

Minutes of a meeting of the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Monday, 2 March 2026.

PRESENT

Mrs. K. Knight (in the Chair)

Mr. N. Chapman CC  
Mr. N. Holt CC  
Mr. A. Innes CC  
Mr. P. King CC

Mr. B. Lovegrove CC  
Mr. P. Morris CC  
Mrs. R. Page CC

In attendance

Mrs Fiona Barber – Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire

51. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2026 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

52. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 35.

53. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 32(1).

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

54. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

55. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

56. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

57. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 33.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 33.

58. Draft Leicestershire Carers Strategy 2026-2030.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Adults and Communities and Director of Children and Family Services, the purpose of which was to seek comments on the draft Leicestershire Carers Strategy 2026-2030. The report explained the development of the strategy and the priorities for delivery. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed the Chairman, Mr. Mark Bools, and Spokespersons Mrs. Deborah Taylor and Mrs. Linda Danks of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the meeting to hear the presentation of the report.

The Chairman further welcomed Fiona Barber, Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire, to the meeting.

Arising from discussion, the following points were made:

- i. Members endorsed the three proposed priorities, highlighting the importance of effective carer flow and clearer information about entitlements and available support. They welcomed the extensive pre-consultation, particularly engagement with over 300 previously unheard carers, and noted ongoing concerns about funding and access to financial support, as well as the significant voluntary contribution made by carers nationally.
- ii. Questions were raised about how identified barriers would translate into practical actions, especially around accessing help at home. Members queried how carers would know what support they were entitled to, how they could access it, and whether a register existed for young carers. Officers reported that carers were often identified through GP practices, though referral processes varied. Improving access to information, advice and guidance remained a priority, particularly for rural carers. The current Voluntary Action South Leicestershire (VASL) contract supported around 7,000 carers. The VASL contract aimed to address those gaps, alongside challenges linked to carers not self-identifying.
- iii. Concerns about VASL's geographical coverage were noted. Officers clarified that the Council did not hold a universal carers' register; only those identified or self-referred were recorded, while VASL maintained its own caseload. The new commissioning arrangements would consider reach, and future strategy work would review funding pathways and reshape the carers' offer.
- iv. Members stressed that carers should have a good quality of life themselves and requested that this principle be explicitly reflected in the Strategy. The Director of Adults and Communities confirmed that adult carers had statutory rights under the Care Act 2014, including assessment and support for eligible needs. Those not meeting thresholds could still access support through the independent sector contract.
- v. Clarification was sought on entitlement to respite care and how carers would access it, alongside questions about whether the £3.5m carers support budget was sufficient.

The Director of Children and Family Services reported that young carers are particularly vulnerable and were identified through close work with schools and health agencies, ensuring access to assessments and support groups.

- vi. The Healthwatch representative reported that carers frequently felt unheard and highlighted issues including inconsistent home-care staff, challenges with hospital discharge, and the importance of education settings for young carers. Healthwatch commended the engagement with over 300 carers.
- vii. Members raised financial pressures on working age carers, mixed experiences with VASL, and concerns about fragmented support pathways. Variation in GP engagement was noted, and Members hoped the Strategy would strengthen links with primary care. The Director of Adults and Communities explained that the £3.5m budget mainly covered direct payments, with around £200,000 each for the VASL contract and internal support team. Respite was funded through individual care packages, and is not included in the £3.5m figure quoted, though figures were difficult to isolate due to funding structures.
- viii. Finally, Members welcomed the work with young carers but requested clearer Strategy content on transition to adult support, particularly for those entering higher education or employment. The Director of Children and Family Services confirmed this would be strengthened in the revised document.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report on the draft Leicestershire Carers Strategy 2026-2030 be noted.
- b) That commencement of a public consultation to further engage with carers and interested parties be noted.
- c) That the comments now made be forwarded to the Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 24 March 2026.

59. National Performance Benchmarking 2024/25 and Performance Report 2025/26 - Position at Quarter 3.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive and Director of Adults and Communities, which provided information which highlighted the adult social care comparative performance position in 2024/25 through national benchmarking, and to present an update of the Adults and Communities Department's performance during the period April to December 2025. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were made:

- i. A Member queried whether supported living was treated as a permanent home within the performance measures, and emphasised the importance of annual reviews, noting that individuals' circumstances could change significantly within a year. The Member felt that increasing already-good review completion levels would strengthen understanding of need and support better resource allocation.

- ii. A Member noted that the report contained substantial narrative and suggested that more graphical or tabular presentation could improve clarity. Officers acknowledged the presentation point, noting that updated graphical appendices had been included but that some metrics were not comparable with previous years due to national reporting changes. They confirmed this would be reviewed for future reporting.
- iii. A Member highlighted that, although the report stated that 3,100 people had received reablement during April to December 2025, it did not explain the outcomes, for example, how many people remained at home, required supported living, or moved into residential care. Officers explained that reablement outcomes were tracked through other reporting mechanisms linked to the operating model. These included the number of people completing reablement with no ongoing long-term services, those needing reduced support, and those whose needs deteriorated. It was confirmed that the service generally achieved strong outcomes and aimed to expand capacity so more people could benefit and remain independent.
- iv. Finally, Members were reminded that annual review performance was monitored daily and discussed monthly with operational leads.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the National Performance Benchmarking 2024/25 and Performance Report 2025/26, Position at Quarter 3, report be noted.
- b) That use of graphical and tabular data to support narrative be included in future reports.

60. Care Quality Commission Assessment 2025 - Improvement Plan Delivery Update.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Communities which provided an update on progress made to deliver the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Improvement Plan, prior to submission of the progress update to the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) due 17 March 2026. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were made:

- i. A Member praised the reduction in waiting times and other improvements. They asked how future risk and sustainability had been considered to prevent previous issues from recurring, especially given rising demand. Officers stated that continuous reporting and improvement formed an ongoing process. The Department would continue to monitor progress, including volumes, duration, and maximum waits, in line with the report's monitoring arrangements. They emphasised that cultural and process changes required accurate data recording, and work was underway with data teams to strengthen recording and performance measurement.
- ii. The Director of Adults and Communities stated that regular workforce audits were essential to understand caseloads, throughput and any bottlenecks. At the start of the pandemic, the Department had already made significant structural changes, including £1.7 million in staffing reductions, before demand doubled. The resource being reinstated, therefore, replaced some of what had been removed, alongside additional capacity. Future workforce planning would continue to align staffing with projected demand through the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

- iii. A Member noted that performance monitoring needed to align with staffing levels and asked what happened when demand rose faster than recruitment could occur. The Director explained that underspend from unavoidable recruitment delays could be used flexibly to secure temporary staff, providing short-term capacity while permanent recruitment was completed.
- iv. A Member asked about timelines for actions within the Improvement Plan and how long it typically took to recruit additional staff, including whether measures were planned to reduce delays that risked losing applicants to faster-moving organisations. Officers advised that processes between interview and start date were being reviewed to identify where timescales could be shortened. This included clearer communication with applicants about key stages, such as notifications, checks and onboarding. In high-demand areas, blanket adverts and coordinated interview cycles had been introduced to streamline recruitment. Promoting the benefits of working for the Council and maintaining proactive communication also supported retention during the recruitment process. However, statutory notice periods remained unavoidable. Officers acknowledged that agency staff could be secured more quickly but stressed that permanent staff were essential for long-term stability, in line with the Improvement Plan's focus on workforce sustainability.

RESOLVED:

That the update report on the Care Quality Commission Assessment 2025, Improvement Plan Delivery, prior to submission of the progress update to the Department for Health and Social Care due 17 March 2026 be noted.

61. Use of Resources in Adult Social Care.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Communities the purpose of which was to share the Local Government Association's (LGA) 2024/25 report on 'Use of Resources in Adult Social Care', and to seek the Committee's view on the Use of Resources within Leicestershire. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the LGA's report on the 'Use of Resource in Adult Social Care' be noted.

62. Date of next meeting.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 1 June 2026, at 2.00pm.