

MEETING OF THE LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**WEDNESDAY, 18TH FEBRUARY 2025 AT 2.00 P.M.****ORDER PAPER****EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

In the event of having to evacuate officers will be able to advise and be on hand to assist any disabled persons.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1
CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The CHAIRMAN will make his announcements.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2
MINUTES
 (Pages 3 - 42)

The CHAIRMAN will move and the VICE CHAIRMAN will second:

“That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 3rd December 2025, copies of which have been circulated to members, be taken as read, confirmed and signed.”

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The CHAIRMAN will invite members who wish to do so to make declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4
BUDGET REPORT OF THE CABINET
 (Pages 43 - 310)
 Supplementary Agenda Pack Pages 3 – 20)

Principal Speakers:
 Mover of the motion (as appropriate)
 Leader of the Opposition (Mrs Taylor)

(A) MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2026/27 – 2029/30

MR FOWLER will move and MR D HARRISON will second:

“(a) That subject to the items below, and following changes arising from the Local Government Finance Settlement, approval be given to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which incorporates the recommended net revenue budget for 2026/27 totalling £616.1m 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 Revenue Support Grant, which reduces the use of reserves in 2026/27 and reduces the funding gap in 2027/28, and the allocation of £2.5m in the Service Investment Fund, as set out earlier in this supplementary report;
- (c) That approval be given to the projected provisional revenue budgets for 2027/28, 2028/29 and 2029/30, set out in revised Appendix B to the report, including the growth and savings for those years as set out in 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 each Chief Officer, in consultation with the Director of Corporate Resources and following consultation with the relevant Cabinet Lead Member(s), undertake preparatory work as considered appropriate to develop proposals and associated investment required to reduce the financial gap in all four years of the MTFS, to enable the Cabinet, subject to scrutiny processes, to consider a new multi-year transformation programme;
- (e) 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;
- (f) That the level of the General Fund and earmarked reserves as set out in the revised Appendix K, to reflect the updates for the High Needs Deficit cover as set out earlier in this report, be noted and the planned use of those earmarked reserves as indicated in that appendix be approved;
- (g) That the risk assessment at paragraph 140 and the Director of Corporate Resources assurance statement at paragraph 155 be noted;
- (h) That the recommended Council Tax increase of 2.99% for 2026/27 and the resulting precept be approved;
- (i) That the Chief Executive be authorised to issue the necessary precepts to billing authorities in accordance with (g) 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;
- (j) That approval be given to the 2026/27 to 2029/30 capital programme, totalling £501m, as set out in Appendix F;
- (k) That the Director of Corporate Resources following consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member for Resources be authorised to approve new capital schemes and revenue spend to save schemes, including revenue costs

associated with their delivery, shown as future developments in the capital programme, to be funded from funding available;

(l) That the financial indicators required under the Prudential Code included in Appendix N, Annex 2 be noted and that the following limits be approved:

	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	2029/30 £m
Operational boundary for external debt				
i) Borrowing	194	200	225	255
ii) Other long term liabilities	1	1	1	1
TOTAL	195	201	226	256
Authorised limit for external debt				
i) Borrowing	204	210	235	265
ii) Other long term liabilities	1	1	1	1
TOTAL	205	211	236	266

(m) 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;

(n) That the following borrowing limits be approved for the period 2026/27 to 2029/30:

(i) Maturity of borrowing:

	Upper Limit	Lower Limit
	%	%
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 25% of the portfolio.

(o) 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;

(p) That the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and the Annual Investment Strategy for 2026/27, 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;
- (q) 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;
- (r) That it be noted that the Leicester and Leicestershire Business Rate Pool has been revoked for 2026/27;
- (s) That the Leicestershire School Funding Formula is subject to capping and scaling and continues to reflect the National Funding Formula for 2026/27;
- (t) That delegated authority be given to the Director of Children and Family Services, following consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member for Children and Family Services, to agree the funding rates for early years providers for 2026/27.”

An amendment will be moved by MRS TAYLOR and seconded by MR KING

[Note: although there will be a single debate, there will be six recorded votes at the end of the debate, one on each of the six proposals that form the amendment. The Chairman will take Table A first, then Table B and so on. There will be no opportunity for further debate between the votes.]

- “1. That paragraph (a), (b), (e), (f) and (i) of the motion be amended to read as follows:
- ‘(a) That subject to the items below, approval be given to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which incorporates the recommended net revenue budget for 2026/27 totalling £616.1m as set out in the amended Appendices A, B and E of this report and includes the growth and savings for that year as set out in Appendix C, as amended by paragraph (a) (i) and (ii) below;’
- ‘(b) That approval be given to the projected provisional revenue budgets for 2027/28, 2028/29 and 2029/30, set out in the amended Appendix B to the report, including the growth and savings for those years as set out in 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, as amended by paragraph (a) (i) and (ii) below;’
- ‘(e) That the level of the General Fund and earmarked reserves as set out in

the amended Appendix K be noted and the planned use of those earmarked reserves as indicated in that appendix be approved, as amended by paragraph (a) (i) and (ii) below;'

- ‘(f) That the risk assessment at paragraph 140 and the Director of Corporate Resources assurance statement at paragraph 155 be noted, as amended by paragraph (a) (iii) below;’
- ‘(i) That approval be given to the 2026/27 to 2029/30 capital programme, totalling £501m, as set out in Appendix F, as amended by paragraph (a) (i) and (ii) below;’

2. That the following be added after paragraph (a) of the motion:

- (a) (i) That the list of growth and savings proposals as set out in Appendix C; the Capital Programme as set out in Appendix F and the Earmarked Reserves as set out in Appendix K of the report be amended as follows:

	2026/27 £000s	2027/28 £000s	2028/29 £000s	2030/31 £000s
TABLE A				
<u>Additional Service Growth</u>				
NEW Parking Enforcement – Feasibility and Model Development	20	0	0	0
Full investigation into establishing a centralised Parking Enforcement Model coordinated by Leicestershire County Council.				
This funding will support:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A feasibility study assessing operational, financial, and legal implications of moving to a centralised enforcement model. • An options appraisal comparing the current approach to an alternative centrally led approach • Engagement with districts and key partners on governance, accountability, and implementation requirements. 				
Identification of potential efficiencies, income generation, and improvements in consistency and compliance.				
A centralised enforcement approach may provide improved consistency, more effective use of technology, streamlined administration, more coverage, extended operation, and potential cost efficiencies. This initial investment enables the Council to fully assess the				

model before making any long-term budgetary commitments.

TABLE B

NEW Development of a Residents' App for Highways Reporting	10	0	0	0
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Investigation into a Residents' Mobile App that enables the public to easily report potholes and other highway issues whilst on the go.

This funding will support investigation of:

- Scoping and estimated uptake of a user-friendly mobile App (iOS and Android).
- Integration with existing highways reporting systems to streamline workflows and reduce duplication.
- Improved GPS-based reporting to enhance accuracy and speed of defect identification.
- Accessibility and compliance requirements.

A dedicated App will improve public reporting, enhance real-time visibility of highways defects, and reduce delays in identifying and triaging potholes and other issues. The investment will support digital transformation and improve customer experience.

TABLE C

NEW Investment in Innovative Technology for Road Maintenance (Automated Road Inspection)	50	0	0	0
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Explore and pilot innovative automated highway technology to drive efficiencies across highway services such as improving the accuracy, efficiency, and speed of identifying defects on the highway and the wider network.

This funding will support:

- A feasibility study into a wide range of potential new technology that could improve efficiency such as automated road-inspection tools (e.g., AI-enabled cameras, sensor-based systems, dashboard-mounted scanning equipment).
- Trials of suitable technologies to assess accuracy in detecting potholes, cracking, surface wear, and other defects on the wider network.
- Evaluation of integration with existing asset-management systems.
- Cost-benefit analysis comparing automated inspection with current manual survey methods.
- Engagement with technology providers and neighbouring authorities to identify best practice.

Automated road-inspection technology offers the potential to:

- Improve the consistency and reliability of condition assessments;
- Identify defects earlier, preventing deterioration;
- Reduce manual workload;
- Provide real-time data to support proactive maintenance planning.

This investment will allow the Council to explore innovative, data-driven approaches to maintaining the highway network and ensure the most efficient use of future maintenance budgets

Potential long-term savings include more efficient highway services such as reduced manual inspection costs and earlier identification of defects, preventing more expensive repairs.

TABLE D

NEW Councillor Grit Bin Funding Pot	30	0	0	0
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Each County Councillor may apply for funding from this pot to install grit bins within their division, subject to meeting the Council's existing location and eligibility criteria for grit bin placement.

This fund will support:

- The purchase and installation of new grit bins.
- Initial stocking of new grit bins
- Improved winter resilience at local, community-identified priority locations.

Providing a dedicated funding pot gives councillors flexibility to address local winter safety needs, supports community resilience, and ensures that grit bins are installed only where they meet the Council's established criteria, ensuring fairness and consistency across the county.

Currently Parish/town or district councils can apply for a grit bin and pay for the installation

TABLE E

NEW Additional Resources for Gully Cleaning to Prevent Flooding	400	0	0	0
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To strengthen the Highways Gully Cleaning Programme and drainage works, in order to reduce surface-water flooding, improve drainage performance, and enhance winter and storm resilience.

This additional funding will support:

- Targeted interventions in areas with repeated resident reports or known historic flooding issues.
- Improved mapping and data capture to support proactive drainage maintenance.

- Repairing culverts
- Addressing other defects arising from surveys

Flooding is one of the most frequent causes of highway disruption and resident complaints. Increasing investment in proactive gully maintenance and drainage repairs reduces emergency callouts, protects road surfaces, improves road safety, and provides visible, community-focused benefits. This funding will allow the Council to act ahead of severe weather events and manage drainage assets more effectively.

Additional Capital Expenditure

TABLE F

Increased Funding for Footpath Maintenance to Prevent Trips and Falls	3,000	0	0	0
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To significantly enhance the Footpath Maintenance Programme, with a focus on preventing trips, falls, injuries, and mobility barriers for residents.

This investment will support:

- Accelerated repairs to damaged, uneven, or deteriorating footways across the county.
- Targeted upgrades in areas with high pedestrian use, including routes near schools, care homes, community centres, and health facilities.
- Reduced backlog of reported defects, improving safety and accessibility for all users, including older residents and those with mobility impairments.
- Proactive maintenance to prevent more costly structural failures caused by weathering, tree-root intrusion, and drainage issues.

Improved monitoring and prioritisation processes to ensure timely intervention in high-risk locations.

Whilst this is a capital enhancement, it is expected to reduce future revenue pressures by lowering reactive maintenance costs and claims relating to slips, trips, and falls.

Footpath condition is one of the most frequent and visible concerns raised by residents. Poorly maintained footways present a direct safety risk, particularly for older people, wheelchair users, visually impaired residents, and families with pushchairs.

Strengthening footpath maintenance:

- Reduces avoidable injuries;
- Improves community confidence;
- Supports active travel ambitions;
- Enhances the overall appearance and usability of local streets.

A £3 million investment provides a substantial uplift that will deliver noticeable improvements countywide.

<u>Other Changes (Finance to Complete)</u>				
Bank & Other interest				
TABLE A	0.4	0.7	1.2	1.2
TABLE B	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.6
TABLE C	0.9	1.8	3.0	3.0
TABLE D	0.5	1.1	1.8	1.8
TABLE E	7.0	14.0	24.0	24.0
TABLE F	52.5	105.0	180.0	180.0
iiLP reduction below removes the requirement to repay borrowing through MRP, but the interest implications from a reduction in cash balances needs to be reflected, as the balances would only be spent if the expected return justified it.				
Assumes mid-year expenditure for 2026/27, reduction in cash balances for first 2-years (3.5%) and borrowing for years 3&4 (6%).				
Total Cost Increase	3,571.5	123.0	210.6	210.6

(a) (ii) that the Total Cost Increase above be met from:

	2026/27 £000s	2027/28 £000s	2028/29 £000s	2030/31 £000s
<u>Reduced Capital Expenditure</u>				
Investing in Leicestershire Programme	(3,510)	0	0	0
TABLE A	(20)	0	0	0
TABLE B	(10)	0	0	0
TABLE C	(50)	0	0	0
TABLE D	(30)	0	0	0
TABLE E	(400)	0	0	0
TABLE F	(3,000)	0	0	0
A one-off allocation to be drawn from the unallocated reserves in the 'Investing in Leicestershire Programme' (iiLP) fund for invest to save projects.				
<u>Increased Savings/Income</u>				

TABLE E				
NEW Removal of Chairman's Council Lunch Allowance	(1.5)	(1.5)	(1.5)	(1.5)
The removal of this allowance provides a modest but appropriate saving, reflecting a commitment to directing funds towards frontline priorities and ensuring public money is spent where it delivers the greatest value for residents				
NEW Removal of Printed Copies of Leicestershire Matters and Transition to Digital-Only Publication	(60.0)	(120.0)	(120.0)	(120.0)
TABLE A	(0.4)	0	0	0
TABLE B	(0.2)	0	0	0
TABLE C	(0.9)	(1.4)	0	0
TABLE D	(0.5)	(1.1)	0	0
TABLE E	(5.5)	(12.5)	(12.5)	(12.5)
TABLE F	(52.5)	(105.0)	(107.5)	(107.5)
This change reflects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the increasing shift towards digital communication across the sector, the need to prioritise essential services during a period of severe financial pressure, and the Council's environmental and carbon reduction commitments. A digital-only model will allow continued communication with residents at significantly lower cost, using the Council's website, email bulletins, and social media channels.				
Total Cost Reduction	(3,571.5)	(121.5)	(121.5)	(121.5)

SUMMARY TABLE				
	2026/27 £000s	2027/28 £000s	2028/29 £000s	2030/31 £000s
Total Cost Increase	3,571.5	123.0	210.6	210.6
Total Cost Reduction	(3,571.5)	(121.5)	(121.5)	(121.5)
Net Change Total	0.0	1.5	89.1	89.1
TABLE A	0.0	0.7	1.2	1.2
TABLE B	0.0	0.4	0.6	0.6

TABLE C	0.0	0.4	3.0	3.0
TABLE D	0.0	0.0	1.8	1.8
TABLE E	0.0	0.0	10.0	10.0
TABLE F	0.0	0.0	72.5	72.5
Revised Budget Gap	15,372	34,152	57,243	84,628

(a) (iii) that the following changes are made to the “Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves” section of the budget report

<u>Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves</u>
<p>The proposed expenditure increases are small investigations or “cash-capped” investments, so do not alter my view of the robustness of estimates contained in the Council report.</p> <p>However, with significant activity already being planned for next year it will be important to prioritise to ensure value for money. The service would benefit from flexibility in the timing of spending the £3million for footpaths maintenance, for example to ensure that it can be co-ordinated with other jobs and accommodate weather conditions.</p> <p>The shortfall in funding of the proposals has a small detrimental impact on the long-term financial position of the County Council, increasing the savings requirement. My recommendation will always be that whilst a financial gap is present discretionary expenditure should be minimised. However, the position is still better than before the settlement, so my view on the robustness of estimates is unchanged.</p>

(a) (iv) that the Revenue Budget Summaries in Appendix A, B and E also be amended to reflect the above changes.”

With the consent of the Council, MR MULLANEY will move a revised amendment.

An amendment will be moved by MR MULLANEY and seconded by MR GALTON

“1. That paragraph (a), (b), (e), (f) and (i) of the motion be amended to read as follows:

‘(a) That subject to the items below, approval be given to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which incorporates the recommended net revenue budget for 2026/27 totalling £616.1m as set out in the amended

Appendices A, B and E of this report and includes the growth and savings for that year as set out in Appendix C, as amended by paragraph (a) (i) and (ii) below;'

- '(b) That approval be given to the projected provisional revenue budgets for 2027/28, 2028/29 and 2029/30, set out in the amended Appendix B to the report, including the growth and savings for those years as set out in 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, as amended by paragraph (a) (i) and (ii) below;'
- '(e) That the level of the General Fund and earmarked reserves as set out in the amended Appendix K be noted and the planned use of those earmarked reserves as indicated in that appendix be approved, as amended by paragraph (a) (i) and (ii) below;'
- '(i) That the risk assessment at paragraph 140 and the Director of Corporate Resources assurance statement at paragraph 155 be noted, as amended by paragraph (a) (iii) below;'

2. That the following be added after paragraph (a) of the motion:

- (a) (i) That the list of growth and savings proposals as set out in Appendix C of the report be amended as follows:

	2026/27 £000s	2027/28 £000s	2028/29 £000s	2030/31 £000s
<u>Additional Service Growth</u>				
NEW Additional investment in public bus subsidies	120	120	120	120
NEW Additional environmental maintenance	200	0	0	0
£200k for additional environmental maintenance including additional weed spraying, rural grass cuts, sign cleaning, footpath maintenance and other relevant treatments as required to respond to conditions over the season				
Total Cost Increase	320	120	120	120

(a) (ii) that the Total Cost Increase above be met from:

	2026/27 £000s	2027/28 £000s	2028/29 £000s	2030/31 £000s
<u>Increased Savings/Income</u>				
<u>Other Changes (Finance to Complete)</u>				
Budget – Service Investment Fund				
Additional grass cutting and weed spraying to be funded from the Service Investment Fund (£2.5m revenue budget).				
Total Cost Reduction	(320)	(120)	(120)	(120)

SUMMARY TABLE				
	2026/27 £000s	2027/28 £000s	2028/29 £000s	2030/31 £000s
Total Cost Increase	320	120	120	120
Total Cost Reduction	(320)	(120)	(120)	(120)
Net Change	0	0	0	0
Revised Budget Gap	No Change	No Change	No Change	No Change

(a) (iii) that the following changes are made to the “Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves” section of the budget report:

Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves

The proposed expenditure increases are funded by redirection of existing budgets and there is no change to the budget gap or reserve balances over the 4-year period. On this basis the amendments do not alter my view of the robustness of estimates contained in the Council report.

My recommendation will always be that whilst a financial gap is present discretionary expenditure should be minimised, and any savings should be directed to reduce the use of reserves needed to balance the budget. However, the position is still better than before the settlement, so my view on the robustness of estimates and level of reserves is unchanged.

(a) (iv) that the Revenue Budget Summaries in Appendix A, B and E also be amended to reflect the above changes.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5
QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 7(1) (2) & (5)

There are no questions asked under Standing Order 7 (1) (2) and (5).

TO DISPOSE OF BUSINESS FROM THE LAST MEETING

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6
REPORT OF THE CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE
 (Pages 311 - 344)

Principal Speakers:
 Chairman (Mr D Harrison)
 Conservative Spokesperson (Mrs D Taylor)
 Liberal Democrat Spokesman (Mr M Mullaney)

(A) REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS (MEETING PROCEDURE RULES)

MR D HARRISON will move and MRS TAYLOR will second:

“That the changes to Standing Orders (The Meeting Procedure Rules), as set out in the Appendix to the report, be approved.”

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6
TO RECEIVE POSITION STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(Note: Standing Order 8 provides as follows: -

- (a) A position statement may give rise to an informal discussion by the Council.
- (b) At the conclusion of the discussion a formal motion may be moved to the effect that a particular issue relevant to the statement be referred to the Cabinet, the Commission, a Board or a Committee for consideration. This shall be moved and seconded formally and put without discussion. No other motion or amendment may be moved.

(c) The discussion of any position statement shall not exceed 20 minutes but the Chairman may permit an extension to this period.)

LEADER

The Leader will make his statement.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8
REPORT OF THE EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE
 (Pages 345 - 362)

Principal Speakers:
 Chairman (Miss H Butler)
 Conservative Spokesperson (Mr O O'Shea)
 Liberal Democrat Spokesman (Mrs L Broadley)
 Labour Spokesman (Mr J Miah)

(A) PAY POLICY STATEMENT

MISS BUTLER will move and MR FOWLER will second:

“That the County Council’s Pay Policy Statement 2026/27, as set out in the Appendix to the report of the Employment Committee, be approved.”

AGENDA ITEM NO. 9
REPORT OF THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
 (Pages 363 – 424)

Principal Speakers:
 Chairman (Mr S L Bray)
 Reform UK Spokesman (Mr G Cooke)
 Conservative Spokesperson (Mr J Orson)
 Labour Spokesman (Mr J Miah)

(A) CHANGES TO THE CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES

MR BRAY will move and MR MIAH will second:

“That the revised Contract Procedure Rules, as set out in the Appendix to the report, be approved.”

AGENDA ITEM NO.10
NOTICE OF MOTION

(A) SEND NURSERIES

MR BOOLS will move and MRS BROADLEY will second:

- “(a) That this County Council believes that the four pre-school nurseries currently supported by this County Council that serve children with Special Educational Needs in the County should continue to be supported;
- (b) That the Menphys Nurseries in Wigston and Sketchley Hill in Burbage and the Oasis nursery in Melton Mowbray and the Lift Beacon in Loughborough provide essential educational support to some of the most vulnerable young children in Leicestershire;
- (c) That many parents have expressed their anguish at the news that the nurseries could close. They offer specialist focused teaching and expert care. To close them would mean the loss of an essential service in the County;
- (d) That this County Council believes that the four nurseries should continue to remain open and urges the County Council Cabinet to listen to the residents of Leicestershire and this Council and keep the nurseries open.”