

MINUTES of a meeting of the COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN on THURSDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2025

Present: Councillor T Eynon (Chair)

Councillors A Barker, M Ball, C Beck (Substitute for Councillor S Lambeth), D Bigby, E Parle and L Windram

In Attendance: Councillors J Legrys and P Moulton

Portfolio Holders: Councillor M Wyatt.

Officers: Mr J Arnold, Mr Z Fazil, Ms K Hiller, Mr J Knight, Mr P Sanders, Mrs E Trahearn and Mrs R Wallace

17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M French, K Horn, S Lambeth and P Lees.

18. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

19. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

None.

20. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2025.

It was moved by Councillor A Barker, seconded by Councillor L Windram and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2025 be approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

21. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS UPDATE

The Chair introduced the new standing item and explained the process for future meetings.

In relation to an action on storage location solutions for Coalville Market, it was questioned if the proposed location was suitable as the distance was of little difference to where storage is currently located. The Strategic Director of Place explained that a review of the use of the Market would be brought to the committee next civic year, and this would be the opportunity to look at the matter in more detail.

In relation to an action on issues with electric scooters around Hermitage Lake, the Leisure Services Team Manager explained that the matter was discussed at bimonthly meetings involving police and Community Safety Team. It was acknowledged that this was a work in progress.

Chair's initials

22. CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chair introduced the new standing item for the agenda and explained the process for future meetings.

Members welcomed the new item introduced in accordance with the Cabinet/Scrutiny Protocol.

23. COMMUNITY GRANTS ANNUAL REPORT

Councillor M Wyatt, Portfolio Holder, presented the report and thanked Emma Trahearn and Ben Dawson for the work undertaken. The Committee were shown supporting videos for several groups and organisations in receipt of a grant.

During discussion several questions of clarity were asked by Members and responses provided by officers.

Members emphasised the significant positive impact of community grants, especially for vulnerable groups, and expressed disappointment at recent budget cuts. They argued that the savings were minor compared to the benefits delivered from these groups.

Members noted the fluctuating numbers of residents receiving support by Age UK and it was acknowledged that this was a result of changing client circumstances. It was suggested that more detail be included in future reports. Following discussions on the crucial role the organisation played for isolated older people, it was recommended that Cabinet reinstate the grant provided to Age UK to its previous level of £22,000. All Members agreed.

In relation to the Citizens Advice Bureau, Members raised concerns about the high demand and limited capacity at drop-in sessions, noting that some residents were turned away as the service was oversubscribed. Members asked for more information to be included in future reports in relation to service usage, waiting times, ward level reach and a breakdown of how the grant was spent for future reports. It was requested that this type of information be brought to committee earlier in the year in future to allow budget planning. Following further discussions, it was suggested that officers and Cabinet consult with the grant recipients, especially Citizens Advice Bureau and Age UK, about funding needs and impact before making budget decisions.

Members praised the success of the Community Lottery in raising funds for local groups, but some concerns were expressed about its sustainability after the Council's transition following Local Government Reorganisation. During discussion on the cost of running the Community Lottery it was acknowledged that there was no dedicated staff costs due to the work being absorbed within existing roles. Members requested that more clarity be included in future reports estimating officer time spent on the project to ensure a true picture of the net benefit.

RECOMMENDED THAT CABINET:

Reinstates the £22,000 grant funding to Age Uk as part of the 2026/27 budget proposals.

24. LEISURE CENTRES ANNUAL REVIEW

Councillor M Wyatt, Portfolio Holder, presented the report to Members.

The Committee were played a supporting video and short presentation from the Everyone Active Contract Manager.

Chair's initials

During discussion several questions of clarity were asked by Members and responses provided by officers.

Comments were made on the 'green agenda' moving forward and Members were provided an update on future plans; it was noted that the Whitwick and Coalville Leisure Centre was a standout centre across all other Everyone Active contracts in this area. Members hoped to see more about the reduction of gas usage and installation of solar panels in future reports.

A discussion was had on the recent investigations into mine water heating and Members were in support of progressing it. Reference was made to the recommendation on the matter made by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee at its last meeting, Members supported the approach and therefore made the same recommendation as follows:

'Recommended that Cabinet allocate the £80,000 as required to fund stage three of the mine water heating feasibility study as part of the Council's 2026/27 budget.'

In relation to usage figures, it was acknowledged that there had been an impact following the opening of alternative nearby facilities, however, now that there was more data available to provide a better picture, plans were in place with the aim to increase numbers. Members accepted reassurance that contract finances remained stable and that reduced membership numbers posed no threat to service viability.

It was commented that there were no comparable figures for deprived areas against other areas, it was suggested that this be included in the future. Officers noted that it was a challenge to reach deprived areas, but they would continue to drive up the increase where possible, although it may be minimal.

Positive comments were made about the NHS use of the leisure centres, including cardiac rehabilitation sessions, exercise referrals and blood donation clinics. It was noted that it was an area of focus and the signs were already encouraging.

Members commented on rural accessibility challenges due to the poor travel links. Officers acknowledged the challenges which were complex but by working with stakeholders and partners, they were trying to work on ways to improve the infrastructure.

Members mentioned the leisure provision available across the district and asked if in future the report could be wider to get a fuller picture. Following discussion, it was acknowledged that as this provision was not supplied by the Council then it would be difficult to provide this type of information.

RECOMMENDED THAT CABINET:

Allocate the £80,000 as required to fund stage three of the mine water heating feasibility study as part of the Council's 2026/27 budget.

25. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the future work programme, and it was noted by Members.

Members discussed an ongoing issue with Section 106 agreements in particular; ensuring parish councils were the default managers of new open spaces, reducing cases where developers revert responsibility to private management companies, improving interpretation and consistency of Section 106 drafting to avoid ambiguity, and concerns that agreements were sometimes not completed for years after estate completion.

Chair's initials

Officers advised that policy aspects should be directed to the Local Plan Committee and compliance issues should be considered by Audit and Governance Committee. Officers also suggested that these matters be considered by the Planning Cross Party Working Group in the first instance.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.12 pm