

North West Leicestershire District Council

**Scrutiny Annual Report
2025/26**

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Foreword

By the 2025/26 Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees

This report provides a summary of work done by scrutiny at North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC) during 2025/26 and provides an opportunity to reflect on this work. It also provides a general overview of how scrutiny operates, the impact it has and how the public can get involved.

NWLDC operates two scrutiny committees. One looks inwards to examine the Council's *corporate* objectives including its Budget and its performance compared to its Delivery Plan. As this Council prepares for Local Government reorganisation, and we all adjust to the impact of climate change, members have been scrutinising the current customer experience and considering the legacy this Council will leave residents in the future.

Another committee focuses on issues that impact on the wellbeing of the *community*. Members have continued to monitor the Leisure Centre and worked to ensure the needs of the least able are not overlooked. We have been scrutinising this Council's plans to develop its own heritage and properties. Members have also initiated a deep dive into the management of sewage outflows in South East Coalville.

Both committees are politically balanced so that they can include as many viewpoints as possible and, this year, both have been chaired by members of the Opposition. As members of the Scrutiny Working Group, both chairs have been working with senior officers to improve the relationship between Scrutiny members, who act as critical friends, and members of the Cabinet who make decisions.

As Scrutiny Chairs we have continued to work to monitor this Council's progress in delivering on its promises to residents. Where we have had concerns, we have made recommendations to Cabinet so that performance can be improved in the future. This document is a record of our progress.



Cllr Terri Eynon
Chair of Community
Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Simon Lambeth
Chair of Corporate
Scrutiny Committee

What is scrutiny?

“The role that overview and scrutiny can play in holding an authority’s decision-makers to account makes it fundamentally important to the successful functioning of local democracy. Effective scrutiny helps secure the efficient delivery of public services and drives improvements within the authority itself. Conversely, poor scrutiny can be indicative of wider governance, leadership, and service failure.”

Overview and Scrutiny: Statutory Guidance for Council’s and Combines Authorities – by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) published 2019

Scrutiny is an important part of the council’s decision-making process and allows members who are not Cabinet members to look into areas of local concern and critically examine decisions taken by the Cabinet to benefit local people.

Scrutiny committees cannot make decisions but can make recommendations to Cabinet and other decision-making bodies of the council. Scrutiny can also look at services provided by other organisations and as such can invite them into committee meetings for discussions.

Principles of good scrutiny

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny established four key principles of scrutiny, these are:

1. Provides critical friend challenge to executive policy and decision makers
Constructive, robust and purposeful challenge. Non-aggressive to create optimum conditions for investigative evidence based process.
2. Enable the voice and concerns of the public
Meetings conducted in public and are webcast. Innovative, public communication, consultation and feedback.
3. Be carried out by independent minded councillors
Councillors actively engage in scrutiny function to drive improvement. Areas are reviewed in an a-political atmosphere.
4. Drive improvement in public services
Promotes community well-being and improves quality of life. Strategic review of corporate policies, plans performance and budgets.

Why scrutiny is important....

Scrutiny is a strategic function of the authority and is a central part of corporate governance. It is, therefore, an important element in decision-making. It also provides councillors that are not in decision-making roles an opportunity to be a ‘critical friend’ to the Cabinet and publicly hold them to account in relation to the decisions they are making.

The scrutiny role...

The main tasks of the committees are:

- **Performance Monitoring** – The Council has to meet corporate priorities set out in the Council Delivery Plan and report against those indicators. Scrutiny can examine any aspect of the Council’s performance, including services that it delivers through partnerships with other organisations.
- **Holding the Cabinet to Account** - Decisions made by the Cabinet but not yet put into practice can be reviewed by the Scrutiny Committees and challenged.
- **Policy review and development** - Scrutiny can propose new policies or review existing policies and recommend changes to the Cabinet.
- **External Scrutiny** - Any issue directly affecting the residents of North West Leicestershire can be scrutinised by the Committees, including services provided by another organisation.

It is through demonstrating the value and impact that effective scrutiny can have in supporting councils and other organisations to deliver better, more cost-effective services, that scrutiny is a valued element of local democracy.

What scrutiny looks like in North West Leicestershire

The scrutiny work is carried out by the two committees – the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and the Community Scrutiny Committee, with an informal Scrutiny Work Programming Group programming the work. Below is a list of areas of responsibility for each scrutiny committee. Each committee can receive reports and comment on matters of policy or items of business of a similar nature to those listed.

Corporate Scrutiny Committee

Asset management
Estates and property
Review of Constitution
Communications
Customer services
Finance
Human resources
Equalities
ICT
Legal services
Revenue and benefits
Shared services
Zero Carbon Road Map

Community Scrutiny Committee

Business / economy
Planning and building control
Tourism
Partnerships
Community safety
Leisure
Health and wellbeing
Waste Services
Stronger and safer communities
Environmental health
Licensing
Environmental protection
Statutory crime and disorder committee
Strategic housing – housing strategy
Housing management
Economic development
Regeneration

The scrutiny committees can set up special working parties called ‘task and finish groups’ when they need to undertake a detailed, in-depth investigation into a particular issue. The work is done by a small group of councillors appointed from the membership of the scrutiny committee. Work takes place for a set period and it is time limited. These focused task and finish groups make recommendations to the parent scrutiny committee before being considered by the Cabinet.

Further information can be found on the NWLDC website regarding the scrutiny committee structure and terms of reference at [Part 3, section D of the council’s Constitution](#).

Public involvement in scrutiny

As the scrutiny committees are actively working on matters that affect the residents of North West Leicestershire, involvement of the public is encouraged in the following ways:

- Accessing agendas / work programmes: All work either planned or already done by the scrutiny committees is publicly available on the NWLDC website (unless in relation to a confidential matter). All meeting dates and corresponding information can be found [on the NWLDC website](#).
- Attending meetings: Members of the public can attend any public meeting of the scrutiny committees. Details of meeting dates can be found [on the NWLDC website](#). If you are interested but are unable to attend in person, the meetings are also available to view online both live and after the event. Links to meetings can be found [on the NWLDC website](#).
- Asking a question: Each meeting of the scrutiny committees allows for public questions to be asked at the beginning of each agenda. Information on how to submit a question can be found [on the NWLDC website](#).
- Submitting a petition: Scrutiny committees can receive petitions relating to an area that the council has authority over. It can be submitted by anyone who lives, works or studies in North West Leicestershire and can be submitted in writing or as an e-petition on the NWLDC website. Further details can be found [on the NWLDC website](#).
- Identifying issues which a scrutiny committee might look at (via officers or committee members)
- Contributing to consultations and surveys

What has scrutiny been doing?

[Visual display of facts and figures below to be included in the final formatted document]

- Each scrutiny committee is made up of 10 members, six of which sit on both Corporate and Community Scrutiny Committees. In total, there are 14 members out of the 38 elected to represent the district that take part in scrutiny.
- **Reports received into scrutiny: 32**
 - For information and update: 4
 - Pre-Cabinet review: 14
 - Policy reviews: 2
 - Performance monitoring: 9
 - Scrutiny process: 3
 - Task and finish group recommendations: 0
- 11 committee meetings held, six Corporate Scrutiny Committee and five Community Scrutiny Committee
- 20 hours and 14 minutes of public debate
- 22 recommendations submitted to Cabinet
- 11 recommendations accepted by Cabinet

Scrutiny Work Programming Group

The Scrutiny Work Programming Group is an informal group, made up of councillors and officers, that has been in operation since early 2022 and was established to manage the growing workloads of both committees and to help shape the scrutiny function moving forward.

The group's key role is to:

- Consider requests for inclusion on the work programmes of each scrutiny committee
- Consider whether there are other ways of receiving information
- Consult with members of scrutiny committees, senior officers, Cabinet members for horizon-scanning on policy development
- Look at the corporate priorities, Council Delivery Plan and Cabinet forward plan and identify key issues / topics for investigation / inquiry
- Consider events and decisions in the council's calendar which could require an input / consultation via scrutiny
- Review any follow-up work required after previous scrutiny.

Due to the cross overs with scrutiny, the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee along with the lead officer attend each of the Scrutiny Work Programming Group meetings to discuss closely linked matters.

Membership:

Councillor T Eynon (Chair of Community Scrutiny Committee)

Councillor S Lambeth (Chair of Corporate Scrutiny Committee)

Councillor P Lees

Councillor L Windram

Work programming

The group reviews the work programmes for both scrutiny committees at each meeting, ensuring that workloads are appropriate and identifying future items from the Cabinet's Executive Decision Notice.

Work requests

The group considers any requests for items received from members and if it is felt that value would be added by scrutinising, they determine the best route to take, whether that be a task and finish group, report to committee or information paper. In 2025/26 the group considered 11 work requests which resulted in:

- Two reports (scheduled for 2026/27)
- Two requests were incorporated within already scheduled reports
- One information paper was provided
- One Task and Finish Group
- Information being provided outside of Committee
- Information being provided at Committee
- Two items being held for future consideration (due to Local Government Reorganisation and Local Plan submission)
- One out of scrutiny scope

Information papers

'Information papers' are for the Work programming Group to consider, rather than full reports to the committees, when this approach is deemed appropriate.

In 2025/26, the group received one information paper:

- Improving Customer Contact Project (Update)
Outcome: agreed that the Communications Team Manager would bring a further update to the Scrutiny Work Programming Group at the conclusion of the project and then a report to Scrutiny would follow.

Cabinet/Scrutiny Protocol

In considering the statutory guidance to promote a positive working relationship between Scrutiny and Cabinet, a protocol was produced to assist Members of the Scrutiny Committees and the Cabinet by defining the relationship between the executive and scrutiny functions and the role of Cabinet in the Scrutiny Process. The group assisted in shaping the protocol which was fully welcomed and supported by Cabinet. The protocol is currently being trialled prior to being taken forward to Council for approval to form part of the constitution, details can be found on the [NWLDC website](#).

Corporate Scrutiny Committee

Set out below are the key topics the Corporate Scrutiny Committee has scrutinised in 2025/26. All agendas and full details of the committee's work can be found on the [NWLDC website](#).

Council's budget-setting

The committee thoroughly examined the draft budgets for 2026/27 as part of the budget consultation process.

The committee:

- Submitted a full set of comments on the draft budget proposals to Cabinet
- Welcomed the introduction of the Legacy Fund
- Recommended that the cost of the Moira Furnace improvement project be reflected in the Capital Programme Development Pool.
- Recommended that the two-hour free parking in Coalville be postponed until the conclusion of the district car parking review.
- Recommended that the Legacy Fund be increased by £1million for 2026/27, and to ensure the award mechanism is fair and transparent.
- Recommended that funding for Ashby Canal be recognised in the Capital Programme Development Pool.

Performance monitoring

One of the roles of scrutiny is to examine and monitor the council's performance by using the priorities as set out in the Council Delivery Plan. The Council's overall performance and financial performance is reviewed on a quarterly basis and fed back to Cabinet as part of the reporting process.

The Committee:

- Submitted comments regularly to Cabinet on council and financial performance
- Received the Corporate Complaints Feedback Annual Report
- Received the Customer Services Annual Report

Local Government Reorganisation

The committee considered and commented on the draft local government reorganisation proposal for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, prior to consideration by Cabinet.

The committee:

- Questioned the ward sizes and community representation, particularly the impact on local identity in divided areas.
- Acknowledged the challenge for parish councils that could be split across neighbourhood areas.
- Challenged the growth rate calculations and financial modelling comparisons
- Questioned the proposed investment in assets such as neighbourhood hubs
- Questioned financial matters including, how the savings made by devolution would be fed into the general funding, inflation stress testing and levelling up parking and garden waste recycling charges
- Questioned how front-line services would be protected

Customer Experience Strategy 2026 - 28

The committee looked at the Council's draft Customer Experience Strategy, submitting comments to the Cabinet for consideration.

The committee:

- Welcomed the strategy and the shared responsibility for customer service across all teams
- Questioned the role of artificial intelligence and digital tools, specifically regarding telephony and its limitations
- Raised concerns around digital exclusion for those unable to access digital methods
- Suggested clear expectations for customers on waiting and call-back times
- Suggested celebrating internal successes to boost staff morale

Legacy Grant Fund

Following approval by Full Council to introduce a Legacy Grant Scheme, the committee looked at the draft proposals on the process for administering the scheme and submitted comments to the Cabinet for consideration.

The committee:

- Welcomed the scheme and recognised the positive opportunity for communities across the district
- Raised concerns about the maximum limit that applicants can claim for as it could be problematic for large scale projects.
- Questioned the approval process to ensure decisions were fair and not politically influenced, including the cross-party oversight.
- Raised concerns that the scoring criteria could favour larger established organisations and disadvantage small community groups.
- Emphasised the importance of supporting inexperienced community groups through the application process
- Questioned the staffing allocation to administer the scheme
- Sought clarification on application timelines and communication with parishes

Zero Carbon Update

The committee received the annual update on the Council's Zero Carbon progress.

The committee:

- Welcomed the significant progress but shared concerns about future funding and lack of detailed targets
- Suggested that the annual report be presented earlier in the civic year to allow the committee to consider making budget recommendations in time for the budget process
- Recommended that £80,000 be allocated to fund stage three of the mine water heating feasibility study as part of the 2026/27 budget
- Recommended that more funds be allocated to the zero carbon fund as part of the 2026/27 budget
- Recommended that the Climate Change Programme Managers salary be moved to the general fund to preserve the zero carbon fund for future projects

Task and finish groups

The Committee established no Task and Finish Groups in 2025/26.

Committee meetings held	6
Reports considered	19
Recommendations submitted to Cabinet	11
Recommendations accepted by Cabinet	6
Comments submitted to Cabinet	78
Hours of public debate	10 hrs 28 minutes
Questions submitted by public	0

Community Scrutiny Committee

Set out below are the key topics the committee has scrutinised in 2025/26. All agendas and full details of the committee's agendas can be found on the [NWLDC website](#).

Foundations Review- Disabled Facilities Grants Delivery

The committee looked at the proposed financial assistance policy and grant programme. Comments were submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

The committee:

- Welcomed the report, however raised concerns about general publicity of the grant and accessibility for those unable to access digital methods.
- Requested access to the full Lightbulb document
- Recommended that marketing and publicity of the Lightbulb service and grants be improved
- Recommended that tenants housed in private properties are not disadvantaged on the housing register
- Recommended that the Foundation be requested to review the Disability Facilities Grant cap with the view to increase it, and to address issues with means testing.
- Recommended that the grant condition period be increased from five years to ten years
- Recommended that the eligibility criteria be tightened to ensure value for money on grant rewards

Moira Furnace Visitor Experience Improvement Programme (Phase 2)

The committee received an update on the project and details on the business case for the next phase. Comments were submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

The committee:

- Welcomed the improvements made to the site and praised the quality of the refurbishment works.
- Raised concerns about any potential excessive parking charges that could deter visitors. It was suggested that consideration be given to local resident concessions.
- Questioned the Council's responsibilities as custodian of the historic building
- Discussed the tight delivery timetable in the context of local government reorganisation
- Acknowledged the positive community impact of the project
- Fully supported the project and recommended that Cabinet allocate of funds required to complete phase two improvements

Stenson Square Gardens

The committee received an update on the project and were asked to review on the design proposals. Comments were submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

The Committee:

- Discussed the financial implications of affordable housing versus market housing on the site. The committee's preference was for a mixed used development including social housing.
- Questioned the timing of the project due to the risks of funds being absorbed as part of local government reorganisation
- Acknowledged the mixed public feedback
- Recommended that more marketing be done to showcase the design visuals and promote the project with the aim of gaining more community involvement
- Recommended that the Coalville Heritage Society be encouraged to investigate the options available to help fund archaeological investigations on the site when works begin

Leisure Centres Annual Review

The committee reviewed an annual update on the effectiveness of Council leisure centres.

The committee:

- Welcomed the increased NHS use of the leisure centres for sessions including cardiac rehabilitation, exercise referrals and blood donation clinics.
- Asked for comparable data for deprived areas be included in future reports
- Welcomed the progress on green initiatives and requested further information in future reports on the reduction of gas usage and installation of solar panels.
- Supported the recommendation of Corporate Scrutiny Committee about funding the progression of mine water heating.
- Recommended that the £80,000 required to fund stage three of the mine water feasibility study be allocated as part of the 2026/27 budget.

Community Grants Annual Report

The committee reviewed an annual update on community grants and the first year of the NWL Community Lottery.

The committee:

- Acknowledged the significant positive impact of community grants and expressed disappointment at recent budget cuts
- Requested that more detail be included in future reports about the number of residents receiving support from Age UK
- Requested more detail be included in future reports about the usage of the Citizens Advice Bureau including service usage, waiting times, ward reach and how the grant is spent
- Suggested that officers and Cabinet consult with grant recipients about finding needs prior to making budget decisions
- Recommended that Cabinet reinstate the grant funding to Age UK as part of the budget 2026/27 budget
- Praised the success of the NWL Community Lottery but raised concerns around sustainability following local government reorganisation.

Task and finish groups

The Committee established one task and finish group in 2025/26:

Water Management in the Coalville Strategic Growth Area Task and Finish Group

The task and finish group was formally set up in June 2025 following the submission of a topic suggestion form and approval by the Scrutiny Work Programming Group. The report detailing the subject matter for review and setting up the group can be found on the [NWLDC website](#).

The review is ongoing and due to conclude in 2026/27, therefore, more information will be included in the 2026/27 annual scrutiny report.

Committee meetings held	5
Reports considered	13
Recommendations submitted to Cabinet	11
Recommendations accepted by Cabinet	5
Comments submitted to Cabinet	19
Hours of public debate	9 hours, 46 minutes
Questions submitted by public	0

Membership	Attendance					
	26 June 2025	11 September 2025	11 December 2025	25 February 2026	23 April 2026	%
Dr Terri Eynon (Chair)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%
Murrae Blair-Park (Deputy Chair)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%
Mike Ball	Y	N	Y	N	Y	60%
Dave Bigby	Y	N	Y	N	Y	60%
Marie French	Y	Y	N	Y	N	60%
Kenny Horn	Y	N	N	Y	N	40%
Simon Lambeth	Y	Y	N	Y	N	60%
Paul Lees	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	80%
Elizabeth Parle	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%
Lee Windram	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%

Where to get more information

If you would like more information about how to get involved or suggest a topic for scrutiny review, you can contact the Democratic Services Team on 01530 454512 or memberservices@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

You can also contact the Scrutiny Committee Chairs directly:

Councillor Simon Lambeth
 Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee
Simon.lambeth@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

Councillor Terri Eynon
 Chair of Community Scrutiny Committee
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