

MINUTES of a meeting of the CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Abbey Room, Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN on THURSDAY, 19 MARCH 2026

Present: Councillor S Lambeth (Chair)

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

In Attendance: Councillors

Portfolio Holders: Councillors K Merrie MBE, A C Woodman and M B Wyatt

Officers: Mr A Barton, Mr Z Fazil, Ms H Panter, Mr P Stone, Mrs R Wallace and Mrs A Crouch

44. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor K Horn.

45. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor S Sheahan declared an other interest in item 9 – Legacy Fund Grant, as a long-term supporter of the Ashby Canal Trust. It was noted that this was a non-pecuniary interest and Councillor Sheahan remained in the meeting for the item.

46. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no public questions.

47. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2026.

It was moved by Councillor M Ball, seconded by Councillor A Morley and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2026 be approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

48. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS UPDATE

Members queried whether the information requested regarding capital receipts and local plan examination costs had been circulated as stated. Officers agreed to investigate and re-circulate the information to the Committee.

The update was noted.

49. CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

Members made the following comments relating to Cabinet's response to scrutiny recommendations:

Marlborough centre costs: a Member queried the phrasing that 'costs had not doubled', explaining that when procurement and planning costs were included, increases were significant. The Portfolio Holder explained that no comments were intended to dismiss scrutiny concerns and agreed to review figures and to respond outside of the meeting.

Chair's initials

Two-hour free parking: concerns were raised about the delays in the implementation in Ashby and felt more publicity was required as residents had already started parking assuming it was free. The Portfolio Holder agreed to clarify the timeline and provide further information outside of the meeting.

Staffing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Members debated whether staffing pressures justified a formal KPI. Officers explained the distinction between KPIs formally reported in the Council Delivery Plan and other internally monitored measures. Councillors stressed the importance of monitoring recruitment and retention pressures and were assured that they were monitored regularly.

Annual targets for zero carbon: Members pressed for clarity on zero-carbon targets, noting that earlier assurances to consider annual targets remained outstanding.

50. COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN - PERFORMANCE REPORT - 2025/26 QUARTER 3

Councillor K Merrie, Portfolio Holder, presented the report.

Comments were made on Key Performance Indicators as they were discussed in turn.

Landlord Charter - Members welcomed the launch of the charter but asked how many landlords had signed up and what percentage that was of all private landlords. Officers confirmed that the council did not hold a full register of private landlords which limited the ability to calculate meaningful percentages. Officers would explore the data held and report back with further information where possible.

Housing resident customer satisfaction - Concern was raised that the resident satisfaction figure was shown as 'amber' rather than 'red'. Members questioned whether this adequately reflected performance. Officers explained that the annual figure differed from monthly monitoring data which showed significantly higher satisfaction levels. The colour status reflected the most up to date monitoring assessed using the same methodology as the national indicator.

Complaints and customer services performance - Members noted that customer services indicators often appeared 'red' and asked if complaints data could be broken down further to better identify where problems originated. Officers confirmed that the complaints data could be broken down further if required but assured that more detailed analysis was undertaken internally. It was noted that a fuller breakdown would be presented to the committee in the annual report due later in the year.

51. HOUSING ACTION PLANS POST INSPECTION

Councillor A Woodman, Portfolio Holder, presented the report.

Members welcomed the report but noted that it contained a significant amount of jargon which could make it difficult for tenants and wider public to understand. Officers acknowledged the concerns, which were also raised at the Housing Improvement Board, and confirmed that a jargon-free, easy-to-read version of the document would be produced, aimed at tenants and the public once adopted.

Members also welcomed the new digital reporting system for repairs; however some concerns were raised as not all tenants were digitally confident and they felt strongly that this should not become the only route for reporting repairs. It was also suggested that the system be carefully tested before full implementation. Officers confirmed that there would be user acceptance training before the roll out and existing non-digital reporting routes would remain available.

Chair's initials

An inconsistency in timescales for completing stock condition surveys was highlighted and acknowledged as an error, with officers agreeing it would be corrected. Members also questioned whether the timescales were realistic and appropriate, particularly with the final proportion of properties. Officers acknowledged that the final proportion of properties could take longer to access and assess, particularly where access was difficult, however the new access policy would assist with that.

Members spoke in support of the tenant groups, however questioned if they were sufficiently representative for the wider tenant population. The challenge of achieving wider representation was acknowledged but broader engagement was encouraged, including outreach beyond meetings. Officers confirmed that a range of engagement methods were being developed and the approach would evolve over time. It was indicated that a clearer overview of engagement methods would be shared when reporting back on progress.

Members welcomed opportunities for greater involvement between Councillors and Housing Officers, such as estate walks and informal engagement. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged the benefit of informal engagement and supported the approach where appropriate.

52. LEGACY FUND GRANT

Councillor K Merrie, Portfolio Holder, presented the report.

Members welcomed the scheme and recognised the positive opportunity for communities across the district. The significant amount of work by officers in developing the framework was also acknowledged and the transparency of scoring was welcomed. Officers confirmed the scheme was designed to be robust, fair and aligned to strategic priorities.

Some concerns were raised that limiting the grant to £250,000 would be problematic to the delivery of larger scale projects such as the Ashby Canal restoration. It was felt that there was a risk that funding would not achieve meaningful outcomes. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the cap was to ensure the fund was distributed fairly across the district rather than being exhausted by a few large schemes. It was also confirmed that there was the ability to review or enhance funding levels in the future should the opportunity arise.

Members sought clarity on 'enhanced due diligence' and 'member oversight' as referenced within the scheme. Some initial concern was raised around the approval of grants by Cabinet. Comments were also raised about reputational risk if funding decisions were perceived as unfair or politically influenced. Officers clarified the process which would be undertaken by officers and signed off by Cabinet, for those grants over a certain threshold, in accordance with the award of grants within the Council's Constitution. It was confirmed that it would be the Members role to set the framework, not determine individual awards. It was acknowledged that any conflicts of interest would be managed through the Code of Conduct.

Members sought clarity on the process regarding cross-party oversight. They also felt that the scoring of applications should be published so that unsuccessful applicants could understand outcomes. Officers confirmed that the reference to cross-party oversight would be provided via the scrutiny process. The commitment to transparency was supported by officers and the Portfolio Holder but further checks on data protection considerations would be required before publishing full scoring information.

Concerns were raised that the grant scoring criteria could unintentionally favour larger established organisations and disadvantage smaller community groups. Members stressed the importance of ensuring equitable access across communities.

Members felt strongly that support should be available for inexperienced or new groups during the application process. Officers confirmed that support would be provided and groups would be given sufficient preparation time as part of the process. Officers would ensure clear communication and guidance to accompany the launch of the scheme.

Members questioned if the allocated funds for administering the scheme were sufficient and if the new community focus officer role would be absorbed entirely by administering the scheme. They felt this role should be undertaking community focus work which was the intention of the new post within the budget. Officers confirmed the administrative arrangements were still being developed and the capacity would be reviewed once the demand was understood. The Portfolio Holder gave assurances that adequate resources would be provided.

Clarification was sought on application timelines and communication with parishes. Officers confirmed that the details were still being developed. It was also confirmed that officers would engage with parish clerks and issue clear guidance once the scheme was finalised.

53. BIODIVERSITY DUTY REPORT

Councillor M Wyatt, Portfolio Holder, presented the report.

Members welcomed the commitment that Biodiversity Net Gain should be delivered locally rather than offset through distant sites. Concerns were raised about the national approach to 'offsetting' and Members were keen to avoid this. Officers explained mitigation process and confirmed the scheme was designed to incentivise local delivery. It was noted that developers were generally keen to provide biodiversity gains on or as near to their sites as possible.

Reference was made to the UK's international commitment to protect 30% of land and sea by 2030 ('30 by 30') and it was suggested that this could be used as a guiding principle locally.

Members queried the length of the next reporting period as the legislation allowed a future report to be published at any point in the next five years. Concerns were raised that a long gap could reduce transparency, especially considering the upcoming Local Government Reorganisation. Officers confirmed that timelines for future reporting had not yet been agreed. It was noted that progress could be communicated through the quarterly performance updates.

Members questioned how success would be measured, and it was suggested that Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) be introduced. Officers confirmed that Biodiversity Net Gain was currently measured and reported through a KPI in the planning service, and this would continue. Wider actions were not captured in a KPI but it was something that could be considered.

54. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

A Member queried the timing and format of the Net Zero reporting. Officers proposed an alternative method of reporting via an enhancement to the information already provided in the quarterly performance report rather than an annual report. This would mean more

accurate information on a regular basis. Members decided to discuss the matter outside of the meeting and respond back to officers on the preferred way forward.

The future work programme was noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.03 pm