

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 22 April 2026.

PRESENT

Mrs D. Taylor CC (in the Chair)

Dr. J. Bloxham CC
Mrs. L. Danks CC
Dr. S. Hill CC
Mr. A. Innes CC
Mr. P. King CC
Mrs K. Knight CC

Mr. M. T. Mullaney CC
Mr. B. Piper CC
Mr J. Poland CC
Mr. K. Robinson CC
Mr. C. A. Smith CC

In attendance

Mr D. Harrison CC – Leader of the Council

Mr K. Crook CC – Deputy Leader

Mike Denby, Director of Inward Investment and Place Marketing at Leicester City Council

79. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2026 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

80. Minutes of special meeting.

The minutes of the Special Meeting held on 18 March 2026 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

81. Question Time.

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

82. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

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

83. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

84. Declarations of interest.

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

Mr P. King CC declared an Other Registerable Interest in agenda item 9 (The Leicester and Leicestershire Business Skills Partnership) and agenda item 10 (Place Marketing – Leicester and Leicestershire) as he was Deputy Leader at Harborough District Council with a portfolio for economic development and tourism.

85. Declarations of the Party Whip.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

86. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

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

87. The Leicester and Leicestershire Business Skills Partnership

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Public Health Law and Governance regarding the governance and function of the Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were made:

- (i) The Partnership was currently fully funded to the end of the 2027/28 financial year from reserves previously held by the Leicester and Leicestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) which had been disbanded last year. Members noted that no funding was being allocated by the County or City Council. Funding beyond 2028 and operating models and potential new joint arrangements would require review and this would likely be undertaken alongside local government reorganisation.
- (ii) Members questioned how the Partnerships work linked to existing countywide and place-based partnerships, and how intelligence and local knowledge would flow between those arrangements. It was noted that place-based partnerships were generally operational and focused on specific town centre/business priorities, whereas the arrangements covered by the Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership were more strategic and, in part, to provide a mechanism through which government responsibilities and funding could be devolved locally (often with conditions and reporting requirements attached).
- (iii) A review was underway to map relevant groups and governance arrangements across the area. This would be considered by the Business Board and appropriate executive/leadership forums for realignment.
- (iv) A Member challenged the current Business Board membership and suggested that this did not appropriately reflect small and medium-sized businesses as well as larger organisations. The Member commented that this had been a previous criticism of the LLEP and it was disappointing that such arrangements had been continued.

- (v) Members sought clarification on the meaning of “enterprise zones”, including whether these were intended as deregulation/low-tax areas or primarily defined geographic locations. It was noted that there were four zones currently operating across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland; MIRA Technology Park, Loughborough University Science and Enterprise Park, Charnwood Campus, Space Park Leicester and Leicester Waterside. These were physical locations identified to support business growth and job creation. Reporting arrangements to government were in place to demonstrate outputs and outcomes for each zone.
- (vi) A Member questioned if further enterprise zones were planned across the county. It was noted that as regional governance developed, including combined authority/mayoral arrangements, decisions would likely be taken at a regional/sub-regional level regarding future arrangements. However, it was expected that the consolidation rather than the expansion of new or existing zones would be more likely.
- (vii) Members emphasised the need for clear evidence of what had been delivered to date, how funding had been spent and what difference had been made as a result of the Partnership’s work. It was suggested that a future report including more detailed measures and key performance indicators would be helpful, including benchmarking with comparable areas.
- (viii) In response to questions about the Employment Hub and support for young people, the Director outlined that the Hub was currently focused on City residents with aspirations to expand into the County subject to funding being made available. Employment and skills activity could support programmes aimed at young people, including targeted work to support those who were not in education, employment or training.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the update on the work and functions of the Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership be noted;
- (b) That consideration be given to a further report being presented to a future meeting of the Commission, providing more detailed performance measures/KPIs and clearer evidence of outputs, outcomes achieved by the Partnership.

88. Place Marketing - Leicester and Leicestershire

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Public Health, Law and Governance, the purpose of which was to provide an update on the work of the Place Marketing team for Leicester and Leicestershire. A copy of the report marked ‘Agenda Item 10’ is filed with these notes.

The Chairman welcomed Mike Denby, Director of Inward Investment & Place Marketing at Leicester City Council to the meeting and who had attended to present on this item.

Arising from discussion, the following points were made:

- (i) In response to questions from members about the extent to which it remained a challenge to encourage visitors who were drawn to Leicester City to also visit attractions in the wider county, and whether initiatives such as joint ticketing could

assist in improving cross-promotion, Mr Denby advised that there had historically been an “invisible border” but that collaboration across the area had improved year-on-year. It was noted that the growth strategy included specific objectives to strengthen cross-area working, with events acting as a key driver of external visitors.

- (ii) Current work to align and link events (for example, coordinating itineraries around major events such as the county fair and local food markets) so that visitors were encouraged to extend their stay and attend multiple activities across the City and County was welcomed.
- (iii) Members asked for a breakdown of where visitors were travelling from, including the proportion coming from outside the area compared with local residents. The Director confirmed that this data was tracked and could be presented in more detail in future reporting. However, the current position was that approximately 67% were local visitors and 33% external visitors. External visitors had increased over recent years from around 27% three years previously.
- (iv) Members questioned the branding of the service as “Visit Leicester”, and why the title did not more explicitly reference the county. Members also expressed concerns that social media content appeared to be more city-focused than county-focused. Mr Denby explained that the name had been informed by a perception survey undertaken when the organisation was first established some years ago. This had indicated that “Leicester” was the most widely recognised destination “hook” for visitors from outside the area, and that once visitors were attracted, the offer promoted experiences across the whole region. Mr Denby provided assurance that the service sought to operate fairly and transparently across both areas. Members suggested that the branding might benefit from being reviewed given the time since it had last been considered.
- (v) A “Hidden Gems” campaign was being developed as part of the new strategy. Alongside promoting major “anchor” attractions, the campaign would focus on a “next tier” of lesser-known places, such as Charnwood Forest that had applied for UNESCO status. These were places/experiences that local residents might be familiar with but which visitors from outside the area had not yet discovered. This would include, within larger attractions, smaller individual venues or café facilities for example. Members noted that work with district partners was underway to compile a comprehensive list of ‘hidden gems’ and to use this to encourage visitors to undertake additional activities during evenings or on subsequent days, thereby supporting longer stays and wider dispersal of visitor spend. It was noted that the campaign was expected to roll out within the coming months and run over an extended period, supported by a dedicated budget.
- (vi) Members commented that, while the report contained strong performance figures, it would be helpful to include comparative information, for example, benchmarking tourism and inward investment outcomes against other comparable areas. Mr Denby confirmed that comparator analysis was undertaken but had not been included in the report on this occasion. He undertook to incorporate this in future reports.
- (vii) Members queried whether reported social media reach and influencer engagement represented good value, noting that view counts did not always appear significant in social media terms. It was acknowledged that viral reach could not be guaranteed.

Influencer selection was intended to draw audiences from outside the area. However, local influencers were also used and their content shared as performance tended to be stronger where content aligned with the influencer's existing locality and therefore did not require significant travel.

- (viii) Members raised concerns regarding proposals for a visitor levy/tax, particularly the potential impact on small hospitality and tourism businesses given the administrative burden involved. It was noted that the service had engaged with businesses and fed back sector views through the government consultation process. Mr Denby advised that, as currently framed, the tax would be payable by the visitor and so could affect demand and disproportionately impact lower-cost stays.
- (ix) Members questioned what factors deterred visitors from coming to the area and what could be done to address "blockages", including issues such as congestion, car parking and public transport. It was noted that deterrents varied and whilst in rural areas challenges could include how to get to attractions, including bus routes and the availability of nearby overnight accommodation, in urban settings, perceptions of issues such as antisocial behaviour, cleanliness and parking would likely be a factor. The service sought to respond to these perceptions through campaign messaging.
- (x) Members asked what arrangements were being developed to maintain local intelligence and engagement currently provided through district councils, in the context of potential local government reorganisation and changes to district structures. Mr Denby advised that, while he could not comment on the future structure of local government, the Service would continue its core role of promoting the region for tourism and investment and would maintain close working relationships with people and partners across the area to demonstrate business-as-usual during this period of change.

RESOLVED:

That the update now provided on the work of the Place Marketing team for Leicester and Leicestershire be noted.

89. Youth Justice Plan

The Commission, acting in its capacity as the designated Crime and Disorder Committee, considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which presented the draft Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2026–2027 for comment. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were made:

- (i) Members noted the statutory basis of the Plan and the longstanding partnership governance arrangements put in place to support this across Leicestershire and Rutland which included oversight through the Youth and Justice Partnership Board. The Board brought together senior leaders from all local authorities, the Police, Probation Service, Health and Education.
- (ii) The principle underpinning the Plan continued to be a 'child first' approach, recognising that most who came into contact with the youth justice system were not

fully grown adults making well-informed, well-thought through decisions, but often children with unmet needs, vulnerabilities and safeguarding concerns.

- (iii) The Plan continued to place emphasis on prevention, early intervention, diversion and safeguarding alongside strengthening work to improve outcomes for victims, reducing unnecessary escalation and criminalization and ensuring a coordinated partnership response to support children at the highest risk of harm, exploitation and serious violence.
- (iv) Members were advised of national reform uncertainty affecting youth justice structures and reporting requirements. For this reason a single year plan had been prepared. This would allow for a further review to be undertaken in a years' time to respond to further changes on the horizon, for example, regarding SEND and Social Care reforms which impact on Youth Justice. The Director confirmed that, at present funding for the service remained stable and that this would not be affected by the one year plan approach.
- (v) Members raised concerns about the lack of clear performance data and benchmarking information within the report. Members suggested that the inclusion of baseline information and targets relating to matters such reoffending rates, the number of first-time entrants, remands and custody and how these compared to neighbouring authorities would be helpful to understand how effective the previous Plan had been and to help identify areas for future improvement. The Director advised that Leicestershire experienced very low numbers of first-time entrants and remands, and explained challenges regarding national data definitions, police reporting systems and recent reporting changes introduced by the Government, all of which had resulted in mixed data being available that was not entirely helpful. The Director assured members that local cohort tracking work was being developed to improve insight and this would feature in the next report to the Commission in a years' time.
- (vi) Members asked what actions were being taken to address the racial disproportionality of those caught in the youth justice system. It was acknowledged that this was a national issue that required a multi-agency approach. The Director advised that work was underway to develop a partnership plan on this issue, with planned focus sessions to be held by the Board to strengthen accountability and response. Members highlighted the role of local leisure/community facilities in diversion and asked whether the Council could support protection of such provisions which due to lack of funding were now being threatened. Officers advised that preventative provision was important in keeping children out of the system as they provided useful points for children to meet and engage with adults they trusted who could provide additional means of support outside the family.
- (vii) It was noted that the deferred prosecution approach was used in limited circumstances around low-level motoring offences to enable assessment and targeted intervention without the need to face disproportionate long-term consequences in adult motoring court. It was noted that, for example, a child seeking to harm themselves, if found in possession of a knife would have to be arrested is now an opportunity under knife crime legislation. However, the deferred prosecution approach provided an opportunity to support that children, for example, by providing mental health support, rather than pushing them automatically through the criminal justice system.

- (viii) Members asked what work was underway to reduce the risk of children with SEND entering the youth justice system. The Director described strengthened links with SEND leadership and wider early help and inclusion services, highlighting specific work such as commissioning speech and language therapy support that was now being undertaken.
- (ix) Members emphasised the importance of earlier support particularly for primary-aged children and their families who might also be struggling. The Director advised that the Youth Justice Service was required to target children aged 10 (the age of criminal responsibility) up to the age of 19. However, it was closely linked with the Council's youth work offer which was based out in localities and worked closely with local action and support groups and district councils. The Service also worked closely with the Council's family support/early help team which targeted younger children and their families but helped to identify those coming of age that might get caught in the system and so required additional preventative support. Members noted, however that the Youth Justice Service primarily dealt with those aged around 14 years.

RESOLVED:

That the Commission's comments on the draft Youth Justice Plan be submitted for consideration by Cabinet and Full Council, and that the plan be noted.

90. Community Safety Annual Update and revised Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services, the purpose of which was to provide an annual update on the work of the Safer Communities Team and to seek its views on the draft Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026 – 2029. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were made:

- (i) Members noted with disappointment that the East Midlands Elected Member Prevent Network Meeting had folded and emphasised the value of regional discussions and Home Office briefings to support elected members' understanding of Prevent and related community safety issues. It was suggested that the Lead Member should seek to re-establish this group to strengthen cross-boundary working, recognising that risks did not align to local authority borders.
- (ii) In response to questions about Prevent activity and trends, the Director advised that during quarter 3 (October 2025 to the end of December 2025) referrals had been particularly busy but had since settled, with higher volumes in Charnwood and Hinckley. It was noted that the District Prevent representative sat within Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council and undertook significant work with schools and local agencies on referral pathways.
- (iii) Over half of the persons referred to the local Police Prevent Team were recorded as having no identified ideology, followed by right-wing extremism, with Islamic extremism the lowest category. Around 10% of referrals were female which was higher than in previous years and, whilst the average referral age cited was 35, the largest age group referred were between 11 and 15 years, suggesting schools played a key role in making referrals.

- (iv) Members asked for further detail on Prevent training in schools. The Director reported that work was undertaken with Designated Safeguarding Leads. Whilst academies might source training from private providers this had to be accredited. The Council also shared information to governors, safeguarding leads and through headteachers' briefings. Training had also been delivered to parents.
- (v) Members highlighted online vulnerability and the influence of high-profile online figures on young people. The Director confirmed that training and awareness regarding online risks and early intervention work in this area continued to be a priority.
- (vi) Members questioned how the Council communicated its Prevent work and whether the annual update sufficiently reflected issues such as antisemitism, far-left extremism and other forms of radicalisation. The Director clarified that the Council did not actively promote its Prevent activity but did deliver training across schools, and for members and staff. Unfortunately, public-facing messaging had been misconstrued and had previously generated significant negative feedback for the service. As a result, communications were managed carefully to protect the Council's reputation and community cohesion while continuing operational work.
- (vii) Members welcomed the joint work taking place with partners to address all forms of hate crime and hate incidents across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. It was noted that further direction was anticipated nationally following the Southport review, including consideration of the 'front door' to Prevent and whether this would be through a single agency or a partnership approach.
- (viii) Members emphasised the importance of being clear that the Council would not tolerate any form of extremism and that residents needed reassurance and practical information on how this would be addressed. It was suggested that improved feedback mechanisms for members would support consistent messaging to communities.
- (ix) In relation to domestic abuse, members questioned the availability of 'safe accommodation' of which there was currently a shortfall. The Director advised that the primary constraint was the wider lack of housing supply across the region. However, work was underway with district and borough partners to explore opportunities with developers, the use of refuge accommodation, and providing support for victims to remain safely in their own homes where appropriate with perpetrators removed where lawful and practicable.
- (x) Members stressed practical barriers for victims finding accommodation including distance, particularly when children were in local schools, as well as the accommodation of family pets. It was suggested that such issues could be a factor preventing victims reporting abuse and engaging with support.
- (xi) It was acknowledged that domestic abuse was wider than physical violence including coercive control and financial abuse. Under-reporting remained a challenge, including for male victims, and the Strategy sought to deliver a significant programme of awareness-raising and increased communications to build confidence and encourage people to report.
- (xii) Members raised concerns about Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Case Reviews (Community Trigger), including whether revised thresholds would increase demand

and whether there was sufficient district capacity to deal with this. It was acknowledged that additional capacity was likely to be challenging and that previous discussions about jointly funding an officer to support such work had not been agreed. This would continue to be considered through the ASB Strategy and Delivery Groups.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Community Safety Annual Update be noted and that the comments now made on the revised Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy be presented to the Cabinet for consideration.
- (b) That the Lead Member for Children and Family Services be encouraged to reignite discussions with colleagues across the East Midlands and to re-establish the East Midlands Prevent Group.

91. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Commission would be held on Monday, 11th May at 10.00am.

10.00 am - 12.56 pm
22 April 2026

CHAIRMAN