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Meeting	COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Time/Day/Date	6.30 pm on Thursday, 6 February 2025
Location	Forest 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	
To receive questions from members of the public under rule no.10 of the Council Procedure Rules. The procedure rule provides that members of the public may ask any question on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties which affect the District, provided that three clear days' notice in writing has been given to the Head of Legal and Support Services.	
4. MINUTES	
To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2024	3 - 6
5. HOUSING POLICIES	
The report of the Head of Housing	7 - 70
6. TREE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY	
The report of the Head of Community Services	71 - 106
7. COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE	
The report of the Head of Community Services	107 - 120

8. UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND AWARD 2025/26

The report of the Economic Development and Regeneration Team Manager **121 - 128**

9. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

To consider any items to be included in the work programme. The plan of forthcoming Cabinet decisions and the current work programme are attached for information. **129 - 150**

Circulation:

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

MINUTES of a meeting of the COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Forest Room, Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN on THURSDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 2024

Present: Councillor T Eynon (Chair)

Councillors M Ball, D Bigby, K Horn, S Lambeth, P Lees, E Parle, S Sheahan (Substitute for Councillor M Blair-Park) and J Windram (Substitute for Councillor M French)

In Attendance: Councillors J Legrys

Portfolio Holders: Councillors A C Saffell and M B Wyatt

Officers: Mr J Arnold, Ms K Hiller, Mr T Devonshire, Mr D Jones, Ms C Proudfoot, Mrs M Scott, Mr T Stanyard, Mr P Wheatley and Mr P Sanders

48. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor M Blair-Park and M French.

49. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no interests declared.

50. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no questions received.

51. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2024.

It was moved by Councillor S Lambeth, seconded by Councillor E Parle and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2024 be approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

52. LOCAL ENFORCEMENT PLAN

The Planning and Development Team Manager presented the report.

Members broadly commended the simplified prioritisation presented in the new Enforcement Plan. Nevertheless, they expressed some concern about resourcing within the Planning Enforcement Team, and asked whether there was clear, formulaic guidelines for Officer delegated decisions and appropriate checks and balances in place for instances where Members felt that an incorrect enforcement decision had been made.

Officers advised that the report in front of them was concerned with prioritisation only, not resourcing, which was currently being assessed by the Planning Advisory Service. As for appropriate safeguards, Officers advised that in the first instance Members should approach the Planning and Development Team Manager or Head of Planning and Infrastructure to register any enforcement concerns; if they remained unsatisfied they should consult the Monitoring Officer. More generally, in the future, the Planning Committee would assess performance in this area, and the Community Scrutiny Committee could assess the efficacy of procedures when this was felt necessary.

The Chair proposed some suggestions as to how Officers could qualitatively review their performance, and report this to the Portfolio Holder.

Some Members suggested that resolution, rather than initial action, should be the key target and deterrence against non-compliance was the key metric of success. Officer determination to gather evidence was particularly important and performance in that area should certainly be monitored. It was suggested that the public were currently dissatisfied with the Planning Enforcement Performance and that a complainant feedback score may contribute to the effective performance monitoring of the new Enforcement Plan.

The Planning and Development Team Manager noted these comments, but advised that case resolution was not a practical target, due to the unique nature of each enforcement case. He also set out for Members how the Enforcement Register operated, and agreed to make this clearer in the report to Cabinet on 22 October.

The Chair invited the Portfolio Holder to speak.

The Portfolio Holder commended the simplified and clarified processes set out in the document, and thanked Officers for the work they had undertaken. He understood some of the concerns the Committee had expressed and noted that this document was still a work in progress.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments, which would be presented to the Cabinet on 22 October.

53. LEISURE CENTRES ANNUAL REVIEW

The Head of Community Services presented the report, with support from representatives from Everyone Active.

Members commended the thoroughness of the report, and the successful performance detailed within it.

An extensive discussion was had about the Activate scheme and the principles behind it. Members were very supportive of the scheme but did raise some issues: improvements had been made to the Activate app, but could its functionality be further improved; and could the scheme be applied to children who lived in the district but were educated outside of it.

The Head of Community Services, with support from Everyone Active, highlighted the successful impacts of the scheme, how the leisure centres had attempted to increase participation and especially amongst the most disadvantaged children, noted that as this was a sector-leading scheme this did mean it's fairly unique nature hampered efforts to further improve the functionality of the app, and said they would examine the idea of extending the scheme.

A discussion was had about the source of energy at the leisure centres. A Member suggested it should be a priority to move away from gas powered energy as soon as was practicable. The Head of Community Services advised that a request for funding for solar panel procurement for the Coalville and Whitwick Leisure Centre was being presented to Cabinet on 24 September 2024, and there was funding allocated in the Capital Programme for the financial year 2025/26 to install solar panels at Ashby Leisure Centre.

It was moved by Councillor D Bigby seconded by Councillor S Sheahan, and

RESOLVED THAT:

The report and the Committee's comments on it be noted.

54. UPDATE ON AIR QUALITY

The Head of Community Services presented the report, with support from the Environmental Protection Team Manager and the Public Protection Team Leader.

A discussion was had about the study which had been commissioned. Members expressed concern that it had been inconclusive, and thus they asked about the prospect of undertaking further studies.

Officers advised that the Council had gone beyond its statutory requirement in monitoring PM 2.5, set out some of the technical details behind the study which had engaged with relevant experts and was undertaken in conjunction with Harborough District Council. They also advised that DEFRA would be unlikely to fund further studies of the same area.

Some Members suggested that officers should approach the issue more proactively and with greater zeal in the future. In response, Officers advised that the aspects of air quality which the Council did have a statutory responsibility to monitor were improving, and they said they would be taking a more educational approach with residents in the future in relation to what contributed to deterioration in air quality in rural areas of the district. Nevertheless air quality was a nationally salient issue and attempts to improve it would need to be led by central Government.

Summarising the discussion, the Chair suggested that scoping work on engaging with residents on the link between the use of gas to heat homes, air quality, and its links to the Zero Carbon agenda, could be presented to the Scrutiny Work Programming Group. She also noted that the Committee specifically asked that the Cabinet consider applying for further rounds of DEFRA funding for air quality studies, as and when opportunities to do so arise.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments, which would be presented to the Cabinet on 22 October.

55. DISTRICT WIDE REGENERATION FRAMEWORK

The Strategic Director of Place introduced the report, read out a supportive statement from the Portfolio Holder, and passed over to the Senior Economic Development Officer. The Head of Property and Regeneration was also present.

A discussion was had about how frequently the Framework document would be updated and how performance would be monitored. Members felt the Framework document needed a clearer pipeline and greater clarity around the governance structure.

Officers acknowledged these concerns and advised that the intention was to bring updates on individual projects quarterly, to review and analyse successes and challenges, and to consider when it would be appropriate to commence new projects. It was hoped that Members would refer to, feed into and where necessary challenge what was set out in the Framework document. The published document would be updated annually, so to give time for projects to come to completion, and it was agreed that there would also be annual performance monitoring in the form of a standing report on the Community Scrutiny Work Programme.

A discussion was had about the links between the document and the provision of infrastructure, generally within the district and with specific reference to the Ivanhoe Line project. Officers advised that some of these issues raised were addressed elsewhere by the Council or were not within the purview of the organisation. As for the Ivanhoe Line, putting that project as an important priority within the regeneration framework should serve to demonstrate to the new Government of the project's importance to the district and the Council. In light of recent developments it was now a question of how to influence the new Government, and the Strategic Director of Place was keen to solicit suggestions from Members.

Officers clarified the separation between the districtwide regeneration framework and the subset Coalville Regeneration Framework, which included plans to renovate Council owned buildings across the town.

The Chair summarised the discussion. She noted the queries raised, but recognised this was only the first iteration of the document, and so she hoped that the next iteration would have a more strategic orientation.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments, which would be presented to the Cabinet on 22 October.

56. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to any items on the Work Programme.

The Chair advised the Committee of the cancellation of the extraordinary meeting scheduled for Monday, 30 September. Clarity from the new government on what household recycling collection arrangements will be acceptable was needed, to inform the waste services review. Before proposing any changes to the current recycling collection service, the Council needed to assure itself that it would be compliant. No timetable for the release of any further guidance or legislation had, as yet, been provided. Officers would update Members in due course.

Members requested performance monitoring reports focused on the Community Lottery Scheme, and Love Your Neighbourhood, to be placed onto the Community Scrutiny Work Programme.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.57 pm

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – THURSDAY, 6
FEBRUARY 2025

Title of Report	HOUSING POLICIES	
Presented by	Jane Rochelle Head of Housing	
Background Papers	None	Public Report: Yes
Financial Implications	The income management policy sets out the proposed approach to rent setting and income collection for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). There are however no direct costs associated with implementation. All other policies are expected to be delivered within existing resources	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	The Damp Mould and Condensation Policy has been developed in response to requirements under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 to respond appropriately to hazards in dwellings The Domestic Abuse Policy has been developed in response to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	There are no direct staffing or corporate implications.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Reason Agenda Item Submitted to Scrutiny Committee	For a number of new and revised housing policies to be considered by Community Scrutiny and seek comments, prior to consideration by Cabinet in March 2025.	
Recommendations	THAT COMMUNITY SCRUTINY PROVIDE COMMENTS ON THE FOLLOWING POLICIES AHEAD OF CONSIDERATION BY CABINET ON 25 MARCH: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INCOME MANAGEMENT POLICY • DAMP MOULD AND CONDENSATION POLICY • TENANCY POLICY • DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY 	

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 There have been recent changes to the regulatory regime for housing and this has resulted in a number of workstreams within the Housing Service. One of

these has been to review key policies to ensure they are effective and fit for purpose in light of the new consumer standards.

- 1.2 Furthermore, the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (Clause 42 'Social housing leases: remedying hazards') also introduced Awaab's Law to ensure that social landlords responded appropriately to hazards in social housing such as damp and mould. Following on from the Damp and Mould Task and Finish Group last year a Damp, Mould and Condensation policy has been developed.

2.0 POLICIES UNDER REVIEW

- 2.1 There are four policies in the current phase of the policy review.
- Income Management Policy (appendix one)
 - Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy (appendix two)
 - Domestic Abuse Policy (appendix three)
 - Tenancy Policy (appendix four)
- 2.2 A summary of the policies and the reasons for review are set out in the sections below.

3.0 INCOME MANAGEMENT POLICY

- 3.1 The income management policy sets out how the service set rents and charges as well as the approach to collection and recovery of debt. The rents function is subject to an annual audit inspection and in recent years a number of recommendations in relation to policies have been identified.
- 3.2 The Policy consolidates a number of separate related policies to ensure that they are consistent and coherent. The policy covers a wide range of aspects of income management from setting rents on newbuild to writing off former tenant debt and has an overall aim of managing and maximising our income streams effectively to support investment in our homes and communities.
- 3.3 As well as updating existing policies to reflect up to date best practice, the policy also proposes to take a more flexible approach to rent setting within the allowed parameters to support the Council's newbuild ambitions.

4.0 DAMP, MOULD AND CONDENSATION POLICY

- 4.1 The Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy was developed as a direct response to the outcomes of the Damp and Mould Task and Finish Group which met between August and December 2023, as well as ensuring that the Council's position is compliant with legislation.
- 4.2 As a social housing landlord, the Council has a responsibility to its residents to ensure that its properties meet the Decent Homes Standard and the provisions in the Homes (Fit for Human Habitation) Act 2018. In addition, the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, in particular Awaab's Law, aims to protect tenants from damp and mould hazards, and amends legislation to require

landlords to investigate and repair reported hazards within a specified timeframe. It is, therefore, important that the Council has a dedicated policy which focuses on how and what will be done in damp and mould cases, and who is responsible.

- 4.3 The aim of the policy is to take reasonable action to identify, remedy and provide advice on damp and mould in social housing properties in order to ensure a safe, healthy and comfortable environment for Council tenants, as well as to protect the structure and quality of the Council's properties.

5.0 DOMESTIC ABUSE

- 5.1 The Council believes that all forms of Domestic abuse are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Domestic abuse often has consequences for the housing of victims and their families. The policy aims to ensure that all staff, partner agencies and contractors understand domestic abuse and give a consistent service when offering guidance and support.
- 5.2 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 provides further protections to those who experience domestic abuse, as well as strengthen measures to tackle perpetrators. It creates a statutory definition of domestic abuse and ensures that when local authorities rehouse victims of domestic abuse, they do not lose a secure lifetime or assured tenancy. As well as this, it provides that all eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse automatically have 'priority need' for homelessness assistance and places a legal duty on councils to fund support for survivors in 'safe accommodation'.
- 5.3 Whilst Domestic abuse impacts across the full range of Council services this new policy sets out how the Council will respond as a landlord to incidents within the housing stock.

6.0 TENANCY POLICY

- 6.1 The Tenancy Policy explains the approach the Council will take to ensure efficient use of its housing stock, by issuing tenancies which are compatible with the purpose of the accommodation, the needs of individual households and the sustainability of the community.
- 6.2 The requirement to develop a Tenancy Policy was set out in the Localism Act 2011. This update reflects a number of changes to the Council's approach since the policy was first developed, in particular around successions to tenancies.
- 6.3 The aims of the tenancy policy are to:
- Ensure best use of our housing stock
 - Ensure that statutory and regulatory responsibilities are met
 - Ensure the Council's approach is consistent, clear and fair

- Ensure customers are provided with appropriate support, particularly those who are vulnerable or at times of personal grief

7.0 ENGAGEMENT TO DATE

- 7.1 An officer workshop took place bringing colleagues together from the Housing Service alongside Finance and Internal Audit teams to discuss areas where existing policies could be clarified or refined. This workshop also identified options it was felt tenants should be offered choice in relating to income management.
- 7.2 These choices informed a survey relating to income management that was sent to all Council tenants for whom an email address or mobile phone number was recorded. The survey identified key areas where there were opportunities to review the current approach.
- 7.3 Responses were received from 249 individuals and a summary of responses is attached as an appendix to this report. These responses informed the development of the policy. A summary of survey responses is attached at appendix five.
- 7.4 The Damp, Mould and Condensation (DMC) policy was shared with all 19 involved residents who form part of the Landlord Services Working Group. It was also shared with 439 tenants who have reported DMC within the last six months along with a digital survey and the opportunity to attend the next Working Group meeting to provide comments and feedback. All feedback was in support of the policy. It was also shared with respiratory leads at Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust. They also approved it and are happy with the policy.
- 7.5 The Tenancy Policy and the Domestic Abuse Policy will be taken to Landlord Services Working Group for consideration on 4 February 2025.
- 7.6 A member workshop took place on 21 January 2025 and feedback from the session has been considered as part of the policy development process.
- 7.7 Community Scrutiny is now being asked to provide feedback on the draft policies and provide any comments prior to consideration by Cabinet.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	- Communities and housing
Policy Considerations:	This suite of policies will replace those currently in operation.
Safeguarding:	The Domestic Abuse policy is concerned with behaviours where safeguarding may be a cause for concern. The policy sets out the actions that will be taken where safeguarding concerns are identified.
Equalities/Diversity:	Final versions of the policies will be subject to an

	equalities impact assessment prior to considerations by Cabinet.
Customer Impact:	These policies have all been developed to ensure consistency and transparency in terms of the approach to service delivery. As such they are expected to improve the customer experience.
Economic and Social Impact:	No direct impact identified.
Environment, Climate Change and zero carbon:	No direct impact identified.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	Tenants have been engaged in the development of all policies. Post scrutiny final drafts will be shared with interested tenants for further comments.
Risks:	No direct risks identified.
Officer Contact	David Scruton Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager david.scruton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

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HOUSING INCOME MANAGEMENT POLICY

Item	Details
Reference:	HRA Income Management Policy 2025
Status:	Draft
Originator:	Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager
Owner:	Head of Housing
Version No:	1.0
Date:	[Insert date policy was last approved]

Key policy details

Approvals

Item	Date of Approval	Version No.
Consulted with [insert]		
Reviewed by [insert e.g. Audit and Governance Committee]		
Approved by [insert]		

The policy owner has the authority to make the following minor changes without approval

XX
XX
XX

Policy Location

This policy can be found at [insert location of policy e.g. NWLDC website, SharePoint page under current policies tab]

Revision history

Version Control	Revision Date	Summary of Changes
1.0		n/a

Policy Review Plans

This policy is subject to a scheduled review once every [insert number] years or earlier if there is a change in legislation or local policy that requires it.

Distribution

Title	Date of Issue	Version No.
[Insert e.g. distributed to Cabinet, on Website etc].		

HOUSING INCOME MANAGEMENT POLICY

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1. Reasons for Policy

- 1.1 As a landlord the Council is responsible for ensuring tenants live in safe well maintained and affordable homes. To achieve this, it is important that the Council is able to manage and maximise its income streams effectively to support investment in Council homes and communities.
- 1.2 This policy sets out how this will be achieved.

2. Legislative Context

- 2.1 Effective income management is underpinned by a range of legislation and government guidance including
 - Housing Act 1986
 - The Rent Standard
 - Housing Act 1985 (as amended by the Housing Act 1996)
 - Localism Act 2011
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Disability Discrimination Act 1995 & 2005
 - The Limitation Act 1980

3. Objectives of the Policy

- 3.1 This policy ensures that we maximise income whilst acting in a fair and empathetic manner when dealing with those in financial difficulty.
- 3.2 It recognises that the Council is a social landlord and provider of affordable housing who has an obligation to all of its tenants to act in a fair and professional manner.
- 3.3 This means we should aim to collect all charges owing whilst being fair and reasonable to anyone experiencing financial difficulties.

4. Definitions

- 4.1 **Affordable Rent:** a property let by a registered provider of housing where the rent charged inclusive of service charges can be up to 80% of the market rent.
Local Housing Allowance: the rates that housing benefit (and Universal Credit) will pay toward a private rented property. They are set at a local and vary depending on the number of bedrooms a household require.
Recharge: a bill for work that the tenant would usually be responsible carried out by the landlord.

Rent Standard: the housing regulators instruction setting out how rents can be set and increased.

Service Charge: an amount paid on top of the core rent to cover the cost of providing shared services to a building.

Social Rent: a rent set by a formula that takes into account property size, value and county earnings at the time the formula was introduced.

Target rent: the maximum amount that can be charged under the rent standard for a particular property

5. Responsible Party

5.1 The responsibility for this policy sits with the Head of Housing

6. Customer Contact

The council will ensure that it is easy for customers to access information about their fees and charges as well as current account balances. As a minimum quarterly rent statements will be sent to existing tenants, and outgoing tenants will be advised of their anticipated final balance at the time of termination.

During any recovery action customers will be contacted in a courteous but firm manner taking on board customer preference for communication wherever possible.

At the end of a tenancy, all outgoing tenants will be contacted to inform them of outstanding fees and charges as soon as possible.

Whenever possible customers experiencing financial difficulties will be supported to assist them to meet their financial obligations whilst accessing the help they need to be financially independent in the future.

Rent Setting

As a housing landlord the majority of Council properties are set at a social rent level as calculated having regard to the rents standard. Currently the tolerances available to set properties above formula are not used, although this option may be explored in future where significant investment has taken place to particular stock.

For new supply the Council will usually set rents at Affordable Rent levels when allowed through agreement with Homes England. The only exception is where the social rent including service charge is calculated to be higher than the applicable affordable rent that would otherwise be charged. An affordable rent is calculated as 80% of the market rent of a given property.

To ensure that properties are affordable and to balance demand between social rent and affordable rented units the Council will tie affordable rents to the local housing allowance rates in the private rented sector. The LHA rate will effectively be used as a cap on affordable rent charged. However, because in some years LHA is not raised only for there to be a significant catch up after a period of time in years where

LHA is not increased the Council will apply an uplift to the LHA rate equivalent to the allowable increase to affordable rents in that year.

As the LHA rate does not reflect the additional costs of producing some unit types, predominantly bungalows the Council will reserve the right to set a cap of LHA + 10% based on the same principles as described above when acquiring or developing units with demonstrable additional costs. Furthermore, as LHA rate is limited to a maximum of 4 bedrooms if in future the Council develops or acquires properties larger than 4 bedroom a 10% increase over LHA may be applied for each further bedroom.

Properties with rents set above LHA will be a minority of new supply and Cabinet permission will be sought if they are ever likely to form more than 2% of the overall stock.

For a range of reasons there will from time to time, properties with rent levels that have diverged from the rent standard. In such circumstances, properties will be relet at target rents wherever possible.

The Council calculates an annual rent which is then charged across the year. Each year the Council will allocate two non-collection weeks.

Recalculating the Target Rent

Whilst normal planned investment will not impact on a properties target rent, there will be some occasions where a property receives significant investment or remodelling that is likely to have a fundamental impact on the 1999 value, the market rent valuation or the applicable LHA cap.

This is most likely to occur where there has been a fundamental change to the property such as an extension changing the number of bedrooms in a property directly impacting on the formula or additional floor space fundamentally changing the nature and likely value of the property.

Such changes are likely to take place during a void period and the rent adjusted accordingly before reletting,

Annual Rent Increases

Rent increases will occur from the first Monday in April each year. Increases will be agreed by full council and tenants will be given four weeks' notice of any increase.

Service Charge Setting

Landlords are able to make charges for additional services that are not provided to every tenant. Normally these charges relate to communal facilities such as cleaning communal areas or share lighting in corridors.

It is worth noting that whilst properties let at a social rent are exclusive of service charges, properties let at an affordable rent are inclusive and additional charges cannot be applied.

The purpose of service charging is to recoup actual expenditure on eligible items apportioned fairly across those benefitting from the service. Service charges must not recover more than the cost of the service provided.

Examples of eligible charges include:

- Communal area cleaning
- Communal area utilities
- Communal window cleaning
- Grounds maintenance
- Communal facilities in sheltered schemes
- Door entry systems

Service charges will be reviewed and updated annually and wherever possible actual expenditure and contractual increases will form the basis of calculations.

Where such an approach is not possible we will use a range of measures to make the most accurate estimation of future expenditure.

An annual review will be carried out to identify whether each individual charge remains appropriate.

Where there has been an unforeseen reduction in service in year the Council will ensure that an equivalent reduction in charge is levied in the following year

There may be circumstances where a new chargeable service is being considered. If this impacts on existing tenanted properties such a charge will only be introduced after consultation with affected tenants. Where newbuild/newly acquired properties are let on a social rent there may be opportunities to levy a service charge alongside the rent.

Use and Occupation Charges

There are certain occupiers of council dwellings who because of their occupation status are not liable for rent, however the Council will instead recover use and occupation charges.

Use and occupation charges will be set in line with the agreed rent for the property concerned.

Taking Properties Out of Debit

The Council recognises that there is a shortage of affordable housing in the district and that it should ensure its stock is available for occupation at all times. There will however be occasions where stock will need to be decommissioned either to allow for significant remodelling or disposal. As accommodation is not available for letting in its current form at these times such properties will be taken out of the debit.

A property would not normally be taken out of debit where the intention is to eventually relet it in its current form unless it is being repurposed temporarily such as for use as an office or community room.

Decisions to take a property out of debit must be confirmed in writing by the Head of Housing setting out the grounds for removal and reasons for it. Only once an approval is received will adjustments be actioned.

The number of properties currently out of debit, reasons for removal and cumulative rent loss will be reported quarterly to ensure there is sufficient oversight of the process.

In exceptional circumstances, a property taken out of debit will be returned to stock in the same format as it was removed without a change of use. In these circumstances the property will be written back on from the start of the current year for accounting purposes.

To enable oversight a formula rent will be calculated for all properties out of debit applying the same formula as those on the debit.

Managing Current Tenancy Balances (arrears and credits)

Tenancy Agreement

The tenancy agreement is the legal contract between the Council as landlord and tenants. In most circumstances this sets out the legal requirements for tenants to pay their rent. The current agreement is clear that tenants are expected to pay all rent and charges due weekly in advance. Any tenant who does not do this is effectively in arrears.

Approach to arrears management

The Council will be proactive in preventing rent arrears and will focus on early intervention to collect rent and minimise losses, including collecting rent in advance when it is due at the frequency agreed at sign up.

Debt recovery action and arrears prevention will be undertaken using letters, emails, visits, text messages, legal notices and where necessary the courts. Actions taken will be on a staged and escalating basis, culminating in legal action, and using eviction as a last resort.

Actions will be sensitive and sympathetic, fair but firm when determining when pursuing recovery. Every opportunity to provide tenants in arrears with necessary

advice and support to understand the implications of their action will be explored.

Action for non-payment of rent will be appropriate and proportionate.

An *Income and Rent Collection Procedure* will be used to provide the framework for action to be taken to recover rent arrears and other fees or charges.

At each stage of the *Income and Rent Collection Procedure* the primary objective will be enabling rent payment and maintaining the tenancy. Repayment arrangements will therefore always be affordable and satisfactory.

Tenants will be encouraged to prioritise their rent payments ahead of other debts as the consequence of non-payment could be homelessness. Tenants will be advised of the consequences of eviction through arrears on future rehousing options.

Where all other options have been exhausted, legal action will be taken against tenants for non-payment of rent. Ultimately, this action may result in the tenants losing their home.

In all cases, tenants will be provided with advice to make sure that they are aware of the support and options available to them.

Tenants will be encouraged to maximise their income by applying for welfare benefits and grants.

Partnerships are in place with other agencies to ensure tenants can access advice, support, and financial services. Opportunities to enhance this offer will be explored at all times.

A range of payment options will be available. Any new payment technologies will be adopted where it is cost effective and appropriate to do so.

When legal action is taken legal costs will usually be recovered from tenants unless to do so is considered disproportionate and is likely to leave a tenant in excessive financial difficulty.

Hierarchy of Housing Debt

Where tenants have multiple debts with the Housing Service a coordinated approach will be taken to recovery to ensure repayments are manageable and realistic.

Current rent arrears will be prioritised as these are the only housing debt that could directly lead to the loss of accommodation. Whilst there are arrears on the current rent account any payment received will always be applied to this account.

Recovering Former Tenant Arrears

Effective former arrears recover begins before a tenancy is terminated. When a notice is received from an outgoing contact will be made within the notice period wherever possible to ensure the tenant understands their current rental balance and likely balance when the tenancy terminates

A former tenant who has arrears will be encouraged to agree a repayment plan that is affordable, sustainable and devised with customer care and cost effectiveness in mind.

The Council recognises that a fair and flexible approach should be used when making an agreement to pay off former tenant arrears.

Detailed procedures for arrears recovery ensure that each case will be regularly monitored and the appropriate action taken.

The Council will provide support and assistance to former tenants, where necessary, with referrals to independent debt and money advice services where appropriate.

The Council will aim to collect all former tenant arrears without recourse to legal action through the use of repayment agreements to avoid unnecessary further costs to the former tenant.

All agreements will be monitored by the appropriate officers until the account has been cleared.

Further Intervention

Where an agreement cannot be put in place either because contact information is not up to date or where the former tenant is not responding to contact all reasonable measures will be taken to pursue the debt.

A range of methods to trace former tenants may be employed including tracing services and tracing agents where it is cost effective to do so given the nature of the debt.

Legal action to recover the arrears will be taken in cases where an assessment of the former tenant's financial circumstances indicate that such action would be appropriate.

Where the arrears are in respect of a deceased tenant action will be limited to contacting the next of kin or executor to claim against the estate. Where there is no response or confirmation is received of no estate the arrears at the time of termination will be written off.

Where a debt is uneconomical to pursue or there is no prospect of recovery The debt will be recommended for write off. In such circumstances the appropriate policies will be followed.

Writing - Off Former Tenant Arrears

There will be instances where, despite all reasonable efforts, it is not possible to pursue a debt further and the former tenant debt should be submitted for write-off. Debts should only be written off in four circumstances.

- 1) The debt is deemed uneconomical to pursue further given its size and likely costs associated with escalated recovery action.
- 2) There is no reasonable prospect of recovery given the known financial situation of the debtor.
- 3) All reasonable efforts to trace the debtor have been explored with no outcome.
- 4) The debt is past the criteria for legal recovery, including the statute of limitations or other formal processes.

Requests for right off will be escalated in line with the Council's financial regulations. Details of the circumstances and the reasoning for the write off will be provided as part of the submission.

Bereavement Allowance

All terminations require four weeks notice and rent is chargeable during the notice period. However, a credit of up to four weeks rent can be made to the account through the application of a bereavement allowance where the termination is as a result of a bereavement. The allowance will be calculated based on the four weeks chargeable within the notice period and any credit on the account at the time notice is received will be offset from the allowance.

Rent credited after the notice is received i.e. where a direct debit is still in place and honoured by the bank will not be treated as a credit for the purposes of calculating the bereavement allowance.

Should families choose to extend the notice period beyond the initial four weeks, and further rent becomes due this will be credited to the account as normal and no further bereavement allowance will be applied.

Writing Debt Back On

Writing debt off is not a recognition that the debt is not owed but simply that it is unlikely to be recovered and so should no longer be accounted for on the balance sheet.

There are circumstances, most commonly where a former tenant approaches for housing assistance where the decision a debt was unrecoverable may be reviewed. In these circumstances a debt should be written back on unless there are compelling reasons not to do so.

Full and Final Offers of Settlement

There may be circumstances where an offer is made to clear a proportion of debt as a full and final offer. In these circumstances any offer will be approved by the Head of Housing and Director of Finance and the debtor will be informed that the action may still be considered to demonstrate a lack of responsibility and that they may be deemed unsuitable to be a tenant for the purposes of the allocations policy.

Recharges

Where the Council has incurred expenditure that would normally be considered the tenants responsibility a recharge will be raised. Most often this will relate to repair work either during the course of the tenancy or where the tenancy has terminated, and the property has not been left in an acceptable condition.

A recharge will only ever be raised with clear evidence of the need to recharge along with the actual costs incurred. Furthermore, wherever possible the (former) tenant will be asked to confirm their responsibility for the costs before the charge is levied.

Arrangements to recoup recharges should always have regard to the debtor's financial circumstances and should not create additional further hardship.

Repayment Plans

A repayment plan will be offered whenever a debt is owed. The plan that is proposed will be fair and affordable. Whilst a key objective to recovery action is to agree a repayment plan that minimises the time it will take to recover debt individual circumstances will be taken into account.

The minimum recovery amount will usually have regard to Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) third party deduction limits, however, where a tenant can demonstrate particular hardship, these limits can be reviewed. Where an agreement cannot be reached a reputable independent third party such as Citizens Advice may be asked to agree a reasonable repayment amount.

Refunds

Wherever possible any account surpluses should be returned to the creditor at the earliest opportunity. However, prior to any refund a check will be made to ensure that there are no unrecorded charges due.

Refunds will be issued on request unless there is a justification for withholding and account holders in credit will be reviewed regularly and a refund offered.

Refunds for former tenancies will be paid once confirmation has been received that there are no other outstanding charges providing payment information is available.

Where a current tenant in credit declines the opportunity of a refund consideration will be given to whether there is a risk of financial exploitation or money laundering. Procedures are in place to escalate in these circumstances.

Internal Payments to the rent account

To maximise income and to reduce the risk of enforcement action, wherever possible any internal payments such as downsizing payments, decant payments etc will be used to offset outstanding debts.

It is recognised there may be situations, however, such as instructions from the Housing Ombudsman where this cannot be applied.

Challenging debts or charges

Where a customer feels they are being pursued for a charge unfairly they should raise this in writing to the Head of Housing in the first instance.

The Council will ensure that there are fair and transparent mechanisms for challenging and debt or charge the recipient feels has been unfairly applied. Whenever a bill is submitted the right of review will clearly be stated upon it.

Equality and Diversity

The Councils aim to ensure that its policies and procedures are fair and transparent; and that the Council work towards achieving balanced and sustainable communities in accordance with its equality and diversity goals.

Equality Analysis

Completion of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

<p>Has an EIA form been completed as part of creating / reviewing / amending this policy?</p>	<p>Please tick: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>To be completed prior to consideration by Cabinet</p>
<p>If yes, where can a copy of the EIA form be found?</p>	<p>[Insert location / available upon request]</p>
<p>If no, please confirm why an EIA was not required?</p>	<p>[Insert reason why form not completed]</p>

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DAMP, MOULD AND CONDENSATION POLICY

Item	Details
Reference:	[Insert policy reference e.g. identifier on centralised spreadsheet]
Status:	[Insert e.g. draft / final]
Originator:	[Insert policy originator]
Owner:	[Insert policy owner]
Version No:	[Insert current version number]
Date:	[Insert date policy was last approved]

Key policy details

Approvals

Item	Date of Approval	Version No.
Consulted with [insert]		
Reviewed by [insert e.g Audit and Governance Committee]		
Approved by [insert]		

The policy owner has the authority to make the following minor changes without approval

XX
XX
XX

Policy Location

This policy can be found at [insert location of policy e.g. NWLDC website, Sharepoint page under current policies tab]

Revision history

Version Control	Revision Date	Summary of Changes
[Insert version no.]	[Insert date of revised version]	[Insert amendments made to previous version]

Policy Review Plans

This policy is subject to a scheduled review once every [insert number] years or earlier if there is a change in legislation or local policy that requires it.

Distribution

Title	Date of Issue	Version No.
[Insert e.g. distributed to Cabinet, on Website etc].		

Security Classification – (*To be marked as appropriate using one of the following classifications).

- Official-Sensitive - Common sense handling required extra care must be taken with storage and sharing.
- Official Sensitive (personal)- As official sensitive contains information concerning individuals.
- Official Sensitive (Commercial) -As official sensitive contains sensitive information with commercial implications.
- Legal Privilege- confidential communications between lawyers and clients when the purpose is to seek legal advice.
- Any information not marked would be assumed Official (not covered under other categories and no special handing required).

The following should be on the final page of every policy.

Equality Analysis

Completion of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

Has an EIA form been completed as part of creating / reviewing / amending this policy?	Please tick: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, where can a copy of the EIA form be found?	[Insert location / available upon request]
If no, please confirm why an EIA was not required?	[Insert reason why form not completed]

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DAMP, MOULD AND CONDENSATION POLICY

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 NWLDC wants to take every reasonable action to identify, remedy and provide advice on damp and mould in Council homes in order to ensure a safe, healthy and comfortable environment for our residents, as well as to protect the fabric of our buildings.
- 1.2 Damp and mould is a complex issue requiring regular action from both housing providers and tenants. The nature of diagnosis of many damp and mould issues means that diagnosis is not always possible at first report.
- 1.3 This policy statement outlines NWLDC's approach to delivering a fit for purpose damp and mould service that will:
 - Provide clarity on the ways in which tenants can report such issues
 - Ensure that tenants are treated in a fair and consistent way
 - Comply with statutory regulatory, legislative requirements, contractual requirements and good practice
 - Ensure dry and healthy homes are provided and maintained
 - Focus on working in partnership with tenants ensuring that a safe and healthy environment is provided.
 - Undertake effective investigations and implement all reasonable remedial measures and improvements to eradicate damp and mould.
 - Ensure that tenants have access to and/or are provided with advice and guidance on managing and controlling condensation and mould.
 - Ensure that the fabric of the Council's property is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp and condensation
 - To utilise the external funding available to support the investment in the Council's stock, improve the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings and the heating costs for tenants.
- 1.4 The Council will make reasonable attempts to access the property to inspect and carry out the works. All logged repairs must have evidence of at least three attempts to contact the tenant. Written communication must then be provided to the tenant asking them to make contact to organise a new repair and record each attempt on the tenant database.
- 1.5 Data collection and insight measures will be implemented to assist with informing the Council of the possible risks to properties. This is to ensure that proactive measures can be undertaken to eliminate damp, mould and condensation before it becomes a problem for tenants.

2 Legal Framework and Context

- 2.1 Under the Safety and Quality standard, The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) requires all registered providers to provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas. This service should respond to the needs of, and offers choices to, tenants, and have the objective of completing repairs and improvements right first time and meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants in their homes.
- 2.2 The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 introduced a consumer regulation regime focused on meeting the needs of tenants. One aim of the legislation and regime is to ensure that providers of social housing, such as the Council, keep its properties and estates safe and clean.
- 2.3 The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 lays the foundations for changes to how social housing is managed. It includes increased regulation of social landlords and new rules for protecting tenants from serious hazards in their homes.
- 2.4 Many of the provisions in the Act are responses to the tragedies of the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire and death of two-year old Awaab Ishak, who died in 2020 from exposure to serious mould.
- 2.5 The Act allows the Regulator of Social Housing to take action against social landlords before people are at risk and hold landlords to account with regular inspections. It introduces new social housing consumer standards and gives the Secretary of State power to require social landlords to investigate and rectify serious health hazards.
- 2.6 From April 2023, the RSH introduced a series of 22 mandatory Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) creating a new system for assessing how well social housing landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services. These measures include those applicable directly to building safety as well as those based on tenant perception surveys setting out tenants' views on the Council's performance, which includes responsible neighbourhood management.
- 2.7 The TSM measures under the Homes Standard relevant to this policy include:
 - TP02 – Satisfaction with Repairs
 - TP04 – Satisfaction that the home is well maintained
 - TP05 – Satisfaction that the home is safe
 - TP10 – Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained
- 2.8 The scope of this policy is covered by legislation including the following:

- Housing Act 1985.
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018.
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, Section 11 - Repairs and Maintenance.
- Housing Act 2004 - Housing Health and Safety Rating.
- Decent Homes Standards.
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- Awaab's Law

3 Policy Aims and Objectives

3.1 This policy explains how the Council will deal effectively with damp and mould in Council homes and communal areas. This includes NWLDC properties that are tenanted.

3.2 This policy covers the following items:

- Methods of reporting
- Diagnostic scripting
- Investigations and repairs
- Process of elimination for complex cases
- Damp and mould inspections
- Technology and monitoring
- Improvements
- Landlord responsibilities
- Tenant responsibilities
- Education and Improvement

Objective

3.3 This policy has been written to ensure that wherever possible, residents are not adversely affected by the causes of damp and mould and drives forward an agenda of proactive action to tackle/manage the causes of damp and mould.

4 Definitions

4.1 For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- **Tenant** – means any person that has a tenancy agreement with the Council.
- **Leaseholder** - means any person or organisation that has a domestic property lease agreement with the Council.
- **Council Property** – means any land/property owned by the Council either as the freehold or leasehold owner.

- **Rising damp** - Characterised by a tide mark on ground floor walls, often accompanied by salt deposits ('efflorescence'), rising damp is caused by the movement of moisture from the ground, rising up through the structure of the building through capillary action.
- **Penetrating damp** - Water penetrating the external structure of the building causing damp, rot and damage to internal surfaces and structure. For example roof leaks, gutter leaks, water ingress through poor pointing or render, bridged damp proof courses or storm water flooding.
- **Plumbing leaks** – leaks from any parts of the plumbing, heating or drainage system, above ground or underground.
- **Condensation** –occurs when an imbalance of heating, moisture and ventilation leads to air borne moisture condensing and settling on cooler surfaces as water.
- **As Built Defect** –is a building defect which met building regulations at the time of construction, but would fail to meet modern building standards today. Common examples include: single skin walls, rat-trap bond walls, cold bridge details, ground levels within 150mm of damp proof course, lack of damp proof course or lack of damp proof membrane.
- **Humidity** (relative humidity (RH)) - is a measure of the water vapour content of air, expressed as a percentage (%RH). RH is strongly proportional to temperature and highly sensitive to temperature changes.
- **Excess humidity** – for the purpose of management of damp and mould, excess humidity is where RH indoors exceeds, or is likely to exceed 70%. Indoor humidity at this level is harmful to respiratory health, and can lead to the formation of mould in homes.
- **Moisture producing room** / wet room – a room in which moisture is created through use of appliances, for example kitchens, bathrooms and shower rooms.
- **Habitable room** –a room that is utilised for dwelling purposes e.g. living, eating, sleeping. NWLDC has a responsibility to ensure that habitable rooms are capable of being free from damp and mould. Rooms not forming part of the habitable property include garages, external stores, sheds, former coal stores and external WCs. These rooms are often unheated and uninsulated, so can be prone to condensation mould if not well ventilated.

5 Types of Damp

The types of damp covered by this policy are:

Rising Damp

This is where there is a movement of moisture from the ground rising up through the structure of the building through capillary action. Properties are normally built with a layer of waterproof material in the walls (and floor if it is solid concrete) of the building and this stops moisture rising above it. However, if it is defective, damaged or covered over or if a property was built without one, rising damp can occur.

Rising damp will only affect basements and ground floor rooms and it will normally not rise any more than 1.5 metres above the ground.

Penetrating Damp

This is where water penetrates the structure of the building (external walls, roofs) or if there are internal leaks Penetrating damp can be the result of, for example:

- Water ingress due to defective or poor original design / workmanship of the structure
- Defective components for example roof coverings, external wall doors and windows.
- Defective or blocked rainwater gutters and pipes.
- Defective or leaking internal waste pipes, hot and cold water and heating systems.
- Flooding due to burst or leaking pipes.

Condensation Damp

This is where moisture held in warm air comes into contact with cold air or a cold surface. The moisture vapour held in the warm air condenses producing water droplets. The building Conditions and features that can increase the risk of condensation include:

- Inadequate ventilation of a property (for example via trickle vents, mechanical extraction, non-mechanical ventilation)
- Inadequate heating of a property, (for example undersized radiators, draught proofing)
- Inadequate or defective thermal insulation of a property, (for example lack or shortage of cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, external wall insulation)
- High humidity within a property, (for example from a leak or by penetrating damp or rising damp)
- Poor design, construction or a defect, (cold bridging: gaps in insulation caused during building or a problem that has developed since then)

The living conditions that can lead to condensation include:

- Lack of ventilation (not opening windows, blocking up vents, not using extractor fans, not allowing air to circulate around furniture)

- Not heating the property adequately
- High humidity – for example, not covering pans when cooking and drying laundry in the property can contribute to this
- Lack of space around furniture and possessions that prevents air flowing through the property

6 Methods of Reporting

- 6.1 Tenants and leaseholders can report repairs by phone, email, letter, in person, on our website or through our social media pages.
- 6.2 Damp and mould issues may also be identified by visiting professionals and NWLDC officers, in which case, this will be reported back to the repairs service.

7 Diagnostic scripting

- 7.1 All repairs coming through the Council's calls centre will be triaged using a diagnostic script. This script has been created from decades of specialist officer knowledge, industry best practice and tenant feedback. The script is designed to determine the most likely cause or causes of damp or mould, and to arrange for repairs or advice to combat this. It may be necessary for the script to be used more than once, as symptoms improve and change.
- 7.2 It is important that tenants are honest and accurate when reporting repairs, in order that the scripting is appropriate.

8 Investigations and Repairs

- 8.1 The Council shall investigate to determine the cause of damp, mould and condensation and carry out remedial repairs and actions in accordance with the tenancy agreement, including:
 - Undertaking work for the treatment of penetrating dampness or mould on void properties before being let to new tenants.
 - Delivering effective solutions, based on dealing with the causes of the damp and mould not just the symptoms.
 - Promoting and providing general advice and guidance on how to manage damp and condensation.
 - Ensuring that the relevant staff are aware of and understand the delivery of the service that will meet the aims of this policy.

- Ensuring that competent contractors are employed to carry out any works associated with damp and mould.
 - Informing the tenant of the findings of the investigations following the visit. This will include identifying the possible causes of damp and mould, recommending effective solutions, all necessary remedial works and the estimated timescales to complete the works.
 - When satisfied that, in partnership with the tenant, all reasonable efforts in managing condensation damp have been carried out and this has not been successful, the Council will visit the property and investigate the matter further.
 - Insulating Housing Revenue Account (HRA) properties in accordance with the Decent Homes Standard to help reduce the likelihood of condensation occurring.
 - Maintaining a tenant's home to avoid penetrating dampness and to avoid rising damp in homes with a damp proof course or membrane by design, and for carrying out remedial action if these do occur.
 - Undertaking reasonable improvement works required to assist in the management and control of condensation damp, e.g. the installation of mechanical extractor fans, air vents and repairing existing insulation.
 - Carrying out remedial works where it is reasonable and practical to do so.
 - Taking a pragmatic approach in finding appropriate solutions when having regard to the constraints of the existing building design and structure. In some cases this may mean that the Council will need to sell or dispose of the property.
 - Making good any internal surfaces following any damage caused by remedial works.
- 8.2 To ensure that treatment has been effective, and damp and mould has not reappeared, any improvement work will be accompanied by a follow on contact to tenants.

9 Process of Elimination for Complex Cases

- 9.1 Occasionally, the cause of dampness is unclear, and the diagnosis process can be complex. This is often the case where there is more than one possible cause of dampness. Extreme condensation can also impede the diagnosis process.

- 9.2 In some complex cases, a process of elimination may be required, and a period of monitoring will be necessary after each element of remedial works is carried out. In the case of penetrating dampness, for example, it might take one month per inch of masonry to dry out.
- 9.3 High levels of internal humidity can impede the drying out process following remedial works, and as such, it is essential that tenants follow advice relating to reducing internal humidity and increasing ventilation during the periods following works.
- 9.4 It is important that this is clearly communicated to tenants, and that tenants are involved in the monitoring and re-reporting process.
- 9.5 Where symptoms of dampness persist after remedial works, it is important that tenants contact NWLDC to advise of this.

10 Damp and Mould Inspections

- 10.1 In cases where the causes of damp and mould are unclear, an inspection may be required. These inspections may be carried out by:
- A trade inspector – this may be someone with a specific carpentry, plumbing, masonry or electrical background, selected for their appropriate skillset to investigate possible contributory factors.
 - A Building Surveyor – this will be an accredited in-house surveyor, who will endeavour to determine the cause or causes of dampness when it is unclear what the cause is, or whether other routes have been explored and exhausted.
 - Independent specialist survey – usually carried out by an independent RICS surveyor. These surveys will be carried out in cases where the causes of damp and mould remain unclear or disputed following a combination of the inspections noted in point 10.

11 Mutual Exchanges

- 11.1 Before any mutual exchange takes place, the property will have been inspected. Outgoing tenants will be required to adequately clear areas to allow inspection and complete any repairs that are the tenant's responsibility before the exchange takes place. This inspection will also identify whether there are any damp and mould issues and appropriate advice will be given at this time and / or remedial repairs requested by the member of staff visiting the property.
- 11.2 Properties moved into as a mutual exchange are accepted as seen. This means that any large scale Works such as kitchen refurbishment will only be completed when and if they are due to be completed via an ongoing planned improvement programme. However, responsive repairs will be carried out following standard procedures and this includes the response to reports of damp and mould.

12 VOID (Empty) Properties

12.1 When a tenancy has ended, work will be undertaken before the next tenant moves in to make sure that the property meets our agreed Void Letting Standard. This aims to ensure that the property is safe, secure, clean and in a good state of repair.

To assist with the eradication, control or management of damp, mould and condensation, this will include:

- Completing any works required to eradicate rising or penetrating damp
- Cleaning of any extractor fans to ensure they are working properly
- Replacing or upgrading of any faulty fans
- Installing mechanical ventilation to any property showing signs of damp, mould or condensation
- Ensuring that doors and windows are serviceable and can effectively ventilate the property
- Applying any damp and mould treatments, where necessary.

13 Technology and Monitoring

13.1 The Council wants to make sure that tenants know how to spot and report issues, and that a proactive approach to preventing damp and mould issues in Council properties is adopted.

13.2 Proactive mould surveys will be undertaken in Council houses in geographic areas identified as having a disproportionately higher number of mould-related issues. In addition to this, proactive checks are also undertaken for damp and mould during the void process where all necessary damp proofing and mould treatment works are carried out.

13.3 Resources have also been increased so that the Council can pro-actively respond to reports of damp and mould.

13.4 **Our ongoing pro-active approach includes:**

The Council will identify the prevalence of hazards including damp and mould through stock condition surveys and predictive modelling. This information will be used to plan and deliver pro-active investment in 'hotspot' areas and poorly designed properties. The Council will also:

- Analyse complaints data to identify potential trends, themes and learning opportunities ensuring processes are re-engineered based upon the learning.
- Undertake thorough damp and mould inspections when properties are vacant, ensuring the necessary damp and mould treatment works are completed before a property is re-let.

- Identify damp and mould issues during mutual exchange inspections to ensure it is rectified prior to the exchange taking place.

13.5 **The Council will:**

- Undertake annual training to Council officers on customer care and how to identify condensation, damp, and mould.
- Deliver regular 'toolbox talks' with Council contractors to ensure operatives, entering properties, are trained to an appropriate level.
- Check each room within a property during a programme of Tenancy Health Check visits to identify damp, mould and condensation.
- Undertake spot checks (MOT) of properties where tenants have not reported a repair within a 12-month period.
- Review information provided to customers to raise awareness around damp, mould and condensation on an annual basis e.g., through the Council's webpages, targeted tenant involvement strategies and social media platforms.
- Provide all new Council tenancies the leaflet 'Damp, mould and condensation in your home- A guide for council tenants' in their starter pack. They will also be shown how to use their heating and ventilation systems, and will be provided with up to date running costs of the appliance for their information.

14 Improvements

14.1 Subject to funding, the Council will endeavor to carry out improvements to properties to assist tenants with creating a warm, healthy environment, free from damp and mould. Improvements could include:

- Provision of a mould treatment kit for free of charge
- Change of heating type
- Internal insulation (thermal boarding)
- External insulation
- Cavity wall insulation
- Floor or ceiling insulation
- Retro-fit damp proof membrane or injection
- Additional mechanical extraction
- Heat recovery units
- Positive input ventilation units
- Additional external drainage

14.2 As improvements fall outside the scope of responsive repair, right to repair and Decent Homes Standard timescales, any commitment to improvements are likely to be on a much longer-term timescale and subject to change.

15 Landlord Responsibilities

15.1 Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 places an obligation on the Council, as a landlord, to maintain the exterior and structure of the property. This includes installations for the provision of water, heating systems, drainage, sanitary appliances and gas and electricity. It ensures a rented property is kept in a good state of repair.

15.2 As also set out in the tenancy agreement, the Council commits to meeting its legal obligation to keep in repair the structure and exterior of the building, including roof tiles, gutters, drains and pipes.

15.3 The Council will keep in repair and proper working order the installations for water, gas, and electricity. This includes basins, sinks, baths, toilets, water tanks and pipes, gas pipes, boilers, electrical wiring, radiators and any other installation for space heating and water heating.

15.4 It is important to note, and in accordance the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, the Council only has to repair the dwelling back to the standard it was when a tenant moved in, as long as the condition was satisfactory at that time. The Council is not required to upgrade or improve any part of the property, unless agreed in the tenancy agreement or undertaken by the Council voluntarily.

15.5 **Reasonable timescales:**

- 15.5.1 Where damp, mould and condensation repairs are required, these will be dealt with in accordance with the timescales set out in Awaab's Law.
Where responsive repairs fall outside of Awaab's Law and meet the right to repair scheme, these will be dealt with in accordance with the timescales set out in the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy.
- 15.5.2 Where repairs fall outside of the scope of responsive repairs or the right to repair scheme, temporary repairs will be attempted, and major works will be carried out within a reasonable time period.
- 15.5.3 Improvement works generally carry no statutory timescales, and a reasonable timescale could vary between six months and several years, where agreed.

16 Tenant Responsibilities

- 16.1 As set out in section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, a tenant or leaseholder has a duty to "use the premises in a tenant-like manner". In essence, this means that our tenants are expected to take good care of the dwelling, carry out daily maintenance tasks and not do anything that directly leads to a deterioration of the fabric of the building or the installations and facilities provided. For example, they should:
- Keep the dwelling clean
 - Heat and ventilate the property appropriately – the Council will support and signpost tenants if there is financial hardship
- 16.2 The Defective Premises Act 1972 sets out that as a landlord, the Council cannot be liable for injury or damage caused by something that the tenant is responsible for repairing.
- 16.3 Tenants have an obligation to allow access for inspections and repairs, in accordance with the tenancy agreement.

17 Education and Improvement

- 17.1 All Council officers will receive training in understanding the causes and symptoms of damp and mould, the potential impact on health, and the importance of reporting concerns. Technical officers and operatives will receive more in depth training to aid diagnosis and ensure appropriate investigations and repairs are carried out.
- 17.2 Accepted methods of diagnosing and treating dampness are regularly being reviewed and developed by industry experts. Technical officers will continue their professional development by monitoring changes in best practice and adopting new techniques.
- 17.3 The causes of damp and mould are complex and in many cases, our tenants may need support to understand the causes of damp, mould and condensation, as well as how to avoid this. NWLDC will ensure that this education is in a range of formats including verbal, written, audio, visual and video.

18 Exclusions and Limitations

- 18.1 Misuse / damage – where damp and mould is caused by misuse or damage, tenants may be responsible for arranging for or paying for repairs. In extreme cases, possession may be sought for breach of tenancy agreement.
- 18.2 Rooms outside of the habitable part of the property – sheds, store rooms, single skin stores, loft spaces and former coal stores do not form part of the habitable property and may not be free from damp or mould.
- 18.3 Leaseholders – the Council will be responsible for anything listed within the freeholder's obligation within the lease. The cost of this is apportioned accordingly.
- 18.4 Garages – garages are not guaranteed to be dry or free from damp. They are designed to be secure off-road parking for standard vehicles only.

19 Complaints and Feedback

19.1 The Council aims to get things right the first time.. Receiving positive comments and feedback about our staff is welcomed and appreciated. this .

19.2 If things do go wrong the Council is committed to:

- Dealing with complaints and comments quickly and effectively; and
- Using complaints, comments and compliments to review and improve our services.

19.3 The Housing Ombudsman Service advises that a complaint must be defined as:

'An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents'.

19.4 Where a tenant considers that the Council has given a poor service or has got something wrong, they may tell a member of staff or their local Councilor in the first instance. This does not need to be treated as a formal complaint (unless the complainant asks us to do so) and may be resolved 'there and then' by way of an apology or plan of action. Any comments provided will be used to take appropriate action, or give information.

19.5 If a tenant does not want to do this or is unhappy with the response, they may make a formal complaint (stage 1), which can then be escalated to a stage 2 complaint if they are still not satisfied with the response. Having been through stages 1 and 2 if the tenant is still not satisfied, the tenant may contact the Housing Ombudsman Service.

20 Equality Impact Assessments

20.1 The Councils complete an equality impact assessment each time a policy, procedure or service is developed or reviewed. The assessment is to help ensure decision making is fair and does not present any barriers or disadvantage to customers from any protected group (including disability) under the Equality Act 2010.

20.2 This policy has been subject to the Council's Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) screening matrix

20.3 The Council aims to work with other stakeholders, both internal and external, to ensure the needs, requirements and circumstances of each tenant are considered, this includes any identified health or mobility issues.

21. Implementation and Monitoring

21.1 The Strategic Director is responsible for implementing and monitoring of this policy.

21.2 This Policy will be reviewed at least every three years from the date approved, to ensure its continuous suitability, adequacy and effectiveness. The introduction of new legislation, regulatory or operational changes or other matters may trigger an earlier review.

21.3 Managers of the Repair and Maintenance Service are responsible for making sure that all relevant employees are aware of the contents and responsibilities of this policy.

22 Right to Review

22.1 Tenants may request access to information relevant to repairs under the Freedom of Information act.

23.2 Tenants are entitled to challenge decisions made under this policy using the Complaints and Members / MP enquiry process.

DRAFT

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Domestic Abuse Policy

Key policy details

Item	Details
Reference:	Domestic Abuse Policy (Housing) 2025
Status:	Draft
Originator:	AH
Owner:	Housing Management Team Manager
Version No:	1.1
Date:	2025

Approvals

Item	Date of Approval	Version No.
Consulted with [insert]		
Reviewed by [insert e.g Audit and Governance Committee]		
Approved by [insert]		

Policy Location

This policy can be found at [insert location of policy e.g. NWLDC website, Sharepoint page under current policies tab]

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Completed by	Completion date

Revision history

Version Control	Revision Date	Summary of Changes
1.1	January 2025	None – new policy

Policy Review Plans

This policy is subject to a scheduled review once every four years or earlier if there is a change in legislation or local policy that requires it.

Distribution

Title	Date of Issue	Version No.
[Insert e.g. distributed to Cabinet, on Website etc].		

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council believes that all forms of Domestic abuse are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Domestic abuse often has consequences for the housing of victims and their families This policy aims to ensure that all staff, partner agencies and contractors understand domestic abuse and give a consistent service when offering guidance and support.

- 1.2 As a social landlord and the provider of homelessness, housing advice and housing allocations services the Council has a major role to play in both preventing domestic abuse and supporting its victims.
- 1.3 The Council has already identified in the Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021 that domestic abuse is a major cause of homelessness in the district.
- 1.4 Domestic abuse is still a largely hidden crime and measuring the true scale of the issue is difficult. Domestic abuse happens in all communities, regardless of gender, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership and pregnancy or maternity.
- 1.5 Domestic abuse is rarely a one-off event and is often used systematically to gain power and control over the victim, with the abuse and or violence increasing in frequency and severity over time.
- 1.6 As a landlord, the Council is well placed to recognise the signs of domestic abuse. It is essential that all reports of domestic abuse are taken seriously and that positive and pro-active work is undertaken with the victim/ survivor to offer support.
- 1.7 In addition, perpetrators of domestic abuse who wish to positively change their behaviour will be assisted to help them access appropriate support and assistance.
- 1.8 Abuse perpetrated by a person over the age of 16 is a domestic abuse issue, while abuse committed against a person under the age of 16 is a child safeguarding issue.

2. LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

- 2.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 provides further protections to those who experience domestic abuse, as well as strengthen measures to tackle perpetrators. Amongst other measures, the Domestic Abuse Act;
 - creates a statutory definition of domestic abuse, emphasising that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also be emotional, coercive or controlling, and economic abuse. As part of this definition, children will be explicitly recognised as victims if they see, hear or otherwise experience the effects of abuse.
 - ensures that when local authorities rehouse victims of domestic abuse, they do not lose a secure lifetime or assured tenancy.
 - provides that all eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse automatically have 'priority need' for homelessness assistance
 - Places a legal duty on councils to fund support for survivors in 'safe accommodation'
- 2.2 The Act defines domestic abuse is 'the behaviour of one person towards another where: both people are aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other and the behaviour is abusive

Behaviour is 'abusive' if it consists of any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional or other abuse

It does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct. Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse. It can happen in all kinds of relationships - regardless of age, race, sex, sexuality, disability, wealth, gender identity, and lifestyle.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 also now recognises children as victims of domestic abuse if they have seen, heard or experienced the effects of domestic abuse

This definition also includes honour - based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

The impact of domestic abuse can range and can sadly often end in the loss of life.

Domestic abuse happens in all communities, regardless of gender, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership and pregnancy or maternity. When dealing with domestic abuse it is important to recognise differences between all protected characteristics and that different approaches and resources are needed when addressing domestic abuse cases.

Domestic abuse can involve:

- **Controlling behaviour** - a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.
- **Coercive behaviour** - an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.
- **Physical injury** – this can be because of a wide range of different behaviour and can include punching, slapping, hitting, biting, pinching, kicking, pulling hair, pushing and strangling. It can also include withholding access to medication, medical care or forcing alcohol or drug use.
- **Harassment** - a crime involving behaviour that takes place more than once, and the perpetrator's actions must have an unwanted effect on the victim. Under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, it is an offence for a person to pursue a course of conduct that amounts to harassment of another person, and that they know (or ought to know) amounts to harassment. The Act defines harassment and states: "References to harassing a person include alarming the person or causing the person distress." A 'course of conduct' in the case of harassment of a single person must involve conduct on at least two occasions.
- **Stalking** - there is no specific legal definition of stalking. However, it is helpful to know that in cases of stalking there is a pattern of unwanted, fixated and obsessive behaviour which is intrusive. It can include harassment that amounts to stalking or stalking that causes fear of violence or serious alarm or distress.

3. APPROACH

- 3.1 This policy sets out how the Housing Service will take steps to assist and support any person subject to or threatened with domestic abuse. The Council fully supports the Chartered Institute of Housing's "Make a Stand" campaign which aims to ensure that all social housing providers across the UK are fully committed to tackling domestic abuse in their homes.
- 3.2 This policy aims to ensure that those who are subjected to domestic abuse are dealt with in a sympathetic and sensitive manner, in accordance with their needs. It aims to ensure all employees act in a non-judgemental way when dealing with cases of domestic abuse.

- 3.3 The Council will support victims of domestic abuse in a variety of ways and work with other agencies, for example:

Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

MARAC is a regular local meeting to discuss how to help people at high risk of murder or serious harm. This includes a domestic abuse specialist (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor - IDVA), police, children's social services, health and other relevant agencies including Housing.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is defined by The Care Act statutory guidance as "Protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect." Domestic abuse often involves safeguarding issues; please refer to the Council's **Safeguarding Policy** for further information on our approach to safeguarding.

- 3.4 When dealing with reports of Domestic Abuse, the Council will ensure tenants are able to disclose domestic abuse through a variety of methods and not be restricted to a particular method. Responses to reports will be within one working day, at a time that is safe and convenient for the victim.

During initial contact, where safe to do so the Council will discuss the safest means of contact, as well as safest times and day to make further contact, including contact by our Domestic Abuse Housing Link Worker.

In the first instance, with agreement from the victim, they should be referred to the Domestic Abuse Housing Link Worker within the Housing Choices team. The link worker will complete a DASH risk assessment as part of their initial engagement.

A safeguarding referral is to be completed following any disclosure.

The Council will respond to disclosures of domestic abuse by:

- Treating all complaints of domestic violence and abuse seriously
- Taking a victim-centred approach to reports of domestic abuse
- Giving priority to the safety of victims and their household
- Ensuring confidentiality
- Working with specialist agencies to manage the victim's safety
- Taking or supporting legal action against perpetrators where appropriate
- Considering any additional security measure to manage the victim's safety

Victims will be referred with their consent to other agencies who may be able to provide additional support or assistance including;

- Police
- Domestic abuse support agencies
- Victim Support
- National domestic violence helplines
- Legal advice (normally accessed via a support agency)
- Children's Services

Victims will be supported as necessary in accessing any of the above services.

A new case will be opened on the Housing management system to record information relating to the disclosure.

The designated safeguarding officer will open a new safeguarding case on the secure case management system shared with police.

3.5 Homelessness and Temporary accommodation

The Council will always work to support the victims wishes. Where a tenant wishes to maintain their tenancy and it is safe to do so, including where this requires a period of absence from the home, the Council will support them to do so. However, where the tenant agrees this is not in their best interests, they will be supported to access appropriate homelessness advice and support.

This policy is designed to ensure that a tenant wishing to maintain their tenancy is not disadvantaged by doing so. All services available to someone as a result of homelessness including support and practical assistance will also be available to current tenants.

3.6 Tenancy Policy

The Tenancy Policy states that if victims of domestic abuse are rehoused, they will retain their security of tenure, for example, secure tenants will be given another secure tenancy.

3.7 Partnership working

The Domestic Abuse Act 2020 places emphasis on multi-agency working and at NWLDC there are already strong partnership arrangements in place to deal with Domestic Abuse;

- MARAC leads in place in Housing and Community Safety and a robust procedure in place in terms of responding to MARAC cases.
- Domestic Abuse Housing Link Worker service provided by Women's Aid in post to provide specialist domestic abuse advice and support to customers and staff
- Safer North West Leicestershire Partnership has an established Domestic Abuse Priority Action Group which the Housing service contributes to, with an action plan around improving the response to and awareness of domestic abuse across North West Leicestershire, including any concerns regarding under reporting
- Fortnightly Threat Risk Harm meetings with neighbourhood policing team, housing and community safety as well as other relevant partners.

3.8 Confidentiality

Where possible any disclosure of domestic abuse will be kept confidential. By maintaining confidentiality, the Council can encourage victims to discuss their situation and as a result help an individual experiencing domestic abuse make positive changes as well as reduce risks to themselves and others.

The Council can only involve other agencies or share information with the consent of the employee concerned, unless the Council is required to do so by law or the information is necessary for the protection of children or vulnerable adults.

3.9 Domestic Abuse experienced by staff

In cases of staff experiencing domestic abuse, the Council will refer to the **Staff**

Domestic Abuse Policy.

There may be circumstances when it will be appropriate for a manager to encourage an employee to disclose what is happening to them so that appropriate help and support can be provided and to prevent the possibility of action being taken due to a decline in performance, poor timekeeping or absenteeism.

As far as possible, information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.

4. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

- 4.1 The Strategic Director is responsible for implementing and monitoring of this policy.
- 4.2 This Policy will be reviewed at least every four years from the date approved, to ensure its continuous suitability, adequacy and effectiveness. The introduction of new legislation, regulatory or operational changes or other matters may trigger an earlier review.
- 4.3 Managers in the Housing Service are responsible for making sure that all relevant employees are aware of the contents and responsibilities of this policy.
- 4.4 Managers in the Housing Service responsible for procurement of contractors working in tenants' homes on behalf of the council are required to report any safeguarding concerns, which includes any concerns regarding domestic abuse.

Equality Analysis

Completion of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

Has an EIA form been completed as part of creating / reviewing / amending this policy?	Please tick: Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, where can a copy of the EIA form be found?	Available upon request
If no, please confirm why an EIA was not required?	N/A



Tenancy Policy

Key policy details

Item	Details
Reference:	Tenancy Policy 2025
Status:	Draft
Originator:	AH
Owner:	Housing Management Team Manager
Version No:	3.2
Date:	2025

Approvals

Item	Date of Approval	Version No.
Consulted with [insert]		
Reviewed by [insert e.g Audit and Governance Committee]		
Approved by [insert]		

Policy Location

This policy can be found at [insert location of policy e.g. NWLDC website, Sharepoint page under current policies tab]

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Completed by	Completion date

Revision history

Version Control	Revision Date	Summary of Changes
3	January 2025	General update to all sections so they are in line with the Tenancy Agreement, specifically around successions and tenancy changes. Addition of information relating to ending a tenancy. Addition of information and definition of domestic abuse.

Policy Review Plans

This policy is subject to a scheduled review once every four years or earlier if there is a change in legislation or local policy that requires it.

Distribution

Title	Date of Issue	Version No.
[Insert e.g. distributed to Cabinet, on Website etc].		

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This policy explains the approach the Council will take to ensure efficient use of its housing stock by issuing tenancies which are compatible with the purpose of the accommodation, the needs of individual households and the sustainability of the community.

1.2 The aims of the Tenancy Policy are to:

- Ensure the Council makes best use of its housing stock
- Ensure that statutory and regulatory responsibilities are met
- Ensure a consistent, clear and fair approach is taken.
- Ensure customers are provided with appropriate support, particularly those who are vulnerable or at times of personal grief

2. APPROACH

2.1 The Council recognises the importance of tenure security in both developing and maintaining stable and viable communities. The Council will continue to ensure, through the allocations policy, that it continues to make best use of stock, particularly those properties that benefit from adaptations or conversions.

2.2 The income levels of new or transferring home seekers will be assessed against the limitations set in the allocations policy.

2.3 The types of tenancy the Council will grant are shown in the table below:

Type of Tenancy	Length of Tenancy	Tenancy Reviews	Reason for using this type of tenancy
Introductory	12 months	First review at six weeks, then quarterly reviews and the option to extend the introductory tenancy for a further six-month period. More frequent reviews will be undertaken based on the risk assessment undertaken at the beginning of the tenancy.	For all new tenants to demonstrate their ability to comply with the tenancy terms and conditions. If enforcement action is required, the route to obtain possession is enabled through mandatory powers for possession. A secure tenancy will also be granted when an introductory tenant has successfully completed their introductory period.
Secure	Lifetime	Tenancy Audits will be undertaken on a four yearly basis unless the Housing Officer determines more	Secure tenants are available to existing secure or assured tenants who are transferring to another

		frequent reviews are required based on the circumstances of the tenant.	social housing property.
Non-Secure	Duration of relevant homeless duties	Four-weekly unless the case officer within Housing Choices determines more frequent reviews are required based on the circumstances of the tenant.	For use as temporary accommodation for those who are homeless and applied for housing under Part VII Housing Act 1996
Use and Occupation	Duration of relevant duties	Four-weekly unless the Housing Officer determines more frequent reviews are required based on the circumstances of the tenant.	Where the lawful tenant is not residing at the property and other occupants remain in occupation.

2.4 Vulnerable Customers

Vulnerable customers will have access to additional support to help understand their tenancy and the review process. This support may be provided by Council staff or directed to other appropriate support agencies to whom they qualify, for example, through social care services. A vulnerable customer is one who needs support to maintain their tenancy, for example, because of health, age or personal circumstances.

The Council's Tenancy Sustainment Officers will provide extensive short-term support appropriate to the individual's circumstances. They will focus on support that has the greatest impact such as to apply for benefits or charitable applications to enable them to sustain their tenancy and avoid any unnecessary eviction.

Where a referral has been made for support elsewhere, the Housing Officer will oversee the case until the referral has been formally received.

Where victims of domestic abuse are rehoused, they will retain their security of tenure, for example secure tenants will be given another secure tenancy.

The definition of domestic and economical abuse is taken from the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which states: Domestic abuse is behaviour of a person towards another person if both parties are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and the behaviour is abusive. Behaviour is abusive if it consists of (a) physical or sexual abuse, (b) violent or threatening behaviour, (c) controlling or coercive behaviour, (d) economic abuse, (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse. It does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct. if the "abuse" means (a) violence, (b) threatening, intimidating, coercive or controlling behaviour, or (c) any other form of abuse, including emotional, financial, physical, psychological or sexual abuse.

Economical abuse means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect to (a) acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or (b) obtain goods or services.

2.5 Tenancy Fraud

Tenancy fraud will be investigated by the Housing Management team and where any instances of potential tenancy fraud are discovered, both criminal and civil enforcement action will be taken. Information will be shared with other Council Services and government bodies, as appropriate. Examples of tenancy fraud include:

- Sub letting
- Unauthorised assignment (including by mutual exchange)
- Wrongly claimed succession
- Right to Buy fraud
- Obtaining a tenancy by false statement or knowingly withholding relevant information
- Not using the property as the main or principle home

2.6 Mutual Exchanges and Transfers

Tenants wishing to move to another social housing property are encouraged to seek to move via a mutual exchange in addition to the choice-based lettings scheme. Tenant must obtain permission from both social housing landlords before a mutual exchange can proceed.

Tenants wanting to move via the choice-based lettings scheme will be assessed to determine their housing need. The tenants will be placed in a band to reflect their housing need. Tenants under-occupying their home will be placed in the urgent band to enable a move to a smaller, more affordable home.

An incentive scheme is also available to tenants wishing to downsize and if they move via a mutual exchange.

2.7 Successions and Assignments

A succession occurs in the event of the death of the tenant. In the event the tenancy is in joint names and one party passes away, this is called a survivorship and counts as a succession.

There can only be one succession. If a succession has already taken place, there can be no further successions. When a joint tenancy has passed to a sole tenancy through a survivorship there can therefore be no further succession.

The tenant and the person applying for succession must both have been occupying the property as their only or principle home at the date of the death.

The Localism Act 2011 changed the automatic right of succession for all new secure tenancies after 1 April 2012.

For tenancies granted after 1 April 2012, only spouses, partners and civil partners

have the right to succeed to the tenancy.

For tenancies granted before 1 April 2012, the following have the right to succeed to the tenancy.

- Spouse or civil partner (same sex couples who have formally registered their relationship under the Civil Partnership Act 2004)
- Someone who lived with the deceased as spouse or civil partner
- Parents
- Grandparents
- Child
- Step-child
- Adopted child
- Grandchild
- Brother/Sister
- Uncle/Aunt
- Nephew/Niece

A tenant is not able to override the statutory succession rules or this policy through other means such as by making requests in a will.

Where there is more than one person qualified to succeed, the tenant's spouse or civil partner will have priority. If there are two or more other people entitled to succeed, then they will be expected to agree between themselves who the successor will be. In the event they cannot agree, the Council will decide.

The successor will succeed to the existing tenancy and a new tenancy will not be granted.

Although an applicant may have the right to succeed to a tenancy, this does not grant automatic rights to the property.

During the application process, a decision will be taken to consider the size of the occupied property and any adaptations. If the property is considered to be too extensive (large) for the needs of the successor or where it is adapted for a disabled person and those adaptations are not required, support will be provided for the successor to move to alternative suitable accommodation which may include a direct match under the Allocations Policy. In the event the successor does not engage in this process, the Council reserves the right to instigate possession proceedings.

Successors under the age of 18 can succeed to a tenancy. In such cases, a trustee will be agreed to hold the tenancy in trust for the child until they reach the age of 18.

The right to succession does not apply to introductory tenants or non-secure tenants or those occupying a property via a use and occupation agreement.

In exceptional circumstances, the Council may choose to allow the occupants who do not have the right to succeed to the tenancy to remain at the property, for example, where the property has been adapted for the occupant and is of a suitable size for the occupants needs. In these circumstances either a discretionary succession may be allowed or an allocation will be made through the housing

register by way of a direct match

Assignment - An assignment means legally transferring a tenancy from one person to another. A tenant can assign their tenancy to:

- Someone who meets the eligibility criteria to succeed to the tenancy.
- Another secure or assured tenant by way of a mutual exchange (subject to a separate eligibility criteria outlined in the Housing Act 1985, schedule 3).
- Someone else where the Court has ordered the tenancy be transferred

2.8 Sole to joint tenancy

A tenancy can be granted as sole or joint. A sole tenancy is in the name of one person although other people may live with them. The sole tenant will take responsibility for all aspects of the tenancy/agreement. A joint tenancy is where two people or more are named on the tenancy agreement. A couple at the time of allocation, will be encouraged to have a joint tenancy. They are 'jointly and severally liable' meaning both tenants are responsible for all aspects of the tenancy/agreement. The decision to grant a joint tenancy with more than two people will require the approval of the Team Manager and will only occur in exceptional circumstances such as three siblings eligible to succeed to a tenancy. Joint tenancies will not be granted to a parent and adult child.

As outlined in the tenancy agreement, the Council does not allow tenancies to be changed from sole to joint tenancies. Tenants wishing to change from joint to sole, must do so as detailed above.

2.9 Lodgers and sub-letting

Tenants are required to obtain permission to take in a lodger. Permission will not be unreasonably withheld providing the property does not become overcrowded as defined in the Housing Act 1985, part 10.

Tenants are required to obtain permission to sublet part of their home. They cannot sublet all of their home.

The tenant is responsible for the payment of rent and other charges and the behaviour of their lodgers and sub tenants and are responsible for making sure that if the tenancy is terminated lodgers and/or sub-tenants have moved out by the time the tenancy ends.

2.10 Ending a tenancy

All tenants are required to give four weeks' notice in writing when vacating a property including if they were moving to a property owned by another social housing provider. Where a tenant is moving to another Council property a shorter notice period may be agreed provided that the outgoing property is returned in a lettable standard.

A tenant can extend their notice period beyond the four-week period with prior approval from the Council.

A tenant can request to withdraw their notice to terminate their tenancy in writing however the decision to accept a written withdrawal is discretionary. Consideration will be given as to the conduct of the tenancy and the likely impact of accepting the withdrawal on the locality before acceptance.

A tenancy does not automatically end when the tenant passes away. Following the death of the tenant only an executor (person given authority in the tenant's will to deal with their affairs) or an administrator (person who has been given grant of probate for the tenant) can legally end the tenancy on behalf of the tenant. In the event there is no executor or administrator, the Council will serve a Notice to Quit on the personal representatives and the Public Trustee to end the tenancy.

Where there is a joint tenancy, one party can terminate the whole tenancy. In some cases, the remaining tenant can be considered for a new sole tenancy. When considering such a request, we will consider if there are breaches in the conditions of tenancy and whether these breaches are sufficiently serious that they would prevent a new tenancy being awarded. The proposed sole tenant must also be living at the property as their main or principle home. The court may also order that a tenancy should be transferred into a sole name or into the name of a spouse or civil partner if it makes an order because of a relationship breakdown.

3 IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

- 3.1 The Strategic Director is responsible for implementing and monitoring of this policy.
- 3.2 This policy will be reviewed at least every three years from the date approved, to ensure its continuous suitability, adequacy and effectiveness. The introduction of new legislation, regulatory or operational changes or other matters may trigger an earlier review.
- 3.3 Managers in the Housing Management Team are responsible for making sure that all relevant employees are aware of the contents and responsibilities of this policy.

Equality Analysis

Completion of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

Has an EIA form been completed as part of creating / reviewing / amending this policy?	Please tick: Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, where can a copy of the EIA form be found?	Available upon request
If no, please confirm why an EIA was not required?	N/A

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Appendix 5

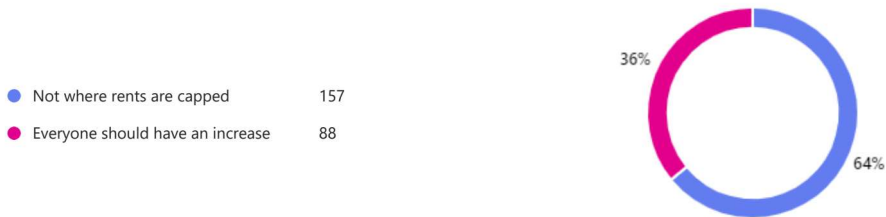
Responses Overview Active

Responses 249 	Average Time 08:07 	Duration 49 Days 
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1. Currently we cap the rents on new properties that we let as Affordable Rents to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate. This is the rent that benefits would pay if someone was in a privately rented property. The cap does mean that it is harder to develop more expensive properties such as bungalows and larger homes. Do you think we should continue to cap rents in this way or should we set higher rents for more expensive properties?



2. Because the LHA rate does not always get increased every year, some people do not get a rent increase in those years. Do you agree with this or do you think everyone should see their rent increase by the same proportion each April?

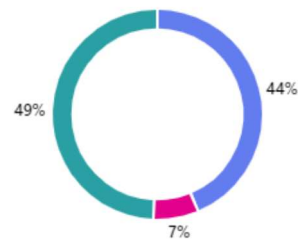


3. We have these limits because Affordable Rents are higher than the social rents that we charge on our traditional housing stock. We could decide that we will only let properties on social rents although this would limit our ability to develop and acquire new homes. Do you think we should stop charging affordable rents?



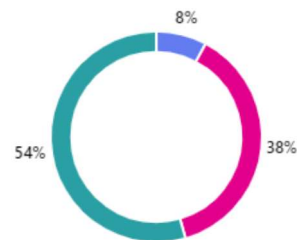
4. Currently we charge tenants when they ask us to provide a reference to a private landlord or letting agent but not if they move to another council or a housing association property. Do you think we should continue with this approach?

- Yes keep it as it is 107
- Charge for all references 17
- Do not charge for any references 121



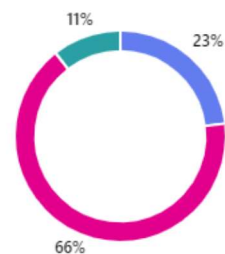
5. When a tenant passes away we continue to charge rent for at least four weeks as the next of kin is required to give us notice. Do you think we should still do this?

- Yes continue to charge rent during the notice period. 19
- Charge rent until the keys are returned but allow the next of kin to end the tenancy earlier 93
- End the rent charges when the tenant passes away 134



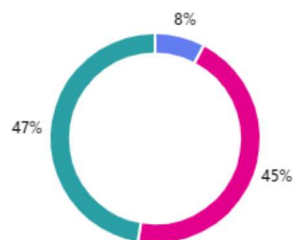
6. We currently have two non-collection weeks at Christmas and New Year. On these weeks no rent is due but people who are in arrears can continue to pay to help bring down their arrears. It does however mean that rents are slightly higher for the rest of the year. Do you think we should?

- Move to charging weeks over a 52 week year 57
- Continue with the two non-collection weeks around Christmas 164
- Introduce two additional non-collection weeks around the summer 26



7. There are a range of options we could use when collecting debt although some could result in tenants and former tenants owing more than the original charges that they owe. Do you think we should ever use any of the following?

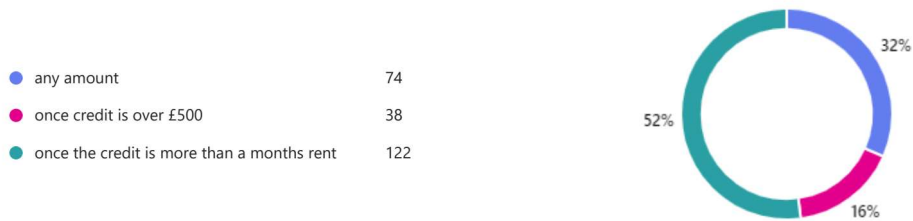
- Hiring a private debt collection agency 16
- Seeking a money judgement through the courts for former tenant arrears 94
- using tracing agencies to get up to date contact details for a former tenant 99



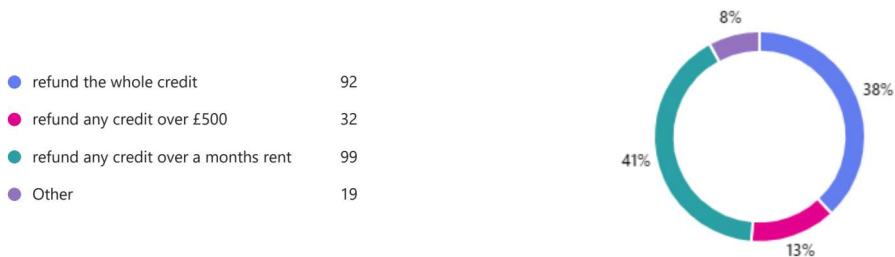
8. We consider a tenant in credit if just before their next payment is due their account is still on credit. When a tenant runs up a credit on their rent account do you think we should automatically repay it, should we contact the tenant to ask if they want it back or should we wait for them to request it?



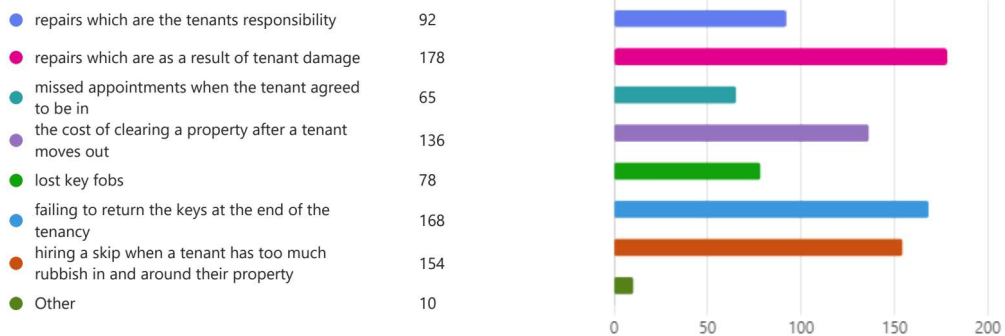
9. If you think we should repay credits, what amount of credit do you think should trigger action



10. Do you think we should refund all credits or should we hold onto some in case a payment is missed?



11. Which of the following things do you think a tenant should be charged for? You can choose more than once answer



12. are there any other comments you wish to make relating to how we deal with income

59
Responses

Latest Responses

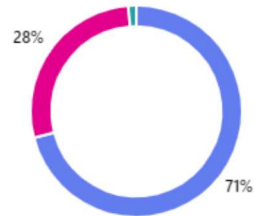


13 respondents (22%) answered Tenants for this question.



13. Are you?

 an existing North West Leicestershire District Council Tenant	176
 Living in a North West Leicestershire Council property	69
 someone else	3



NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – THURSDAY, 6
FEBRUARY 2025

Title of Report	TREE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY	
Presented by	Paul Sanders Head of Community Services	
Background Papers	None	Public Report: Yes
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications associated with the Strategy, only to develop and deliver an annual Action Plan. If costs for the delivery of specific actions cannot be covered through accessing external funding or existing revenue budgets, then consideration will be given to accessing funding for them as part of the appropriate capital or revenue budget setting process.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	There will be a requirement for the Council to comply with Health and Safety requirements when undertaking any work to trees. The Council will have particular undertakings as the asset owner.	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	All actions will be delivered by the Parks and Open Spaces Team Leader and the Parks and Open Spaces Development Officer as part of their substantive roles.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Reason Agenda Item Submitted to Scrutiny Committee	To notify Community Scrutiny Committee of the proposed new NWLDC Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Management Strategy, and to seek members views and comments.	
Recommendations	THAT COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE NOTES AND PROVIDES FEEDBACK ON THE DRAFT NWLDC TREE, WOODLAND AND HEDGEROW MANAGEMENT STRATEGY TO INFORM CABINET'S CONSIDERATION OF THE STRATEGY ON 25 MARCH 2025.	

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 Trees provide a significant contribution to the quality of people's lives. In addition to the aesthetic value they bring, they also provide other significant benefits:

- Improving air quality and reducing air pollution

- Absorbing carbon dioxide and contributing significantly to mitigating climate change
- Reducing flood risk
- As part of a wider ecosystem, supporting and hosting flora and fauna
- Improving physical, mental and social human health

1.2 There are various national and local policies and guidelines which advocate and support the planting and effective management of trees and hedgerows. These include:

Environment Improvement Plan

In 2018, the Government set out its plan for recovering nature and reversing the decline of biodiversity.

Leicestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Leicestershire County Council has been mandated by Government to produce a strategy that will prioritise actions to drive nature's recovery across the county, and will support wider environmental benefits such as climate change, flood mitigation and improved air and water quality. Local authorities are a key stakeholder in supporting the development and delivery of this strategy at a local level.

NWLDC Zero Carbon Roadmap

The Council has a target to achieve a Net Zero Carbon Council by 2030 and a Net Zero Carbon District by 2050. The Council can help to mitigate the effects of climate change and offset the use of fossil fuels by planting trees and hedgerows and creating small woodlands.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

BNG is a way of creating and improving natural habitats by ensuring relevant new planning applications can demonstrate at least a 10% BNG as part of the proposed scheme.

1.3 Forest Research, as part of the Forestry Commission, has stated there is currently an average tree canopy cover across the country of 13%, and the Government has a target to increase this to 17.5% by 2050. In Leicestershire the coverage is at 14.2%. The canopy cover level in both the Coalville area, where the Council owns most of its land, is higher than the national average at 18.6%, and the average across the district is higher still at 19.2%. The aim of the strategy is to increase this to 20% by 2050.

1.4 Various services within the Council are responsible for managing a portfolio of trees. These services are:

- Parks and Open Spaces within Leisure Services
- Property Services
- Housing Services

1.5 The trees managed are sited in various locations:

- Parks
- Open Spaces
- Cemeteries
- Woodland sites
- Play areas

- Car parks
 - Housing sites
 - Adjacent to buildings, properties and assets
 - Special expense sites
- 1.6 With the exception of trees on housing sites, responsibility for the day-to-day management of Council trees sits within the Parks and Open Spaces team, either through a Service Level Agreement which is in place with Property Services for trees they are responsible for, or the direct management of all other trees. Trees on housing sites are currently managed independently by the Housing Service.
- 1.7 There is a full and comprehensive management programme in place for the trees managed by the Parks and Open Spaces team which includes:
- Periodic tree surveys
 - The identifying and prioritising of maintenance tasks required
 - Budgeting to allow for maintenance tasks to be delivered
 - The documenting and recording of all inspections and works undertaken on a management software system
- 1.8 The Housing Service is currently undertaking work on their portfolio of trees to ensure a similar management programme is in place.
- 1.9 The Council is supportive of planting more trees and hedgerows across the district and on land it owns, and this has been evidenced by recent tree planting at the Hermitage Ecopark, Coalville Park, and Sharpley Avenue Recreation Ground, for example, as well as the annual Free Tree Scheme, delivered in partnership with the National Forest, which gives trees and hedgerows to residents free of charge.
- 1.10 Despite there being a comprehensive programme in place for the management of trees, and a track record of supporting the planting of trees and hedgerows, the Council does not have a public facing document that highlights to partners, stakeholders and residents how these elements are managed and what actions are planned to be delivered on an annual basis to support them. Consequently, a draft NWLDC Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Management Strategy (**Appendix 1**) has been developed for consideration and adoption by the Council. The development of a Tree Strategy is one of the key aims set out in the Council's Delivery Plan approved by Council in November 2023.

2.0 NWLDC TREE, WOODLAND AND HEDGEROW MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

- 2.1 The NWLDC Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Management Strategy has been based on a template produced by the Woodland Trust and developed using examples of best practice of tree management strategies created by other organisations. It applies to all trees the Council has management responsibility for, including those on housing sites.
- 2.2 The purpose of the Strategy is to:
- Highlight the benefits of trees and hedgerows
 - Highlight the management principles with regards to trees and hedgerows
 - Give detail as to how the Council will manage its tree stock
 - Highlight the challenges facing the Council in its management of trees

- Highlight the national and local policy and guidance that underpins the management of trees and hedgerows
- Give a clear commitment to increasing canopy cover across the district
- Protect people and property
- Support the Council's journey to Zero Carbon.

2.3 The Strategy sets out:

- The aims and objectives in terms of managing trees and hedgerows and increasing canopy cover across the district
- Details of how frequently trees will be inspected, what the inspections will consist of, how maintenance work will be prioritised, and the timescales for undertaking work
- When the Council will look to undertake work on trees and when it will not
- How private and protected trees are managed, what work is permitted to them, and how this can be undertaken
- The partners the Council will work with to deliver the Strategy and the Action Plan
- Parcels of land the Council owns where further tree planting could be considered.

2.4 It is proposed that as part of the Strategy and in line with Government targets, the Council commits to increasing the amount of tree canopy cover across the district from 19.2% to 20% by 2050.

2.5 Prior to publication, the Strategy will be made more user friendly with a cover, the addition of pictures, and the formatting of the text.

3.0 NWLDC GENERAL FUND TREE, WOODLAND AND HEDGEROW ACTION PLAN

3.1 Subject to the strategy being adopted, an Action Plan will be developed to support delivery of it. The Action Plan will be reviewed annually and will be developed in line with the Council's budget setting process so that additional resources can be requested if required.

3.2 The Action Plan will underpin delivery of the Strategy by highlighting the specific actions that will be undertaken in support of it during the financial year.

3.3 The Action Plan will highlight partner organisations with whom projects and initiatives will be delivered, what specifically will be delivered, potential outputs from the action, and any financial implications.

3.4 The primary aims of the Action Plan will be to:

- Increase tree canopy cover across the district
- Manage risks to people, property and infrastructure from trees and hedgerows
- Improve biodiversity
- Ensure the effective maintenance of trees and hedgerows
- Engage the voluntary sector and key stakeholders in the development and management of the Council's tree stock

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Action Plan will highlight any financial implications associated to the delivery of actions.
- 4.2 Where possible, external funding will be accessed to support the delivery of the actions. If that is not possible then, where feasible, existing general fund or Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budgets will be used.
- 4.3 Standard maintenance actions such as the undertaking of tree surveys and the routine maintenance works that come from these will be funded through existing revenue budgets as part of the budget setting process.
- 4.4 If there are proposed actions within the Action Plan that cannot be funded either through external funding sources or existing revenue budgets, then these will be considered through the appropriate capital or revenue budget setting process.

5.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The co-ordination of the delivery of the Action Plan will sit within Leisure Services, in the Parks and Open Spaces team as a joint responsibility of the Parks and Open Spaces Team Leader and the Parks and Open Spaces Development Officer. As their roles focus on horticultural development and the management of grounds maintenance, they currently take responsibility for the delivery of actions of this nature. Consequently, it is not anticipated that there will be any resource implications, although this will be monitored.

6.0 RISKS

- 6.1 Whilst there are no perceived risks to having a Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Management Strategy and Action Plan, if the Council was to continue to operate without one and a tree caused personal injury to a resident or a property, then the Council's defence may be significantly weakened if there were no Strategy outlining how the Council manages and maintains its tree stock. Advice from the Council's insurers has been taken in the preparation of the Strategy, has informed the document and will also inform the development of the associated Action Plan.

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Strategy has been developed in consultation with the following stakeholders:
- The National Forest Company
 - The Woodland Trust
 - The Forestry Commission
 - Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust
 - Leicestershire County Council
 - Travelers Insurance Company
 - NWLDC Planning Policy Team
 - NWLDC Property Services

8.0 NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 The Strategy will be presented to Cabinet at their meeting on 25 March 2025, alongside any further comments for consideration from Scrutiny Committee, with a

view to seeking approval for the Strategy to be adopted corporately and for the 2025/26 Action Plan to be developed thereafter.

8.2 Once the Strategy is adopted a formal launch will take place July 2025.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	Clean, green and Zero Carbon
Policy Considerations:	Zero Carbon Health and Wellbeing Planning Policy
Safeguarding:	None
Equalities/Diversity:	None
Customer Impact:	Creating a safer environment, and creating environments that are aesthetically more pleasing, encourage physical activity, and support mental wellbeing
Economic and Social Impact:	None
Environment, Climate Change and zero carbon:	Reduced carbon emissions, reduced risk of flooding, improved air quality, increased levels of biodiversity
Consultation/Community Engagement:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Forest Company • The Woodland Trust • The Forestry Commission • Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust • Leicestershire County Council • Travelers Insurance Company • NWLDC Planning Policy Team • NWLDC Property Services
Risks:	Whilst there are no perceived risks to having a Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Management Strategy and Action Plan, if the Council was to continue to operate without one and a tree caused personal injury to a resident or a property, then the Council's defence may be significantly weakened if there were no Strategy outlining how the Council manages and maintains its tree stock.
Officer Contact	Paul Sanders Head of Community Services Paul.Sanders@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

NWLDC Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Management Strategy

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- 2.2 Tree and Hedgerow Planting Rationale
- 2.3 Action Plan
- 2.4 Goals and Objectives
- 2.5 Management Principles of Trees and Hedgerows
- 2.6 Tree Inspections
- 2.7 Contractors
- 2.8 Tree Planting and Regeneration
- 2.9 Partnership Approach for Delivery
- 2.10 Challenges

3. Action Plan Monitoring and Implementation

- 3.1 Action Plan
- 3.2 Projected Costs

4. Context

- 4.1 National and Local Policy

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Appendix A: List of Partners

Appendix B: Town and Country Planning Act 1990

1. Introduction

North West Leicestershire includes the key urban areas of Coalville, Ashby, Measham and Castle Donington and a rich, varied rural area. A wide variety of landscape types and qualities exist and one of the most important, natural elements of the local environment is trees. Trees and hedgerows, whether appearing as individuals, groups, as woodlands, or part of the wider countryside matrix, have a significant effect on quality of life by providing direct and indirect benefits, including:

- Creating aesthetic value by contributing as part of the landscape.
- Contributing to people's quality of life and sense of wellbeing.
- Supporting and hosting flora and fauna, as part of a wider ecosystem.
- Improving air quality by releasing oxygen for us to breathe, absorbing carbon dioxide, and filtering pollutants.
- Reducing stress, improving mental health, and aiding recovery.
- Bringing people and communities together by promoting social integration.
- Providing educational benefits.
- Providing economic benefits.
- Providing shelter and shade.
- Reducing noise levels.
- Providing a timber resource.

All local authorities have a duty to protect significant trees for their amenity value and most manage a large number of trees and hedgerows both directly and indirectly. North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC) is no exception to this.

Trees are long-lived community assets which are essential to health and wellbeing, not only in enhancing enjoyment of the street scene, but by reducing some of the adverse impacts of urban environments. This resource should not be taken for granted and the municipal tree and hedgerow stock for which the Council is responsible must be managed and constantly replenished for our children and future generations. The Council must also raise awareness of the importance of the urban forest on both public and privately owned land and encourage all residents to manage all of district's trees and hedgerows carefully for many years to come, and to plant more. However, they can also cause a range of issues, from being a nuisance or inconvenience to potentially causing serious injury or property damage.

In view of the benefits of trees and hedgerows, and the Council's responsibility for tree management and protection, it is fitting for the Council to set out its approach to these issues. The purpose of this strategy is to set out the basis of management practices to ensure all those involved in managing trees and hedgerows are working to the same basic principles:

- Activities that increase and enhance trees, hedgerows and woodland will connect to wider landscape-scale projects as part of green infrastructure strategies (National Planning Policy Framework, National Planning Practice Guidance). Within this framework there is guidance for new developments. Planning policies and decisions will be developed that ensure new developments have adequate tree coverage. This document also links to other Government guidance such as the National Model Design Code which stipulates that all new developments will be expected to follow national policy by achieving a 10% net gain in biodiversity.
- Aims contained in the Government's 25-year Environment Plan (2018) to maintain our environment in a sustainable and resilient condition.

- Urban forestry activity can be better focused, both across tree and hedgerow planting and in the management of the existing tree and hedgerow stock.

The NWLDC Strategy for Trees, Hedgerows and Woodlands will link to a series of related local policies and action plans that will shape planning and day to day decisions around nature and around ongoing work in a sound, evidence-based framework.

It is important that this strategy remains a live document until 2030 and is continuously used, updated and referred to. The NWLDC Tree Strategy will be periodically reviewed by the Council and stakeholders. This would include:

- Performance of the strategy
- The relevance of the strategy in relation to local and national policy
- The production of an annual NWLDC Treen, Woodland and Hedgerow Management Action Plan.

The Council is aware that the Government is in the process of developing a National Tree and Open Spaces Strategy. NWLDC will therefore ensure that the local strategy fits into the national strategy once developed. This may involve refocusing the existing strategy to maximise national opportunities (e.g. around funding) and local implementation. Research continues to support best practices in managing tree stocks, new tree and hedgerow plantings and inform developing strategies. The NWLDC strategy will be a fluid document that will evolve in response to best practices and changes in legislation.

The strategy highlights the broad aims to ensure that NWLDC helps contribute to high quality urban environments and establishes a clear, consistent and structured approach to how trees on District Council owned land will be managed and maintained. This includes parks and open spaces, land and properties managed by Housing Services, land and properties managed by Property Services, and parished areas managed as a special expense. It does not include trees and hedgerows on highway verges which are managed by Leicestershire County Council, those on land owned and managed by parish or town councils, those owned privately, and those on land leased to a third party where the lease specifically passes the responsibility for tree management to the lessee.

2. The Strategy

2.1 Council's Pledge

Trees and hedgerows enhance the quality of life in urban environments and form an integral part of their shape, colour and diversity. They are essential to our health and wellbeing, not only in reducing some of the adverse impacts of the urban environment but also in enhancing our enjoyment of the street scene and rural landscapes.

Trees and hedgerows also provide economic benefits to North West Leicestershire through eco-system services; their leaves and branches filter out pollution, reduce the risk of flooding, cool urban air temperatures and provide shade from the sun's harmful ultra-violet rays. Trees contribute to climate change mitigation by absorbing and locking up carbon dioxide, reduce flooding and reduce pollution thus helping the world avoid climate change; and increased tree cover will help adapt the district for the effects of unavoidable climate change.

As part of the NWLDC Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy, the Council commits to:

- Undertaking a survey of all NWLDC's trees to form a single database. This shows what trees the Council has, what condition they are in, what maintenance works need to be undertaken, and identifying trees and areas which may come under threat.
- Setting out how NWLDC will respond to pests or diseases that threaten the Council's existing, replacement and new tree cover.
- Setting objectives that clearly define what future success looks like and the specific benefits the Council's tree and hedgerow stock is expected to deliver, together with milestones for progress during the life of the strategy.
- Ensuring all opportunities are taken to plant new, climate resilient trees and hedgerows to support wildlife and public amenity value and encourage appropriate natural regeneration.
- Using a Tree Risk Assessment Management tool, to ensure there is a clear audit trail of all decisions made regarding tree felling, pollarding, pruning and coppicing.
- Providing a framework to establish a healthy, balanced and sustainable tree and hedgerow population.
- Increasing tree canopy cover across the district.

As part of this pledge the Council will sign up to the principles of the Leicestershire Tree Charter ([Tree charter and our tree management strategy | Leicestershire County Council](#)) that has been created between Leicestershire County Council and The National Forest to help improve and enhance the tree scape for the residents of Leicestershire. It is a commitment of the partnership to ensure the future of the tree stock through the increased planting of both urban and rural trees as well as managing existing woodlands.

The Council is aware that there are limitations in that it has a limited land resource that is available for tree planting. There is scope to utilise the open space that exists around Council housing estates and open areas in many parts of the district. To achieve the desired targets, the Council will be relying on partner organisations, including The National Forest, Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust, town and parish councils, and other landowners to help deliver tree planting. The National Forest has been successful at increasing the canopy cover within its boundaries, some of which fall within the north west of the district. The district is experiencing an increase in housing development around the existing conurbations which is increasing land prices which makes tree planting less desirable to the owners in terms of financial return. There is the potential to increase the number of trees and green space required as part of a development.

2.2 Tree and Hedgerow Planting Rationale

The Woodland Trust succinctly states, 'Woods and Trees are essential. For People. For Wildlife. For Life.' The current environmental crisis demands urgent action to protect our precious woodlands and trees, which are vital for the survival of both people and wildlife. These natural assets are under increasing pressure from a range of threats, including climate change, inappropriate development, pollution, a growing population in urban areas, deadly tree diseases and pests, invasive non-native species, and grazing by livestock and deer.

Ancient woods and veteran trees are some of the country's most valuable natural resources, home to many vulnerable and threatened species. Ancient woods are areas of woodland that have persisted since 1600 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and 1750 in Scotland. This is when maps started to be reasonably accurate so it can be identified that these areas have had tree cover for hundreds of years. They are relatively undisturbed by human development. As a result, they are unique and complex communities of plants, fungi, insects and other microorganisms. As well as ancient woodland there are other designations which are just as important to local wildlife and biodiversity:

Ancient semi-natural woods which are woods that have developed naturally. Most have been used by humans – often managed for timber and other industries over the centuries – but they have had woodland cover for over 400 years.

Plantations on ancient woodland sites which are ancient woods that have been felled and replanted with non-native species. Typically, these are conifers, but it can also include broadleaved planting such as non-native beech, red oak, and sweet chestnut. Although damaged, these sites still have the complex soil of ancient woodland, and all are considered to contain remnants of the woodland specialist species which occurred before.

Ancient woods are irreplaceable as the complex biodiversity of these areas which has accumulated over hundreds of years cannot be reproduced. Many species that thrive in ancient woodland are slow to colonise new areas. These are an important habitat and in sore need of protection. They provide crucial benefits such as clean and cool air, carbon sequestration, timber, flood reduction, and improved physical and mental health. Urban trees play a critical role in creating healthy, economically successful communities and habitats for both people and wildlife.

There are numerous ancient trees in the district which are recorded on The Woodland Trust's web-based ATI mapping tool. The Council will actively introduce new specimens within the target areas as set out by The Woodland Trust. We will also create a database of Ancient Trees based on the Woodland Trust to aid our planning departments decision making process.

The Environment Act 2021 places the environment at the centre of policy making and takes urgent and meaningful action to address the nature and climate crisis. It sets an ambitious framework for ensuring that future generations inherit a healthier environment. For more information on government and local policies, refer to Appendix A.

2.3 Action Plan

In order to support delivery of the strategy, an annual Action Plan will be developed which will detail specific actions the Council endeavours to undertake. The purpose of this Action Plan will be to deliver the Council's pledge, aims and objectives for trees, hedgerows and woodlands by:

- Establishing a plan to increase and enhance the availability and maintenance of trees and hedgerows in the district.
- Ensuring that all decisions and actions related to trees and hedgerows are made in a systematic and consistent manner; and
- Evaluating periodically the strategy, action plan and policies for the care, management, expansion and enhancement of Council's tree and hedgerow population, to track progress and make necessary adjustments.

2.4 Goals and Objectives

The objectives of the NWLDC Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy are to:

- Conserve and enhance the tree and hedgerow resource in terms of quality and numbers, removing them only for overriding arboricultural or safety reasons.
- Ensure the provision of trees, hedgerows and woodlands is fully considered and integrated within management plans for parks and open spaces.

- Manage risks to people, property and infrastructure from trees and hedgerows, following best practices and legal obligations, and through appropriately resourced inspection and maintenance programmes.
- Increase tree canopy cover across the district.
- Fulfil the Council's legal obligations as a tree and hedgerow owner by addressing safety and major nuisance issues effectively.
- Inform residents and stakeholders of the legal obligations relating to trees and hedgerows, and manage enquiries and expectations appropriately.
- Establish sustainable management programmes for Council managed woodland utilising external funding from central government and other agencies.
- Work with landowners and partners to promote and increase the current level of tree and hedgerow planting on public and private land.
- Ensure the health, age diversity and species diversity of the Council's tree population.
- Develop a network of wooded landscapes and green corridors to help address the recent decline of individual trees and to mitigate against potential challenges.
- Protect important tree and hedgerow features.
- Sustainably manage, protect and enhance the Council's tree and hedgerow population to maximise its ecological, social, and economic benefits.
- Raise awareness of trees as valuable components of green infrastructure through education and community involvement and management.
- Retain a central database to track tree planting and monitor maintenance undertaken.

2.5 Management Principles of Trees and Hedgerows

Parks and Open Spaces

Trees are fundamental to the structure of parks and open spaces. They are not only important to regular visitors, they are very important contributors to the overall environment of the area. They are a high value resource that require active management if they are to prosper and bestow the benefits we would hope for.

The nature of tree populations in different parks and open spaces is as variable as the character of the sites themselves. At one extreme there are the older parks, with a declining, mature population of trees including a number of rare and interesting specimens. At the other end there are the newer parks, with a developing but neglected tree population. For this reason the management of park trees has to be planned on a site by site basis, seeking a balanced tree population and a character for each.

Some parts of the district contain open spaces with much shorter grass. Some structured tree planting has been carried out over the last 20 years thus creating copses and these areas are now in need of woodland management whilst bearing in mind the sensitive nature of such areas. Creating and managing small wooded areas can create opportunities for wildlife whilst improving the landscape and creating a place of real value for local residents.

Management of Trees

Management of the Council's trees is based on a planned inspection routine and associated tasks and requests for tree works from the public and other outside sources. While all aspects of Council operations are important, resources need to be balanced to ensure trees are managed appropriately. When considering tree works to Council trees the following Acts will be adhered to:

1. Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
2. Town and Country Planning Act 2012

3. Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
4. The Environment Act 1986
5. The Management of Hedgerows (England) Regulations 2024

Appropriate and effective tree inspection procedures should ensure that changes in tree conditions are noted and, if necessary, acted upon before the tree becomes hazardous and injury to persons or damage to property occurs. The Council's tree inspection procedures take into account a range of criteria including species, age, size, health and condition, location, site usage, hazard risk and landscape and ecological value. The tree inspection programme aims to balance the management of trees for public safety with the ecological and landscape value of trees. Both management objectives are important, but the nature and use of each site normally dictates which one should take precedence. Different management prescriptions may, therefore, be applied depending on the tree's location. When managing trees for public safety reasons, only the minimum work required to remove the danger should be undertaken to ensure that the trees' multiple benefits are retained unless this may create longer term issues for the tree. However, the Council acknowledges that good arboricultural practice will take precedence when working with trees when the danger has been removed and this may mean that more than the minimum works are carried out. Trees are best inspected when in full leaf, from mid-summer through to autumn, before leaf fall. However, the scale of the Council's tree resource dictates that inspections will continue throughout the year.

The Council's suitably qualified inspectors will undertake periodic inspections of all trees and woodlands under its control. A record of each inspection will be kept on the Council's database, including details of any action required and the timescale within which actions will be completed.

Ancient, Veteran and Heritage Trees

Ancient, and other veteran trees are a vital and treasured part of the country's history, and natural and cultural landscape, and Britain has the greatest number of ancient trees in northern Europe. Ancient and veteran trees are a unique host to some protected species (such as the violet click beetle). An ancient tree is generally low, fat, squat (because the crown has reduced in size through age), and has a wide trunk which is often hollow. A veteran tree shows ancient characteristics. A heritage tree is linked to a local event, history or local person, or is botanically scarce. Notable trees are memorable, usually due to their size and/or setting. They need not be veteran.

Removal of Trees

Trees are an important part of the district's environment and provide enjoyment, visual attractiveness, shade, and important wildlife habitats. The Council will not fell trees without very good reason and in any event will always encourage best practice. Each case will be considered on its merits. Felling may be considered where a tree is:

- Dead, dying or diseased.
- A danger to public or site user safety.
- Causing an unreasonable obstruction to a public highway.
- A major and proven contributor to serious structural damage to buildings or infrastructure.
- Of a size or species clearly inappropriate to their location.

The Council is committed to the regeneration of the district and felling may also be considered in an area designated for development and/or regeneration. Developers will be encouraged to retain the existing tree stock as far as reasonably possible and in accordance with recommendations outlined in BS 5837:2012.

Pruning of Trees

Pruning can weaken the structure of a tree and should be avoided unless absolutely necessary. In some species pruning can encourage rapid shoot development and the intended outcome of the operation is thereby quickly negated. Therefore, the Council will approach each case on its merits. Pruning may be undertaken or permitted where:

- Low tree branches cause an obstruction over a highway, access to property, or gardens and open spaces to which the general public have access.
- A tree is proven to be contributing to structural damage to adjacent buildings.
- A tree restricts repairs and maintenance to property or infrastructure.
- Trees are interfering with street lighting, public CCTV, highway signage and sightlines.
- Young trees will benefit from pruning in order to shape and train them.
- Dead or diseased material is removed in order to make the tree safe or to shape and balance the crown.

Right to Light

A common complaint received is that trees block light to properties and shade gardens. There is no legal “right to light”. The tree owner is not obliged to carry out work to the tree for the benefit of light levels.

- The Council will not fell or prune Council owned trees solely for the reason that they are reducing light levels into properties or are casting shade over gardens.

Solar Panels

The use of solar panels to generate electricity has environmental benefits by producing low carbon energy at relatively low cost. However, it is not considered environmentally beneficial overall to require the removal or pruning of trees, which themselves provide environmental benefits (including carbon sequestration) and a broad range of other advantages for people and wildlife. Prior to the installation of solar panels, the provider’s pre-installation survey should take note of anything which may currently or potentially obstruct direct sunlight from reaching the panels surface and give advice regarding the suitability or otherwise of the installation. The Council assumes that the positioning of solar panels will have followed these procedures.

- The Council will not fell or prune trees solely for the purpose of improving solar access to panels.

Practical Impacts of Trees

There are a variety of potential conflicts associated with trees. Most of these are minor or seasonal and considered to be practical issues associated with living near trees. Some consider these issues to be a nuisance, whilst others are content to accept minor or occasional inconvenience or irritation whilst appreciating the wider overall benefits trees provide. Some examples are:

- Falling leaves/needles, sap, fruit, nuts, or blossom
- Roosting and feeding birds and associated droppings
- Insects and honeydew
- Climbing of trees by children
- Reduction of increase of moisture to gardens
- Removal of nutrients from the soil
- Suckers or germinating seedlings in gardens
- Leaves falling into gutters, drains, or on to flat roofs

- Build-up of algae and moss on fences, paths, or other structures

Trees are living organisms which follow an annual cycle that cannot readily be altered by human intervention. Each species may have a particular tendency to create seasonal issues, but these are generally short lived. Any nuisance can be readily mitigated by basic maintenance of the householder.

- The Council will not fell or prune Council owned trees solely to alleviate problems caused by natural and/or seasonal phenomena

If a tree is causing stickiness to vehicles, washing, or other assets, this seasonal problem is likely to be caused by aphid infestation and the sticky material produced is known as “honeydew”. When left for some time various fungi may develop on this substance which results in a black coating, often referred to as “sooty mould”. This problem is particularly evident with certain trees species, notably lime and sycamore and is often more noticeable in hot weather. These problems cannot be solved by pruning or applying chemicals to the tree. Honeydew is a mild sugar solution and should not adversely affect paintwork or other materials provided the surface is washed regularly with a mild detergent.

- The Council will not undertake pruning or felling works solely for the purpose of eradicating honeydew or sooty moulds.

The Council receive many requests to prune or remove trees because they are judged to be interfering with views. Although it is understood that over time views may become impeded as trees mature, there is no right to a view. In many cases the tree was already there when the resident moved into the property so there was always going to be a time limit on the view.

- Under normal circumstances the Council will not prune or remove trees in order to improve or restore views.
- In certain areas of the district the original landscaping was designed to include viewpoints in key locations. Felling or pruning of trees in these areas may be considered in conjunction with the Council’s Conservation Officer in order to maintain/restore these historic viewpoints.

Tree Pollarding

Pollarding was first practiced as a form of woodland management. Traditionally, trees are pollarded for one of two reasons: Fodder pollards produced "pollard hay" for livestock feed; they were pruned at intervals of two to six years so their leafy material would be most abundant. Wood pollards were pruned at longer intervals of eight to fifteen years, a pruning cycle tending to produce upright poles favoured for fencing and construction. It has been used at various times to manage urban trees but is problematic because of its detriment to the tree, its aesthetic appearance, and its vigorous regrowth requiring constant attention with associated costs. Pollarding is defined in BS3998:2010.

- The Council will not pollard trees except to maintain old pollards where appropriate.
- The Council will not create new pollards

Trees in Close Proximity to Properties

When trees are close to buildings it is not uncommon for people to be concerned that the roots are damaging their property. The direct action of roots will rarely cause significant damage to any heavy loaded structure, including houses. The Council will not fell or reduce trees solely for the reason that light structures such as driveways, footways, patios, garden walls, lawns etc are being disrupted. Structural damage to heavy loaded structures can be

caused through soil moisture extraction by tree roots in some circumstances. This type of damage generally only occurs where the soil type is shrinkable and therefore prone to fluctuations in volume. The Council will only remove or prune Council-owned trees that are proven to be responsible for causing damage to property if this is the most appropriate solution. In these circumstances the Council will require positive evidence to support any request, including (but not restricted to) the following information:

- Age of property
- Depth and type of foundation
- Building extension history
- Spatial arrangement and amplitude of damage
- Tree root data
- Soil tests
- Seasonal monitoring
- Level distortion survey.

The responsibility for provision of such evidence lies with the individual. Where trees which are not the Council's responsibility are causing damage to Council property, the Council will take action in the same way and will use the appropriate legislation to ensure the landowner carries out remedial action to rectify the problem.

Protected Trees

There are a number of reasons a tree might be protected; Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's), Conservation Areas, Planning Conditions and Covenants, for example. It is a criminal offence to lop, top, cut down, uproot, wilfully damage or destroy a protected tree unless the Council has permitted the work. Therefore, if tree owners or contractors are unsure, they should check with the Local Authority Planning Service before commencing work on any tree. In some circumstances it may also be necessary to obtain a felling licence from the Forestry Commission before felling trees, although this is unlikely to apply to a normal domestic garden.

Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) and Conservation Areas

NWLDC has the power to issue TPO's to control work undertaken to trees that make an important contribution to the local area. Trees within conservation areas have a level of protection similar to trees which are covered by a TPO. If works to protected trees are needed, an application must be made to the Council. In line with best practice advice in the "British Standard 3998: tree work – recommendations" and TPO applications guidance notes, a full and clear specification of tree works will be required. Once a valid application has been received and registered, the local parish or town council and adjoining landowners, where appropriate, will be consulted. Tree owners should consult a suitably qualified arborist to decide upon an appropriate specification and description of tree work.

The title "Tree Preservation Order" suggests to the layman that the tree or trees are "preserved" for all time. This is not the case and is, impossible. Trees have a finite life and will likely require attention at some time, especially in urban areas or near properties, for example. The TPO ensures that the local authority, as an independent party, has a measure of control over the fate of the tree to ensure that only appropriate works are carried out and that, where appropriate, the tree is replaced at the end of its life.

A Conservation Area is a specified area designated by the Local Planning Authority because of its special character which is usually due to the architectural or historical importance of an area. Within a designated Conservation Area all trees have a level of protection similar to trees covered by a TPO.

It is a criminal offence to carry out works to a tree protected by a Tree Preservation Order or by virtue of being in a Conservation Area unless an application has been submitted to the Council to carry out the works and that application has been approved. The Council will then consider the impact of the proposed works on the character of the Conservation Area and local public amenity.

Dangerous Trees Which Are Protected

The responsibility to remedy a hazard rests solely with the tree owner and not the Council. Any work to remove a hazard must be the minimum necessary. This can only be undertaken without going through an application process if the tree or branch is deemed dangerous. If this is the case the owner must inform the Council by giving written notice via email and must provide evidence of the hazard to the Council. Such evidence includes photographs of the damage. The owner should keep their own records of evidence, should they be challenged, so that they can prove the works undertaken were necessary in the interests of safety to make the tree safe. The Council also maintains a record of all reported and confirmed dangerous trees/branches. Persons who own and/or carry out works to protected trees under the guise of safety works without notification to the Council or sending in evidence could be liable to prosecution.

Woodland Trees

The Council will take reasonable steps to preserve and enhance woodland trees, particularly those that are indigenous to the district. The Council will encourage natural regeneration in woodlands and, where possible and subject to safety assessments, will retain dead trees in woodlands, preferring to prune rather than fell. In situ dead timber and felled trees are left as habitat as it can improve the biodiversity of the woodland benefiting the birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals as they forage, shelter and rear young in and around deadwood and old trees. Dead and dying trees, debris and wood fragments are even more valuable for less obvious groups, such as insects, lichens, bryophytes and fungi. The Council will manage woodlands as a long term, diverse and resilient sustainable resource. This includes the woodland management technique of woodland thinning of young trees to enable the best trees to flourish. The Council will also actively support and encourage community involvement in the planning and operation of woodland management.

The Council will develop management plans for Council owned woodlands with the multiple objectives of conservation, landscape, recreation and education being pursued and with the priorities being determined by the character and history of the woodland, its contribution to the landscape, conservation and recreation potential. Maintenance and improvement of boundaries, footpaths, drainage systems and public information are desirable aspects of woodland management. Where appropriate woodland management and park management plans will be integrated and will:

- Endeavour to improve access to woodlands for the whole community.
- Encourage community involvement in and awareness of the district's woodland inventory.
- Consider the benefits of a mixed woodland that leads to an increase in resilience of the woodland as a whole.
- Develop management techniques to ensure the development of multi-aged structure woodland and retain standing deadwood in woodlands and open spaces where public safety will not be compromised.
- Identify areas suitable for the establishment of new woodland.
- Encourage private landowners to establish and undertake active management of all woodlands in their ownership.
- Purchase timber and wood products from sustainable managed sources.

- Inspect trees directly adjacent to or within the zone of influence of, highways, footpaths and public rights of way on a cyclical basis to ensure public safety as far as is reasonably practicable.
- Work with statutory and non-statutory partners for the benefit of the woodland inventory

Open Space

Open spaces are the areas in a woodland without trees or shrubs. They can be managed to stop them reverting to woodland and losing their unique ecological and historic features. These spaces are important within woodland as they support a wide range of animals and flowering plants. They can be created through:

- natural events like storms and landslides that knock trees over
- management activities like tree felling and coppicing

Open spaces can be:

- temporary, where trees are allowed to regrow after a time
- permanent, where areas are cut or mowed to keep them free of trees

The way open space links to woodland is also important. The best habitat has a gradual change at its edges, from short grass to flowering plants to tall trees. This range of structures supports a wide variety of wildlife. Some habitats and wildlife found in open woodland spaces are threatened and need conservation action.

Open space can also protect the historic features in woodland such as burial mounds, charcoal hearths and earth banks.

Open spaces provide:

- habitats for invertebrates, birds, and small mammals
- food for a wide range of wildlife, including pollinators
- food plants for particular species, like common dog violet for the silver-washed fritillary butterfly
- year-round food supplies, like seeds, fruits, pollen, nectar and invertebrates
- nesting, shelter and hibernation sites
- bare ground to allow plants to germinate

These areas can also:

- connect adjacent natural habitats and help wildlife move through the landscape
- improve access
- create areas to manage deer populations
- reduce risks of wildfire to the standing trees
- help conserve historic features

Temporary open spaces, full of young, shrubby plants can be some of the best areas for wildlife, including pollinators.

Trees on Private Land

The Council will:

- Issue TPO's on individual trees, individual trees that form significant groups and woodlands that are considered worthy of protection and under threat.
- Maintain current records of all TPO's and monitor the replacement of trees protected by them.
- Consider prosecuting breaches of TPO's and Conservation Area protection where appropriate.

- Fully consider existing trees and woodland, on or adjacent to proposed development, so those worthy trees are successfully retained and safeguarded in accordance with appropriate guidelines.
- Require the submission of a tree survey report as part of any planning application where trees and woodlands may be affected.
- Apply current industry standards as a minimum standard for planning applications and seek expert advice when necessary.
- When granting planning consent set conditions for the retention, protection, planting and maintenance of trees and other plants.
- Use planning conditions for the protection of trees.
- Utilise commuted sums such as Section 106 Agreements under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, to ensure long-term maintenance of trees and woodlands on new development sites where appropriate.
- Seek to increase the awareness of developers and planners to the value of trees, and the methods for protecting and integrating them within new developments.
- Liaise with statutory authorities where necessary.

Hedges

A hedge can be cheap to create and can last for a long time. It can help bring wildlife into a garden and its flowers, berries and leaves can add colour and beauty. Landowners do not normally need permission to plant a hedge in a garden and there are no laws that say how high you can grow a hedge.

Landowners are responsible for looking after any hedge on their property and for making sure it is not a nuisance to anyone else. A landowner can help prevent a hedge on their property from becoming a nuisance by trimming the top and sides of hedges regularly.

High Hedges

If a hedge is allowed to grow unchecked, it can sometimes cause problems. If an individual is troubled by someone else's hedge, the best way to deal with the issue is to talk to them about it. Calling the Council or taking further remedial action without first approaching a neighbour may make matters worse. High hedges legislation only relates to evergreen or semi-evergreen hedges.

Protected Hedgerows

Some hedges are afforded protection under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 and landowners must submit a Hedgerow Removal Notice to the Council to request the removal of a hedgerow protected under these regulations. This includes hedgerows that are on or run alongside:

- Agricultural land
- Common land
- Land used for forestry
- Land used for the breeding or keeping of horses, ponies or donkeys
- A Local Nature Reserve or Site of Special Scientific Interest

Hedges within or that form the boundary of a dwelling are exempt from requiring notification. Where the hedge demarks the boundary between two properties and in the absence of mention of the hedge or boundary measurements in the titles of either property a Court is likely to assume that a line drawn through the centre of the base of the hedge represents the boundary, thus the hedge is joint property. Any jointly owned hedge cannot unilaterally be removed.

A landowner may cut back that part of the hedge that overhangs their property but must not endanger the continued life of their neighbour's half of the hedge. Any alternative boundary

demarcation will have to stand within the landowners' land alone. Similarly, any foundations must not endanger the continued life of a neighbour's half of the hedge.

Rural Trees and Hedgerows

Woodland and hedgerow loss in the district has occurred since the Second World War, mainly due to the reduction in agricultural fields. Recent legislation such as The Environmental Act 1995 and The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 has been introduced to help protect certain hedgerows from removal.

Most land in rural areas is privately owned. Many landowners take a positive view of their influence over the quality of the landscape in the countryside and take advantage of grant aid schemes and sources of advice to implement positive landscape management and enhancement schemes. Conversely, there are some that do not or cannot undertake positive action and, consequently, the landscape under their control can decline.

More information for the public on trees and hedgerows can be found at https://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/works_to_trees_and_hedgerows

2.6 Tree Inspections

The Council has adopted tree inspection procedures which provide information to minimise risk to the public and property. Such procedures are considered reasonable, proportionate to the level of risk at a particular location, recognise the benefits of the trees, and are acceptable in legal terms as they follow industry recommendations and codes of practice. In addition to informal observations put forward by members of the public, Council officers and other organisations, the Council's approach to tree inspections includes walkover and detailed inspections, or tree surveys, which are carried out by appropriately qualified and knowledgeable arboricultural specialists. Such inspections are carried out at regular intervals and are commensurate with the level of risk identified at a given location. Detailed inspections will take into account the biological, pathological and bio-mechanical aspects of tree health and stability along with other considerations such as the effects of weather and site disturbance.

The Council maintains a tree survey database which is continually being updated to ensure it is up to date and holds inspection records for the trees in its ownership. At any one time the database presents a snapshot of the arboricultural health of NWLDC's tree stock.

Following a tree survey, a risk rating is attributed to each tree on the basis of its condition and the nature of the area, and this will determine how frequently further surveys will be undertaken, any remedial works required, and the timeframe within which these works will be delivered.

Walkover Inspections

The Walk-over Inspection is a brief form of survey aimed at assessing the general condition and level of risk within an area of trees whilst identifying obvious hazards that exist. It will typically be used in areas of sites or whole sites where a moderate or low level of risk exists, for example, well used wooded areas after adverse weather. The walkover survey will involve:

- A general assessment of the tree cover within the area from ground level at walking pace
- A cursory glance at the existing trees within the site, in most cases by walking along existing footpaths or access routes, boundaries and edge trees.

- Those trees that appear to exhibit signs of decline, disease or weak structure will be subject to a detailed inspection.
- All trees requiring works or monitoring action will be recorded on a tree inspection schedule.

Detailed Inspections

A detailed inspection, or a Tree Survey, involves a closer visual inspection from ground level of each individual tree within the given zone. It will typically be carried out on individual or groups of trees that are within falling distance of main roads, high use buildings, main thoroughfares or areas of high use. Each survey will determine the time period to the next inspection dependant on associated risks with trees and their locations and will also prioritise the tree/s:

- High Priority – these will be assessed a minimum of every two years
- Medium Priority – these will be assessed a minimum of every four years
- Low Priority - these will be assessed a minimum of every five years

When undertaking surveys throughout the year, priority will be given to those considered High Priority and then those that are Medium Priority. Only when there are extenuating circumstances, such as inclement weather and unforeseen resource implications for example, will flexibility be given to increasing the frequency of undertaking surveys and, in such situations, additional mitigation measures will be put in place to manage any risks this may present. The Council commits to reviewing the timeframes within which High, Medium and Low priority tree/s will be surveyed on an ongoing basis to ensure the delivery of tree surveys is adequately resourced and is effective.

Data Capture

The following information will be recorded on the database:

- Date of inspection
- Site details including clear information on hazards detected
- Name of inspector
- Recommendations
- Work undertaken
- Details of enquiries or complaints relating to trees on the site
- The recording of data if there are no risks, hazards, or works identified

Response Times

The remedial tree works that are highlighted from the surveys will be risk assessed and a timeframe for the works to be completed determined. The timeframe for works will be dependant on factors such as;

- The risk that not undertaking the works present
- Any associated risks within the environment
- How publicly accessible the area is
- The proximity to buildings and other assets
- Seasonality and weather

In the event of being made aware of a potentially high-risk situation, a site visit and assessment will be undertaken as a priority. A survey will be conducted and, based on that, a timeframe for remedial works programmed in. In the interim period, the area will be made as safe as possible to reduce any risk as far as is practically possible.

Failure Log

A failure log is maintained as part of the process. Events such as tree failures are recorded as soon as practicable after they occur. Such information is important for identifying the cause of the failure and can help prevent similar incidents in future.

2.7 Contractors

If the Council engages a contractor to undertake tree inspections or maintenance works, then it will ensure as part of the procurement process and ongoing monitoring that all works are being delivered to an acceptable standard. This will include, but will not be limited to the following:

- Ensuring staff are adequately qualified
- Ensuring all works are adequately risk assessed
- Ensuring appropriate method statements are in place
- Ensuring works are undertaken in a safe manner
- Ensuring works are completed within the appropriate timeframes
- Undertaking periodic spot checks on the contractors to ensure compliance.

2.8 Tree Planting and Regeneration

The Council is committed to planting new trees and, where appropriate, replacing trees that require removal. As part of this the Council will:

- Undertake, where appropriate, a thorough site appraisal before carrying out tree planting.
- Record details of all trees planted on Council land, including objectives and future management requirements.
- Monitor the success of newly planted trees.
- Ensure that new tree planting does not reduce the value of existing landscapes or nature conservation.
- Plant species appropriate to the conditions and character of the site.
- Utilise a wide range of tree species and planting sizes according to the objectives of the planting.
- Encourage natural regeneration for ancient woodlands where possible, or the planting of native stock of local provenance where available.
- Adopt planting techniques that reduce the potential for infrastructure detriment.
- Appropriately maintain newly planted trees after planting.
- Consider planting specific trees for the benefit of wildlife, such as a disease resistant elm tree cultivars for White Letter Hairstreak butterflies.

On an ongoing basis, the Council will assess parcels of land it owns to determine the feasibility of planting trees.

Strategic planning, observing key ecological principles and best practice, is essential to determine long-term tree planting locations. The Lawton Principles ([The ecology of conserving biodiversity - the Lawton principles](#)) were developed in response to the need for a more strategic and holistic approach to conservation and restoration of habitats in the UK. The principles promote the idea of making space for nature, by expanding and connecting habitats across landscapes, improving their quality and resilience, and creating new habitats where necessary. By following these principles, the district can not only protect and restore existing biodiversity but also create a more resilient and sustainable environment for future generations.

Buffering and extending already-existing ancient woodland is crucial for maintaining the unique ecological value of these habitats. Ancient woodland is home to many rare and

threatened species, and its protection is vital for biodiversity conservation. By extending and connecting ancient woodland with other habitats, larger, more diverse landscapes that can support more species and provide greater ecological resilience can be created. Additionally, planting trees in buffer zones around ancient woodland can help protect them from pollution, fragmentation and other threats.

Canopy cover mapping is a valuable tool for identifying opportunities for planting new trees and expanding woodland cover. By using remote sensing data, areas with low canopy cover can be identified and prioritised for tree planting. This approach can help to maximise the benefits of new tree planting, such as carbon sequestration, flood prevention, and biodiversity enhancement, while minimising the potential conflicts with other land uses. Canopy cover mapping can also help to identify areas where existing woodland could be expanded or linked to other habitats, creating larger and more connected landscapes for wildlife.

When should trees be planted?

Trees are best planted in the dormant period between November and March when the ground is damp and cold, although not below freezing. Traditionally, planting should be completed by Christmas to afford whips the greatest chance of root establishment. However, with climate change and the seasons becoming more erratic, it can be possible to plant later into a wet spring.

2.9 Partnership Approach for Delivery

The key to the success of this strategy is working in partnership. The Council will continue to engage with key partners such as Leicestershire County Council, parish and town councils, schools, individual households and community groups to effectively manage the districts tree and hedgerow stock to support delivery of the strategy. A list of stakeholders and partners can be found at Appendix A.

As part of the partnership approach and subject to available resources, the Council will work with partners and stakeholders to:

- Encourage new tree planting, new rural hedgerows, planting of trees in hedgerows and field corners and maintenance on private land. Where appropriate, using native species will be encouraged for the benefit of local biodiversity, flora, fauna and landscape conservation.
- Lead by example and encourage positive woodland management.
- Develop programmes of education, guided walks, talks, open days, presentations and exhibitions, where resources permit.
- Provide opportunities for active participation with volunteer groups, nature conservation bodies, schools and residents.
- Endeavour to promote and encourage a Tree Warden scheme in the district.
- Continue to increase public involvement in tree planting using the Commemorative Tree Initiative scheme. Encourage and promote where appropriate local and national tree initiatives.
- Produce literature promoting the benefits and providing advice on tree related issues, as resources permit.
- Publish and make available information relating to trees and woodlands within the district.
- Provide opportunities for consultation and education.

2.10 Challenges

Aftercare

When it comes to ensuring the survival of newly planted trees, it is important to understand that their survivor curves are different from those of people. As such, a robust program of aftercare is essential to ensure their long-term survival and growth.

One crucial aspect of aftercare is the application of weed suppressant and/or mulch around the base of the tree. This is to conserve moisture and regulate temperature, both of which are essential for healthy tree growth. It also helps to suppress weeds, which can compete with young trees for water and nutrients. Mulch should be applied around the base of the tree, to a depth of two to three inches, and replenished annually.

Another key component of aftercare is beating-up. This involves replacing any trees that have died or failed to establish with new ones. Beating-up should be carried out as soon as possible after planting, ideally in the first growing season. This can help to reduce the risk of gaps in the tree canopy, which can lead to a lack of shade and an increase in weed growth.

Cell-grown trees can offer a survival advantage over bare-root or root-balled trees. These trees have a greater volume of root mass, which makes them better able to withstand drought and other environmental stresses. While losses are to be expected, a well-planned aftercare program can help to reduce the number of trees lost and promote healthy growth and development.

Biosecurity

The threats facing trees is increasing at an unprecedented rate. Global travel, the importation of goods and a changing climate all have the potential to introduce pests and diseases which can have highly damaging impacts on national and local tree populations. These outbreaks not only have the potential to have a devastating impact on the landscape of the district but can also impact on the ability to strategically allocate resources to manage the district's trees effectively.

To reduce the risk of tree pests and diseases having a harmful impact on the NWLDC tree population, the Council is following current Government and industry best practice in relation to biosecurity matters. The Council endorses the principles set out in the Government and industry documents including the Arboricultural Association's guidance notes and current guidance from Forest Research.

The Council is not able to address biosecurity issues as a standalone organisation and owner of trees. However, through the adoption of these values, having robust biosecurity practices in place and working with other organisations and tree owners the Council can effectively respond to any new pest and disease outbreaks. NWLDC will do this by:

- Reporting the instances of notifiable pests and diseases to the appropriate national bodies.
- Developing Local Action Plans where necessary to address pest and disease outbreaks.
- Ensuring our appointed contractors have up to date biosecurity plans working practices in place.
- Maintaining a high level of training in biosecurity matters for our employees who encounter trees.
- Only procuring new trees from UK Nurseries with high biosecurity standards in place (including how they source their growing stock).
- Developing diversity in our own tree population.
- Promoting high standards of biosecurity to our partner organisations and the public.

Climate Change

Climate change is expected to have significant impacts on tree planting in the UK. Changes in temperature, rainfall patterns and extreme weather events could affect the growth and survival of trees, making it challenging to establish new woodland. Globally, forest ecosystems play a key role in addressing climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. They also provide a source of wood, which is a low energy construction material and a less polluting source of energy compared with fossil fuels. On a local level trees and woodlands have an important role to play in mitigating climate change and it is essential that tree managers sustain and enhance this vital resource. It is crucial, therefore, to carefully consider the suitability of species for the changing climate when planting new trees.

One of the best ways to ensure minimal disruption to existing ecosystems is to plant native species. Native trees have evolved over thousands of years to cope with the UK's climate and soil conditions, and they are more resilient to pests and diseases. They also provide habitats for native wildlife, support biodiversity and help to preserve local landscapes and cultural heritage.

In the face of climate change, it is also important to consider the adaptability of trees. This means selecting species that can tolerate a range of conditions, such as drought, flooding, high winds and temperature extremes. Trees with deeper root systems, for example, may be better suited to cope with periods of drought, while those that can tolerate waterlogged soil may be better suited to areas prone to flooding. Within the boundary of the district a tree nursery has been established in a joint project between Leicestershire County Council and The National Forest with an aim of developing locally native tree stocks.

Overall, careful planning and consideration of the potential impacts of climate change are essential when planting trees. By choosing the right species and taking measures to ensure their survival and growth, the effects of climate change can be mitigated against, biodiversity can be supported, and a more resilient and sustainable tree stock can be developed.

Increasing Environmental Pressures

Environmental legislation surrounding the management of trees and the reporting of arboricultural statistics has the potential to greatly impact on resources. In addition, the time over which the NWLDC Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Strategy spans will likely see the introduction of various national policies and targets in relation to tree management which may impact on this further.

Land Availability

The UK has one of the lowest levels of woodland cover in Europe, and while there have been concerted efforts to increase tree planting rates in recent years, finding suitable land remains a significant obstacle. One approach to addressing this issue has been for local councils to call on private landowners to provide sites for tree planting. This approach has been successful in some areas, with several local authorities offering grants or other incentives to encourage private landowners to establish new woodlands.

When considering the ideal land for tree planting, there are several factors to consider. One of the most important is the potential for the new woodland to buffer and extend existing ancient woodland. Ancient woodland is a valuable habitat that is home to many rare and endangered species. By planting new woodland adjacent to existing ancient woodland, it is possible to create a larger, more connected habitat that is better able to support wildlife.

Other factors include soil type, aspect and slope. Woodland planted on suitable soils will be more productive and will require less input in terms of fertilisers and other treatments. Trees planted on south-facing slopes will receive more sunlight and will be better able to grow,

while trees planted on north-facing slopes will be more sheltered and may require less maintenance.

Agroforestry and nature-friendly farming are also emerging as methods to boost tree cover while maintaining agricultural yield. Agroforestry involves integrating trees into farming systems, which can provide a range of benefits such as improved soil health, increased biodiversity, and enhanced carbon sequestration. Nature-friendly farming practices can also help to increase tree cover by creating new habitats for wildlife and supporting the growth of new trees.

Canopy Cover Distribution

An initial assessment of the canopy cover across the district indicates that it is significantly higher than both the coverage across Leicestershire and the country as a whole. That said, there is a noted loss of canopy cover on the edge of urban areas with little graduation / integration of the tree stock in these areas. Furthermore, where there are important canopy populations in rural areas they tend to be fragmented, therefore reducing their ecological and biodiversity potential. As per Forest Research figures produced by the Forestry Commission, there is currently a 19.2% canopy cover across North West Leicestershire against a national coverage of 13% and a Leicestershire coverage of 14.2%. Whilst there is minimal land owned by the Council on which additional trees can be planted, the Council is committed to planting trees where it can, alongside working with partners and landowners across the district such as the National Forest, the Woodland Trust, Leicestershire County Council, and parish and town councils, with a view to increasing canopy cover to 20% by 2050.

Limited Diversity in Tree Stock

A review of the composition of the Council's tree stock has shown limited diversity in terms of species mix, age classification and tree canopy size. Given the current threat to Ash trees, there is the potential that the Council's tree population could be significantly affected by an outbreak of Ash Dieback in the district. A lack of species diversity makes the Council's tree stock highly susceptible to significant losses through pest and disease outbreaks. Approximately 40% of the Council's trees are classified as "semi mature". This has the potential to increase the likelihood of a large proportion of our trees maturing and eventually entering decline at a similar time. Not only does this have the potential to lead to large scale tree loss in a relatively short period of time, but also has resource implications of managing an aging tree population. Similarly, only a small proportion of Council trees are classified as "over mature" limiting the future benefits we can derive from our oldest trees. Data concerning tree species mix also indicates that much of the tree stock is comprised of tree species with typically small size canopies at maturity. While these species still form an important part of the Council's tree population, their benefits are limited when compared to trees with a larger growth potential such as Oak and Beech, especially in maturity

Pests and Diseases

Tree pest and disease management is a critical issue in the UK, with a range of pests and diseases posing a significant threat to the health and wellbeing of the country's trees. One of the most concerning diseases affecting UK trees is Ash Dieback, a fungal disease that has potential to devastate the country's ash population. The Woodland Trust advises landowners to monitor their ash trees for signs of the disease and to take appropriate action if necessary, such as felling affected trees and implementing biosecurity measures to prevent further spread of the disease. In a woodland environment it might be of benefit to fell and remove all the ash trees in infected compartments and replant with a mixture of species. The Forestry Commission has a requirement in its woodland creation grants that plants are purchased through a nursery that has signed up to Plant Healthy bio-security accreditation. Where possible that Council will ensure that its trees come thorough an accredited source.

Dutch Elm Disease (DED) took a significant toll of trees in the area in the 1970's particularly in the most intensive agricultural areas where Elm was the dominant hedgerow tree. Considerable areas of relatively denuded landscape have not been repaired and still rely on Elm regeneration that will, inevitably succumb to the disease. The only real solution to the problem is new planting with native species such as Field maple and Oak or naturalized species such as sycamore or allowing naturally regenerating trees to grow to maturity by restricting the use of hedges flails. DED remains a concern even today. The regrowth from the old Elm stumps and root suckers has become a significant feature in some places and this regrowth is now often at an age and size where it is becoming attractive to the Elm Bark Beetle which spreads the disease. Losses of Elm in recent years have increased and over the next few years considerable loss of regenerating Elm will once again deplete the tree population of our countryside.

Since the decline of the Elm tree in the late 1970s, the Ash has become the most common native tree in Leicestershire. It is the main component of our rural landscapes, being found commonly in woodlands, field hedges and along our road corridors. Much of the ash population is mature and the health of this species has been declining for many years due to a number of factors contributing to a syndrome known as ash decline. Ash Dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) was first reported in Britain in 2012 on imported nursery stock and was first observed in the wider environment in 2013. The disease has now spread extensively across the country and the advanced effects of the disease are now evident in southern and eastern counties. The disease has been noted in Leicestershire for a number of years and ongoing monitoring is showing that it is now well established in the county's ash population. Ash dieback was first recorded in Europe in 1992 and many countries have now suffered up to 90 percent mortality in their ash trees. Ash Dieback will present a significant public safety risk on our road and public open spaces and the council's action plan will help to address these issues. The long-term effect of Ash Dieback on the county's rural landscape will, however, be substantial with many areas potentially becoming devoid of mature trees. To monitor and manage the effects of the disease, Leicestershire County Council set up an Ash Dieback Project Board. An action plan has now been produced which will inform and steer the authority's response to managing the disease.

Acute oak decline is an emerging disease of oak trees (trees in the *Quercus* genus) which was first observed in the UK late in the 20th century. It can kill oak trees within four to six years of the onset of symptoms. The disease is found mostly on mature oak trees, but younger trees can also be affected. It is caused by multiple agents, especially bacteria, and thousands of trees are affected. For infection to occur, it is likely the trees need to be weakened (predisposed) by certain factors, especially environmental factors. Oak trees play significant roles in our economy, landscape, biodiversity, environment and culture. Oak timber is one of our most valuable woodland products, and hundreds of jobs and businesses depend on it to some extent. Oak trees are ecologically very important, supporting rich woodland biodiversity by providing habitat for more other species than any other tree species in the UK. The complexity of the cause and the rate at which the number of affected trees has increased therefore gives cause for concern for two of our most important and numerous tree species.

Another pest causing concern in the UK is the oak processionary moth, a non-native species that has the potential to cause significant damage to oak trees. The moth's larvae feed on oak leaves, causing severe defoliation and weakening the tree's defences against other pests and diseases. The Woodland Trust advises landowners to report any sightings of the moth and to take steps to control its spread, including removing and destroying affected trees and using pheromone traps to trap and kill the adult moths. This pest is more of a public health problem than a tree issue. The caterpillars and their nests should be avoided and pets should be restrained to prevent them coming into contact with the nests.

Other pests and diseases affecting UK trees, and increasingly within the National Forest area, include Phytophthora ramorum, a fungal disease that affects a range of tree species, including larch, and sweet chestnut blight, a fungal disease that can cause significant damage to sweet chestnut trees. The Woodland Trust advises landowners to be vigilant for signs of these and other pests and diseases and to take appropriate action to control their spread, including implementing good biosecurity practices, such as cleaning tools and equipment between sites, and avoiding movement of infected plant material.

The control of muntjac deer and grey squirrels will be undertaken, where possible, if the impact of the damage is considered to have a moderate impact on site biodiversity. High populations of squirrels and muntjac deer can cause extensive physical damage to trees and prevent the natural regeneration of woodland trees and flowers. Without vegetation it is difficult to create a diverse structure. Squirrels and deer do not have natural predators, so control needs to be by human intervention. This presents challenges in woodlands close to human habitation and is often not undertaken for this reason, to the detriment of the ecology of the woodland. Both species would require a detailed survey to determine the population levels and the amount of damage to the tree stock. Analysing of the data from the surveys will determine the need to level of control needs to be implemented for the Council to achieve its woodland objectives.

Effective tree pest and disease management is critical to the health and sustainability of the UK's trees and woodlands. The Woodland Trust and other organisations offer a range of guidance and resources to help landowners manage these threats, including advice on identifying and reporting pests and diseases, implementing biosecurity measures, and taking appropriate action to control their spread.

Vandalism

Damage to trees through deliberate acts is common and places significant pressure on the Council to manage a sustainable tree population. Regular instances include the cutting of branches, lighting fires under mature trees, and poor-quality pruning of trees near domestic property. Young and newly planted trees often have branches torn out or their stems snapped against their supports. These, and all other acts of vandalism to Council owned trees prevents strategic allocation of our resources to managing our trees as it diverts resources elsewhere.

Vandalism to newly-planted trees can have a significant impact on tree survival rates, growth and development and it can take years for the trees to recover, if they survive at all. Therefore, it is essential to take steps to prevent vandalism from occurring in the first place and to address it promptly when it does.

Subject to resources, the Council will consider various means to counter vandalism. These will include:

- The installation of fencing around newly-planted trees. Fencing provides a physical barrier between the trees and potential vandals, making it more difficult for them to access the trees. Fencing can be particularly effective when combined with other deterrents, such as warning signs or hunting cameras.
- Hunting cameras can be very useful. These cameras can be set up in strategic locations around planting sites and they capture images or footage of anyone who enters the area. The presence of these cameras can act as a deterrent, and the footage captured can be used to identify and prosecute vandals.
- Public consultation can also be effective to prevent vandalism. The Council will consider various means to engage with local communities, and involving them in tree planting initiatives, can create a sense of ownership and pride in the new trees. This

can encourage people to take responsibility for protecting the trees and reporting any incidents of vandalism. Additionally, public consultations can help to identify any potential issues or concerns from the community, which can then be addressed in the planning and implementation of tree planting initiatives.

Vandalism to trees can have a detrimental impact on the environment and local communities. Preventative measures, such as those highlighted can help to reduce the risk of vandalism and protect newly-planted trees to ensure the success of tree planting initiatives and the growth and development of healthy trees for future generations.

Damage Associated with the Installation and Repair of Utility Services

While the benefits of street trees are well documented, they are extremely vulnerable to damage from utility works. For example, poor pruning to give overhead line clearance and root damage from trenching and service installation. Work on trees in these areas must be carried out in accordance with NJUG Vol. 4.

Dated TPO Designations

The assessment of legal designations has indicated that 30% of the Council's protected trees fall within TPO's that were made prior to 1990. Many of the older orders (especially Leicestershire County Council orders made before 1975) cover trees which are no longer present and may not reflect the current tree population. Leicestershire County Council is one of two counties in England to have retained responsibilities for their TPO's which were made before 1975 and this causes management complications and applications and applicant confusion. Whilst currently there is no consideration being given in Leicestershire to districts taking responsibility for TPO's, this debate has taken place in the neighbouring authority of Derbyshire where there is a reluctance to do so without the allocation of adequate resources. If this issue is raised in Leicestershire, then due consideration will be given to the implications of the Council taking responsibility at that time.

Handling Disputes

The Council will not accept presumption of damage. All claims against the Council in respect of tree damage must be submitted with an appropriate independent assessment in order to ascertain whether a tree or hedge is causing significant damage. The decision of Council officers represents the Council's decision on tree matters. Where a member of the public considers that the decision or recommendation has not taken reasonable account of all of the factors and information they have previously provided, they may request that the matter is reviewed through the Council's existing Complaints Procedure.

3. Action Plan Monitoring and Implementation

3.1 Action Plan

On an annual basis, the Council will develop a NWLDC Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Management Action Plan to support delivery of the Strategy by identifying tasks to be delivered, highlighting lead and partner organisations, financial implications, and timescales for delivery. The general aims of the Action Plan will be to increase levels of biodiversity and canopy cover across the district, whilst ensuring assets are adequately maintained and resourced appropriately.

3.2 Resource Implications

A key requirement for delivery of the NWLDC Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy is to assess the staffing and financial resources needed to deliver it. These will be identified within the Action Plan where it is highlighted if resources are currently available to deliver

actions or if an application or business case will be required to access resources. Resources will be required to:

- Monitor the tree stock in order to proactively fulfil a duty of care.
- Organise necessary works to mitigate issues relating to health and safety or social/communal problems.
- Provide and plant new trees and hedgerows in line with the Council Carbon Zero agenda.
- Inspect and maintain the existing tree stock.
- Ensure all tree works are conducted according to current best practice, using suitably qualified operatives.

Where potential exists, the Council will assess the need for the following:

- Deliver aftercare for young trees to ensure establishment and longevity.
- Work and liaise with others to ensure trees remain an asset to the landscape.

The NWLDC Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Management Action Plan will clearly highlight the financial implications of each action and, where possible, external funding sources will be identified and accessed to support the delivery of actions.

4. Context

4.1 National and Local Policy and Guidance

Environment Act 2021

The UK has passed the world-leading Environment Act 2021 into law, which will improve the country's air and water quality, reduce waste, increase recycling, and protect species and the natural environment. The act will be driven by new, legally binding environmental targets and enforced by the newly established Office for Environmental Protection (OEP). This office will hold government and public bodies accountable for meeting their environmental obligations. The act will include a target to halt the decline of species by 2030 and prevent deforestation overseas, and it will require new developments to improve or create habitats for nature. The act will also incentivise people to recycle more, encourage businesses to create sustainable packaging, and stop the export of polluting plastic waste.

The Environment Act 2021 will also crack down on water companies that discharge sewage into rivers, waterways and coastlines, and it will require the government to publish a plan to reduce sewage discharges by September 2022. The act will also strengthen the protection of the country's woodlands and help create a more wooded country. The Office for Environmental Protection has already been established in an interim form, and it will formally commence its statutory functions soon. The work of implementing the policies of the Environment Act has already begun, including developing legally binding environmental targets, launching consultations on deposit return schemes for drinks containers, and publishing a draft Principles Policy Statement to protect the environment.

Environment Improvement Plan 2023

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP) was established in 2018 to create a vision for a quarter of a century of action to help improve the natural world. The first review of this plan has now been completed and sets out the specific targets and commitments to deliver on the 25YEP's ten goals. The overarching goal of the plan is to halt the decline in biodiversity and to achieve thriving plants and wildlife. To do so, the plan outlines various initiatives such as the creation of a Species Survival Fund, the establishment of new National Nature Reserves, protection of 30% of land and sea for nature, and incentives for

farmers to adopt nature-friendly practices. Additionally, an updated Green Finance Strategy will be published to leverage private finance to achieve these goals, with a goal to raise at least £500 million per year of private finance into nature's recovery by 2027 and more than £1 billion by 2030.

The 25YEP also acknowledges the international aspect of restoring nature, as it reflects that it is not just a national effort. The UN Nature Summit COP15 resulted in the agreement of a new Global Biodiversity Framework with 23 global targets, including the protection of 30% of global land and ocean by 2030. The 25YEP's goals and targets at home will support progress towards the UN's Sustainable Development Goals internationally. The implementation of the Environment Act 2021 and the rollout of Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Biodiversity Net Gain will further support the overarching goal of improving nature.

Environmental Land Management

The Agricultural Transition is a major reform of agricultural policy and spending in England that is being undertaken as the country moves away from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The goal of this transition is to phase out subsidies for land ownership and tenure and improve support for farmers and land managers, who will be paid to provide both food production, and environmental goods and services. The reform also includes one-off grants to support farm productivity, innovation, research and development.

The Agricultural Transition is aimed at promoting a resilient, productive agriculture sector that can both meet food production needs and address the challenges of the environment and climate. In the past, food production has sometimes been achieved at the expense of nature, but these reforms aim to encourage farmers and land managers to improve the natural environment alongside food production. Environmental goods and services will play a key role in all farm businesses as the reforms aim to deliver significant elements of the statutory environment and climate targets.

Canopy Cover

The Forestry Commission (Forest Research) has calculated that the current canopy cover across the country, comprising of woodland and trees outside woodlands, to be 13% and the Government have an aim of increasing this to 17% by 2050. The current canopy cover across the district is higher than the national average at 19.2%, whilst in the Coalville area it is slightly less at 18.6%. There are challenges to increasing canopy cover, namely within the Coalville area identifying suitable land whereby trees can be planted, and more widely across the district, working with landowners to encourage them to plant trees due to the lack of land the Council owns. Despite these challenges, the aim of the strategy, supported by actions within the Action Plan and subject to resources being made available to support delivery, is to increase canopy cover across the district and in the Coalville area to 20% by 2050.

Local Climate Change Strategy / Zero Carbon Roadmap

On 25 June 2019, the Council declared a Climate Emergency and appointed specialist environmental consultants to help develop the response to the need to reduce the Council's and the district's carbon emissions. The Council has committed to achieve a Net Zero Carbon Council by 2030 and a Net Zero Carbon District by 2050.

This resulted in the publication of the Council's Zero Carbon Roadmap in November 2019 which, along with the accompanying Action Plan, was adopted by the Council on 31 March 2020. The Action Plan focuses on carbon emissions, their sources and how to reduce them and identifies recommended actions to achieve Net Zero Carbon status.

'Zero carbon' needs to be defined in terms of exactly which sources are included and which measures for off-setting carbon emissions are allowed, such as the planting of trees and hedgerows. Net zero carbon does not mean there will be no CO₂ emissions; there will be emissions, and these will be 'off-set' by either a reduction in carbon outside the measured area, or by a form of sequestration of carbon dioxide.

The Council can help to mitigate the effects of climate change and offset the use of fossil fuels by planting trees and hedgerows and creating small woodlands, where appropriate land can be found and resources identified to support this. As part of this strategy, the Council has identified and will continue to identify appropriate areas of housing and property that can be utilised for tree planting, and will continue to increase levels of tree planting in parks, open spaces, and other land the Council owns, where appropriate. In addition, the Council will continue to work with partners and landowners to encourage them to plant trees on their land with an aim of increasing canopy cover across the district.

As a tree dies and decays, it releases much of its stored carbon back into the atmosphere. Planting long lived trees and ensuring they remain in good health will help extend the length of time the carbon remains in storage. Urban trees play a role on mitigating climate change by acting as carbon pools, absorbing carbon and reducing the concentration of CO₂ concentrations in the atmosphere. This can be accomplished directly through carbon sequestration and indirectly as a result of the reduced need to heat and cool buildings owing to an increased canopy cover. In comparison to other types of above-ground vegetation, trees are particularly good carbon reservoirs, with older trees able to absorb more carbon. A study in Leicester identified that trees stored approximately 97% of the carbon stored in vegetation within the city (Davies et al. 2011), pointing to their potential to act as successful carbon pools within the urban environment.

The Council recognises the urgency of the situation and the need for immediate action to mitigate the effects of climate change. This includes a joined-up effort from all areas of the district, including transport, energy and waste. The strategy also recognises the role of nature in reducing carbon emissions and building resilience to environmental changes, such as using natural flood defenses and promoting biodiversity.

In February 2023, the Council was one of the first twelve organisations to sign up to the Leicestershire Climate and Nature Pact which is based on the principles of the Glasgow Climate Pact, signed by the UK Government in November 2021, and which brings together the private and voluntary sectors to work with local government, education sector and local communities to make environmental changes. The Council is also part of the Green Living Leicestershire partnership between Leicestershire authorities which aims to deliver projects supporting sustainability and net zero, and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to as close to zero as possible. The senior responsible officer governing Zero Carbon is the Chief Executive Officer which demonstrates NWLDC's commitment to combating climate change at the highest level. More information on the above can be found at https://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/climate_change

Leicestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Leicestershire County Council (LCC) has been mandated by Government to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Leicestershire. Primarily aimed at landowners, farmers, local authorities and environmental groups, the LNRS will:

- map the most valuable existing areas for nature
- establish priorities
- map proposals for specific actions to drive nature's recovery and wider environmental benefits

The LNRS will bring together landscape scale, multifaceted approaches focused on preserving, conserving and enhancing nature and meeting other environmental objectives such as climate change, flood mitigation and improved air and water quality. It will also allow government funding to potentially be accessed to help deliver against priorities.

NWLDC will work with LCC to support delivery of the LNRS at a local level across the district.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a way of creating and improving natural habitats. BNG makes sure any new development has a measurable positive impact ('net gain') on biodiversity, compared to what was there before the development. From 12 February 2024, all new major developments (10 or more homes or a site area of one hectare of more or 1,000 sqm metres of floorspace) have to demonstrate through a planning application how the scheme will provide at least 10% biodiversity net gain. From 2 April 2024, BNG also applies to all minor applications (unless exempt). In England, BNG is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021). The planting of new trees and hedgerows may be a way of contributing to the BNG of a new development and more information on this can be found at https://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/biodiversity_net_gain_bng

Local Plan

A Local Plan sets the planning framework for an area. It is important because it;

- identifies the development land needed in the future
- sets out how sites will be developed and coordinated with the infrastructure needed
- helps reduce the risk of speculative planning applications
- sets out the policies used when determining planning applications.

Information on the North West Leicestershire Local Plan can be found at https://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/local_plan_review

TPO Felling Requests

The aim is to protect TPO trees and their replacements. To ensure this, the TPO applicant should provide information about the type and size of replacement trees, as well as the location where they will be planted. This information is necessary for NWLDC to update its TPO mapping system and maintain the TPO status of the new tree(s) (as stated in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 206(4)).

To ensure successful establishment of new plantings, NWLDC recommends adhering to current British Standards, specifically the British Standard Code of Practice for General Landscape Operations (excluding hard surfaces) (BS4428:1989).

Appendix A

Partners and Stakeholders the Council works with to manage trees and woodlands includes, amongst others;

- Local Residents
- Council Elected Members
- Leicestershire County Council
- Parish / Town Councils
- The National Forest Company
- Forestry Commission
- Local Schools
- The Tree Council
- Earthwatch
- The Conservation Volunteers
- Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust
- The Tree Council
- Natural England
- Landowners
- Woodland Trust
- National Trust

Appendix B

- Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 206(4). See item (4) at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/section/206>.

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NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – THURSDAY, 6
FEBRUARY 2025

Title of Report	COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE	
Presented by	Paul Sanders Head of Community Services paul.sanders@nwleicestershire.gov.uk	
Background Papers	Community Safety Partnerships - GOV.UK Safer North west Leicestershire Partnership Plan 24 - 26	Public Report: Yes
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications associated with this report.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	<p>The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has several statutory requirements mandated under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.</p> <p>The Council has a legal duty under section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004) to deliver domestic homicide reviews on behalf of the victims.</p> <p>The Council has a legal duty under Sections 104 and 105 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, the ASB policing and Crime Act 2014 to provide anti-social behaviour case reviews.</p> <p>The Council has a legal duty under Section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 as amended under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act (2022) to reduce serious violence.</p>	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	None	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Reason Agenda Item Submitted to Scrutiny Committee	To provide the Committee with an update on the Council's partnership related community safety statutory function and the work of the Community Safety Partnership.	
Recommendations	THAT THE COMMITTEE NOTES AND COMMENTS ON THE REPORT AND THE WORK OF THE NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE SAFER COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP.	

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) are a requirement of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The partnership is made up of representatives from the police, local authorities, fire and rescue authorities, health services, and probation services (known as the 'responsible authorities'). The CSP is responsible for providing a strategic lead for community safety and providing commitment and joint working to achieve reduction in crime and disorder across the area of North West Leicestershire. In North West Leicestershire the partnership is referred to as the Safer North West Leicestershire Partnership (SNWLP).

1.2 Overarching Principles

The partnership has agreed that alongside its priorities that it will adopt three overarching themes that supports the work carried out. These are:

1. "To make our community safer for residents, communities, businesses, and visitors.
2. To support and protect all those who are vulnerable within our community.
3. To work in partnership to achieve better value in what we deliver to residents, communities, businesses, and visitors".

Other areas that the government has designated as mandatory for the partnership to address are to:

- Reduce reoffending.
- Prevent substance misuse (such as drugs and alcohol).
- Prevent and reduce serious violence.

There are also areas where some or all partners have similar duties, and the partnership will support the shared delivery of these duties including include counter terrorism, domestic abuse, and safeguarding.

1.3 Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of the SNWLP relate to three areas:

- Delivering CSP strategic priorities and any relevant targets arising from these priorities.
- Meeting the statutory responsibilities held by the partnership.
- Other issues relating to community safety, which may arise, from government policies or other developments.

1.4 Statutory Responsibilities

- Publishing a three-year plan explaining how the partnership aims to reduce crime locally.
- Producing an Annual Strategic Assessment.
- Evaluating and monitoring the performance of crime and disorder within the district.
- Approving any actions required to tackle areas of poor performance or insufficient resources as highlighted by performance data or by the 'Strategic Assessment.'

- Preventing and reducing serious violence including supporting the preparation and implementation of the Violence Reduction Network (VRN) delivery plan, locality profile and needs assessment.
- Implementing the duties within the Domestic Abuse Act 2020.
- Hosting Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) case reviews in accordance with the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.
- Hosting Domestic Homicide Reviews in accordance with legislation and agreed structures within Leicestershire.
- Supporting individual agencies with the implementation of the PREVENT duty.
- Implementing the requirements of the relevant legislation:
 - i. Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (CDA 1998), Police and Justice Act 2006, Policing and Crime Act 2009
 - ii. Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
 - iii. Domestic Abuse Act 2021
 - iv. Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011
 - v. Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
 - vi. Care Act 2014
 - vii. Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015

In duties shared across partnership members, the SNWLP will share delivery to support agencies. This includes domestic abuse, PREVENT and serious violence.

1.5 Strategic Plan

Every three years each CSP is required by law to produce a strategy. The strategy identifies priorities and trends for the partnership to focus on and provides a framework for delivery. The key elements of the strategy are:

- Make our community safer for residents, communities, businesses and visitors
- Support and protect all those who are vulnerable within our community.
- Work in partnership to achieve better value in what we deliver to residents, communities, businesses, and visitors.

The partnership also has some areas that the government designate as mandatory to address and these are reducing reoffending and substance misuse (such as drugs and alcohol).

1.6 Strategic assessment

Each year the partnership conducts a strategic assessment into crime and disorder nationally, regionally, and locally, which outlines the activities it plans to deliver. The assessment helps us respond to emerging threats and to ensure the priorities are relevant. This year (2024/25) the priorities are:

- Priority 1 - Reduce violence in all its forms.
- Priority 2 - Prevent exploitation.
- Priority 3 - Improve road safety.

The wide scope of Priority 1 means it needs to be broken into smaller themes, and will be delivered through four working groups:

1. Violence Reduction Network - looking at longer-term prevention using public health modelling to address this, with a focus on young people.

2. Domestic abuse - dealing with both support for victims and prevention, this will also deliver against the Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) action plans.
3. Night time economy (NTE) and violence against women and girls - delivering the 'Celebrate Safely' work and the national 'violence against women and girls' strategy.
4. Sexual violence - understanding and prevention of sexual violence across the district.

1.7 Membership

The SNWLP is chaired by the person duly elected using the arrangements specified below. In their absence, the Vice Chair takes responsibility for the meeting.

The membership will be taken from those responsible agencies as identified within the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (as amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006), namely:

- North West Leicestershire District Council*
 - Leicestershire County Council*
 - Leicestershire Police
 - Leicestershire Fire & Rescue Service
 - Leicestershire and Rutland Primary Care Trust
 - The Probation Service
- (*Statutory agencies under the Act)

When needed, each member will have a single vote, and should a vote be required, the Chair will have the deciding vote in case of a tie.

Together with representation from:

- Turning Point.
- Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Leicestershire Violence Reduction Network (VRN).
- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Decisions are normally made on a consensus. Should disagreement occur, a vote is taken with the decision based on the majority vote.

To be quorate the meeting must include at least three of the seven responsible authorities listed above.

1.8 Finances

The partnership has:

- Oversight of all partnership funds relating to crime reduction within North West Leicestershire.
- Approves funding bids prior to submission to the Office for Policing and Crime Commissioner.
- Delegates operational financial decisions to the sub-groups, who report back at meetings of the SNWLP.
- Reports on spend to appropriate funding agencies.

1.9 Meetings

The agenda covers prescribed topics as 'standing items' in line with its statutory duties, along with space for three items that have been requested by partners and are relevant to the meeting.

1.10 Governance

All sub-groups report to the SNWLP, and SNWLP reports to the LLR Strategic Partnership Board (LLRSPB).

Terms of reference relate to the period up to 1 April each year, at which point they are reviewed annually.

1.11 Information sharing

Across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, all community safety data sharing is covered by an information sharing agreement (ISA) provided by Leicestershire County Council, which is signed by all parties covered by CDA1998 as responsible authorities.

1.12 Equalities

The SNWLP members comply with Equality and Diversity Policies within their organisations.

The partnership is committed to equality and diversity with a specific focus on reinforcing the SNWLP responsibility under the Equality Act 2010, and their role as community leaders, service providers, employers and purchasers of goods and services.

2.0 Current performance

The CSP commissions a dashboard for crime and disorder levels annually and have been able to compare like for like for over four years. This is created from redacted police data. Whilst addresses or victim details are not seen, data to the ward level on various crime types is scrutinised.

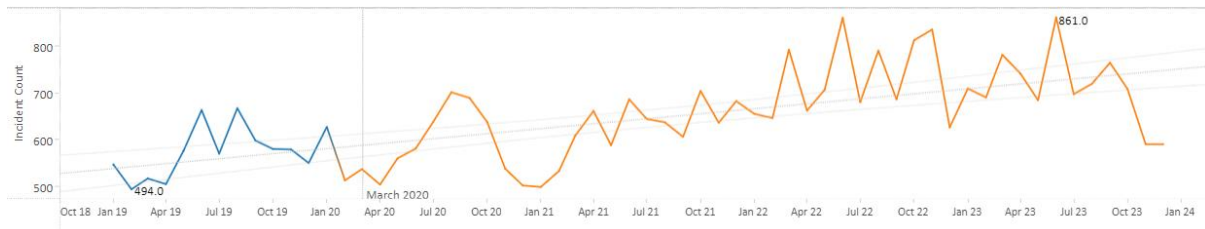
Each year, trends are monitored and are reflected within the annual strategic assessment. Whilst trends can emerge at any time, this gives a statistical basis for the partnership's work. As well as using this information to set annual priorities, impact can be tracked over a longer period. Alongside the local dashboard, other data sources are examined to improve the partnership's knowledge base and help understand the wider needs of the community.

Due to the information sharing agreement (ISA) lots of information from partners is shared which includes ambulance, fire, police, and the NHS. The next few paragraphs look at crime trends over the past few years.

2.1 All Crime

When looking at the 'all crime data,' it needs to be within the context that this figure is based on the number of crimes reported. It does not consider the impact of each crime type. Some cases may only count as a single incident but can have a huge impact on the community.

Since 2019, the total number of reported crimes has risen from 6,846 to 8,534 in 2023. This is a 19.8% increase in four years, an average annual increase of just below 5%. However, the graph below shows how much variation between each year is recorded. Looking at the annual changes, in 2020, there was a 2.7% increase. In 2022, this was 16.7%. at the end of 2023, this was a reduction of 2.5%.



Covid can be seen as a factor in these changes along with new crime types and return to normal life all impacting the figures.

All Crime	Rate
District average	78.4
Coalville Central	296.8
Ashby Castle North	192.4
Greenhill	186.6
Diseworth, Belton, Grace Dieu	143.1
Ibstock Centre	134.6

Taking the initial statement around the 'All Crime' figure, the top five wards for reporting crimes per resident, known as the 'crime rate per 1000', is shown.

Over the year, the level of reporting fluctuates. Based on the four-year average, June is the busiest month, and February sees the smallest number of reports.



2.2 Serious Violence-All

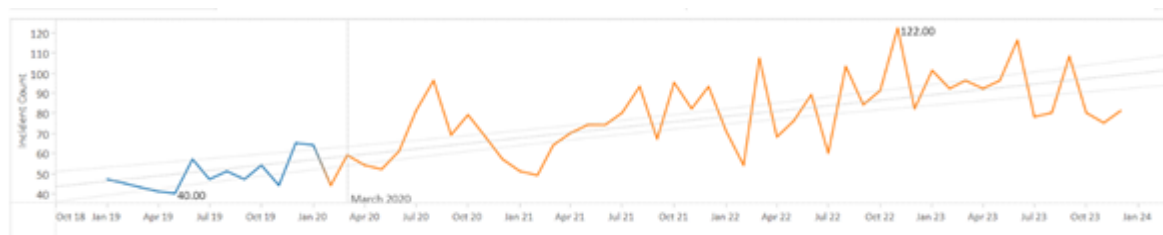
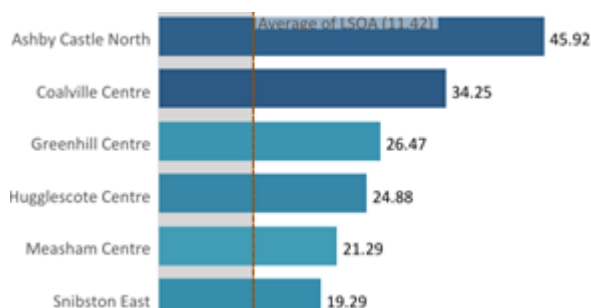
Serious violent crime has been made a statutory duty for all CSP's, and there is a duty to act in partnership with the Leicestershire Violence Reduction Network (VRN). The Serious Violence Duty came into force on 31 January 2023. It requires specified authorities, for one or more local government areas, to work together and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence, including identifying the kinds of serious violence in the area, the causes of that violence and to prepare and implement a shared strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence in the area. (Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 Act Ch1 Part 2). Section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act has also been amended and as a result Community Safety Partnerships

are required to have the prevention and reduction of serious violence as an explicit priority in their strategies and plans.

	Rate
District average	30.53
Coalville Centre	92.37
Greenhill Centre	86.70
Ashby Castle North	76.53
Hugglescote Centre	59.49
Snibston East	53.95

In terms of the local profile for ‘violence against the person’ classification, the district average is 30.53, with Greenhill and Coalville the most impacted wards. Every ward has reported violence in the past year, the lowest being Ashby Castle South. This highlights the impact of night time violence, with Ashby Castle North, the third highest of the wards.

When the severity of the offending is explored, small changes in to the five most prolific wards can be seen. Ashby Castle North is the most prolific, 45.95 per 1,000 against a district average 11.45. Over the four-year period, we see a fluctuation in the level of violence with injury, with a significant increase since 2019. However, with the impact of the partnership's work, the trend has been reducing.



The data shows a 34.9% increase in violence in 2020 with the level still increasing, but at a much-reduced rate. In 2023, this was 8.7%. between 2022 and 2023, there was an increase of 88 incidents, to 1095. The rate per 1,000 is 30.53 for this category.

When looking at specific violence, the police flag both alcohol and domestic related crime.

The two largest night time economy areas have the largest spikes in alcohol related incidents. Since 2019, the number of incidents has increased from 489 to 637. When looking at the percentage of violence with injury and NTE, significant share each year can be seen. Whilst not a like for like comparison, the percentage share over the five years demonstrates some comparable data. In 2019, a greater percentage share originated from alcohol related violence. With the focused work of the partnership this is now reduced to 58%.

2.3 Serious violence-domestic abuse

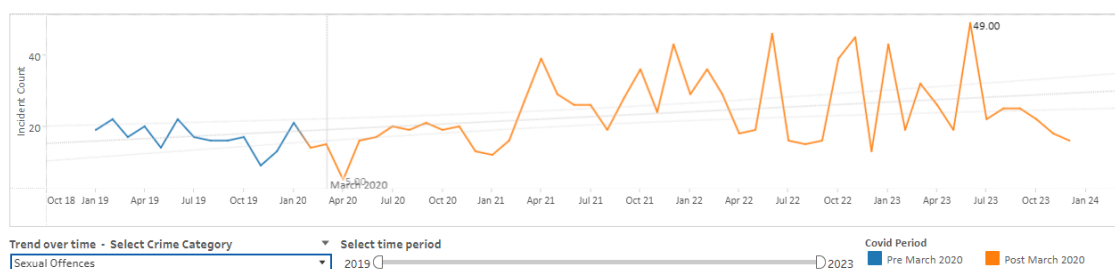
Over the past five years, there has been an increase from 824 incidents to 1,125 last year. An increase of 37%. There was a spike during the lockdown period with increases of 17.4%. Last year there was a small decrease.

This gives a static figure with which to target the partnership's work. The level of domestic violence at ward level is less confined than alcohol related violence.

Central Greenhill has the highest recorded domestic abuse and has a 31.77 crime rate. The district average is 10.46. Again, every ward has reported some domestic abuse but typically, the levels are lower in the district.

2.4 Serious violence-sexual offences

The reporting of sexual crimes has also seen changes over the past few years. Whilst little direct changes to legislation have occurred, national work streams, action plans, media events and a change in attitudes towards reporting, have all made the management of sexual offenses a higher priority for the public. The 'Me too' movement has shifted the public debate and has increased awareness. This can be seen as the increase of reporting over the past years, however, following police, Government, and the partnership's local work, the levels of reporting are becoming more stable. While this is higher than previous years, it needs to be acknowledged that some of this is the reporting of offences that would not have been raised previously.



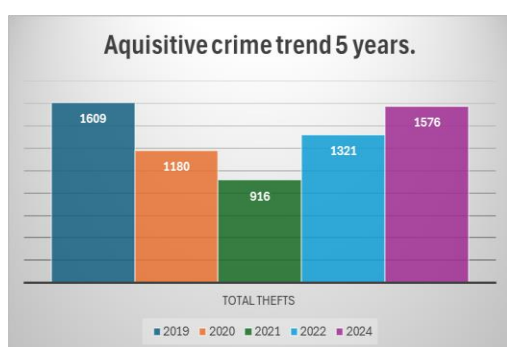
The largest increase was in 2021, with an increase of 62%. The past year has seen a 1.6% reduction. Location wise, the expectation would be that sexual offences are focused in the night time economy. However, the data shows a spread across the population centres.

2.5 Exploitation

As part of the partnership's work to support the prevention of exploitation it has embraced the model of contextual safeguarding. Contextual safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships

that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships. Therefore, children's social care practitioners need to engage with individuals and sectors who do have influence over/within extra-familial contexts and recognise that assessment of and intervention with these spaces are a critical part of safeguarding practices. Contextual safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts.

2.6 Acquisitive crime (including Burglary, Theft from Motor Vehicle, Theft of Motor Vehicle)



Vehicle crime such as thefts have seen fluctuations over the past five years, but the trend is, in general terms, relatively static. In 2019, 1,609 reports and 1,576 by 2023, a decrease of 33 offences. However, the impact of Covid and the lockdown saw a reduction of 693 recorded offences. The reduction of opportunity for home and vehicle thefts being the primary cause. With the end of lockdown, the levels returned to pre lockdown levels.

There is variance within the data and if the focus is on 2023, then post lockdown, clearer trends emerge. Burglary offences remained at stable levels. Motor vehicle related theft offending has returned to pre-lockdown levels. It is in the increase of the shoplifting that the most significant changes can be seen.

Below are the ward level breakdowns, based on the rates per 1000. As in previous years, the level of burglaries is linked to population density. The hotspot in greater Appleby is unusual, however, its location near to the motorway network may be linked to this. The rate of 2.72 average is low and leads to the statement that the area is a safe place to live.

Burglary (Domestic)	Rate
District average	2.72
Greenhill Castle Rock	11.38
Greenhill Centre	9.27
Ashby Hollywell East	7.59
Castle Donington West & Donington Park	5.87
Greater Appleby	5.15

The levels in Greenhill suggest that any work in burglary reduction should be focused on Greenhill.

Business and community burglaries, (previously known as burglary other) are widespread across the district. The width of this category does not lend itself to detailed analysis.

Theft from motor vehicles is a trend that continues, with the theft of car parts becoming a serious trend. The theft of catalytic convertors is still a common target, with SUV and four-by-four vehicles being targeted. The main method for thefts remains breaking the window and forcing the locks. The use of high-tech devices in theft remains low.

The sharp fall in motor vehicle thefts seen between 2002/03 and the mid-2010s, followed by a sudden increase recently tracks a pattern that can be observed in the overall crime figures for the United Kingdom in total, there were approximately 6.66 million crime offences in 2023/24, an increase of over 2.6 million offences when compared with 2013/14. Although this was a higher number of crimes than in the early 2000s, due to population increase, the crime rate for 2023/24 was 89.4, lower than in 2003/04, when the crime rate was 111.1 crimes per 1,000 people.

The recent uptake in overall crime has been sudden and severe enough to catch the attention of the media. It has not gone unnoticed that this rise occurred following cuts to funding for the police which was then followed by a decline in numbers. These cuts have since been reversed and funding for the police has again started to increase.

Theft from Motor vehicles	Rate
District average	4.11
Diseworth, Belton and Grace Dieu	50.07
Ellistown	12.91
Castle Donington East and Hemmington	11.19
Ashby Holywell East	9.93
Long Whatton and Kegworth South West	6.81

2.7 Anti-social Behaviour (ASB)

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) continues to be an issue in North West Leicestershire, however, there have been reductions over the past five years and the levels of antisocial behaviour are below national levels. As a result, antisocial behaviour has not been a priority for the community safety partnership for the past five years. This does not mean, however, that the ASB has not been addressed by the teams from the Council and Leicestershire Police. Within the Council, the management of antisocial behaviour is split between two teams, housing and community safety. Across the partnership, a shared system is used known as “Sentinel” to manage cases. Both the police and housing services can access this system which was introduced following a serious case review in 2011.

In 2019, 996 incidents of ASB were reported in the district which was the highest ever and fluctuating levels during lockdown were also reported with increases due to new categories of ASB such as social gatherings and breaches of Covid regulations. However, since the end of the lockdown there has been a steady reduction of ASB. In 2023, there were 777 reports of ASB across the district, this is up by 5.9% over 2022. However, it is a reduction over the five years of 219 incidents.

For the partnership, the greater level of risk comes from personal ASB. This is where ASB is targeted towards an individual. Again, despite fluctuations over the lockdown

period, there has been a reduction in personal ASB and 2023 this was a reduction of 36.4%. This puts the annual reporting of personal ASB around 75 incidents per year.

The largest increase in ASB is in the category of environmental ASB. This includes fly-tipping littering and fly posters. This has seen an increase of 44.2% over the last year and is now at a similar level to 2019. The impact of lockdown did see an increase, however, the continued levels of environmental ASB is believed to be linked to the cost-of-living crisis and a significant amount of the fly tipping could be classified as business waste. An example of this is the dumping of clinical waste from a care home.

Whilst not a CSP priority, the partnership is working with the Love Your Neighbourhood (LYN) campaign. This allows the partnership to support the prevention of environmental crime. Community Safety will support with the Action Plan for LYN year two, with the development of a Litter and Graffiti Policy to help tackle the anti-social behaviours associated with this type of environmental crime.

2.8 Substance Misuse

The level of misuse of substances has seen a spike in 2019/2020, with a steady decrease since. The current trend line is down but the level of reporting has remained above the 2019 level. The reason for the spike is largely based around police and CSP activity to target dealers. This period of intensive work has seen more instances of reporting. The gradual reduction is the long impact of this work.

The Management of Substance misuse in LLR is managed under a contract with Turning Point. They are a regulated social enterprise. Turning Point Leicestershire and Rutland is an integrated substance misuse service which aims to meet the needs of the local people and offer support for drug and alcohol use.

They work with people who are affected by drugs and alcohol and need support to make a change.

In 2019, as part of the Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland service, they were inspected and rated as “Outstanding” by the Care Quality Commission.

The core focus of drug offences correlates with the NTE locations. To support the reduction, the CSP has a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for substance misuse in Ashby De La Zouch.

Drug offences	Rate
District average	1.9
Central Coalville	11.42
Ashby Castle North	7.29
Castle Donington East and Hemmington	4.10
Coalville Stephenson Way	3.8
Hugglescote Central	3.00

2.9 Funding

The CSP is funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner. Each year there is an allocated a set budget, calculated on a formula of population versus crime levels. The partnership has also had the opportunity to bid for any underspends each year. The following table shows the 2024/25 funding allocations that the partnership has been able to secure.

	24/25 Funding	23/24 Underspend allocation	Total Funding 24/25
SNWL	£53,776.10	+£8,230.67	£62,006.76

These funds are allocated to deliver projects that target the priorities of the CSP, and quarterly performance updates are provided to the PCC. The decisions to fund a project is made at CSP meetings. Below are details of funding decisions made in 2024/2025.

Project Description	Funding allocation
CSP Delivery Officer	£21,827.00
Safer Coalville Crimestoppers Campaign	£3,500
DISC – Business Crime	£4,152
Safer Euros campaign (including drink driving campaign)	£5,400
Enhanced CCTV monitoring	£3,494.40
Celebrate Safely campaign (Christmas/New Year)	£2,000
Rural CCTV	£8,230.67
KISP youth intervention	£2,700.00
Traffic officer training	£2,100.00

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	Communities and housing. Looking after our tenants and keeping our communities safe.
Policy Considerations:	Safer North west Leicestershire Partnership Plan 24 - 26
Safeguarding:	North West Leicestershire District Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people, and adults at risk of harm. Any safeguarding concerns raised will be referred as appropriate.
Equalities/Diversity:	The Community Safety Partnership is committed to equality and diversity with a specific focus on reinforcing the SNWLP responsibility under the Equality Act 2010.
Customer Impact:	The Community Safety Partnership is responsible for providing a strategic lead for community safety and providing commitment and joint working to achieve reduction in crime and disorder across North West Leicestershire.
Economic and Social Impact:	The Community Safety Partnership provides joint working to reduce crime and disorder across North West Leicestershire.

Environment, Climate Change and zero carbon:	The work of the Community Safety Partnership continues to have a positive impact on the environment.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	The Community Safety Partnership involves consulting and working with relevant agencies.
Risks:	Risks associated with non-completion of work and fulfilling the Council's statutory duty.
Officer Contact	Paul Sanders Head of Community Services Paul.Sanders@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

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NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – THURSDAY, 6
FEBRUARY 2025

Title of Report	UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND AWARD 2025/26	
Presented by	Barrie Walford Economic Development and Regeneration Team Manager	
Background Papers	Scrutiny Committee report – March 2023 UKSPF Cabinet report – March 2023	Public Report: Yes
Financial Implications	Set out within the report	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	Set out within the report	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	Set out within the report	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Reason Agenda Item Submitted to Scrutiny	To set out to Scrutiny Committee a deliverable 12-month programme of UKSPF funded projects that delivers against Council objectives and in accordance with requirements of the UKSPF fund.	
Recommendations	THAT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REVIEWS THIS REPORT ON ADDITIONAL FUNDING FROM THE UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND AND PROVIDES COMMENTS FOR CABINET TO CONSIDER AT ITS MEETING ON 25 FEBRUARY 2025	

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Announced in April 2022, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) was administered by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) – Now re-named as Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).
- 1.2 The Council was allocated £2,414,817, profiled over three years from 2022 to 2025. The final year of funding ends on 31 March 2025.
- 1.3 In November 2024, MHCLG announced that the UKSPF would be extended for a 'transition year' for the financial year 2025/26 while work continued on what would ultimately replace the funding in the longer term.

1.4 In December 2024, MHCLG confirmed the allocations for Lead Authorities and also set out the approach for the funding:

- The Council has been allocated £789,998, which is split as £145,859 Capital and £644,140 Revenue.
- NWLDC will receive this funding directly in or around April 2025.
- Unspent funding from the 2022-2025 UKSPF cannot be carried over into the new fund. The 31 March 2025 deadline remains for those projects.
- No announcement has been made on further funding beyond March 2026. However, the UKSPF 2025/26 cannot be carried over into what arrangements may follow, and therefore it must be spent within the 12-month timeframe.
- The three priority areas of Community and Place, Supporting Local Business and People and Skills remain, however, there are new missions and priorities associated with each:

1.5 **Communities and Place**

- **Healthy Safe and Inclusive Communities**
 - Healthy: Improving health and wellbeing
 - Safe: Reducing crime
 - Inclusive: Bringing Communities together, tackling homelessness
- **Thriving Places**
 - Development of the visitor economy
 - High street / town centre improvements

1.6 **Supporting Local Business**

- **Support for business**
 - Advice and support to business
 - Enterprise Culture and Start-Up support
 - Business sites and premises

1.7 **People and Skills**

- **Employability**
 - Support for young people at risk of being Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
 - Supporting people to progress towards and into employment
- **Skills**
 - Essential skills, including numeracy, literacy, English as a second language (ESOL) and digital
 - Employment related skills

1.8 A full prospectus and list of interventions for the UKSPF 2025/26 has not been published but is expected soon.

1.9 In addition to the UKSPF award, the Department for Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) awarded local authorities additional funding to deliver a Rural England Prosperity Fund between April 2023 and March 2025. No announcement has yet been made in relation to further funding from DEFRA .

2.0 **UKSPF 25/26 recommended programme**

2.1 Officers have considered options for the new fund against the short timeframe in which delivery is required. Recommended options for allocation of the funding are set out below.

2.2 These projects will:

- Meet Council priorities as set out in the Council Delivery Plan.
- Deliver against the Council’s Regeneration Framework objectives.
- Split the funding to provide a District-wide impact (Reflecting Member aspirations that shaped the original UKSPF programme).
- Respond to feedback on the Districtwide Regeneration received from Members, Community Scrutiny Committee and external stakeholders.
- And, satisfy UKSPF eligibility criteria.

2.3 Following Scrutiny Committee, officers intend to present recommended options for the use of the UKSPF transitional funding to Cabinet on 25 February.

2.4 The list of proposed projects are set out in the table below which includes an allowance for the cost of administration.

Project	Indicative Budget
4% Admin Allowance	£31,600
Renew Business Support contract	£60,000
Renew Skills for work contract	£35,000
New Community Grant scheme	£150,000
Investment in key settlements (Vital and Viable study projects)	£300,000
Improving Our Visitor Economy - Moira Furnace Phase 2	£145,859 Capital and £30,000 Revenue
Regeneration Framework project feasibility studies	£37,500

2.5 **4% Admin Allowance** - This is a deductible amount from the total award to be used toward supporting the resourcing of the project(s). The figure of 4% is suggested by MHCLG.

2.6 **Extension of existing Business Support contract** - Through the 2022-2025 UKSPF programme, North West Leicestershire launched two different business support programmes.

2.7 The first was the Leicestershire Business Advisory Service, known as LBAS. This project was delivered in collaboration with Leicestershire Local Authorities of Blaby, Harborough, Hinckley and Bosworth, Melton, and Oadby and Wigston and ran a free to access business advice and support service for small and medium sized business across Leicestershire.

2.8 The second was a ‘Women in Business’ support programme commissioned exclusively in North West Leicestershire that was designed to support local women to start up in business and/or support women back into employment.

- 2.9 Officers are currently working with our neighbouring authorities to define what the extension of these business support programmes could look like to maximise the impact of the 2025/26 UKSPF transition funding.
- 2.10 **Extension of existing Skills work contract** - Through the 2022-2025 UKSPF programme, North West Leicestershire commissioned and launched a series of different skills support programmes.
- 2.11 As with the business support programmes referred to earlier, Officers are currently evaluating the impact of these skills programmes to determine how to best use the 2025/26 UKSPF transition funding to shape the extension of some of the UKSPF funded skills programmes.
- 2.12 **New Community Grant scheme** - Over 2023 and 2024 the Council allocated £300,000 toward Community led projects in each parish (or area where unparished) of the district. Over £258,000 was distributed to a range of projects, however, it was noted that several parishes did not apply for funding at all and that larger areas, such as Coalville and Ashby-de-la-Zouch, met their funding caps very quickly. It was also fed back from applicants that the small amounts of funding in some places (<£3,500) made it difficult to find a project without using external funding.
- 2.13 Officers propose that this scheme is kept as a larger, central grant fund from which the Council seek to support a smaller number of higher value projects that can come from anywhere in the District.
- 2.14 **Investment in local centres (Vital and Viable study) projects** - By March 2025, each of the six centres identified in the Council's Local Plan (Coalville, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Castle Donington, Kegworth, Ibstock and Measham) will have a 'Vital and Viable' study completed which will also include suggested projects. These studies are being completed in collaboration with Town and Parish Councils, local businesses, community groups and other stakeholders.
- 2.15 These studies, shaped by local stakeholders, will identify a series of projects and interventions that can make smaller but impactful improvements to towns and local centres in the District.
- 2.16 It is proposed that an allocation of £300,000 be made from the Council's UKSPF 25/26 award to enable town and parish councils to work with their communities with the six centres to deliver some of their priority projects they identify through preparing their local vital and viable study.
- 2.17 Nominally the £300,000 allocation gives each centre £50,000, though this may need to be tiered to take into account the size and needs of each area.
- 2.18 **Improve The Visitor Economy Moira Furnace – Phase 2**
Through the original UKSPF award and the Council's own Capital programme, the historic monument has been subject to recent investment to secure the Furnace, undertake essential repair works and to enhance the existing presentation of the furnace setting.
- 2.19 Using the capital allocation of UKSPF transitional funding, Officers propose to continue to deliver improvements to the offer at Moira Furnace and commence a new second phase of capital investment to support the visitor economy and enhance the tourism offer. The use of the UKSPF complements the Council's planned investment

into Moira Furnace and contributes to the ongoing investment to the National Forest and delivery of the Heart of the National Forest plan.

2.20 These projects include:

- Study work to support efforts to restore the Ashby Canal as set out in the Council's District-wide Regeneration Framework,
- Ongoing collaborative work with Visit Leicester to promote North West Leicestershire as a visitor destination
- Delivery of a green accreditation that supports local visitor attractions, tourism businesses and accommodation providers to improve their green credentials, benefit the environment and create competitive advantage for our visitor economy.

2.21 **Regeneration Framework project feasibility studies** - This funding can be utilised toward exploring feasibility, design or options studies for projects set out within the North West Leicestershire Districtwide Regeneration Framework and the Coalville Regeneration Framework.

3.0 Financial implications

3.1 All projects listed above in section 2 above are proposed to be delivered using UKSPF 25/26 funding awarded in accordance with any conditions attached to those funding awards.

3.2 Any UKSPF 25/26 funding unspent by 31 March 2026 will need to be returned to MHCLG.

3.3 This report sets out proposals to allocate the new funding to projects which officers are confident of delivering within the 12-month timescale, as well as meeting the priorities of the Council Delivery Plan and Regeneration Frameworks.

3.4 It is proposed that the projects recommended within this report will be delivered using existing capacity with the Economic Regeneration team.

4.0 Legal Implications

4.1 Projects delivered through the UKSPF will need to be delivered within the subsidy control regime (formerly State Aid).

4.2 Additionally, UKSPF spend should be compliant with Public Contracts Regulations 2015, where relevant and follow local constitution, processes and procedures as and where relevant.

5.0 Staffing and Corporate Implications

5.1 It is proposed that the UKSPF 25/26 programme will be delivered with a similar programme framework as the original UKSPF.

5.2 The UKSPF 25/26 will be delivered by a 'Project Team' consisting of the Council's Economic Development Manager and a Senior Economic Development Officer. This Project Team will be supported by the wider Economic Development team, the Head of Regeneration and Director of Place.

- 5.3 Each of the listed projects will be delivered by at least one senior 'Lead' Officer. The Lead Officer(s) will regularly (weekly in most cases) meet with the 'Project Team' to monitor the progress of each project.
- 5.4 The Economic Development Manager will be providing regular updates through monthly briefings with the Business and Regeneration Portfolio Holder and through briefings with the Shadow Business and Regeneration Portfolio Holder.
- 5.5 On a bi-monthly basis the 'Project Team' will provide a progress report and notify any delivery risks to a 'UKSPF Programme Group'. It is proposed that 'Programme Group' will be made up of officers from the following service areas: Audit, Communications, Finance, Legal and, where necessary, ICT and Transformation.
- 5.6 As a minimum, on a quarterly basis, the 'Programme Group' will provide an oversight update on the UKSPF programme to Capital Strategy Group.
- 5.7 Once concluded, officers will bring an evaluation report back to the Scrutiny Committee and to Cabinet to reflect on the UKPSF 25/26, its outputs and outcomes and lessons learnt.

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:	North West Leicestershire Council Delivery Plan North West Leicestershire Districtwide Regeneration Framework
Safeguarding:	No safeguarding considerations have been identified.
Equalities/Diversity:	No equalities/diversity considerations have been identified at this stage. However, Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken for specific projects as they are developed to ensure they meet the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives of the Council
Customer Impact:	The proposed UKSPF 25/26 projects set out a series of interventions that will benefit residents and businesses.
Economic and Social Impact:	The proposed UKSPF 25/26 projects set out a series of interventions that will benefit residents and businesses.
Environment, Climate Change and zero carbon:	Through the delivery of the Community Grants and investment in local centres may enable communities and partner organisation to implement initiatives that contribute to achieving the North West Leicestershire zero carbon roadmap.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	The programme of work identified within this report contribute to the delivery of the adopted Council's Regeneration Frameworks which have been subject to scrutiny prior to their adoption. In addition, the investment in local centres: Vital and Viable study projects will have been identified

	following consultation within the districts six local centres.
Risks:	As part of its Corporate Governance arrangements, the Council must ensure that risk management is considered and satisfactorily covered in any report put before elected Members for a decision or action.
Officer Contact	Paul Wheatley Head of Economic Regeneration paul.wheatley@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

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Community Scrutiny Committee – WORK PROGRAMME (as at 28/01/25)

Date of Meeting	Item	Lead Officer	Witnesses	Indicative Agenda Item Duration
February 2025				
April 2025				
10 April 2025	Marlborough Square Project Review Post delivery assessment of project including performance against quality, cost, and timescale expectations.	Paul Wheatley, Head of Property and Regeneration		30 minutes
10 April 2025	Disabled Facilities Grant Review To provide an update and present the findings of the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) Review which has been commissioned through Foundations - National body for DFGs and Home Improvement Agencies.	Paul Sanders, Head of Community Services		30 minutes
10 April 2025	Community Grants Annual Report To set out for Members the grants administered by Community Focus Team, and to assess both qualitatively and quantitatively the outcomes attained, from February 2024 to January 2025.	Paul Sanders, Head of Community Services		30 minutes
10 April 2025	Good Design Guide for North West Leicestershire The document sets out how NWL will measure s good design locally and provides developers and applicants with guidance on the Councils requirements for good design. Scrutiny will see the draft document following public consultation in advance of the report going to Cabinet.	Chris Elston, Head of Planning & Infrastructure		

Date of Meeting	Item	Lead Officer	Witnesses	Agenda Item Duration
10 April 2025	Annual S106 Agreement Update Report To set out for the Committee the position of Section 106 agreements as agreed over the preceding 12 months.	Chris Elston, Head of Planning and Infrastructure		30 minutes
June 2025				
26 June 2025	Love Your Neighbourhood Annual Review To review the performance of the Love Your Neighbourhood campaign against a range of indicators, as requested by the Committee when it the campaign was presented to them in April 2025.	Paul Sanders, Head of Community Services		30 minutes
26 June 2025	Scrutiny Annual Report To present the work of the two scrutiny committees for the civic year 2024/25, and their engagement with the Executive and Officers within decision making processes, using a range of qualitative and quantitative metrics.	Rachel Wallace, Democratic Services Officer		30 minutes

Community Scrutiny Committee	
Request	Position
Waste Services Review	<p>This work was intended to be presented at an extraordinary meeting of the Community Scrutiny Committee in September 2024. This was postponed due to a lack of clarity from the new Government on what household recycling collection arrangements will be acceptable and the need for the Council to be assured that it will be compliant.</p> <p><u>Update December 2024</u></p> <p>DEFRA ministers were written to in September this year setting out the need for urgent clarity on the waste and recycling position regarding Simpler Recycling. This included reference to our aging fleet as well as the delays to delivery and the impact this may have on meeting our obligation in the new Environment Act. A copy of the letter was provided to Council in November. The Chief Executive is also seeking a meeting with the minister. The press release issued on the 12 Nov also updates on the situation. To date no response to the letter has been received and the position remains as reported to Council.</p> <p><u>Update February 2025</u></p> <p>It is planned that the extraordinary meeting will take place in Spring 2025.</p>
National Forest Line	<p>It was agreed that there would be further review by Community Scrutiny following item in December 2023 to seek to provide support to the Ivanhoe/National Forest Line.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially agreed that NWL (with LCC) would seek to arrange a further briefing/meeting with Network Rail following Outline Business Case approval and enable further engagement for Scrutiny. However, since December 2023 the situation has changed (as the update in September 2024) with the cancellation of the RYR programme in her statement on 29 July 2024. The project has been identified within the District Regeneration Framework to ensure remains

visible in the Council's work plan to support other partners in delivery. It is proposed that any updates from partners and support that the Council may be able to provide will be reported to Scrutiny through the annual update report on the Framework.

Update September 2024 (from DfT)

- The Chancellor announced the cancellation of the RYR programme in her statement on 29 July 2024.
- The RYR projects will now come to an orderly close and no further funding will be provided through the programme.
- Where projects are not currently live, no new work will be started. For projects which have development or design work in progress, DfT are considering the best way to bring these projects to a close.
- For Ivanhoe, this will mean that no new work will start.
- The Chancellor also announced that the Transport Secretary will be undertaking a review of the Department's investment portfolio, including individual RYR projects.
- DfT Capital Review underway and is considering alignment of individual infrastructure projects with government's priorities of growth, housing, jobs and value for money.
- The review is being progressed in two phases – the first will consider RYR projects plus other Network North proposals, the second will have a larger scope. The outputs will help to inform a wider Spending Review in 2025 however some announcements could be made before then.

February 2025

No further update.

Work requests Community Scrutiny Committee – February 2025

Request	Position
Scoping work on Air Quality and resident engagement	<p><u>Update December 2024</u></p> <p>Officers to attend the Scrutiny Work Programming Group meeting in March 2025 and have scoping discussion.</p>
Scoping work on Warehouse Design	<p>At the Scrutiny Work Programming Group meeting in December 2024, a request was made to examine the design of warehouses around the district, given the significant number of them within the district and with further growth projected. It was agreed that this work would be considered in 2026, to allow the Planning Policy Team to prioritise their work on drafting the Council’s Local Plan in 2025.</p>

Principles and Criteria used for Assessing Items Put Forward

Identify Issues for consideration by Scrutiny

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

Prioritise the potential list of scrutiny topics based on factors including

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

Work requests Community Scrutiny Committee – February 2025

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

PREVIOUS SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

None.

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Notice of Executive Key Decisions

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

The date of publication of this notice is Friday, 24 January 2025. The Deadline for making any representations as to why items marked as private should be considered in public by **Cabinet on 25 February 2025 is 5pm Friday, 14 February 2025.**

Key Decisions

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

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

The Council's Executive

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

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

Confidential Items and Private Meetings of the Executive

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

Access to Agenda and Related Documents

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

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

Executive Decisions

Decision	Decision Maker	Status of Decision	Public or Private (and reason – where private)	Date of Decision	Contacts	Documents to be submitted to the Decision Maker	Considered by Scrutiny or other Committee
February 2025							
Empty Property - Compulsory Purchase	Cabinet	Key	Public	25 February 2025	<p>Councillor Michael Wyatt Tel: 07773 341531 michael.wyatt@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Community Services Tel: 01530 454832 paul.sanders@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Empty Property - Compulsory Purchase	Delegated Cabinet function
Acquisitions and Disposals	Cabinet	Key	Private	25 February 2025	<p>Councillor Andrew Woodman Tel: 07970 520357 andrew.woodman@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Housing, Head of Property and Regeneration Tel: 01530 454502, Tel: 01530 454 354 jane.rochelle@nwleicester.gov.uk, paul.wheatley@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Acquisitions	Delegated Cabinet function

Decision	Decision Maker	Status of Decision	Public or Private (and reason – where private)	Date of Decision	Contacts	Documents to be submitted to the Decision Maker	Considered by Scrutiny or other Committee
Supplementary Estimates, Virements and Capital Approvals	Cabinet	Key	Public	25 February 2025	<p>Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Finance Tel: 01530 454492 anna.crouch@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Supplementary Estimates, Virements and Capital Approvals	Delegated Cabinet function
Award of Contracts 139	Cabinet	Key	Private	25 February 2025	<p>Councillor Andrew Woodman Tel: 07970 520357 andrew.woodman@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Strategic Director of Communities Tel: 01530 454819 andy.barton@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Award of Contracts	Delegated Cabinet function
Performance Monitoring Report	Cabinet	Non-Key	Public	25 February 2025	<p>Councillor Keith Merrie MBE Tel: 07596 112270 keith.merrie@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development Tel: 01530 454518 mike.murphy@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Performance Monitoring Report	Corporate Scrutiny Committee, 13 March 2025

Decision	Decision Maker	Status of Decision	Public or Private (and reason – where private)	Date of Decision	Contacts	Documents to be submitted to the Decision Maker	Considered by Scrutiny or other Committee
UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2025/26 award	Cabinet	Key	Public	25 February 2025	Councillor Tony Gillard Tel: 01530 452930 tony.gillard@nwleicestershire.gov.uk Economic Regeneration Team Manager Tel: 01530 454822 Barrie.Walford@nwleicestershire.gov.uk	UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2025/26 award	Community Scrutiny Committee 6 February 2025
Devolution White Paper Update 140	Cabinet	Non-Key	Public	25 February 2025	Councillor Richard Blunt Tel: 01530 454510 richard.blunt@nwleicestershire.gov.uk Chief Executive Tel: 01530 454500 allison.thomas@nwleicestershire.gov.uk	Devolution White Paper Update	Reports will be presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee as appropriate during this process.
March 2025							
Tree Management Strategy	Cabinet	Key	Public	25 March 2025	Councillor Michael Wyatt Tel: 07773 341531 michael.wyatt@nwleicestershire.gov.uk Head of Community Services Tel: 01530 454832 paul.sanders@nwleicestershire.gov.uk	Tree Management Strategy	Community Scrutiny Committee, 6 February 2024

Decision	Decision Maker	Status of Decision	Public or Private <small>(and reason – where private)</small>	Date of Decision	Contacts	Documents to be submitted to the Decision Maker	Considered by Scrutiny or other Committee
Moneyhill Solar EV Charging Hub	Cabinet	Key	Public	25 March 2025	<p>Councillor Michael Wyatt Tel: 07773 341531 michael.wyatt@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Community Services Tel: 01530 454832 paul.sanders@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Moneyhill Solar EV Charging Hub	Delegated Cabinet Function
Housing Policies 141	Cabinet	Key	Public	25 March 2025	<p>Councillor Andrew Woodman Tel: 07970 520357 andrew.woodman@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager david.scruton@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Housing Policies	Community Scrutiny, 6 February 2024.
2024/25 Quarter 3 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Finance Update	Cabinet	Non-Key	Public	25 March 2025	<p>Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Finance Team Manager Tel: 01530 454684 sarah.magill@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	2024/25 Quarter 3 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Finance Update	Corporate Scrutiny Committee, 8 May 2025

Decision	Decision Maker	Status of Decision	Public or Private (and reason – where private)	Date of Decision	Contacts	Documents to be submitted to the Decision Maker	Considered by Scrutiny or other Committee
2023/24 Provisional Financial Outturn - General Fund	Cabinet	Key	Public	25 March 2025	<p>Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Finance Team Manager Tel: 01530 454684 sarah.magill@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	2023/24 Provisional Financial Outturn - General Fund	N/A
2023/24 Provisional Financial Outturn - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 142	Cabinet	Key	Public	25 March 2025	<p>Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Finance Team Manager Tel: 01530 454684 sarah.magill@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	2023/24 Provisional Financial Outturn - Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	N/A
2024/25 Quarter 3 General Fund Finance Update	Cabinet	Non-Key	Public	25 March 2025	<p>Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Finance Team Manager Tel: 01530 454684 sarah.magill@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	2024/25 Quarter 3 General Fund Finance Update	Will be considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 8 May 2025

Decision	Decision Maker	Status of Decision	Public or Private (and reason – where private)	Date of Decision	Contacts	Documents to be submitted to the Decision Maker	Considered by Scrutiny or other Committee
Acquisitions and Disposals	Cabinet	Key	Private	25 March 2025	<p>Councillor Andrew Woodman Tel: 07970 520357 andrew.woodman@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Housing, Head of Property and Regeneration Tel: 01530 454502, Tel: 01530 454 354 jane.rochelle@nwleicester.gov.uk, paul.wheatley@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Acquisitions	Delegated Cabinet function
Supplementary Estimates, Virements and Capital Approvals	Cabinet	Key	Public	25 March 2025	<p>Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Finance Tel: 01530 454492 anna.crouch@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Supplementary Estimates, Virements and Capital Approvals	Delegated Cabinet function
Award of Contracts	Cabinet	Key	Private	25 March 2025	<p>Councillor Andrew Woodman Tel: 07970 520357 andrew.woodman@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Strategic Director of Communities Tel: 01530 454819 andy.barton@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Award of Contracts	Delegated Cabinet function

Decision	Decision Maker	Status of Decision	Public or Private (and reason – where private)	Date of Decision	Contacts	Documents to be submitted to the Decision Maker	Considered by Scrutiny or other Committee
Former Tenant Rent Arrears, Current Tenant Rent Arrears, Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates and Sundry Debts Write Offs	Cabinet	Key	Public	25 March 2025	Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicester.gov.uk Head of Finance Tel: 01530 454492 anna.crouch@nwleicester.gov.uk	Former Tenant Rent Arrears, Current Tenant Rent Arrears, Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates and Sundry Debts Write Offs	Delegated Cabinet function
Devolution White Paper Update 144	Cabinet	Non-Key	Public	25 March 2025	Councillor Richard Blunt Tel: 01530 454510 richard.blunt@nwleicester.gov.uk Chief Executive Tel: 01530 454500 allison.thomas@nwleicester.gov.uk		Reports will be presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee as appropriate during this process.
April 2025							
Disabled Facilities Grants Review	Cabinet	Non-Key	Public	22 April 2025	Councillor Michael Wyatt Tel: 07773 341531 michael.wyatt@nwleicester.gov.uk Head of Community Services Tel: 01530 454832 paul.sanders@nwleicester.gov.uk	Disabled Facilities Grants Review	Community Scrutiny Committee, 10 April 2025

Decision	Decision Maker	Status of Decision	Public or Private (and reason – where private)	Date of Decision	Contacts	Documents to be submitted to the Decision Maker	Considered by Scrutiny or other Committee
Acquisitions and Disposals	Cabinet	Key	Private	22 April 2025	<p>Councillor Andrew Woodman Tel: 07970 520357 andrew.woodman@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Housing, Head of Property and Regeneration Tel: 01530 454502, Tel: 01530 454 354 jane.rochelle@nwleicester.gov.uk, paul.wheatley@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Acquisitions	Delegated Cabinet function
Supplementary Estimates, Virements and Capital Approvals	Cabinet	Key	Public	22 April 2025	<p>Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Finance Tel: 01530 454492 anna.crouch@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Supplementary Estimates, Virements and Capital Approvals	Delegated Cabinet function
Award of Contracts	Cabinet	Key	Private	22 April 2025	<p>Councillor Andrew Woodman Tel: 07970 520357 andrew.woodman@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Strategic Director of Communities Tel: 01530 454819 andy.barton@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Award of Contracts	N/A delegated Cabinet function

Decision	Decision Maker	Status of Decision	Public or Private (and reason – where private)	Date of Decision	Contacts	Documents to be submitted to the Decision Maker	Considered by Scrutiny or other Committee
Devolution White Paper Update	Cabinet	Non-Key	Public	22 April 2025	Councillor Richard Blunt Tel: 01530 454510 richard.blunt@nwleicester-shire.gov.uk Chief Executive Tel: 01530 454500 allison.thomas@nwleicester-shire.gov.uk	Devolution White Paper Update	Reports will be presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee as appropriate during this process.
May 2025							
Performance Monitoring Report 146	Cabinet	Non-Key	Public	20 May 2025	Councillor Keith Merrie MBE Tel: 07596 112270 keith.merrie@nwleicester-shire.gov.uk Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development Tel: 01530 454518 mike.murphy@nwleicester-shire.gov.uk	Performance Monitoring Report	Corporate Scrutiny Committee, 19 June 2025.
Former Tenant Rent Arrears, Current Tenant Rent Arrears, Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates and Sundry Debts Write Offs	Cabinet	Key	Public	20 May 2025	Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicester-shire.gov.uk Head of Finance Tel: 01530 454492 anna.crouch@nwleicester-shire.gov.uk	Former Tenant Rent Arrears, Current Tenant Rent Arrears, Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates and Sundry Debts Write Offs	Delegated Cabinet function

Decision	Decision Maker	Status of Decision	Public or Private (and reason – where private)	Date of Decision	Contacts	Documents to be submitted to the Decision Maker	Considered by Scrutiny or other Committee
Good Design Guide for North West Leicestershire	Cabinet	Key	Public	20 May 2025	Councillor Tony Saffell Tel: 01332 810706 tonyc.saffell@nwleicester-shire.gov.uk Head of Planning and Infrastructure Tel: 01530 454668 chris.elston@nwleicestershire.gov.uk	Good Design Guide for North West Leicestershire	Community Scrutiny Committee, 10 April 2025
Devolution White Paper Update 147	Cabinet	Non-Key	Public	20 May 2025	Councillor Richard Blunt Tel: 01530 454510 richard.blunt@nwleicester-shire.gov.uk Chief Executive Tel: 01530 454500 allison.thomas@nwleicestershire.gov.uk	Devolution White Paper Update	Reports will be presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee as appropriate during this process.
June 2025							
2024/25 Provisional Financial Outturn - Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	Cabinet	Non-Key	Public	24 June 2025	Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk Finance Team Manager Tel: 01530 454684 sarah.magill@nwleicester-shire.gov.uk	2024/25 Provisional Financial Outturn - Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	To be confirmed when the schedule for the civic year 2025/26 has been agreed.

Decision	Decision Maker	Status of Decision	Public or Private (and reason – where private)	Date of Decision	Contacts	Documents to be submitted to the Decision Maker	Considered by Scrutiny or other Committee
2024/25 Provisional Financial Outturn - General Fund	Cabinet	Non-Key	Public	24 June 2025	<p>Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Finance Team Manager Tel: 01530 454684 sarah.magill@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	2024/25 Provisional Financial Outturn - General Fund	To be confirmed when the schedule for the civic year 2025/26 has been agreed.
<p>Treasury Management Stewardship Report 2024/25</p> <p>148</p>	Cabinet	Non-Key	Public	24 June 2025	<p>Councillor Nicholas Rushton Tel: 01530 412059 nicholas.rushton@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Head of Finance Tel: 01530 454492 anna.crouch@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Treasury Management Stewardship Report 2024/25	Audit & Governance Committee, 4 June 2025
Devolution White Paper Update	Cabinet	Non-Key	Public	24 June 2025	<p>Councillor Richard Blunt Tel: 01530 454510 richard.blunt@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Chief Executive Tel: 01530 454500 allison.thomas@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Devolution White Paper Update	Reports will be presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee as appropriate during this process.

Decision	Decision Maker	Status of Decision	Public or Private (and reason – where private)	Date of Decision	Contacts	Documents to be submitted to the Decision Maker	Considered by Scrutiny or other Committee
Annual Corporate Complaints	Cabinet	Key	Public	24 June 2025	<p>Councillor Andrew Woodman Tel: 07970 520357 andrew.woodman@nwleicester.gov.uk</p> <p>Customer Services Team Manager nichola.oliver@nwleicester.gov.uk</p>	Annual Corporate Complaints	Corporate Scrutiny Committee, 19 June 2025.

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