

MINUTES of a meeting of the CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Abbey Room, Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN on THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2025

Present: Councillor S Lambeth (Chair)

Councillors C Beck, D Bigby, M Burke, K Horn, A Morley, R L Morris, S Sheahan and J Windram

Portfolio Holders: Councillor A Woodman

Officers: Mr A Barton, Mr C Elston, Ms K Hiller, Ms H Panter, Mr P Sanders, Mr P Stone and Mrs R Wallace

12. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Ball.

13. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

14. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

None.

15. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2025.

It was moved by Councillor S Sheahan, seconded by Councillor M Burke and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2025 be approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

16. PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT - 2025/26 QUARTER 1

Councillor A Woodman, the Housing, Property and Customer Services Portfolio Holder presented the report.

Prior to general discussion relating to the report, it was noted that there were still concerns relating to the reporting process of the council's performance and that some Members felt that the Corporate Scrutiny Committee should have the opportunity to review it prior to Cabinet. However, the improvements made to the report following the Committee's previous suggestions were acknowledged. The Strategic Director commented that this was not the agreed process which was set up under the new Council Delivery Plan, and that Cabinet received the report first as they are the body who can enact action on the report and therefore receive it first.

There was also some disappointment shared in the way recommendations from both scrutiny committees were reported to Cabinet and dealt with by Cabinet Members at the meetings. It was felt that they were not considered or acknowledged. The recently adopted Cabinet/Scrutiny Protocol was referenced, and Members were hopeful that improvements would be seen in the future. Councillor A Woodman acknowledged the comments and would report back to Cabinet on the matter.

Chair's initials

Comments were made on key performance indicators as they were discussed in turn.

Key Performance Indicator 2 (dealing with planning applications): The Committee welcomed improved processing times, however asked for assurances that quality was not being lost over quantity. The Head of Planning and Infrastructure assured Members that quality of decisions being made on planning applications was still a priority and asked that any concerns on specific applications be raised with him directly.

Key Performance Indicator 5 (delivering the Coalville Regeneration Framework): The Portfolio Holder was asked if the ambitions for the Regeneration Framework would be achievable and how the Cabinet Members felt about it. As the matter did not fall within his portfolio area, Councillor A Woodman agreed to provide feedback outside of the meeting.

Key Performance Indicator 7 and 8 (provision of service and repairs to housing tenants): Members noted the declining satisfaction of housing tenants and asked several questions of clarity which were responded to by officers. Following comments received on the measurable statistics used within the report which were based on the annual targets agreed within the Council Delivery Plan, it was agreed to provide clearer explanations in future reports to assist the Committee in reviewing the data.

Regarding the provision of new homes project, a Member questioned the length and cost to date and asked for a detailed report on the matter. The Strategic Director of Communities explained the procurement process which was contributing to the delay and agreed to provide some further details outside of the meeting.

Key Performance Indicator 9 (private rental tenants able to live safely in their homes): In response to a question relating to the Private Sector Housing Charter, the Head of Community Services confirmed positive feedback from landlords, and it was expected to be launched within the financial year.

Key Performance Indicator 12 (review of waste service): The stagnation in recycling rates was acknowledged by Members. The Head of Community Services outlined the strategy in place to tackle the issue including the food waste collections and twin bin systems already agreed by Cabinet and Council.

Key Performance Indicator 13 (aim to be a carbon neutral Council): It was noted that previous recommendations in relation to this indicator were not considered by Cabinet at its last meeting. Following a discussion on the report due for committee on the matter, it was confirmed that it would be placed on the work programme for the December 2025 meeting.

Key Performance Indicator 16 (customers at the heart of everything we do): Members queried the resolution targets for complaints as it was a recurring issue, the Strategic Director of Communities and Portfolio Holder highlighted the plans that were in place including staff training and process reviews.

Key Performance Indicator 17 (provision of value for money services): Members discussed issues as previously identified in relation to finance systems and the Strategic Director of Resources provided an explanation as to the current status. The delays to the 2024/25 statement of accounts were discussed and the recent completion of the 2023/24 accounts were acknowledged. Following concerns raised in relation to the scrutiny of the matter, it was confirmed that the Audit and Governance Committee were fully aware of the current situation and were regularly updated.

Key Performance Indicator 18 (live within our means): In relation to future financial planning and the possibility of potential budget cuts. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that Cabinet Members received regular updates, and the situation was being monitored. The Strategic Director of Resources acknowledged that the next few years would be difficult financially but assured Members that 2026/27 budget planning had commenced with service areas and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy Report, to be considered in the Autumn, would kick start discussions with Members.

Regarding the Transformation Project spending, at the Chair's request, it was agreed for the Strategic Director of Resources to meet with him outside of the committee to discuss the matter further. Feedback would be provided to the committee at a future meeting.

The Chair thanked the Committee for their comments.

17. FINANCE UPDATE - 2025/26 QUARTER 1

Councillor A Woodman, the Housing, Property and Customer Services Portfolio Holder presented the report.

During discussions several questions of clarity were asked in relation to underspends, contingency budget allocations, vacancy control targets and virements. Responses were provided by the Strategic Director of Resources.

Some concerns were raised in relation to the use of virements and it was questioned if they were being used to mask issues rather than address them. The Strategic Director of Resources explained that it was a common financial practice and that details of all virements were reported to Cabinet monthly, a report that all Members could view for further information. It was agreed that the relevant information from the Cabinet updates be included in the quarterly reports for the committee moving forward.

A comment was made in relation to the current performance against the budget and the fact that, if it was not for the substantial grant received from government, the situation would be much worse.

In relation to the savings programme, it was noted that the planned savings from the removal of a Community Focus Team post was no longer included as the post was retained. It was agreed that more detail regarding the decision to retain the post be provided to Members outside of the meeting.

In relation to the Capital Programme, the reliance on reserves was noted and compliance was questioned. Concerns were also raised regarding the projects due to be delivered and the effect the impending local government reorganisation would have on them. The Strategic Director of Resources assured Members that all was as it should be regarding compliance and confirmed that there was some uncertainty surrounding the use of reserves. This would form part of the budget discussions moving forward. Following on from this discussion, it was agreed that the Strategic Director of Resources would draft a layman's guide on the use of reserves and internal borrowing for Members, and further explanation on the matter would be provided as part of the budget workshops for Councillors.

A discussion was had on future financial reports for the Committee, and it was confirmed that a report regarding plans for the old council office building was scheduled for the December committee meeting and a report regarding the proposals to become a debt free council would be scheduled in due course.

The Chair raised several concerns including the early overspend of budgets, use of virements, rising arrears, overspending on arrears and the transformation budget. He concluded that it was an issue that budgets could not be controlled so early in the financial year and was a concern for the year end. He suggested that separate discussions be had with the Strategic Director of Resources outside of the meeting with updates provided as part of the next financial quarterly update.

The Chair thanked the Committee for their comments.

18. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the future work programme.

The change of date was noted for the meeting scheduled to consider a report on Local Government Reorganisation to fall in line with the regional timetable.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chair closed the meeting at 8.16 pm