

CABINET – FRIDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2025**ORDER PAPER****ITEM DETAILS****APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None received.

1. MINUTES (Pages 3 -14)**Proposed motion**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2024 be taken as read, confirmed, and signed.

2. URGENT ITEMS

None.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Cabinet are asked to declare any interests in the business to be discussed.

**4. PROVISIONAL MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2025/26 TO 2028/29
(Pages 15 – 262)**

- *Appendix Q to this report, setting out the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny bodies, was circulated separately and is attached to this Order Paper, marked '4a'.*
- *Revised Appendices A, B, C and E have been circulated separately and are attached to this Order Paper, marked '4b'.*

Proposed motion

That the following be recommended to the County Council:

- (a) That subject to the items below, and following changes arising from the final Local Government Finance Settlement and receipt of final Business Rates information from Leicestershire district councils, approval be given to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which incorporates the recommended net revenue budget for 2025/26 totalling £615.2m as set out in

the revised Appendices A, B and E of this report and includes the growth and savings for that year as set out in the revised Appendix C;

- (b) That the revised Appendices A, B, C and E be approved to reflect the changes in Business Rates, grant income and a reduction in the growth contingency, which taken together have no impact on the use of reserves;
- (c) That approval be given to the projected provisional revenue budgets for 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29, set out in the revised Appendix B to the report, including the growth and savings for those years as set out in the revised Appendix C, allowing the undertaking of preliminary work, including business case development, engagement and equality and human rights impact assessments, as may be necessary to achieve the savings specified for those years including savings under development, set out in Appendix D;
- (d) That approval be given to the early achievement of savings that are included in the MTFs, as may be necessary, along with associated investment costs, subject to the Director of Corporate Resources agreeing to funding being available;
- (e) That the level of the general fund and earmarked reserves as set out in Appendix K be noted and the planned use of those earmarked reserves as indicated in that appendix be approved;
- (f) That the amounts of the County Council's Council Tax for each band of dwelling and the precept payable by each billing authority for 2025/26 be as set out in Appendix M;
- (g) That the Chief Executive be authorised to issue the necessary precepts to billing authorities in accordance with the budget requirement above and the tax base notified by the District Councils, and to take any other action which may be necessary to give effect to the precepts;
- (h) That approval be given to the 2025/26 to 2028/29 capital programme, totalling £439m, as set out in Appendix F;
- (i) That the Director of Corporate Resources following consultation with the Lead Member for Resources be authorised to approve new capital schemes, including revenue costs associated with their delivery, shown as future developments in the capital programme, to be funded from funding available;
- (j) That the financial indicators required under the Prudential Code included in Appendix N, Annex 2 be noted and that the following limits be approved:

	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m
Operational boundary for external debt				
i) Borrowing	201	197	232	271
ii) Other long term liabilities	6	6	6	5
TOTAL	207	203	238	276
Authorised limit for external debt				
i) Borrowing	211	207	242	281
ii) Other long term liabilities	6	6	6	5
TOTAL	217	213	248	286

- (k) That the Director of Corporate Resources be authorised to effect movement within the authorised limit for external debt between borrowing and other long-term liabilities;
- (l) That the following borrowing limits be approved for the period 2025/26 to 2028/29:

(i) Maturity of borrowing:-

	<u>Upper Limit</u>	<u>Lower Limit</u>
	%	%
Under 12 months	30	0
12 months and within 24 months	30	0
24 months and within 5 years	50	0
5 years and within 10 years	70	0
10 years and above	100	25

- (ii) An upper limit for principal sums invested for periods longer than 364 days is 20% of the portfolio.
- (m) That the Director of Corporate Resources be authorised to enter into such loans or undertake such arrangements as necessary to finance the capital programme, subject to the prudential limits in Appendix N;
- (n) That the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and the Annual Investment Strategy for 2025/26, as set out in Appendix N, be approved including:
- (i) The Treasury Management Policy Statement, Appendix N; Annex 4;
- (ii) The Annual Statement of the Annual Minimum Revenue Provision as set out in Appendix N, Annex 1;
- (o) That the Capital Strategy (Appendix G), Investing in Leicestershire Programme Strategy (Appendix H), Risk Management Policy and Strategy (Appendix I), Earmarked Reserves Policy (Appendix J) and Insurance Policy (Appendix L) be approved;
- (p) That it be noted that the Leicester and Leicestershire Business Rate Pool will continue for 2025/26;

- (q) That the Director of Corporate Resources, following consultation with the Lead Member for Resources, be authorised to make any changes to the provisional MTFS which may be required as a result of changes arising between the Cabinet and County Council meetings, noting that any changes will be reported to the County Council on 19 February 2025;
- (r) That School funding is subject to a 0.5% transfer of funding to the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant;
- (s) That the Leicestershire School Funding Formula is subject to capping at 0.28% per pupil and continues to reflect the National Funding Formula for 2025/26;
- (t) That delegated authority be given to the Director of Children and Family Services, following consultation with the Lead Member for Children and Family Services, to agree the funding rates for early years providers.

5. ENGLISH DEVOLUTION WHITE PAPER: LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION – INCLUDING URGENT ACTION TAKEN (Pages 263 – 270 and supplementary report pages 1-16)

Proposed motion

- a) That the urgent action taken by the Chief Executive under delegated authority to request the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution to postpone the County Council elections from May 2025 to May 2026 and to provide a clear commitment to devolution and reorganisation be noted;
- b) That the letter from the Minister of 5th February saying that he has decided not to agree to the request be noted, together with the invitation received from the Minister also on 5th February to submit a proposal for unitary local government reorganisation and the accompanying guidance and assessment criteria, including the requirement to submit an interim plan to Government before 21st March 2025;
- c) That the Minister's decision not to allow local government reorganisation in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland through the fast-track process, as jointly requested by the City Mayor, the Acting Leader of the County Council and the Leader of Rutland Council, has resulted in devolution to the area being further delayed with any estimated date for devolution currently uncertain;
- d) That the criteria for unitary local government be noted and supported, including that a unitary authority must be the right size to achieve efficiencies (with the aim of a population of 500,000) ensuring value for money for council tax payers, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks; must prioritise the delivery, improvement and sustainability of services; that reorganisation should avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services such as social care; and that a unitary authority should enable stronger community engagement and should reflect sensible geography and a sensible economic area;
- e) That it be noted that, following the publication of the English Devolution White Paper, a meeting of the Leaders and Chief Executives of the 10 councils in

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland took place on 8th January, at which no consensus was reached on unitary authority structure options and it was agreed to meet again after the receipt of the Minister's invitation to submit proposals and the criteria to be followed;

- f) That if consensus cannot be reached, it be noted that guidance on the interim plan recognises that it may contain more than one potential proposal for a unitary structure;
- g) That this supplementary report and the original report be submitted to the meeting of the County Council on 19 February for information;
- h) That progress on the interim plan be reported regularly to the Group Leaders.

6. RESPONSE TO MELTON LOCAL PLAN PARTIAL REVIEW REGULATION 19 PRE-SUBMISSION CONSULTATION DRAFT (Pages 271 - 286)

Proposed motion

That the response to Melton Borough Council's Draft Local Plan consultation, set out in paragraphs 34 – 37 and the appendix to the report, be approved.

7. RESPONSE TO THE OADBY AND WIGSTON LOCAL PLAN (2020-2041) REGULATION 19 PRE-SUBMISSION CONSULTATION DRAFT (Pages 287 - 316)

Proposed motion

- a) That the County Council's response to the Oadby and Wigston Borough Council's Draft Local Plan consultation, set out in paragraphs 35 – 61 and the appendix to the report, be approved;
- b) That it be noted that given the significant factors that affect the Plan from a transport perspective, the County Council considers that the Plan, in its current form, fails to meet the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) tests of soundness insofar as its Effectiveness and Consistency with national policy;
- c) That the decision of Oadby and Wigston Borough Council to pause progress on its new Local Plan following the close of the Regulation 19 consultation, in order to consider the requirements of the new National Planning Policy Framework, be noted.

8. STRATEGIC TRANSPORT PLANNING ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH THE EMERGING CHARNWOOD LOCAL PLAN (Pages 317 – 334)

Proposed motion

- a) That the latest position in respect of the Local Plan be noted, including:
 - i. The Borough Council shared a draft initial viability report with officers of the County Council on 20 December 2024. This report contained

a high-level assessment of the Local Plan's ability to support the financial requirements of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). County Council officers provided comments before the Borough Council submitted the final report to the Inspectors. County Council officers have not yet been provided with a final copy of the report, and it is not yet available on the Examination website;

- ii. On 24 January 2025, the Local Plan Inspectors responded to the Borough Council, after reviewing the initial viability report and the updated Local Development Scheme and have held that the Local Plan examination can continue. The Inspectors have outlined the next steps, which will include a period of consultation on the CIL viability report and its implications for the soundness of the Local Plan. The Inspectors will prepare a focused set of Matters, Issues and Questions, on which comments will be sought, and will hold a hearing session on the evidence and provide written responses to the questions. Depending on the outcome of the consultation and hearing session, consultation on Further Main Modifications will be required to complete the Examination. The Borough Council has been asked to respond if it wishes to proceed on this basis. No timescales have yet been provided by the Inspectors, therefore there still remains considerable uncertainty over the timetable and eventual adoption of the Local Plan. Additional hearing sessions may add further delays to the overall timetable for adoption of the Local Plan. The position of the Local Highway Authority (LHA) in respect of relevant planning applications coming forward ahead of the Local Plan has been reviewed, as set out in paragraphs 29 to 31 of the report, and will remain the same for the time being, until there is more certainty. It is likely that this will follow from the outcome of the forthcoming hearing sessions. In the meantime, officers are requested to write to the Inspectors, via the programme officer, seeking an invitation to attend and be represented at the hearings sessions when they resume;
- iii. The publication of the Borough Council's Full Council Questions and Responses in respect of the Local Development Scheme, Draft Local Plan and development of a CIL, and the County Council's concerns arising from the responses given, as summarised in paragraphs 34 to 38 from the Leader of the Borough Council, in particular the Response, to a Question that "the County Council has disengaged from discussing the local plan" is incorrect;
- iv. The potential implications for the LHA in its role as statutory consultee arising from the Local Plan process, as set out in paragraphs 27 and 28;

- v. The discussions to date with respect to establishing appropriate governance for joint working between the County and Borough Councils going forward in respect of highways and transport matters, noting also the Cabinet's previous resolution of 17 December 2024 that a more appropriate governance structure than the current Infrastructure Board is needed;
- b) That in line with previous recommendations and delegations, the Chief Executive, the Director of Environment and Transport, and the Director of Law and Governance, following consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Lead Members, be authorised to:
- i. Continue work to establish a more appropriate governance structure to allow the County Council to work alongside, support, and co-operate with the Borough Council as necessary;
 - ii. Participate appropriately in the development and implementation of a CIL charging schedule in line with national guidance and to seek to influence the adoption of a CIL as soon as possible, recognising the potential for work to be undertaken at risk ahead of possible further Local Plan examination sessions;
 - iii. Seek to mitigate the impacts arising from the potential further delays to the adoption of the Local Plan as far as reasonably possible.

9. FLOODING IN LEICESTERSHIRE IN JANUARY 2025 AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LEAD LOCAL FLOOD AUTHORITY AND LOCAL HIGHWAY AUTHORITY
(Pages 335 - 356)

- *Comments have been received from Dr. K. Feltham CC and are appended to this Order Paper, marked '9a'.*
- *A letter has been received from Neil O'Brien MP and a copy is appended to this Order Paper, marked '9b'.*
- *A written submission has been received from a local resident of Great Glen, and a copy is appended to this Order Paper, marked '9c'.*
- *With the agreement of the Chairman, Mr. N. Bannister CC will speak on this item.*

Proposed motion

- a) That in respect of the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA),
- i. the valuable contribution made to the response and recovery efforts of colleagues across the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (LLR) Local Resilience Forum (LRF) as well as the many flood wardens, flood action groups and other community members from across the County, who have helped to provide detailed information to support

Risk Management Authorities in their investigations be noted with thanks;

- ii. the allocation of an initial £20,000 of discretionary funds for the financial year 2024/25 towards supporting Leicestershire communities recovering from the most recent flooding, with a further £80,000 funding in 2025/26 to increase the preparedness and resilience for any future flood events, as set out in Table 1, be approved;
 - iii. the approach to planning for increased workload due to the increased frequency of severe weather and associated flooding issues, together with the approach to prioritisation of current workload, as set out in paragraphs 49 to 53, be approved;
 - iv. the use of additional funding set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to develop the Flood Risk Management Team (£20,000 in 2024/25 rising to £220,000 in 2025/26) to help deal with increased workload arising from previous flood events and potential future incidents, as detailed in paragraphs 49 and 50, be approved;
 - v. it be noted that further reviews of the LLFA structure and prioritisation may be required as more information becomes available;
 - vi. a further letter be written to Leicestershire Members of Parliament (MPs) and the Secretary of State to highlight the significant impact this event and others have had on many Leicestershire residents, homes and businesses and to seek support and investment in flood prevention and managing the impacts of flooding as an urgent priority in line with paragraphs 56-61;
 - vii. the approach to communication and engagement on flood events as set out in paragraphs 54 and 55 be approved;
- b) That in respect of the Local Highway Authority (LHA),
- i) the impacts of recent flood events on the highway network and steps taken to respond to these events be noted;
 - ii) the use of additional funding set out through the MTFS to support flood response and recovery activity in the LHA (resulting in additional costs of £460,000 in 2024/25 rising to £700,000 in 2025/26), as set out in paragraph 64, be approved.

10. REVISED ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY AND NET ZERO ACTION PLANS (Pages 357 - 426)

- *The report was considered by the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 January 2025 and its comments are attached to this Order Paper, marked '10a'.*
- *Comments have been received from Mr. M. Hunt CC and are appended to this Order Paper marked '10b'.*

Proposed motion

- a) That the revised Environment Strategy Action Plan, 2035 Net Zero Council Action Plan and 2050 Net Zero Leicestershire Action Plan be approved;
- b) That the common Mink Control Policy for all members of the Leicestershire and Rutland Water Vole Steering Group be approved;
- c) That the provision of delegated responsibility to the Director of Environment and Transport to approve any future similar control policies in relation to invasive and non-native species, following consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member and relevant service areas within the Council, be approved.

11. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) AND INCLUSION STRATEGY 2024-27 (Pages 427 - 482)

Proposed motion

That the draft refreshed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Inclusion Strategy be approved for consultation.

12. LEICESTERSHIRE'S POLICY ON ADMISSIONS TO MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS: DETERMINATION OF ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS (Pages 483 – 554)

Proposed motion

That the changes to admissions arrangements at Stathern Primary School, St. Mary's CE Primary School (Hinckley), Burbage Junior School, St. Denys CE Infant School, Ibstock, and Ibstock Junior School, as set out in paragraph 24 of the report, be approved.

13. EXCEPTION TO CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES TO PROVIDE AGENCY COVER FOR THE PROVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT (SENA) TRIBUNAL OFFICERS – URGENT ACTION TAKEN BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (Pages 555 – 560)

Proposed motion

That the action taken by the Chief Executive to approve an exception to the Contract Procedure Rules to enable the direct award of contracts for the temporary provision of two agency SENA Tribunal Officers with the contract running until 31 March 2025, up to a maximum spend of £282,693.00, be noted.

14. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH: LEICESTERSHIRE'S HEALTH – INEQUALITIES IN HEALTH (Pages 561 – 602)

Proposed motion

- a) That the recommendations contained within the Director of Public Health's Annual Report 2024 be supported;
- b) That it be noted that the Annual Report will be submitted to the County Council on 19 February 2025.

15. ITEMS REFERRED FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

None.

16. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN HAS DECIDED TO TAKE AS URGENT

None.

Officer to contact

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HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 JANUARY 2025

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2025/26-2028/29

MINUTE EXTRACT

Public Health Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26-2028/29.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Public Health and the Director of Corporate Resources which provided information on the proposed 2025/26 to 2028/29 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as it related to Public Health. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed Mrs. L. Richardson CC, Cabinet Lead Member for Health, and Mr. B. Champion CC Cabinet Support Member, to the meeting for this item.

Arising from discussions the following points were noted:

- (i) Funding for Public Health came solely from the Department of Health and Social Care, not Council tax. The Public Health Grant for 2025/26 had not yet been announced but was expected soon. As the funding details had not yet been received an assumption had been made by the department that there would be a 2% increase in the Grant for 2025/26.
- (ii) The Public Health Grant could only be spent on public health functions. The department had specific statutory duties, as well as an overall statutory duty to take steps to improve the overall health of the population. The Public Health Grant was also used by other departments within the County Council for discretionary services that could be described as fulfilling the Public Health department's overall duty to improve the health of the population. Should further savings have to be made by Public Health, that funding to other departments could have to be withdrawn.
- (iii) Leicestershire County Council spent less on lifestyle services, such as stop smoking, weight management etc, than other authorities. It was not mandatory for Public Health departments to fund lifestyle services so in theory they could be cut. However, this would be difficult in practice as those services contributed to the department's overall duty to improve the health of the population and had a positive impact.
- (iv) The MTFS covered a 4 year period but the benefits of health interventions often took longer than that to become apparent.

- (v) In response to concerns raised by a member about the impact of cuts on services, some reassurance was given that services commissioned and delivered by Public Health were given an efficiency score and those services which had the biggest impact for the largest number of people were prioritised. The department's approach was to redesign commissioned services so that as good a service could be provided at a reduced cost. The Homelessness Service was one example of this.
- (vi) With regards to measuring the impact of services, regular modelling took place. There was a Public Health Outcomes Framework which contained 36 indicators related to public health priorities and delivery.
- (vii) The NHS was no longer funding any pay increases for providers commissioned by the local authority therefore Public Health was facing a cost pressure resulting from the NHS Agenda for Change pay rises. However, subsequent to the report for the meeting being published the department had received £868,000 additional funding to cover those costs.
- (viii) In response to concerns raised by a member regarding people feeling isolated and lonely, particularly the elderly, it was explained that the First Contact Plus and Local Area Co-ordinator services helped with this issue. A report on this topic would be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.
- (ix) Public Health funded the Health Check programme which was delivered by General Practice. There had been an increase in demand for the service which was a positive because it meant that more people were getting checked but this did add cost pressures to the department.
- (x) The council held a contract with Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association (SSAFA) to provide support to ex-service personnel. The contract was due to end in March 2025 and the service was being reviewed. A large amount of data relating to the service, particularly referral outcomes, was being analysed. No decision had been made yet on whether the service would be recommissioned or cut. Members emphasised that it was important to provide some support to armed forces veterans. In response it was clarified that work with veterans would still take place even if the SSAFA contract was not renewed but consideration would have to be given to whether it should be carried out by organisations other than SSAFA. An alternative could be for the support to be provided by Local Area Co-ordinators and First Contact Plus. There were also other charities that worked with military veterans. A member emphasised that working age veterans and older veterans had different needs.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report and information now provided be noted;
- (b) That the comments now made be forwarded to the Scrutiny Commission for consideration at its meeting on 27 January 2025.

**HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE - 16 JANUARY 2025**

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2025/26 – 2028/29

MINUTE EXTRACT

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 – 2028/29

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Environment and Transport and the Director of Corporate Resources which provided information on the proposed 2025/26 to 2028/29 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as it related to the Highways and Transport side of the Environment and Transport department. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item '8' is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed Mr. O. O'Shea CC, Cabinet Lead Member for Highways and Transport, to the meeting for this item.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

Growth

- (i) Street lighting reactive maintenance jobs had increased by 257% since 2022/23 due to aged assets. Aged Assets referred to columns and cables that had a life expectancy and needed maintaining. Members queried whether any scoping exercises had been carried out to see if alternative sources of power could be utilised which were more sustainable. In response, Officers explained that the current approach was to switch to LED lighting and that replacement programme was underway on what was a large scale. Assets needed to be reliable and alternative sources were taken on board as the technology improved over time.

SEN Transport

- (ii) Assisted Transport was a significant part of the department's budget and the spend on it was continuing to increase. A member acknowledged that the money needed to be spent and forecasts and provision for the future needed to be made. However, Members suggested that as this was an issue affecting local authorities across the country it should be addressed nationally by government.
- (iii) The Council had a statutory duty to deliver the SEN Transport service and the department's growth would continue to be dominated by increased demand for SEN Transport. Members noted that the Council was able to increase the Adult Social Care precept by 2% without requiring a referendum and submitted that

until the government addressed the SEN Transport issue nationally the County Council would have to keep increasing the precept by the maximum amount each year.

Savings

- (iv) A Member raised concerns about a lighting in urban areas and questioned whether increasing the amount of lighting was a cost worth paying. In response it was explained that a substantial saving had been made as a result of dimming street lighting and the saving would have to be made elsewhere were it not made from street lighting, but The department was aware that dimmed street lighting might not be suitable for all areas and would take feedback from the ongoing pilot scheme and address the concerns where necessary.
- (v) As many electric vehicles were heavier than other vehicles due to the weight of the battery, Members queried whether this resulted in more deterioration of the roads. In response it was acknowledged that there had been an acceleration in deterioration on the network in recent years and that there were many factors that impacted this such as weather. The fact that EV's were heavier and heavier vehicles had an impact on the road network was an area that would need addressing nationally.
- (vi) Members raised concerns regarding high volumes of traffic around Junction 21 of the M1. It was suggested that the government's requirements of local authorities to increase housing growth should come with additional investment in the transport infrastructure as the existing road networks would not be able to cope with additional growth.

Capital Programme

- (vii) In response to a Member query about Zouch Bridge highlighted in the report it was noted that the bridge had been identified as an asset that needed replacing as it was a key link on the strategic network. Works would continue towards completion in 2027 which members welcomed.
- (viii) A member raised concerns regarding maintenance of the existing highways network. Some maintenance had originally been planned to be funded through the Network North funding but this is no longer available under the new Government and monies that had already been accelerated to carry out some of maintenance would now be accounted for in expected multi-year settlements from DfT over the period of the MTFS. It was noted that this highlighted the need for ongoing planned maintenance so the department could make the best use of available funding while managing the risks attached to this as a result of current uncertainty in funding.
- (ix) The amount of future contributions to be received by the department from developers under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

were hard to predict so could not yet be allocated in the budget until confirmation was received. However, upcoming Section 106 funding was closely monitored to maximise the use of this funding.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 -2028/29 be noted;
- b) That the comments now made be forwarded to the Scrutiny Commission for consideration at its meeting on 27 January 2025.

ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
20 JANUARY 2025

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2025/26 – 2028/29

MINUTE EXTRACT

Adults and Communities Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 – 2028/29

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Adults and Communities and Director of Corporate Resources which provided information on the proposed 2025/26 to 2028/29 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as it related to the Adults and Communities Department. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed Mrs. C. M. Radford, Cabinet Lead Member to the meeting for the item.

Arising from Discussion, the following points were made:

Proposed Revenue Budget, Other Changes and Transfers

Growth

- i. The current negative growth position of -£1.8million for 2025/26 was an unusual position to be in. However, this had been due to the substantial increase in the number of people approaching the Department for services in 2023/24, and the increase in size, scale and cost of care packages, which had resulted in the Council having to put in substantial additional growth for 2024/25. Over the past 12 months, the Department had contained that growth to manage costs, and had successfully negated the requirement for further growth for the current financial year. The Director highlighted, however, that whilst the Department would continue to work towards containing costs, the position was dynamic and could change over the next year.
- ii. Members noted that with an increase in the number of people using services, it was expected that there would be an increase in income as people contributed to their cost of care, and income from the NHS to support people in receipt of services, which could be balanced against the overall growth figures.

- iii. Members queried the older people demand budget and how modelling had resulted in a projected budget of £2million for the 2025/26 rising to £15million for 2028/29. The Director explained that modelling was based on information held at a point in time, and by using national models (Office of National Statistics (ONS), Poppi and Pansi) data, which provided an estimated figure over the four-year period. The growth averaged out at 2-3% each year which was in line with the demographic growth in the elderly population in Leicestershire. The budget for 2024/25 had not been over-modelled, but the Department had worked hard to mitigate demand and contain costs over the year.
- iv. Members queried if the demand management target of -£4million was a control of costs by limiting services. Members were reassured that whilst the Department would seek to limit expenditure and contain growth through a series of initiatives, it had not been at the expense of services provided. For example, additional resources had been targeted into reviewing people's care needs to ensure the support being offered was meeting need in an equitable way, to ensure people had a fair outcome from the assessment process, and that people were as independent as they could be. In terms of eligibility of services, this was set nationally and had been laid out under the Care Act.
- v. Members heard there would be growth in the numbers of people requiring services as they moved from Children's into Adult Social Care placements, but numbers would potentially peak around the year 2030 following which they were expected to fall due to a decline in birth rates.
- vi. Members questioned whether the impact of the Fair Outcomes policy had levelled off. The Director commented that the policy had been in place for around 10 years, and that a panel had been set up to provide added assurance to the Department that assessments and provision of services were being made in accordance with the policy. As the panel had been in place for just over 12 months, the requirement to attend the panel was being stepped down as teams were showing evidence that they were commissioning at the right level in terms of support packages for individuals. Performance would continue to be monitored over the course of the next few months to ensure progress was maintained.
- vii. It was noted with concern that the previous year's growth was over 3.5% and this had been a level of growth not seen before by the Council. The Director highlighted that this outstripped the growth that was being seen by other councils at the time. The growth figure was now around 1.5% and this was consistent with other councils in the country.
- viii. The Director reported the numbers of placements of older adults in residential care had seen a small increase from 868 for 2023/24 to approximately 880 for 2024/25. This was not considered an alarming figure. It was noted that the majority of people in residential care required 24-hour care, otherwise they would be supported to remain independent at home. In terms of people with higher support needs being able to move into Extra Care as an alternative was something being looked into over the next MTFS period. The majority of people in Extra Care, however, would not require a higher level of care.

- ix. A Member queried if, with recent Government financial announcements of increased National Insurance contributions, future changes to taxation, and impending changes to inheritance tax, consideration had been given to people in isolated rural areas. The Director reported that the budget did not include uplifts in terms of the cost of care through inflation, and rising National Insurance, as the Council had a corporate reserve that was applied to the budget after this was set. This accounted for all inflationary increases across all departments. In terms of income, the status quo was assumed at the point of modelling the budget.
- x. It was acknowledged that the National Insurance increase would be a big change for the next financial year, and all councils were tasked with modelling what might be an appropriate increase going forward based on intelligence of the local workforce.

Adult Social Care – Savings

- xi. A Member questioned what support was in place to support Personal Assistants employed directly by a service user. It was noted that services were in place and if required would ensure cover, for example, for leave or sickness. The service was monitored on a regular basis to ensure people had the right support and were not put at risk. It was believed that having a personal assistant to a more traditional form of service could be beneficial in terms of well-being and gave people more control of their services.
- xii. A representative from Healthwatch requested service users be involved so far as possible when any review of services was undertaken. It was noted that the Department engaged with more people to support the co-production of future services and an engagement panel had been established which included people with lived experience which provided useful additional feedback.
- xiii. It was noted that whilst some of the savings outlined in Appendix C might appear as being the same each year this was likely due to it being the last year of delivery, and so there would not be an increase each year going forward but had to be shown over the four years on the MTFs. The budget was assessed each year with the savings the Department needed to make, having regard to inflationary rises.

Communities and Wellbeing

- xiv. A Member questioned under **AC16 (Eff) – Implementation of revised service for Communities and Wellbeing, if there was an end point whereby the Record Office in Wigston could no longer take any more records. The Director reported that the end point had already been reached, and there were many records being stored in other locations outside of the Record Office, in a non-compliant manner. The National Archive had given the County Council until May 2026 to show it had a compliant method of storage.

Health and Social Care Integration

- xv. Given the Government's plan to speed up the throughput of people being treated in the NHS, members queried what impact this would have on adult social care services, for example, in undertaking assessments for people requiring onward care, or supporting people in their own homes. It was noted that regular conversations were being had with the NHS at a strategic level, particularly around the flow of people through the urgent and emergency care system, and how to improve outcomes for people to ensure they were receiving the right service on discharge. It was further noted that the city and county had the highest number of people in receipt of social care services across the East Midlands where the route of access was hospital which was managed as a system.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report regarding the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2025/26 to 2028/29 and the information now provided be noted;
- b) That the comments now made be forwarded to the Scrutiny Commission for consideration at its meeting on 27 January 2025.

**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 21 JANUARY 2025**

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2025/26 – 2028/29

MINUTE EXTRACT

Children and Families Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 – 2028/29

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Children and Family Services and the Director of Corporate Resources which provided information on the proposed 2025/26 to 2028/29 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as it related to the Children and Family Services department. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed Mrs. D. Taylor CC, Lead Member for Children and Family Services, to the meeting for this item.

Children's Social Care Reform

- (i) A question was raised in relation to measures which the Government had outlined in order to improve competition and commissioning within children's social care. The Director outlined that competition was often limited because the market was dominated by a number of large providers, and that this presented a challenge in terms of commissioning social care placements against budget constraints. The proposed reforms would aim to encourage local authorities to improve competition within the system in order to create better placement opportunities for children. The Department had undertaken work locally to develop its own children's homes, through the Children's Innovation partnership (CIP), in order to overcome challenges with competition and to address rising unit costs.

Proposed Revenue Budget

- (ii) The Director emphasised that the central contingency which was being held within the Department would be utilised in order to offset the costs associated with the 2024/25 pay award for directly employed staff. In terms of the expected increase to the rate of National Insurance contributions (NICs) paid by employers, members noted that it was not yet possible to understand the impact that this could have on the Council. The Director agreed to update members on any changes to this position through updates on the Department's budget position.

Growth

- (iii) Members were pleased that there had been a reduction in the weekly unit cost for supporting Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC), despite a significant level of demand and continued financial pressures within the system. The Director stated that this had been possible by ensuring commissioning was in line with the needs of UASC and through utilising smarter commissioning strategies. The UASC cohort presented a significant growth pressure over the MTF period in terms of demand and costs.
- (iv) In response to a concern relating to the cost of providing social care placements, the Director explained that high costs were a result of the complexities within the cohort of young people taken into care. A large number of children within this cohort required additional support as a result of their experience of trauma and previous lived experiences. Members were assured that the Department continued to ensure that each child and young person in care had the correct level of support in place in order to meet their individual needs, regardless of the reason behind the requirement for social care provision.

Savings

- (v) A member raised a question regarding whether school funding in Leicestershire was comparable to that in other local authority areas. The Director stated that minimum per pupil funding, allocated through the National Funding Formula (NFF), was consistent across all authority areas. However, additional funds were provided to schools based on the level of free school meal eligibility and the number of children with home addresses which triggered deprivation funding. As a result, it often appeared that some schools within other local authority areas were in receipt of higher levels of funding than others.
- (vi) Members noted that government funding to support its policy for a free school breakfast club programme would be allocated to schools directly. The Policy had been announced in the Government's Autumn Budget 2024 and was expected to be delivered from April 2025.
- (vii) In response to a question relating to an expected final visit by Ofsted at a Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)/Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) residential home, which had been developed as part of the Children's Innovation Partnership (CIP) with match funding from the Department of Education (DfE), the Director stated that confirmation of the visit date was awaited.

Capital Programme

- (viii) The Director stated that the majority of the Capital Programme was likely to be funded by external grants such as the Basic Need Grant, the High Needs Provision Capital Grant and the Strategic Maintenance Grant. In addition to

these grants, the Capital Programme would be funded through Section 106 contributions, which were received as a result of housing development.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report regarding the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 – 2028/29 and information now provided be noted;
- b) That the comments now made be forwarded to the Scrutiny Commission for consideration at its meeting on 27 January 2025.



**ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 22 JANUARY 2025**

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2025/26-2028/29

MINUTE EXTRACT

**Environment and Climate Change Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 –
2028/29**

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Environment and Transport and the Director of Corporate Resources which provided information on the proposed 2025/26 to 2028/29 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as it related to the Environment and Waste Management Services within the Council's Environment and Transport Department. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed Mr. B.L. Pain CC, Cabinet Lead Member for the Environment and the Green Agenda to the meeting for this and other items.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

Revenue Budget

- i) A reduction in residual waste and therefore a saving had been forecast due to the planned introduction of mandatory food waste collections from April 2026. A member questioned what else the Council planned to do to reduce this further. The Director assured members that the Council would continue to deliver existing programmes that sought to encourage recycling and reuse and educating residents on how they could better dispose of their waste as well as continuing to implement the Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy. However, Members acknowledged there would always be some demand for residual 'black bin' waste disposal. The Lead Member highlighted that reductions would be countered by rising population and housing growth which were expected to result in more waste being generated. The Authority would monitor the impact of growth against the impact of its programmes and the introduction of mandatory food waste collections and other factors such as changing waste types, which all had to be taken into account when assessing the Council's future waste contract needs.

- ii) A Member raised concern that the Department's resources of £0.39m to tackle Ash Dieback had been transferred to the Corporate Resources Department. It was noted that this was simply an accounting matter and reflected the fact that the Corporate Resources Department employed the team that looked after trees and woodlands.

Growth

- iii) The technology currently being used to dispose of residual waste which came at a cost was currently considered the most viable option to dispose of waste at the scale required. A Member challenged whether it was more economical to use and therefore pay landfill tax or to incinerate waste and pay the proposed incineration tax. It was noted that the Council sought to manage waste in accordance with the waste hierarchy at the top of which would be waste prevention, reuse and recycling and landfill at the bottom. It was agreed that there needed to be a push towards repurposing waste in line with the circular economy principals rather than sending it to landfill as there were no benefits from this, in order to limit any damaging impact on the environment.
- iv) A Member commented that the ultimate aim would be to reduce non-recyclable packaging. As previously discussed by the Committee, it was noted that the Government's introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging would now make producers responsible for the costs relating to that packaging from 'cradle to grave' (i.e from production of the material to its disposal). A scheme administrator had been set up by the Government who producers paid a fee to and which was now feeding through to the Authority to help it meet the cost of disposing of this type of waste. The Lead Member emphasised that the Council had been indicatively allocated £6m for 2025/26 but that future allocations were unclear. It was intended that this approach would help to manage away non-recyclable packaging materials, which would then in turn reduce the payments having to be made by the industry.

Savings

- v) Opening hours at recycling and household waste sites (RHWS) were being reduced in the summer but not universally. Sites would no longer be open 9am until 7pm every day through the summer opening period. Some sites would close at 5pm on certain days but on occasion be open later for residents convenience. Evidence of use showed that sites were used less in the evenings compared to morning usage. However, it was acknowledged that some evening access was still needed and there would therefore be days when some sites would be open until 7pm, to accommodate this. The Director

emphasised that the advice to the public would be to check the Council's website prior to visiting.

- vi) Fly-tipping was raised as a concern by some Members who queried whether there were links between closing waste disposal sites and an increase in fly-tipping. It was noted that there was currently no data to suggest there was an escalation in fly tipping cases as a result of closed sites. A Member suggested that enforcement action was the biggest deterrent which was the responsibility of district councils. However the Lead Member emphasised this was not only a district council problem as the County Council had responsibility for disposing of the waste which could be costly. The Council therefore worked closely with district councils and other agencies, such as the Police and the Environment Agency to address what was a criminal offence. Members noted that the cost of disposal had been factored into the budget.

Other Factors Influencing MTFs Delivery/Other Funding Sources

- vii) It was noted that the County Council had responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of a section of the Ashby Canal as a result of the legacy of a proposal a number of years previously to restore and reopen the canal.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 -2028/29 be noted;
- b) That the comments now made be forwarded to the Scrutiny Commission for consideration at its meeting on 27 January 2025.

SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 27th JANUARY 2025

MINUTE EXTRACT

Medium Term Financial Strategy 20225/26 – 2028/29

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which provided information on the proposed 2025/26 – 2028/29 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as it related to Corporate and Central items. The report also provided an update on changes to funding and other issues arising since the publication of the draft MTFS and provided details of a number of strategies and policies related to the MTFS. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed the Acting Leader of the Council, Mrs D. Taylor CC (in remote attendance), and Cabinet Lead Member for Resources, Mr L. Brecon CC, to the meeting for this item.

In presenting the report the Director commented that the Council faced uncontrollable pressures which would lead to significant savings having to be made despite the Council having sought to recover the maximum amount of council tax possible as permitted by the Government. Next year, the MTFS was predicated on the need to use some of the Council's reserves to balance the budget. Thereafter the deficit was forecast to grow significantly to £95m as a result of service demand and inflationary pressures, despite significant work and savings having been made in previous years across all service areas.

The Director emphasised that the main determinants for the Council's future financial health very much rested with the Government and its approach to things like local government funding reform, SEND funding reform and the national living wage. There were a growing number of authorities now needing additional Government support. The Council would continue to prioritise its financial resilience, however, the Director emphasised that it was difficult to predict the future direction of the Council in the longer term given the level of uncertainties faced.

Arising from discussion, the following points were made:

Revenue Budget and Growth

- (i) Members expressed significant concern at the growing level of challenges faced by the Council. A member commented that it would be impossible given limits on the Council's ability to generate income, that this would cover its forecasted expenditure, particularly taking account of rising levels of growth in the demand for services, increasing costs and national insurance, and pay and

price inflation.

- (ii) It was suggested that uncertainty around future Government funding had made planning for this MTFS particularly difficult. It was noted that the Government was undertaking a spending review which would be concluded in June. Following this, it was thought the Government would be able to provide greater clarity around future funding streams. This should also be accompanied by reforms to the local government finance system, a consultation already having been launched on this issue.
- (iii) Members questioned what other approaches the Government might take to address pressures on local government finances. The Director reported that there appeared to be some acknowledgement that service standard reforms would be needed, as well as the removal of the cap on council tax, both of which would help to enable councils to become more self-sustainable.
- (iv) The Lead Member was challenged about what the Cabinet's strategy would be to address the budget deficit. The Lead Member confirmed that consideration had and would continue to be given to service delivery methods, and the level of service provided. It was acknowledged that lower level services were already being provided in Leicestershire at a cheaper cost due to its low funding position. However, the Councils performance had always demonstrated that these were delivered effectively and efficiently and to a good standard. Further the Council had secured specialist external support from organisations like Newton Europe that would continue to drive change across a range of services. The Lead Member assured members that whilst not sufficiently developed to be included in the current MTFS, further savings were being identified across all departments. However, he reiterated that there were still a number of factors outside the Council's control and dependent on the Government's funding approach and how it delivered local government finance reform.
- (v) The MTFS took account of the previously approved increase in council tax by 4.99%, the maximum amount permissible for 2025/26, including the adult social care precept. A member suggested that the report had not made it clear that the Council had little choice but to do this. It was noted that whilst there would be no restrictions on future grants, the Government had emphasised that there would be an assumption that all councils would in future raise council tax to the maximum amount. It was further noted that a council tax rise of only 2.99% had been accounted for in future years because of the uncertainty around future referendum limits and whether additional the adult social care precept would still be available.
- (vi) A Member commented on the impact rising council tax levels could have on residents that were already affected by rising costs. It was noted that the Council's MTFS consultation included questions regarding the potential impact of rising council tax. Feedback was currently being assessed and would be captured as part of the final MTFS to be submitted to the Cabinet.
- (vii) It was noted that not increasing council tax to the maximum amount would have placed the Council in further difficulty and could have prevented it from being

able to provide some services to its most vulnerable residents. The Director agreed it was a difficult balance to strike, but highlighted that some authorities that had not previously raised council tax by the full amount were now in crisis and seeking this year to increase this significantly beyond the 5% cap.

- (viii) A re-set of business rate baselines was expected to be introduced in 2026/27. It was not yet clear if this would put at risk some of the Council's growth that had been built up since the system first came into force and now amounted to approximately £10m above the Council's current baseline. In addition, it was noted that as the Council was part of a business rates pool with the City and district councils it could also potentially lose the growth that it expected to receive back from that pool. Members noted that the amount at risk was between £6m and £8m. Whilst a transitional period would likely be provided for, details about this were not yet known.
- (ix) The Government's White Paper on Local Government Reform had been published after the draft MTFS had been prepared. Given current levels of uncertainty regarding the planned reforms, the MTFS had not included any reference to this in terms of cost and benefits at this time. The Director assured Members that if the position became clearer over the coming weeks, the final MTFS to be presented to the Cabinet and full Council could be amended to include some further information about this.
- (x) It was noted that the decision to undertake local government reorganisation would be regarded as a matter of local choice and therefore the cost of implementing this would need to be met locally. In previous reorganisations the Government had not allocated any additional resources to support this.

Savings

- (xi) The MTFS included £33m worth of savings to be delivered over the next four years. Despite this a budget deficit of £95m had been forecast. The Director emphasised that whilst the longer-term deficit was a concern, the bigger concern would be addressing the expected £40m deficit in 2026/27, as there would not be a lot of time to deliver the savings necessary to address this. If not addressed in year, this added to budget pressures faced in later years.
- (xii) A Member questioned why only limited savings had been identified in the current MTFS. It was noted that savings were being developed and that detailed business cases would be brought forward over the coming year. The Commission was assured that this was a constant process which Chief Officers were working on with their Lead Members. A review of the Council's Strategic Plan was also underway which would provide further direction.

Reserves

- (xiii) The budget equalisation reserve had increased significantly. This was allocated to cover future year budget gaps and to reflect increased pressure on the High Needs element of the Dedicated Schools Grant, taking account of the current statutory override which was due to come to an end in March 2026. The

Government had not yet confirmed if this would be extended so there was some degree of uncertainty around this.

- (xiv) The current level of reserves were expected to decrease over time as the Council expected to have to dip into this to cover future budget gaps, pending further savings being identified and delivered, and more funding being received from the Government.

Capital Programme

- (xv) A Member raised concern that funding had not been allocated within the capital programme to replace the current Records Office. It was noted that the Council had been given notice by The National Archives that its future accreditation status was dependent on it having a clear and deliverable plan to address current issues around the storage of, and access to records by May 2026. Given that time was of the essence, it was questioned why this had not been accounted for. The Director explained that the Records Office was managed under a partnership arrangement with the City and Rutland Councils and that the Council was in discussions with both authorities to find an agreed way forward. It was noted that the capital programme included an allocation for 'future developments' and that when an approach had been agreed some of this funding could be used towards this. The Record Office was named as a Future Development of the Adults and Communities capital programme that had been discussed at the relevant scrutiny committee.
- (xvi) The Lead Member commented that he and the Lead Member for Adults and Communities were aware of the implications of the Council losing its accreditation but that discussions with partners needed to be held in the first instance and a joint approach agreed if possible. It was suggested that a time limit should be imposed on those discussions to ensure the Council could progress alone to ensure it met the May 2026 deadline.
- (xvii) Members raised concerns that delays in the delivery of capital projects resulted in rising costs which affected the Council's overall capital programme. Members questioned how delays were managed and challenged to ensure these were avoided and mitigated where possible. The Director confirmed that arising from the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road project, a review of how the Council undertook large capital schemes had been carried out and improvements made to the Council's internal processes. All projects were kept under regular review and contractors challenged wherever possible over delays. It was acknowledged that projects which were funded by multiple parties (such as developer funding, Funding from the DfT and Homes England etc.) were often more complicated and difficult to manage.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report and information now provided be noted;

- (b) That the comments now made be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 7th February 2025.

Medium Term Financial Strategy 20225/26 – 2028/29 – Chief Executive’s Department

The Commission considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and the Director of Corporate Resources which provided information on the proposed 2025/26 – 2028/29 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as it related to the Chief Executive’s Department. A copy of the report marked ‘Agenda Item 9’ is filed with these minutes.

In addition to the Acting Leader and the Lead Member for Resources, the Chairman welcomed the Lead Member for Community and Staff Relations, Mrs P. Posnett CC, to the meeting.

Arising from discussion and questions, the following points were made:

- (i) A Member commented that work arising from local government reorganisation would mainly fall within the remit of the Chief Executive’s Department and queried why additional growth to cover that work had not been sought in the current MTFS. It was acknowledged that this could not be accommodated entirely within existing resources. However, when the position became clearer on the Council’s proposed approach, discussions would be held with the Director of Corporate Resources regarding what additional resources would be required.
- (ii) A Member queried what outcomes had been delivered by the Growth Service and Business Intelligence Service and asked, given the cost of those services, whether any savings could be identified in those areas. It was noted that a whole review of this service area was taking place and that further savings identified from that would be presented as part of the next iteration of the MTFS. So far, a saving of £95,000 had been accounted for.
- (iii) The Council allowed trade union representatives to use some facilities at County Hall as part of the recognition agreement and ongoing arrangements with recognised trade unions.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report and information now provided be noted;
- (b) That the comments now made be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 7th February 2025.

Medium Term Financial Strategy 20225/26 – 2028/29 – Corporate Resources Department

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which provided information on the proposed 2025/26 – 2028/29 MTFS as it related to the Corporate Resources Department. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

In addition to the Acting Leader and the Lead Member for Resources, the Chairman welcomed the Lead Member for Transformation and in support of Resources, to the meeting.

Arising from discussion and questions, the following points arose:

- (i) A Member commented on the allocation of capital resources to the Investing in Leicestershire Programme and questioned if this was appropriate given the financial pressures faced. The Director provided reassurance that investment in the Programme would not be made unless this was supported by a sound business case and was expected to generate a revenue income stream in line with the Strategy. The IllP had been positive, generating income to support the delivery of other Council services for a number of years, reducing the level of savings needing to be made, and provided support for local businesses.
- (ii) Beaumanor Hall was expected to generate a reduced loss this year. It was acknowledged that significant work had been undertaken to build a more sustainable business from the property but that this continued to be difficult. A Member challenged why the property costs for Beaumanor Hall were not shown against the revenue income it generated suggesting that this did not provide a transparent view of how well this traded service was operating. It was noted that services were presented in the budget based upon responsibility which allowed central overheads to be seen clearly. When decision making was made this information would be brought together for a holistic view to be taken.
- (iii) A member commented on the difficulty some residents had getting through to officers and challenged whether this was as a result of the Ways of Working programme. The Director advised that feedback from a recent staff survey suggested that productivity had increased significantly following the introduction of hybrid working, but that work was ongoing to improve the capture of data to support this view.
- (iv) It was noted that the Council had not made a decision to mandate officers come into the officer for a set number of days per week like some other

organisations had chosen to do. Instead, the Council supported managers to determine the appropriate level of flexibility that best met the needs of their service area. They were considered best able to determine when performance management, objectives and targets were not being met and how to address this.

- (v) The Director commented that hybrid working stemmed from the Covid 19 pandemic which forced home working upon a range of organisations to ensure these could continue to operate during that difficult period. Since then, all organisations have been adapting to a more flexible working approach. How well this worked varied depending on the needs of the business. The Director provided reassurance that the Council was seeing unprecedented growth at a time when staff resources had been reduced, but that despite this performance was being retained which indicated that productivity was good amongst staff. The Lead Member emphasised that hybrid working was now expected by employees and that offering this helped to improve recruitment and staff retention.
- (vi) The Council's Customer Programme sought to improve the customer experience when contacting the Council. Improvements had been made but it was acknowledged that some areas of difficulty were still being worked on. For example, focus was now being given to reducing failure demand contacts, automated responses being provided where appropriate to keep people informed of progress regarding their enquiries. Also, steps were being taken to reduce call waiting times, call back options were being explored to prevent callers having to wait in a queue.
- (vii) Supporting recognised trade unions was part of the employment offer. The Council currently funded 4 full time union representatives at a cost of approximately £250,000 per annum. Relations with trade unions were considered valuable, particularly when actions plans needed to be delivered ensuring a coordinated response and that support for staff was available. The Director confirmed there were no proposal to reduce the level of support provided as this was considered an important part in ensuring good employee relations, especially during significant periods of change.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report and information now provided be noted;
- (b) That the comments made by the Commission be presented to the Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 7th February 2025.

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 - 2028/29 - Consideration of responses from other Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The Commission considered extracts from the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held to consider the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 – 2028/29 so far as this related to the County Council departments. A copy of the minute extracts from each meeting is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the comments made by each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 7th February 2025.

[These minute extracts are attached.]

Investing in Leicestershire Programme Portfolio Management Strategy 2025 - 2029

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which sought members views on the revised Investing in Leicestershire Programme (IILP) Portfolio Management Strategy 2025 – 2029 which sets out the proposed approach to future asset management and investment. A copy of the report marked ‘Agenda item 12’ is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points arose:

- (i) The refreshed Plan continued to seek to ensure the Council made the best use of its property assets and generated a good revenue return to support the delivery of wider services.
- (ii) A new Rural Strategy was being developed to ensure that the estate had a clear direction and supported the County Council’s wider objectives. This would be presented to the Commission at a future meeting for consideration.
- (iii) Members were assured that an inspection programme was in place and would be detailed in the new Rural Strategy. A full inspection would usually be carried out once a year with periodic visits carried out on an ad hoc basis as necessary. The Director reported that advice had been sought from external land agents regarding the timing of inspections. They had recommended that these continue annually, advising that quarterly inspections would be unusual and expensive and risked being intrusive to tenants. It was noted that a balance needed to be struck between the Council’s right to seek to protect its assets and a tenant’s right to the quiet enjoyment of what was their family home and place of business.

- (iv) Delays in the delivery of ILLP projects had less of an impact than other capital projects as any rise in costs would usually be recovered through increased rental income. Future costs could also be mitigated against as projects to build industrial units would not be commenced until future tenants had been secured.

- (v) Members were reassured that all projects within the ILLP were subject to a detailed business case first being agreed. Thereafter delivery against that business case would be monitored throughout the life of the project, with a detailed appraisal then carried out 12 months after completion.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the update now provided on the refreshed Investing in Leicestershire Programme Portfolio Management Strategy 2025 – 2029 be noted;

- (b) That the comments of the Scrutiny Commission be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 7th February 2025.

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2025/26 - 2028/29 REVENUE BUDGET *

	TOTAL 2024/25	Inflation/ Contingencies /Transfers	Growth	Savings	TOTAL 2025/26	Inflation/ Contingencies /Transfers	Growth	Savings	TOTAL 2026/27	Inflation/ Contingencies /Transfers	Growth	Savings	TOTAL 2027/28	Inflation/ Contingencies /Transfers	Growth	Savings	TOTAL 2028/29
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Spending																	
Services :																	
Children & Family Services	120,902	6,176	20,300	-5,600	141,778		10,390	-3,970	148,198		11,470	-3,920	155,748		14,700	-3,450	166,998
Adults & Communities	228,677	13,503	-1,780	-3,390	237,010		4,250	-2,370	238,890		6,600	-1,425	244,065		5,640	-1,100	248,605
Public Health **	-2,606	0	0	-140	-2,746		0	0	-2,746		0	0	-2,746		0	0	-2,746
Environment & Transport	107,678	5,206	6,220	-1,930	117,174	1,437	2,545	-2,565	118,591	-60	4,390	-40	122,881		7,825	0	130,706
Chief Executives	16,283	841	0	-265	16,859		0	-45	16,814		0	-10	16,804		0	0	16,804
Corporate Resources	38,171	2,568	300	-2,000	39,039	67	200	-1,000	38,306	70	0	-195	38,181	73	0	0	38,254
DSG (Central Dept recharges)	509,105	28,294	25,040	-13,325	549,114	1,503	17,385	-9,950	558,052	10	22,460	-5,590	574,932	73	28,165	-4,550	598,621
Growth Contingency	-2,285		0	0	-2,285		9,615	0	-2,285		4,540	0	-2,285		0	0	-2,285
Service Investment Fund	200	1,000			1,200	-1,000			200				200				200
MTFS Risks Contingency	10,000	-2,000			8,000				8,000				8,000				8,000
Contingency for inflation/ Living Wage	36,059	-1,629			34,430	20,757			55,187	22,380			77,566	22,727			100,293
Central Items:	553,079	25,665	25,040	-13,325	590,459	21,260	27,000	-9,950	628,769	22,390	27,000	-5,590	672,569	22,800	28,165	-4,550	718,984
Financing of capital	17,400	-2,600			14,800	200			15,000				15,000	1,000			16,000
Bank & other interest	-14,200	2,200			-12,000	3,000			-9,000	3,000			-6,000	1,000			-5,000
Central expenditure	2,705	309		0	3,014	-1,020		0	1,994	-165	0	0	1,829	-160	0	0	1,669
Total Services & Central Items	558,984	25,574	25,040	-13,325	596,273	23,440	27,000	-9,950	636,763	25,225	27,000	-5,590	683,398	24,640	28,165	-4,550	731,653
Contributions to earmarked reserves	15,000				22,600				9,700				8,800				11,600
Contributions to General Fund	0				1,000				1,000				1,000				1,000
Contribution from reserves to balance budget	-6,377				-4,653												
Total Spending	567,607				615,220				647,463				693,198				744,253
Funding																	
Revenue Support Grant	-29				-1,229				-1,230				-1,230				-1,230
Business Rates - Top Up	-42,383				-42,912				-43,600				-44,250				-44,910
Business Rates Baseline/Retained	-31,490				-31,818				-22,373				-22,893				-23,413
S31 grants - Business Rates	-17,517				-17,713				-18,001				-18,281				-18,571
Business Rates Pool - share of Levy	-6,500				-8,000				0				0				0
Council Tax Precept	-397,916				-422,465				-441,620				-461,650				-482,590
Council Tax Collection Fund net surplus	-1,918				-1,493				-500				-500				-500
New Homes Bonus Grant	-1,012				-1,041				0				0				0
Improved Better Care Grant etc.	-14,190				-14,190				-14,190				-14,190				-14,190
Social Care Grant	-43,697				-50,971				-50,971				-50,971				-50,971
Services Grant	-394				0				0				0				0
ASC Market Sustainability & Improvement Fund	-10,562				-10,562				-10,562				-10,562				-10,562
Children's Social Care Prevention Grant	0				-1,464				-1,464				-1,464				-1,464
Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Grant	0				-1,373				-1,373				-1,373				-1,373
NI Compensation Grant	0				-3,656				-3,656				-3,656				-3,656
Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)	0				-6,333				0				0				0
Total Funding	-567,607				-615,220				-609,540				-631,020				-653,430
VARIANCE	0				0				37,923				62,178				90,823
<i>Band D Council Tax</i>	<i>£1,601.58</i>				<i>£1,681.50</i>				<i>£1,731.78</i>				<i>£1,783.56</i>				<i>£1,836.88</i>
<i>Increase</i>	<i>4.99%</i>				<i>4.99%</i>				<i>2.99%</i>				<i>2.99%</i>				<i>2.99%</i>

* provisional for 2026/27 and later years

** preventative expenditure within other Departments' budgets to be identified and absorbed into the ring fenced budget

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APPENDIX C (Amended)

References		2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000	
<u>GROWTH</u>						
<u>CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES</u>						
**	G1	Demographic growth & increasing cost of Social Care Placement mix	15,000	23,300	33,000	44,500
**	G2	Front-line social care staff - increased caseloads	500	500	750	750
**	G3	Post Transforming SEND & Inclusion In Leicestershire(TSIL) sustainability	900	900	900	900
**	G4	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) - increased demand/cost	3,250	5,500	8,000	11,200
*	G5	Demand management	-100	-260	-1,240	-1,240
	G6	Children In Need Financial Support - Section 17/23	750	750	750	750
		TOTAL	20,300	30,690	42,160	56,860
<u>ADULTS & COMMUNITIES</u>						
**	G7	Older people - new entrants and increasing needs in community based services and residential admissions	1,900	5,660	10,720	15,190
**	G8	Learning Disabilities - new entrants including children transitions and people with complex needs	550	1,720	3,790	5,720
**	G9	Mental Health - new entrants in community based services and residential admissions	500	1,340	2,470	3,340
**	G10	Physical Disabilities - new entrants in community based services	0	110	470	800
**	G11	Additional Service User Income from new growth to offset costs	-420	-1,430	-2,500	-3,630
**	G12	Additional Health Income from new growth to offset costs	-310	-930	-1,880	-2,710
**	G13	Demand management	-4,000	-4,000	-4,000	-4,000
		TOTAL	-1,780	2,470	9,070	14,710
<u>ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT</u>						
<u>Highways & Transport</u>						
**	G14	Special Educational Needs transport - increased client numbers/costs	3,125	4,980	7,125	9,565
**	G15	Highways Maintenance	1,170	1,595	1,825	2,200
	G16	Statutory change in Mainstream Home to School transport policy	120	120	120	120
	G17	Mainstream School Transport	660	830	1,010	1,190
	G18	School Crossing Patrol - loss of income from Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Road Safety Partnership (LLRRSP)	190	190	190	190
	G19	Fleet Services vehicle maintenance costs	290	190	260	330
	G20	Street Lighting maintenance costs	340	215	215	215
		Total	5,895	8,120	10,745	13,810
<u>Environment & Waste</u>						
*	G21	Confirm replacement - licensing costs	70	70	70	70
**	G22	Waste Upholstered Domestic Seating (WUDS)	65	65	65	65
**	G23	DIY Waste - loss of income	55	110	175	235
	G24	Increased waste tonnages	0	240	440	640
	G25	Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) expansion to include energy from waste facilities	0	0	1,500	6,000
		Total	190	485	2,250	7,010
<u>Department Wide</u>						
**	G26	HGV Driver Market Premia	135	160	160	160
		Total	135	160	160	160
		TOTAL E&T	6,220	8,765	13,155	20,980
<u>CORPORATE RESOURCES</u>						
	G27	ICT cyber security	300	500	500	500
		TOTAL	300	500	500	500
<u>CORPORATE GROWTH</u>						
**	G28	Growth contingency	0	9,615	14,155	14,155
		TOTAL	0	9,615	14,155	14,155
		TOTAL GROWTH	25,040	52,040	79,040	107,205
<i>Overall net additional growth</i>				27,000	27,000	28,165

* items unchanged from previous Medium Term Financial Strategy

** items included in the previous Medium Term Financial Strategy which have been amended

References		2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000		
<u>SAVINGS</u>							
<u>References used in the following tables</u>							
* items unchanged from previous Medium Term Financial Strategy							
** items included in the previous Medium Term Financial Strategy which have been amended							
Eff - Efficiency saving							
SR - Service reduction							
Inc - Income							
<u>CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES</u>							
**	CF1	Eff	Innovation Partnership - Creation and investment in Internal Residential provision	-750	-1,250	-1,750	-2,000
**	CF2	Eff	Departmental establishment modelling / Re-design	-390	-390	-390	-390
**	CF3	Eff	Defining CFS For the Future Programme - Phase 2 - Social Care Workforce Strategy (Recruitment and Retention)	-250	-500	-900	-900
**	CF4	Eff	Reduced Care Costs through growth of internal family based placements	-150	-450	-750	-1,000
**	CF5	Eff/Inc	Smarter commissioning, Procurement and Demand Management - Social Care Placements and externally commissioned services				
			Strand 1 - Contain & Minimise impact of market cost pressures for children placements - external providers	-910	-2,180	-3,900	-6,300
			Strand 2 - Review of care packages /cost (Pro-active and Reactive) ensuring value for money and effectiveness	-1,400	-2,050	-2,450	-2,850
			Strand 3 - Development of a wide range of other accommodation and support options.	-1,000	-1,250	-1,500	-1,500
			Strand 4 - Increased Partner Income	-750	-1,500	-1,850	-2,000
			TOTAL	-5,600	-9,570	-13,490	-16,940
<u>ADULTS & COMMUNITIES</u>							
<u>Adult Social Care</u>							
**	AC1	Inc	Increased income from fairer charging and removal of subsidy / aligning increases	-100	-200	-300	-400
**	AC2	Eff	Implementation of digital assistive technology to service users	-150	-300	-300	-300
**	AC3	Eff	Review of Mental Health pathway and placements	-400	-400	-400	-400
**	AC4	Inc	Increased Better Care Fund income from annual uplift	-1,000	-2,000	-3,000	-4,000
*	AC5	Eff	Improve consistency in hourly rates for Direct Payments and promote use of personal assistants	-160	-160	-160	-160
*	AC6	Eff	Transforming Commissioning (Extra Care)	-100	-180	-255	-255
*	AC7	Eff	Transforming Commissioning (Alternatives to homecare)	-250	-600	-600	-600
*	AC8	Eff	Transforming Commissioning continuing review of contracts across all areas	-150	-150	-150	-150
	AC9	Eff	Review of underspends in staffing and general expenditure(turnover)	-300	-300	-300	-300
	AC10	Eff	Review in-house supported living and short breaks provision	-100	-250	-500	-500
	AC11	Eff	Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHP) review	-30	-30	-30	-30
	AC12	Eff	Review of 1:1 support in residential care	-250	-500	-500	-500
	AC13	Inc	Increasing Health Income	-300	-500	-500	-500
	AC14	Inc	Review of Fees & Charges	-100	-150	-150	-150
			Total ASC	-3,390	-5,720	-7,145	-8,245
<u>Communities and Wellbeing</u>							
**	AC16	Eff	Implementation of revised service for communities and wellbeing	0	-40	-40	-40
			Total C&W	0	-40	-40	-40
			TOTAL A&C	-3,390	-5,760	-7,185	-8,285
<u>PUBLIC HEALTH</u>							
*	PH1	Eff/SR	Review of Commissioned services	-90	-90	-90	-90
*	PH2	Eff	Quit Ready - Development of a Pharmacy Community Based Service Model	-50	-50	-50	-50
			TOTAL	-140	-140	-140	-140

References			2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	
			£000	£000	£000	£000	
<u>SAVINGS</u>							
<u>ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT</u>							
<u>Highways & Transport</u>							
**	ET1	Eff	Assisted Transport Programme	-550	-1,985	-2,005	-2,005
**	ET2	SR	Review application of subsidised bus policy, post Covid	0	-400	-400	-400
**	ET3	Inc/SR	Review approach to Park and Ride	0	-400	-400	-400
**	ET4	Eff/SR	Street Lighting - review energy reduction options, including reduced operation times	-110	-110	-110	-110
**	ET5	Inc	Network Management incl. temporary traffic regulation orders (TTRO)	-400	-400	-400	-400
**	ET6	Inc	Fees and Charges Uplift	-80	-80	-80	-80
	ET7	Inc	Review of fees & charges across targeted services	-60	-60	-60	-60
	ET8	Eff	Traffic Signals energy savings arising LED implementation	-25	-45	-45	-45
	ET9	Eff	Fleet Service Insurance	-15	-15	-15	-15
			Total	-1,240	-3,495	-3,515	-3,515
<u>Environment & Waste</u>							
**	ET10	Eff/Inc	Recycling & Household Waste Sites (RHWS) service approach	-60	-60	-60	-60
**	ET11	Inc	Trade Waste income	-50	-100	-100	-100
**	ET12	SR	Review RHWS provision	-400	-400	-400	-400
**	ET13	Eff/Inc	Food Waste Implementation	130	-130	-150	-150
**	ET14	Inc	Fees and Charges Uplift	-20	-20	-20	-20
**	ET15	Eff	Reduction in line of business system licences	-60	-60	-60	-60
	ET16	Eff	Digitalised timesheets	-30	-30	-30	-30
	ET17	Eff	Contracted waste tonnage reductions	-200	-200	-200	-200
			Total	-690	-1,000	-1,020	-1,020
			TOTAL E&T	-1,930	-4,495	-4,535	-4,535
<u>CHIEF EXECUTIVE</u>							
*	CE1	Inc	Democratic Services income	-5	-5	-5	-5
*	CE2	Eff	Trading Standards Review	-10	-20	-30	-30
	CE3	Inc	Freeport Accountable Body responsibilities	-50	-50	-50	-50
	CE4	Inc	Additional Registrars fees and income	-50	-85	-85	-85
	CE5	Eff	Growth Service staffing review	-95	-95	-95	-95
	CE6	Eff	Democratic Services efficiencies	-30	-30	-30	-30
	CE7	SR	Hospitality Function reductions	-10	-10	-10	-10
	CE8	Inc	Hire of Committee Suite	-15	-15	-15	-15
			TOTAL	-265	-310	-320	-320
<u>CORPORATE RESOURCES</u>							
**	CR1	Eff/Inc	Ways of Working - Use of office space	-240	-735	-810	-810
**	CR2	Eff	Customer Programme (Cross cutting)	-220	-530	-530	-530
*	CR3	Eff	Operational Finance process improvement	-50	-50	-50	-50
**	CR4	Eff	Transformation Unit efficiencies	0	0	-70	-70
**	CR5	Eff	Energy Initiatives	-150	-150	-200	-200
*	CR6	Eff	ICT efficiencies	-300	-725	-725	-725
**	CR7	Eff	Property Service efficiencies	-150	-185	-185	-185
**	CR8	Eff	Departmental/Administrative efficiencies	-440	-140	-140	-140
**	CR9	Eff	People Services efficiencies	0	-35	-35	-35
	CR10	Eff	Insurance - reduced insurance premium contract	-200	-200	-200	-200
	CR11	Inc	Review of Support Service charges	-250	-250	-250	-250
			TOTAL	-2,000	-3,000	-3,195	-3,195
			TOTAL SAVINGS including additional income	-13,325	-23,275	-28,865	-33,415
			MTFS net shortfalls - savings required	-4,653	-37,923	-62,178	-90,823
			Gap in 2025/26 budget to be met from earmarked reserves	4,653			
			TOTAL SAVINGS REQUIRED - EXCLUDING DSG	-13,325	-61,198	-91,043	-124,238
<u>Dedicated Schools Grant - Deficit reduction activity</u>							
			Transforming SEND & Inclusion in Leicestershire (TSIL) Programme defined opportunities	-12,384	-20,034	-28,018	-34,237
			Increase in Local Specialist Places	-389	-4,252	-11,193	-14,486
			SEND Investment Fund - return on investment	0	-2,600	-2,970	-3,360
			TOTAL SAVINGS REQUIRED - INCLUDING DSG	-26,098	-88,084	-133,224	-176,321

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CORPORATE & CENTRAL ITEMS**REVENUE BUDGET 2025/26**

Net Budget 2024/25 £		* Employees £	Running Expenses £	Internal Income £	Gross Budget £	External Income £	Net Budget 2025/26 £	
CORPORATE								
-2,285,000	DSG (Central Dept recharges)	S	0	0	0	-2,285,000	-2,285,000	
0	Growth Contingency	n/a	0	0	0	0	0	
200,000	Service Investment Fund	S	0	1,200,000	0	1,200,000	1,200,000	
10,000,000	MTFS Risks Contingency	B	0	8,000,000	0	8,000,000	8,000,000	
12,300,000	Contingency for Inflation / Living Wage **	B	7,500,000	26,930,000	0	34,430,000	34,430,000	
20,215,000	TOTAL CORPORATE BUDGETS		7,500,000	36,130,000	0	43,630,000	-2,285,000	41,345,000
CENTRAL ITEMS								
17,400,000	Financing of Capital	B	0	17,375,000	0	17,375,000	-2,575,000	14,800,000
-14,200,000	Bank & Other Interest	B	0	0	0	0	-12,000,000	-12,000,000
Central Expenditure								
1,500,000	Pensions (pre LGR /LGR)	S	0	1,400,000	0	1,400,000	0	1,400,000
1,390,000	Members Expenses & Support etc	S	1,356,250	100,000	0	1,456,250	0	1,456,250
329,000	Flood Defence Levies	S	0	329,000	0	329,000	0	329,000
500,000	Elections	S	0	500,000	0	500,000	0	500,000
-621,000	Financial Arrangements	B	0	515,000	-221,000	294,000	-915,000	-621,000
-50,000	Car Leasing	B	0	0	-50,000	-50,000	0	-50,000
3,048,000			1,356,250	2,844,000	-271,000	3,929,250	-915,000	3,014,250
6,248,000	TOTAL CENTRAL ITEMS		1,356,250	20,219,000	-271,000	21,304,250	-15,490,000	5,814,250

* S/D/B : indicates that the service is Statutory, Discretionary or a combination of Both

** 2024/25 contingency of £36.1m less £23.8m transferred to Departmental budgets by January 2025

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Comments from Dr Kevin Feltham, representing Gartree Division

Cabinet Meeting 7 February 2025

Agenda Item 9 - Flooding in Leicestershire in January 2025 and implications for Lead Local Flood Authority and local Highways Authority

Great Glen is a major community in my division. On 6/7 January this year many residents and businesses were affected by the floods that ensued from the weather, and I have been contacted by many of them seeking help and advice. Areas in Great Glen affected by flooding included The Nook, Orchard Lane, London Road, Church Road and the High Street areas. A woman trapped in a car in the rising flood water was rescued by the owner of a nearby Italian restaurant, and images of the rescue were broadcast on national news channels.

Residents and businesses affected by the flooding are steadily trying to bring their properties back to normal; in some cases, the whole downstairs of some properties were flooded so this will take some time, and a number of families are having to find temporary accommodation elsewhere.

I am pleased to see that the Cabinet are discussing an additional £1m from reserves to help communities clean up and become flood ready. It is very important that this money is used for more investigations, designed to pinpoint the causes of flooding, and identify any potential solutions, and to fund drainage repairs as necessary.

I am aware that many of those affected have contacted the council but I am not aware of any direct responses, so I would ask that further information can urgently be provided for residents and businesses affected by the flooding so they can plan for the restoration of their premises as soon as possible.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr Deborah Taylor
Acting Leader
Leicestershire County Council

Sent via e-mail.

6th February 2025

Dear Cllr Taylor,

Flooding in Great Glen

I am writing regarding recent flooding events in Great Glen. I understand that the County Council has proposed to invest £1m more in helping communities in Leicestershire affected by flooding. This will allow the authority to undertake more investigations, designed to pinpoint the causes of flooding and identify any potential solutions, and to fund drainage repairs. I also understand that this will be discussed at the Cabinet meeting on 7th February 2025. I am sorry I am unable to attend due to some longstanding commitments.

This is a welcome commitment from the County Council that could help prevent destructive flooding events in the future, such as the one that occurred in Great Glen in early January. You will no doubt be aware of what happened in the village, especially as the story of the rescue of a stranded motorist made national headlines.

I understand that 50 homeowners and 4 business owners were affected during the flooding, some having to vacate their houses for several months. This is the second time the village has been severely flooded. Nobody wants this to happen a third time. With that in mind, I would like to request that the Cabinet ensure that the funding is made available to Great Glen as part of this investment for investigative work to pinpoint what has gone wrong. I also understand an additional half-a-million pounds is coming later this year to clear drains of flood debris and fix immediate damage. I would also like to request funding for Great Glen as several drains need clearing and repairs need to be made.

I hope that Cabinet looks favourably at the above requests.

Yours sincerely,

Neil O'Brien

Neil O'Brien OBE MP

Member of Parliament for Harborough, Oadby and Wigston

Telephone: 020 7219 3000 Email: neil.obrien.mp@parliament.uk

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Cabinet – 7 February 2025**Agenda Item 9 – Flooding in Leicestershire in January 2025 and Implications for the Lead Local Flood Authority and Local Highways Authority****Comments from a local resident of Great Glen**

I would like to request an investigation into the root causes of the floods that occurred on the 6th January and caused devastating damage to 50 homes, over 100 cars and 4 businesses.

I would be grateful to urge the cabinet of the necessity to prioritise funding for Great Glen in light of the floods. I would like them to look at additional funding as a result of these unprecedented events.

Specifically, we hope to seek assurances for greater investment in improved drainage systems and infrastructure to handle heavy rainfall and to prevent waterlogging, regular maintenance and clearing of existing watercourses and drainage channels to ensure they function effectively and collaboration to develop a flood risk management plan 2025 for Great Glen.

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**ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 22 JANUARY 2025**

**ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY AND NET ZERO STRATEGY – REVISED ACTION
PLANS**

MINUTE EXTRACT

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport the purpose of which was to seek the Committee's views on the draft revised Environment Strategy Action Plan, the 2035 Net Zero Council Action Plan and the 2050 Net Zero Leicestershire Action Plan. The report also sought the Committee's views on a proposed Mink Control Policy proposed to be introduced by the Leicestershire and Rutland Water Vole Steering Group of which the Council is a member. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 10', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

Environment Strategy and Net Zero Action Plan Reviews

- i) The streamlining of objectives from over 300 to 55 as part of the efficiency review was considered a good approach, as was the plan to streamline activity to enable officers to focus more on delivery. A Member commented, however, that the objectives were not SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relative or Time bound) objectives and did not seem to be time dependent. They suggested that more needed to be done to prioritise these to focus delivery towards the 2035 and 2050 target.
- ii) It was noted that there were two action plans; a County wide plan and a County Council plan. The County Council updates were feeding through and the Department strived to make these SMART with clear actions attached. The County wide action plan was more high level and challenging, and covered strategies such as the Local Transport Strategy and the Energy Strategy. These were supported by more detailed action plans held within the department which had responsibility for delivering these (for example, the Energy Strategy would be supported by an action plan held within the Corporate Resources Department). Officers acknowledged that this was a challenge for officers as it was difficult to track what was being delivered by all the relevant teams. However, the governance processes in place made sure regular updates were provided so that overall progress on key priorities could be tracked.

iii) The Lead Member highlighted that the revised Strategy had been consolidated and streamlined in response to budget constraints. Officers had managed a considerably difficult task to narrow down the list of previous actions which had been criticised for being too detailed. It was acknowledged that in a changing environment the Department had to be prepared to adapt to change but at the current time the Strategy now presented what was considered the best way forward. The Lead Member welcomed comments from the Committee and asked that any contradictions which Members identified in either Strategy or Action Plan be provided directly to the Department for consideration.

Mink Control Policy

In presenting the Mink Policy for consideration, the Director outlined that this fell under the Environment Strategy which included a commitment to support action to reduce the impact of invasive non-native species. In seeking to deliver on this commitment, the County Council was a member of the Leicestershire and Rutland Water Vole Steering Group which involved other partners such as other local authorities, the Environment Agency, the River Trust and Rutland Wildlife Trust. The Steering Group had proposed that a common mink control policy be introduced by all partners as it was a non-native species and a predator to water voles.

Members noted that water voles were an endangered species and identified as a priority species within the Council's Local Nature Recovery Strategy alongside a commitment to implement predator control measures as a means of protection.

The Committee supported action to reduce invasive and non-native species but questioned whether mink were the most destructive factor. It was queried whether other factors such as water quality and loss of habitat had been considered as a reason for the decline of water voles. Members also raised serious concerns about the suggested method of disposal (i.e. the use of an air rifle) and questioned whether this was truly regarded as humane and in line with best practice.

The Director advised the Committee that the draft policy and the information provided by the Steering Group had been based on expert guidance which suggested native water vole numbers were in decline as a result of carnivorous mink which were on the incline. The Steering Group supported the strategic and humane control of mink and the policy it had put forward including the suggested method of disposal had been based on the Water Life Recovery Trust's Field Manual for smart mink trapping, the Trust being considered experts in this field.

Overall Members supported the principle of the proposed Policy but agreed that the Cabinet should be made aware of its concerns regarding the possible method of disposal and requested that it seek assurances that only humane methods would be used when implementing this. The Lead Member assured the Committee that their concerns would be brought to the attention of the Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report on the revised Environment Strategy Action Plan, the 2035 Net Zero Council Action Plan and the Net Zero Leicestershire Action Plan be noted and that the comments now made by the Committee be presented to the Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 7 February 2025.
- b) That the Mink Control Policy be noted and supported in principle, but that the concerns raised by the Committee regarding possible methods of disposal of American mink as suggested within the policy be submitted to the Cabinet for further consideration.

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Submission to Cabinet6th February 2025**From Max Hunt CC****ITEM 10****REVISED ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY
AND NET ZERO ACTION PLANS.****COMMENTS FROM MAX HUNT CC**

This is a fundamental review of the previous unwieldy Action Plan.

Unfortunately, in the process the new Plan has lost touch with those target dates of 2035 or 2050 as shown in the risk assessment in paragraph 51.

The excellent Net Zero Roadmap, which the county commissioned at some cost, is no longer referenced. This demonstrated that Net Zero requires consistent reductions in carbon. It's the quantity of greenhouse gases that needs to be capped and that takes time. We are producing more GHG than ever.

Nevertheless, the drive to reduce carbon is still evident in the new plan, The Council itself is doing well although we only represent 2% of emissions. In Leicestershire as a whole we have to do much more to influence the two biggest challenges, which are in home heating and transport.

We can improve Local Plans and we must promote the new investment in home insulation. The new Local Transport Plan promises to be big on decarbonisation. We can't wait to see the plans.

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