

Minutes of a meeting of the Adults and Cultural Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Monday, 7 September 2026.

PRESENT

Mr. Morris CC (Vice-Chair in the Chair)

Mrs. L. Broadley CC  
Mr. N. Chapman CC  
Mr. A. Innes CC  
Mr. P. King CC

Mr. B. Lovegrove CC  
Dr. D. North CC  
Mrs. R. Page CC

In attendance

Mrs. Fiona Barber – Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire (online)

15. Minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2026.

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2026 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

16. Question Time.

It was reported that the Chief Executive had not received any questions under Standing Order 32(4).

17. Questions asked by Members under Standing Order 32(1).

It was reported that the Chief Executive had not received any questions under Standing Order 32(1).

18. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

19. 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.

No declarations were made.

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

There were no declarations of the party whip.

21. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 33.

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

22. Draft Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2025-26.

The Committee considered a report of the Independent Chair of the Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Adults Board (LRSAB) for 2025/26. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were made:

- i. Members discussed the Board's work on equality, diversity and inclusion. Officers explained that safeguarding data indicated disproportionately low levels of alerts and enquiries from some demographic groups. Further work would seek to establish whether all communities were being reached and felt able to raise safeguarding concerns. The Board also considered learning concerning people with learning disabilities and other groups experiencing poorer outcomes.
- ii. The Committee noted the increase in safeguarding alerts. Officers advised that 4,337 alerts had been received during 2025/26 and that the increase reflected outreach, training and improved awareness among partner agencies. The proportion progressing to section 42 enquiries had remained broadly stable and consistent with the national position.
- iii. In response to concern about the resources required to manage increased activity, officers confirmed that the Council had increased operational safeguarding capacity through investment associated with the Care Quality Commission improvement programme. Processes had also been revised, including improvements to the provider portal and feedback to referrers.
- iv. It was clarified that reserves were being used to support the Safeguarding Adults Board business office rather than the Council's operational safeguarding activity. Contributions from partners had remained unchanged for several years and discussions were taking place about increasing them. The remaining reserves were expected to support the Board for at least a further two years.
- v. The Healthwatch representative asked about increases in neglect, self-neglect and domestic abuse. Officers referred to revised self-neglect guidance, associated training and audit work, and advised that all recommendations arising from work on domestic abuse in older adults had been addressed. Increased identification of concerns involving people living in their own homes was considered positive because those individuals could have fewer people able to recognise risk.
- vi. Members requested a fuller breakdown of people affected by safeguarding concerns, including disability and primary need. Officers confirmed that relevant information was held within the care management system and undertook to circulate available data after the meeting.
- vii. Members emphasised the need for reports to explain clearly what had changed for individuals. Officers reported that desired outcomes had been met in 95.8% of enquiries and that risk had been removed or reduced in over 90% of cases. Of 4,337

alerts, 1,531 had met the statutory threshold for a safeguarding enquiry.

- viii. Officers undertook to examine whether information could be provided on repeat alerts and on alerts which had not progressed to a section 42 enquiry. It was explained that non-qualifying contacts could relate to care quality, complaints or circumstances falling outside the statutory safeguarding criteria. An easy-read version of the annual report had also been drafted for publication.

#### RESOLVED:

That:

- a) The draft Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report be noted.
- b) The comments now made by the Committee be presented to the Cabinet at its meeting on 8 September 2026.
- c) The Director be requested to circulate available data providing a fuller breakdown of the people affected by safeguarding concerns.
- d) The Director be requested to consider whether information could be provided on repeat safeguarding alerts and alerts which did not progress to a section 42 enquiry.

#### 23. Annual Review of Leicestershire Country Parks.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Cultural Services providing an annual review of work undertaken across Leicestershire's country parks during 2025. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were made:

- i. The Committee was advised that the Council managed 18 country parks covering approximately 530 hectares, four of which held Green Flag status. The parks were estimated to receive more than one million visits each year, although no mechanism was available to record all visitors accurately. Volunteers had contributed over 1,600 hours during 2025.
- ii. A Member requested that a future meeting receive a presentation from the ranger service on its day-to-day work. The Head Ranger confirmed that this could be provided.
- iii. In relation to waste collected at Watermead Country Park, officers clarified that much of the material had been carried downstream during flooding rather than fly-tipped. Where evidence of fly-tipping was found, incidents were reported and the service worked with district councils and the Police. The long-standing approach encouraged visitors to take waste home and recycle it.
- iv. Members discussed car parking charges and their potential effect on access, health and wellbeing and parking in surrounding areas. Officers advised that no reduction in car park use had been identified following the increase in charges, but that usage and wider impacts would continue to be monitored. Income from parking was used to

support the costs of operating the country parks service.

- v. Members requested improved information on the number and profile of visitors to support assessment of demand, accessibility and investment priorities. Officers acknowledged the limitations of existing car park data and advised that options for collecting broader visitor information were being explored.
- vi. Accessibility was discussed, including the availability of suitable paths, barriers and signage. Officers advised that most parks had accessible footpaths, while acknowledging that further work could be undertaken to provide clearer information for visitors.
- vii. Officers explained that historic parking data had been lost when a new number-plate recognition system was installed and that an abnormal figure appeared to include all vehicles passing through a barrier rather than paid visitors only. Members stressed the importance of preventing future data loss.
- viii. Members praised the contribution of volunteers and requested an indicative monetary value for the hours contributed. Officers undertook to calculate this using an agreed valuation for volunteer time.

#### RESOLVED:

That:

- a) The report be noted.
- b) The Director be requested to provide further information about the work of the country park ranger service at a future meeting of the Committee.
- c) The Director be requested to provide an indicative monetary value for volunteer hours contributed to the country parks service.

#### 24. Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Cultural Services which provided an update on the outcome of the review of the Accreditation status of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (ROLLR). A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were made:

- i. Members were advised that accreditation, awarded provisionally in 2024, had been retained following confirmation from The National Archives in July 2026. Progress had been made towards implementing a digital preservation and access system and securing archival-standard storage with capacity for growth. A midpoint review was expected in summer 2027.
- ii. Procurement routes had been identified for both required improvements and procurement was expected to be completed before the end of 2026.
- iii. Members expressed continuing concern about the absence of a permanent accommodation solution and the long-term cost of external storage. It was argued that

archival material would continue to require suitable storage irrespective of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and that delay could increase costs.

- iv. Officers advised that the agreed interim solution was robust for the near and medium term but was likely to be more expensive over the longer term. A permanent solution required agreement between the three partner authorities, and uncertainty concerning LGR had affected the ability to commit to substantial capital expenditure.
- v. The Cabinet Lead Member confirmed that the matter would continue to be considered and reported back to the Committee.

#### RESOLVED:

That the report and the comments made by the Committee be noted.

#### 25. Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2025-26.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Cultural Services which provided a summary of the complaints and compliments received in respect of adult social care services commissioned or provided by the Department during 2025-26. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were made:

- i. The Committee noted that 342 statutory complaints had been received, compared with 317 in the previous year and 369 in 2023/24. The principal themes concerned charging, assessment and care planning. Of closed complaints, 47% had been upheld and 88% had received a response within the statutory timescale.
- ii. Thirty-three stage one complaints had progressed to stage two. Timeliness at stage two remained an area of concern. Officers advised that a review had resulted in revised response templates intended to improve the quality and completeness of responses.
- iii. The Council had received 442 compliments, an increase of 59% on the previous year. A new QR code had been introduced to make it easier for residents to submit compliments.
- iv. Members discussed the increasing use of artificial intelligence by complainants, which could result in lengthy and complex submissions. Officers advised that tools were being piloted to help staff identify the issues requiring investigation, while responses remained subject to officer judgement. For complex matters, direct telephone contact with residents was encouraged to clarify concerns and retain a personal approach.
- v. Members emphasised that the complaints process should remain accessible and that every complaint reflected frustration, regardless of whether it was ultimately upheld. Continuity of contact and clear, personal communication were considered important in resolving issues early.
- vi. Concern was expressed about the proportion of stage two complaints exceeding timescales. Officers explained that complexity, volume and concentrations of complaints within individual service areas could affect response times. Members

requested clearer targets and improvement planning for reducing delays.

- vii. The Healthwatch representative asked whether complainants were surveyed about their experience of the complaints process. Officers confirmed that no specific central survey was currently undertaken but agreed that this could provide valuable feedback and would be considered.
- viii. It was noted that the Ombudsman had made 33 decisions relating to adult social care during the reporting period, of which eight had been upheld. No public reports had been issued and the Council had complied with all recommended remedies.

#### RESOLVED:

That:

- a) The report and the comments made by the Committee be noted.
- b) The Director be requested to consider introducing a means of obtaining feedback from complainants on their experience of the complaints process.
- c) The Director be requested to consider clearer targets and an improvement plan for stage two complaint response times.

#### 26. Care Quality Commission Assessment 2025 Improvement Plan Delivery Update.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Cultural Services providing an update on delivery of the Care Quality Commission Improvement Plan and seeking comments on the proposed Adults Rural and Under-represented Communities Grant Scheme. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were made:

- i. Members welcomed significant progress reported. In August 2026, 3.3% of people had waited more than 28 days for an assessment, compared with 18% in August 2025, and the maximum current wait had reduced from 157 days to 28 days. The number awaiting a financial assessment had reduced from 102 at the start of 2026 to 10 in August.
- ii. The number of people awaiting an Occupational Therapy assessment had reduced from 740 at the start of the year to 527. Members were also advised that 81% of annual reviews had been completed within 12 months, compared with a national average of 57%.
- iii. Work to improve access included additional customer service capacity, changes to telephone menus, a review of website information, a new chatbot and a hospital discharge information leaflet. Recruitment to the reablement service had increased capacity by more than 15 full-time equivalent posts.
- iv. The proposed grant scheme would combine a connections fund with grants of up to £5,000 a year for local voluntary and community organisations. A total budget of £800,000 over four years was proposed to improve access to preventative support among rural and under-represented communities.

- v. Members discussed recruitment and retention, particularly for qualified staff. Officers advised that recruitment and onboarding processes were under review, temporary agency staff had been used where necessary, apprenticeships were supporting longer-term supply, and work was being allocated according to role and skill level. Supervision arrangements were used to monitor progression and manageable workloads.
- vi. Concern was raised about the sustainability of improvements where temporary staff had been used. Officers advised that four task and finish groups were examining maximum waits across Occupational Therapy, care and support assessments, carers and reviews, including whether recorded delays reflected process issues as well as unfinished work.
- vii. It was explained that the reported maximum wait used a rolling 12-month calculation. Consequently, a historic long wait remained in the indicator until it fell outside that period. Members requested clearer explanation of the reasons for remaining waits and the actions being taken.
- viii. Members commended officers for the improvements achieved and emphasised the importance of maintaining progress. The potential implications of changed LGR arrangements for future CQC assessment and workforce recruitment were also noted.

#### RESOLVED:

That:

- a) The progress made in delivering the Care Quality Commission Improvement Plan be noted.
- b) The Committee's comments on the Adults Rural and Under-represented Communities Grant Scheme be submitted to the Cabinet.
- c) The Director be requested to provide clearer information on the reasons for remaining care and support assessment waits and the action being taken to reduce them.

#### 27. Leicestershire Carers Strategy 2026-2030.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Cultural Services presenting the outcome of consultation on the Leicestershire Carers Strategy 2026 to 2030. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 13' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were made:

- i. Members were advised that more than 160 people had responded to the formal consultation, in addition to approximately 300 people engaged during development of the draft strategy. Respondents broadly supported the priorities. Key issues included respite provision, loneliness and isolation, crisis support, support for working carers, and improved communication between adults' and children's services for young carers and parent carers.
- ii. A Leicestershire Carers Strategy Group would oversee delivery, with representation from Council services and health partners. Recruitment of a dedicated carers lead was under way and the commissioned carers support service was due to be

reprocured. A progress update and developed action plan were proposed for submission to the Committee in approximately six months.

- iii. Members strongly welcomed the strategy and emphasised the importance of carers being listened to, recognised and valued. The Healthwatch representative welcomed the reflection of carers' views and sought assurance that the health sector would make corresponding commitments. Officers confirmed that health partners had contributed to the strategy and would participate in governance, but accepted that additional NHS commitments should be included in the action plan.
- iv. Members requested that the economic value of unpaid carers in Leicestershire be identified, alongside qualitative evidence of the difference made by support. Officers undertook to provide an indicative figure.
- v. The difficulty of reaching rural and isolated carers was discussed. Officers advised that the strategy and the proposed grant scheme included commitments to improve engagement and information in harder-to-reach communities. Members suggested greater use of parish councils, community organisations, charity shops and other local networks.
- vi. Officers undertook to work with parish councils and local communities as part of implementation. The importance of accessible information, advice and signposting in varied formats and locations was emphasised, including a concise item which carers could retain or display.
- vii. It was confirmed that the extension of the existing commissioned carers support contract to 31 March 2028 had been an officer decision made within the extension provisions of the contract.

#### RESOLVED:

That:

- a) The outcome of consultation results on the Leicestershire Carers Strategy 2026 to 2030 be noted.
- b) The comments now made by the Committee be presented to the Cabinet at its meeting on 8 September 2026.
- c) The Director be requested to strengthen NHS commitments within the Strategy action plan.
- d) The Director be requested to provide an indicative assessment of the economic value of unpaid carers in Leicestershire.
- e) The Director be requested to work with parish councils, community organisations and other local networks to improve the reach of information and support for carers.
- f) A progress update and further developed action plan be submitted to the Committee in approximately six months.

#### 28. Dates of Future Meetings.

It was noted that future meetings of the Committee were scheduled to be held at 2.00pm on the following dates:

2 November 2026

18 January 2027

1 March 2027

7 June 2027

6 September 2027

8 November 2027

2.00pm to 4.36pm  
07 September 2026

CHAIRMAN