

MINUTES of a meeting of the COUNCIL held in the Forest Room, Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN on TUESDAY, 17 JUNE 2025

Present: Councillor P Lees (Chair)

Councillors J G Simmons, M Ball, A Barker, C Beck, D Bigby, M Blair-Park, R Blunt, R Boam, M Burke, R Canny, D Cooper, D Everitt, T Eynon, M French, J Geary, T Gillard, K Horn, R Johnson, S Lambeth, J Legrys, K Merrie MBE, A Morley, R L Morris, P Moulton, G Rogers, N J Rushton, R Sutton, A C Saffell, C A Sewell, S Sheahan, N Smith, A Wilson, J Windram, L Windram, A C Woodman and M B Wyatt

Officers: Mr J Arnold, Mr A Barton, Mrs C Hammond, Ms K Hiller, Mr P Stone, Mrs A Thomas and Mrs R Wallace

22. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor E Parle.

23. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no interests declared.

24. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair announced his attendance at several civic events including the Moira Canal Festival, the Lord Mayor's Civic Reception at Leicester Cathedral, and the VE Day celebration at De Montfort Hall. The Chair had also met with the Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire.

25. LEADER'S AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor R Blunt, the Leader of the Council, made the following announcements:

A proposal for the Council to become debt free on its General Fund was announced and it was intended for full details to be available in September. Following a question from a Member it was confirmed that if the decision was made to go down the debt free route, the matter would be formally scrutinised by the relevant Scrutiny Committee in due course.

An update was provided on the current position of the Local Government Reorganisation submission and the ongoing public consultation.

Councillor M Wyatt, the Community and Climate Change Portfolio Holder made the following announcements:

An update was provided on the Charnwood Forest Regional Park's current progress on becoming a UNESCO Global Geopark. Should the designation be successful, funding was being sought by all local authority partners and following an assessment by the Strategic Director of Resources, it was announced that a recommendation to support would be considered by Cabinet on 24 June 2025.

The success of this year's Download Festival held in Castle Donington was celebrated and thanks were given to the event organisers and staff on their hard work, commitment and dedication to run the event. Several Members spoke in support of the well managed event, and it was proposed that a letter of thanks be written to the event organisers to congratulate them on a very well-run event.

As the year anniversary for NWL Community Lottery approached, an update was provided on the funds raised to date and the projects it was being used for.

Members were referred to the additional papers within which detailed the performance of the Love Your Neighbourhood Scheme. Thanks were given to the staff, residents, community groups, parish and town councils, and all Members in making the scheme a success. Some Members welcomed the information, however, were disappointed that there was not a formal report to a scrutiny committee as originally planned so that a full debate could be had on the topic.

Councillor K Merrie, the Finance and Corporate Portfolio Holder announced that budget discussions for 2026/27, including Local Government Reorganisation, were underway and he would like to work collaboratively with the opposition group as soon as possible towards the best options for the district. Members of the opposition group spoke in support.

26. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no questions received.

27. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

There were three questions asked which are set out below together with the responses. Each Member who asked a question was invited by the Chair to ask a supplementary question which is also set out together with the response.

Question from Councillor T Eynon

“In the light the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 and the Leasehold and Commonhold Reform Bill, what progress has the Local Plan Committee made towards dealing with the unfairness of Freehold Estate Charges and preparing an Open Space Policy which presumes developers will transfer all public open green spaces to the relevant Parish or District Council?”

Response from Councillor N Rushton

“There is no reason that would currently preclude Parish and Town Councils from accepting the transfer of public open space on new developments subject to receipt of an appropriate commuted sum for maintenance, secured by S106 Agreement.

The new Local Plan will have a policy on public open space (Policy IF4 – Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities). Wording could be added to the policy to state that the preference in the first instance is for Parish and Town Councils to accept the transfer of public open space with the payment of a commuted sum for maintenance secured through S106 Agreement. If a Parish or Town Council did not want to accept transfer of the public open space, it would fall to be maintained by a management company.

This is a matter that will be considered by the Local Plan Committee in due course.”

Supplementary question and response

Councillor T Eynon asked, that as officers had been assisting residents to take responsibility for their own land management, how the Council was intending to support residents from other areas in the district to do the same. Councillor N Rushton responded that all leaseholders had a right to take over land management, but it was not the responsibility of the Council to encourage residents to do so. He explained it was an

arduous process but suggested that the best way to approach the matter was for residents to work together to address it.

Question from Councillor D Bigby

"In 2019 the council declared a Climate Emergency and subsequently agreed a Zero Carbon Roadmap and Action Plan. The Council Delivery Plan 2023-2028 identifies one of its four priorities as "clean, green and Zero Carbon.....looking after the environment we live in". A key aim is "We will aim to be carbon neutral as a council by 2030 and a district by 2050". The council's Annual Zero Carbon Roadmap Update is an important document which provides evidence of this council's record in implementing its Zero Carbon Action Plan. For the three years to August 2024 this report has been presented annually to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee to allow thorough examination of progress, or lack of progress, against the Council's net zero goals. Until recently, a Year 5 report on progress was timetabled to go to Corporate Scrutiny this summer.

Could the portfolio holder please explain why and by whom the decision has been made to withdraw this report from the scrutiny process?"

Response from Councillor M Wyatt

"The report has not been withdrawn. As part of the Scrutiny Working Group meeting on the 18 June, all annual reports including the one on Net Zero, are a topic of discussion. This will ensure that annual reports being made to either committee align with the Scrutiny Principles. Once this is completed, the reports agreed will then be programmed through the agenda of the scrutiny meetings to ensure members are updated in line with the agreed protocols. As a Council Delivery Plan target quarterly reporting on the progress on Net Zero, is also taking place.

The report was removed from the agenda due to a combination of officer availability and work that was being undertaken in the background to inform such a report not being available for that date. Equally the agenda for the Corporate Scrutiny Committee meeting in September (there is no meeting of that Committee in August) has a number of other sizable agenda items."

Supplementary question and response

Councillor D Bigby asked how the Cabinet was going to support the resource of scrutiny to allow reports to be provided to Committee on time as planned. Councillor M Wyatt agreed to provide a response outside of the meeting.

Question from Councillor J Legrys

"What progress has this authority made towards updating the 2017 Playing Pitch Strategy and using the emerging data to identify a site in Ashby de la Zouch for a 4G sports pitch and support its funding through s106 contributions?"

Response from Councillor M Wyatt

"The Council commissioned consultants KKP to undertake a review of its sports and community facilities and assess future need. The final report is due to be published in October. The report will provide an evidence base to support the new Local Plan and unlock contributions from developers in the future as well as funding from other external sources. Several early engagement sessions have been undertaken across the district, including in Ashby, to explore early findings to inform the final plan but no final decisions have as yet been made."

Supplementary question and response

Councillor J Legrys asked why the Council was delaying the important sporting improvements to Ashby when there were funds available. Councillor M Wyatt noted the comments and agreed to provide a response outside of the meeting.

28. MOTIONS

No motions were received.

29. PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

30. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2025.

It was moved by Councillor P Lees, seconded by Councillor J Simmons and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2025 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

31. AWAAB'S LAW – OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Councillor A Woodman, Housing, Property and Customer Services Portfolio Holder, presented the report and moved the recommendations. It was seconded by Councillor N Rushton.

Members welcomed the report, and assurances were sought regarding staffing, IT systems and cultural change required in addressing damp and mould in council owned properties. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged the matters raised and it was noted that they would be discussed further with the Housing Improvement Board.

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The funding of £0.5million from the Housing Revenue Account 2024/25 be approved as a supplementary estimate to meet the costs over five years.
- b) An earmarked reserve of £0.5million be created.

32. SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, VIREMENTS AND CAPITAL APPROVALS

Councillor K Merrie, Finance and Corporate Portfolio Holder, presented the report to Members and moved the recommendations. It was seconded by Councillor N Rushton.

A request was made to move into confidential session so that a discussion could be had on the contents of the confidential appendix to the report. It was therefore moved by Councillor P Lees, seconded by Councillor J Simmons and

RESOLVED THAT:

In pursuance of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded during the consideration of appendix C to the report on the grounds that the business to be transacted involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined

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in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

A discussion then ensued on the confidential appendix to the report, where several questions of clarity were responded to by officers and the Leader of the Council. At the conclusion of the discussion, the confidential session was ended, and the meeting was reopened to the press and public.

In relation to the funds available both in the active programme and the development pool, a Member asked for assurances that it was still the intention to use it for a new supply of council homes in the current financial year as allocated. Concerns were raised that at three months into the financial year; there was yet to be any movement on the plans. It was acknowledged that as it was a technical housing question, a response would be provided outside of the meeting by the Housing, Property and Customer Services Portfolio Holder.

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The supplementary estimates as detailed in paragraph 2.2 and appendix C, which are above £250,000 and are externally funded be approved.
- b) The revised capital programmes as detailed in appendices A and B be approved.

33. AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

Councillor K Merrie, Finance and Corporate Portfolio Holder, presented the report to Members.

Councillor P Moulton was invited to speak on the report as the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee during 2025/25.

During discussion it was suggested that more detail be included in future so that it was clear which audits had taken place in the preceding 12-month period, the progress made and which departments they were focused on, this would provide a better picture of what had been achieved.

The report was noted.

34. ANNUAL MEMBER CONDUCT REPORT

Councillor N Rushton, Infrastructure Portfolio Holder, presented the report to Members.

Councillor P Moulton was invited to speak on the report as the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee during 2025/25.

Members commended the work undertaken by the Monitoring Officer with investigating recent conduct complaints due to the difficulties of subject matter.

During discussions, a Member highlighted the number of complaints received that did not meet the initial tests and inquired as to whether there was a process to identify if the complaints were vexatious, particularly if a complainant submitted numerous complaints. As the Governance Working Group was soon to be convened to review the complaints procedure, this comment was noted and would be included as part of the review.

Following further discussions, it was suggested that general committee quorums as detailed in the terms of references be reconsidered as part of the review of the

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Constitution. For most committees it was a minimum of three members to be in attendance to hold a meeting, which some members felt was very low.

The report was noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.42 pm