

MINUTES of a meeting of the CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN on MONDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2025

Present: Councillor M Ball (In the Chair)

Councillors M Ball, C Beck, D Bigby, M Burke, A Morley, R L Morris, S Sheahan, J G Simmons (Substitute for Councillor K Horn), J Windram and J Legrys (Substitute for Councillor S Lambeth)

In Attendance: Councillors

Portfolio Holders: Councillors R Blunt

Officers: Mrs A Thomas, Mr A Barton, Ms H Panter, Mr P Stone, Ms K Hiller and Mrs C Hammond

19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors K Horn and S Lambeth.

20. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no interests declared.

21. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no public questions received.

22. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2025.

It was moved by Councillor R Morris, seconded by Councillor S Sheahan and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2025 be approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

23. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

Councillor R Blunt, the Leader of the Council, presented the report, outlining the context, process, and rationale for the North City South proposal.

The Chief Executive provided the committee with a presentation of the proposal, including the structure of three new councils, alignment with devolution, neighbourhood partnerships and public engagement results.

Mr A Wood, from the Finance Team, Rutland County Council, was asked to present to the committee on the financial modelling, savings estimates, transition costs, council tax harmonisation, and sustainability model.

Chair's initials

A member asked how the proposed ward sizes and neighbourhoods of 50,000 would maintain a sense of community, and how areas would be divided, especially near authority boundaries.

A member questioned how chief executive salaries would be set to avoid competition between the new councils for staff, and how to attract the right candidates. They also asked how terms and conditions would be aligned across the councils.

The Head of HR and Organisational Development advised that all staff except the Chief Executive would transfer on existing terms and conditions, and future structures would be designed to avoid competition between councils, with mirrored job descriptions and terms for senior roles.

A member raised concerns about ensuring member allowances are appropriate to attract quality candidates and reflect increased responsibilities.

The Chief Executive clarified that member allowances would be determined by the new councils, with savings anticipated from reducing the number of councillors. It was also noted that increased responsibilities and spend for members would be considered in the new member allowance schemes.

A member commented on the challenge for parish councils that might be split between two neighbourhood areas, and the impact on their influence.

The Chief Executive acknowledged the challenge with the intent to avoid splitting villages and to ensure neighbourhood areas were meaningful and manageable for both members and parish councils.

A member asked if the financial modelling for the North City South proposal could be directly compared to the County Council's proposal, and whether the same input data and assumptions were used. He also questioned the predicted growth rates and their comparability.

Mr A Wood confirmed that while the same baseline data was used, the North City South team would not model the county's proposal due to time constraints and differing assumptions; each proposal's assumptions would be transparent for comparison. He also indicated that growth rates and other metrics were based on agreed methodologies, but direct comparison with other models may be limited by different assumptions and calculation methods.

A member commented that not including a physical hub in each neighbourhood partnership would devalue the model and asked for cost estimates to include them.

The Chief Executive advised that the model assumed one main customer service hub per main town, not one per neighbourhood partnership, but local staff would work in neighbourhoods using existing assets and drop-in points

A member asked about the rationale for expecting savings from intensive one-to-one preventative work with children and families, given its expense.

Mr A Wood explained that national evidence showed investment in prevention reduced long-term costs by reducing the number of children entering care, but acknowledged it required targeted, data-driven intervention.

A member asked if the financial model had been stress-tested for higher inflation rates, especially regarding wage costs, and whether the £44 million savings would be recurring or affect central government funding.

Mr A Wood confirmed that the model included inflation assumptions (mainly 2%) and had been stress tested for higher rates, with sensitivity analysis showing significant impact if inflation was higher. He also advised that the £44 million savings were recurring and intended to close budget gaps and invest in prevention, with the expectation that government would not reduce funding as a result.

A member asked how the proposal would ensure frontline services are protected and avoid levelling down, referencing previous county proposals that achieved savings by reducing service levels.

Mr A Wood clarified that the model did not assume levelling down of services; policy decisions on service levels will be made by the new councils, not by officers at the proposal stage.

A member asked if the team had learned from other local authorities' experiences with harmonisation during local government reorganisation, specifically referencing Northamptonshire.

Mr A Wood advised that officers had reviewed other reorganisations noting most chose to harmonise council tax in the first year for equity, but details would be for the new councils to decide. **(POST MEETING NOTE – Following the meeting it was confirmed by officers that most chose two to three years to harmonise council tax.**

A member commented on concerns about levelling up parking charges and green bin fees across the area, noting the impact on local communities.

Mr A Wood explained that that harmonisation of fees was an assumption for modelling purposes only; actual decisions would be made by the new councils.

A member asked about the benefits of devolution for the area and the extent of collaboration with Lincolnshire councils.

The Chief Executive noted that the proposal aligned local government reorganisation with devolution to accelerate benefits, and there was no formal collaboration with Lincolnshire; Rutland's involvement with Lincolnshire is a separate issue.

Members were advised that that all questions and comments would be collated and presented to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on the 28 October 2025.

The Deputy Chair thanked the Committee for their comments.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.15 pm