

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 10 July 2025

6.00 pm

**Committee Rooms 1-2,
City Hall**

Membership: Councillors Gary Hewson (Chair), Anita Pritchard (Vice-Chair),
Natasha Chapman, Martin Christopher, Thomas Dyer,
Adrianna McNulty, Neil Murray, Pat Vaughan and Emily Wood

Substitute member(s): Councillors Liz Bushell and Annie Currier

Officers attending: Martin Walmsley, Lara Wells, Emily Holmes and Democratic
Services

AGENDA

SECTION A	Page(s)
1. Confirmation of Minutes - 22 May 2025	3 - 12
2. Declarations of Interest	
Please note that, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, when declaring interests members must disclose the existence and nature of the interest, and whether it is a disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI) or personal and/or pecuniary.	
3. Portfolio Holder under Scrutiny - Reducing Inequality	13 - 48
4. Income and Arrears Monitoring	49 - 56
5. Scrutiny Self Evaluation Review	57 - 94
6. Work Programme 2025/26	95 - 108

This page is intentionally blank.

Present: Councillor Gary Hewson (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Natasha Chapman, Councillor Martin
Christopher, Councillor Thomas Dyer, Councillor Anita
Pritchard and Councillor Pat Vaughan

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Adrianna McNulty, Councillor Neil Murray and
Councillor Emily Wood

1. Confirmation of Minutes - 13 March 2025

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2025 be confirmed.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Pat Vaughan declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Financial Performance - Outturn 2024/25'.

Reason: His grand-daughter worked in the Finance Department at the City of Lincoln Council.

Councillor Pat Vaughan declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Treasury Management Stewardship and Actual Prudential Indicators Report 2024/25 (Outturn)'.

Reason: His grand-daughter worked in the Finance Department at the City of Lincoln Council.

Councillor Pat Vaughan declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Strategic Risk Register - Quarterly Review'.

Reason: His grand-daughter worked in the Finance Department at the City of Lincoln Council.

Councillor Pat Vaughan declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Strategic Risk Register - Quarterly Review'.

Reason: His grand-daughter worked in the Finance Department at the City of Lincoln Council.

3. Change to Order of Business

RESOLVED that the order of business be changed to allow Item number 7, 'Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2024-2025' to be considered as the next agenda item.

4. Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2024-2025

The Customer Services Manager:

- a) presented an annual complaints report including details from the Annual Review of Local Authority Complaints issued by the Local Government and

Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the decisions of the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS)

- b) explained that the Council's complaints procedure included two levels in response to formal complaints. Once the complaint has been considered and responded to by two separate officers the complainant was advised that if they were not satisfied with the final response, they can seek redress from the relevant Ombudsman service
- c) highlighted that Complaints relating to the landlord function of the council, as a provider of social housing, were escalated to the Housing Ombudsman Service. All other complaints, about any other service or aspect of council business fell under the jurisdiction of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
- d) stated that in April 2024, the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code (The Code), became statutory for all social housing providers. The Council's policy was updated to ensure compliance with the code and, as it represented best practice in dealing with customer complaints, the principles of the code were adopted as a corporate policy across all directorates. This report summarised the council performance in 2024-2025 and includes the annual self-assessment against The Code
- e) outlined the overall number of complaints received by the Council on a Directorate basis for the full year 2024-2025, including performance against target response times and the percentage of complaints which were upheld followed by a breakdown of complaints received by service area detailed at 3.3 and 4 of her report
- f) reported that the LGSCO (Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman) made decisions on 4 new complaints about the City of Lincoln Council, a significant reduction compared with the previous two years. She gave a further breakdown of this by service area at item 6 of her report
- g) welcomed the Committee's comments and questions.

Question: Could an update be provided on how many complaints had been received about mould?

Response: The Customer Services Manager confirmed that once she had sought the figures, they would be circulated to the Committee for information.

RESOLVED that the Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2024 be noted with thanks.

5. Financial Performance - Outturn 2024/25

The Financial Services Manager:

- a) presented a report to Performance Scrutiny Committee with the provisional 2024/25 financial outturn position on the Council's revenue and capital budgets, including:
 - General Fund
 - Housing Revenue Account

- Housing Repairs Service
 - Capital Programmes
- b) requested that Performance Scrutiny Committee note that the financial outturn was still subject to Audit by KPMG, the Council's external Auditors
- c) provided information on the following:
- **General Fund Revenue Account** – for 2024/25 the Council's net General Fund Revenue Budget was set at £15,427,670, including a planned contribution to balances of £146,820 resulting in an estimated level of general balances at the year-end of £2,391,979. The finance performance quarterly monitoring report for quarter 3 predicted an underspend against the revised budget of £176,017 (before additional transfers to earmarked reserves and carry forward requests). The provisional outturn for 2024/25 now indicated an improvement of £604,852 (before additional transfers to earmarked reserves and carry forward requests) Based on this position, additional transfers to earmarked reserves, and carry forward requests, totalling £826,658 had been proposed which resulted in an overall budget underspend of £7. This represented a variance against the revised budget of less than 1%. Full details of the main variances were provided in Appendix B.
 - **Housing Revenue Account** — for 2024/25 the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) net revenue budget was set with a planned contribution from balances of £101,220, resulting in estimated general balances at year-end of £1,030,024 (after allowing for the 2023/24 outturn position). The financial performance quarterly report for quarter 3 predicted an underspend of £714,390. The provisional outturn for 2024/25 now indicated an overall budget underspend of £1,557,873 (before additional transfers to earmarked reserves and carry forward requests). Based on this position, additional earmarked reserves and carry forward requests totalling £1,404,580 had been proposed resulting in an overall budget underspend of £153,293 This would result in HRA balance as of 31st March 2025 of £1,183,317. Full details of the main variances were provided at Appendix D.
 - **Housing Repairs Service** – For 2024/25 the Council's Housing Repairs Service (HRS) net budget was set at zero, which reflected its full cost recovery nature. The provisional outturn for 2024/25 showed the HRS had a surplus of £112,647 which was repatriated to the HRA. Full details of the main variances were provided at Appendix F.
 - **General Investment Programme** – the revised General Investment Programme (GIP) for 2024/25 amounted to £22m following the quarter 3 report. At quarter 4 the programme had reduced by £3.06m to £18.97m as shown at paragraph 7.2. The overall spending on the General Investment Programme active schemes (including externally delivered schemes) for 2024/25 was £16.7m, which was 88.25% of the quarter 3 budget as detailed in Appendix I.

- **Housing Investment Programme** – the revised programme for 2024/25 amounted to £17.615m following the quarter 3 position. At quarter 4 the programme had decreased by £1.308m to £16.308m as shown at paragraph 7.10 of the report. The overall expenditure on the Housing Investment Programme for the final quarter was £16.508m, which was 93.66% of the budget as detailed at Appendix J of the report.

d) invited members' comments and questions.

Question: Were the Lincoln Town Deal Board projects ongoing? Could a list be provided of the projects that were still underway?

Response: The Financial Services Manager confirmed she would seek a list of ongoing Lincoln Town Deal Board Projects and circulate to the Committee for information.

Question: What was the Play Pitch Strategy?

Response: The Play Pitch Strategy was predominantly funding for leisure facilities with open spaces accessible to provide to the public.

Question: Would Members be involved in providing a steer on the Play Pitch Strategy?

Response: Yes, Members would be involved, and a consultation would be submitted for it.

The Chair highlighted that the income generating streams for the Crematorium, Car Parking and Cornhill Market would need to be reviewed regularly going forward.

Question: Could the action plan for the Crematorium be circulated to Members?

Response: The Directorate of Communities and Environment monitored income levels across all its service areas including Car Parks and the Crematorium on a monthly basis and made in year adjustments to encourage take up (in the case of services such as Car Parks, Green Waste Collections etc). The Action Plan for the Crematorium was derived from the issues that impacted in May 2024. Almost all of the actions had been completed, and a recent independent audit would be reported soon, after the police had completed their investigations which was anticipated to be very shortly. The Assistant Director for Strategic Development confirmed that the report would be brought to Committee, once it was released.

Question: With regards to complaints and reporting, how could the Council turn properties around quicker and avoid using contractors?

Response: The Assistant Director for Strategic Development explained that a report on the Workforce Development Strategy would be brought to Performance Scrutiny Committee in September.

RESOLVED that:

- a) The Financial Services Manager collate a list of current ongoing Lincoln Town Deal Board Projects and circulate to the Committee for information.
- b) The Action Plan for the Crematorium be brought to a future meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee, once released.

- c) The Workforce Development Strategy be brought to Performance Scrutiny Committee in September 2025.
- d) Performance Scrutiny Committee noted the provisional 2024/25 financial outturn for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, Housing Repairs Service and Capital Programmes as set out in sections 3 – 7 and, in particular the reasons for any variances.
- e) The new General Fund carry forward requests and transfers to earmarked reserves, as detailed in paragraph 3.10 and 3.11 prior to reporting to the Executive be reviewed and noted.
- f) The new HRA carry forward requests and transfers to earmarked reserves and the Major Repairs reserve detailed in paragraph 4.8 and 4.9 prior to reporting to the Executive, be noted.
- g) The changes to the General Investment Programme and Housing Investment Programme as approved by the Chief Finance Officer as detailed in paragraphs 7.6 and 7.14 prior to reporting to the Executive be noted.
- h) The changes to the General Investment programme and the Housing Investment programme approved, or to be approved, by the Executive as detailed in paragraphs 7.3, 7.5, 7.11, 7.12 and 7.13, prior to reporting to the Executive, be noted.
- i) The content of the report be noted and referred to the Executive for approval.

6. Treasury Management Stewardship and Actual Prudential Indicators Report 2024/25 (Outturn)

The Financial Services Manager:

- a) presented a report to Performance Scrutiny Committee on the Council's treasury management activity and the actual prudential indicators for 2024/25
- b) explained that the Council held £19.127m of investments which was £1.584m higher than at 31 March 2024 as detailed within the investment profile at Appendix A, and section 4.3
- c) highlighted that the Council's total debt (including leases and lease-type arrangements) at 31 March 2025 was £107.286m as detailed within Appendix A, and section 4
- d) stated that Actual investment interest earned on balances was £1.131m compared to £661,000 estimated in the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-29 as outlined at Appendix A and section 9
- e) invited members' questions and comments.

RESOLVED that:

- a) The actual prudential indicators contained within appendices A and B be

noted by the Performance Scrutiny Committee.

b) The Annual Treasury Management report for 2024/25 be noted.

7. Quarter 4 2024/25 Operational Performance Report

The Business Intelligence Officer:

- a. presented an outturn performance summary report to Performance Scrutiny Committee of the Council's performance in Quarter 4 of 2024/25
- b. highlighted that out of the 87 performance measures monitored during the quarter, 64 had targets allocated to them, of these targeted measures 44 (68.7%) were within or exceeding the targets set
- c. reported that when read together, Appendices A and B aimed to enhance the range of performance information presented via the quarterly reporting process and make it easier to assess and scrutinise the performance of each priority/portfolio
- d. advised that as set out in section 3, Appendix A provided an overview of the Council's performance by Directorate and Vision 2025 theme. The highlight report detailed some of the positive work of the Council during the quarter, and the impact of this was also included in Appendix A.
- e. advised of specific areas to monitor within each Directorate as outlined at item 5 of her report
- f. invited members' comments and questions.

Question: What parameters were being considered with regards to the Climate Change priority?

Response: The Business Intelligence Officer confirmed that she would liaise with the relevant officer and feedback the information to the Committee.

Question: Why hadn't appraisals been carried out for all staff?

Response: A new model had been introduced which required all staff to have had an appraisal between April and June. This allowed staff to monitor them more robustly. An extension had been given to Customer Services staff due to a higher number of employees in that area. The Quarter 1 report in August should show a healthy percentage as most appraisals would have been carried out by then.

Question: Was it possible to provide percentage figures for appraisals at future meetings going forward?

Response: The Assistant Director for Strategic Development confirmed that she would provide the figures at a future Performance Scrutiny Committee meeting.

The Business Intelligence Officer advised Members that it was important to note that only appraisals recorded on the I-Trent system were part of the Performance report.

Question: How had the recent liquidation of Destination Lincolnshire impacted the Council?

Response: It was confirmed that the funding for the 2025/26 Service Level Agreement had not been released and so the funds remained available to help market the city and its events through an alternate model, once it emerged. Further information on alternative arrangements for the events programme would be shared with Performance Scrutiny Committee at a future meeting.

Question: In relation to Leisure Centres and the new contract provider being announced, could more financial information be presented to members at future committees?

Response: Going forward, a review of the new contract would be carried out and more information could be fed into the system.

Question: What were the Nature Towns and Cities Funding staff employed to deliver?

Response: The Business Intelligence Officer confirmed that she would liaise with the relevant officer and feedback her findings to the Committee.

Question: Would the City of Lincoln Council continue to run the Greyfriars and Barbican buildings once refurbishment works are finished?

Response: Greyfriars was a Council asset and would be leased to Heritage Trust Lincolnshire once works were complete. Heritage Trust Lincolnshire were working in partnership with the Council.. The Barbican was not a Council asset;, it belonged to the Co-op. The Council was the accountable body for the grant and once the project was complete, the lease would be obtained by the University.

Question: What was the reason behind the backlog of benefit requests? How could they be resolved?

Response: The Assistant Director for Strategic Development confirmed that she would liaise with the relevant officer and feedback the information to the Committee.

RESOLVED that:

- a) The Business Intelligence Officer to feedback to the Committee the parameters used for the Climate Change Priority.
- b) The Assistant Director for Strategic Development to provide the percentage of appraisals carried out at the next Quarterly Performance Scrutiny Committee.
- c) The Business Intelligence Officer to provide clarity on what the Nature and Towns funding staff were employed to deliver.
- d) The Assistant Director for Strategic Development to provide the Committee with clarity on the backlog of benefits requests.
- e) The contents of the Quarter 4 2024/25 Operational Performance Report, found at Appendices A and B, ahead of the report being presented to Executive on 2 June 2025, be noted.
- f) Performance Scrutiny Committee confirmed that the format of the performance report continued to meet their requirements.

8. Annual Scrutiny Report 2024/25

The Democratic Services Officer:

- a) presented the Scrutiny Annual Report for 2024/25 for comments, prior to being referred to Full Council for approval
- b) advised that within the Constitution it states that the scrutiny committees should produce an annual report to Council. Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees did produce individual reports to Council during the municipal year, however, the attached Scrutiny Annual Report summarised the work of the scrutiny committees for the full year and highlighted the key achievements made under scrutiny in 2024/25.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

9. Draft Work Programme 2025/26

The Chair:

- a) presented the Draft Work Programme for 2025/26 as detailed at Appendix A of the report
- b) advised that the work programme for the Performance Scrutiny Committee was put forward annually for approval by Council; the work programme was then regularly updated throughout the year in consultation with the Performance Scrutiny Committee and its Chair
- c) reported that items had been scheduled in accordance with the existing work programme and officers' guidance regarding the meetings at which the most up-to-date information could be reported to the committee; the work programme also included the list of portfolio holders under scrutiny
- d) requested any relevant comments or changes to the proposed work programme for 2025/26.

RESOLVED that the work programme for 2025/26 be noted with a view to continuously update when necessary going forward.

10. Strategic Risk Register - Quarterly Review

The Financial Services Manager:

- a) presented Performance Scrutiny Committee with a status report of the Strategic Risk Register as at the end of the fourth quarter 2024/25
- b) stated that since the last report to Members in February, the Strategic Risk Register had been refreshed and updated by the Risk Owners and Corporate Management Team. This involved reviewing each risk in terms of the level of assessed risk, control measures in place and mitigating actions required and identifying that there had been some positive movement in the Risk Register. It also considered whether there were new risks that needed to be assessed.
- c) reported that the Strategic Risk Register currently contained fifteen risks as follows:

- 1) Failure to engage & influence effectively with the Council's strategic partners, council staff and all stakeholders to deliver against the Council's new Vision 2030.
 - 2) Failure to deliver a sustainable Medium-Term Financial Strategy that supported delivery of the Council's Vision (specifically in relation to the General Fund).
 - 3) Failure to deliver the Towards Financial Sustainability Programme.
 - 4) Failure to ensure compliance with existing and new statutory duties/functions.
 - 5) Failure to protect the local authority's long-term vision due to changing structures and relationships in local government and impact on size, scale and scope of the Council.
 - 6) Unable to meet the emerging changes required in the Council's culture, behaviour and skills to support the delivery of the Council's vision, transformational journey to one Council approach and service delivery.
 - 7) Insufficient levels of resilience and capacity exist in order to deliver key strategic projects & services within the Council.
 - 8) Decline in the economic prosperity within the City Centre.
 - 9) Failure to deliver key strategic projects.
 - 10) Failure of the Council's key contractors and partners to remain sustainable and continue to deliver value for money.
 - 11) Failure to protect the vulnerable in relation to the Council's PREVENT and compliance with safeguarding and domestic abuse duties.
 - 12) Failure to mitigate against the risk of a successful cyber-attack against the Council.
 - 13) Impacts of uncertainty of Government policies on migration policy, asylum dispersal, early prison release etc. on the Council's service delivery, capacity and MTFS as well as the impacts on housing, communities and the economic vitality of the City Centre.
 - 14) Failure to deliver critical services in an emergency situation.
 - 15) Failure of service delivery leading to reputational impacts on the Council and adverse financial implications.
- d) provided an overview of how risks were measured and evaluated and while there had been some positive movements in terms of the implementation of control measures, there had also been some external factors which had results in a change to the assessed levels of likelihood and/or impact
- e) welcomed members comments and questions.

RESOLVED that the Council's strategic risks as at the end of Quarter 4 2024/25 be noted.

11. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item(s) of business because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be a disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

12. Strategic Risk Register - Quarterly Review

The Financial Services Manager:

- a. provided members with the revised Strategic Risk Register as attached at Appendix A.
- b. invited members' questions and comments.

RESOLVED that the Strategic Risk Register as at the end of the third quarter 2024/25 be noted.

Inclusive Economic Growth

1. Building Control
2. Car Parks
3. Commercial Development
4. Contaminated Land
5. Cultural and Events Activities Including:
 - Christmas Lights
6. Economic Development and Growth, including:
 - Western Growth Corridor
 - Sustainable Urban Extensions
7. Heritage
8. Innovation and Inward Investment including:
 - Lincoln Science and Innovation Park
 - Smart City initiatives
9. Markets
10. Planning, including:
 - Central Lincolnshire Local Plan
 - Regional and National Planning Policies
11. Public Realm including:
 - City Centre Masterplan
 - Cornhill Area Redevelopment
12. Regeneration Including:
 - Neighbourhood Revitalisation
 - Community Planning
13. Small Business Support
14. Tourism and Marketing
15. Transport including:
 - Transport Hub
 - Connectivity
 - Infrastructure

Reducing Inequality

1. Anti-Poverty Strategy
2. Asylum Seekers
3. Benefits Advice and take-up, including:
 - Housing Benefit
 - Council Tax Support
4. Community Cohesion Strategy
5. Community Strategies and Policies
6. Corporate Social Responsibility including:
 - Hate Crime
 - Lincolnshire Safer Communities
7. Discretionary Rate Relief Policy
8. Financial Inclusion, including:
 - Adult Learning;
 - Young People.
9. Prevent
10. Public Protection including:
 - Antisocial Behavior
 - Noise Nuisance
 - CCTV
 - Domestic Violence
11. Skills and Training, including The Network;
12. Social Value Policy
13. Universal Credit
14. Welfare Advice
15. Welfare Reform

Quality Housing

1. Affordable Housing
2. Discretionary Housing Payments
3. Estate Management
4. Fleet Management
5. Health and Wellbeing, particularly its links to good quality housing
 - Physical and Mental Health
 - Suicide
6. Homelessness Prevention
7. House Building
8. Housing Investment and Decent Homes
9. Housing Repairs and Maintenance
10. Housing Revenue Account and Landlord Services including:
 - Tenant Engagement
 - Housing Stock Options
11. Lettings and Allocations including:
 - Rogue Landlords
 - Trusted Landlord Accreditation Scheme
12. Rough Sleepers
13. Strategic Housing
14. Supported Housing

Remarkable Place

1. Allotments
2. Cemeteries and Crematorium
3. Community Centres
4. Environmental Contracts including:
 - Refuse Collection and Recycling
 - Highways
 - Open Space and Grounds Maintenance

- Public Conveniences
 - Cleansing
5. Food Health and Safety
 6. Licensing
 7. Parks and Recreation
 8. Pollution Control
 9. Sport and Leisure facilities to promote physical activity

Climate and Corporate Strategy

1. Climate Change (linkage to Local Plan)
2. Low Carbon Agenda
3. Equality and Diversity: Employer perspective
4. Corporate Communications and Media Relations
5. Corporate Strategy including:
 - Strategic Plan (Vision 2020)
 - Annual Report
 - Strategic Partnerships
6. Human Resources including:
 - People Strategy
 - Apprenticeships
 - Trade Union Liaison
 - Organisational Culture and Core Values
7. Regional and Sub-Regional Governance Arrangements including Devolution
8. Legal (excluding Electoral and Democratic Services)

Customer Experience, Review and Resources

1. Audit
2. Central Support Services
3. Complaints Handling
4. Corporate Reviews
5. Customer Engagement including:
6. Customer Services
7. Contact Centre
8. Democratic and Electoral Services including:
 - Voter Registration
 - Democratic Engagement
9. ICT
10. Performance including Systems and Process
11. Strategic Information including:
 - Corporate Evidence Bases
 - Lincoln City Profile

12. Asset Management
13. Civic and Twinning
14. Corporate Health and Safety
15. Emergency Planning
16. Finance including:
 - Financial Strategy
 - Financial Position
17. Procurement (excluding social value)
18. Revenues
19. Risk Management and Governance including:
 - Insurance
20. Specific Major Projects (Excluding Major Developments)
21. Towards Financial Sustainability including Commercialisation
22. Equality and Diversity:
 - Service user perspective

This page is intentionally blank.

REPORT UNDER RULE 2(vi) OF THE COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES**REPORT BY COUNCILLOR LUCINDA PRESTON, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR REDUCING INEQUALITY**

1	Introduction
1.1	<p>Our work to combat the challenges residents and businesses face, especially with regards to cost of living, continues. The many teams who have contributed to this report, have played a vital role in alleviating these pressures, even with the increased influx of customers this past year.</p> <p>This portfolio encompasses a wide range of services that are integral to our provision of support, within our communities. The dedication and work of these teams has allowed us to make a major impact in the last 12 months. I would like to thank all those involved for the level of professionalism and care shown by both staff and members, to those who need it most. These are challenging times but with their help, we have, and will continue, to alleviate the pressures faced by those in need and enable them to fulfil their potential.</p> <p>I would also like to thank the Council's partners, especially within the third sector, who play a fundamental role in ensuring our residents receive the support they require. This partner support has been provided at a time when they are facing many challenges themselves as a result of the current economic climate.</p> <p>In the following pages of my report I have provided an update on each of the service areas, which fall under the responsibility of my portfolio. These updates focus on the period following the previous report to committee (July 2024 to June 2025).</p> <p>Where available, performance information has been included within the service area updates. Appendix B also includes the latest performance measure outturns and supporting service area commentary for those strategic performance measures under my portfolio.</p> <p>I am new to the role of Portfolio Holder for Reducing Inequality and would like to recognise the outstanding contribution of my predecessor Councillor Sue Burke to this role. Sue is remembered for her commitment to equality and fairness as well as her boundless compassion and passion for this portfolio. We miss her very much.</p>
2	Welfare and Benefits Advice
2.1	<p>The Council's Shared Service for Revenues and Benefits brings together benefit payments and the collection of the revenue due to both Councils under one team, working under the LiNK label. As part of collecting monies owed and awarding benefits, it is essential that the team are confident that any debt is collected fairly and that individuals are claiming everything that they are entitled to in terms of discounts, grants and benefits. As an extension to this, they also offer a professional money advice</p>

	service, giving residents with problems debt support in tackling and resolving their situation.
2.2	<p>The Welfare Team is a semi-independent arm of LiNK, working across both Lincoln and North Kesteven, providing advice and assistance in claiming benefits. Their focus is on helping residents to navigate the complex rules and entitlement conditions, of the full range of welfare benefits. Additionally, the team provides advice and assistance on pensions, grants, charitable payments and tax credits. They report through the Customer Service Team to ensure that their focus is entirely on the individual and to ensure impartiality of advice.</p> <p>The debt casework undertaken by the team is managed within the regulations set out by the Financial Conduct Authority. The Council is a member of the Community Money Advice organisation who provide training for the debt advisers and who monitor quality by undertaking regular visits, file reviews and an annual report. These reports have been positive throughout, and the team are highly rated for their professionalism, independence and the quality of the advice and support that they give. The last file audit awarded a 100% rating and applauded the quality of record-keeping, adherence to FCA regulations and outcome achieved. Some of the policies and procedures that have been developed by the team have been shared across the organisation as best practice.</p>
2.3	In the last financial year, looking at Lincoln residents only, the team advised 5,616 individual customers and helped them to secure £33,744 of additional weekly benefit payments. In most cases these payments continue to be paid throughout the year and assuming that these all continue in payment, the annual income of the people helped has increased by £1,754,700. Additionally, since many benefits are backdated on award, there were lump sum payments totalling £335,895. In total, the team have brought in an excess of £2 million of extra money into the pockets of Lincoln residents and the Lincoln economy.
3	Welfare Reform, Universal Credit and Cost of Living Support
3.1	The Cost of Living Support Team continues to provide vital support to residents of Lincoln. The Cost of Living Co-ordinator role, originally funded for 1-year through strategic plan monies, has been extended by a further 18 months, recognising the capacity needed in this key area of work. The team continues to receive extremely high levels of demand from residents struggling with cost of living pressures, requiring both emergency support as well as longer-term and preventative assistance.
3.2	<p><u>Household Support Fund</u></p> <p>The Household Support Fund (HSF) is now in its' seventh wave ('HSF7'), which runs for this financial year 2025/26. HSF is a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) funded scheme, aiming to provide emergency support around food, fuel and other wider related essentials, with HSF7 having a focus on preventative support too. The scheme is being delivered working closely with Lincolnshire County Council and other district Councils.</p> <p>HSF wave 6 ('HSF6') ran from 1st October 2024 to 31st March 2025, with the following support being provided both directly through our Cost of Living Support Team as well as through a range of fantastic partner organisations throughout the city:</p>

Household Composition	Households with a Disabled Person	Households with Children	Households with a Pensioner	Other	
Number of Households Helped	1,123	1,498	247	1,121	
Amount of Award	£80,467	£143,520	£30,249	£73,083	Total Paid £327,319

For 2025/26, £0.5m is available for City of Lincoln Council to deliver HSF7 – the team is geared up to ensure an efficient system is in place to support residents, but also a system that focuses on longer-term preventative support – for example, diversion of foodbank usage to accessing Lincoln Community Grocery (and the associated wraparound personal support provided there). HSF7 has recently ‘gone live’ (in terms of both direct delivery by the Council and also through a range of trusted partner organisations), - demands on this fund have already been high.

The 2025 Spending Review set out to reform crisis support. This year it has allocated £842 million per year to reform crisis support. This includes the first ever multi-year settlement to transform the Household Support Fund into a new Crisis and Resilience Fund incorporating Discretionary Housing Payments and funding councils like City of Lincoln Council to support some of the poorest households in order to alleviate child hunger outside of term time. This longer-term funding commitment will enable the Council to provide further preventative support to communities as well as to assist people facing an immediate financial crisis. At the time of writing, we are awaiting further details, however as a Council are committed to trying to influence the shape of this fund moving forward.

3.3

Universal Credit

The ongoing managed migration of Universal Credit (UC) continues to result in significant demands on officers within our Revenues and Benefits service. The current focus by DWP is moving over customers claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), where they are in scope to claim UC. Many ESA customers are vulnerable and are likely to need support from our team, as well as through working with other partners such as DWP and Citizens Advice.

4

Housing Benefit / Council Tax Support

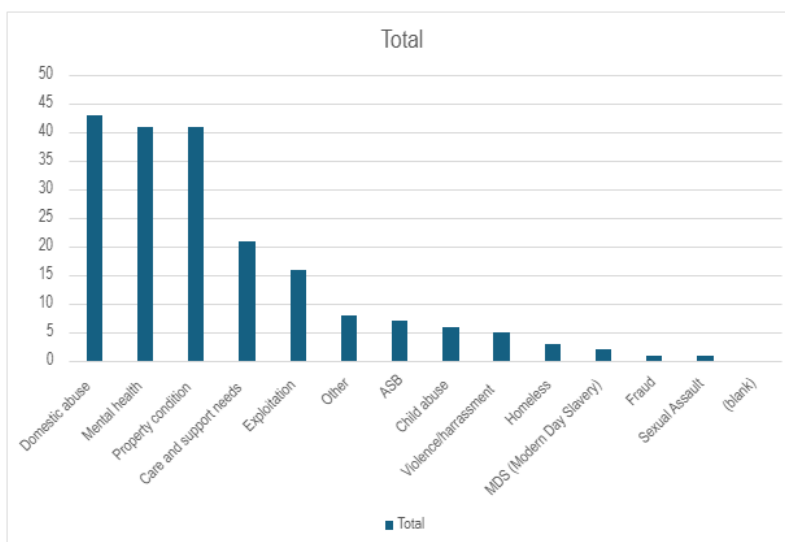
4.1

The Council’s Benefits Team continues to administer a significant number of Housing Benefit (just under 3,000) and Council Tax Support (just under 8,000) claims. Although the Housing Benefit claim caseload has reduced due to migration of certain cases to Universal Credit, demands on the team remain high with associated UC-related documents, as well as the volume of cost of living support and Discretionary Housing Payments applications.

4.2	<p>Despite the challenges, pressures and demands on the Benefits Team, New Claims and Changes of Circumstance for Housing Benefit continue to be processed promptly, with positive average processing times being achieved.</p> <p>In 2024/25, New Claims were processed within an average of 13.20 days and Changes of Circumstance in 3.72 days. These rates of performance compare favourably ahead of national average processing times, with the latest available national figures (in respect of quarter 3 2024/25) being New Claims average 20 days and Changes of Circumstance average 7 days.</p>																														
4.3	<p>The Council's Benefits Team also process Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) applications. These payments assist customers requiring additional help with housing costs, usually on a short-term basis. Payments are limited to a fund provided by central government each year, any payments above this figure are a direct cost to the Council.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th><th>City of Lincoln Council central government DHP grant</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>2025/26</td><td>£132,330</td></tr> <tr><td>2024/25</td><td>£132,330</td></tr> <tr><td>2023/24</td><td>£132,330</td></tr> <tr><td>2022/23</td><td>£132,330</td></tr> <tr><td>2021/22</td><td>£186,707</td></tr> <tr><td>2020/21</td><td>£250,113</td></tr> <tr><td>2019/20</td><td>£178,674</td></tr> <tr><td>2018/19</td><td>£208,624</td></tr> <tr><td>2017/18</td><td>£242,505</td></tr> <tr><td>2016/17</td><td>£173,675</td></tr> <tr><td>2015/16</td><td>£139,678</td></tr> <tr><td>2014/15</td><td>£194,308</td></tr> <tr><td>2013/14</td><td>£199,741</td></tr> <tr><td>2012/13</td><td>£98,865</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>As highlighted earlier in this report, the new Crisis and Resilience Fund will incorporate Discretionary Housing Payments.</p>		City of Lincoln Council central government DHP grant	2025/26	£132,330	2024/25	£132,330	2023/24	£132,330	2022/23	£132,330	2021/22	£186,707	2020/21	£250,113	2019/20	£178,674	2018/19	£208,624	2017/18	£242,505	2016/17	£173,675	2015/16	£139,678	2014/15	£194,308	2013/14	£199,741	2012/13	£98,865
	City of Lincoln Council central government DHP grant																														
2025/26	£132,330																														
2024/25	£132,330																														
2023/24	£132,330																														
2022/23	£132,330																														
2021/22	£186,707																														
2020/21	£250,113																														
2019/20	£178,674																														
2018/19	£208,624																														
2017/18	£242,505																														
2016/17	£173,675																														
2015/16	£139,678																														
2014/15	£194,308																														
2013/14	£199,741																														
2012/13	£98,865																														
4.4	<p>Despite rising rents in the city as well as Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates (used to assess Housing Benefit and Universal Credit housing costs entitlement) not reflective of rental rates in the city, funding has decreased in recent years and been frozen since 2022/23, meaning officers regularly need to review guidance regarding making awards.</p>																														
4.5	<p>£125,186 of the 2024/25 government grant for DHP was spent (95%). There was a slight underspend in 2024/25 partly due to a more 'cautious' approach being taken in this financial year with it being the first year Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) incomes were not disregarded for DHP assessment to allow for more DHP being allocated to private sector cases with a 'cap' in place. This 'cap' is being raised in 2025/26, so it is not envisaged there will be a DHP underspend this current financial year.</p>																														
5	Lincoln Anti-Poverty Strategy																														
5.1	<p>Officers continue to refresh the Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy, working collaboratively with a range of key partners in the city, the approach being led under the name 'Lincoln</p>																														

	<p>Against Poverty’. The development of this strategy is being supported through the work of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee. A range of data collection exercises have taken place as well as a truly positive and inspiring assembly event held in January 2025 at the Engine Shed (Lincoln Against Poverty - sharing, collaborating and celebrating event). The data collected and assessment of current, emerging and future needs is currently being collated, and the intention is that a refreshed strategy will be presented to Executive and Council in November 2025.</p>
6	Discretionary Rate Relief Policy
6.1	<p>The Council’s Business Rates Growth Policy, approved by Executive in July 2018, provides a time-limited rate relief discount to new and extended business premises within the city, in the interest of building the Business Rates base, supporting economic growth and job creation. Eligibility for this scheme is dependent on the extent of the business premises creation or extension, location and the impact of the new business or expansion plans on the local economy. The impact of Covid-19 meant applications under this policy reduced, and applications/spend at reduced levels has continued. In 2024/25, a total of £35k was awarded under this policy.</p> <p>An internal ‘panel’ meets quarterly (or more regularly if needed) to consider businesses that have applied for this relief, or to try and target businesses who may benefit from this relief (i.e. if we have intelligence that a business is considering moving into Lincoln or expanding – could we look to offer some Growth Relief from their business rates for up to 3 years?).</p>
7	Financial Inclusion
7.1	<p>Financial inclusion continues to be a key objective and factor in many areas of our Revenues and Benefit shared service’s work. The Lincolnshire Financial Inclusion Partnership (LFIP) is currently chaired by the Assistant Director of Shared Revenues and Benefits for North Kesteven District Council and City of Lincoln Council, - which brings together organisations and partners to promote and raise the profile of financial inclusion across the county.</p>
7.2	<p>In 2024/25 LFIP led a successful countywide Pension Credit take-up promotion campaign, as well as running a very well attended (over 130 people from a wide range of organisations) conference in February 2025 focusing on several key areas of financial inclusion related matters.</p>
7.3	<p>Three key areas of high-profile engagement by LFIP in 2025/26, are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate communications as and when proposed/confirmed further welfare reforms are introduced (e.g. those relating to PIP), but for the meantime with a ‘<i>don’t worry, get in touch</i>’ message/approach. • Co-ordination of ‘Talk Money Week’ activities in Lincolnshire during November 2025: Talk Money Week Money and Pensions Service ; <p>A conference to be held in February 2026 (date and venue TBC), to follow on from the highly successful conferences held in Boston (2023), Grantham (2024) and Skegness (2025).</p>

7.4	<p>In terms of the well-documented ongoing national cost of living pressures, both partner Councils continue to review and update web pages dedicated to initiatives to try and assist residents with cost of living support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cost of Living Support – City of Lincoln Council• Cost of Living Support North Kesteven District Council (n-kesteven.gov.uk) <p>Also, LFIP has developed a whole range of cost of living support web pages and information through a dedicated area of the Connect to Support Lincolnshire website: Money Talk Lincs Lincolnshire .</p>																								
7.5	<p>In 2024/25, a proportion of UK Shared Prosperity Funding was allocated to help deliver cost of living initiatives. Projects delivered included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lincoln Community Grocery vouchers for new tenants of City of Lincoln Council or placed in accommodation by the local authority, expanded to YMCA Lincolnshire• Emergency fuel vouchers• Funding accommodation improvement at a homelessness charity• Research work into cost of living support requirements for those whose first language is not English• Grants for community venues• School uniforms provision• Tools library																								
8	Safeguarding																								
8.1	<p>Progress continues to be made to embed safeguarding across the Council. The number of internal referrals from officers has increased which reflects staff training, although it is anticipated that the statistics are also indicative in an upward trend linked to increasing levels of vulnerability and complexity among some adults in the city.</p> <table><tr><th>Safeguarding referrals (adults)</th><th>2020/2 1</th><th>2021/2 2</th><th>2022/2 3</th><th>2023/2 4</th><th>2024/2 5</th></tr><tr><td></td><td>93</td><td>69</td><td>154</td><td>240</td><td>390</td></tr></table> <table><tr><th>Safeguarding referrals (children and young people)</th><th>2020/2 1</th><th>2021/2 2</th><th>2022/2 3</th><th>2023/2 4</th><th>2024/2 5</th></tr><tr><td></td><td>10</td><td>4</td><td>27</td><td>46</td><td>44</td></tr></table> <p>The below graph outlines the main categories of concern for internal safeguarding referrals.</p>	Safeguarding referrals (adults)	2020/2 1	2021/2 2	2022/2 3	2023/2 4	2024/2 5		93	69	154	240	390	Safeguarding referrals (children and young people)	2020/2 1	2021/2 2	2022/2 3	2023/2 4	2024/2 5		10	4	27	46	44
Safeguarding referrals (adults)	2020/2 1	2021/2 2	2022/2 3	2023/2 4	2024/2 5																				
	93	69	154	240	390																				
Safeguarding referrals (children and young people)	2020/2 1	2021/2 2	2022/2 3	2023/2 4	2024/2 5																				
	10	4	27	46	44																				



Whilst the main categories detailed are self-explanatory; property condition includes differing levels of severity, i.e. hoarding, those properties that are “Filthy and Verminous” (Public Health Act 1936) as well as properties with significant repairs issues.

8.2

Mental health encompasses those with significant illness to those that are requesting crisis support from employees.

“Other” is mixture of suspicious/concerning behaviour that cannot be categorised by the above options.

The Council receives a significant number of safeguarding reports that relate to or include concerns for mental health and wellbeing. To increase awareness of the support available and the pathways to access this, the Safeguarding Lead organised a briefing with the S.75 Team and Talking Therapies who are part of Lincolnshire County Council and Lincolnshire Partnership Foundation Trust. This was well attended by services across the Council including, HR, Communications, Housing Tenancy, Private Sector Housing and Customer Services.

Lincoln is represented weekly at Level 2 MACE (Multi Agency Child Exploitation) due to the number of children/young people linked to exploitation in the city. 108 cases were heard at Level 2 MACE in 2024/25; it should be noted that this number comprises victims, persons of concern and locations, and includes repeat cases. The vast amount of exploitation is linked to ‘county lines’. Lincoln has by far the highest number of cases heard at Level 2 MACE compared to neighbouring Lincolnshire authorities, it has the highest attendance rate in the County for Level 2 MACE multi-agency meetings which demonstrates the Council’s ongoing commitment to supporting vulnerable young people.

Lincoln has a higher level of suspected child exploitation activity in the city compared to neighbouring areas and specific training for key frontline officers has been undertaken on how to complete an ‘Op. Insignia’ referral form using the necessary tools and general overview of Child Exploitation.

The Council’s Vulnerable Adults Panel (VAP) has been running for almost a year now. The purpose of VAP is to provide a multi-agency environment for case discussions to support adults with more complex needs, who are not, for various reasons, currently able to access single agency support. Following a successful pilot, VAP is now accepting referrals city-wide from partner agencies such as Police, Probation and Neighbourhood Team.

During 2024/25 there has been a substantial number of Lincoln-based domestic abuse cases heard at the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). All cases heard at MARAC involve domestic abuse where there is deemed to be at high risk of death or serious injury to the victim. The breakdown highlights the increase in numbers of Lincoln cases being heard at the forum. The full year breakdown of MARAC cases is provided in 'figure 6':

	Total	Of which are tenants	Of which are homeless applicants
01/01/2024	26	10	Monitoring commenced in Jan 2025
01/02/2024	28	9	
01/03/2024	24	14	
01/04/2024	20	10	
01/05/2024	22	5	
01/06/2024	19	11	
01/07/2024	26	9	
01/08/2024	19	10	
01/09/2024	20	7	
01/10/2024	20	10	
01/11/2024	20	8	
01/12/2024	20	8	
TOTAL	283	111	
01/01/2025	33	15	7
01/02/2025	23	8	4
01/03/2025	23	4	2
01/04/2025	31	13	5

9	Skills and Training
9.1	Officers continue to engage with a range of skills and employment related organisations (for example, DWP, Lincoln College) seeking joined up opportunities. The Assistant Director of Shared Revenues and Benefits sits on The Network (The Network – Careers advice, guidance and support for 16-24 year olds in Lincoln) Management Board, providing a link into ways in which the Council may be able to support their vital work.
10	Housing Strategy
10.1	We have also been doing some work from a strategic perspective of trying to deliver a variety of housing options within the city that will help people have varying levels of support according to their needs.
11	Asylum Seekers and Refugees
11.1	We have welcomed families from Syria and Afghanistan into the city in the past, due to our involvement with the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Home Office are looking to

	accommodate asylum seekers and families from Afghanistan within the City. However, due to the lack of suitable and affordable accommodation we are still waiting for our first arrivals. The Council are working closely with the Strategic Migration Partnership and our partner Councils in the East Midlands area, to facilitate this and share our experiences.
11.2	Additionally, the city has a number of Ukrainian Refugees living independently and with host families. The Council has worked closely with Lincolnshire County Council and other local districts to undertake property and safeguarding checks to ensure they are living in safe and suitable accommodation.
12	Neighbourhood Working
12.1	<p><u>Sincil Bank Revitalisation Programme</u></p> <p>The previous report work has continued on the key projects agreed, as part of the Sincil Bank Revitalisation Programme. The objective continues to be on long term sustainable place making and community building.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Team continued to have slightly reduced capacity this year, due to the Neighbourhood Manager being seconded for two days each week. This secondment is to support the Communities and Place element of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) programme. The Project Assistant has also been partly seconded to deliver the Community Grants programme. Despite this reduced capacity, the team has continued to progress initiatives in Sincil Bank, working with partners to deliver a range of key improvements to the area as well as residents' access to services.</p>
12.2	<p><u>Highways Infrastructure</u></p> <p>Funded by the Towns Fund, Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) has received £3.1m to make changes to the highway's infrastructure in the area.</p> <p>Lincolnshire County Council is leading on the improvements to Sincil Bank and the City of Lincoln Council is leading on the improvements to four key gateways into the area.</p> <p>The Highways element was complete during April 2025, aside from the installation of a number of planters. This work is likely to be completed by the end of June.</p> <p>Following a consultation event in November 2023, the gateways that have been prioritised are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Portland Street / High Street · Portland Street / Canwick Road · Sincil Bank / LNER Stadium · Sincil Bank / Tentercroft Street <p>Work is yet to start on the Gateways: it is anticipated that this should commence later in the summer.</p>
12.3	<p><u>Hermit Street</u></p> <p>The Hermit Street element of the revitalisation programme, has seen the creation of eleven new family homes in the Sincil Bank area. The new homes have been built to</p>

	<p>high environmental standards and include modern infrastructure such as new drainage, lighting, and utilities. The project has also generated significant social value, including community engagement and educational opportunities. For example, 100% of the supply chain spend was with micro, small, and medium businesses, role play equipment was donated to a local nursery for their outdoor area, pupils from two local schools were supported with transport to the construction week at Lincolnshire Showground and a wooden plaque was designed by a local social enterprise for the community garden on the corner of Hermit Street and Portland Street.</p> <p>The former garage site on Hermit Mews has been transformed, with the existing garage block and garages adjacent to the flats demolished. All new homes were handed over to tenants in October 2024.</p>
12.4	<p><u>Cleaner Safer Streets</u></p> <p>The team continue to support initiatives to reduce incidents of fly tipping in the Sincil Bank area.</p> <p>A Week of Action took place between the 15th and 19th July. During this week of action, Lincolnshire Police's Eddie Van (Engagement, Digital Delivery, Information and Events) was located outside Wyvern House over three days. The van displayed key information on how to report fly tipping, how to get rid of unwanted waste, bin collection and what goes in black, brown, and green wheelie bins. Also included were key messages on keeping Sincil Bank a cleaner, greener, and safer place to live. A documentary was produced by the University of Lincoln film and media students, working with Sincil Bank Rivercare and the Litter Pick Group. This documentary highlights the work conducted regularly by volunteers in the area.</p> <p>The Mini Police also conducted two street audits making notes of any fly tipping, graffiti, and side waste. These issues were then reported to the relevant service areas to resolve.</p> <p>Over the week of action, an officer from the Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Team conducted inspections. The area's CCTV assisted the Council to take enforcement action in two fly tipping cases. Four fixed penalty notices and six community protection warnings were also issued during the course of the week, with the Neighbourhood Team knocking on 143 doors in the area and speaking to 51 households about fly tipping. A full report outlining the impact of the week is available and will be used to inform a further week of action in 2025.</p> <p>Alongside this engagement activity, the team have funded an additional CCTV camera on the corner of Hermit Street as well as the installation of planters by Green Synergy, on a corner that was previously one of the most prolific fly tipping hot spots in the area. Since installation in December, there have been no reports of any fly tipping.</p>
12.5	<p><u>Other key updates linked to the Sincil Bank Revitalisation Programme</u></p> <p>Alongside these physical interventions, the Neighbourhood Team has continued to work hard to engage with the community and build trusted relationships.</p> <p>An update on some of the engagement activity continuing in the area is provided below.</p>
12.6	<p><u>Sincil Bank Community Hub</u></p>

	<p>The Sincil Bank Community Hub, which is located on Portland Street, has continued to build relationships with residents and is established as a well-known location for people to seek advice. While the visits covered a wide range of issues, common themes include visiting for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · General information and advice · Meet with other residents / organisations · Report fly tipping / litter · Apply for resident parking permits. <p>Alongside members of the team, Citizens Advice and LEAN offer outreach services. Both of these are well attended by members of the community.</p>
12.7	<p><u>Lincoln Embracing All Nations (LEAN)</u></p> <p>To help ensure support is available for our culturally diverse communities, the Neighbourhood Team has been instrumental in creating an organisation called Lincoln Embracing All Nations (LEAN).</p> <p>LEAN has received external funding and appointed members of staff to advance the organisation and assist the various groups that support our communities in the city.</p> <p>LEAN has also continued to support groups to host events, a recent example being a popular International Women's Group.</p> <p>Additionally, work has continued towards the longer-term aspiration of LEAN, which is to have a city-wide location that will act as a focal point for our diverse communities. The Neighbourhood Team are working with LEAN to create a base at St Peter at Gowts Church Hall.</p>
12.8	<p>The Neighbourhood Team has supported three main events in the area over the past twelve months.</p> <p>The team has supported Lincoln City Foundation to organise the second Community World Cup. This took place on the 17th May and built on a previous event that was held last May. This was another successful event bringing together the City's diverse community, with an estimation of over 600 people attending on the day. I visited this inspiring event: it was wonderful to see such a spirit of fun, competitiveness and community.</p> <p>The team worked with Lincolnshire Police to hold a Community Forum in October. This gave residents the opportunity to meet their local Policing Team and discuss any issues of concern.</p> <p>The team also supported a local community group known as Maze Matters to host "Sincil Bank by the Sea" in July. This is the fourth time that this event has happened, making it a regular highlight in the neighbourhood.</p>
12.9	<p><u>Neighbourhood Working Evaluation</u></p> <p>Rose Regeneration has been commissioned to measure the impact of the interventions in Sincil Bank, provide advice on the legacy of the work in the area, advise on the phased move from the area and document any lessons learnt that could inform the next phase of Neighbourhood Working.</p>

	<p>This report is now complete, and the findings were reported to the Council's Executive on the 3 June. The report includes the findings of surveys conducted with groups / organisations who have received funding from the team. 80% of respondents rated the support provided to individual residents as being very strong or strong, and 77% rated the impact on building the capacity of local residents to run activities and events as being very strong or strong. Below is an example of feedback received:</p> <p><i>"There has been a definite change in perception about the Portland Street area and that things can be achieved here."</i></p> <p>These findings are included in Appendix C to this report.</p>
12.10	<p>Rose Regeneration have also conducted more in depth interviews with projects that the team have supported. Below are two examples of notable quotes from these interviews:</p> <p><i>"LEAN wouldn't have happened without the Neighbourhood Working Team – they get it, they see the need and they invest in looking at good practice outside of Lincoln and how to make it happen in Sincil Bank... they play the long game."</i></p> <p><i>"Residents are willing to help with maintenance and ongoing works and that community ownership will bring sustainability."</i></p>
12.11	<p>The report also highlights the work that the team has carried out in connecting with external organisations and bringing together organisations in ways that have harnessed resources and investment, for the local area that would not have happened without this intervention.</p> <p>As part of this evaluation, Rose Regeneration has looked at capturing the less tangible outcomes delivered through the work in the area. The analysis shows for every £1.00 invested in Neighbourhood Working, £3.20 of social value has been generated.</p> <p>Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a way of developing a value for the less tangible outcomes delivered through Neighbourhood Working. The evaluation has looked at how the Community Hub and Programme have led to new ways of working with residents, local groups and partners; increased access to services; and improved the cleanliness and appearance of streets and green spaces.</p> <p>Mapped against the Sustainable Development Goals, the pilot is making a significant contribution around 'Sustainable Communities and Cities'. A Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) analysis was undertaken to assess the value-for-money being delivered. The analysis reveals that Neighbourhood Working has a BCR of £2.48/£1. The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government appraisal guide (2023) ranks BCR; with anything above 2 as offering 'high' value for money. More information about the SROI and BCR analyses can be found in Appendix C.</p> <p>The report to Executive has also used this information to make recommendations on the future direction of the Neighbourhood Team.</p>

13	Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour
13.1	<p><u>Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour (PPASB Team)</u></p> <p>The Public Protection and Anti-Social Team (PPASB Team) operates to protect individuals, the community, and the amenity of the city. The team operates over a broad range of areas, with the core services providing a combination of both proactive and reactive activities.</p> <p>The areas covered by the service include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-social behaviour (ASB) • Youth ASB • Accumulation of waste • Animal welfare • Fly-tipping investigations • Bins on Streets • Licensing consultations • Littering • Management of Safety Warden service • Noise • Pests/ conditions of gardens • Housing referrals <p>The PPASB team receives an average of 4,000 service requests per year.</p>
13.2	<p><u>Enforcement Action</u></p> <p>Formal enforcement action is the last option when responding to service requests. Informal tools are prioritised, these tools include advice and guidance, letters, visits, informal mediation and partnership working. It is only when informal action fails, that the team will consider taking formal enforcement action. Formal enforcement action includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal notices • Fixed penalty notices • Injunctions • Closure notices/ orders • Prosecutions • Joint working with Housing to seek possession • Acceptable behaviour contracts • Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) <p>Appendix A sets out more detail on enforcement action taken.</p>
13.3	<p><u>Youth ASB</u></p> <p>Youth ASB has been a focus for both the PPASB team and the Police. There is a joint protocol agreed at the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership (Community Safety Partnership), which allows for an incremental approach to addressing Youth ASB. This process includes a stage warning system, the use of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs), referrals into youth support services and ultimately applications for injunctions.</p> <p>The team have established effective partnership working arrangements with the Police. This allows for identification of youths and effective enforcement/ engagement action. The teams ran a media campaign to spread awareness of the work that has taken place to address youth ASB. For the period of Jan 2024 to April 2025, the teams issued 197</p>

	<p>stage 1 warnings, 53 stage 2 warnings and 20 ABC's. Visits are carried out by the Police and PPASB Officers to the parents' houses, in an attempt to control the behaviours. The team are currently progressing an injunction application against a youth. Action is also taken against the parent's tenancy if the parents of the problematic youths are City of Lincoln Council tenants.</p>
13.4	<p><u>Safer Lincolnshire Partnership (SLP)</u></p> <p>The PPASB manager continues to represent City of Lincoln Council at the SLP, at an operational level. Community safety partnerships are a legal requirement for local authorities. Priorities are set for addressing ASB across the County. Useful processes have been created through the SLP. This includes the Youth ASB protocol and a Noxious Odour policy. These policies are used often by Officers within the PPASB and Policing teams.</p>
13.5	<p><u>City Centre Management</u></p> <p>City Centre Tasking meetings enable information sharing, priorities to be set, resources to be co-ordinated and understood, as well as emerging issues to be identified and fed into the City Centre and Uphill Management meeting.</p> <p>CCTV, Police, Car Parking Services, Lincoln BIG, Project Compass and the Rough Sleeper Team meet on a fortnightly basis to discuss ongoing and emerging issues within the city centre and our multi-Story Car Parks. This group share intelligence and formulate an operational response to issues, alongside setting and reviewing priorities for the two weeks ahead at each meeting.</p> <p>All the partners came together to create a City Centre Policing plan, which is currently at the stage of being signed off. The final plan will be published shortly.</p>
13.6	<p><u>Public Space Protection Orders</u></p> <p>There are currently three active PSPOs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A PSPO that covers the City Centre (and wider) that prohibits the consumption of intoxicating substances or having an open container of alcohol. 2. A PSPO that covers three Multi-Storey Car parks. 3. A PSPO, which prevents access to St Peters Passage. This PSPO was renewed in October 2024.
13.7	<p><u>Anti-Social Behaviour Risk Assessment Conference (ASBRAC)</u></p> <p>ASBRAC is co-ordinated by the PPASB team and chaired by the PPASB manager. This forum allows for partnership working to resolve high risk cases of ASB. These meetings are held monthly and have representation from all the relevant partner agencies. The group have dealt with approximately 4 cases per month and resolutions have been reached for all referrals into the group. This includes joint enforcement plans alongside support processes for the victims.</p> <p>The PPASB manager acts as an independent chair for cases where victims have requested an ASB Case review. These meetings have allowed for an independent oversight on cases across the county. City of Lincoln Council's case review requests</p>

	are chaired by an independent chair from one of the other partner agencies, that form the SLP.
13.8	<p><u>Safety Warden Service</u></p> <p>The Council submitted a bid into the Serious Violence fund. The total grant award is £54,384. This bid was successful and means that the Safety Warden service can continue to operate on a Friday and Saturday night. The service has proven to be invaluable in not only reducing crime and ASB, but also helping to ease the pressure on our emergency services by offering immediate support to those who need it. The successful bid will allow the service to continue through to April 2026.</p> <p>The Safety Warden service will also be operating on Saturday afternoons between the hours of 16:00pm and 22:00pm. This will be funded out of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioners 'Hot Spot patrol fund'. The estimated annual cost for this is £13,300.</p>
13.9	<p><u>PPASB Service Forward Look</u></p> <p>The focus for the next 12 months will include continuing to improve working relationships with Housing to tackle ASB within CoLC's housing stock. A service level agreement is currently going through the internal approval process. This agreement will clearly identify each team's responsibilities when it comes to tackling ASB.</p> <p>Two of the other District Councils have signed an extension to the contract for stray dog collection. This resulted in additional funding into the PPASB team to allow them to collect stray dogs for North Kesteven and South Kesteven, up until April 2026. The Police and Crime Commissioners Office (PCC) has received further funding for financial year 25/26, to provide a visible presence in identified hot spots of the City. CoLC's allocation of this funding is going to fund the Safety Wardens Service in the City Centre on Saturday afternoons.</p>
14	CCTV Service
14.1	From January 2024 to January 2025 the Council's CCTV service monitored 12,192 incidents, a 16% increase on the 2023 figures for this period. This can be accounted for by the return to double staffing of the CCTV control room. During this period the service also processed 816 reviews, an 18% increase on the previous period. Significantly, 1,028 Police evidence disks have been produced for criminal prosecutions as part of the Council's ongoing support for the police and commitment to public safety, which is an increase of 30%. It should also be noted that 227 internal and external reviews were completed, indicating an increase in support for other Council services with a growing demand for insurance and freedom of information requests.
14.2	The CCTV service continues to engage with multi-agency working to support the day and nighttime economy in the city. The service has continued to develop closer working relationships and present a transparent service as part of this work.
14.3	We are pleased to announce that two more members of the public have agreed to become lay visitors. This independent public group play an important role in quality assuring the work the service provides is transparent. This ensures that everyone's human rights and personal data, is protected and managed in accordance with

	government legislation. Visits to the Control Room from stakeholders, community groups and Councillors remain popular and have continued to increase.
14.4	The CCTV service has benefitted from additional Safer Street funding, which has enabled an extensive recruitment process attracting a record number of applicants for vacant positions. The service has been able to successfully fill these positions with high quality individuals. The new recruits have completed the SIA course and have been working alongside experienced operators for the past sixteen months. They are all now competent to manage the control room on their own if the need arises.
14.5	<p>Safer Street funding has also allowed the service to install 9 new cameras to the system. The camera locations were decided in consultation with the Police and Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Team with the aim to cover further areas of the city.</p> <p>A server room upgrade to support the addition of extra cameras to the system has also been completed and cameras have been installed internally and externally at the refurbished Cornhill Market. The service has also completed installations at the Moorland and Sudbrooke community centres and the Terrace on Flaxengate.</p> <p>Plans have been approved for a camera system to be installed at Temple Gardens and to upgrade and adopt the CCTV system at the Council run managed workspace on Limekiln Way.</p>
14.6	<p>Alongside the city centre, the service has continued to monitor various Council sites including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arboretum • Birchwood Leisure Centre • Boultham Park • City Hall • Derek Miller Court • Hamilton House • Hartsholme Park • Jarvis House • St Botolph's Court • Trent View • Yarborough Leisure Centre • Moorland Community Centre • Sudbrook Drive Community Centre • The Terrace
14.7	<p>Events hosted in the city have also been supported by the CCTV service, including football matches, the Lincoln 10k, cycling events, Lincoln Pride, Christmas lights switch on and any marches or protests.</p> <p>Footfall data for key events in the city including Steampunk and the Lincoln History weekend continues to be requested. Events in our parks are also monitored for numbers attending and any public order or health and safety concerns. This data enables officials to make informed decisions to ensure that these and any future events can take place with minimal issues.</p>

14.8	<p>The figures below provide a reminder of the incident numbers for the last 4 years recorded by the CCTV service; these are relatively consistent until the introduction of 24/7 double staffing which marks a distinct uplift in incidents recorded.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2021 - 9,637 • 2022 – 9,566 • 2023 – 9,905 • 2024 – 12,192
14.9	<p>Fly tipping incidents are still numerous; however, funding has been found for two dedicated PPASB officers to tackle this issue. Along with bins on streets, the service will continue to produce evidence disks for prosecution. The CCTV evidence has enabled the Public Protection & Anti-Social Behaviour Team to issue penalty notices to individuals who have been identified and so it is envisaged this robust enforcement approach to fly tipping will dissuade offenders moving forward.</p>
15	Lincoln Community Lottery
15.1	<p>Lincoln Community Lottery was launched in 2018 by the Council as a tool to help local causes to raise additional funds to support the work of their cause within the city. For each £1 ticket purchased, 50 pence goes towards the supporters chosen good cause, with an additional 10 pence supporting the Lincoln Lottery Community Fund.</p> <p>Since the lottery was launched, over £230k has been raised by the lottery to support local causes. This includes a mix of funds raised directly for causes, together with funds raised within the Lincoln Lottery Community Fund. For the period August 2023 to August 2024, £19,822 was raised directly for local causes by the lottery, with an additional £8,135 being raised towards the community fund. At the time of writing this report, 75 local causes are signed up to the lottery to use this as a fundraising tool.</p> <p>The Lincoln Lottery Community Fund is allocated on an annual basis. This involves consultation with supporters of the lottery / local residents, which is followed by an application and selection process. Information on the 2024 allocations from the fund is detailed on the lottery section of the Council's website, which can be accessed via this link – https://www.lincoln.gov.uk/people-community/lincoln-community-lottery/10.</p> <p>To help ensure the lottery remains fair for all supporters and causes taking part, all causes joining the lottery are required to meet the lottery terms and conditions. Each cause is contacted annually to gain confirmation that they still continue to meet the required criteria and to obtain an update on how they have used the funds raised to support the delivery of their services. All lottery good causes must either be a constituted group, registered charity or community interest company.</p> <p>With the lottery being a type of gambling, the Council is extremely cautious when raising awareness of the lottery. All promotion by the Council is focused on raising awareness of how the lottery can support local causes, rather than focused on encouraging local residents to purchase tickets and the prizes on offer. Information on support with problem gambling is also included in all communications.</p> <p>Further information on the lottery is available via the Council website, https://www.lincoln.gov.uk/people-community/lincoln-community-lottery/10, and via the lottery website itself https://www.lincolnlottery.co.uk.</p>

16	Social Value Policy
16.1	Where relevant and proportionate to the contract/provision being procured, Social Value (SV) will be used as part of the quality assessment. We currently ask bidders to provide a proposed Social Value Plan (SVP) which they would then deliver and this forms part of the contract with the successful bidder. An example of this is the Hermit Street Housing Regeneration Project where SV was delivered in respect of local labour and supply chains being engaged on the contract as well as additional elements where local school were engaged and given access to local construction programmes etc.
16.2	Internally as part of Vision 2030, officers from various sections including Procurement, Housing and Major Developments will be working together to review and update the current Social Value Policy. In addition, it is being proposed that the development of a corporate wide Social Value Toolkit which will underpin the policy is undertaken so moving forward we can ensure that we capture the SV derived and ensure it aligns with the Council's aspirations.
17	Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter
17.1	<p>Launched in 2018 the Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter is a Council initiative aimed at recognising those organisations locally, which go above the statutory minimum to support their local employees and the local community. All organisations gaining accreditation to the charter must meet set criteria, which helps to ensure accreditation remains fair for all organisations regardless of size. For example, those organisations with over 50 employees are required to demonstrate they undertake a larger number of socially responsible activities to support their employees and the local community than those with a lower number of employees. All accredited organisations must either have a base in the city and / or employ staff which live within the city boundary.</p> <p>Currently there are 103 local organisations accredited to the charter and these range from very small to very large employers and are from across a wide range of sectors. To raise awareness of both the charter and those organisations accredited to this, the Council promotes the charter on a routine basis via the Council's corporate communication channels. This promotion includes case studies from charter signatories, both written and video, together graphics raising awareness of all organisations accredited, alongside general promotion of the charter.</p>
17.2	<p>The Council's website also includes a dedicated section on the charter. Within this section includes the charter itself, a guide to the charter, examples of socially responsible activities, which organisations could undertake to support their employees and the local community, together with the video case studies and a directory of all organisations who have gained accreditation. Within the directory includes the name of each organisation under the sector they operate within. Also included is an individual page for each organisation containing their logo, website address and case study.</p> <p>To keep all organisations up to date with the charter, on a quarterly basis a newsletter is distributed to all accredited organisations. Included as standard is the current list of charter signatories, a selection of case studies from organisations gaining accreditation, details of how the Council is promoting those accredited and importantly information on opportunities locally, which organisations accredited to the charter may wish to support as part of their ongoing corporate social responsibility activity within the city.</p>

17.3	<p>To also help ensure the charter remains fair for all, each organisation is required to complete a declaration questionnaire on an annual basis. Together with gaining confirmation that each organisation continues to meet the accreditation criteria, this contact also enables the Council to keep up to date with the socially responsible opportunities being undertaken and the positive impact of this.</p> <p>To find out more about the charter and which organisations are accredited to this locally, please visit www.lincoln.gov.uk/socialresponsibility.</p>
18	Looking ahead
18.1	<p>Our top priority remains in supporting all residents and businesses with the cost of living challenges they face. Regardless of stretched resources, I am confident in the Council's ability to continue to offer the high level of support it always has, and I am fortunate enough to see this outstanding work first hand.</p> <p>The success stories referenced, and figures shown within this report, are a testament to the dedication of the service areas involved, who not only help those in need but emulate our Council's vision and its priorities. It is also important to add that the portfolio includes some of the most emotionally challenging work undertaken by staff in the Council and I am immensely proud of what they do, day in and day out. I am excited for the year ahead and look forward to working with officers as we move forward with projects that make our communities even more resilient, vibrant and proud to be Lincoln.</p>

Cllr Lucinda Preston
Portfolio Holder for Reducing Inequality

Appendix A – Enforcement Action

	1 st Nov 2023 to 31 st May 2024	1 st Nov 2024 to 31 st May 2025
WARNINGS		
Community Protection Warnings	78	100
ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES		
Fly tipping Community Protection Warnings	10	27
Fly tipping Community Protection Notices	1	11
Fly tipping Fixed Penalty Notices	15	15
Bins on streets Community Protection Warnings	112	48
Bins on streets Community Protection Notices	42	10
Bins on streets Fixed Penalty Notices	21	2
NOISE ISSUES		
Noise Abatement Notices	1	10
GENERAL ASB ISSUES		
ASB Community Protection Notices	10	13
CONDITION OF PROPERTY RELATED ISSUES		
Prevention of Damage by Pests Notices	2	11
Community Protection Notices	1	5
OTHER ENFORCEMENTS		
Microchipping Notice	2	1

APPENDIX B – Performance Monitoring

Below provides the latest performance measure outturns and supporting service area commentary for those performance measures linked to my portfolio. The data presented is for Quarter 4 2024/25:

Status Key

G	At or above target	A	Acceptable performance - results are within target boundaries	R	Below target	V	Volumetric/contextual measures that support targeted measures
	Performance has improved since last quarter		Performance has stayed the same since last quarter		Performance has deteriorated since last quarter		

37

Assistant Director	Service Area	PH	Measure ID	Measure	Unit	High Or Low is Good	Low Target	High Target	Previous Data Period	Previous Value	Current Quarter	Current Value	Status	Service Area Commentary	
CX	Martin Walmsley - Assistant Director of Shared Revenues and Benefits	Housing Benefit Administration	RI	BE 1	Average days to process new housing benefit claims from date received (cumulative)	Days	Low is good	19.00	17.00	Q4 - 23/24	14.32	Q4 - 24/25	13.20	G	▲ The service area reports a further decrease in the number of days to process new housing benefit claims from date received during quarter 4. The team continue to prioritise new claims to ensure people are receiving help to pay their rent. Compared to the same quarter last year performance has improved by 1.12 days.
		Housing Benefit Administration	RI	BE 2	Average days to process housing benefit claim changes of circumstances from date received (cumulative)	Days	Low is good	7.00	5.50	Q4 - 23/24	3.42	Q4 - 24/25	3.72	G	▼ Performance has further improved in the final quarter, due to the number of changes made in advance of the quarter end (these count as 1 day), as customers report increases in rent and income, due to the new financial year.
		Housing Benefit Administration	RI	BE 3	Number of Housing Benefits / Council Tax support customers awaiting assessment	Number	Low is good	2000.00	1900.00	Q4 - 23/24	2274.00	Q4 - 24/25	2567.00	R	▼ Extremely high volumes of demand are experienced in Quarter 4, alongside resourcing pressures and other areas of vital work (such as cost of living support), this has led to outstanding work levels increasing. Of the 2,567 reported, 2,228 customers are awaiting a first contact, officers are working hard to reduce these levels through Quarter 1, by allocating resources accordingly. The impact of Universal Credit is also increasing the team's workload, as well as higher volumes or pensioner Housing Benefit claims being expected due to increased take-up of Pension Credit, - these matters are being factored into performance targets moving forward.

		Housing Benefit Administration	RI	BE 4	Percentage of risk-based quality checks made where benefit entitlement is correct (cumulative)	%	High is good	91.00	94.00	Q4 - 23/24	93.05	Q4 - 24/25	95.05	G	<p>Throughout quarter 4, the Benefits and Subsidy team completed 614 checks on benefits assessments, with 594 of the checks correctly assessed in both the Subsidy checks and assessment checks. This is an reduction of 236 checks on the previous quarter, with 95.05% correctly assessed.</p> <p>Cumulatively this year the Benefit and Subsidy team have completed 2,183 checks on benefits assessments, with 2,075 of the checks correctly assessed in both the Subsidy checks and assessment checks.</p> <p>The service area have reduced the number of Quality Checks completed for new members of the team due to the increased percentage of correct claims processed in previous quarters by the newest members, as well as year-end reports completed by the staff members, which has reduced the time available to deal with quality checks.</p>
		Housing Benefit Administration	RI	BE 5	The number of new benefit claims year to date (Housing Benefits/Council Tax Support)	Number	N/A	Volumetric	Volumetric	Q3 - 24/25	3519.00	Q4 - 24/25	4709.00	V	<p>This year the Benefits Team have processed 4,709 new claims in total, of these 1,023 were for Housing Benefit and 3,686 were for Council Tax Support.</p>
	DCE	Simon Colburn - Assistant Director of Health & Environmental Services	RI	PPASB 1	Number of cases received in the quarter (ASB cases only)	Number	N/A	Volumetric	Volumetric	Q3 - 24/25	185.00	Q4 - 24/25	173.00	V	<p>This is a 6.5% decrease when compared to the last quarter. It is a 31.1% increase when compared with Q4 of 23/24. This measure appears to be stabilising following the increase in cases the team received during Q's 1 and 2 of 24/25.</p> <p>This measure has been revised for 2025/26 to report cases received across the full service, which will provide a more</p>

	Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Team	RI	PPASB 2	Number of cases closed in the quarter (across full PPASB service)	Number	N/A	Volumetric	Volumetric	Q3 - 24/25	1114.00	Q4 - 24/25	1083.00	V	The outturn for the measure is a 4.6% decrease when compared with Q3 of 24/25 and a 4.8% increase when compared Q4 of 23/24. This outturn is relatively stable.
	Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Team	RI	PPASB 3	Number of live cases open at the end of the quarter (across full PPASB service)	Number	Low is good	240.00	200.00	Q3 - 24/25	272.00	Q4 - 24/25	280.00	R	<p>This outturn has remained stable over the past financial year. It is also stable when compared with Q4 of 23/24 which was 279.</p> <p>This measure is being replaced for 2025/26 to report on the average days to close a case in quarter across the full service, to better reflect the volume of work undertaken by the team on case management.</p>
Steve Bird - Assistant Director of Communities and Street Scene	CCTV	RI	CCTV 1	Total number of incidents handled by CCTV operators	Number	N/A	Volumetric	Volumetric	Q3 - 24/25	3102.00	Q4 - 24/25	2262.00	V	<p>Incident numbers have reduced in Q4 following Christmas and New Year, plus the poor weather keeps numbers in the city down.</p> <p>All incident areas report a decrease consistent with the overall reduction, apart from PPASB where numbers are significantly down compared to the last quarter, which is attributed to a designated police officer working with the service area and COLC ASB team to target these groups.</p>

6

Source – COLC Performance Information Management System (PIMS)

APPENDIX C – Neighbourhood Working Evaluation

Introduction

In June 2016 the [City of Lincoln Council](#) appointed OpenPlan to prepare a [Place Shaping Framework](#) for the Sincil Bank area – defined by the railway to the north, Canwick Road to the east, South Park to the south, and High street to the west. The brief was to work with the local community and stakeholders to come up with recommendations to make the area a better place for the people who live and work here.

The Framework was published in April 2017. It described Sincil Bank as a *‘community of communities – a very diverse place shared by people from many different backgrounds’* – and contained 42 recommendations to make physical improvements to the area, as well as promote social and economic development and develop opportunity sites. While the Framework was being developed, City of Lincoln Council reviewed its neighbourhood working programme and decided to prioritise its resources in Sincil Bank. Since then the Council has been running a Neighbourhood Working pilot to implement as many of the 42 Place Shaping Framework recommendations as possible alongside local residents, Community Partners and stakeholders.

In March 2024 Rose Regeneration was commissioned by the City of Lincoln Council to undertake an external evaluation of Neighbourhood Working in Sincil Bank. The evaluation has followed HM Treasury guidance and covered 3 main areas:

1. How was the Neighbourhood Working pilot designed – and how it is being implemented?
2. What difference is the pilot making to residents, Community Partners and stakeholders?
3. Is the pilot offering value-for-money?

This report summarises the key findings and insights from the evaluation.

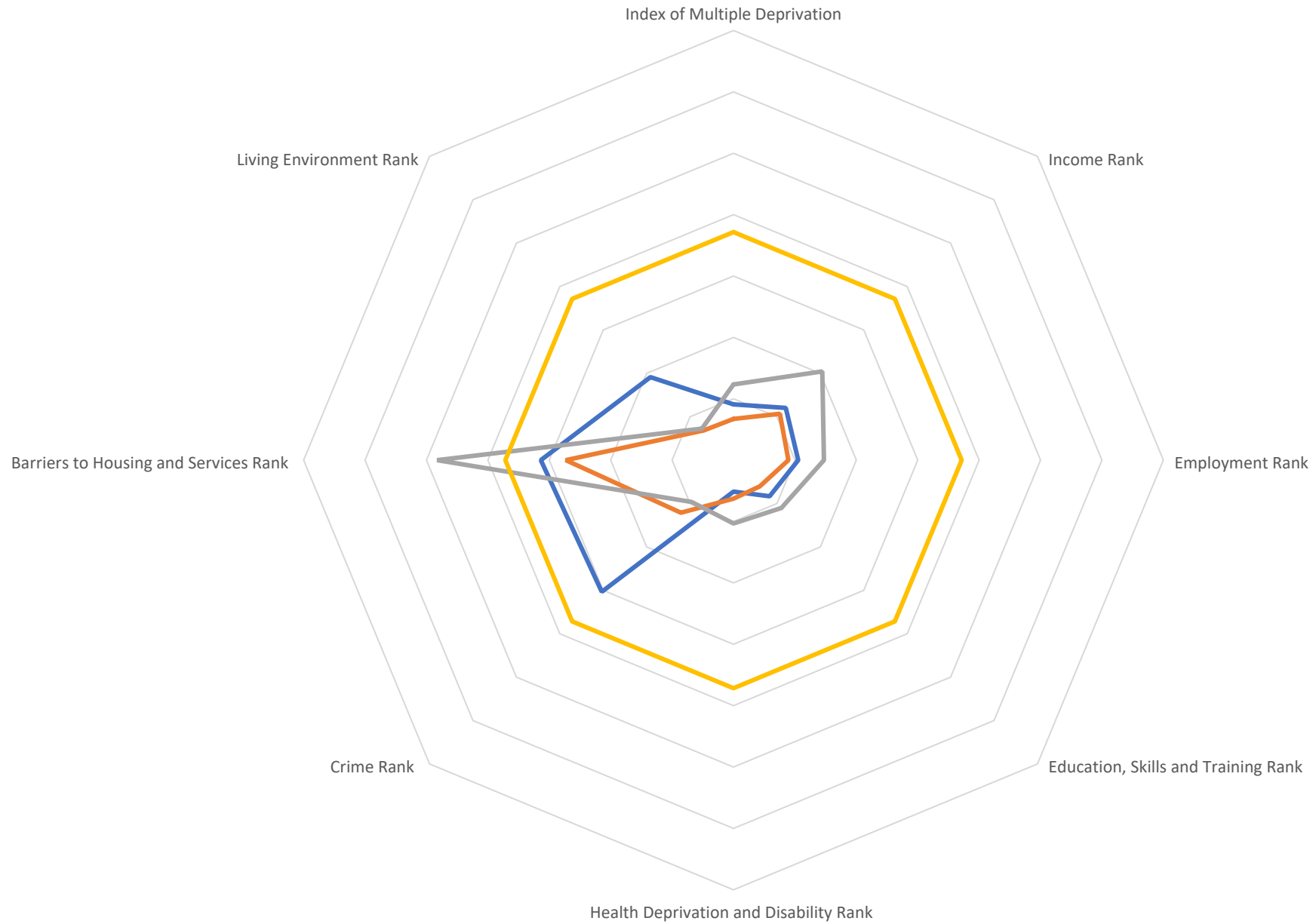
What was the Neighbourhood Working pilot set up to do?

Central government publishes local measures of deprivation in England. The last Statistical Release was published in September 2019. It is based on seven domains of deprivation which draw on 39 separate indicators. These are then weighted to give an overall measure of multiple deprivation experienced by people living in a neighbourhood [known as a Lower-layer Super Output Area, LSOA]. Each neighbourhood, or LSOA, is ranked from most deprived (1st) to least deprived (32,844th).

Rose Regeneration compared the 2019 data for Sincil Street area, where the Neighbourhood Working pilot is taking place, with the data releases from 2015 and 2010. These results are shown in the chart overleaf.

English Indices of Deprivation (2010-2019)

2019 2015 2010 England Mid Point



The chart shows considerable deterioration in levels of deprivation between 2010 and 2015, with only a modest bounce back in 2019. Overall, the neighbourhood was ranked 4,011 in 2010; 5,504 in 2015; and 2,387 [placing it in the 7% most deprived neighbourhoods in England].

Community consultations for the Place Shaping Framework also highlighted:

- Streets marred by littering and fly-tipping.
- People commuting to Lincoln for work treating the area as a free car park or as a rat run.
- Energy-inefficient homes, including a high proportion of housing stock rented as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- A number of high profile crimes increasing residents' fear of crime.

Between December 2018 and March 2025 a small, dedicated Neighbourhood Working team (mainly 2 staff) are based at the [Community Hub](#) on Portland Street. As well as having a physical base, they are delivering a programme of key projects and activities with residents and organisations. Between 2018 and 2020 this included:

- Introducing and monitoring a ban on the display of to-let boards on certain streets.
- Installing CCTV at suitable locations.
- The development of open spaces, including St Andrew's Garden (where a neglected open space has been transformed into a pocket park for the local community).
- Delivering a series of community events and activities.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the neighbourhood team refocused their priorities to include:

- Hermit Street redevelopment (building 11 new affordable homes on a site previously occupied by garages).
- Implementing residents parking (to increase the availability of parking for local residents and reduce commuter parking).
- Highways redesign (e.g. one-way traffic system, a green corridor for cyclists and pedestrians).
- Creating and enhancing open spaces.
- Cleaner and safer streets.

"COVID-19 both lost and gained them [Neighbourhood Working team] something during and after this time. During the pandemic they had to work City wide and sometimes even county wide. A lot of specific Sincil Bank community support then fell to other groups. After COVID they refocused their priorities but I would like to think the team has thought continually about the legacy of their time here and built sustainability into the organisations and projects they've funded", Community Partner.

The external environment during which the pilot is being delivered has changed significantly – from welfare reforms and Brexit through to the COVID-19 pandemic and cost-of-living pressures.

What impact is the pilot having on local communities?

On average, 20-30 people a week visit the Community Hub to access information, advice and services (from the City of Lincoln Council and from Community Partners). Analysis of the visit log over a 12-month period found the top 3 presenting issues were around general advice, access to space or services from another organisation at the Community Hub, and residents parking.

Resident surveys carried out in 2019, 2020 and 2023 show an increase in people reporting that they know what to do and where to go if they have a problem. Comparing survey data between 2019 and 2023 reveals:

- 20% more residents reported knowing which organisation to contact if they have a problem.
- 11% more residents knowing where to go for help with a housing issue, and 9% more residents knowing where to go for help if they have a problem with fly tipping or litter.
- A 5% increase in the number of residents reporting Sincil Bank is getting better and improving as a place to live.

“Residents work hard to do their bit to keep the area clean and tidy and a number of projects have been delivered to brighten up the area”, local resident.

“There has been a definite change in perception about the Portland Street area and that things can be achieved here”, local resident.

For the evaluation residents and local organisations were asked to use one (or two!) words to describe the Neighbourhood Working pilot. Their responses are shown in the word cloud overleaf:



Back in 2019, the City of Lincoln Council and Investors in Lincoln introduced a 'Community Chest' to kickstart activity in the area. During the pilot, £50,073.09 has been awarded to 31 local projects – from street play, holiday clubs and family fun days through to archaeological digs and setting up community gardening and growing clubs.

The Neighbourhood Working team has encouraged residents to come forward with ideas, and they have embedded community ownership in the initiatives they have funded. A short survey was circulated to all groups and organisations that had received funding from the Community Chest. Representatives from 22 organisations completed the survey.

- 50% of respondents said they would not have done their project without support from Neighbourhood Working – and 68% went on to apply to other funders to continue their existing project, or to start new work.
- 68% of respondents delivered their project or activity with the support of another local organisation – with 16 different voluntary & community sector organisations, charities and statutory sector bodies listed by respondents.
- 75% rated their overall experience of delivering an activity funded by the Community Chest as 'very positive', 5% as 'positive' and 20% as 'neutral'.
- 77% rated the impact of Neighbourhood Working on building the capacity of local groups and residents to run projects and activities as being 'very strong' or 'strong'.

"The [name of project] is important to the local community and sets an example about the future of the Sincil area...the project has encouraged people to volunteer, to learn and share practical skills as well as providing good visual and actual space for wildlife and making the area more attractive".

"[Name of project] wouldn't happen without the Neighbourhood Working team – they get it, they see the need, and they invest in looking at good practice outside of Lincoln and how to make it happen in Sincil Bank...they play the long game".

"Residents are willing to help with maintenance and ongoing works and that community ownership will bring sustainability".

The Neighbourhood Working team has monitored the implementation of the 42 Place Shaping Framework recommendations, carrying out annual reviews. In 2021, six recommendations were implemented, in 2022 twenty-nine recommendations, and in 2023 three recommendations. For four recommendations no work is planned to take place before 2025.

A range of stakeholders offered external perspectives on Neighbourhood Working. They highlighted the new and different ways of working it has provided to organisations (e.g. greater partnership working and collaboration) and to residents (e.g. reducing dependency and recognising the skills, knowledge and experience that they bring). Some stakeholders want Neighbourhood Working to focus on small, hyperlocal, street-based work; while other stakeholders had a preference for larger projects and tackling broader, systemic issues.

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a way of developing a value for the less tangible outcomes delivered through Neighbourhood Working. The evaluation has looked at how the Community Hub and Programme have increased access to services and improved the appearance of streets and green spaces. The analysis shows for every £1.00 invested in Neighbourhood Working, £3.20 of social value has been generated. HM Treasury ranks anything over £2.00 as delivering a 'good' level of social value.

Is the pilot offering value-for-money?

For the Community Chest, volunteer contributions to projects, as well as items or resources being offered in-kind (e.g. training, marketing and promotion, computers, sports equipment, gardening tools), provided match funding worth £72,887.

The Neighbourhood Working team has played a key role in working with external organisations to harness other investment for the local area that would not have happened without the pilot. For example, City of Lincoln Council secured £235,000 from the Government's Controlling Migration Fund to tackle rogue landlords; and Lincoln City Foundation successfully bid to deliver a 5-year Place Based Social Action (PBSA) community activities programme.

A Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) analysis was undertaken to assess the value-for-money being delivered. The analysis reveals that Neighbourhood Working has a BCR of £2.48/£1. The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) ranks BCR; with anything above 2 as offering 'high' value for money.

Where next?

Residents, Community Partners and stakeholders have expressed some concern about the gaps that will be left when the pilot ends – particularly around providing residents with a drop-in, and a safe space for organisational information sharing. Some stakeholders also queried whether Community Partners and residents will be able to step-up and scale-up what they do to fill these gaps. Planning the legacy, and what local communities want to see happen beyond March 2025, was highlighted as important.

The external evaluation is intended to inform wider Neighbourhood Working discussions across the city. Future delivery of Neighbourhood Working by City of Lincoln Council will need to take account of the resources that can be made available. It has become clear that there is considerable merit in exploring how multi-agency working can be scaled up across the city. Initial discussions with Lincolnshire County Council and Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board have highlighted scope for a pilot to enable all three bodies to work together with Community Partners and residents to deliver preventative impacts at the neighbourhood level.

SUBJECT:	INCOME AND ARREARS MONITORING
DIRECTORATE:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND TOWN CLERK
REPORT AUTHOR:	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR SHARED REVENUES AND BENEFITS

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Members on the position with regard to amounts of monies owed to the City Council as at 1st April 2025, (and Business Improvement District (BID) levy to the end of June 2025).

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This update is provided to Members of this Committee each year once all figures have been collated.
- 2.2 The report summarises the in-year collection of Council Tax, Business Rates, the Business Improvement District (BID) levy, Housing Rents, Former Tenant Rent Arrears, Sundry Debtors and Housing Benefit Overpayments to the 31st March 2025, and sets out the arrears brought forward position at 1st April 2025, (BID to the end of June 2025).
- 2.3 The ongoing cost of living challenges, understandably, have been significant in terms of collection monies due to the Council – with many businesses and taxpayers suffering financial hardship in recent years. This in turn impacts on officers' ability to recover monies in as prompt manner as would have been the case in previous years. Officers are committed to making realistic payment arrangements, aiming to avoid undue exceptional hardship to residents and businesses wherever possible.

3. Background

- 3.1 2024/25 was another year of significant demands for the Revenues and Benefits service, with ongoing impacts from cost of living challenges affecting residents' incomes with high prices of energy, fuel, food etc.

4. Council Tax Collection

- 4.1 The Council Tax net collectable debit for 2024/25 after Council Tax Support, discounts and exemptions had been granted was £56,742,355. This is an increase of £3,200,436 from 2023/24.
- 4.2 Total payments received in respect of 2024/25 were £53,754,142. This is an increase of £3,401,530 from 2023/24.
- 4.3 For the financial year 2024/25, in-year collection of 94.73% is up by 0.69% compared to 2023/24 (94.04%).

Although performance has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels of collection, the outturn collection rate is a positive achievement in light of the significant impacts of the well-documented ongoing cost of living challenges locally and nationally.

- 4.4 Council Tax arrears brought forward on 1st April 2024 and 1st April 2025 are shown below:

Council Tax @1.4.2025	Brought-forward 1st April 2024	Council Tax	Brought-forward 1st April 2025	Increase/ (Decrease)
Value of accounts in credit for the years before 2023/24	-£1,404,636	Value of accounts in credit for the years before 2024/25	-£1,525,681	Increase £121,045
Value of accounts in debit for the years before 2023/24	£7,642,565	Value of accounts in debit for the years before 2024/25	£9,089,635	Increase £1,447,070
Value of accounts in credit in 2023/24	-£1,233,251	Value of accounts in credit in 2024/25	-£1,188,971	Decrease £44,280
Value of accounts in debit in 2023/24	£4,604,728	Value of accounts in debit in 2024/25	£4,349,050	Decrease £255,678
Overall credits brought forward into 2024/25	-£2,637,887	Overall credits brought forward into 2025/26	-£2,673,711	Increase £35,824
Overall debits brought forward into 2024/25	£12,244,293	Overall debits brought forward into 2025/26	£13,438,686	£1,194,393
Number of arrears cases	18,739	Number of arrears cases	18,326	Decrease of 413

The balance of debits brought forward into 2024/25 was £12,244,293 and this increased to £13,438,686 by 31st March 2025, an increase of £1,194,393.

The balance of credits brought forward into 2024/25 was £2,637,887 and this increased to £2,673,711 an increase of £35,824.

- 4.5 The new arrears figure of £13,438,686 brought forward represents; the balance of arrears outstanding from previous years at 31st March 2025 as set out in 4.4 above, the Council Tax due in 2024/25 and not collected, court costs raised in 2024/25 and still unpaid, other adjustments made in 2024/25 in respect of previous years, and excludes any credits held.
- 4.6 In terms of the amount of Council Tax written-out during the financial year 2024/25 (which could be outstanding Council Tax from any financial year), the figure was £198,028. This compares to £171,305 written-out during 2023/24.
- 4.7 It is important to note that just because a debt has been written-out, this does not mean it cannot be written back on and collected if new information is received. During 2024/25, £27,616 was written back on.

5. Business Rates Collection

- 5.1 The Business Rates net collectable debit for 2024/25 after empty voids, charity entitlements and other reliefs had been granted was £40,586,757. This is an increase of £2,773,032 from 2023/24. Recent years are not wholly comparable due to changes in eligible reductions in respect of Expanded Retail Discount / Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief, in addition to reassessments of properties by the Valuation Office. The retail relief for 2024/25 was 75% and the retail relief for 2023/24 was 75% but for 2025/26 this is reduced to 40%.
- 5.2 Total payments received in respect of 2024/25 were £39,964,312. This is an increase of £2,685,745 from 2023/24.
- 5.3 Business Rates arrears brought forward from all previous years at 1st April 2024 was £1,209,511. By 31st March 2024 these arrears had increased to £1,382,651.
- 5.4 The table below shows comparisons between 2023/24 and 2024/25 in respect of; in-year collection rate, arrears brought forward and number of arrears cases.

Business Rates	2023/24	2024/25	Increase/ (Decrease)
Collection Rate	98.32%	98.22%	0.10%
Arrears @ 1 st April (Value)	£1,209,511	1,382,651	Increase £173,319
Arrears @ 1 st April (Cases)	455	288	Decrease 167

Despite a reduction in collection, this still remains high - which is positive, particularly in light of the economic climate and significant challenges for businesses in recent years.

- 5.5 The new arrears figure of £1,382,651 brought forward represents; the balance of arrears outstanding from previous years at 31st March 2025 as set out in 5.3 above, the Business Rates due in 2024/25 and not collected, the balance of court costs raised in 2024/25 and still unpaid, any other adjustments made in 2024/25 in respect of previous years, and excludes credits.
- 5.6 In terms of the amount of Business Rates written-out during the financial year 2024/25 (which could be outstanding Business Rates from any financial year), the figure was £91,723. This compares to £209,239 written-out during 2023/24..
- 5.7 As with Council Tax, it is important to note that just because a debt has been written-out, this does not mean it cannot be written back on and collected if new information is received. During 2024/25 £4,765 was written back on.

6. Business Improvement District (BID) Levy Collection 2024/25

- 6.1 Members will be aware that the Authority is responsible for the administration and collection of the BID Levy.

- 6.2 The BID financial year runs from July to June and the figures given below represent collection up to the end of June 2025.
- 6.3 The 2024/25 net collectable debit raised in respect of the Levy was £461,950.
- 6.4 A comparison of in-year collection rates between the BID financial years ending 30th June 2024 and 30th June 2025 is shown in the table below, with collection remaining high.

Year ending 30 th June 2025	97.23%	Decrease of 0.19%
Year ending 30 th June 2024	97.42%	

A high level of in-year collection has again been achieved for the BID Levy.

7. Housing Rents Collection

- 7.1 The net Housing Rent debit for 2024/25 (collectable rent) excluding Housing Benefits, Universal Credit and other adjustments was £35,842,015 of which 99.87% was collected. This is an increase of 0.17%% on 2023/24 collection of 99.69%.
- 7.2 For administration purposes, Housing Rent arrears are split between 'current' and 'former' tenants. The table below shows comparisons between 2023/24 and 2024/25 in respect of: in-year collection rate, arrears brought forward and number of arrears cases.

Housing Rents	2023/24	2024/25	Increase/ (Decrease)
Collection Rate (including arrears/credits b/f)	96.83%	97.05%	0.22%
Collection Rate (excluding arrears/credits b/f)	99.69%	99.87%	0.17%
Arrears @ 1 st April (Value)	£1,885,306	£2,329,032	£443,726
- Current	£1,009,951	£1,208,449	£198,498
- Former	£875,355	£1,120,583	£245,228
Arrears @ 1 st April (Cases)	2,599	2,780	181

- 7.3 Tenancy Services continues to focus on rent collection and income maximisation for tenants and are committed to reducing the arrears whilst sustaining tenancies.

Year collection as of the end of March 2025 stood at 99.87%, a slight increase from 99.69% at the end of the previous year. There was an overall increase in current arrears from £1,009,951 to £1,208,449, an increase of £198,498.

Arrears as a % of the debit stood at 3.38% as of the end of March 2025, compared to 2.88% the previous year, an increase of 0.50%.

Evictions decreased to 19 being carried out in 2024/25 compared to 25 being carried out in 2023/24.

- 7.4 Former tenant arrears collection for 2024/25 was 16.06% (compared to 2023/24 collection of 31.45%). Collection has reduced due to a number of factors, including cost of living challenges and rents where these are not paid during the period of tenancy. Also, where a tenant has vacated we do not always have a forwarding/contact address to pursue the debt – although every appropriate route to trace a debtor is followed. Reduced staffing resources on the team also had an impact on collection, however additional Recovery Officers have recently been put in place, - once new officers have been trained this will help to make positive impacts regarding performance.

8. Sundry Debtors Collection

- 8.1 A total of 15,108 new debtor accounts were raised in 2024/25 amounting to £19,563,074 in cash terms.
- 8.2 The table below shows comparisons between 2023/24 and 2024/25 in respect of arrears brought forward and number of arrears cases.

Sundry Debtors				2023/24	2024/25	Increase/ (Decrease)
Arrears	@	1 st	April	£4,583,954	£5,844,681	Increase £1,260,727
(Value)						
Arrears	@	1 st	April	5,931	7,239	Increase 1,308
(Cases)						

Sundry debt invoices to the value of £1,709,463 were raised in March 2025, with expectation that some of these would not be paid in year (i.e. in 2024/25). The collection rate for 2024/25 was 79.43% - this is a decrease from 2023/24 of 81.73%. The matter of raising large invoices towards the end of the financial year is not an issue in itself, however does present an impact on in-year collection as these invoices are not due to be paid for approximately 28 days and businesses do not generally pay as soon as they get the bill. Therefore raising an invoice in March 2025 would generally mean that this is not paid before 1st April 2025.

In March 2025, there were a total of 1,093 invoices raised, of which 450 were paid in full and 25 invoices were part paid or credit notes raised.

9. Housing Benefit Overpayments Collection

- 9.1 The balance of outstanding Housing Benefit Overpayments as of 1st April 2025 was

£1,164,273 and compares to £2,199,302 on 1st April 2024, a decrease of £575,029.

9.2 A total of £564,733 in Housing Benefit overpayments was raised in 2024/25. Total credits received in 2024/25 were £732,347 – this includes card payments, direct deductions from ongoing benefit, payments from our collection agents, underlying entitlement and payments via attachments from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and employers.

9.3 The total number of cases with a debt outstanding in the Debtors system at the 1st April 2025 was 1,100.

The table below shows comparisons between 2023/24 and 2024/25 in respect of arrears brought forward and number of arrears cases in the Debtors system.

Housing Benefit Overpayments	2023/24	2024/25	Increase/ (Decrease)
Arrears @ 1 st April (Value)	£2,199,302	£1,624,273	Decrease £575,029
Arrears @ 1 st April (Cases)	1,222	1,100	Decrease 122

10. Strategic Priorities

10.1 Let's reduce all kinds of inequality: The Revenues and Benefits Service has a key role in reducing poverty and disadvantage; by ensuring residents receive the benefits they are entitled to, providing money/debt advice, as well as collecting monies due to the Council in line with a Fair Collection and Debt Recovery Policy.

11. Organisational Impacts

11.1 Financial: Prompt and efficient recovery of amounts due to the Council helps to ensure that income receivable is collected in order to finance critical services.

11.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules: There are no direct legal implications from this report.

12. Risk Implications

12.1 A Risk Register is in place for the Revenues and Benefits shared service.

13. Recommendation

13.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

Key Decision	No
Do the Exempt Information Categories Apply?	No
Call in and Urgency: Is the decision one to which Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?	No
How many appendices does the report contain?	None
List of Background Papers:	None
Lead Officer:	Martin Walmsley, Assistant Director – Shared Revenues and Benefits Martin.Walmsley@lincoln.gov.uk

This page is intentionally blank.

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10 JULY 2025

SUBJECT:	SCRUTINY SELF EVALUATION REVIEW
DIRECTORATE:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND TOWN CLERK
REPORT AUTHOR:	DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND ELECTIONS MANAGER

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an opportunity to self-evaluate and review its scrutiny effectiveness.

2. Background

- 2.1 An Internal Audit was carried out on Governance Health Check in July 2024. The audit had given substantial assurance, as there are good governance arrangements in place at the City of Lincoln Council, with only a few improvements identified. One of the recommendations was to carry out a review of the Council's scrutiny effectiveness which this report aims to address.
- 2.2 The audit recognised that scrutiny is an important part of the Governance structure, and it was therefore essential that the Council's scrutiny committees are effective, and that this is demonstrated. To evidence this good practice, a self-assessment should be used with the results feeding into the Scrutiny Annual Report.

3. Scrutiny Evaluation Process

- 3.1 The Centre for Public Scrutiny has produced a guidance document (attached at Appendix A) which provides advice on self-assessment as well as recommendations on good practice.
- 3.2 A review of scrutiny effectiveness should be led by scrutiny councillors, and the outcomes of those reviews be driven by what scrutiny members have concluded for their individual committee.
- 3.3 The first stage in the process will be to hold an informal roundtable discussion with a working group of up to five Scrutiny Committee members. The group should consist of the Chair of the Committee, and preferably at least one member from a non-controlling group. For Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee, one member from the Lincoln Tenants Panel can be appointed.
- 3.4 At this meeting, the group will discuss, consider and complete a self-assessment matrix (attached at Appendix B) with support from Democratic Services which will consider the current scrutiny process, and highlight strengths and weaknesses.
- 3.5 The second stage is for the working group to share and discuss the findings with the full scrutiny committee, inviting members to comment and reflect on the results and any recommendations identified during the process.

- 3.6 Any recommendations highlighted which affect the wider scrutiny function will be considered separately once all committees have completed their own self-assessment.

4. Strategic Priorities

Ensuring that the Council has effective scrutiny arrangements in place to support decision making is a key part of the Council's overall governance framework.

5. Organisational Impacts

5.1 Finance

There are no direct financial implications arising as a result of this report.

5.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

The review of effectiveness ensures best practice is met.

5.3 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

Due to the nature of this report there are no direct equality, diversity or human rights implications.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 That Performance Scrutiny Committee select a group of up to five councillors to attend a roundtable discussion (date to be confirmed) to complete the document for presentation at the 14 August 2025 meeting of Performance Scrutiny Committee. The group should contain the Chair of the Committee and preferably at least one member from a non-controlling group.

Is this a key decision?

No

Do the exempt information categories apply?

No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply?

No

How many appendices does the report contain?

Two

List of Background Papers:

None

Lead Officer:

Cheryl Evans, Democratic Services and
Elections Manager

Email: cheryl.evans@lincoln.gov.uk

This page is intentionally blank.



The scrutiny evaluation framework

A mechanism for reviewing, evaluating and improving local government scrutiny and governance arrangements

processes devolution **design** principles
evaluation framework **review**
 transparency governance **research**
The scrutiny evaluation framework
A mechanism for reviewing, evaluating and
improving local government scrutiny
and governance arrangements
focus responsibilities arrangements
structure agreement commitment **maximising**

INTRODUCTION

Local government is changing. Major changes to the way that services are planned and delivered (including devolution), the financial challenge and increased demand on issues like social care mean that elected councillors are making increasingly important decisions which will have a profound impact on local people's lives for many years. Effective decision-making demands good governance. Good governance demands good scrutiny.

How can scrutiny arrangements be reviewed and improved to meet these challenges? In short, how can scrutiny be engineered to add value, make a difference to local people's lives and central to streamlined and responsive local decision-making?

This framework provides a mechanism for local authorities to address and answer these questions.

Our thanks are due to the scrutiny practitioners who provided comments on a draft of this document.

Background: where does this come from?

This framework is based on a number of earlier documents:

- Our "Accountability Works for You" framework (2011) and our scrutiny self-evaluation framework (2006), both earlier iterations of this new model;
- The fifteen "characteristics of effective scrutiny" developed following comprehensive research alongside the Wales Audit Office;
- Measures and principles relating to the impact and influence of Parliamentary select committees, based on research carried out by the Constitution Unit and the Institute for Government;
- Recent CfPS publications, in particular:
 - Tipping the scales (2012)
 - Our "Practice Guide" series (2014 / 2016)
 - The change game (2015)
 - Social return on investment (2016)
- Other models chosen and designed by local authorities for the evaluation of scrutiny.

In recent years, the amount of resource available for carrying out scrutiny in local government has lessened. Posts have been made redundant, and responsibility moved to officers, and parts of councils, who may not have had a background in working with members to support them in such a unique council function. While our early framework was designed with the "professional scrutiny officer" in mind, this framework has deliberately been drafted for officers and members who may not have a detailed understanding of scrutiny theory and practice. As such, it is more directive in its approach than previous versions. Despite this, it remains the case that councils must reflect and review their scrutiny arrangements on their own terms.

Setting up a group to take responsibility for this work

Reviews of scrutiny must be led by scrutiny councillors, and the outcomes of those reviews must also be driven by what scrutiny members have concluded. Cabinet and senior officers are important stakeholders, but the process and its conclusions are not theirs to define. For a meaningful, scrutiny member-led process to work, members need to agree principles within which they are prepared to work, and need to commit to recommending pragmatic solutions to problems which might even challenge the accepted wisdom in the authority about what scrutiny does, and what it is for.

A project group, chaired by a scrutiny councillor, may carry out the bulk of the research and analysis we describe below, but this is likely to put a substantial onus on councillors.

In practice we think it more likely that officers – or a single officer – will provide support to the group, reporting back periodically. If this is the case, we would recommend that this officer maintains regular, informal contact with members, to ensure that their expectations are being met. Additionally, we have suggested “checkpoints” at the end of every stage – points at which we think information and evidence would be considered in detail by the project group, and possibly shared with the wider member corps and other interested parties.

Importantly, this works to ensure buy-in to the eventual recommendations. In our experience, reviews which are conducted largely in private, and which then report back their findings to a wider member group which has not been part of that review process, can find it very difficult to secure buy-in and agreement to those recommendations from that wider group of members – especially if those recommendations are contentious.

Agreeing some basic design principles

For some time we have suggested that areas conducting reviews like this agree a set of “design principles” to help them to build consensus about what their governance systems will look like.

Design principles are important. They keep you focused on the way you will work under new arrangements, and help you to avoid fixating exclusively on governance structures (like the number and terms of reference of committees).

We think that local areas embarking on this work are likely to be able to come up with their own design principles, but we present some below to provide some ideas.

Principle	Some prompts
Members leading and owning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How should members direct the work programme? 2. Which members should be involved in leading the scrutiny process, and how? 3. What should the relationship between members and their support officers look like? What about the relationship between members and officers in service departments? 4. How does the member role influence how scrutiny and its work is presented to the wider authority, and to the area?
Flexibility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How will the work programme be flexible to account for unexpected issues emerging during the year? 2. What resource exists to support scrutiny's work, and how can it be best used? 3. How effective do members need to be in working together, and working with others, to achieve their objectives?
A focus on adding value, outcomes and prioritisation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How should members build an understanding of the impact of their work? 2. What are the most significant priorities affecting the local area, and how should this affect scrutiny's work? 3. How does scrutiny evaluate, review and improve the way it works?

Step 1: taking stock

How do we do things now?

There are two aspects to this. The first is to look in – at scrutiny's current processes and systems. The second is to look out – at the context for the council, the area, and the area's inhabitants.

Looking in

This part focuses on key characteristics of effective scrutiny, and invites you to reflect on how you measure up. This isn't a tickbox exercise – it's an invitation to think about your current ways of working, to make it easier for you to consider improvements at later stages. As such, the characteristics and prompts we have listed below should be seen as the framework for a conversation and a way to make sure you don't miss anything, rather than a list, requiring answers to every issue and question.

This stage is important for two reasons – firstly, it helps you to build up an accurate picture of how scrutiny works at the moment, and secondly it ensures that you have a common understanding of those characteristics, and why they are important.

You might wish to consider these characteristics in some of the following ways – depending on the resource you have at your disposal.

- A quick desktop exercise carried out by members and/or officers;
- A single meeting of scrutiny councillors (say, an evening session to work through the characteristics and the prompts);
- A more wide-ranging, but informal, set of discussions – for example, informal meetings with cabinet members, senior officers, partners and other key stakeholders;
- Conversations with members of the public who have engaged with scrutiny (as well as those who haven't);
- More formal evidence taken at committee meetings.

This should be a challenging and reflective process. It may identify shortcomings with scrutiny; it may lead to despondency that those shortcomings are significant and cannot be overcome. It could also be seen as organisationally risky for scrutiny to take a look at its strengths and weaknesses in this way. However, it is the only way that improvement can happen.

The characteristics themselves

See Good scrutiny? Good question! (WAO, 2014) – <https://www.wao.gov.uk/publication/good-scrutiny-good-question-auditor-general-wales-improvement-study-scrutiny-local>

Accountability works! (2010) – <http://www.cfps.org.uk/accountability-works/>

Characteristic

Overview and scrutiny has a clearly defined and valued role in the council's improvement and governance arrangements.

Overview and scrutiny has the dedicated officer support it needs from officers who are able to undertake independent research effectively, and provide councillors with high-quality analysis, advice and training.

Overview and scrutiny inquiries are non-political, methodologically sound and incorporate a wide range of evidence and perspectives.

Overview and scrutiny provides viable and well evidenced solutions to recognised problems.

Overview and scrutiny councillors have the training and development opportunities they need to undertake their role effectively.

The process receives effective support from the council's corporate management team who ensures that information provided to overview and scrutiny is of high quality and is provided in a timely and consistent manner.

Overview and scrutiny is councillor-led, takes into account the views of the public, partners and other stakeholders, and balances the prioritisation of community concerns against issues of strategic risk and importance.

Overview and scrutiny meetings and activities are well-planned, chaired effectively and make best use of the resources available to it.

Decision-makers give public account for themselves at overview and scrutiny committees for their portfolio responsibilities.

Overview and scrutiny is recognised by the executive and corporate management team as an important council mechanism for community engagement, and facilitates greater citizen involvement in governance.

Overview and scrutiny is characterised by effective communication to raise awareness of, and encourage participation in democratic accountability.

Overview and scrutiny operates non-politically and deals effectively with sensitive political issues, tension and conflict.

Overview and scrutiny builds trust and good relationships with a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders.

Overview and scrutiny enables the "voice" of local people and communities across the area to be heard as part of decision and policy-making processes.

We think that scrutiny can be evaluated against these characteristics by posing a number of questions. Below, we provide a list of possible questions, and an indication of where the answers you give to each question may be evidence of good practice, or a cause for concern.

How are scrutiny councillors involved in influencing major decisions, and in considering and evaluating performance, finance and risk information?

Good practice: *Evidence of decisions being altered consensually as a result of scrutiny's involvement.*

Average practice: *Evidence of scrutiny making recommendations on major decisions, but with limited impact, and sometimes not at the right time.*

Poor practice: *Evidence of scrutiny not looking at these issues at all, or doing so in a way that adds little value / duplicates the work of others.*

Do different people with a role in holding decision-makers to account (like scrutiny, the Police and Crime Panel, a combined authority scrutiny committee, local Healthwatch) work together?

Good practice: *Evidence of tangible impact resulting from this sort of joint working, such as aligned work programmes and an elimination of duplication, and improvements in substantive joint working between the council and its partners, directly facilitated by scrutiny.*

Average practice: *Some limited joint working – usually reactive, in response to an external pressure like a substantive variation in service delivery in the NHS. Some duplication and overlap in work and little awareness of mutual responsibilities. An awareness that some issues are falling between the gaps.*

Poor practice: *No joint working, even when clear opportunities present themselves. “Council scrutiny” is siloed, and internally focused. Significant opportunities for local scrutiny are missed without anyone realising that those opportunities existed in the first place.*

How does scrutiny gather evidence?

Good practice: Evidence gathering is tied to the objectives of the work, with the result that scrutiny's time is used more effectively. Information will probably be shared with members informally on a continual basis, to actively assist them in refining the work programme in-year. In respect of task and finish groups, evidence will be gathered from a wide range of sources, and members will have the confidence to analyse and evaluate that evidence themselves (usually with the assistance of officers).

Average practice: Evidence on key council performance and other issues will usually be shared with members on a quarterly basis, often when the data is quite out of date. Task and finish groups will benefit from evidence from a range of sources but analysis will be quite officer-led. Members will lack confidence in understanding what information is available within and outside the council and how to access and use it.

Poor practice: Committee meetings will be used as the primary mechanism for information sharing, with a large number of reports on agendas "to note", with almost all evidence and information coming in the form of officer reports.

How does scrutiny weigh the evidence that it has collected?

Good practice: Councillors understand the respective value of different kinds of evidence, and use their political and personal judgment to consider which should be relied on to support scrutiny's work. Councillors are confident in developing their own lines of questioning to test the robustness of evidence they receive. Detailed evaluation of evidence is carried out offline, in preparation for the use of that evaluation to conduct more probing and forensic questions in committee, or in other meetings. Successful weighing of evidence could be proven to have led to more robust findings, and better recommendations.

Average practice: Analysis of evidence is carried out by officers, with most evaluation of evidence happening in committee, often supported by officer-drafted questioning plans. Members know that certain evidence is more likely to be accurate and reliable than others, but sometimes this can result in pejorative judgments being made, particularly about "anecdotal" evidence from local people.

Poor practice: There is no support available from officers to help members to weigh and evaluate evidence, and the need to evaluate and triangulate information from different sources is largely alien to members and the scrutiny function. Members deal with shortcomings in evidence and information by simply asking for "more information" from officers.

How is performance, finance and risk information considered as a part of the evidence-gathering process?

Good practice: Information is considered informally as it is created, alongside other evidence created and used by the council and others. Performance, finance and risks information is triangulated with this wider evidence base. Members are able to reach a judgment about escalating issues to committee “by exception”.

Average practice: Information is available to members as it is produced but may not be presented consistently (so, performance information may be regularly shared but risk information may not be). Triangulation may be ad hoc, because the council does not have systems for ensuring that members gain access to information in a timely manner.

Poor practice: Committees consider information quarterly in committee meetings, usually many weeks after the data itself has been finalised. Information is presented in the form of scorecards. Members ask questions about why performance under certain targets is “red” but have no way of following up on those questions or the answers received. There is little consideration of financial information and little to no consideration of risk information.

What is the tangible impact that scrutiny activity has on the ground?

Good practice: Members and officers have a shared understanding of scrutiny’s impact. This impact is significant and sustained, and can be expressed in terms of outcomes for local people. This understanding includes a recognition that scrutiny’s impact is difficult to quantify and that judgments on impact can be subjective.

Average practice: Members and officers have an understanding of scrutiny’s impact which may not be shared or universally agreed. Where impact is assessed it may be focused on improving outputs (eg improving an internal council business process) rather than anything else.

Poor practice: There is no evidence that scrutiny has any impact and no systems exist to measure it.

What happens when decision-makers disagree with scrutiny?

Good practice: *Rules of engagement between scrutiny and the executive have been discussed and agreed by councillors.*

Average practice: *There is a scrutiny / executive protocol in the Constitution, although it is quite process-based. Disagreements, when they occur, are usually resolved through negotiation between politicians, pragmatically.*

Poor practice: *Decision-makers' decisions always trump scrutiny's views. There is no scrutiny / executive protocol in the Constitution or any other formal/informal mechanism for resolving disagreements.*

When scrutiny makes formal recommendations, how are they responded to?

Good practice: *Recommendations are always SMART (specific, measurable, agreed, realistic and timed) and are limited in number. Usually, information about likely recommendations will be shared and discussed with the executive prior to being made. The executive will always submit a substantive response to recommendations, with reasons being given if recommendations are rejected.*

Average practice: *Recommendations are usually at least partially SMART. A lot of recommendations might be made, making it difficult to monitor them all. Some recommendations may not be addressed to the right people. The executive's response to recommendations is variable – sometimes recommendations are ignored or “noted” rather than being formally responded to.*

Poor practice: *Scrutiny makes few formal recommendations, and when it does they are usually just “noted” by the executive. Recommendations will often be vague and poorly drafted.*

What happens when things go wrong?

Good practice: *Safety valves (such as informal meetings for discussion, and lines of communication between political groups) exist within the scrutiny process to eliminate risks before they present themselves. The political and organisational culture of the council is such that potential difficulties, flashpoints and mistakes are highlighted and dealt with frankly and candidly. When problems do present themselves, people work together on all sides to resolve them without recourse to rules and procedures.*

Average practice: *There are regular, somewhat formal, meetings between the executive and scrutiny to allow issues of concern to be raised, but no real mechanisms to pre-empt problems. When problems do occur, the focus can be on what rules and procedures say about the issue, rather than identifying an equitable solution.*

Poor practice: *Problems and shortcomings in scrutiny's impact are either ignored or seen as evidence of scrutiny's ineffectiveness. Blame is a common feature. Problems are seen as an opportunity for political posturing, rather than as an issue requiring collective resolution. The need for executive-side commitment to making things work is poorly understood. Scrutiny is a "process" to be "managed".*

Looking out

Scrutiny has to be relevant. It must do work which has an impact on local people. It has to engage with decision-makers' priorities and the priorities of other partners – the NHS, the combined authority (if there is one), and so on.

Here are some of the key "external" issues which are likely to impact on how scrutiny is carried out, and how governance is likely to need to change in the area. Part of the evaluation process is about considering these changes, and reflecting on what they mean for the future of scrutiny.

- Financial challenges for local government. The nature of funding for local authorities will change significantly between now and 2020. The amount of money available for the transaction of core business will continue to dwindle;
- Demographic changes will result in pressure and demand in some areas – for example, adult social care;
- Both of the above are likely to result in a pressure for local authorities to "transform", as we set out in our 2015 publication "The change game". Transformation might see the creation of some, or all of the following – which raises questions for scrutiny and local accountability:
 - Strategic commissioning arrangements, with councils moving away from traditional contracting-out;
 - The establishment of novel structures for service delivery, like open-book partnerships and Teckal companies;
 - Confederations and council "clustering", which is an ancillary element of some devolution deals;

- Major transformation programmes being carried out by other public agencies – for example, the agreement and implementation of Sustainability and Transformation Plans/Partnerships (STPs) in the NHS – are likely to have a big impact;
- Devolution deals, and the establishment of combined authorities, raise substantial questions about democracy and local scrutiny;
- The potential for local government reorganisation or reviews by the Boundary Commission;
- The development of digital technology means that the public expect a different relationship with elected representatives and those making decisions on their behalf.

What is scrutiny's response to these challenges?

Is scrutiny in a position to make such a response and how does it need to change in order to do so? This should be a difficult question to answer. Tackling it will involve an acceptance from those involved in the scrutiny process and the way they work may need to change, and change significantly, in order for scrutiny to remain relevant. If you sail through this part of the exercise quickly and easily, it may be that those involved have not fully engaged in this challenge, and its implications.

CHECKPOINT: Share products of the “taking stock” exercise with wider membership. Invite members to reflect on its conclusions and decide whether they agree. Have initial discussions between members and officers about scrutiny's role – see below.

Step 2: identifying what scrutiny's role is

At this point you will have the following evidence:

- A sense of scrutiny's current areas of strength and weakness (identified through the “looking in” exercise);
- A sense of where opportunities exist to make improvements, in the context of what's going on in the wider area (identified through the “looking out” exercise);
- A sense of the principles that you will use to underpin those improvements (in the form of your design principles).

This will help you to look at the accountability and governance roles carried out by others in the local area, and decide what scrutiny's own role should be in that context.

Step 2.1 Understand the roles of others

See Practice Guides 9, 11 and 13 – <http://www.cfps.org.uk/?s=practice+guide>

Accountability works! (2010) – <http://www.cfps.org.uk/accountability-works/>

Scrutiny does not happen in a vacuum. Within the local area, there will be individuals, groups, agencies and other organisations who will have some role in holding to account and/or overseeing the kinds of important local issues in which the scrutiny function has a stake.

You need to understand who these people are. You also need to understand what their roles are. The better you understand those roles the better the chance that scrutiny's function can be clearly demarcated, with members and others having the confidence that scrutiny is doing something unique and valuable.

One of the most valuable roles that scrutiny can perform is to look at the internal systems and processes that comprise much council governance (some of the kinds of things that we introduce below) and open them out to public input, insight and scrutiny. The public are likely to have a profoundly different perspective on local services to those held by the council. Scrutiny should consider that perspective when looking at the role of these other organisations.

This exercise will make it easier to identify where the local “gaps” in good governance are. This will then help to define how scrutiny might design its role to fit into that gap.

Some of the people involved are – and their roles in governance – include:

Person	Role
In-house council managers	Holding to account their own staff for the delivery of council services, and other business. This will usually be carried out through usual line management methods, through performance management and budget and risk control.
Executive councillors	Executive councillors / cabinet members holding senior managers to account for their delivery of the council's political priorities, using similar techniques to those described above.
Clientside council managers	Council officers who manage contracts, or handle the commissioning of services from other organisations, use management information to hold the delivery of those services to account. This is usually done by reference to a contract, and robust systems will usually be in place to assure value for money. Particular areas of concern will be “escalated” to senior managers and elected members.
Partner organisations	<p>While the council holds its partners to account, its partners also hold it to account. For example, the integration of health and social care require that councils work together closely with NHS bodies. Those NHS bodies will have expectations of the contribution that the council will make to such arrangements.</p> <p>Partners may also be commissioned providers, or new bodies (such as Teckal companies) in which the council has a stake, which are responsible for the planning and delivery of local services along with other agencies. The accountability relationships between these bodies are important to understand.</p>
Regulators	In England, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission are the key external regulators, whose work focuses on the care services provided by councils to children and adults.

The public

The public are the primary source of accountability for elected politicians; they hold politicians, and officers, to account through elections and also through community activism between elections. This activism can take many forms. Sometimes it will be traditional, and manifested through mechanisms such as formally-constituted residents' associations and community groups. On other occasions, it can be more disruptive.

Others involved in local scrutiny and accountability

Organisations such as Local Healthwatch have an important scrutiny role, alongside the Police and Crime Panel, the local fire authority and other bodies.

The scrutiny functions of neighbouring authorities will also need to develop close working relationships.

Increasingly, the creation and development of combined authorities will make those bodies' own overview and scrutiny committees important partners.

Step 2.2 Sketch out a role and focus areas

See The Change Game (2015) - <http://www.cfps.org.uk/the-change-game/>

Cards on the table (2016) - <http://www.cfps.org.uk/cards-on-the-table-devolution/>

Tipping the scales (2012) - <http://www.cfps.org.uk/tipping-the-scales/>

Increasingly, it's becoming clear that traditional, broad-brush scrutiny work – the kind that takes a general view of a topic in the round – is an imperfect way to conduct scrutiny. There are two ways to design work differently:

- Focusing in on a narrow area of policy – for example, a review into social housing could focus on the time taken to carry out regular maintenance and repairs or council communication on the “right to buy” post the passage of the Housing and Planning Act;
- Use a “focus” through which to look at a topic. So, again in relation to social housing, you could look at corporate risks associated with social housing (capacity and demand, for example) or at tenants' expectations about the way that the council should communicate with them.

In “The change game” we introduced this idea of focus as a way of channelling scrutiny's input into large and complex issues. There are a number of possible areas of focus that we mentioned:

- Focus on value. CfPS's publications on social return on investment will help to understand this role more effectively;
- Focus on risk. CfPS has recently published a paper on risk and resilience, which explains how risk can be used by scrutineers to weigh up complex policy options;
- Focus on residents' experiences. CfPS's paper “Hiding in plain sight” emphasises the importance of engaging with the concerns of local people – focusing on this as the driver of scrutiny work is a powerful way to bring a different perspective to bear on local policymaking;

- Focus on the system, and on organisational development. Councils are going through substantial transformations which will require big cultural changes – scrutiny can lead on understanding these changes, making sure they are informed by wider community need, and championing these moves within the organisation;
- Focus on performance and quality. Adopting a “by exception” report to performance monitoring, with scrutiny playing a defined and well-understood role in intervening when service quality falls and other improvement mechanisms fail.

The selection of a clear and unambiguous focus for scrutiny is a critical part of improving its impact. The resource, and organisational commitment, simply no longer exist for us to talk about scrutiny as a function which “holds the executive to account” in the broadest sense of the term, without a sense of a need to prioritise its work. Discussion and agreement on scrutiny’s role will be difficult, and will cause contention.

CHECKPOINT: Share with members and officers in the council – and with other stakeholders – first thoughts about scrutiny’s future role, and how it differs from what is in place now. Take the opportunity to reflect on how that new role might significantly change expectations about scrutiny in the future, and how scrutiny needs to be supported and resourced. Use this opportunity to further discuss, and subsequently agree, what scrutiny’s overall role will be.

Step 3: ways of working and accessing information

Now comes the time to agree how scrutiny will work – how it will use its agreed role to embed the design principles we mentioned above.

There are a number of different methods for conducting scrutiny work. Below, we set out some of them, explain what they are, and suggest the kinds of issues you might address.

It’s important to remember that you need to review and evaluate these ways of working against the role you have agreed, and against the work you did at the start, when you reviewed the context in which you are working. The lessons you learned from those exercises will help you to understand which of these methods will work best.

These ways of working will need to be informed by the more general approach you take to the way that scrutiny carries out its work, such as:

- Work programming. How will this process work? Who will be involved in it?
- Practically, how will scrutiny seek to engage with the executive, with the council’s partners and with the public?
- Overall, how will scrutiny seek to evaluate and improve its performance on an ongoing basis?

The answers to these questions will relate closely to scrutiny’s agreed role. Once discussed and agreed, it will be easier to think about scrutiny’s practical ways of working inside and outside meetings.

Critically, all activities must be designed in such a way that they maximise the positive outcome from scrutiny’s work. Activity must, in this way, be relentlessly and continually tied to a sense of scrutiny’s value – what it brings to the council and to the wider community.

Possible ways of working

See Practice Guides 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 12 – <http://www.cfps.org.uk/?s=practice+guide>

Activity	Description
In committee	<p>Limiting the number of substantive items on each agenda to one or two.</p> <p>Thinking about “themed agendas” where a few connected subjects are discussed.</p> <p>Briefing officers on scrutiny’s objectives in looking at particular items to ensure that their reports are targeted and focused, rather than generic.</p> <p>Requiring as a matter of course that cabinet members attend to answer questions on key items, rather than chief officers alone.</p> <p>Not always permitting officers or cabinet councillors to make presentations before questioning begins, relying on scrutiny members reading their papers and requiring that relevant information be shared in paper form rather than making the assumption that oral presentations will always be necessary.</p> <p>Planning meetings/evidence-gathering in such a way that the chair is empowered to make substantive recommendations on an item then and there.</p>
In a task and finish group meeting	<p>Recognising where task and finish working is really necessary, and where it is just an extension of committee work by another means.</p> <p>Ensuring that the scope of reviews translates into each meeting having a clear and defined objective, with meetings taking a project-focused approach.</p> <p>Thinking about which background papers, and from whom, are prepared and circulated in advance (something on which we expand in the section below on information).</p> <p>Thinking about the interplay between witnesses, and how witnesses will be managed before, during and after the meeting.</p>

In a meeting designed for public input

Thinking about the circumstances in which such public meetings might be appropriate.

Thinking about how such meetings might be planned, designed and communicated – who is involved and when, and how are the public involved in that process? For example, it might make sense to talk to the council's communications team about the basic principles that underpin public scrutiny meetings and how they can be planned and organised to integrate with the council's wider approach to engagement.

Ensuring that opportunities for public input are significant are meaningful – in the way that the meeting is planned and organised.

Ensuring that the role of councillors in such meetings is clear.

Putting in place measures to keep those who attend (and those who don't, in the wider community) informed about the meeting and its outcomes.

In the community

Planning ways to ensure that information from councillors' ward work is fed into the scrutiny process.

Thinking of innovative and interesting ways that scrutiny can take its work out in the community.

Informally with officers

Regular information sharing meetings between chairs, councillors and senior officers.

Regular informal briefing sessions for larger groups of councillors, replacing "for information" items at committee meetings and organised by the department involved.

Less productive ways of working

There are ways of working, common in scrutiny, which are broadly unproductive. This process provides a useful opportunity to review those approaches and to consider how they might be improved.

Activity	Why it tends not to be productive, and what can be done about it
Meetings with multiple (more than two) substantive items on the agenda	<p>Does not allow enough opportunity for members to dig into and reflect on an issue. Encourages “glossing” of information and an overreliance on officer reports.</p> <hr/> <p>Work programmes can be made sharper. Members can challenge themselves, and each other, to justify the placing of certain items on the committee agenda. The use of selection criteria for agenda items or similar systems to prioritise work.</p>
Items submitted to committee “to note” or to provide an update	<p>Uses up time at committee meetings without a clear sense of an outcome, or scrutiny adding any value.</p> <hr/> <p>Work, whether at committee or in a different forum, should be carried out with a defined outcome in mind – usually, the making of recommendations. Papers circulated to members for information should be provided to them in their postbag, online and/or by means of member briefings organised by service departments.</p>
Provision, at committee, of full scorecards / full technical reports as a separate substantive item	<p>Members can often get bogged down in the minutiae of technical data. This can lead to ineffective scrutiny. Such data will often be out of date by the time members come to see it, and won’t be presented in a way that enables members to add much value to the way it is used and analysed.</p> <hr/> <p>Such data should be used as part of the research base for an approach which sees particular performance issues brought to committee by exception. This would allow specific performance challenges to be highlighted, reflected upon and actioned by members.</p>

Establishment of open-ended “standing panels” or other working groups which do not have the status of formal committees

It is common for scrutiny activity to be delegated to “standing panels” with open terms of reference. This raises resource challenges, and means that such scrutiny work risks not being especially task-oriented.

Better prioritisation of work to ensure that there is always a defined scope with an end point / outcome.

Work that adopts a council-focused perspective of the local community

For example a “review of the council’s youth service” is different from, and inferior to, a “review of the needs of local young people”. Framing issues in a different way will make it easier to break out of council silos and address things from the point of view of local people. This links to the points made above about scrutiny’s overall focus.

Accessing information

See “Your right to know” (2012) – <http://www.cfps.org.uk/your-right-to-know-the-future-for-transparency-in-england/>

“Pulling it together, 3rd edition” (2017) – forthcoming

Once different ways of working have been explored and agreed, members will need to consider the range of information they will require to work properly.

In brief, there are a number of steps through which councillors need to go in order to assure themselves that they are accessing the right information in the right way at the right time, and using it to maximise the effect of their scrutiny work.

- Learning the basics of how to find and use information. This will involve talking to officers about scrutiny’s role, their expectations and what information might be required;
- Understanding how to analyse and reflect on research evidence. Members will need to discuss how much they need to develop these skills themselves, and the extent to which they will need officer assistance;
- Developing scrutiny’s approach to gathering and using evidence so that findings and recommendations are clearly evidence-informed, and that the evidence used tracks back to scrutiny’s overall role.

It is worth remembering that councillors sitting on scrutiny committees have enhanced information access rights under legislation. It is also important to remember that this does not mean that councillors should be looking at everything available, all the time. Part of the benefit of taking a more forensic and targeted approach to evidence is about understanding where to stop. Members need to decide themselves how information will be presented to them and how much they need.

One way that some councils have sought to manage the weight of information that members could look at is to divide the task up. Individual councillors on a committee could be given the responsibility to lead on oversight of a particular element of that committee’s terms of reference. This is particularly useful for councils with only one, or two committees, and where councillors might be worried that they cannot otherwise keep track of a wide range of strategic issues.

CHECKPOINT: This checkpoint involves members agreeing to sign off what has been discussed and agreed – this is the most important part of the work so far.

Some useful principles to bear in mind are:

- These new ways of working should be presented as being temporary in nature, pending final evaluation (see step 5). Making wholesale changes to ways of working – and particularly to structures – can seem risky, particularly when those changes are seen as permanent. By providing a year for new arrangements to “bed in”, space is provided to evaluate the new approach with a view either to changing it, reverting back to previous arrangements or keeping with what you have;
- These ways of working will involve cultural change – changes to the mindset, attitudes and values of both members and officers. Structural change does not need to be discussed at this stage, and is indeed likely to distract from the need to sign off what has been agreed so far;
- As well as member agreement, a wider range of stakeholders also need to be consulted and informed about scrutiny’s new direction, role, focus and ways of working. This checkpoint will therefore require that members think about how this will be communicated to a wider audience.

Step 4: agreeing a new structural model

The final stage in the process is the agreement of a new structural model for the scrutiny function. Essentially, this is the number of committees you will have, what their terms of reference will be, who will sit on them and who will chair.

It is important not to skip ahead to this stage, or to focus too much time and energy on structures. The way that scrutiny is structurally carried out will closely derive from its role. If its role is not clear, not widely understood and not agreed, the greater the chance that disagreements will occur. It is a waste of time and energy to spend meetings arguing about whether there should be three committees, or four, or five, based purely on a sense of a need to “fit” existing work, or more work, into a new structure.

The number of committees and their size

See Practice Guide 6 – <http://www.cfps.org.uk/?s=practice+guide>

There is no optimum number of scrutiny committees. CfPS research shows no real connection between the size and number of scrutiny committees and their effectiveness, although some research we have carried out suggests a loose correlation between more effective scrutiny and fewer committees. On balance, for logistical reasons, we would suggest that a good size for a committee lies somewhere between 7 and 10.

But every council is different, and each scrutiny function is different, with a different role. Little is therefore likely to be learned by looking at the committee structure of neighbouring, or similar, authorities as part of an evaluation of scrutiny.

The most common committee structures are set out below.

- Single committee – a single committee that undertakes all work (without any task and finish groups);
- Single committee with task and finish – a single committee which commissions further work from task and finish groups;

■ Two committees –

- “Internal” and “external” – some councils set up one committee to look at matters for which the council is responsible, and one looking at issues which are the responsibility of partners. This is, in our view, not an effective way to divide up work, because it is increasingly difficult to identify obvious divisions between these different strands of work;
- “People” and “places”, or similar – dividing issues into those which involve services being delivered directly to individuals (such as social care) and those provided to communities more generally (parks, libraries);
- “Overview” and “scrutiny” – dividing policy development from performance management and call-in.

■ Three or more committees – where terms of reference may be divided in a variety of ways, reflecting the nature of the council. Setting terms of reference to reflect the council’s corporate priorities is a popular approach, but this assumes that the council’s corporate priorities are sufficiently robust.

The terms of reference

Concern is often expressed by members or officers at the prospect of committee terms of reference being too broad. This is often seen as a justification for expanding the number of committees.

This links back to the issue we raised earlier about prioritisation. Effective prioritisation makes it possible to have effective scrutiny with fewer meetings and fewer committees. Ineffective scrutiny can flourish where plenty of time and space is available for more activity to be carried out. The fear may exist that resource-stretched scrutiny will suffer as things will “fall between the cracks”. This risk is most likely to be realised when councillors expect to receive frequent updates on a very wide range of issues, and drown under the weight of paper. Prioritisation – which will derive directly from scrutiny’s agreed role – is the only way to prevent this risk from being a significant one.

The chairing arrangements

See Practice Guide 6 – <http://www.cfps.org.uk/?s=practice+guide>

Skills Briefing 2 – <http://www.cfps.org.uk/?s=skills+briefing>

Full Council will usually vote on the chairship of overview and scrutiny committees. The committee will then formally elect a chair at the beginning of meetings. Usually this means that chairs will be of the same political party as the executive.

Although there is no conclusive evidence to demonstrate that scrutiny is more effective when chaired by members of the opposition, in our view to do so makes it easier for scrutiny to demonstrate its independence from the leadership. It also brings a wider range of differing perspectives to bear on the scrutiny process.

Step 5: ongoing review and evaluation

An important part of evaluating scrutiny is the need to keep that evaluation going. It should be a continuous process – not necessarily in a formal sense, but in the sense of how you think about work as you are doing it.

This toolkit is something which can be returned to, and used to formulate quicker and more targeted evaluation processes. Future evaluations, for example, may involve only step 1 – “taking stock” – with subsequent steps being undertaken only where it is felt that there is a clear business need to do so.

More information

A range of resources exists on the CfPS website which will help practitioners to understand and improve their scrutiny function.

CfPS also provides a helpdesk function to local authorities, funded by the LGA, to assist on matters relating to scrutiny, as well as corporate governance more generally. To access this support please call 020 3866 5100.

CfPS is the leading provider of training and consultancy to local government overview and scrutiny. If you think you need help to review the effectiveness of your scrutiny and governance arrangements or additional training for members or officers please get in touch to discuss further.



Contact:

Ed Hammond
020 3866 5109
ed.hammond@cfps.org.uk

77 Mansell Street London E1 8AN
telephone **020 3866 5100** email **info@cfps.org.uk** twitter **@cfpscrutiny**

Self-assessment of Overview and Scrutiny Good Practice – 2025

Rate each question on current performance at CoLC on a scale of 1-10 with 1 being lowest and 10 being highest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
--	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-----------

Section 1: Scrutiny Purpose and Governance

1	Does a facility exist for Scrutiny to regularly report to full Council regarding its work?									
2	Do the terms of reference for the Council's Scrutiny Committees clearly set out the purpose of the committees?									
3	Is the role and purpose of scrutiny understood and accepted across the authority?									
4	Does scrutiny provide support to the authority in meeting the requirements of good governance?									
5	Are the arrangements to hold the committee to account for its performance satisfactory?									
6	Does a protocol for the relationship between Scrutiny Members and the Executive exist?									
7	If "Yes", is it understood?									
8	Does Scrutiny at the Council act as a "Critical Friend" in scrutinising Council functions?									

Section 1: Summary & Recommendations

Rate each question on current performance at CoLC on a scale of 1-10 with 1 being lowest and 10 being highest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Section 2: The work of Scrutiny Committees

[illegible]

Section 2: Summary & Recommendations

23	Does the committee have good working relations with key people and organisations, including the Executive and Corporate Management Team?										
24	Are Officer and Cabinet Members proactive in highlighting issues and topic for additional scrutiny?										
25	Do Scrutiny Committees identify key lines of enquiry and questioning in advance of their meetings?										
26	Is adequate secretariat and administrative support to the committee provided?										

Section 3: Summary & Recommendations

Rate each question on current performance at CoLC on a scale of 1-10 with 1 being lowest and 10 being highest

Section 4: Effectiveness of the Committee

[illegible]

31	Does the Scrutiny function effectively communicate its work to the rest of the Council and the wider public?										
32	Does Scrutiny Committee activity contribute to the decision making process and the development of new policy?										
33	Are examples of best practice captured and used by Scrutiny Committees?										
34	Is the “Voice” of the local community heard? Does Scrutiny have process for the involvement of the public?										

Section 4: Summary & Recommendations

Additional Comments

<p>As a member of a Scrutiny Committee what training would you benefit from?</p> <p>What do you think the key strengths of Scrutiny are?</p> <p>What improvements could be made to further develop Scrutiny at the Council?</p>	
---	--

This page is intentionally blank.

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**10 JULY 2025**

SUBJECT: WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2025/26

DIRECTORATE: CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND TOWN CLERK

LEAD OFFICER: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present members with the Performance Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2025/26 (Appendix A).

2. Background

- 2.1 The work programme for the Performance Scrutiny Committee is put forward annually for approval by Council. The work programme is then regularly updated throughout the year in consultation with the Performance Scrutiny Committee and its chair.
- 2.2 Items have been scheduled in accordance with the existing work programme and officers' guidance regarding the meetings at which the most up-to-date information can be reported to the committee.
- 2.3 The work programme includes the list of portfolio holders under scrutiny.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 That members offer any relevant comments or changes on the proposed work programme.

Key Decision No

Do the Exempt Information Categories Apply No

Call In and Urgency: Is the decision one to which Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply? No

Does the report contain Appendices? Yes

If Yes, how many Appendices? 1

Lead Officer: Jessica Cullen, Democratic Services Officer
Email: jessica.cullen@lincoln.gov.uk

This page is intentionally blank.

22 May 2025

Item(s)	Responsible Person(s)	Strategic Priority/ Comments
Standard Items		
Financial Performance (Detailed): Outturn 2024/25 Quarter 4	Laura Shipley	Quarterly Report Professional High Performing Services
Treasury Management Stewardship and Actual Prudential Indicators Report 2024/25 (Outturn)	Laura Shipley	Six Monthly Report Professional High Performing Services
Performance Monitoring Outturn 2024/25 Quarter 4	Lara Wells	Quarterly Report-Professional High Performing Services
Annual Scrutiny Report 2024/25	Jess Cullen	Annual Report
Annual Complaints Report	Jo Crookes	Annual Report
Strategic Risk Register – Quarterly Report Quarter 4	Jaclyn Gibson	Quarterly Report Professional High Performing Services

19 June 2025 (CANCELLED)

Item(s)	Responsible Person(s)	Strategic Priority/ Comments
Standard Items		
Confirmation of Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee Minutes	Democratic Services	Regular Report Let's Deliver Quality Housing
Fire Safety Update – Inspections of Flats owned by Leaseholders	Matt Hillman/ Martin Kerrigan	Annual Report
Work Programme for 2025-26 - Update	Democratic Services	Regular Report

10 July 2025 (*Monitoring Overview*)

Item(s)	Responsible Person(s)	Strategic Priority/ Comments
Standard Items		
Work Programme for 2025-26 - Update	Democratic Services	Regular Report
Portfolio Under Scrutiny Session – Reducing Inequality	Portfolio Holder	Annual Session Reducing Inequality
Monitoring Items		
Scrutiny Self - Evaluation Review	Democratic Services	Annual Review
Income/Arrears Monitoring report	Martin Walmsley	Annual Report <i>Professional High Performing Services</i>

14 August 2025 (Quarterly Monitoring)

Item(s)	Responsible Person(s)	Strategic Priority/ Comments
Standard Items		
Confirmation of Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee Minutes	Democratic Services	Regular Report Lets Deliver Quality Housing
Work Programme for 2025-26 - Update	Democratic Services	Regular Report
Portfolio Under Scrutiny Session – Climate and Corporate Strategy (now includes Climate Change w.e.f 2025 report)	Portfolio Holder	Annual Session Professional High Performing Services
Monitoring Items		
Financial Performance (Detailed) – Quarterly Monitoring: Quarter 1	Laura Shipley	Quarterly Report Professional High Performing Services
Treasury Management – Quarter 1	Laura Shipley	Quarterly Report Professional High Performing Services
Performance Quarterly Monitoring: Quarter 1	Lara Wells	Quarterly Report Professional High Performing Services
Quarterly Strategic Risk Register Report-Quarter1	Jaclyn Gibson	Quarterly Report Professional High Performing Services
Scrutiny Self-Evaluation Review - Results	Democratic Services	Annual Review

25 September 2025

Item(s)	Responsible Person(s)	Strategic Priority/ Comments
Standard Items		
Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee Minutes	Democratic Services	Regular Report Lets Deliver Quality Housing
Work Programme for 2025-26 – Update	Democratic Services	Regular Report
OD Group and Workforce Strategy to Performance	Carolyn Wheater/Ali Thacker	Professional High Performing Services
Portfolio Under Scrutiny Remarkable Place	Portfolio Holder	Annual Session
Annual Report for Remarkable Place V2030 Theme	Simon Walters	Annual Report
Protecting Vulnerable People Update	Emily Holmes	Regular Report
Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Annual Report 2025/26 including Financial Update	Toby Forbes-Turner	Annual Report Let's Drive Economic Growth

13 November 2025

Item(s)	Responsible Person(s)	Strategic Priority/ Comments
Standard Items		
Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee Minutes	Democratic Services	Regular Report Let's Deliver Quality Housing
Work Programme for 2025-26 - Update	Democratic Services	Regular Report
Portfolio Under Scrutiny - Customer Experience, Review and Resources	Portfolio Holder	Annual Session
Annual Complaints Report Update	Emily Holmes	Update Report
Monitoring Items		
Financial Performance (Detailed) – Quarterly Monitoring: Quarter 2	Laura Shipley	Quarterly Report Professional High Performing Services
Performance Quarterly Monitoring: Quarter 2	Lara Wells	Quarterly Report Professional High Performing Services
Strategic Risk Register – Quarterly Report Quarter 2	Jaclyn Gibson	Quarterly Report Professional High Performing Services
Treasury Management and Prudential Code Update Report – Half Yearly Report	Laura Shipley	Half Yearly Report Professional High Performing Services
Other Items:		
Budget Theme Group – Nominees	Jaclyn Gibson	Annual Appointment Professional High Performing Services

4 December 2025

Item(s)	Responsible Person(s)	Strategic Priority/ Comments
Standard Items		
Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee Minutes	Democratic Services	Regular Report Let's Deliver Quality Housing
Work Programme for 2025-26 - Update	Democratic Services	Regular Report
Portfolio Under Scrutiny Session – Quality Housing	Portfolio Holder	Annual Session Let's Deliver Quality Housing
Monitoring Item(s)		
Fire Safety Update	Matt Hillman	Annual Report

22 January 2026

Item(s)	Responsible Person(s)	Strategic Priority/ Comments
Standard Items		
Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee Minutes	Democratic Services	Regular Report Let's Deliver Quality Housing
OD Group and Workforce Strategy to Performance	Carolyn Wheater/Ali Thacker	Professional High Performing Services
Work Programme for 2025-26 - Update	Democratic Services	Regular Report
Portfolio Under Scrutiny – Inclusive Economic Growth	Portfolio Holder	Annual Session Let's Drive Economic Growth
Annual Scrutiny Report	Democratic Services	Annual Report

19 February 2026

Item(s)	Responsible Person(s)	Strategic Priority/ Comments
Standard Items		
Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee Minutes	Democratic Services	Regular Report Lets Deliver Quality Housing
Draft Work Programme for 2024-2025	Democratic Services	Regular Report
Monitoring Items		
Financial Performance (Detailed) – Quarterly Monitoring: Quarter 3	Laura Shipley	Quarterly Report Professional High Performing Services
Performance Quarterly Monitoring: Quarter 3	Lara Wells	Quarterly Report Professional High Performing Services
Treasury Management : Quarter 3	Laura Shipley	Quarterly Report Professional High Performing Services
Strategic Risk Register – Quarterly Report Quarter 3	Laura Shipley	Quarterly Report Professional High Performing Services
Feedback from Budget Review Group	Laura Shipley	Annual Report Professional High Performing Services
Section 106 – Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement	Kieron Manning	Annual Report Lets Drive Economic Growth

12 March 2026

Item(s)	Responsible Person(s)	Strategic Priority/ Comments
Standard Items		
Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee Minutes	Democratic Services	Regular Report Let's Deliver Quality Housing
Draft Work Programme for 2025-2026	Democratic Services	Regular Report
Monitoring Items		
Targets for 2025/26	Emily Holmes/Lara Wells	Annual Report

Portfolio Under Scrutiny Sessions

Date	Portfolio
10 July 2025	Reducing Inequality
14 August 2025	Climate and Corporate Strategy
25 September 2025	Remarkable Place
13 November 2025	Customer Experience, Review and Resources
4 December 2025	Quality Housing
22 January 2026	Inclusive Economic Growth

This page is intentionally blank.