit from the economic development that others may be driving which brings positive outcomes from NWLDC residents and businesses. The peer team visited one of the sites being developed, talked with several different partners and read documents provided to the team by the council.

There are misconceptions locally, including within the councillor cohort about the logistics sector. Such developments were referred to, several times during the peer challenge by different councillors, as “just big sheds” and being all low grade and low paid jobs “not what we want”. However, the logistics sector has a wide variety of jobs including highly technical and highly skilled. There are roles for local residents with varying levels of education and experience. The council has a role in addressing these myths and ensuring residents see the opportunities they could have.

The council is developing a new Local Plan. The peer team highly recommends that the council maximises every opportunity for networking to continue to build relationships across relevant sectors, and subsequently direct development in the way that it wants. Otherwise, the council risks the situation where developments and growth happen ‘to’ the district, rather than ‘with’ the district. The council needs to be at the heart of influencing and leading the growth that it wants to see. The peer team saw and heard several strong examples of where NWLDC had outlined its expectation of new developments to a very high standard, which had subsequently been delivered. NWLDC shouldn’t underestimate its ability to influence appropriate

development.

The East Midlands Freeport is an important part of the economic growth picture for the district. The council has been involved in the development of the Freeport company, with a councillor a regular and active attender of board meetings, as well as legal and planning work. The councillor representing NWLDC on the board was not available to talk to the peer team, so feedback from the team is therefore only able to report on what it heard, saw and read whilst on site and in background reading.

The LGA and the peer team recognise that some of the issues that arise for the development that goes alongside the Freeport are challenging and can be political contentious and very sensitive for different communities. Some decisions may be outside the reach of the District Council and that they may be hard to reconcile with local priorities. Communication is key to how decisions are felt by the council, local residents and businesses. The peer team recommends working more closely with the Freeport team in the [Planning Advisory Service \(PAS\)](#) to help navigate those challenging areas sensitively.

Every freeport site is different, but there is value in engaging with different councils working with different freeports, sharing challenges and successes with this new way of working. This should help ensure that locally, NWLDC leads some developments, and influences others as much as possible to come out with the best options for its residents and businesses. It is a means to an end, not an end in itself, providing a great opportunity to create more jobs, drive regeneration and improve the skills and aspirations for local residents complementing the regeneration and other economic work that the council is doing. It is worth noting, however, that the impact of the Freeport is a high corporate and economic risk, and the peer team would expect that it is included on the Corporate Risk Register. The peer team recommends that NWLDC continues to engage actively and positively with the Freeport. Its role as Community leader is not to be underestimated when dispelling myths and addressing resident concerns.

At the time of the peer challenge, the District-wide regeneration plan was in development and was not available to the peer team. The team suggests that

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external communications around all the various economic development projects and sites, regardless of which organisation is leading it, could be brought together to maximise the benefits of all the work that the council is doing, and the opportunities all the developments bring to the residents and businesses in the district. This includes the Coalville regeneration programme, the District-wide regeneration programme, and the overall Economic Growth Strategy (including the work with the Freeport where appropriate).

5.2 Organisational and place leadership

The Chief Executive and Leader are both well respected by partners who spoke highly of NWLDC. However, there are examples where improved partnership working could boost the reputation of the council, and influence decisions taken at a regional and sub-regional level to maximise the benefits to the residents and businesses in the district. Relationships are good with the County Council on one level, but there are reports that partners within the district would appreciate support from NWLDC in working with the County.

The peer team recognises that the work that the council has done to date has been supporting setting up the East Midlands Freeport (EMF). Members took decisions to enable the council to be part of the EMF company once formed and the council's engagement will move to the next phase of work. The peer team recognises the sensitivities around the EMF and recommend that NWLDC works with PAS to help the balance of its various roles as Planning Authority, Interested Party, and Community Leader.

Relations between councillors and officers are broadly good. However, there are examples where increased two-way trust would lead to a more productive relationship, and subsequently better service delivery. The peer team recommends that the council considered how senior councillors and senior officers work together to demonstrate local leadership from a united council. Further work could be considered on developing increased understanding by councillors of how strategic decisions relate to 'business as usual'. The council could also identify opportunities for councillors to have a higher profile both internally and externally, with the support of senior officers, without becoming operational managers. The LGA can help with

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relevant development workshops.

The nuances of the current political arrangements are well managed but a longer-term view of this is needed. Full Council meetings can feel like an unknown quantity, and officers must prepare for multiple scenarios before every meeting. This increases the workload and reduces efficiency. The peer team recommends that all councillors recognise the impact this has on how effectively staff can work and consider ways to minimise this effect.

Positive advocacy of cross-regional working by Councillors would strengthen the council's reputation and voice as a significant place in the region. It would strengthen the district's visibility and increase the impact and influence with partners and inward investment (for example EMF). NWLDC also has some strong examples it could use to raise its own profile within the region and indeed the sector, whether in regeneration or adapting to a changing political landscape.

Having now worked together for just over a year, there is also the opportunity for leading councillors to reflect on how they view a longer-term arrangement, to the next election. The peer team recommends that councillors consider what has worked well so far, and what could be improved in both their political relationships, and with senior officers.

5.3 Governance and culture

The Leader has provided stability in an environment of 'No Overall Control'. However, the political change is beginning to be felt by officers. Honest, strategic conversations are needed between the Cabinet and senior officers, and with the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) to ensure that the focus is on the long-term future for the council.

The Risk Register is a live document demonstrating how risks are mitigated. Councillors are aware of its importance and the consequence of different corporate risks. The East Midlands Freeport did not appear on the Corporate Risk Register, despite it having a significant impact on future economic, employment and development prospects. The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) provides an opportunity to demonstrate Councillors' oversight and management of risk.

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The emerging People Strategy needs to reflect and address the high levels of staff turnover in key areas, particularly where there are critical vacancies, for example in Housing. The council should continue to look at what it can do differently to help recruit in these areas. NWLDC is part of an East Midlands Councils group focusing on recruitment and retention, which has enabled shared learning and ideas. It could also work with neighbouring authorities to explore partnership recruitment possibilities. The council is also participating in Impact – The Local Government Graduate Development Programme and has a graduate starting in September 2024.

The Transformation programme was in its infancy at the time of the Peer Challenge. Councillors backed the programme at a high level with a budget of £500,000, but key dates and goals will need to be agreed to ensure the programme's success. A clear programme of activities, owners, milestones, benefits realisation, dependent parties and councillor involvement would help add focus to delivery.

This is an opportunity to comprehensively oversee what the council does, and what it wants to do, and review how to deliver its aims. The LGA's Transformation Programme can help NWLDC with specific elements or overall with its transformation agenda through resources and information on its [Transformation Hub](#). Support is provided to councillors as well as officers to enable them to engage fully with the transformation process and ensure that the council is driving forward in the same direction. The peer team encourages NWLDC to engage with this support, most of which is available free of charge.

Since the peer challenge, the council reports that things have moved on with the Transformation Programme. Key staff posts have been advertised, and concrete plans have been developed. A Communications Plan has now been developed, alongside the Transformation Programme. The Communications Team has already been identified as needing an uplift in resources to ensure the extra demands needed by the Transformation Programme. Plans are owned by the Cabinet who monitor performance regularly and Scrutiny is also involved. The peer challenge took place too early in the process for this work to have started, and the peer team did not hear about this work. It is good to see progress is being made.

Current regular internal communications tend to be in a broadcast style. Staff

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roadshows were held to capture ideas from staff to help shape the Transformation Programme, but the council could maximise the skills and knowledge of the skilled staff in the Communications Team more, who can advise how to ensure that staff can be actively engaged, using multiple channels of empowering two-way engagement. The Internal Comms plan was not available at the time of the Peer Challenge, and the Transformation Communications Plan was being developed. Enabling the Communications team to lead more on internal comms with additional capacity will support the Transformation work. The peer team recommend that NWLDC continues its engagement with LGA Communications, more information available: [Comms Hub – communications support | Local Government Association](#)

5.4 Financial planning and management

The last audited accounts for the council were 2020/21, signed off unqualified in April 2023. There were no identified risks of significant weakness in relation to Financial Sustainability, Governance, or improving economy efficiency and effectiveness. Risks of significant weakness were identified for Governance linked to statutory financial reporting, because of inaccurate property records and insufficient capacity in the Finance Team. However, this is some time in the past, and officers have been working with external auditors since that time to address this.

NWLDC will be changing external auditors for the audit of 2023/24 Statement of Accounts onwards. It will be important that the council manages well the production of remaining outstanding financial statements and the transition from current to new external auditors. The council has recognised that need, and reports that engagement with the new auditors is progressing well.

The council is forecasting a General Fund revenue overspend for 2023/34 of £333,000. In-year pressures for 2023/24 have been largely offset by additional investment income and savings on financing costs due to slippage on the Capital programme. The council has set a balanced budget for 2024/25 with savings of £1.7m in place but it was not completely clear at the time of the peer challenge what the methodology was for identifying, delivering and capturing savings for 2024/25 onwards. It will be important to robustly manage delivery of these savings. The council has taken steps to reduce the forecast scale of deficit for 2028/29 from circa

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£4m to £1.9m.

The council receives significant funding from the Business Rates Retention scheme. The new UK government may review this scheme and NWLDC will need to consider as a potential risk, what effect this might have on its local forecasting. Timescales on reviewing the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) need to be clear, along with managing and delivering outcomes. The council recognises that this is something it needs to keep abreast of.

The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is high-level. It could be affected by the new UK government's plans. The MTFP does not yet capture costs associated with the council's plans to be carbon neutral by 2030. Since the peer challenge, the council has reported that this is being done. The peer team recommends scenario planning, considering how to reflect its future pressures, and looking at a variety of outcomes, including potential changes to business rates income and how these might affect the scale of savings plans required.

The Council is currently developing a Finance Improvement Plan to clearly capture all planned improvements underway in the Finance Service, Systems and Processes and to set clear delivery objectives and timescales. The peer team recommends that it will be important to keep under robust review and to report management, performance and value of Commercial Property Investments.

5.5 Capacity for improvement

Staff are motivated and enthusiastic about delivering good work. They are keen to support the new political administration in achieving its aims. There is some very good work being done around staff welfare, including informal social activities as well as formal support. However, not all activities are accessible to all staff, particularly if they are not based in the Whitwick Business Centre. NWLDC recognises this risk, and a health and wellbeing plan has recently been developed to address this.

Staff are understandably nervous about the future, and what the Transformation agenda may hold for them, but new senior staff, including a new Chief Executive, have helped to enthuse officers and renew their commitment to the district.

The work that NWLDC did with the LGA to develop a council narrative is being

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embedded across the council. It has been used in full in the Council Delivery Plan, words and phrases are used in the Communications Strategy and is being used in recruitment and in customer contacts.

NWLDC has gained Investors In People at Silver which is an excellent achievement and the trajectory to Gold by 2025 is sound and progressive. However, the peer team heard that a high level of sickness absence in public facing services such as Waste and Housing is having a detrimental effect on managing change in those areas, and the team did not see a plan to address this, although it was identified in the Transformation Plan.

Support is provided by Human Resources (HR) to raise awareness of the impacts of making assumptions and unconscious bias, neurodiversity, and value of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) on the internal leadership programme. However, it is not clear if the impact of this support has been evaluated to demonstrate if this is making a difference.

In enhancing both customer contact and communications the peer team noted exceptional commitment of the officers involved and the clarity of their thinking on the opportunities that exist to improve the web site and their willingness to create new ways of working.

The Customer Contact programme is designed with a clear understanding of the potential benefits and articulation of the resources required to achieve an improvement in Customer Experience. The £33k opportunity needs to be translated into deliverable savings for the Council, more commensurate with the investment levels, with clarity on how reduced officer hours will translate into actual payroll savings or redeployment to vacant roles. There may be external third-party dependencies and unidentified costs in redesigning e-forms for revenues and benefits claims as they are delivered through the shared services organization.

6. Next steps

It is recognised that senior political and managerial leadership will want to consider, discuss and reflect on these findings. The LGA will continue to provide on-going

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support to the council. As part of the CPC, the council are also required to have a progress review and publish the findings from this within twelve months of the CPC. The LGA will also publish the progress review report on their website.

The progress review will provide space for a council's senior leadership to report to peers on the progress made against each of the CPC's recommendations, discuss early impact or learning and receive feedback on the implementation of the CPC action plan. The progress review will usually be delivered on-site over one day. The Progress Review at North West Leicestershire District Council is due by the end of April 2025.

In the meantime, Mark Edgell, Principal Adviser for the East Midlands, is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. As outlined above, Mark is available to discuss any further support the council requires.

Mark.Edgell@local.gov.uk.

Area	Ref	Recommendations	Response & Actions	By	Change to Constitution	Timescale A 1-3 months B 3-6 months C 6-12+ months
Relationships	1	Build relations between councillors, and between councillors and officers through a programme of development workshops to build trust and openness	<p>The Chief Executive and Directors meet with the leading group fortnightly to discuss a range of topics and embryonic policy development.</p> <p>Officers have regular Portfolio Holder and shadow Portfolio Holder meetings.</p> <p>The Chief Executive meets with political groups by invitation.</p> <p>Informal workshops are held on key topics of interest (waste service, budget, housing improvement, audit).</p> <p>A comprehensive member induction is held following Council elections. Investment has been made in a member development and training programme.</p> <p>Cross party working informally and formally on key projects – i.e. waste review.</p> <p>Members views on how to address this recommendation specially will be sought through Corporate Scrutiny and Cabinet meetings. Would external support (for example from the LGA) assist with helping to address this recommendation?</p>	Chief Executive	No	Ongoing but additional items over the next 6-12 months.
Risk Management	2	Use the Risk Register and the Annual Governance Statement to raise situational awareness and future concerns	<p>The Corporate Risk Register is regularly reported to Audit and Governance Committee and to Corporate Leadership Team.</p> <p>The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is presently drafted by the Section 151 Officer and subsequently reviewed by both the Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer. In the future the AGS will be developed in</p>	Director Resources	No	12 months

			<p>partnership with the corporate leadership team and aligned with the Oflog best value guidance.</p> <p>The Council has been recognised as an exemplar by the LGA for its work on Governance and Assurance</p> <p>Departmental and Service Plans contain risk registers to cover their specific areas of service across the Council.</p> <p>A Corporate Risk Group has been established comprising representatives from each department to oversee the development of the corporate and service risk registers and to regularly review the Council's approach to risk management and to ensure key risks have been identified and mitigating actions put in place.</p> <p>Training for CLT and extended leadership team and members has been delivered.</p>			
Financial Management	3	Ensure that financial transactions and contracts are under consistent and robust review	<p>The Council has recently procured the services of V4 – a procurement and contracts specialist to provide additional procurement support to the Council.</p> <p>The key focus will be the finalising a new Procurement Strategy and support in maintaining robust contracts' register that is regularly reviewed by CLT to ensure the Council is compliant with its contract procedures.</p> <p>The introduction of the Procurement Act 2023 provides additional complexity to procurement activity. A task and finish group is currently reviewing the changes to systems and processes. A key element of this is the review of the Council's contract procedure rules. This work is already in train, however, V4 should be able to provide additional advice and support.</p> <p>Officers will also receive training in respect of the Procurement Act 2023.</p>	Director of Resources	Yes – change to contract procedure rules.	6 months

			<p>The S151 Officer has been working closely with the new external auditors to ensure successful transition and good progress has been made in publishing the 2021/22 and 2022/23 Statement of Accounts. In respect of the Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 the Council will not be in a position to meet the backstop date like many councils across the Country. The Council is not an outlier in this regard; however, the S151 Officer has made contact with MHCLG to inform them of this and awaits further guidance. The Council's external auditors is fully sighted on this issue and will be working closely with the Council to mitigate this position.</p> <p>Significant work has been undertaken with the Council's Internal Audit Service to ensure a comprehensive Internal Audit Plan is delivered.</p>			
<p>Communications</p>	4	<p>Establish a thorough two-way Corporate Communications Engagement Plan</p>	<p>The Corporate Communications Strategy is updated every year. This year includes a focus on developing new channels for internal communications. This includes internal comms brand "We are NWL".</p> <p>A separate Communications Strategy has been developed for the Council's transformation programme and is being rolled out. Staff roadshows took place in July and in early November across the Council including for front-line and remote workers.</p> <p>Virtual "in conversation" topic-based all-staff information and dialogue sessions are planned, the first one being in respect of governance.</p> <p>There is an expanded weekly all-staff email and there are now knowledge sharing events in place. There are also specific communications plans for certain activities and areas – e.g. Transformation and the Housing Service.</p>	Chief Executive	No	Completed

Transformation	5	Enhance the newly adopted Transformation Plan with a clear set of financial outcomes, deliverable dates, benefits, third party dependencies and risks across all programme areas	<p>A monitoring form has been established with key metrics for the delivery of each project/scheme. This is monitored by the Transformation Steering Group.</p> <p>The successful appointment of a Transformation Programme Officer, together with the LGA Graduate, will ensure that all future projects/schemes are regularly reviewed.</p> <p>Transformation performance is reported regularly to Members as part of the quarterly performance monitoring to Cabinet and Scrutiny including the monitoring of the £500k allocated for transformation work.</p> <p>Business cases for new projects and schemes are reviewed by the Council's Transformation Steering Group, with funding requests drawn from the £500k Transformation Fund.</p>	Director of Resources	No	12 months
Housing	6	Conduct a wholesale process mapping and review of systems in Housing Repairs	<p>The Council has recognised its housing service is not providing as good a service as it should be. In recognition of this Cabinet set up a Housing Improvement Board in the Spring 2024 consisting of representatives of all major political parties and is working its way through a number of topics including repairs management and has already drawn up a Housing Improvement Plan.</p> <p>Between the Peer Review and the publication of this action plan the Council has already reviewed its repairs policy. This has gained political agreement and has been actioned.</p> <p>Since the Peer Review a whole home contractor has been procured to assist with the management and delivery of the repairs service, focusing on the work in progress and delayed repairs delivery.</p> <p>At the time of the Peer Review there were significant gaps in the housing management team inhibiting the ability to deliver services. Significant work has been undertaken over the summer to recruit to key roles to enable the delivery of the service and progress improvements. A Knowledge Information Management self-assessment as set out by the Regulator for Social Housing has also been undertaken and an action plan will be developed. In addition, work around the culture issues covered in the</p>	Director Communities	No	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Within 6/12 months</p>

			report are and continue to be addressed as part of the Improvement Plan process.			
External Stakeholders	7	Engage more proactively in partnership working in all settings, ensuring the maximum benefit for the district's businesses and residents	The Council has reinvigorated its Parish Liaison meetings, including being led by a member of the senior leadership team. The Chief Executive, Director of Resources and other members of the CLT have attended a meeting of parish clerks and have agreed to share the Council's Forward Plan in the future to ensure that key items of interest are flagged in advance.	Director of Communities	No	Completed and ongoing in terms of Forward Plan
			The Council has recently agreed a District-wide Regeneration Frameworks to sit alongside its Coalville Regeneration Framework. The Council engaged with a range of partners in its development and will work closely with key partners on its delivery over the next few years.	Director of Place	No	12 months Annual Review
			The Chief Executive will continue to have regular planned 'catch up' meetings with the two MPs covering North West Leicestershire, Trade Unions, The National Forest Company, East Midlands Airport, Health providers, the East Midlands Freeport and social housing providers.	Chief Executive	No	Ongoing
			The Chief Executive will continue to play an active role in the District Chief Executives' meeting for Leicestershire as well as the Public Sector Leaders' meeting involving the County Council, City Council, Police, Health and Government Department liaison officers.			
			The Leader will continue to attend the Leicestershire District Leaders' meeting on a quarterly basis and will be participating in a MPs Summit in December. North West Leicestershire will be chairing the Leaders' meeting in 2025/26.	Leading Members	No	Ongoing

		<p>A member of the Alliance has recently represented the Alliance administration at the annual Local Government Association Conference and plays a leading role in the Independent Group of the LGA.</p> <p>Cabinet members are also well represented on other sub regional boards such as the East Midlands Freeport.</p> <p>Members are also regular attendees at other meetings such as Parish Councils and represent the Council on other boards and forums as agreed at Annual Council.</p> <p>Members of CLT attend a range of local, regional and national forums on topic specific issues.</p> <p>The Head of HR and Organisational Development leads the Council's work with the Local Resilience Partnership</p> <p>The Council is also currently collaborating with East Midlands Councils on project to support recruitment and retention of key staff to support its emerging Workforce Strategy which will be considered by CLT in December. A Health and Wellbeing Strategy was approved for consultation earlier this year and is being finalised.</p> <p>The Council is on course for its Investor in People assessment in March 2025.</p>	CLT	No	12 months and ongoing
			Head of HR and OD	No	Ongoing
			Head of HR and OD	No	6 months

Appendix C

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 5 DECEMBER 2024

25. LGA PEER REVIEW

The Chief Executive presented the report.

A discussion was had about the Council's engagement with local businesses and attention to their needs, with some Members expressing some concern, particularly regarding the logistics industry. The Chief Executive advised that the Peer Review Team recognised the active Economic Development Team who had forged strong links with local businesses. She had personally visited many of the large employers in the district, and was aware of their needs, views and what they offered to the district's employment profile.

The Chair requested a profile of how logistics employment within the district was distributed. The Chief Executive said she would consult with the Economic Development Team and would arrange for relevant data to be shared with the Committee.

An extended discussion was had about the Freeport. Members expressed some concern about engagement with some local stakeholders, governance arrangements and communications with Members. The Chief Executive advised that the Infrastructure Portfolio Holder represented the Council on the Board, whilst she and the Strategic Director of Place had regular briefings with Labour Group leaders and the shadow Portfolio Holder. She had also suggested to the Chief Executive of the Freeport that they broadened their community engagement activities to involve local parishes and local ward Members. Any company wishing to locate within the Freeport had to pass rigorous checks.

In response to a question about communications with Council staff, the Chief Executive explained how the Council Delivery Plan fed into service level plans and then down to personal development reviews. There were regular staff roadshows, workshops for senior officers, as well as knowledge sharing events with front line staff. This was a work in progress but a key area of importance to her. Relatedly, she wanted to know Members preferences regarding Member Development Workshops which could be led by the LGA or senior officers at the Council.

Members asked several procedural questions. The Chief Executive explained who the peer review team membership had been. The Strategic Director of Communities, himself a peer reviewer on occasion, advised that findings always reflected a consensus position agreed between the peer reviewers, and were then moderated for fairness and balance by LGA specialists. He did note nevertheless that there were some inevitable limitations with the three-day snapshot model of peer review.

Several Members commended the positive findings and welcomed the wide basis of consultation. The Chief Executive also clarified that all participants had been thanked with a personal letter from her.

The Chair invited the Portfolio Holder to address the Committee.

The Portfolio Holder addressed the committee. He felt some of the profiling data around employment in the district, requested by the Chair, might be regarded as commercially sensitive, and so businesses would likely be reluctant to provide it.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments which would be presented to the Cabinet on 17 December 2024.

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – TUESDAY, 17 DECEMBER 2024



Title of Report	CONSULTATION ON ENABLING REMOTE ATTENDANCE AND PROXY VOTING AT LOCAL AUTHORITY MEETINGS	
Presented by	Councillor Keith Merrie MBE Infrastructure Portfolio Holder PH Briefed <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
Background Papers	Enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings - GOV.UK Consultation on enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings report and minutes – Corporate Scrutiny Committee – 5 December 2024	Public Report: Yes Key Decision: Yes
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Should the requirements for holding and attending meetings change in the future, the financial implications (if any) will be assessed at that time. Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	Currently paragraph 39 of Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires councillors to attend meetings in person in order to take part in the debate and vote. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the then government passed the Coronavirus Act 2020. Section 78 of the 2020 Act authorised the making of regulations to make provision for the way Members may attend, speak at, vote in, or otherwise participate in, local authority meetings. The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 facilitated this and enabled formal council meetings to take place remotely. The regulations were limited in application to local authority meetings to be held or held before 7 May 2021. The 2020 Act was repealed on 24 March 2024. A change in the law would be required to enable remote attendance and proxy voting of Members at meetings. Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	

Staffing and Corporate Implications	<p>There are no staffing implications arising directly from this report.</p> <p>Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes</p>
Purpose of Report	<p>To ask that Cabinet considers and agrees the Council's response to the Government's consultation enabling remote meetings and proxy voting.</p>
Reason for Decision	<p>To enable the Council to submit a response to the Government's consultation on Enabling remote meetings and proxy voting at local authority meetings.</p>
Recommendations	<p>THAT CABINET:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CONSIDERS THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION TO NOT SUPPORT THE INTRODUCTION OF PROXY VOTING AND DETERMINES WHETHER IT WISHES TO INCLUDE THIS IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION 10 OF THE CONSULTATION 2. ENDORSES THE SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S CONSULTATION ON "ENABLING REMOTE MEETINGS AND PROXY VOTING AT LOCAL AUTHORITY MEETINGS", SUBJECT TO CABINET'S POSITION ON QUESTION 10 BEING INCORPORATED AND AUTHORISES THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE TO SUBMIT THE RESPONSE ON THE COUNCIL'S BEHALF 3. NOTES THAT THE CONSULTATION IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS UNTIL 19 DECEMBER 2024.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Currently the law requires that councillors attend formal Council meetings in person in order to take part in the debate and vote (Schedule 12, Local Government Act 1972). Councillors are required to exercise their own votes and proxy voting is not allowed. During the Covid 19 Pandemic the then Government enacted temporary legislation which enabled formal council meetings to be held remotely with councillors being able to join the debate and vote (The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020). Many councillors will recall meetings held during this period via Microsoft Teams. The Council successfully held a range of meetings which also included public participation, such as Planning Committee.
- 1.2 The regulations came to an end automatically on 7 May 2021 and the Council returned to full in person meetings in line with any social distancing restrictions in place at the time.

- 1.3 The return to in person meetings was challenged in Judicial Review proceedings by the Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO), Lawyers in Local Government (LLG) and Hertfordshire County Council in 2021. The Court refused to extend the emergency temporary regulations and determined that this was a policy matter to be considered by Parliament, requiring new legislation and not by the courts.

2.0 GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

- 2.1 The Deputy Prime Minister's speech at the Local Government Association (LGA) conference included an announcement about the consultation on proposals for remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings.
- 2.2 For ease of reference, find here the full text of the speech – [Local Government Association Conference - GOV.UK](#).
- 2.3 The consultation entitled "Enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings" can be found here [Enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings - GOV.UK](#). This consultation will close at 11.59pm on 19 December 2024. The consultation is open to individuals, councillors and councils.
- 2.4 Details of the consultation have been shared with all members via email, on the members hub and the Leader referred to it in his announcement at Council on 5 November 2024, encouraging Members to respond. The Leader requested that Corporate Scrutiny Committee consider the issue at its meeting on 5 December 2024 to enable Members to debate the issue before Cabinet.
- 2.5 As well as submitting their own consultation responses, Members were invited to share any views on the questions with the Democratic Services Team Manager before the Scrutiny Committee, to enable any comments to be considered at the meeting. No views were received from individual members.
- 2.6 A copy of the consultation and the Council's response is attached at Appendix A to this report.

3.0 COMMENTS FROM CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 5 DECEMBER 2024

- 3.1 The Committee expressed broad support for the proposal of enabling remote meetings and felt that there should be limitations on the use of remote attendance, though the detail of those limitations would need further consideration, should the legislation change.
- 3.2 In relation to proxy voting at meetings, the Committee voted unanimously in favour of proxy voting not being introduced as part of any legislation changes. It was felt all Members should be able to listen and take full part in the debate, before making a decision on how to vote. It was proposed to recommend to Cabinet that the response to question 10 be stated to be 'no'. Cabinet is asked to consider this recommendation and make a decision as to whether this response to question 10 should be adopted. Subject to the response to this question being confirmed, Cabinet is being asked to endorse the response to the consultation as attached to this report.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	A well-run council
Policy Considerations:	The Council's Constitution would need to be reviewed and amended to take account of remote meetings should the legislation change to allow them.
Safeguarding:	None
Equalities/Diversity:	An Equalities Impact Assessment would need to be completed should the legislation change, and the Council needs to consider how it implements any changes to the way it runs its formal council meetings.
Customer Impact:	None directly arising at this time. The impact on customers would need to be considered should the legislation change, and the Council needs to give thought to how it runs its formal council meetings.
Economic and Social Impact:	None directly arising at this time.
Environment, Climate Change and zero carbon:	None directly arising at this time.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	Public Government Consultation.
Risks:	None directly arising at this time.
Officer Contact	Kate Hiller Interim Head of Legal and Support Services and Monitoring Officer Kate.Hiller@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

APPENDIX A – SUGGESTED CONSULTATION RESPONSE

QUESTION 1

Please tick all that apply - are you responding to this consultation as:

b) a council body – if so please indicate which local authority type

- Town or Parish Council
- District or Borough Council ✓
- Unitary Authority
- County Council
- Combined Authority / Combined County Authority
- Fire and Rescue Authority
- Police and Crime Panel
- Other local authority type - please state

THE PROPOSAL FOR REMOTE ATTENDANCE

The Government intends to legislate to give local authorities the flexibility to allow elected members to attend formal council meetings remotely. We believe that this modernising measure of providing broad flexibility to enable remote attendance will have the dual positive impacts of diversifying the representation of those willing and able to stand for elected office and enhance the resilience of local authorities in the face of local or national emergencies.

The intent is that this legislative change would give local authorities the flexibility to allow members to attend remotely.

QUESTION 2

Do you agree with the broad principle of granting local authorities powers to allow remote attendance at formal meetings?

Yes/No

If you answered No to the above question please go directly to question 4.

QUESTION 3

If you answered Yes to the above question, do you think that there should be specific limitations on remote attendance? -

Please tick all the options below that correspond with your view and use the free text box for any other comments.

a) Any formal meeting allowing remote attendance should have at least two thirds of members in physical attendance.

b) Members should only be able to attend Council meetings remotely in exceptional circumstances, such as those who are medically or physically unable to attend, or for reasons of local or national emergencies.

~~c) There should be no limitations placed upon councils with regard to setting arrangements for remote attendance of council meetings, up to and including full remote attendance.~~

d) [Free text box]

Question 4

If you are an elected member can you anticipate that you personally may seek to attend some of your council meetings remotely?

- yes
- no
- I am not an elected member

Question 4a

If you answered No please use the free text below

[Free text box]

Question 4b

If you answered Yes, could you indicate below which of the following options best describes your likely pattern of attending meetings remotely –

- very occasionally
- from time to time
- regularly but not always
- all the time

Question 5

If you are responding to this consultation on behalf of a council as a whole, what proportion of the Council's current elected members are likely to seek to attend Council meetings remotely over the course of a year?

- less than 10%
- more than 10% but less than 50%
- more than 50% but less than 90%

- ~~most of them 90% to 100%~~

QUESTION 6

The Government recognises that there may be cases in which it is necessary for councils to hold meetings fully remotely. Do you think there should be limitations placed on the number of fully remote meetings councils should be able to hold?

- a) ~~Councils should be able to allow full remote attendance at up to half of council meetings within a twelve month calendar period.~~
- b) Councils should only have the flexibility to change a meeting from in-person to online, or vice versa, due to unforeseen and exceptional circumstances.
- c) ~~Councils should not have the flexibility to conduct fully remote meetings to ensure there is always an in-person presence~~
- d) [Free Text Box]

QUESTION 7

Do you think there are there any necessary procedural measures that would help to ensure a remote or hybrid attendance policy is workable and efficient?

Please tick all the options that correspond with your view and use the free text box for any other comments.

- a) Councils should be required to publish a list of attendees joining the meeting remotely and give notice if a meeting is being held with full remote attendance.
- b) Councils should be required to ensure that standard constitutional arrangements are followed for hybrid and fully remote meetings.
- c) Councils should be required to make arrangements to ensure restricted items (where a Council decision is taken in private to protect confidentiality) are managed appropriately and to require remotely attending members to join from a private location.
- d) Other – Should the Government progress with this legislation, this Council puts forwards a recommendation that the Local Government Association, in consultation with local authorities and other professional associations, such as the Association of Democratic Services and Lawyers in Local Government, produces a standard constitutional template for local authorities to adopt.

QUESTION 8

Do you think legislative change to allow councillors to attend local authority meetings remotely should or should not be considered for the following reasons?

Tick all the statements below that apply to your point of view.

Should be considered because**Should not be considered because**

It is a positive modernising measure.

~~Councillors should be physically present at all formal meetings.~~

It would likely increase the diversity of people willing and able to stand for election in their local area, making councils more representative of the communities they serve.

It could lead to a significant number of councillors habitually attending remotely and ultimately reduce the effectiveness of councils.

Councils would be more resilient in the event of local or national emergencies which prevent in-person attendance.

It would be more difficult for councillors to build personal working relationships with colleagues, and engage with members of the public in attendance at meetings.

Free text box – please state any other reasons

Free text box – please state any other reasons

QUESTION 9

In your view, would allowing councillors to attend formal local authority meetings remotely according to their needs particularly benefit or disadvantage individuals with protected characteristics, for example those with disabilities or caring responsibilities? -

Please tick an option below:

- it would benefit members
- ~~it would disadvantage members~~
- ~~neither~~

Please use the text box below to make any further comment on this question.

PROXY VOTING

Proxy voting is a form of voting whereby a member of a decision-making body may delegate their voting power to another representative to enable a vote in their absence.

It is possible some members may find that, due to their personal circumstances, they are temporarily unable to participate in meetings even if remote attendance provisions are in place. Provisions for proxy voting could provide additional flexibility to those who really need it on a time-limited basis, allowing affected members to indirectly exercise their democratic duty, participate in their local authority's governance, and ensure that their views are taken into consideration. In the context of local authorities, the representative would have to be another elected member of the local authority.

QUESTION 10

In addition to provisions allowing for remote attendance, do you consider that it would be helpful to introduce proxy voting?

- yes
- no
- unsure

QUESTION 11

If yes, for which of the following reasons which may prohibit a member's participation in council meetings do you consider it would be appropriate?

Please select all that apply:

- physical or medical conditions
- caring responsibilities
- parental leave or other responsibilities
- other [Free text box]

QUESTION 12

Are there circumstances in which you feel proxy voting would not be appropriate?

QUESTION 13

If you think proxy voting is appropriate, are there any limitations you think should be placed upon it?

[Free text box]

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – TUESDAY, 17 DECEMBER 2024



Title of Report	DRAFT LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY	
Presented by	Councillor Tony Saffell Planning Portfolio Holder PH Briefed: yes	
Background Papers	Local Habitat Map webpages which support/accompany the draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy https://haveyoursay.leicestershire.gov.uk/local-nature-recovery-strategy-local-habitat-map Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023	Public Report: Yes
		Key Decision: Yes
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	The preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies is a new statutory duty placed on Local Government. There are also statutory requirements to be followed in the process for preparing/publishing the strategy, as well as complying with the Councils Constitutional requirements.	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	Potential resource implications for the Planning Policy Team who will need to take the LNRS into account in the preparation of Local and Neighbourhood Plans.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	The purpose of the report is to present to the Cabinet the draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland to seek approval for it to go out to public consultation. Although the LNRS would not be adopted at this stage and would only be a draft going to consultation, the Council's Legal Service has previously advised that Cabinet approval would still be required, due to the requirement for the draft having to be in an approved form.	
Reason for Decision	Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new statutory duty placed	

	<p>on local government in England, as part of the Environment Act 2021. It requires local authorities to work together to develop Local Nature Recovery Strategies across 48 areas in England.</p> <p>Under the Environment Act 2021, Leicestershire County Council was appointed the 'responsible authority' for the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.</p> <p>Leicestershire County Council requires each of the seven local authorities in Leicestershire to seek authority to go out to public consultation.</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>THAT CABINET:</p> <p>APPROVES THE DRAFT LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY, REFERRED TO IN PARAGRAPH 3.7 BELOW, TO GO OUT TO PUBLIC CONSULTATION</p>

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 As part of the Environment Act 2021 the Government introduced the requirement to develop Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) across England. There are 48 LNRS areas across England.
- 1.2 This new mandatory system of spatial strategies will map the most valuable existing areas for nature, establish priorities and map proposals for specific actions to drive nature's recovery and wider environmental benefits. The draft strategy must go out to public consultation and the strategy must be agreed by the Secretary of State.
- 1.3 In March 2022, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) approached higher tier councils to take on the 'responsible authority' role as part of the new LNRS duty. Leicestershire County Council agreed on a provisional, non-binding basis to be the 'responsible authority' for the LNRS area which covers Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland.
- 1.4 Between March 2022 and March 2023, the Government put in place a national framework to enable the preparation of LNRSs to commence. This included confirming strategy boundaries and formally agreeing the roles of the 'responsible authority' to lead in each area.
- 1.5 The official regulations and guidance on LNRS were released on 23 March 2023. The regulations and guidance provided details on the appointment of responsible authorities, the creation of the role of supporting authorities, and what was required in developing and publishing LNRSs.
- 1.6 Defra sent a formal letter to all provisional responsible authorities, including Leicestershire County Council, in mid-May 2023 to notify them that they had been appointed as the responsible authority for their respective LNRS area.

2.0 DEVELOPMENT OF THE DRAFT LNRS

- 2.1 The development of the draft LNRS required Leicestershire County Council to work in partnership with neighbouring authorities including Leicester City Council, Rutland Council and the districts as well as other public bodies such as the Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and the National Forest Company.
- 2.2 Engagement has also involved key partners and stakeholders including, amongst others, representatives from the supporting authorities and Defra bodies, the National Farmers Union (NFU), Countryside Land Managers Association (CLA), Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust (LRWT) and Trent Rivers Trust.
- 2.3 A programme of communication and engagement was undertaken to promote the work to develop the LNRS, to encourage stakeholders and residents to get involved. The engagement programme also included a series of farmer/landowner and resident workshops across the LNRS area.
- 2.4 Leicestershire County Council officers presented the LNRS to the Members Advisory Group on 14 September 2023.

3.0 OVERVIEW OF THE LNRS CONTENTS

- 3.1 The contents of the LNRS are largely set out in the official LNRS guidance, with strategies required to meet certain criteria in order to be approved to go out to public consultation by Natural England. The LNRS consists of two key components; the LNRS strategy document and auxiliary webpages that include an interactive copy of the Local Habitat Map and supporting information.
- 3.2 The draft LNRS for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland was presented to a Natural England panel on 8 October 2024. The panel found the LNRS had met all the criteria, however, they suggested some minor amendments to be made to the document and the webpages to improve their readability and functionality.
- 3.3 The amendments were made to the designed-up version of the LNRS and the webpages, and they were presented to a Natural England sub-panel on 5 November 2024 for approval. The County Council has now received approval from Natural England for the draft LNRS.
- 3.4 The key components of the LNRS are:
 - the setting out of the overall strategic aims of the strategy,
 - the area description, which describes the natural landscape and how people have shaped the landscape,
 - an assessment of the current state of nature across the area, including a presentation in map form of the existing areas of particular importance for biodiversity (located on supporting LNRS webpages),
 - a presentation of the key environmental considerations, such as future pressures and wider environmental issues,
 - a presentation in map form of the areas that could become of importance for biodiversity and the wider environment (located on supporting LNRS webpages),

- the setting out of the main biodiversity priorities and measures, that will take place within the priority areas as well as the landscape scale (area wide) priorities and measures,
- the setting out of the key factors needed to support delivery of the LNRS,
- a suite of appendices providing supporting information and technical detail.

3.5 The [Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023](#) includes a requirement that Local Authorities must take account of any LNRS when preparing Local and Neighbourhood Plans. Once approved, it is anticipated that the LNRS would help support the implementation of BNG schemes secured through the granting of planning permissions for new development to identified priority areas for nature recovery and biodiversity.

3.6 A copy of the draft LNRS can be found on the following link:

[Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)

4.0 DRAFT LNRS APPROVAL PROCESS

4.1 The draft LNRS was issued to the supporting authorities on 4 October under Regulation 7 of the Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023.

4.2 Under Regulation 9, the supporting authorities have 28 days to raise an objection with the responsible authority regarding the draft LNRS. Leicestershire County Council has received no objections to-date.

4.3 The draft LNRS is also going through the individual approval processes of the supporting authorities and Defra bodies to approve the draft LNRS to go out to public consultation. Although the LNRS would not be adopted at this stage and would only be a draft going to consultation, the Council's Legal Service has previously advised that Cabinet approval would still be required, due to the requirement for the draft having to be in an approved form.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications that arise from this report.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning and regeneration - Communities and housing - Clean, green and Zero Carbon - A well-run council
Policy Considerations:	LNRSs are a new statutory duty being placed on local government as a result of the Environment Act 2021. All local authorities have a role to play in preparing and delivering them. The LNRS must be

	taken into account in the plan-making process, including Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans.
Safeguarding:	None identified.
Equalities/Diversity:	None identified.
Customer Impact:	The decision will allow for public consultation on the strategy.
Economic and Social Impact:	None identified
Environment, Climate Change and Zero Carbon:	The LNRS will map the most valuable existing areas for nature, establish priorities and map proposals for specific actions to drive nature's recovery and wider environmental benefits.
Consultation/Community/Tenant Engagement:	This report seeks Cabinet approval for Leicestershire County Council to go out to public consultation on the draft LNRS.
Risks:	Impact on the resources of the Planning Policy team in terms having to take account of the LNRS in Local and Neighbourhood Plan making.
Officer Contact	Chris Elston Head of Planning and Infrastructure Chris.elston@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

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NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – TUESDAY, 17 DECEMBER 2024



Title of Report	EXTENSION OF THE COALVILLE CONSERVATION LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ORDER	
Presented by	Councillor Tony Gillard Business and Regeneration Portfolio Holder PH Briefed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Background Papers	Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme Cabinet report, 5 March 2019 Extension of the Coalville conservation area local development order Cabinet report, 24 September 2019	Public Report: Yes
		Key Decision: No
Financial Implications	The costs associated with extending the Local Development Order as well as the costs to deliver the final three projects will be met from existing approved Council budgets held in earmarked reserves.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	The extension of the Local Development Order will ensure that any works undertaken through the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme will be compliant within permitted planning legislation.	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	The administrative process required to extend the Local Development Order will be overseen by existing officer capacity with the Economic Regeneration Service.	
	Furthermore, the delivery of the final three frontage Improvement projects will be managed by the Economic Regeneration Service.	
Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes		
Purpose of Report	To request Cabinet approval for a 12-month extension to the Coalville Local Development Order	
Reason for Decision	To support the conclusion of the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme, by making it easier for property owners to undertake specified improvements.	
	The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 provides for the local	

	planning authority to formally adopt the Local Development Order.
Recommendations	<p>THAT CABINET:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ENDORSES THE DRAFT COALVILLE CONSERVATION AREA LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ORDER, AT APPENDIX 1, FOR A 28 DAY PERIOD OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION 2. ENDORSES THE DRAFT COALVILLE FRONTAGE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME DESIGN GUIDE, AT APPENDIX 2, FOR A 28 DAY PERIOD OF CONSULTATION 3. DELEGATES TO THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FOR PLACE , IN CONSULTATION WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR BUSINESS AND REGENERATION, CONSIDERATION OF ANY RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION 4. DELEGATES TO THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FOR PLACE, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR BUSINESS AND REGENERATION, (SUBJECT TO CONSIDERATION OF THE CONSULTATION RESPONSES) TO ADOPT THE EXTENSION OF THE COALVILLE CONSERVATION AREA LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ORDER FOR A PERIOD OF ONE YEAR EXPIRING ON 31 JANUARY 2026

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The first Coalville Conservation Area Local Development Order (LDO) was adopted by Cabinet on 21 July 2015 and subsequently expanded and renewed by Cabinet again in July 2016, March 2018 and then extended in September 2019.
- 1.2 This most recent LDO ran for approximately five years before it expired on 30 November 2024.
- 1.3 The LDO grants planning permission for the works eligible under the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme, making it easier for eligible property owners to improve their frontages. The LDO also, by granting planning permission, enables those properties that are covered by the LDO, but whose owners may not wish to participate in the grant scheme, to make the improvements that it grants planning permission for. There is no compulsion on any building owner to implement the works that are set out in the LDO.
- 1.4 The aim of the Frontage Improvement Scheme is to ensure that long term sustainable and architecturally sympathetic repair and renovation takes place to eligible properties within Coalville Town Centre.
- 1.5 The Frontage Improvement Scheme has closed to new applications. However, three project applications that were accepted prior to the scheme closing in 2019 remain in progress:

- 44 High Street, Coalville (Fast Cash)
- 32 High Street, Coalville (Bolstridge)
- Unit 3, 7 Marlborough Square, Coalville (Metro Stores)

1.6 These final three projects were delayed at the request of North West Leicestershire District Council to allow for officer capacity to be refocused to undertake the required work for the Marlborough Square public realm improvements.

1.7 Extending the LDO will allow for the final three outstanding frontage improvement projects to be completed.

2.0 THE PURPOSE AND RENEWAL OF THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ORDER

2.1 The renewal of the LDO is intended to encourage affected building owners to invest in their properties and is specifically designed to support them by removing the need for planning permission to carry out applicable works.

2.2 In addition to the three targeted properties listed in 1.5, the area and properties covered by the proposed renewal of the LDO are listed in the 'Coalville Conservation Area Local Development Order Statement of Reasons' (Appendix 3).

2.3 The properties covered by the proposed LDO are all within the Coalville Conservation Area.

3.0 THE EFFECT OF THE ORDER

3.1 The LDO will enable, for a period of 12 months from the date of adoption, eligible property owners to carry out some or all of the following works to their properties:

- At ground floor: refurbishment, repair, or replacement of shop fronts, subject to conditions and other limitations that are specified in the LDO; and/or
- At first floor and above: refurbishment, repair or replacement of rainwater goods, brickwork, and windows, subject to conditions and other limitations as stipulated by the LDO.

3.2 The conditions include that the works done must comply with the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme Design Guide that accompanies the LDO. The design guide provides guidance about good shop fronts and includes a sequence of questions in respect of compliance with the LDO.

3.3 The LDO enables a building owner to carry out some or all of the specified works to the buildings covered by it, regardless of whether they apply to the Council for a grant.

3.4 During the 12-month period, the authority may revoke the LDO or modify it at any time.

3.5 At the end of the 12-month period, the authority may either revoke the LDO, extend it, or amend it.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 The Council will comply with the consultation requirements, as set out in Article 38 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England)

Order 2015. Following the expiry of the 28-day consultation period, any and all responses received will be recorded, analysed and assessed to inform the final version of the LDO. The Secretary of State will be accordingly notified within 28 days of adoption of the LDO (with or without amendment, as the case may be).

4.2 The following the statutory notification process will be undertaken:

- Site notices to be displayed on street
- Letters to be delivered to each of the properties covered by the LDO, addressed to owners and tenants
- A notice to be placed in the Leicester Mercury
- Documents to be placed on the Council’s website
- Documents to be placed in the Council’s Customer Centre for public inspection
- Letters to relevant voluntary and business bodies

4.3 The Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme Design Guide will also be consulted on for a period of 28 days, at the same time as the consultation on the LDO.

4.4 Following the conclusion of the consultation undertaken for the statutory notification process, the Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Business will review all representations made. This report seeks delegation for the adoption of the LDO.

4.5 The Director may choose to return the LDO adoption request to Cabinet subject to the responses received through the consultation.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The press notice, website text and notification letters will all need to be reviewed and updated as necessary. In addition, the renewal of the LDO will require some administrative tasks, such as posting site notices, and addressing consultation responses. This will be executed using existing Economic Regeneration resources.

5.2 The continued implementation of the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme will be accommodated within existing officer time and budgets or arrangements that are already in place.

5.3 The press notice carries a cost of approximately £1,000. That cost will be borne by existing reserves allocated to the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	- Planning and regeneration - Clean, green and Zero Carbon
Policy Considerations:	There are no policy considerations to be made.
Safeguarding:	There are no safeguarding considerations to be made.
Equalities/Diversity:	There are no equalities/diversity considerations to be made.
Customer Impact:	Set out in report.
Economic and Social Impact:	Set out in report.

Environment, Climate Change and Zero Carbon:	Set out in report.
Consultation/Community/Tenant Engagement:	Set out in report
Risks:	Should the Local Development Order extension not be permitted the remaining frontage applications would need to apply for planning permission to undertake the planned frontage works. This would incur planning fees and potentially delay the project delivery. This could act as a barrier to applicants completing their projects.
Officer Contact	Barrie Walford Economic Development Manager barrie.walford@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

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Draft Coalville Conservation Area Local Development Order



Consultation draft: December 2024

North West Leicestershire District Council

Coalville Conservation Area

Local Development Order

1. This Local Development Order relates to an area within the Coalville town centre and Conservation Area, as indicated by the red line of the map at Appendix A.
2. The Order grants planning permission, subject to conditions, for the refurbishment or replacement of shop fronts at ground floor level.
3. The Order grants planning permission, subject to conditions, for the refurbishment, repair or replacement of rainwater goods, brickwork and windows at first floor level and above.
4. The Order, and the terms within it, will be active following the date of its adoption, and will expire on 31 January 2026.
5. Development which has started under the provision of the Order will be allowed to be completed in the event that the Order is revoked or revised.
6. Development that has started under the provision of the Order prior to its expiry may be completed following the expiry of the Order.
7. The developments that have taken place under the Order will be allowed to remain in perpetuity, but no developments will be allowed under the terms of the Order following its expiry, without necessary permission having been obtained.

SHOP FRONT REFURBISHMENT OR REPLACEMENT

Class A

Permitted Development:

The refurbishment, repair or replacement of a shop front at ground floor level

A1. Development is not permitted by Class A if:

- a) The building is a listed building; or
- b) The building is adjacent to a listed building

A2. Development is permitted by Class A, subject to the following conditions:

- a) The development shall be carried out in accordance with the 'Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme Design Guide'
 - (i) All materials used shall be in accordance with the guide

RAINWATER GOODS, BRICKWORK, AND WINDOWS

Class B

Permitted Development:

The refurbishment, repair or replacement of rainwater goods, brickwork, and windows at first floor level and above

B1. Development is not permitted by Class B if:

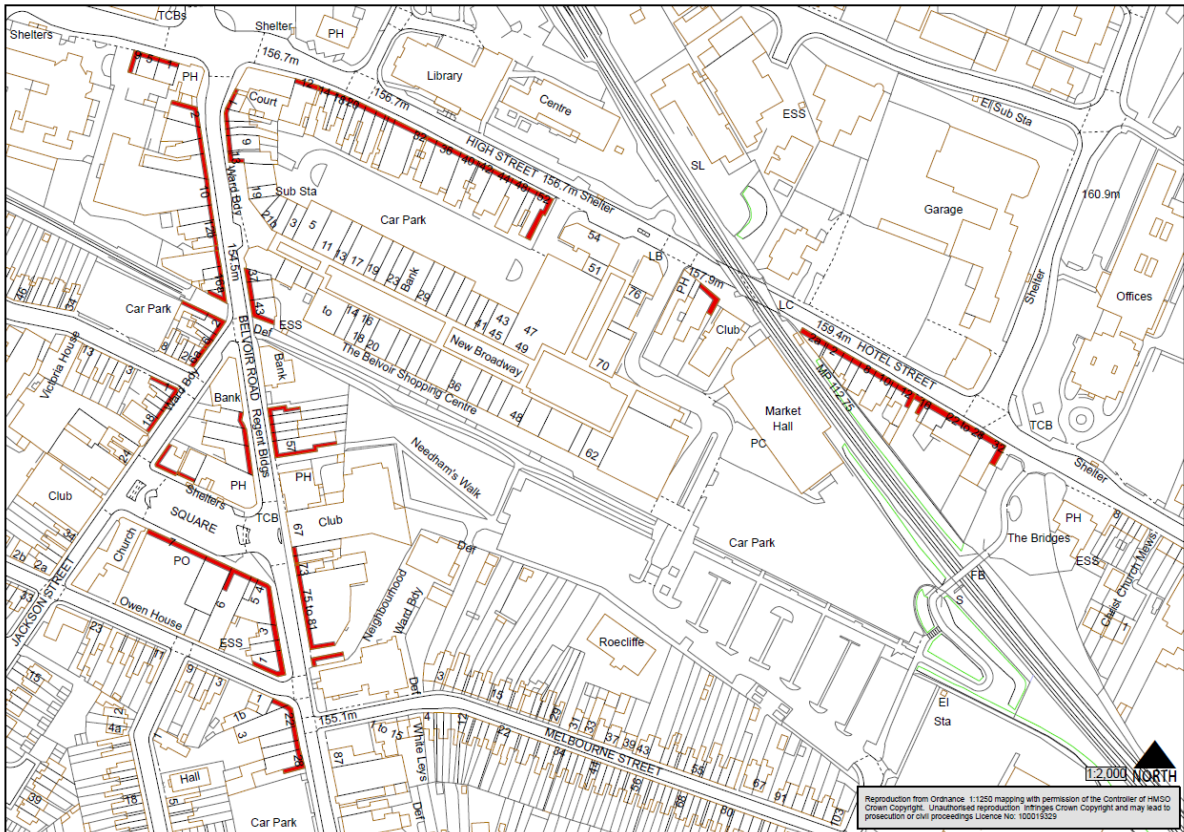
- a) The building is a listed building; or
- b) The building is adjacent to a listed building

B2. Development is permitted by Class B, subject to the following conditions:

- a) Paint shall not be applied to brickwork; and
- b) Window frames shall be timber

Appendix A:

Area covered by Coalville Conservation Area Local Development Order



Properties covered by the Order

10 – 52 High Street (evens only)

74 High Street (even only)

2a – 32 Hotel Street (evens only)

1 – 13 Belvoir Road (odds)

37 – 43 Belvoir Road (odds)

49 – 59 Belvoir Road (odds)

69 – 83 Belvoir Road (odds)

2 Belvoir Road – 18 Belvoir Road (evens)

22A Belvoir Road – Regent Buildings (evens)

Lombard House – Stafford House, Belvoir Road

Exchange Buildings – 28 Belvoir Road (evens)

1a Owen Street (odd)

1 – 9 Ashby Road (odds)

2 – 16 Jackson Street (evens)

1 Margaret Street (odd)

7– 10 Marlborough Square

2 – 3a Marlborough Square

Appendix B: Notes

1. This Order has been prepared to help with the implementation of the 'Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme'.
2. If a property owner wishes to make improvements to their shop front at ground floor level, within the terms and conditions of the Order, independently of the grant process, it is allowed by the Order as long as the work complies with the conditions of the Order.
3. If a property owner wishes to make improvements to their property at first floor level and above, within the terms and conditions of the Order, independently of the grant process, it is allowed by the Order as long as the work complies with the conditions of the Order.
4. Before you start work, you should check that what you intend to do is allowed (either by the Order or by other 'permitted development'). You can do this by contacting Planning & Development: either by telephone 01530 454665/6; or by email development.control@nwleicestershire.gov.uk
5. It is your responsibility to make sure that all other legislation is complied with, which may include Building Regulations.

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**DRAFT COALVILLE FRONTAGE
IMPROVEMENT
SCHEME DESIGN GUIDE**

HELPING TO IMPROVE COALVILLE'S TOWN CENTRE

DECEMBER 2024

Local businesses have told us that they want us to help them make Coalville town centre more attractive and welcoming; encouraging more people to visit, stay longer and spend more money with local businesses. The council has created the Frontage Improvement Scheme to provide grant funding to help improve the quality of shop fronts in the town centre. The scheme offers funding to independent businesses on parts of Hotel Street, High Street, Belvoir Road, Marlborough Square, Jackson Street and Ashby Road.

The scheme is integral to improving the attractiveness of the town centre, and provides investment to support business owners and property owners.

Why are frontages important?

High quality shop fronts help to attract people to use businesses. Collectively, high quality frontages help to create a positive image of a place. A town centre full of well designed, well-maintained shop fronts projects an impression of quality and offers a more attractive environment to residents and visitors.

The Frontage Improvement Scheme aims to ensure that long term, successful repair and restoration takes place in prominent parts of Coalville Conservation Area to maintain the town's architectural interest.

How is the scheme targeted?

The scheme has been targeted at properties on parts of Hotel Street, High Street, Belvoir Road, Marlborough Square, Jackson Street and Ashby Road because:

- These thoroughfares are the main streets running through the town.
- These are the town's original 'high streets' and we are keen to draw more people to the area.
- They are home to a diverse range of independent retailers offering good quality products and services.
- A number of shop fronts need some care and attention.
- Improved shop fronts will encourage people to take notice of the town centre and we hope this will increase footfall and trade.

The design of new or repaired shop fronts

- The grant scheme supports the designing and installation of new frontages that are more sympathetic to the age of the property of which they are part. Where a good shop front already exists, grant funding is available to assist with the cost of repair, reinstatement and the introduction of more traditional features.
- The role of North West Leicestershire District Council is to help co-ordinate the grant scheme and make sure that the restored and new shop fronts complement one another, for example by helping businesses and property owners make changes that sit within this design guide.

- A similar scheme has been operating in Swadlincote for a number of years and significant improvements have been made to shop fronts in the town. If you are looking for ideas for what you might do why not have a look around Hotel Street and High Street in Coalville, and Swadlincote's High Street?

The Coalville Conservation Area local development order

Generally Planning Permission is required to carry out works to a shop front, if those works would materially affect the appearance of the building. In deciding whether or not to grant Planning Permission, the District Council shall pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the significance of the conservation area.




The District Council has prepared a draft local development order (LDO) for Coalville Conservation Area. The LDO would permit the refurbishment, repair or replacement of shop fronts provided that the works are carried out in accordance with this design guide.







On pages three to six of this design guide, you will find a summary of the elements of a traditional shop front and the range of shop front styles.

On pages four to eight, you will find eleven questions relating to your proposed shop front design. If you wish to comply with the LDO and install the proposed design without Planning Permission, then you shall be able to:

- Answer 'yes' to each of questions 1 and 2;
- Answer 'yes' to each of questions 3 to 11, unless in each case the proposed element would be similar in appearance to the existing.

Before you start work, you should ask the Planning and Development team whether the design that you propose would comply with the LDO. Please telephone the duty officer after 1pm on 01530 454725 or email development.control@nwleicestershire.gov.uk.

	Question	Comment
	Retaining features of significance	
1	<p>Was the existing shop front installed after July 1948?</p> <p>If the existing shop front was installed before July 1948, then have any features of significance been removed or obscured?</p>	<p>If you are proposing to replace an intact historic shop front, then you should seek planning permission.</p>
		
2	<p>Do you propose to retain and incorporate all surviving features of significance?</p>	<p>If you are proposing to remove any features of significance, then you should seek planning permission.</p>
		

	Question	Comment
	Designing in character	
3	Would the proposed shop front be installed within a single building?	If you are proposing to install a shop front across more than one building, then you should seek planning permission.
		
4	Would the top of the proposed shop front be lower than the bottom of the first floor window sill?	If the shop front would extend above the bottom of the first floor window sill, then you should seek planning permission.
		
5	Would the proposed shop front have a fascia and cornice no more than one fifth of the height of the shop front overall?	If the fascia and cornice would be more than one fifth of the height of the shop front overall, then you should seek planning permission.
		

	Question	Comment
	Materials and finishes	
6	Would the proposed shop front (excepting the stall riser and pedestals) be faced in painted timber?	If you are proposing a facing material other than painted timber, then you should seek planning permission.
		
7	<p>Would the proposed shop front include a stall riser and pedestals faced in red brick, blue brick, glazed brick, glazed tile or render?</p> <p>Would the stall riser be at least 300mm high at its lowest point?</p>	If you are proposing any other facing material, then you should seek planning permission. If you are proposing a very low stall riser, or you are not proposing a stall riser at all, then you should seek planning permission.
		 

	Question	Comment
	Good architecture	
8	Would the proposed shop front have a fascia supported at either end by pilasters?	If the fascia would not be supported at either end by pilasters, then you should seek planning permission.
		 
9	Would the proposed shop front have a fascia enclosed by brackets and a cornice?	If the fascia would not be enclosed by brackets and a cornice, then you should seek planning permission.
		

	Question	Comment
	Shop blinds and security grilles	
10	If the proposed shop front would include a blind, would this be an awning blind?	If you are proposing to install another type of blind (e.g. a 'dutch' blind), then you should seek planning permission.
		
11	If the proposed shop front would include security grilles, would these be installed internally?	If you are proposing to install any form of external security grille, then you should seek planning permission.
		

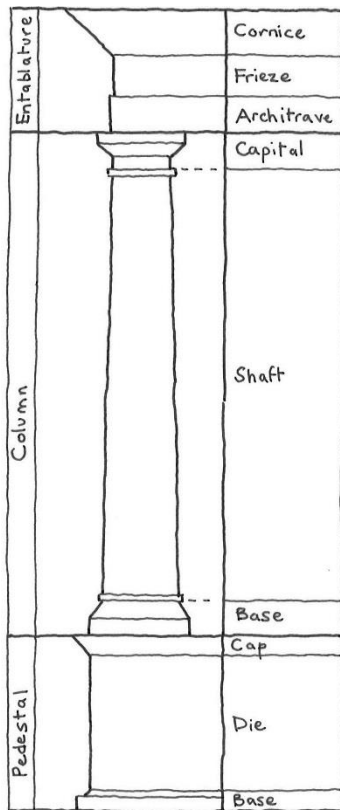
The drawing on page 5 is reproduced with the kind permission of A+G Architects of Loughborough.

Write to: Economic Regeneration
NWLDC
PO Box 11051
Coalville
LE67 0FW

Email us: economic.development@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

Appendix: Traditional shop fronts

Traditional shop fronts use elements borrowed from classical architecture. This is reflected in the terms that we use to describe the elements of a shop front.



The shop front, piece by piece

The fascia: The fascia is equivalent to the classical *frieze* and *architrave*. A fascia is supported at either end by a pilaster and in turn it supports the cornice. A fascia is bounded at either end by a bracket. The fascia should be in scale with the shop front and the building as a whole.

The cornice: The cornice is equivalent to the classical *cornice*. A cornice is supported by the fascia and at either end by a bracket. A shop front should incorporate a cornice to enclose the fascia and offer visual support for the upper part of the premises.

The bracket: The bracket is equivalent to the classical *console*. A bracket supports either end of the cornice and bounds either end of the fascia. A shop front should incorporate brackets to enclose the fascia.

The pilaster: The pilaster is equivalent to the classical *column* or *pilaster*. A pilaster is supported by a pedestal and in turn it supports either end of the fascia. A shop front should incorporate pilasters to offer visual support for the upper part of the premises.

The pedestal: The pedestal is equivalent to the classical *pedestal*. A pedestal supports a pilaster and bounds either end of the stall riser. The pedestal is best executed in durable materials; timber is best avoided.

The stall riser: The stall riser is equivalent to the classical *podium*. A stall riser supports the shop window. A stall riser is bounded at either end by a pedestal. A shop front should incorporate a stall riser to minimise the risk of people colliding with transparent glazing. The stall riser is best executed in durable materials; timber is best avoided.

The shop window: The shop window may be subdivided with mullions, transoms and glazing bars. The subdivision of the shop window should reflect the proportions of the building and its vertical or horizontal emphasis. The subdivision of the shop window also has the advantage of reducing the amount of glass that has to be replaced in the event of breakage.

The threshold: The threshold should be level (i.e. it should offer a slope no greater than 1:20) and the route across the threshold should provide weather protection. A recessed entrance provides weather protection and may account for a sloping threshold. It also offers additional space for advertisement and shop window display.

The entrance door: The entrance door should be accessible to all. The entrance door should be wide enough to allow unrestricted passage for a variety of users including wheelchair users. An entrance door with powered operation is the most satisfactory solution for most people. The entrance door should be glazed to allow people to see others approaching from the opposite direction.

Styles of shop fronts

There are a range of shop front styles in Coalville town centre. Some are older, some are more modern. A number of the older ones have been altered over the years, some less successfully than others. A number of modern shop fronts do not respect the rest of the (older) building of which they are part as well as they could.

The following pages provide some illustrations of shop front styles.



*Market Street, Ashby de la Zouch
Shop front installed shortly after 1880*



*Borough Street, Castle Donington
A late nineteenth century shop front*

Around 1850, large shop windows became possible with the introduction of cast iron piers. Large windows allowed more room for display and let more light into the shop itself. Both qualities were enhanced by plate glass. By about 1850 it was possible to get sheets of plate glass at less than one tenth of the eighteenth century cost.



*High Street, Kegworth
A late nineteenth century shop front*



*Market Street, Ashby de la Zouch
Shop front installed after c.1880*

The trend towards larger windows continued through the nineteenth century and on into the early twentieth century. The advent of these new plate-glass windows introduced a different scale to the design of shop fronts, with the stall riser at the base of the window virtually disappearing, and the front being carried much higher up, thereby increasing the natural internal light. The fascia also grew and was often canted outward so that the face of the board faced towards the onlooker. This also resulted in larger brackets at the end of the fascia.



*Market Street, Ashby de la Zouch
Shop front installed shortly after 1902*



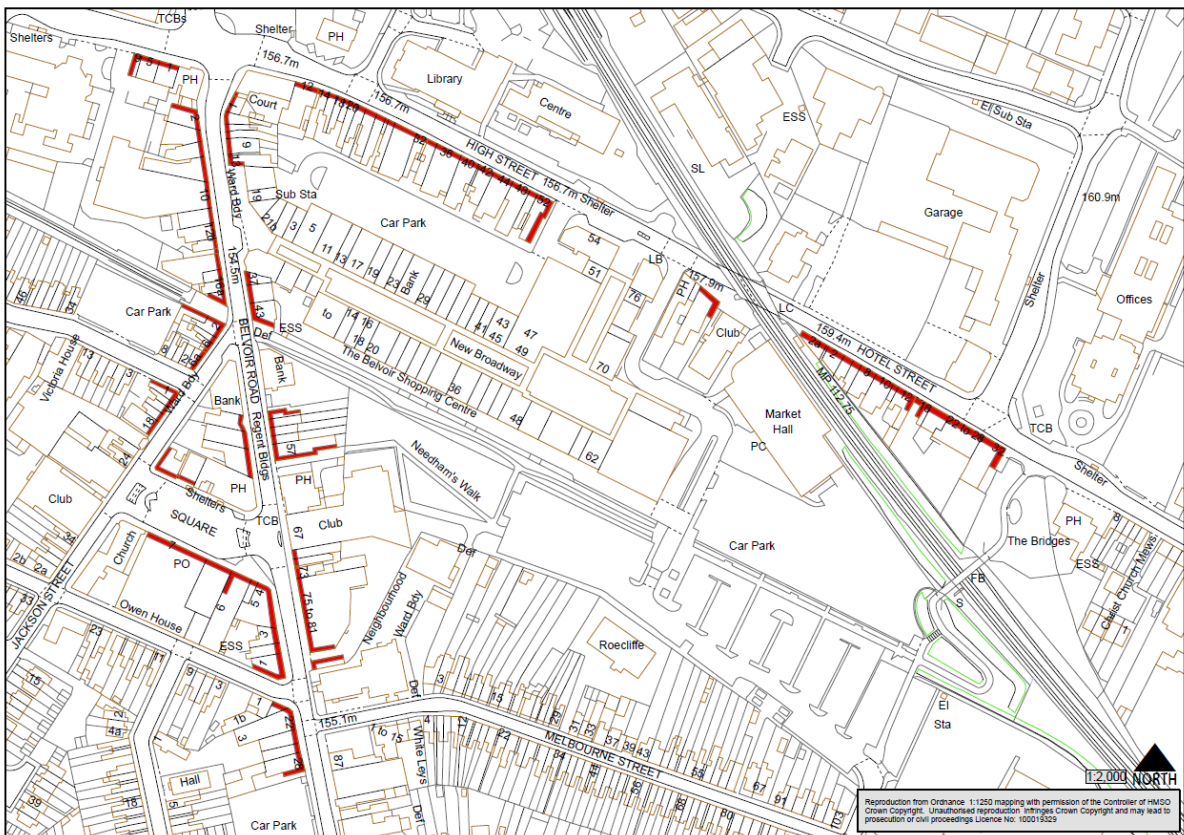
*Market Street, Ashby de la Zouch
Shop front installed c.1930*

Coalville Conservation Area Local Development Order

Statement of Reasons – December 2024

North West Leicestershire District Council has prepared this Local Development Order to help facilitate the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme by streamlining the planning process.

1. The area covered by the Order



1.1 The Order applies to the frontages and key side elevations of the following properties, as shown by the red line on the map above:

- 10 – 52 High Street (evens only)
- 74 High Street (even only)
- 2a – 32 Hotel Street (evens only)

- 1 – 13 Belvoir Road (odds)
- 37 – 43 Belvoir Road (odds)
- 49 – 59 Belvoir Road (odds)
- 69 – 83 Belvoir Road (odds)
- 2 Belvoir Road – 18 Belvoir Road (evens)
- 22A Belvoir Road – Regent Buildings (evens)
- Lombard House – Stafford House, Belvoir Road
- Exchange Buildings – 28 Belvoir Road (evens)
- 1a Owen Street (odd)
- 1 – 9 Ashby Road (odds)
- 2 – 16 Jackson Street (evens)
- 1 Margaret Street (odd)
- 7– 10 Marlborough Square
- 2 – 3a Marlborough Square

1.2 The properties covered by the Order are all within the Conservation Area.

2. Description of development permitted

- 2.1 The Order is in two parts: ground floor and upper floor/s.
- 2.2 At ground floor, repair, refurbishment or replacement of shop fronts are permitted, subject to conditions and other limitations.
- 2.3 At first floor or above, the refurbishment, repair or replacement of rainwater goods, brickwork, and windows is permitted, again subject to conditions and other limitations.

3. Justification for creating the Order

- 3.1 North West Leicestershire District Council is committed to improving Coalville town centre. The Coalville frontages scheme was launched in July 2015 in order to facilitate the Council's wider programme to 'create confidence in Coalville' as part of the Coalville Project. The scheme's geographical scope was expanded to Phase 2 in December 2016, to accommodate demand following the success of Phase 1.
- 3.2 The aim of the Frontage Improvement Scheme is to ensure that long term sustainable and architecturally sympathetic repair and renovation takes place along parts of Hotel Street, High Street, Belvoir Road, Marlborough Square, Jackson Street and Ashby Road; and to maintain and enhance Coalville's architectural interest in a way that reflects respect for its heritage.
- 3.4 The Order supports that investment by removing red tape: it grants planning permission, for the works that the frontage improvement scheme is targeting, avoiding the need for individual properties to gain planning permission, with the time and expense that is involved with that process.
- 3.5 Property owners, and occupants, need only to ensure their proposals conform to the Order, the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme Design Guide (and terms of grant if applicable). If a property owner wishes to carry out works that are covered by the Order, but entirely at their own expense, that is allowed. It is intended that the Order will help to maintain this success, following the Council's allocation of £650,000 of funding to the Frontage Improvement Scheme, of which approximately £179,000 remains.
- 3.6 There have been four earlier Coalville Conservation Area Local Development Orders. The first LDO was adopted in July 2015 for an 18 month period, and was instigated to assist the delivery of Phase 1 of the scheme for Hotel Street and High Street. The second LDO, adopted in December 2016 for an 18 month period, was expanded to include the Phase 2 properties (parts of Belvoir Road, Marlborough Square, Jackson Street and Ashby Road) as well as providing continued for properties on Hotel Street and High Street (Phase 1). The third LDO included properties from both phases of the scheme and expired on 30 November 2019. The fourth LDO added a limited number of properties to its predecessor (these properties being: 1a Owen Street,

Lombard House, Stafford House, Exchange Buildings, 28 Belvoir Road, and 83 Belvoir Road). The fourth LDO expired on 30 November 2024.

- 3.7 It is therefore considered that the LDO has been, and will continue to be, an effective and appropriate tool to make the planning process easier, thereby encouraging participation in the Frontage Improvement Scheme.

4 Rationale for the development permitted

- 4.1 The type and form of development permitted has been carefully considered, to offer sufficient flexibility to property owners, enabling them to deliver the improvements that are sought by the scheme.
- 4.2 In addition, the development permitted by the Order is designed to encourage desirable changes.
- 4.3 The Order applies regardless of whether the improvements are being carried out as part of the Frontage Improvement Scheme, which means that if a property owner decides to improve their shop front independently, they still would not need specific planning permission as long as the works are within the scope of the Order.

5 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening

- 5.1 The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017 set out the forms and size thresholds of development that require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). These are split into two categories, Schedule 1 and Schedule 2.
- 5.2 Article 38 paragraph 12 part (b) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended by the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017) states that a Local Development Order may not be made so as to grant planning permission for development which is Schedule 1 development within the meaning of regulation 2 (1) of the 2017 Regulations. No Schedule 1 development is therefore included in the Local Development Order.
- 5.3 The development permitted by the Local Development Order does not fall within the list of 'Schedule 2' developments.
- 5.4 No EIA is therefore necessary.
- 5.5 Given the nature of the works it is not considered that an appropriate assessment is required in respect of Regulation 80 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 as amended by the Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019.

6 Consultation on the LDO

- 6.1 The council will comply with the consultation requirements, as set out in Article 38 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).
- 6.2 Following the expiry of the consultation period, any and all responses received will be recorded, analysed and assessed to inform the final version of the Order. The Secretary of State will be accordingly notified within 28 days of adoption of the Order (with or without amendment, as the case may be).

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