

# Cabinet

**Thursday, 19 September 2024 at 10:30**

**County Hall, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 7QP**

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## AGENDA

- |    |   |              |
|----|---|--------------|
| 1  | Minutes of the last meeting of Cabinet held on 25 July 2024                 | 3 - 8        |
| 2  | Apologies for Absence   |              |
| 3  | Declarations of Interests by Members and Officers:- (see note below)        |              |
| 4  | Small School Sustainability Strategy 2024-29                                | 9 - 36       |
| 5  | Nottinghamshire's Improving School Attendance Strategy 2024-27              | 37 - 60      |
| 6  | Nottinghamshire Housing Strategy 2024-29                                    | 61 - 108     |
| 7  | Highway Services Contract - Via East Midlands Limited                       | 109 -<br>126 |
| 8  | Arc Property Services Partnership Limited Contract                          | 127 -<br>138 |
| 9  | Response to the Recommendations from the Scrutiny Review Cost of Living     | 139 -<br>162 |
| 10 | Nottinghamshire County Council Resource to Support Academisation of Schools | 163 -<br>168 |

### Notes

- (1) Councillors are advised to contact their Research Officer for details of any Group Meetings which are planned for this meeting.
- (2) Members of the public wishing to inspect "Background Papers" referred to in the reports on the agenda or Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act should contact:-

Customer Services Centre 0300 500 80 80

- (3) Persons making a declaration of interest should have regard to the Code of Conduct and the Council's Procedure Rules. Those declaring must indicate the nature of their interest and the reasons for the declaration.

Councillors or Officers requiring clarification on whether to make a declaration of interest are invited to contact Keith Ford (Tel. 0115 977 2590) or a colleague in Democratic Services prior to the meeting.

- (4) Councillors are reminded that Committee and Sub-Committee papers, with the exception of those which contain Exempt or Confidential Information, may be recycled.
- (5) This agenda and its associated reports are available to view online via an online calendar - <http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/dms/Meetings.aspx>

Meeting CABINET

Date Thursday 25 July 2024 (commencing at 10.30 am)

membership

### **COUNCILLORS**

Ben Bradley (Chairman)  
Bruce Laughton (Vice-Chairman)

Chris Barnfather  
Scott Carlton  
Neil Clarke MBE  
Keith Girling  
Richard Jackson  
Sam Smith  
Tracey Taylor  
Jonathan Wheeler

### **OTHER COUNCILLORS IN ATTENDANCE**

#### **Deputy Cabinet Members**

Sinead Anderson  
André Camilleri  
Nigel Moxon  
Tom Smith  
Gordon Wheeler

#### **Other Councillors**

Richard Butler  
Jim Creamer  
Boyd Elliott  
Paul Henshaw  
Mike Pringle

### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Adrian Smith	Chief Executive
Marjorie Toward	Chief Executive's Department
Nigel Stevenson	
Isobel Fleming	
Keith Ford	
Phil Rostance	
Melanie Williams	Adult Social Care Department

Colin Pettigrew

Children and Families Department

Derek Higon

Place Department

Emily Holmes

Vivienne Robbins

**1. MEMBERSHIP**

**RESOLVED 2024/011**

That the membership of the Cabinet for the 2024-25 municipal year be noted as follows:

- Leader of the Council – Councillor Ben Bradley
- Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member, Transformation – Councillor Bruce Laughton
- Cabinet Member, Business Management – Councillor Chris Barnfather
- Cabinet Member, Adult Social Care – Councillor Jonathan Wheeler
- Cabinet Member, Children and Families – Councillor Tracey Taylor
- Cabinet Member, Communities and Public Health – Councillor Scott Carlton
- Cabinet Member, Economic Development and Asset Management – Councillor Keith Girling
- Cabinet Member, Education and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) – Councillor Sam Smith
- Cabinet Member, Finance and Resources – Councillor Richard Jackson
- Cabinet Member, Transport and Environment – Councillor Neil Clarke MBE

**2. MINUTES**

The minutes of the last meeting of Cabinet held on 28 March 2024, having been previously circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

**3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None

**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

None.

**5. THE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE PLAN - ANNUAL REPORT – 2023-24**

**RESOLVED 2024/012**

That the progress made against the previous Annual Delivery Plan 2023-24 be acknowledged.

Due to the subject matters being linked, The Chairman agreed that agenda items 6 and 7 be considered together (with the subsequent votes on each item taken separately).

**6. MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS 2023-24**

During the debate, it was clarified that the Economic Development and Asset Management Portfolio budget had an overspend of £0.6m, rather than an underspend as stated in the section heading on page 28 of the report.

**RESOLVED 2024/013**

1) That the following be noted:

- a. the 2023-24 year-end revenue position;
- b. the year-end position and movement of the Authority's reserves as detailed in paragraphs 20-24 and Appendix B of the report;
- c. the final position on 2023-24 contingency requests as detailed in Appendix C;
- d. the year-end position for the 2023-24 contingency requests, as detailed in Appendix C of the report;
- e. the capital variations, as set out in paragraphs 47-51 and Appendix D of the report;
- f. the Council's 2023-24 Prudential Indicators as detailed in Appendix E of the report;
- g. the Treasury management Outturn report as set out in Appendix F of the report.

2) That the variation to the capital programme, as set out in paragraph 52 of the report, be approved.

**7. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT – PERIOD 2, 2024-25**

**RESOLVED 2024/014**

That the following be noted:

- the individual Portfolio revenue budgets for 2024-25;
- the summary of capital expenditure to date, year-end forecasts and variations to the capital programme;
- the Council's Balance Sheet transactions.

Due to the subject matters being linked, The Chairman agreed that agenda items 8 and 9 be considered together (with the subsequent votes on each item taken separately).

**8. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL AREA SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) STRATEGY 2024-27**

**RESOLVED 2024/015**

That the proposed Nottinghamshire area SEND Strategy 2024-27, as appended to the report, be approved.

**9. THE NOTTINGHAM AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES JOINT COMMISSIONING STRATEGY 2024-27**

**RESOLVED 2024/016**

That the proposed Nottingham and Nottinghamshire SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy 2024-27, as appended to the report, be approved.

**10. PUBLIC HEALTH GRANT RESERVES INVESTMENT OVER THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

**RESOLVED 2024/017**

- 1) That the proposals set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved (with any changes to the proposed expenditure against each activity subject to approval by the relevant decision maker).
- 2) That the procurement and entry into the necessary contractual documents to facilitate these proposals be approved, with such documents to be finalised by the Director of Public Health in consultation with the Section 151 Officer or nominee.

**11. HIGHWAYS UPDATE AND WINTER READINESS**

**RESOLVED 2024/018**

That a £4.8m variation to the capital programme be approved to reflect additional investment in the highway network to improve recovery from the 2023-24 winter and to increase resilience for the forthcoming winter period.

**12. CATERING AND FACILITIES MANAGEMENT SERVICE – FUTURE OPERATING MODEL**

**RESOLVED 2024/019**

- 1) That the response from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health to the recommendations arising from the Place Select Committee review of Catering and Facilities Management be approved.

- 2) That a procurement exercise and other work as set out in the report be commenced to identify a preferred partner and partnership operating model for the future delivery of the catering and facilities management services currently offered by the Council.
- 3) That the key commercial parameters for the detailed design of the procurement exercise be determined by the Executive Director for Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health.
- 4) That the Interim Service Director Place and Communities be authorised to conduct negotiations required during the procurement process, consulting at regular milestones with an officer Senior Steering Group consisting of the Executive Director for Place, the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer and supported by appropriate legal, financial and technical advice relevant to the project.
- 5) That the outcome of the procurement exercise be reported back to a future Cabinet Meeting for the formal approval of any proposed new operating model and preferred partner.

**13. RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW OF HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRES**

**RESOLVED 2024/020**

- 1) That the recommendations from the Place Select Committee review of Household Waste Recycling Centres be received.
- 2) That the response to the recommendations arising from the Place Select Committee review of Household Waste Recycling Centres be approved.

**14. FORWARD LOOKING AND RESILIENT COUNCIL – DIGITAL AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)**

**RESOLVED 2024/021**

- 1) That a replacement programme in relation to the BMS and Mosaic systems, including the employment of dedicated external Programme management resource for these programmes using funding from the Strategic Technology Reserve be formally established.
- 2) That the Artificial Intelligence Strategy objectives and principles be endorsed.
- 3) That the drawing down of £500,000 funding from the Strategic Technology Reserve for release of internal capacity and programme resources to initiate the Mosaic and SAP (BMS) programmes be approved.

- 4) That a report be submitted to Cabinet in the Autumn of 2024 to provide progress on the programmes of work.

**15. OUTSIDE BODIES REGISTER UPDATE**

**RESOLVED 2024/022**

- 1) That the inclusion of the Carlton, Kirkby, Mansfield, Newark and Worksop Local Town Boards in the Outside Bodies Register as Category B bodies be approved.
- 2) That the establishment of the East Midlands Combined County Authority Transport and Advisory Committee, Skills and Employment Advisory Committee, Investment Committee, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Audit and Governance Committee, and the process for making appointments, be noted.
- 3) That the inclusion of the Nottingham-Lincoln Stakeholder Board in the Outside Bodies Register as a Category C body be approved.

The meeting closed at 11.44 am.

CHAIRMAN



## **REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER, EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES**

### **SMALL SCHOOL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY 2024 – 2029**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. This report seeks Cabinet approval of a Small School Sustainability Strategy 2024-2029, attached as **Appendix 1**, for Nottinghamshire's small schools who may be looking to improve and/or take a proactive approach to improving their long-term sustainability and reduce the impact of the unique challenges and risks small schools often experience.
2. This is a Key Decision because it will have significant effects on two or more electoral divisions.

#### **Information**

3. There is no nationally agreed definition of a small school, so Nottinghamshire County Council adopts the definition frequently used by Ofsted for a small school, which is a school that has 150 pupils or less.
4. Nottinghamshire currently has 71 schools with 150 pupils or less on roll. 54 of these are Primary Schools, 15 are Infant Schools and 2 are Junior Schools (data as of May 2024). This data also includes 3 new 'free' schools that recently opened which currently fall within the definition of a small school.
5. Of the 71 schools, 47 are Local Authority maintained, 21 are Academies and 32 are Church Schools. In maintained schools, decision making is delegated to Head Teachers and Governing Bodies.
6. Nottinghamshire currently has 10 'very small schools' which have less than 50 pupils, and which this Strategy places additional focus on as the challenges impacting small schools are often exacerbated in these settings.
7. The majority of Nottinghamshire's small schools are in rural locations, particularly in Newark & Sherwood and Bassetlaw districts, however varying numbers of these schools can be found within all seven County districts.
8. Nottinghamshire's small schools are frequently a popular choice, receiving over 700 first choice applications for the 2023/24 academic year, and play a pivotal role in their local communities. The Council strongly values all of these schools and wants to take action to

celebrate and support these settings in order to be able to continue to provide these benefits to Nottinghamshire's children and communities.

9. The Council's Small School Sustainability Strategy aims to provide a platform to support small schools, highlights the immediate risks and challenges that many of these schools may either be currently facing or at risk of facing in the future, and outlines clear, preventative steps that can be taken to support overcoming these risks and how schools can go about implementing these preventions.
10. The strategy recognises the role of Governing Bodies and Headteachers in the leadership and management of schools and the role of the Council in providing guidance and support for small schools to aid their decision making and planning and clarifies the support available and how this can be accessed, so that the Council's role in the process is clear.
11. This strategy has been designed directly with small schools, with direct input from Head Teachers of these settings, and seeks to ensure that such schools are aware of the options available to them to help improve their long-term sustainability.
12. The strategy highlights the key risks to sustainability that small schools are likely to be impacted by which include: pupil numbers on roll, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, finance, Governing Bodies and maintaining stable and secure leadership. Highlighting these issues and asking key questions for these schools to consider supports early identification of problems and promotion of prevention rather than reaction.
13. The strategy promotes and encourages small schools to take action to ensure they do not stand alone and are able to work together with other schools. These actions include working in partnerships, forming informal and formal collaborations or federations, and academisation. The strategy provides detailed information and links to inform schools about how to take the above actions and the benefits they can offer, to support them to make informed decisions to benefit their sustainability.

### **Other Options Considered**

14. The option of not taking action to support small school sustainability was rejected, as it is not in the best interests of these schools, the children and local communities accessing these settings, and does not align with the Council's message that it does not want to close small schools.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

15. The Council has produced the Small School Sustainability Strategy to support local small schools to remain informed of both the challenges they are likely to experience, and the range of potential solutions, to lessen the negative impact of these challenges and ensure they can continue to operate successfully.
16. The Council values local small schools and the positive impacts they offer to their pupils and wider local communities, and this strategy demonstrates its commitment to ensuring these schools are able to remain operational and able to provide their multitude of benefits long-term.

17. The strategy aims to be preventative rather than reactionary in order to support small schools to improve their sustainability before they reach a crisis point and ensure that they remain in a stable and secure position long-term.
18. Successful delivery of this strategy will support mitigation of the risks faced by local small schools and reduce the likelihood of such schools facing risk of closure.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

19. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Financial Implications**

20. When allocating Individual School Budgets, from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), Nottinghamshire County Council mirrors, as closely as possible, the National Funding Formula that is used by the Department for Education in allocating DSG to Local Authorities.
21. The National Funding Formula allocates funding to Local Authorities based on Pupil Led Factors (93.5% of core total funding) and School Led Factors (6.5% of core total funding).
22. As part of each Individual School's Budget they are guaranteed to receive a £134,000 lump sum within the School Led Factors, but the vast majority of funding is allocated on a per pupil basis so directly linked to how many pupils they have on roll. Therefore, small schools receive lower levels of funding to reflect their lower pupil numbers.
23. Small schools are funded, as all other schools, through the Dedicated Schools Grant. This in turn is calculated by a formula that reflects a number of factors, including fixed sums to run schools. The DSG is limited by the Formula and resources expended on small schools cannot therefore be utilised elsewhere.
24. The recommended actions detailed in this strategy may result in an increasing number of small schools reaching out to Nottinghamshire County Council Education & Inclusion Department for varying levels of support. There is no additional funding in place to fund this supportive work.
25. There are no immediate financial implications. Future consideration may need to be given to any aspects of support that the Council might provide that could lead to financial implications or changes.

## Human Rights Implications

26. This strategy supports children and young people's right to education through directly supporting Nottinghamshire's small schools to remain open and able to offer them a quality educational environment.

## RECOMMENDATION/S

That Cabinet:

- 1) approves the Small School Sustainability Strategy, attached as **Appendix 1**.
- 2) approves that the aims of the strategy are actively promoted to all small schools.

**Councillor Sam Smith**

**Cabinet Member, Education and Special Educational Needs & Disabilities**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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## Constitutional Comments (SF 05/09/24)

27. The recommendation falls within the remit of the Cabinet by virtue of its terms of reference.

## Financial Comments (GM 04/09/24)

28. All Schools funding needs to be contained within the overall Dedicated Schools Grant funding stream.

## Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- [Embracing Change: Rural and Small Schools \(2018\) | The Church of England](#)
- [Running small rural primary schools efficiently \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

- [Schools National Funding Formula: Changes to sparsity funding from 2022-23- consultation response July 2021 - Department for Education.pdf](#)

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

CF0187





# Nottinghamshire County Council Small School Sustainability Strategy

**2024-2029**

# Contents

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# Foreword



**Councillor Sam Smith, Cabinet Member for Education and SEND at Nottinghamshire County Council**

I am delighted to introduce the new Nottinghamshire Small Schools Strategy.

Children living in our rural communities benefit from local small schools that sit within the heart of their communities. These schools have less than 150 pupils on roll and include some with less than 50 pupils on roll meaning children are learning in a local school setting, where classes are small and individual needs are well understood.

Our ambition is for children to have the opportunity to experience outstanding learning, to be safe and to have their needs met as close to home as possible.

We know that families value our small schools because they are regularly selected as first preference on school place applications. We also know that these small schools are seen as an important aspect of village life and provide a central point for their communities.

Small schools are unique environments, and the county council has launched this strategy to encourage a partnership approach to supporting governors and leaders in small schools to ensure that they continue to thrive. I am extremely grateful to the governors, headteachers, teachers and wider school staff who work hard to make our small schools successful.



# 1 Our strategy for small schools



## 1.1 Introduction

The [Nottinghamshire Plan 2021 – 2031](#), contains clear ambitions for supporting our communities and families (Ambition 2) and building skills that help people get good jobs (Ambition 4) including making sure there are the right number of school places for Nottinghamshire children and young people. Small and rural primary schools are integral to the educational landscape of Nottinghamshire and delivery of these ambitions.

We aim to value, celebrate and support the positive contributions of our small schools, whilst ensuring we maintain a robust and sustainable education system for all children and young people across Nottinghamshire.

Small schools are popular with parents and carers for their unique and welcoming environments and their pivotal role in local communities. In 2024, Nottinghamshire small schools received over 700 first-choice applications.

Nottinghamshire County Council recognises the significant role school leaders and governors, who know their schools and communities best, play in planning for and making decisions about the future of their school and this strategy seeks to support and encourage school leaders and governing bodies in taking a proactive approach to reviewing current and future sustainability, actively considering the challenges and opportunities ahead and to plan strategically for a positive future.

We want all our small schools to consider the current or future pressures they may face and to use the questions and options within this strategy, including partnerships and academisation, to develop sustainable future plans. Schools are also actively encouraged to work with and contact us for guidance where required so that we can support each school and its future in the best possible way. In these circumstances, please contact [info@em-edsupport.org.uk](mailto:info@em-edsupport.org.uk).





## 1.2 Why should the county council prepare a small school strategy?

Nottinghamshire County Council has produced the small school sustainability strategy to support our small schools to remain informed of both the challenges they are likely to experience, and the range of potential solutions, to lessen the negative impact of these challenges and ensure they can continue to operate successfully and not in isolation. This strategy is underpinned by our Strengths Based Nottinghamshire Approach and seeks to build on the strengths of our schools, build even stronger relationships and provide continued high quality education for children, young people, families and communities across Nottinghamshire.

Nottinghamshire's small schools continue to compare well to both larger schools and national comparisons in terms of pupil outcomes in all areas. This demonstrates the strength and quality of education that Nottinghamshire's small schools can offer, their dedication to doing so, and the widespread benefits this has for local children and their families.

However, there are a range of complex issues which can challenge the stability and sustainability of small schools. The main challenges which can impact on Nottinghamshire's small schools can broadly fit into five main categories: pupil numbers, SEND, finance, strong leadership and governing bodies.





## Pupil numbers

Small schools, by definition, have lower pupil numbers than their larger counterparts, and whilst this presents several advantages such as smaller class sizes, an increased sense of community and teachers having an increased knowledge of and positive relationship with their students, it does also create an increasing number of risks.

As small schools often have low numbers of pupils on roll, any decrease in this number can have significant impacts. School funding is strongly linked to the number of pupils, and as such falling numbers on roll can result in reduced budgets, and directly impact on school's financial sustainability.



## SEND

Due to their smaller class sizes and the community feel of smaller schools, they are often attractive to parents who have children with special educational needs who feel that a smaller setting will provide a better learning environment that can meet their child's needs. This is a benefit that small schools can offer, and means that compared to larger schools, small schools frequently have proportionally higher numbers of children with SEND. However, this poses significant challenges for small schools, which often lack additional teaching staff or assistants, and the funding to provide the necessary support.



## Strong leadership

Maintaining and securing strong and stable leadership is also frequently more challenging for smaller schools, where changes in the leadership structure are often harder to respond to. For example, if a headteacher of a small school either leaves or has to take a long period of absence, it can often take considerable time to find a replacement and some schools will struggle to fill the vacancy at all.

Leadership capacity within small schools is often limited and, for those schools whose headteacher also carries teaching responsibilities, this has an even greater impact for the pupils and the day-to-day running of the school, as well as a further financial cost of supply teachers or procuring external leadership cover.







## Finance

Due to small schools having lower numbers of pupils in attendance, and often falling numbers on roll, their budgets are lower than that of larger schools, which can place them at increased risk of facing financial pressures and entering a deficit budget. The impact of a deficit budget for a small school can quickly escalate and when compounded by small schools being faced with fewer savings to be made due to often operating with lower staffing levels, this can lead to significant financial/budgetary concerns when unexpected costs arise, or the prices of resources increase.



## Governing bodies

Small schools often encounter both unique opportunities and challenges in recruiting and retaining governors. The limited pool of staff and parents, geographic location, and specific skill requirements can make this process more difficult. While these schools demonstrate resilience by encouraging governors to take on multiple roles, this approach can result in increased workloads that may become unsustainable over time. Vacancies on small school governing bodies are not uncommon, requiring significant time and effort from headteachers and chairs of governors to recruit new members.



## Wider challenges

Recent studies indicate that small schools inspected under the current Ofsted framework are five times more likely to receive a grade lower than 'Good' at their next inspection (TES, 2022). Small schools are also twice as likely to close as the national average (O'Brien 2019), particularly those small schools in rural areas. Rural areas are more likely to be impacted by issues with access to services such as employment, housing, and transport, which create additional challenges for small schools in these areas (Ovenden-Hope & Passy, 2019 & 2020).



### 1.3 Development of our strategy

This strategy has been developed with direct input from small school headteachers. The strategy seeks to ensure that small schools are aware of the options available to them to help improve their long-term sustainability, secure stable leadership and governance, maintain a good financial position with access to required resources, and continue to provide high-quality education provision to children across Nottinghamshire. There was also further consultation with several Strategic Partnership Boards and internal council services throughout the course of the strategy's development, to allow for their input and expertise. Whilst this strategy is focused primarily at maintained small primary schools, Nottinghamshire County Council is committed to working with all small schools and academy trusts on the issues highlighted within this strategy.

<sup>1</sup>O'Brien, N. (2019). *The decline of small schools and village schools [research note]*. Onward. Retrieved from: <https://www.ukonward.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Primary-schools.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>Ovenden-Hope, T. and Passy, R. (2019). *Educational Isolation: A challenge for schools in England*. Plymouth: Plymouth Marjon University and University of Plymouth. Retrieved from Marjon University website: <https://www.marjon.ac.uk/educational-isolation>.

<sup>3</sup>Ovenden-Hope, T. and Passy, R. (Eds.) (2020) *Exploring Teacher Recruitment and Retention: contextual challenges from international perspectives*. Oxford, Routledge



# Small schools – context



## 2.1 Definition

The definition of a small school varies globally and there is no agreed national definition for small schools in the UK. Nottinghamshire County Council defines small schools as those with 150 or fewer pupils, aligning with Ofsted's (2024) definition. Furthermore, schools with fewer than 50 pupils are classified as very small schools. Number On Roll (NOR) refers to the number of pupils enrolled at any specific school.

## 2.2 Nottinghamshire small schools in numbers

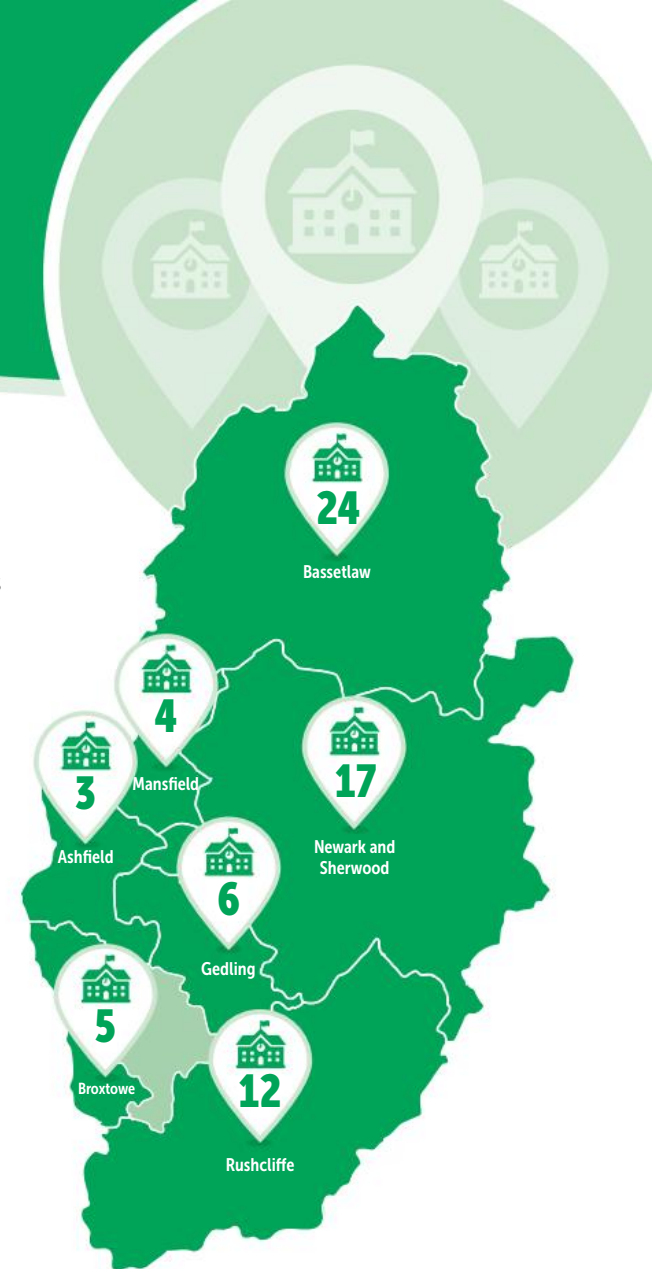
Nottinghamshire has many small schools, mainly in rural areas. As of May 2024 census:

- 71 (24%) schools are classified as small based on numbers on roll (NOR below 150). This figure includes Infant & Junior schools.
- The majority of small schools are in the districts of Newark & Sherwood and Bassetlaw.
- Nottinghamshire has ten very small schools (NOR less than 50). Eight out of these ten very small schools are local authority maintained and five out of these 10 are church schools

### Key data as at May 2024

	Number of Schools	Percentage
Number of small schools in Nottinghamshire	71	24%
Local authority maintained schools	47	57%
Academies	21	29%
Church schools	32	45%
Ofsted rating of 'Good' or 'Outstanding' (as of 24/07/24)	61	85%
Very Small Schools	10	14%

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This data includes three new 'free' schools that recently opened, which currently fall within the definition of small schools.



# 3 Strategic goals and recommendations



## 3.1 Strategic goals

The strategy for small schools has been developed to achieve the following strategic goals:

A

**For school leaders and governing bodies to proactively review and strategically plan for current and future sustainability challenges and opportunities.**

B

To provide support for small schools by:

1. Highlighting the immediate risks and challenges they face or may face in the future.
2. Outlining clear, preventative steps to overcome and avoid these risks.
3. Providing guidance on implementing these preventative measures.
4. Identifying additional sources of support for leaders and governors.

This strategy and the stated strategic goals above support the ambitions within the current 'Nottinghamshire plan 2021-31'





## 3.2 Strategy recommendations

This strategy sets out a range of key questions and encourages all governing bodies and leaders of small schools to consider these:



In considering these questions, we advise all small school governing bodies and leaders to also consider how working in partnership with others can enhance the quality of education and enrichment opportunities for your pupils, maximise resources and mitigate the challenges and pressures identified. A range of informal and formal partnership arrangements are outlined below to support discussions and future planning.



### 3.3 Partnerships

Schools can benefit from sharing their knowledge, experience and resources by working together informally in partnerships. Small schools can choose to work with other small schools, or other larger schools or Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) locally.

Partnerships can focus on supporting multiple areas such as:

- **teaching and learning**
- **curriculum**
- **leadership**
- **behaviour.**
- **provision of CPD**
- **leadership support**
- **coaching and mentoring**
- **sharing of planning documents.**

Support can be provided through shared activities including:

Schools working in partnership can, and should, set objectives for what each involved hopes to achieve, and these should reflect the strengths and needs of each individual school included in the partnership, with the aim being that mutually beneficial support and expertise is provided to all.

Recent research conducted by the county council found that most small schools are already actively involved in various partnerships, and they report these to be both positive and beneficial.

For more information on partnerships please use the following – [Guide to setting up partnerships](#)





### 3.4 Collaboration

Across Nottinghamshire a high number of our small schools are already working in partnership with each other, both formally and informally. A further way for schools to work together is through a formal collaboration. In a formal collaboration, maintained schools may collaborate with other maintained schools and hold joint governing body meetings and form joint collaboration committees. The regulations leave most of the detailed arrangements for the schools involved to decide, allowing for two or more governing bodies to arrange for their functions to be carried out jointly and to be delegated to a joint collaboration committee – although individual governing bodies will retain legal responsibility and corporate liability for all decisions made on their behalf.

While the collaboration regulations do not permit maintained schools to share governance arrangements and form formal joint committees with academies, a maintained school may collaborate informally. For example, a joint working group may be established which is purely advisory in nature, making recommendations to the boards of both schools who retain decision making powers. Alternatively, a committee may be established with parallel dual identities – complying with both the requirements of maintained school regulations and the legal framework for academies.

All schools involved in a collaboration continue to manage their own budgets but can choose to make efficiencies by sharing staffing and combined purchasing decisions with advice from the local authority.



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**For further details on collaboration, including the benefits, and steps involved in a collaboration please follow these links:**

[Collaboration Guide](#)

[Template Collaboration Agreement](#)

[New Collaboration Flowchart](#)

[Flowchart for Renewal of a Collaboration](#)

Several small schools in Nottinghamshire are already working in both formal and informal collaborations and are experiencing the benefits of doing so. These benefits have been reported to include:

- helping schools to be outward facing
- supporting staff accessing high quality CPD
- sharing recruitment responsibilities and administrative staff
- increasing the leadership support network
- sharing DSL, curriculum lead and SENCO responsibilities so when one head teacher is off, their staff have another specified contact if needed
- sharing transport to trips and extra-curricular activities to reduce the costs
- sharing providers across the involved schools – for example PE providers and caretakers.
- small schools supporting very small schools through cooking their school meals on their site and transporting them over as a cost saving exercise
- sharing advice and support for staff wellbeing.





### 3.5 Federation

A federation creates a single governing body to govern more than one maintained small school. Small schools in a federation continue to be individual schools, keeping their existing category and character and are inspected by Ofsted individually.

Admission to each school continues to be determined by the appropriate admissions authority. The governing body of the federation will receive individual budgets for each of the federated schools and will be able to use the budgets across the schools in the federation.

The governing body decision to federate must follow a prescribed process, which is detailed in the [School Governance \(Federations\) Regulations 2012](#).

The governing body will be able to make new appointments to the federation on contracts that do not stipulate a particular school as the work base, rather a number of schools across the federation. This will give greater contractual flexibility to deploy staff across schools in the Federation.

For more information on federations, including benefits, financial implications, how to form a federation and timeline information please access the following documents:

[Federation guide](#)

[Suggested timeline for a federation consultation](#)

It is recommended for small schools to work in a collaboration for a period before making the more formal decision to federate. By doing so you can, in effect, see how it works for you before committing to a federation, as there are more legalities around them.

Nottinghamshire already has established federations of schools effectively working together, so we can provide support and guidance for any school looking to explore this option.



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### 3.6 Academisation

The process of academisation sees a school convert from being maintained by the local authority to becoming an academy, usually as part of a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). Academies receive funding directly from the Government and are run by an academy board of trustees. Academy trusts are not-for-profit companies. They employ the staff and have trustees who are responsible for the performance of the academies in the trust. Trusts might run a single academy or a group of academies.

Nottinghamshire and its surrounding areas have high numbers of high-performing experienced MATs.

**Potential benefits associated with joining a MAT include:**

- support and guidance (from the existing MAT) in the conversion process
- working with schools that you have an existing relationship with and have already joined the trust
- opportunities to maintain and improve performance from a trust that has a history of improving schools
- access to established central services (such as school improvement and financial management) and opportunities to benefit from expertise within a central executive team
- safeguarding long-term financial health where a trust has a strong track record on finance
- access to progression and development (CPD) opportunities for staff across the trust.

Before determining the most appropriate course of action the school's leadership team and governors need to be well-informed and aware of the options and what these involve, and the impact these will have in order to reach the best decision.

Once the process has been initiated, the Department for Education (DfE) will offer direct support to schools converting to academy status, in the form of a dedicated project lead to work with you throughout the process and answer any questions or concerns you may have.

For further details on academisation please see – [Convert to an Academy: Guide for Schools & A Guide to Forming or Joining a Multi Academy Trust](#)

**The above list of suggested actions is not exhaustive, and we welcome small schools exploring alternative options, which best suit their individual circumstances for increased sustainability. The most important thing is that the chosen model of support is right for your school. It is particularly important to consider leadership structures and succession planning in whichever option you choose.**





# 4 Sources of support



## 4.1 Sold (buyback) services

Nottinghamshire County Council offers a range of services that schools can buyback to help support them in a variety of ways which include:

- The East Midlands Education Support Service which provides all traded services to schools – for more information please visit their [website](#).
- HR services – further information can be obtained by contacting [hrdutydesk@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:hrdutydesk@nottscc.gov.uk)
- Pupil Place Planning – for more information please contact [place.planning@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:place.planning@nottscc.gov.uk)
- Legal Services – contact [legal.services@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:legal.services@nottscc.gov.uk)
- Finance support – for more information please contact [cyp.finance@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:cyp.finance@nottscc.gov.uk)
- Governor Services – for more information about this specific service please contact GovServ. [Practitioners@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:Practitioners@nottscc.gov.uk)
- Buildings and property support – contact [PropertyServices@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:PropertyServices@nottscc.gov.uk)

Nottinghamshire County Council also offers competitively priced Continuous Professional Development training, regular senior leader briefings and access to annual leadership conferences.

The buy-back services that are offered to all schools are currently under review, and over the course of the next two years may be subject to change. All schools will be made directly aware of any changes that may occur.



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Credit: SolSt



## 4.2 Small schools network

Nottinghamshire County Council runs a small school network which holds online meetings on at least a termly basis, for small school staff to attend, and focuses on various topics such as curriculums, subject leadership, collaborations and federations. This network provides a collaborative space for small school staff to come together and learn from one another, share and discuss best practice, and build positive relationships with colleagues.



## 4.3 Small schools data

Nottinghamshire County Council is in the process of ensuring the local authority education teams involved with small schools work more closely together and share the information they hold on small schools productively. This will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the strengths of each school including:

- governance arrangements
- Ofsted ratings
- current capacity
- current number on roll
- projected demand
- projected demand within the planning area
- other schools within the same planning area
- leadership arrangements and financial information.

This will enable local authority colleagues to identify strong practice and target support to schools more effectively.

**For more general information and support offered by the local authority please contact [info@em-edsupport.org.uk](mailto:info@em-edsupport.org.uk)**







#### 4.4 National Association of Small Schools

Small schools can also join and access support and information through the [National Association of Small Schools \(NASS\)](#) who believe that small schools represent a valuable stake in community provision. NASS promote the work and benefits of small schools whilst calling for increased recognition, support, and fairer funding through their small schools' manifesto.

NASS have developed links with a wide range of partners across the education spectrum. These include, universities, local authority support groups, independent bodies which provide training within the sector, teacher and unions, colleagues for the Church of England and education advisers.

NASS recognises the value of both inter-school and inter-area collaboration and, for the future, intends to serve as a conduit bringing together colleagues from across the country to share practice, research and information to fully enhance the status of the small school.

#### 4.5 Diocese

Several of Nottinghamshire's small schools are linked to a church diocese. If this applies to your school, we recommend that you liaise with your diocese who will also be able to provide support and advice regarding exploring any of the options outlined within this strategy to improve sustainability.

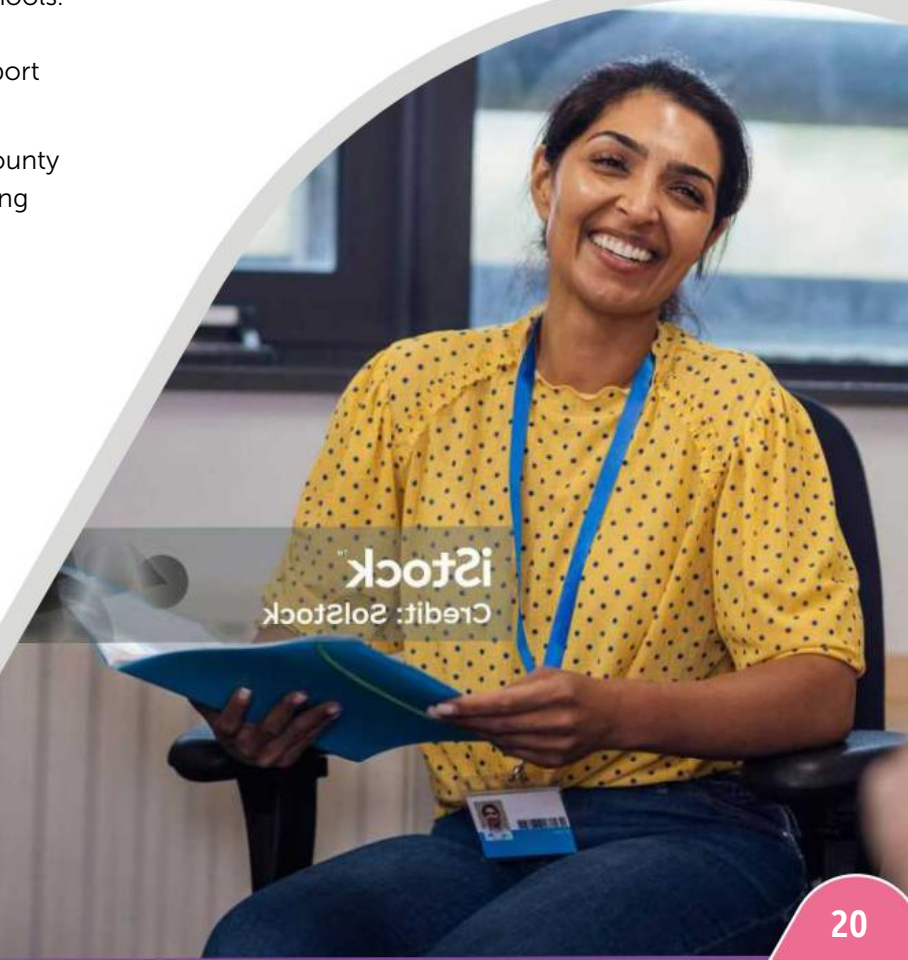
Contact can be made with each diocese through the following:

- The Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham – [reception@southwell.anglican.org](mailto:reception@southwell.anglican.org)
- Nottingham Roman Catholic Diocesan Education Trust – [peter.giorgio@nottingham-des.org.uk](mailto:peter.giorgio@nottingham-des.org.uk)
- Roman Catholic Diocese of Hallam - [schools@hallam-diocese.com](mailto:schools@hallam-diocese.com)



# 5 Implementation and monitoring

- The strategy has been set out as a five-year document and will be reviewed annually and updated to ensure we are working effectively to implementing its goals and outcomes.
- Nottinghamshire County Council is committed to enhancing collaboration among local authority teams by facilitating information sharing to support small schools. This will enable local authority colleagues to have well-informed up to date knowledge and understanding about small schools, providing targeted support where needed.
- The actions contained in this strategy highlight the role Nottinghamshire County Council will play in supporting small schools and the role played by governing bodies and school leaders.
- Monitoring and strategic oversight will take place twice a year through the strategic school place planning board.



# 6 Next steps

Nottinghamshire County Council encourages all small schools to use this strategy and the outlined key indicators of sustainability to consider the steps they are going to take as a result, to ensure that their school will remain sustainable. This topic should be a standing item on governing body meeting agendas, and small schools should link with the county council as and where appropriate for further guidance and support.

**The next steps linked to this strategy for the leaders of small schools are as follows:**

Share the strategy and review the suggested actions in relation to your school and circumstances.

Discuss the implications and further actions detailed in the strategy with your governing body.

Be aware of pupil and financial projections over both short- and long-term.

Include leadership succession planning as part of governor meetings.

Determine how quickly your school needs to take action/s in line with this strategy.

Discuss and consider a plan of action regardless of whether this is required in the short or long-term to enable fast action if factors change over time.

Share plans with Nottinghamshire County Council if you would like further support and guidance.

Keep sustainability a key part of all leadership and governance conversations.



# 7 Conclusion



Nottinghamshire County Council strongly advises all small schools to be active in planning for their future and reviewing the options detailed within this strategy. We want to ensure our schools are supported and are aware of the further advice and guidance they can access. These options outlined are designed to enhance the long-term sustainability and strength of our small schools and ensure that they can continue to operate successfully and remain pillars of their local communities, offering valuable support to children and their families across the county.



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**REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND SPECIAL  
EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES****NOTTINGHAMSHIRE'S IMPROVING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE STRATEGY  
2024 - 2027****Purpose of the Report**

1. The report seeks approval of the new Nottinghamshire Improving School Attendance Strategy 2024 – 2027, attached as **Appendix 1**.
2. This is a Key Decision because it will have significant effects on two or more electoral divisions.

**Information**

3. During the 2023-24 academic year, the Department for Education issued revised statutory guidance for schools, academy trusts and local authorities entitled, [Working together to improve school attendance](#). The guidance sets out the key duties and responsibilities of schools, academy trusts and local authorities that apply from 19 August 2024 to improve and maintain high levels of school attendance.
4. The key duties and expectations of schools, academy trusts and local authorities from 19 August 2024 are set out in a [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance](#). Local authorities are expected to adopt a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services.
5. The new Government is also strongly committed to reducing the current levels of persistent absence with the new Secretary of State for Education outlining a need to “address a crisis in attendance”.
6. Historically, both overall and persistent absence rates in Nottinghamshire were stable at around 4.5% and tracked consistently below the England average. However, there was a significant increase in overall absence rates across Nottinghamshire following the Coronavirus Pandemic as families and pupils adjusted to being back in school full time. The overall absence rate in Nottinghamshire during the autumn and spring terms of the 2023-24 academic year was 6.9%.
7. Persistent absence rates in Nottinghamshire were historically around 9.6% and they tracked below the England average. Persistent absence rates also rose sharply in

Nottinghamshire after the pandemic and were 18.4% during the autumn and spring terms in the 2023-24 academic year.

8. Pupil absence data for Nottinghamshire confirms that some groups of young people are more likely to be persistently absent. In particular, this includes pupils eligible for free school meals, pupils with a social worker, and pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
9. The purpose of the strategy is to ensure there is a collective focus on improving rates of school attendance across Nottinghamshire.
10. The Nottinghamshire Improving School Attendance Strategy outlines how the Local Authority and its partners will work collaboratively to improve school attendance by:
  - Improving the use of absence data at a school, academy, trust, geographical and cohort level to better track severe and persistent absence rates and target resources accordingly
  - Establishing clear and robust governance and reporting arrangements for monitoring school attendance and absence rates in Nottinghamshire
  - Ensuring families where a child has persistent or severe absence levels, receive the right help at the right time so that legal interventions are only used as a last resort in line with the Support First principle
  - Delivering a local communications campaign to Nottinghamshire families about the importance of regular attendance at school for a child's development, attainment, safety and wellbeing
  - Focusing activity on pupils who are more likely to be absent from school including for example, pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, children on a Child in Need and Child Protection plan
  - Working with schools and Academy Trusts to share and build best practice in relation to school attendance policies and practice
  - Providing advice, guidance, support and challenge to schools through attendance at Partnership and Fair Access Panel Meetings, and individual Targeting Support Meetings to individual schools where this is required,
  - Building Good Practice across the school system through Termly Network meetings and Good Practice Guidance
  - Introducing a School Attendance Charter with Health, Police and other key partners to improve school attendance in Nottinghamshire.
11. The Improving School Attendance Strategy has been developed through discussion with:
  - Healthy Families Team
  - Education Psychology Service
  - Children's Social Care
  - The Virtual School
  - Early Help, The Family Service
  - Tackling Emerging Threats to Children Team
  - Youth Justice Services.
12. Local authority officers have also met with the regional Department of Education advisor to review the content of the strategy. This included having access to draft strategies developed by other local authorities.

13. The strategy's ambition is to reduce overall and persistent absence rates in Nottinghamshire to below pre-pandemic levels of 4.5% and 9.6% respectively.
14. The strategy will also focus on priority cohorts of young people who are currently disproportionately represented in the cohort of pupils who are persistent absence. Namely pupils with a social worker, pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and young people open to targeted services such as Youth Justice.

### **Other Options Considered**

15. There is an option not to develop a full strategy for improving school attendance. However, this would likely limit the overall impact that a strategy with a more collective approach to improving school attendance can offer.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

16. It is a requirement that all local authorities must take a more strategic approach to improving school attendance and make it a key focus of all frontline council services. The development of an Improving School Attendance Strategy for Nottinghamshire will provide a vehicle for delivering this expectation set out in the 2024 Department for Education statutory guidance.
17. Introducing an overarching strategy for Nottinghamshire will also enable the Council and key stakeholders to strengthen and develop a collective approach to improving school attendance.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

18. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability, and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Financial Implications**

19. No additional resources are being requested to deliver the Improving School Attendance Strategy.

### **Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications**

20. For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and being in school regularly provides the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown a link between regular absence from school and exposure to extra-familial harms.

## RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That Cabinet approves Nottinghamshire's Improving School Attendance Strategy for 2024-2027, attached as **Appendix 1**.

**Councillor Sam Smith**

**Cabinet Member for Education and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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### **Constitutional Comments (KK 19/08/24)**

21. The proposal in this report is within the remit of the Cabinet.

### **Financial Comments (SS 19/08/24)**

22. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

[Working together to improve school attendance](#)

[Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance](#)

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

CF0198



# Nottinghamshire Improving School Attendance Strategy 2024-2027



*“Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families.”*

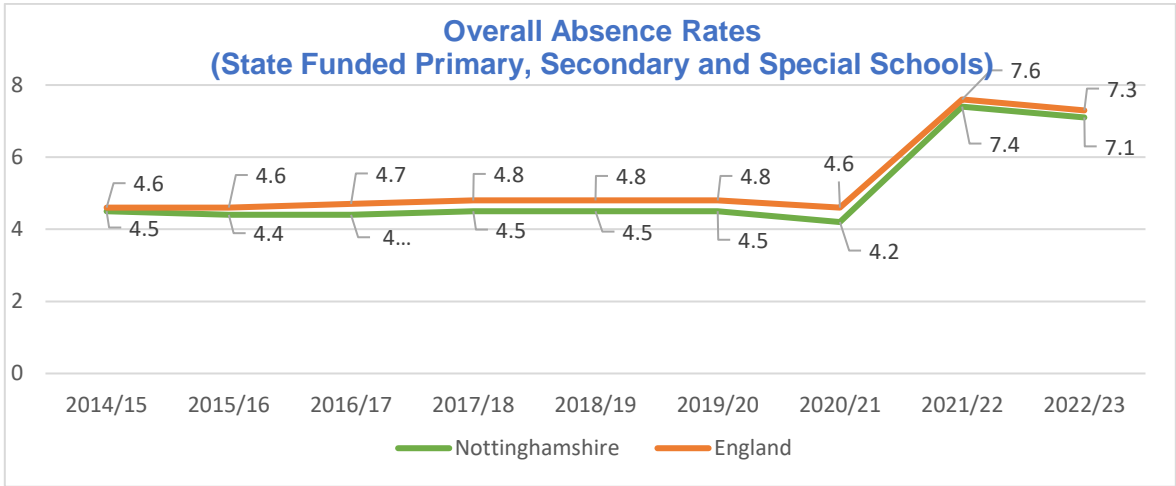
## 1. Introduction and Nottinghamshire Context

- ❖ Nottinghamshire has an estimated population of 824,800 residents (Census 2021).
- ❖ In Nottinghamshire, 20% (168,500) of the population are children (0-17 years old),
- ❖ There were 129,244 statutory school aged pupils in Nottinghamshire in the 2022-23 academic year,
- ❖ There are 444 schools in Nottinghamshire comprising of:
  - ✚ 45 Secondary schools
  - ✚ 284 Primary Schools, and
  - ✚ 11 Special Schools,
  - ✚ 4 Independent Schools

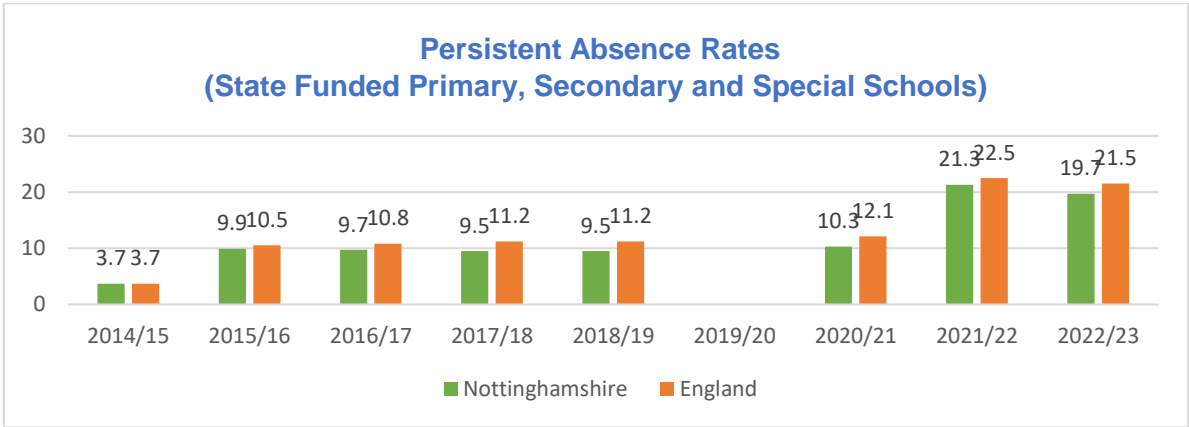


- ❖ In July 2024, 329 schools in Nottinghamshire were signed up to [Share daily school attendance data](#) with the Department for Education. That equates to over 95% of schools. All schools will be required to share their daily attendance from 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

- ❖ Between 2014/15 and 2020/21 academic years, **Overall Absence** rates in Nottinghamshire were stable at around 4.5% and tracked consistently below the England average.



- ❖ However, there was a significant increase in overall absence rates across Nottinghamshire following the Coronavirus Pandemic as families and pupils adjusted to being back in school full time. The overall absence rate in Nottinghamshire during the autumn and spring terms of the 2023-24 academic year was 6.9%.
- ❖ Similarly, between 2014/15 and 2020/21 academic years **Persistent Absence** rates in Nottinghamshire (>10%) tracked below the England average. But then saw a significant increase post pandemic to around 20%, whilst remaining below the England average.

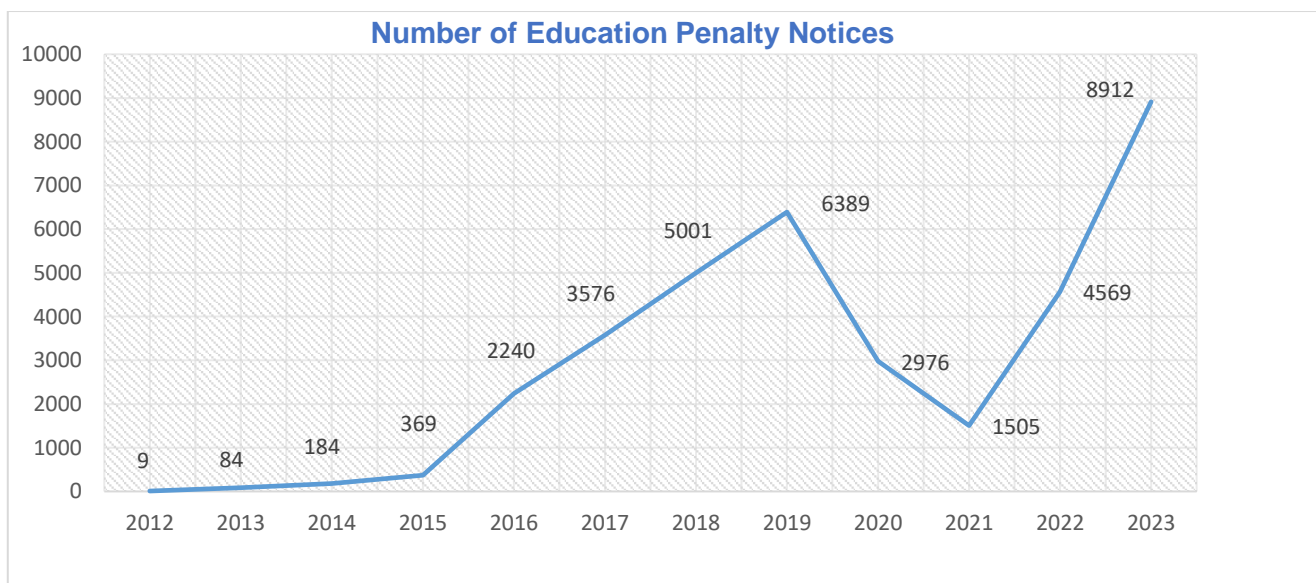


- ❖ During the autumn and spring terms of the 2023-24 academic year, around 18.4% of pupil enrolments were persistently absent in Nottinghamshire, compared to 19.3% across England.
- ❖ Most pupil enrolments who were persistently absent over the 2021/22 and 2022/23 academic years had absence rates of between 10-15%, followed by those who were absent for 15-20% of their school week. This means that since the pandemic and a return to normal expectations in terms of school attendance, most of the pupils who are persistently absent are missing on average up to one day each week from school. During the autumn and spring terms of the 2023-24 academic year around two thirds of pupils who were persistently absent were missing up to 1 day a week from school on average.

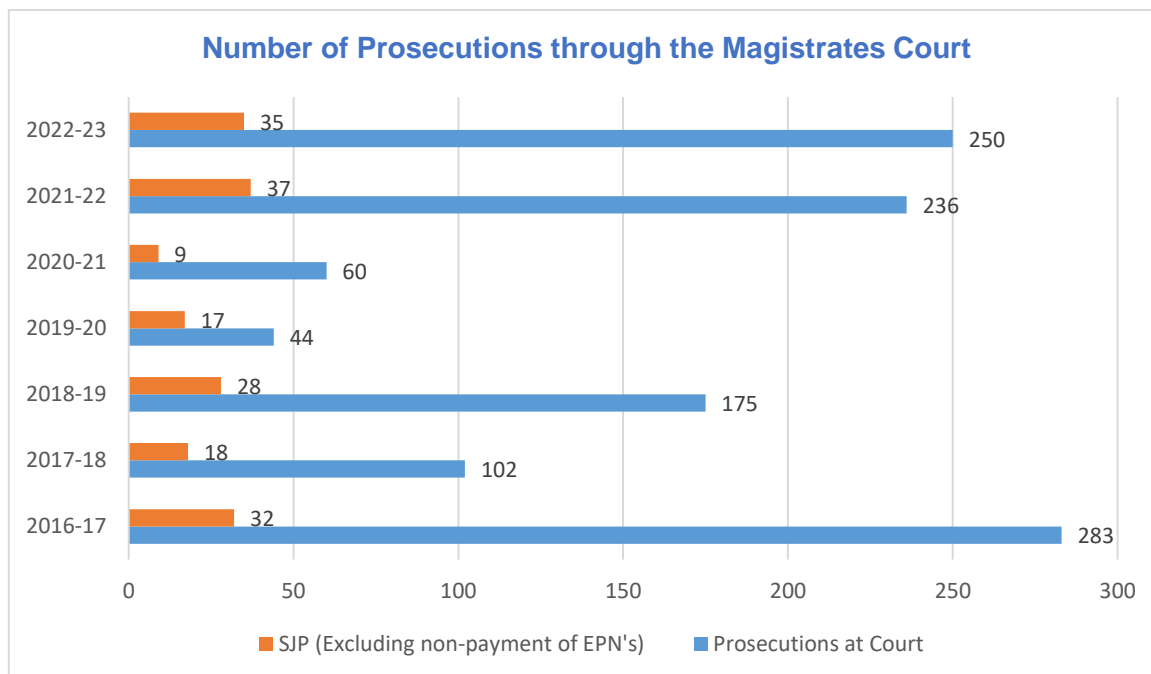
- ❖ **Severe Persistent Absence** rates (>50%) equated to 1.6% of the cohort in Nottinghamshire over the 2021/22, 2022/23 academic years which was on a par with the England Average.
- ❖ During the autumn and spring terms of the 2023-24 academic year, over 2,000 pupils in Nottinghamshire were reported as have **severe persistent absence** from school because they were missing more than 50% of their school week. This equated to around 2% of the cohort.
- ❖ Since 2012, it has been Nottinghamshire County Council's approach to provide support first to families where a child's attendance is causing concern before legal intervention is considered.
- ❖ To embed this approach, Nottinghamshire County Council's education welfare functions were integrated within its targeted family support services in 2012. The Education and Attendance team is currently located within Nottinghamshire's early help / family support services.
- ❖ Since 2015, the [Family Service](#) has taken a lead role for providing support to families of statutory school aged children where school attendance is a concern. This is delivered through a **Lead Professional Model** using whole family assessments and a **Team Around the Family model**.



- ❖ Nottinghamshire has a well-established [Local Code of Conduct](#) for issuing Education Penalty Notice fines. This includes locally agreed thresholds, that were approved by Elected Members in 2013 following an extensive consultation with schools and Head Teachers.



- ❖ There has been a significant increase in requests for parents to be issued with fines, predominantly in response to parents removing their children from school in term-time without authorisation for a holiday.
- ❖ Where it becomes necessary, Nottinghamshire County Council has arrangements in place through its **Education and Attendance Team** to prosecute parents at Court under s444 of the 1996 Education Act where they are failing in their responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly.



- ❖ In Nottinghamshire, legal action is used as a last resort where for example support has been exhausted or declined and there hasn't been any improvement in attendance.





## 2. Nottinghamshire's Vision and Principles

*"We will work with children and young people,  
together with families and our partners,  
to give the consistent support and protection they need to be safe,  
secure and have opportunities to fulfil their potential."*

### Principles:

- 1 We will put positive outcomes for children and young people at the heart of what we do.
- 2 We will focus on strengths within relationships and celebrate achievements.
- 3 We will promote a reflective learning culture which balances high support and high challenge.
- 4 We will empower the workforce to be creative and drive innovative and evidence-based practice.
- 5 We will work effectively with partner agencies to provide coordinated planning and support.
- 6 We will keep children at home with families wherever possible or when needed provide alternative permanent placements as quickly as possible.
- 7 We will recognise and support individual needs, challenge inequality and celebrate diversity and inclusion.
- 8 We will seek to make best use of the resources available to us.



### 3. Nottinghamshire's Ambition – Links to other key Strategies:

<a href="#">Nottinghamshire Best Start Strategy 2021-2025</a>	We will deliver our Best Start Strategy so that all children in Nottinghamshire, wherever they live, grow up to enjoy the best health possible, are protected from harm, and have access to education that enables them to reach their potential and boost their future life chances.
<a href="#">The Nottinghamshire Plan: Our plan for a healthy, prosperous and greener Nottinghamshire</a>	<p>The Nottinghamshire Plan aims to create: <b>"A healthy, prosperous and greener future for everyone"</b></p> <p>Between 2021 and 2031, the Council will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• improving health and wellbeing in all our communities</li><li>• growing our economy and improving living standards</li><li>• reducing the County's impact on the environment</li><li>• helping everyone access the best of Nottinghamshire.</li></ul> <p>Improving school attendance will help children and young people gain the skills they need to make a successful transition into post 16 learning and employment.</p>



## 4. Nottinghamshire's Approach to Improving School Attendance.

1. Improving **School Attendance is Everyone's Business**:
  - The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex and are often specific to individual pupils and families.
  - Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school regularly and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners need to work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.
  - Securing good attendance requires a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, support services in the local authority, and other local partners.
2. Nottinghamshire County Council is **clear about our responsibilities as a Local Authority** to:
  - **Rigorously track local attendance data** to devise a strategic approach to attendance that prioritises the pupils, pupil cohorts and schools on which to provide support and focus its efforts on to unblock area wide barriers to attendance.
  - Have a **School Attendance Support Team** which regularly brings schools together to communicate messages, provide advice and share best practice between schools and trusts within the area.
  - **Hold termly conversations with schools**, using their attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils.
  - Provide **access to Early Help support workers** to work intensively with families to provide practical whole-family support where needed to tackle the causes of absenteeism and unblock the barriers to attendance.
  - Take forward attendance **legal intervention** (using the full range of parental responsibility measures) where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with. •
  - Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through their Virtual School.

Expectations for schools, Academy Trusts and Local Authorities are set out in the Department for Education Guidance [Working together to improve school attendance](#)
3. Nottinghamshire County Council believes in the principle of providing **Help First** before legal action is considered:
4. Nottinghamshire County Council is committed to **Strength Based Practice**:

The local authority is committed to working with partners, children, young people and families in a strength-based approach by for example:

  - Focusing on people's strengths, capabilities, motivations, and resources,
  - Believing that all individuals have the capacity to grow, learn and change,
  - Recognising that people know their own lives and journeys better than anybody else, and
  - Acknowledging that problems are problems, and that they do not define people,
  - Helping build safe and nurturing relationships and effective support systems,
  - listening to the voices of children, young people, parents, carers.

[Our Strengths-based Approach to Practice | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)



5. We have clear **Practice Standards for Children's Services**

Nottinghamshire County Council is committed to ensuring that children, young people, and their families receive help, protection, and care with a consistent approach across all services and teams. Value-based practice standards provide all lead practitioners, social workers, practice supervisors, and managers with consistent guidance about the way council services work with children and families in Nottinghamshire and support practitioners to achieve the best possible outcomes with and for children and families.

- The safety and happiness of the child or young person is the focus for all that we do.
- We know our children and families well.
- We work with children and families with care and recognition.
- We are creative and ambitious practitioners.

[Practice Standards - Working with children and families](#)

## Five Key Building Blocks for Nottinghamshire's Improving School Attendance Strategy:

The overall ambition of the strategy is to reduce rates of overall, persistent, and severely persistent absence in Nottinghamshire to pre-pandemic levels and for absence rates to track below the England average.

The responsibility for raising and promoting attendance is shared by everyone. Everyone has a part to play including parents/carers, children and young people themselves, schools and academy trusts and a range of services across the Children's Services Partnership and the voluntary sector who provide support to families.

To achieve Nottinghamshire's ambition will require collective action across schools, academy trusts and agencies across the Children's Services Partnership and the voluntary sector.

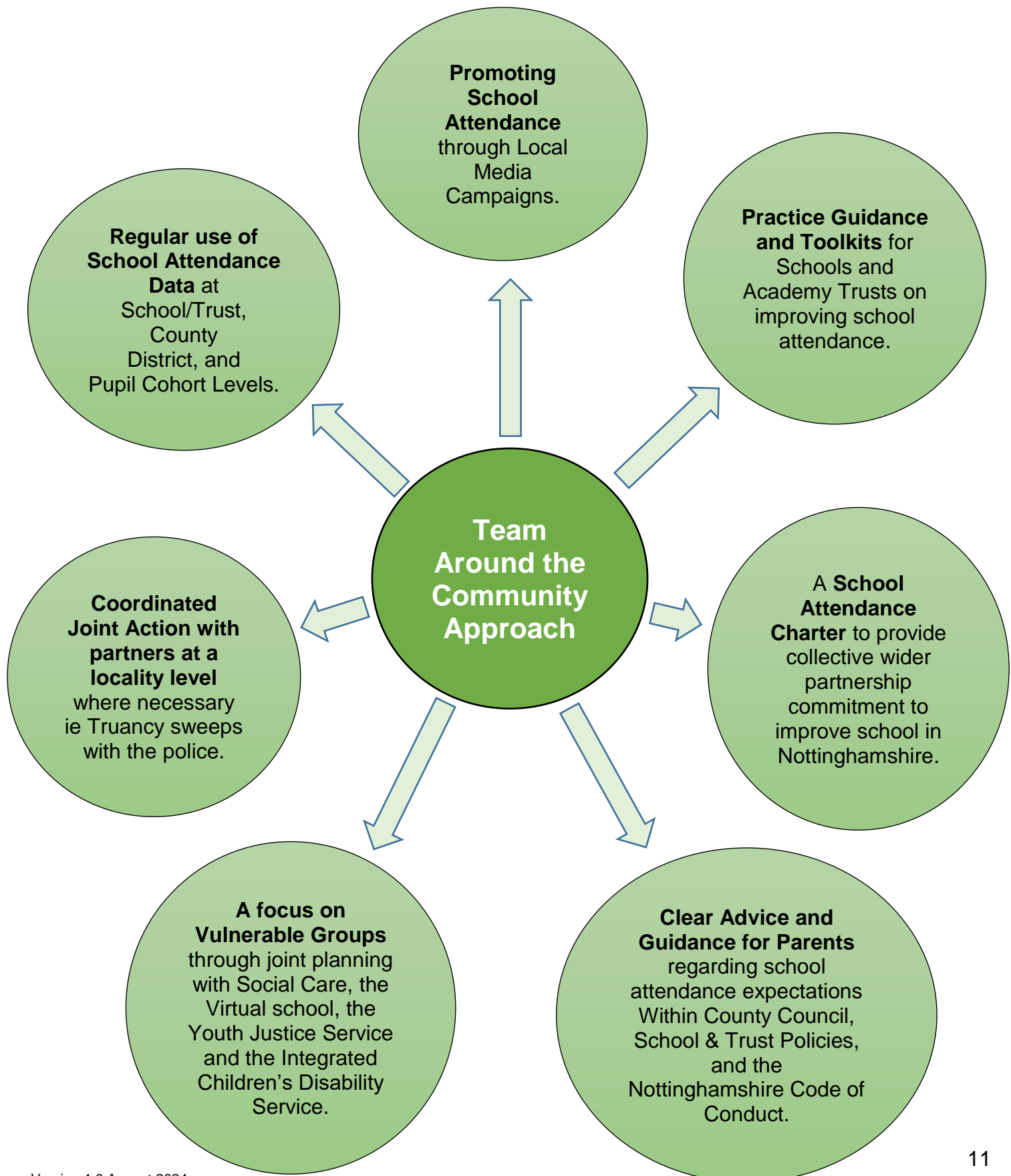
The Improving School attendance strategy 2024-2027 for Nottinghamshire includes five main building blocks.

The Foundation blocks revolve around how support is delivered at a wider community, school and family/pupil level.

Overlaid by a clear and transparent approach to legal intervention where this is required and strong governance arrangements.



Nottinghamshire's  
**Team around the Community Approach**  
will include:



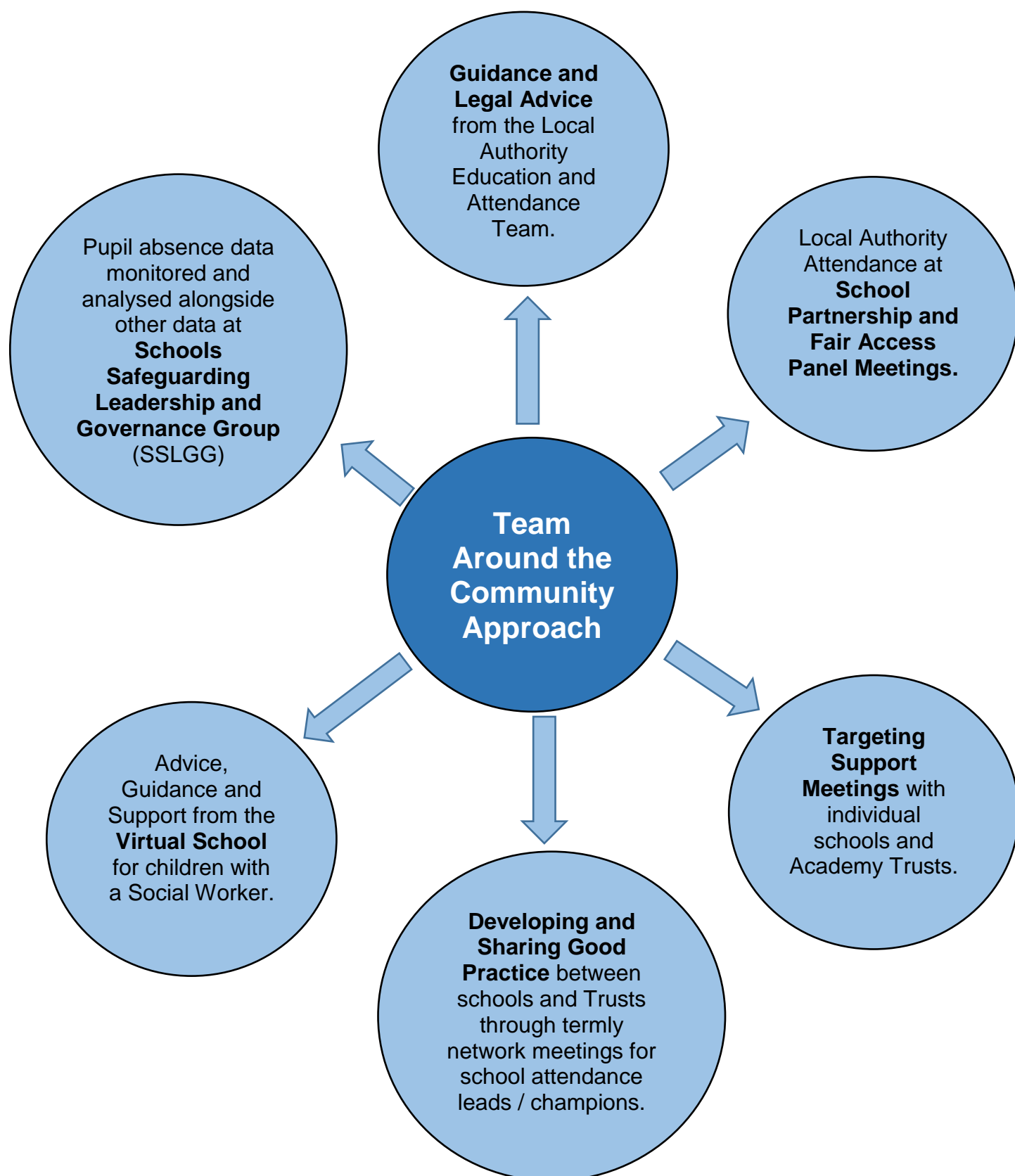
### What the Local Authority is already doing:

- ✓ Raising awareness across children's social care teams about children who are not being offered or accessing a full-time education package. The Assessment Teams include any concerns about school attendance within their assessment work and flag with District Child Protection teams any pupils who are not accessing their education entitlement. These pupils are then monitored as part of any ongoing plan.
- ✓ Children's social care meets regularly (every 6 weeks) with the Virtual school to discuss children looked after who are not accessing a full education package,
- ✓ A new Improving school Attendance Toolkit has been developed for schools with good practice guidance and information.

### Areas in and for Development:

- ❖ Develop a local media campaign to promote the importance of children and young people being in school, and to raise awareness of the support available and possible legal interventions.
- ❖ Work with a range of partners across education, health, and social care to develop an Improving School Attendance Charter.
- ❖ Use data to increase the focus on vulnerable groups of children and young people who are persistently absent from school. In particular, pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), children with a Social Worker on Child in Need (CiN) and Child Protection (CP) Plans and children who are Educated other than at school (EOTAS) and children looked after by the local authority and those open to the Youth Justice Service. Data will aim to consider the intersectionality of different characteristics and vulnerabilities of the persistently absent cohort.
- ❖ Engage with a wider range of stakeholders, particularly Health to make Improving School Attendance an area of focus for agencies and commissioners across the wider Children and Families Partnership.

Nottinghamshire's  
**Team around the School Approach**  
will include:





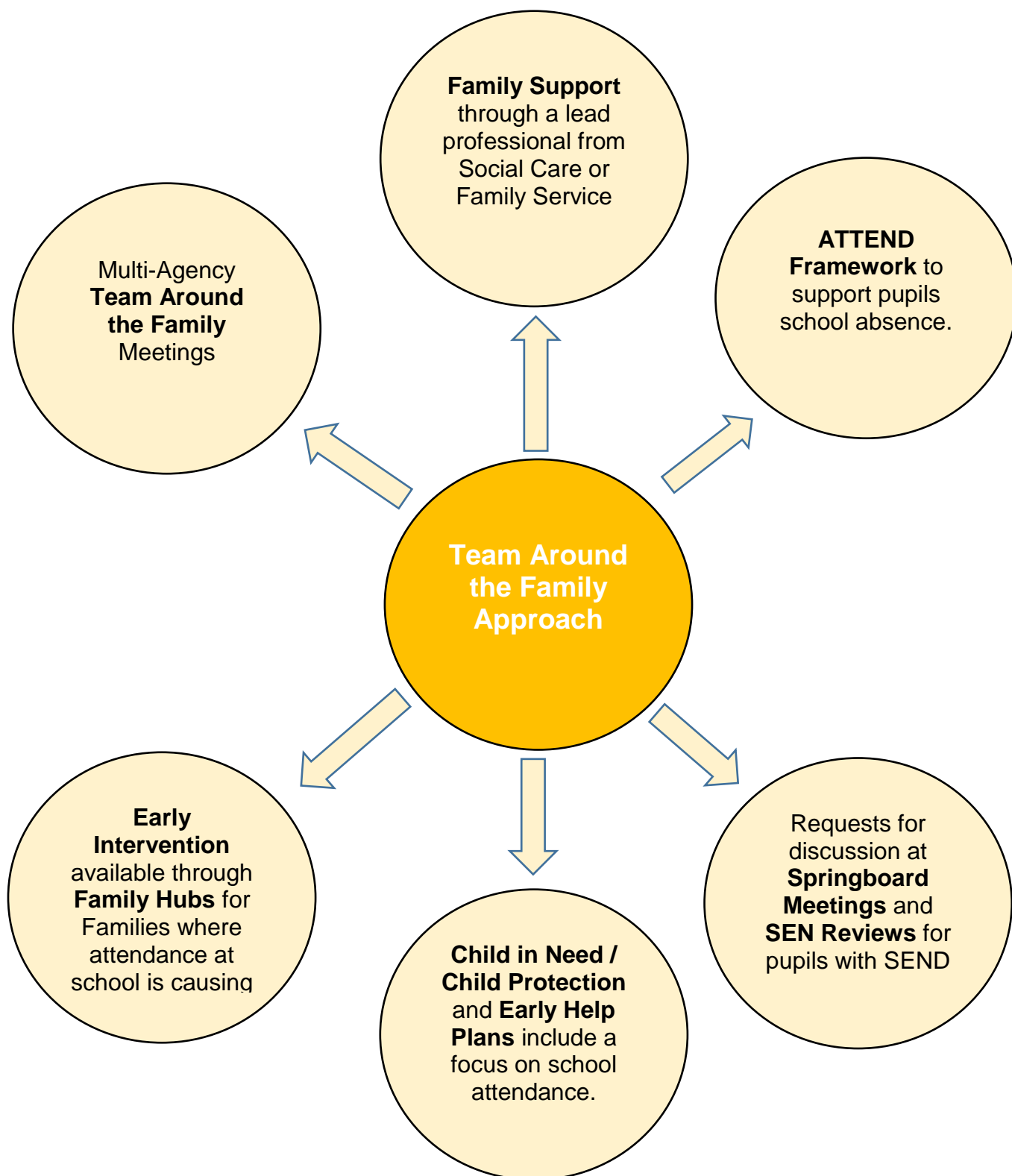
### What the Local Authority is already doing:

- ✓ Developed an **Improving School Attendance Toolkit** for schools in Nottinghamshire containing good practice guidance and advice.
- ✓ The Education and Attendance Team are represented at Locality Partnership meetings with schools where individual pupils are discussed whose attendance is causing concern.
- ✓ Completed some initial analysis of attendance rates in Nottinghamshire to identify trends and cohorts of pupils where attendance is a concern, including pupils with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and children on Free School Meals (FSM) and children with a Social Worker on Child in Need or Child Protection Plans.
- ✓ Established a formal link between the Virtual School and the Education and Attendance Team.
- ✓ Deliver termly network meetings for school attendance leads and champions and school leaders, where policy and practice guidance updates are disseminated, and best practice is shared,
- ✓ Training and Support for schools focused on preventative approaches to supporting vulnerable pupils and delivering graduated support, (ie SEND, emotionally based non-attendance)
- ✓ Training and support for schools on a range of issues impacting on families and pupils through the Education, Safeguarding, Health, and Wellbeing Hub (*formerly Tackling Emerging Threats to Children Team*) the Virtual School and the Education Psychology Service.
- ✓ Monitor the attendance of pupils educated other than at school through an Attendance Management System where the local authority commission the alternative provision.

### Areas in and for Development:

- Improve data analysis of pupil absences broken down by School, Academy Trust, District and Borough, Vulnerable groups (FSM, CiN, CPP, SEND, EOTAS), key Academic Phase, key Stage and Year Groups.
- Increase the delivery of Targeting Support meetings from September 2024 in line with the 2024 Working Together to Improve School Attendance Guidance, with a particular focus on using data to prioritise schools with higher rates of persistent and severely persistent absence.
- Link attendance data sets with other key education data sets to ensure stronger links with the wider inclusion agenda through the **Schools Safeguarding Leadership and Governance Group** (SSLGG).
- Develop closer links between the Education and Attendance Team and Alternative Education providers to build and share good practice.

Nottinghamshire's  
**Team around the Family Approach**  
will include:



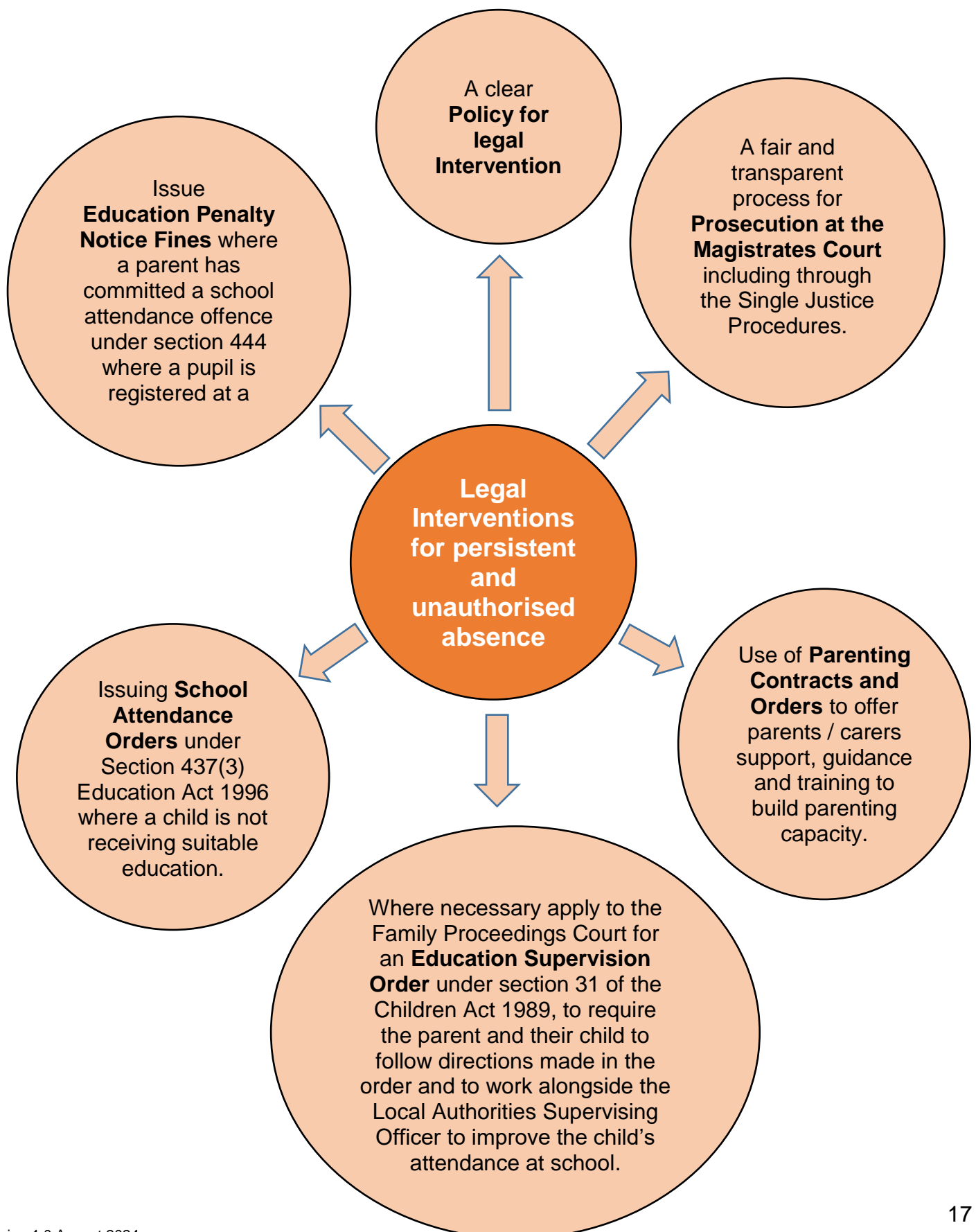
### What the Local Authority is already doing:

- ✓ Providing coordinated multi-agency support to families where attendance is a concern through the Family Service.
- ✓ Convene and coordinate multi-agency meetings focused on the needs of individual pupils and families through the Family Service and Virtual school.
- ✓ Introduced the [ATTEND Framework for Schools and Settings](#) to support school staff to hold structured conversations with pupils and families in order to understand the underlying reasons and barriers impacting on attendance at school.
- ✓ Developed guidance and a range of resources ([EBSA Padlet](#)) for the children's workforce (including schools) to support families and schools in their work together to increase attendance for individual pupils to support with Emotionally-Based School Avoidance.
- ✓ Established a process where children open on CIN or CP plans who are not receiving the full education entitlement are discussed with the Education Partnerships team to ensure a robust plan is put in place.
- ✓ Education, Training and Employment advisors based within the Youth Justice Service providing support to young people who may not be receiving the full education entitlement.
- ✓ Updated the Improving School Attendance Toolkit to include guidance of Parenting Contracts and graduated support for pupils who are persistently absent.
- ✓ Joint work with schools to support individual pupils who are not accessing their full educational entitlement through Fair Access protocols, SEND Support, the Partnership Team, and Health Related Education.
- ✓ Access to health services for pupils where the absence is connected with an underlying health need.

### Areas in and for Development:

- Develop the Family Hub offer for families in Nottinghamshire with school age children.
- Develop stronger links between the Education and Attendance Team and the Integrated Children's Disability Service for pupils with SEND where issues around persistent or severe persistence absence are of concern.
- Review working links between the Education and Attendance team and the Youth Justice service.
- Strengthen the referral protocol to the Health Services for children, young people and families where absence from school is a symptom of a wider health need. i.e. Healthy Families Team, Mental Health Support Teams and B U Notts.
- Embed good practice is support pupils with emotionally based absence from school.

Nottinghamshire's Approach to  
**Prosecution and Legal Interventions**  
will include:



### **What the Local Authority is already doing:**

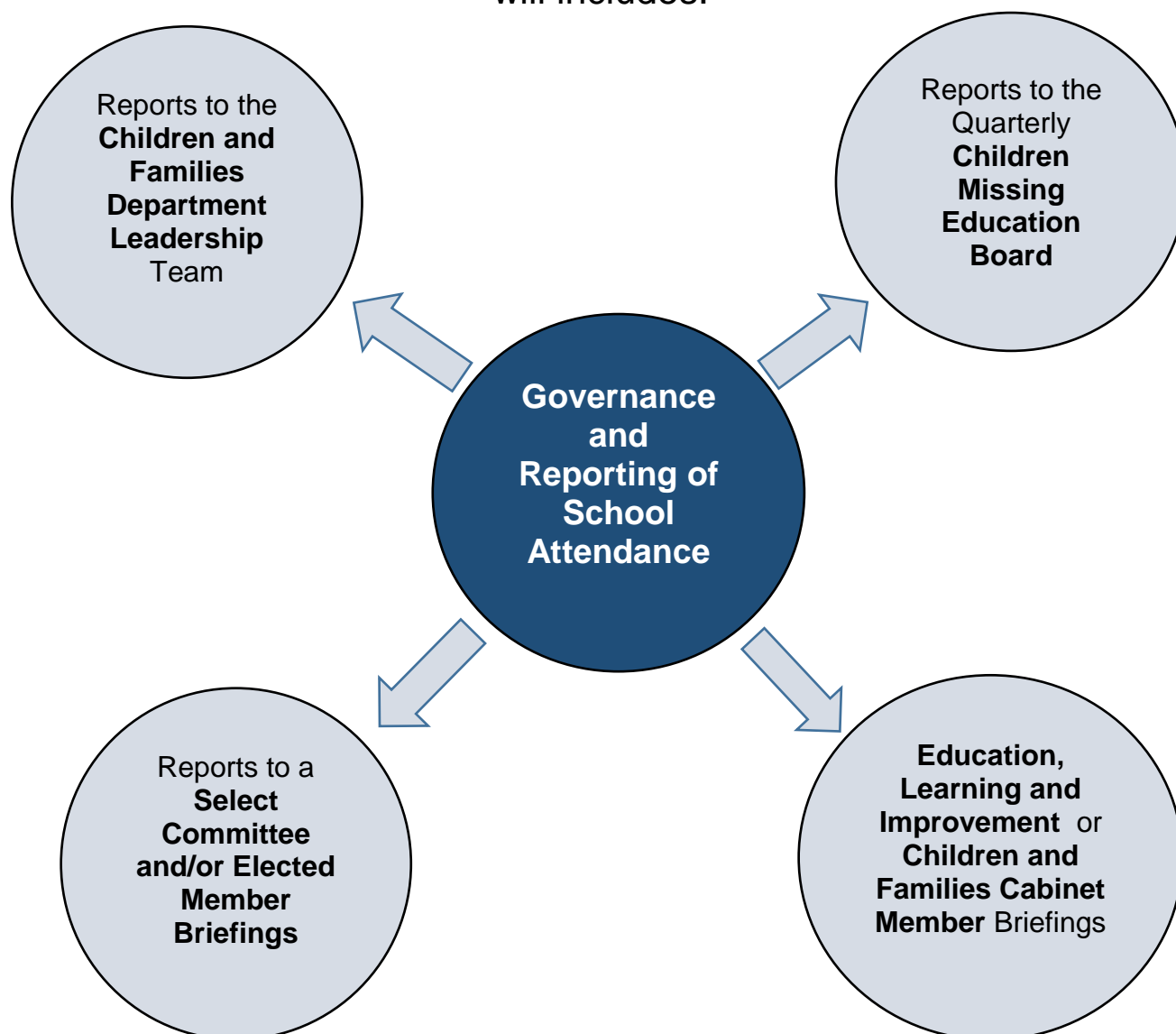
- ✓ Nottinghamshire has a well-established system for issuing Education Penalty Notice fines as a proportionate legal intervention for unauthorised absence, particularly for unauthorised leave of absence in term-time.
- ✓ Improving links with the Elective Home Education Team for families where a School Attendance Order is required because the provision is deemed unsuitable.
- ✓ Simplified the process for considering Education Supervision Orders to take into account the range of support already available to families through Early Help and Childrens' Services.
- ✓ Supervision of Parenting Orders issued by the court by parenting practitioners where additional parenting interventions are required to overcome barriers to attendance.
- ✓ Created a new Education and Attendance Team to bring together the expertise around legal interventions into one team with some increased resourcing.

### **Areas in and for Development:**

- Review Nottinghamshire's School Attendance Prosecution Policy.
- Develop guidance for schools on the use of Parenting Contracts.
- Revise the Nottinghamshire Code of Conduct



## Nottinghamshire Approach to **Governance and Reporting** will includes:



### **What the Local Authority is already doing:**

- ✓ Ad Hoc reporting to the departmental leadership team and Elected Member briefings,
- ✓ Cabinet Member for Education and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND),
- ✓ Termly multi-disciplinary Children Missing Education Board meetings,
- ✓ Termly **Schools Safeguarding Leadership and Governance Group** (SSLGG)

### **Areas in and for Development:**

- Develop more regular reporting around attendance to the departmental leadership group,
- Develop a more regular flow of pupil absence data across designated cohorts and vulnerable groups to support the implementation and review of the strategy and improve school attendance back to pre-pandemic levels.
- Consider reporting arrangements to the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership in recognition that school attendance is a protective factor.

## Improving School Attendance Strategy Action Plan 2024-2027

Action	Responsibility	Timescales	Outcome
<p>Work with Information and Systems to develop a suite of data for pupil absence in Nottinghamshire broken down by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School</li> <li>Trust</li> <li>Locality</li> <li>Vulnerable groups (FSM, CiN, CPP, SEND)</li> <li>Academic Phase/Key Stage</li> <li>Year Group</li> </ul>	Education and Attendance Team / Information and Systems	March 2025	Improved attendance rates for pupils from vulnerable groups particularly pupils on a CiN, CP Plan, EOTAS, FSM, and Pupils with SEND through the better use of data to target interventions and resources.
Deliver a local Media Campaign to promote the benefits of regular school attendance and underlining the message that every day counts.	Education and Attendance Team / Communications and Marketing	From September 2024	Parents have a better understanding of the law and their duty to ensure their children attend schools regularly
Revise the Nottinghamshire Code of Conduct for Education Penalty Notices in line with the National Framework	Education and Attendance Team	September 2024	Updated Code of Conduct published on the County Council website and new thresholds apply.
Revise the Improving School Attendance Toolkit to include guidance around use of Parenting Contracts for schools.	Education and Attendance Team	September 2024	Revised Toolkit disseminated to schools and uploaded to the Schools' Portal.
Test out Targeting Support meeting models with schools and academy trusts.	Education and Attendance Team	March 2025	Deliver regular meetings with school leaders and attendance champions to
Work with key partners including Health and the Police to develop a Nottinghamshire Improving School Attendance Charter.	Service Director – Education Learning and Inclusion.	March 2025	Improving school attendance charter in place which provides a commitment across the partnership to improving attendance at school.
Establish regular reporting on school attendance to, senior officers, lead elected members and key governance groups.	Departmental Leadership Team	December 2024	Regular reporting in place to track improvements in reducing overall and persistent absence.

**REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND  
ASSET MANAGEMENT****NOTTINGHAMSHIRE HOUSING STRATEGY (2024 – 2029)****Purpose of the Report**

1. The report seeks approval of the Nottinghamshire Housing Strategy, attached as **Appendix 1**, covering the period 2024 to 2029.
2. This is a Key Decision because it will have significant effects on two or more electoral divisions.

**Information**

3. The Council's [Nottinghamshire Plan](#) Ambition 1 is "Helping our people live healthier, more independent lives". The 2024/25 [Annual Delivery Plan](#) indicates that, to help achieve this, the Council will:

*"Work with the local District and Borough Councils and adopt a joint Housing Strategy to create healthy and sustainable places, meet housing needs in Nottinghamshire and ensure that people can live and age well in their own homes. This strategy will also focus on how we work together to provide safe homes for the most vulnerable in our communities."*

4. The Nottinghamshire Housing Strategy has been developed to reflect the many and varied aspects of the County Council's work on housing including:
  - Planning, securing funding and delivering infrastructure to support the delivery of sustainable housing (for example delivery of schools, transport links, recycling and waste provision, and flood mitigation).
  - Working with Borough and District partners on proposed large-scale development projects.
  - As a landowner, helping to provide new open market, specialist and affordable homes on surplus Council-owned land, helping to meet housing need across the county.
  - Co-ordinating and commissioning to ensure housing is available for vulnerable people and those with care and support needs.
  - Enabling support for those in housing need, preventing homelessness, and improving health and wellbeing.
  - Promoting with the District and Borough Councils the "Spatial Planning for Health Framework and Protocol" to achieve improved health outcomes in new development.

5. The Draft Housing Strategy was published via the Council's portal in early May 2023 with a eight week consultation period seeking the views of all those with a stake in the future of housing in Nottinghamshire including private housebuilders, providers of social housing, care providers, District and Borough Councils and Homes England (the Government Agency responsible for housing). A total of 100 comments were received that have been incorporated into the final version.
6. At the outset of this work, it was agreed that the County Housing Strategy would complement the individual Districts and Borough Housing Strategies with the purpose of the Nottinghamshire Housing Strategy to:
  - Help integrate the work of the County Council in enabling and influencing housing in Nottinghamshire and seek to deliver the ambition in the Nottinghamshire Plan to help people lead healthier and more independent lives;
  - Ensure the County Council's housing work is integrated with and reflective of District and Borough housing strategies in Nottinghamshire; and
  - Outline the actions the County Council will take to achieve its strategic priorities and how the Council will work with its partners in the wider housing system over the period to 2024/29.
7. The Housing Strategy has been positioned at an appropriate level to enable a focus on the work which can be done over the next five years. By presenting the different roles and responsibilities of the County Council in a single Housing Strategy it enables the different strands on housing across the Departments to be drawn together and be undertaken around the prime objective of helping all our residents in the County, both now and in the future to lead healthy and independent lives. The document sets out how important housing and accommodation is in achieving outcomes across the Nottinghamshire Plan and for the communities that the County Council serves. As the strategy evolves this will become a key document to use with our partners to help drive improvements and meet housing needs across the county.
8. The structure of the Housing Strategy is formed of six sections.
  - The first chapter provides the context of housing within Nottinghamshire that sets out the current issues in providing the right number and type of housing within the County and the reasons why a Housing Strategy has been prepared and the County Council's different and important roles that it plays as part of the housing system in Nottinghamshire.
  - The second chapter provides the headlines of Housing in Nottinghamshire including the latest data on housing stock, tenure, housing need, completions, and affordable housing.
  - The next sections set out the three Strategic Goals and associated Outcomes that will be monitored in delivering the strategy.

These include:

- **Strategic Goal A: Growing a Green and Healthy Economy** The outcomes around this goal are based on our work as a statutory consultee to Strategic and Local Plans which provide for housing as well as individual planning applications for housing development. The County Council is a partner in delivering new housing development and because of our responsibilities for transport, education, flood mitigation, public health and social care the County Council work closely with the District and Borough

Councils influencing the creation of sustainable and thriving communities. A key focus will be to work with our Nottinghamshire Local Planning Authority partners through our Spatial Planning and Health Framework and through public health advice and intelligence to help new housing areas be designed from the outset with health in mind.

- **Strategic Goal B: Enabling people to live independently** This goal focusses on outcomes of our work that we do in helping people live healthier and more independent lives including housing with care / assisted / supported living. The key outcomes are to ensure new homes and places are designed and adapted for residents to live independent and healthy lives.
  - **Strategic Goal C: Supporting those in urgent housing need** The final goal sets out five outcomes of the County Council work in supporting those in urgent housing need to help prevent homelessness and help secure and retain permanent accommodation.
9. The final chapter sets out how the Housing Strategy will be implemented and monitored. The Strategy has been designed as a five -year document which will be reviewed annually through an action plan that closely reflects the Strategic Goals and Outcomes of the Housing Strategy with proposed annual reports to be submitted to the Cabinet Member – Economic Development and Asset Management.
  10. The action plan will highlight the different roles the County Council will play in delivery – whether that is in a lead role, where we have shared responsibility as part of a partnership, or where we are playing a supporting or influencing role to help achieve outcomes. It is proposed to monitor performance of the action plan every quarter through a new Corporate Housing Oversight Group within the County Council which will help promote improved inter-departmental working.
  11. It is also proposed to monitor the implementation in partnership with our Borough and District Councils, the new East Midlands Combined County Authority and the East Midlands Mayor and explore what existing and / or new forums might be used to help this objective.
  12. It is not intended to use the Housing Strategy as a static document as it needs to respond to new suggestions or changes in policy. It is therefore expected that during the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy that changes will be required to ensure that outcomes across the Nottinghamshire Plan and for the communities that the County Council serves can be delivered effectively. Any subsequent changes to the Strategy will be approved by the Cabinet Member – Economic Development and Asset Management (or Cabinet if the changes were deemed to be significant).

### **Other Options Considered**

13. Not to prepare a Housing Strategy. This option has in effect been followed to date but considering the need to promote housing development, create healthy and sustainable places, promote independent living, and support those in housing need that meets the need of Nottinghamshire's residents, it is considered important that the County Council should set out a Housing Strategy.



## **Reason for Recommendations**

14. The Nottinghamshire Housing Strategy 2024-2029 brings together the different roles and responsibilities of the County Council to ensure the right type of housing need is achieved for the residents of Nottinghamshire. It is important to monitor delivery of the strategy to ensure that changes can be made to respond to new policy and improvements to the Strategy.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

15. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Financial Implications**

16. Whilst its actions are ambitious, most of them reflect work which is already underway within the County Council. The Strategy itself does not therefore commit the County Council to new expenditure with all activity referenced being delivered using existing resources. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That Cabinet approves:

- 1) the proposed Nottinghamshire Housing Strategy 2024 - 2029, attached as Appendix 1; and
- 2) to monitor the implementation of the Strategy by way of an annual progress report to Cabinet Member – Economic Development and Asset Management.

**Councillor Keith Girling**

**Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Asset Management**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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### **Constitutional Comments (EKH 30/08/2024)**

17. The content of the report falls within the remit of the Cabinet by virtue of its terms of reference.

### **Financial Comments (GBM 30/08/2024)**

18. As suggested in Paragraph 16, there are no direct implications from this report on the Councils finances. Any financial consequences from the implementation of the Strategy will be dealt with through the Council's established financial processes).

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

### **Electoral Divisions and Members Affected**

- All



# Housing Strategy

2024-2029

Creating healthy & sustainable places,  
promoting independent living, and  
supporting those in housing need



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Credit: J

September 2024



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# 01 Our Strategy for Housing



## Introduction

- 1.1** The County Council published a new [Nottinghamshire Plan in 2022](#). Ambition 1 is “Helping our people live healthier, more independent lives”. The 2023/24 [Annual Delivery Plan](#), said that to achieve this our intention was to work with the local District and Borough Councils and adopt a Housing Strategy to create healthy and sustainable places, meet housing needs in Nottinghamshire and ensure that people can live and age well in their own homes. This strategy will also focus on how we work together to provide safe homes for the most vulnerable in our communities.

## Why should the County Council prepare a Housing Strategy?

- 1.2** From influencing the location and approach to future housing areas in development plans to funding the support given to those who are in housing need, we are engaged day by day in a wide variety of housing-related work. We have therefore decided to set out our key priorities for housing over the next five years.
- 1.3** Our strategy is based on meeting three distinct goals in respect of housing:
- Green and Healthy Growth in housing across Nottinghamshire
  - Enabling people to live more independently all their lives
  - Supporting those in urgent housing need
- 1.4** Nottinghamshire has a two tier system of local government with a County Council and District and Borough Councils covering individual areas. The provision of adequate housing is a key responsibility of our district and borough councils. They have a housing duty to identify and meet the housing needs of their Districts and Boroughs. This includes ensuring there is a sufficiency of affordable housing, supporting people who are homeless, ensuring that houses are fit for purpose especially those in the rented sector and managing housing benefits. As housing authorities they prepare District and Borough wide Housing Strategies to outline the priorities for meeting housing need and dealing with homelessness. As planning authorities, they determine all planning applications for new housing and must adopt Local Plans to allocate land to meet long-term housing need. Whilst the County Council does not have these formal responsibilities, we do have responsibilities for provision of appropriate infrastructure and the provision of care and support to those in need, all of which have implications for housing.

- 1.5** More than this, we have wider responsibilities to promote public health and wellbeing in Nottinghamshire. Safe and secure housing is one of the key “building blocks” of a healthy life and a healthy society – just as important as other building blocks such as a good diet, connections with friends and family and a secure job. Our public health role seeks to strengthen these building blocks and support individuals and communities with the impact this has on their health.
- 1.6** Housing has become a significant issue at national and local level and there is often reference to a housing “crisis”. There is general acceptance that not enough housing of the right type is being built. There is a general lack of suitable, affordable housing for those who need it in many parts of the UK and Nottinghamshire. This particularly is affecting younger people who cannot afford their own home, but there is also a shortage of suitable accommodation for those in the later stages of life. Government house building targets have consistently been missed whilst house price growth has favoured those with property and led to a surge in private rented accommodation. Limited rights for tenants have in the past fuelled a rise in homelessness cases and re-directed the resources of local authorities from prevention to provision of temporary accommodation.
- 1.7** At present there is no clear sign that these trends will improve. Housing is a County Council challenge because the lack of movement in the housing market means that many people are not able to access the type of housing they need and become stuck in unsuitable accommodation leading to greater support needs. Enabling more and wider choice of good quality housing is necessary. It underpins the council’s strategic priorities to enable green growth, support older and younger people with care needs and other vulnerable groups to live independently, reduce health inequalities and create great places to grow up, live and work.
- 1.8** Poor housing has an adverse impact on our efforts to combat climate change and reduce carbon emissions. Better, more energy-efficient housing - both current and future - will reduce domestic carbon emissions and have additional benefits with better housing conditions potentially reducing fuel poverty, cold/damp housing, and related health conditions. In order for the UK to meet its legally binding climate change targets and in support of local authority climate resolutions, there is a need for local government to work together to support energy and emission reduction in new build and existing homes.

- 1.9** Ensuring the right numbers, types, affordability, and quality of housing are provided across Nottinghamshire relies on the cooperation of relevant partners. Our Borough and District partners have statutory responsibilities for housing and local plan making, ensuring land is identified for housing in the right places. Housing Associations and Private Developers build homes across the county. Homes England are investing funding, land and expertise to support delivery on behalf of the Government.
- 1.10** Homes need to be safe from abuse to enable their residents to lead fulfilling lives. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 placed a Statutory duty on the authority to ensure that all survivors of domestic abuse are supported within safe accommodation. Making and keeping home a safe place requires strong partnerships between local authorities and the voluntary and community sector.

## Our role in housing

- 1.11** Nottinghamshire County Council plays a very important part of the housing system in Nottinghamshire.

### Our roles include:

- Planning, securing funding and delivering infrastructure and services to support housing delivery (education, mobility, digital connectivity, recycling & waste provision, flood mitigation)
- Working with borough and district partners and government on proposed new communities and regeneration projects
- As a landowner helping provide new open market, specialist, and affordable homes on surplus County Council owned land in order to help to meet housing need across the County area
- Coordinating, commissioning, and market shaping activity to ensure housing is available for vulnerable people and those with care and support needs
- Strategic coordination and commissioning on crosscutting issues e.g., homelessness prevention, improving health and wellbeing, and integration support for resettled refugees
- A statutory duty to lead and coordinate safe accommodation and support for survivors of domestic abuse and their children.
- Advocate improved health outcomes in new development through our leading Spatial Planning for Health Framework and Protocol with District and Borough Councils
- Working with relevant partners as part of the East Midlands Mayoral Combined Authority (EMCA) to help influence the regional approach to housing across Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, Derby and Derbyshire.



- 1.12** Our work on housing however is spread across many different teams in the County Council. This Housing Strategy aims to bring all our work together on housing for the first time, enabling us to set goals and objectives on housing and set out our proposition to work with partners for the benefit of existing and future residents of Nottinghamshire. It will provide the evidence of a coherent County Council strategy in order to support bids to funding agencies for its goals and aims - such as to fit/retrofit local housing to improve energy efficiency standards.
- 1.13** This Strategy has been prepared considering the County Council's declaration of a climate emergency and our commitment to achieve carbon neutrality in all our actions by 2030. We have a [Corporate Environmental Policy](#) which guides all our actions and this is also reflected in the [Nottinghamshire Plan](#). In 2024 we developed and published a Net Zero Framework to guide our activities towards becoming carbon neutral. Our goals and actions related to housing have been framed accordingly.
- 1.14** In accordance with our Nottinghamshire Plan and the Nottinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Board Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, we want to create healthy and sustainable places, ensure the places we call home – in which we grow, live, work and age in, promotes good health and wellbeing and is good for the environment. This includes developing quality houses and places, which have good local infrastructure that is positive for health. This will also help to reduce health inequalities and help support independent living and a better quality of life for all.
- 1.15** As we have prepared this Strategy, a new East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) has been created for Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire led by a new Mayor – Claire Ward elected in May 2024. The authority will potentially have a key role in funding housing and the Mayor has already declared that combating homelessness is one of her key priorities. The Combined Authority is expected to work with local authorities, public health, landowners, developers and housing providers to open up greater access to funding for affordable, good quality housing options and towards retrofitting existing homes to be more environmentally sustainable.
- 1.16** The Mayor and Combined Authority is expected to use powers to buy land and develop housing, with the consent of local authorities and it could result in better standards for homes, low carbon measures, and improvements to existing housing. The draft Strategy has been shared with representatives of the new Combined Authority and we look forward to working with the new Mayor and Authority on housing in future years.



## Development of our Strategy

- 1.17** This strategy is the product of joint working between officers in all departments of the County Council co-ordinated by the planning policy team within the Place Department.
- 1.18** A draft of this document was issued for consultation in May 2023 with all those with a stake in the future of housing in Nottinghamshire – private housebuilders, providers of social housing, care providers, District and Borough Councils and Homes England, the government agency responsible for housing.
- 1.19** The views which were submitted on the Draft Housing Strategy have been considered and we are very grateful for the responses, especially from our District and Borough Council partners.
- 1.20** Details related to the arrangements for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy are contained in section 6.



# Housing in Nottinghamshire



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**2.1** The Nottinghamshire Plan (2022) and the Nottinghamshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2022-2026) both put housing at their heart stating that NCC want to ensure that its residents live healthier and happier lives, prosper in their communities and remain independent in later life. The following section sets out the context for housing, on which we can build a robust Housing Strategy to ensure these ambitions are met.

**2.2** Nottinghamshire covers 805 square miles with a population of 833,000<sup>1</sup>

- The overall population is predicted to rise to 908,000 (9%) by 2034<sup>2</sup>
- The population of over 65s is expected to increase by over 30% by 2034, or an extra 53,200 people
- The number of older people expected to live alone is expected to increase by 26% by 2030<sup>3</sup>
- Children and young people make up 23% of the population, which is expected to increase by 7% by 2026 (JSNA 2017)

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<sup>1</sup>ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates 2020

<sup>2</sup>Based on 2018 Office for National Statistics sub national population projections

<sup>3</sup>POPPI tool – Projecting Older People Population Information

**2.3** The wellbeing of Nottinghamshire residents is generally good.<sup>4</sup> However:

- Some areas are the most deprived in England, particularly in Mansfield and Ashfield Districts, with 31 neighbourhoods falling within the nation's most deprived 10%
- People in the most disadvantaged areas have lives that are on average 7 years shorter than those living in the least disadvantaged areas and experience permanent illness or disability 14 years earlier.
- 85% of a person's health is influenced by social factors such as employment, education, and the environment, together with strong and supportive communities. These are key factors in the services we plan and deliver, as they can improve the health of our County.
- The impact of the pandemic has been unequal across Nottinghamshire. As well as the effects of the virus on adults' and children's health, restrictions and lockdowns have affected people's everyday life, worsening physical health, mental health, loneliness and access to education. This may have a significant and continuing impact on people's health over the next few decades.

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<sup>4</sup>Public Health Outcomes Framework for Nottinghamshire, Public Health England (PHE), October 2021

<sup>5</sup>English Indices of Deprivation 2019, published by Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government



**2.4** Nottinghamshire's economic landscape has changed a lot over the last 30 years, with growth largely mirroring the national economy. However, while the south and east of the County are generally performing at or around the national average, the north, especially Ashfield and Mansfield, are below the national average in terms of education, skills, training, annual earnings and business growth.<sup>6</sup> Also, Nottinghamshire in general is performing below England's average in several areas:

- The average annual salary for full-time workers is £30,000, compared to £31,461 nationally<sup>7</sup>
- In 2020, 35% of the working age population in Nottinghamshire were qualified to degree level or above, compared to 43% nationally<sup>8</sup>
- That same year, 7% of the working age population in the County had no qualifications, compared to 6% nationally

However, these figures vary throughout Nottinghamshire, with the most significant skill gaps in Bassetlaw and Newark and Sherwood.

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<sup>6</sup>ONS Annual Population Survey (APS), December 2020 (accessed via NOMIS)

<sup>7</sup>ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), December 2020 (accessed via NOMIS)

<sup>8</sup>ONS Annual Population Survey (APS), December 2020 (accessed via NOMIS)



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Credit: Jacob Wackerhausen

**2.5** Nottinghamshire County Council comprises seven borough and district authorities:

- Ashfield District Council
- Bassetlaw District Council
- Broxtowe Borough Council
- Gedling Borough Council
- Mansfield District Council
- Newark and Sherwood District Council
- Rushcliffe Borough Council

**2.6** Within Nottinghamshire, there is a total housing stock of just over 371,000.  
The distribution of this stock by ownership is as follows:

**Table 1 - Housing Stock by Local Authority (2021)**

Housing Stock	Local Authority	Registered Provider	Other public body	Private Owned	Total
Ashfield	6635	2101	2	48,022	56,760
Bassetlaw	6676	1527	0	45,448	52,875
Broxtowe	4411	1325	197	44,526	50,459
Gedling	190	5105	0	48,268	53,563
Mansfield	6442	2322	0	41,198	49,962
Newark and Sherwood	5551	2611	0	47,597	55,759
Rushcliffe	30	4454	0	47,354	51,838
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,937</b>	<b>19,445</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>322,413</b>	<b>371,216</b>

Source: DLUHC dwelling stock estimates

**2.7** The tenure of Nottinghamshire households is shown below illustrating the significant increase in the proportion of privately rented housing in Nottinghamshire since 2011. This exceeds the proportion of housing which is rented from the local authority or housing association as social housing.



**Table 2 - Tenure of Households in Nottinghamshire (Census 2021)**

Tenure of Household		% Change since 2011
<b>Owns Outright</b>	<b>136,577</b>	<b>+14.5%</b>
<b>Owns with a mortgage</b>	<b>113,117</b>	<b>-5.78%</b>
<b>Shared ownership</b>	<b>2,034</b>	<b>+ 27%</b>
<b>Social Rented</b>	<b>45,710</b>	<b>+1.4%</b>
<b>Private rented</b>	<b>59,195</b>	<b>+34.4%</b>
<b>Lives rent free</b>	<b>493</b>	<b>-88.5%</b>

Source: Census 2021

**2.8** Delivery of new and affordable housing across Nottinghamshire over the past five years is shown in the following table.

**Table 3 - Housing completions and level of affordable housing**

	New housing completions 2017-2022	Affordable homes built (social rent, affordable rent, intermediate rent, shared ownership, affordable home ownership) 2017-2022	% Affordable housing
Ashfield	1,547	235	15
Bassetlaw	3,219	502	16
Broxtowe	1,147	92	8
Gedling	1,551	189	12
Mansfield	1,935	184	9.5
Newark and Sherwood	3,435	697	20
Rushcliffe	2,271	864	38
<b>County total</b>	<b>15,105</b>	<b>2,752</b>	<b>18</b>

Source: LPA housing monitoring reports and Live tables on affordable housing supply December 2022 Gov.uk

# Strategic Goal A

## Growing a Green and Healthy Nottinghamshire



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Credit: Cristi Savin

## Context

- 3.1** One of the principle aims of good government is to ensure there are the right number and quality of homes being built for those who need them. The planning system exists to ensure sufficient housing is permitted to enable housing needs to be met. It is not simply about numbers – the cost of private homes has meant that home ownership is out of the reach of many younger people so there needs to be more affordable options available. New housing should also meet the housing needs of different groups in the community and each Borough and District in Nottinghamshire produces a Housing Need Assessment to understand this.
- 3.2** At Nottinghamshire County Council we help inform decisions on Strategic and Local Plans which provide for housing as well as individual planning applications for housing development. We are a partner in delivering new housing development because of our responsibilities for transport and mobility, education, flood mitigation, public health and social care and a host of other responsibilities based in our Place Directorate. We are not a local housing authority or a planning authority for housing and have no powers to intervene or regulate the private housing sector but we can work well with our District and Borough Councils using the powers and influence we have to help drive sustainable green growth.
- 3.3** The goal we have set ourselves is simply to grow a green and healthy Nottinghamshire. This will mean focussing our work on supporting development and housing linked to improved environmental outcomes, promoting more active travel and improved health and reducing inequalities. We want to work together with all our partners to deliver the following outcomes.

# Outcomes

## A.1

### Healthy homes and places are delivered through strategic sites and regeneration/development projects, supported by new infrastructure



- 3.4** Much of our work on housing is focussed on the largest developments in Nottinghamshire which demand the most attention because of complexities in terms of infrastructure. We will continue to work with local planning authorities and land promoters/developer to help accelerate development, help bring forward appropriate infrastructure at the right time and seek to unlock barriers to sustainable development and growth in homes.
- 3.5** During the financial year 2022/23 alone, £7.4m of developer funding was agreed through planning obligations to support infrastructure provision in Nottinghamshire and £6.8m was received. The County Council spent £2.9m on infrastructure and retained £28.4m of developer contributions funding which is ring fenced to invest in future infrastructure projects.





**3.6** We will continue to invest staff resources to support our Borough and District Councils in bringing forward new housing and high-quality places. Examples of current projects we will engage on over the next five years, where we have an interest as landowner or key stakeholder such as the local transport authority are listed below:

- Bassetlaw, we will work with the District Council to support the regeneration of the Worksop Central Area and realise new housing opportunities through our land in Worksop and Retford
- In Mansfield, we will complete the development of Berry Hill as part of the landowner consortium and work with the District Council to support the housing-led urban extension at Jubilee Way
- In Ashfield, we will work with the Council to promote our land assets for housing and other development as part of the emerging Local Plan
- In Newark and Sherwood, we will support the delivery of the Newark Southern Relief Road as part of the completion of the Middlebeck development and work to support the delivery of the Thoresby Vale development at Edwinstowe
- In Broxtowe, we will seek funding to deliver transport infrastructure to enable the delivery of land for housing at Toton and Chetwynd Barracks
- In Gedling, we will continue the implementation of the Top Wighay site as mixed housing and business development
- In Rushcliffe, we will work with the Borough Council to support the implementation of the development of Fairham, south of Clifton and the delivery of a supplementary planning document to inform the comprehensive development of land east of Gamston and north of Tollerton



### 3.7 Over the next five years, our principal actions will be to:

- Work with local planning authorities through our [Spatial Planning and Health Framework](#), our rapid health impact toolkit and through public health advice and intelligence to help new housing areas be designed from the outset with health in mind
- Promote active and sustainable travel to support accessible developments and improved cycling and walking facilities and e-vehicle charging
- Implement our [Bus Service Improvement Plan](#) to enable independence and greener living
- Work with local planning authorities to ensure sufficient supporting infrastructure is included in Local Plans and contribute to infrastructure funding statements or delivery plans
- Work with local planning authorities to secure funding from developers to invest in transport, schools and other infrastructure when planning permission is granted
- Seek government funding to invest in transport and other infrastructure to support new housing development.

**3.8** We will monitor progress towards this outcome by assessing the number of new homes constructed on significant sites \*in Nottinghamshire, against the projected build out rates in April 2022 and the incorporation of health into local planning policies through our Spatial Planning for Health Framework. We will engage with Borough and District Councils, Homes England, National Highways, Department for Education, Department for Housing and Communities and Local Government, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities and other agencies in supporting this outcome.

\* generally sites (or a combination of sites) over 500 dwellings in size



## A pipeline of surplus County Council sites is developed for housing to help meet local housing needs



- 3.9** The County Council has a significant property portfolio, owning more than 900 buildings with development land holdings exceeding 330 hectares. These buildings and land support our corporate objectives. Our Investing in Nottinghamshire Programme is using our property and land assets to transform the way we work whilst driving economic regeneration in our local communities. Surplus land and property which is suitable for development is promoted through the planning process working with Borough and District Councils to achieve necessary approvals and then we work with selected developers to realise built development.
- 3.10** We are committed to ensuring that, where suitable, our land assets are used to benefit Nottinghamshire and that homes built on land we currently own are built to the highest standards in terms of energy/environmental performance and adaptability. When looking at the future of land and property in the County Council's ownership we will:
- Explore what opportunity there is to support our own services and commissioning of services – particularly to delivering housing which supports adult and children's care
  - Explore what opportunity exists to partner with District and Borough Councils to achieve objectives which help meet specific housing needs in the relevant District
  - Seek when disposing of land and property to partner with developers who meet our objectives on energy/environmental performance and adaptability
- 3.11 Over the next five years our principal actions will be to:**
- Complete housing development at Berry Hill Mansfield as part of a landowner consortium as an exemplar of a design for good health
  - Progress housing development at Top Wighay in Gedling with Vistry Partnerships as the developer for the site with homes setting exemplar standards for energy saving and digital connectivity
  - Seek delivery of housing in Worksop and Retford on land allocated in the Bassetlaw Local Plan
  - Promote housing in Ashfield District on land in our ownership

- 3.12** We will monitor the number of new homes constructed on County Council land and seek to ensure this mirrors the expectation for build out by our District and Borough Council partners to assist in their housing delivery. We will engage positively with other landowners, District Councils Homes England and EMCCA where needed in support of this outcome.

## A.3

**House building supports people and businesses in the County and leads to growth in local jobs and services. Existing homes are retrofitted to address fuel poverty and meet zero carbon standards**



- 3.13** House building not only provides people with somewhere to live but supports local employment in construction and services. As a mineral planning authority, we are responsible for making sure that there are sufficient supplies of aggregates and building materials available for the construction industry in the region. Our Mineral Local Plan adopted in 2021 takes account of the future rate of house building.
- 3.13** However, shortages in the availability of building materials, and a resurgent skills shortage, especially for key trades such as bricklaying and carpentry have been holding housing delivery back. We want to maximise the opportunity for local people that gain the skills and experience to help build planned new homes and retrofit existing homes to meet our net zero ambitions. Construction methods are changing to reduce carbon emissions and to complete more components off site.
- 3.14** We want to see new homes built that are fully digitally connected with highspeed fibre to the home as part of places which deliver the right employment opportunities for existing and new residents. We recognise that more homes will generate increased revenue to local authorities through Council Tax and New Homes Bonus payments and along with developer contributions through the Community Infrastructure Levy and S106 planning obligations, this will help support public services and social infrastructure.

- 3.15** The County Council has joined with many other local authorities in declaring a climate emergency and our Nottinghamshire Plan has a vision of working towards a healthy, prosperous, and greener future for everyone. We have committed to becoming carbon neutral in all our activities by 2030. To contribute to the UK government's legally binding targets to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050 our homes will need to use low-carbon heating systems and be more energy efficient.
- 3.16** Homes account for more than 21% of the country's total carbon emissions with three-quarters of this coming from heating systems. To ensure the UK remains on track to reach net zero by 2050 all homes must achieve an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of C or above. For existing homes, the [Climate Emergency Retrofit Guide](#) set out by LETI, a voluntary network of built environment professionals, sets out what good retrofit looks like for existing homes.
- 3.17** We have worked in partnership with our District and Borough colleagues in Mansfield and Bassetlaw to upgrade the energy efficiency of up to 25 homes in their ownership through funding secured through the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund demonstrator project. The funding complements existing programmes such as the Warm Homes Fund and Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme, both of which the County Council acts as an accountable body. Our Public Health team funds a Healthy Housing service led by Nottingham Energy Partnership offering a host of practical ways residents can improve the energy efficiency of their home. The Let's Optimise Your Heating service led by the Growth and Economic Development team offers practical advice to households to upgrade the energy efficiency of their boilers and reduce heating bill costs.
- 3.18** We have raised the importance of the health benefits of retrofitting housing with partners across EMCCA and are recommending that EMCCA consider this a priority and work with Councils to develop a clear understanding of housing stock conditions across its area to inform future interventions.
- 3.19** We aim to support the delivery of a Nottinghamshire Health and Housing Database to capture details at address level of the condition of the housing stock across Nottinghamshire using a model developed by Derbyshire County Council. This will enable us to target properties for intervention. We know that social or low income occupied housing which meets higher environmental standards will be cheaper to run and be healthier to live in.

### 3.20 Over the next five years our principal actions will be to:

- Work with partners to support the construction skills sector in Nottinghamshire.
- Champion Nottinghamshire as a place to set up and expand with good technology, logistics, digital infrastructure and innovative strengths.
- Support the retrofitting of existing homes to address fuel poverty and meet zero carbon standard
- Continue to support housing decarbonisation across Nottinghamshire with our partner District and Borough Councils
- Support the completion and maintenance of a Nottinghamshire Health and Housing Stock Database for all housing stock, to allow each local housing authority to better understand the housing stock conditions (especially in the private sector), help target future intervention for retrofitting improvements or enforcement using experience developed in Derbyshire.

**3.21** We will track the number of housing units which have been subject to retrofitting to aid energy saving and the number of residents in fuel poverty, whose household bills have been reduced. We will engage with the Midlands Net Zero Hub and Local Authority Energy Partnership together with our Borough and District Councils in support of this outcome.

**3.22** We will monitor progress by assessing the uptake of construction apprentices in Nottinghamshire and the growth of key sectors such as sustainable energy, heat generation and modern methods of construction. We will engage with Borough and District Councils, training agencies and employers' organisations in support of this outcome.

## A.4

**New housing is built, and aids sustainable places through net zero infrastructure such as better digital and transport connectivity and clear biodiversity gains**



**3.23** We will look to explore how future housing development on land that we own or where we are the developer/client can meet enhanced standards for net zero development such as Passivhaus or equivalent. Noting the introduction of the Future Homes Standard fully by 2025, our aim will be to be ahead of UK government targets, fitting in with broader Combined County Authority ambitions and adopting standards and making requirements for the development of land that we own which represent the highest standards in Nottinghamshire.



**3.24** We are re-designing our transport infrastructure across the County to encourage active travel modes (walking & cycling) and supporting bus travel linking residential areas with key destinations. Through the Active Travel Fund, we are implementing a programme of cycling schemes from 2023/24 and have been working in partnership with Derby City Council, Derbyshire County Council and Nottingham City Council to develop a D2N2-wide local cycling and walking infrastructure plan. Our Bus Service Improvement Plan will continue to guide investment in bus services and infrastructure to deliver more sustainable travel options.

**3.25 Over the next five years our principal actions will be to:**

- Deliver a Green Growth Spatial Plan for Investment Opportunities
- Continue to support sustainable development opportunities across Nottinghamshire with our partner District and Borough Councils
- Support completion and maintenance of a Nottinghamshire Health and Housing Stock Database for all housing stock, to allow each local housing authority to better understand the housing stock conditions (especially in the private sector), help target future intervention for retrofitting improvements or enforcement using experience developed in Derbyshire.
- Deliver a pipeline of sites for new housing on County Council land including at Top Wighay which will include exemplar standards for homes in terms of reducing carbon, energy efficiency and supporting net zero
- Promote the ambition for all new build housing to be provided with fibre to the premises as part of our Better Broadband for Nottinghamshire programme
- Create better active travel infrastructure and public transport systems and networks serving housing areas to help reduce reliance on the private car and improve health and wellbeing
- Expand the provision of electric charging points to serve local neighbourhoods.

**3.26** We will monitor delivery of active travel infrastructure against the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). We will monitor wider infrastructure progress by tracking improvements to our environment as part of linking residential areas to local services and places of employment across all Local Plans. We will engage with the EEMCCA together with our Borough and District Councils in support of this outcome.

## New homes meet local needs including affordable homes for younger and older people and those with support needs



- 3.27** As planning authorities, all our District and Borough Councils prepare housing need assessments to inform their Local Plans. Paragraph 50 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires that local planning authorities plan for a mix of housing based on the needs of different groups in the community and identify the size, type tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations. Our District Housing Strategies also recognise the need for homes to suit people in later stages of life which would help free up accommodation for others.
- 3.28** It is critical to maintaining independence that people have a choice of different types and tenures of housing which meet their needs throughout their life. This is particularly the case for older people who may wish to move to more compact, easily maintained accommodation with easier accessibility as they grow older.
- 3.29** Whilst much care for children is provided by foster or adoptive parents, there is still a need for homes for children in our care. We run two homes for children with disabilities and three mainstream homes. Equally young people who are leaving care provided by the County Council as corporate parent, need a choice of housing which meets their needs as they learn to support themselves. This issue is further covered in Outcome 3.5.
- 3.30** Those who are commissioned to provide housing with support to our adults with learning disabilities and support needs may need to obtain access to larger housing units for those who need it to live together with their support workers on hand.



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Credit: Ivan Pantic

**3.31** Children and young people with disabilities need access to family sized homes which meet their needs. This is likely to require properties to be built which are over and above the requirements of Building Regulations Approved Document M, for example including an accessible bedroom for a child as well as a double bedroom for parents; or a bathroom which has space for both a level access shower and a bath so that a changing table can be used within the space.

**3.32** Working age adults born with or who have developed disabilities have a need for adapted housing. This could be because of a progressive condition or a new permanent disability due to health, trauma, or crisis. There is a need for new `lifetime homes` that are wheelchair accessible and affordable, for both owner occupiers and social housing. This would compliment the requirement to adapt existing properties of all tenures for this group of people.

**3.33 Over the next five years our principal actions will be to:**

- Ensure that the need for suitable homes for older people and those with requirements are reflected in the housing need assessments and Local Plans of each Borough and District in Nottinghamshire
- Respond to larger planning applications for housing and negotiate with developers where needed to ensure that specific requirements are accommodated where possible, particularly advocating for the need for new "lifetime homes" or adapted housing for working age and older people and specialist extra care facilities and homes for families with disabled children/young people where there is a local need
- Ensure that our own property portfolio is reviewed to examine the opportunities to accommodate the provision of care for adults and children
- When disposing of our land for housing, seek to assist in meeting locally identified housing needs.

**3.34** We will monitor progress by reviewing outstanding housing needs as identified by our commissioning services in Adult Care and Children's and seek to work more closely with our partner Borough and District Councils especially through the planning system to help us deliver this outcome.

# Strategic Goal B

## Enabling people to live independently



istock  
Credit: Daisy-Daisy



## Context

- 4.1** A core principle underpinning the delivery of Adult Social Care in Nottinghamshire is that of promoting independence. Our approach to social care starts from the premise that everyone we work with has strengths that can be built on to promote recovery and the achievement of independent lives. One of the key ambitions of the Nottinghamshire Plan is helping our people live healthier and more independent lives and this is reflected in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2022-2026).
- 4.2** By 2036 the number of people aged 65 or above in Nottinghamshire as in the rest of the UK will rise to around 25% of the population. Housing with Assisted Care/Supported Living means enabling older people with care and support needs to remain living independently in their own homes within a supported environment. The development of supported living for adults with learning disabilities as well as providing pathways to support people to regain skills following a hospital stay are equally embedded in our service offer today. Health and care workers work together with the person, their family and carers to achieve their optimum level of independence.
- 4.3** Prior to considering the need for ongoing care and support, interventions such as providing assistive equipment and home adaption can be made to enable adults to remain at home and/or to live independently and engage with their network and community.



# Outcomes

B.1

## New homes and places are designed for residents to live independent and healthy lives



- 4.4** We want to see all mainstream new homes and residential areas designed and built so they can provide for independent living and take into account longer lifetimes. We use “co-production” to involve service users in designing the services they use and want to see older and disabled people helping in the design of residential areas and helping shape types of specialist housing models such as Extra Care or Assisted Living.
- 4.5 Over the next five years our principal actions will be to:**
- Engage with the Borough and District Councils when planning applications are considered and in the development of Local Design Codes to make housing areas better designed for older and disabled people
  - Support the supply of new housing and proposals which are specifically aimed at older and disabled people which are close to shops, services and cultural facilities and connect well to public transport
  - Support the supply of new family sized homes suitable for children and young people with disabilities
  - Use the land and property that we own to help deliver supported housing and extra care provision where there is a local need such as at the former Elizabethan School and St Michaels View sites in Retford, the former Kirklands Care Home site in Kirkby in Ashfield and Walker Street, in Eastwood.
- 4.6** We will monitor progress by assessing Borough and District Local Plans and design codes to ensure they help support residents to maintain independent and healthy lives. We will engage with Borough and District Councils and promoters of new development in support of this outcome.

## Homes are adapted to support residents to live independently



- 4.7** A lot of our work to keep people independent is to help them adapt their living spaces to new circumstances, either temporarily or permanently. This can be achieved by installing items to aid mobility or prevent falls. Government funding for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) is provided to the County Council through the Better Care Fund in recognition of the importance of ensuring adaptations are part of an integrated approach to housing, health, and social care locally. District Councils are responsible for home adaptations and the provision of DFG's to eligible residents. We will work with Districts and Boroughs to agree on the use of this funding.
- 4.8** It would make sense for many homes to be designed to allow people to remain in one place throughout their life course without the need for subsequent adaption. Standards like Lifetime Homes can adapt to changing needs – from storage of pushchairs to storage of mobility scooters and level thresholds. The models of housing that work for older people, work for everyone else.



#### 4.9 Over the next five years our principal actions will be to:

- Collaborate with our local housing authority colleagues to ensure delivery of a seamless, person-centred support, equipment and adaptations service to those with mobility needs who need them
- To ensure timely adaptations delivery to facilitate people being safely discharged from hospital and also to use adaptations as a preventative intervention to support carers, prevent falls, reduce loneliness and avoid moves into residential or nursing care
- Advocate for the highest proportion of homes to be built to Lifetime Homes (LTH) standards within new housing areas to provide flexible and adaptable homes
- Advocate for the supply of new family sized homes suitable for children and young people with disabilities

**4.10** We will monitor progress in meeting this outcome by reviewing the operation of our Disabled Facilities Grants scheme and monitoring the provision of homes built to Lifetime Homes standard in Nottinghamshire. We will work with our partner Borough and District Councils through our housing and planning liaison to help us deliver this outcome.

## B.3

### There is access to high quality specialist and supported accommodation for those who need it



**4.11** Despite the aim of keeping people independent in their own homes, there is a need for specialist accommodation which provides a home for those who need extra support. Supported or sheltered housing schemes and residential care homes have long been provided for older people, but Extra Care Housing provides the means to live as independently as possible with the reassurance of additional support when it is needed. There are currently 12 extra care schemes in Nottinghamshire.

**4.12** The provision of specific retirement housing (often bungalows) which has an age qualification, often with access to non-residential staff but linked to an alarm service is a common housing option provided by our District and Borough Councils. Private providers now account for most of the care and support for older people who have residential and dementia care needs with a range of provision across the County. Specialist-supported accommodation for adults with learning difficulties and mental health conditions is also provided by the County Council and through partnerships with private providers.

**4.13 Over the next five years our principal actions will be to:**

- Continue to monitor the provision of places providing specialist care and support for older people and those in temporary accommodation in Nottinghamshire and work with providers to ensure that future provision meets anticipated needs
- Seeking to engage with Local Plans to ensure sites are reserved for housing designed for older people and where there is an outstanding local need for extra care provision, looking to sites which are accessible to local shops and services
- Support planning applications by developers and providers when made to our District and Borough Councils for specialist housing for older people and for those experiencing homelessness or for necessary changes of use from dwelling to house in multiple occupation to provide for supported living schemes which meet the locational criteria above.

**4.14** We will monitor our progress in meeting this outcome by providing appropriate support to planning applications made to our for-specialist care and older persons provision across Nottinghamshire and work with our colleagues in District and Borough Councils to ensure that local planning policy is supportive of provision for specialist and supported accommodation in new development areas.

05

# Strategic Goal C: Supporting those in urgent housing need



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## Context

- 5.1** Some people are in urgent need of a home due to many different reasons.. Single person homelessness is on the rise with many having complex needs. Many stay with friends and family and the termination of such arrangements is the largest reason for homelessness. The County Council works with our District and Borough housing authorities to commission appropriate support to those in housing need to help prevent homelessness and help them secure and retain accommodation.
- 5.2** In some cases, this leads to sleeping rough on the streets. We share the commitment of the UK government to end rough sleeping in Nottinghamshire and during the pandemic, we worked proactively with District and Borough Councils across Nottinghamshire to take urgent action to house rough sleepers and protect public health. We are providing more effective support to prevent rough sleeping from happening in the first place.
- 5.3** Children and young people who need help and protection need a home in which support and care is provided. By law, we must look after children and young people who cannot live with their families, where this is in the interests of the child. As well as supporting young people who leave care, we work alongside our local housing authorities to prevent 16- and 17-year-olds from becoming homeless. Over 950 children are currently looked after in Nottinghamshire. We currently have 229 foster carers, and the County Council manages two homes for children with disabilities and three mainstream homes.

## Outcomes

1

### Partnership working to end the need for people to sleep rough in Nottinghamshire



- 5.4** Following the Covid 19 Pandemic and the successful work undertaken to move rough sleepers into accommodation, we want to prioritise working with local housing authorities to commission ongoing support for rough sleepers and a convening role to bring partners together.

**5.5 Over the next five years our principal actions will be to:**

- Work with partners to commission ongoing support for rough sleepers
- Continue to improve working arrangements with partners to reduce the number of people becoming homeless as they leave the criminal justice system, health, or care settings
- Develop interventions with partners to reduce the time rough sleepers spend living on the streets

**5.6** We will monitor our progress in achieving this outcome by looking at the rough sleeper counts (and other data that is available) carried out in Nottinghamshire and work in partnership with District and Borough housing and homelessness teams to help end the need for rough sleeping.

2

**Preventing homelessness and supporting people into permanent accommodation**



**5.7** The housing system is under strain owing to many reasons and the shortage of affordable housing is a problem in many areas of Nottinghamshire. The ending of tenancies by private landlords is a principal cause of homelessness and domestic abuse is a further major cause as people leave abusive partners.

**5.8** Temporary accommodation solutions are arranged by our District and Borough housing authorities, and we will continue to work with our partner Councils through our Public Health work to commission advice and support services for adults who are in housing need and in temporary accommodation because of homelessness.



### 5.9 Over the next five years our principal actions will be to:

- Collaborate with our local housing authority colleagues, to ensure delivery of seamless person-centred support for those experiencing homelessness in temporary accommodation
- Continue to monitor the provision of places providing specialist care and support for those in temporary accommodation in Nottinghamshire and work with providers to ensure that future provision meets anticipated needs
- Seek to engage with Local Plans to ensure sites are reserved where needed for temporary accommodation in Nottinghamshire
- Support planning applications by developers and providers when made to District and Borough Councils for specialist temporary and move on housing for those experiencing homelessness
- Develop further our statutory “duty to refer” to housing authorities where appropriate as part of our social care work to support those in need.
- Work with local housing authorities to explore how County Council property might assist in providing temporary accommodation

**5.10** We will monitor the progress in meeting this outcome by looking at the number of evictions from supported accommodation and seek to reduce these. We will work in partnership with our District and Borough Councils across Nottinghamshire on this issue.



### Ensuring access to supported accommodation services for young people (aged 16-21) and care leavers up to the age of 25



**5.11** Young people sometimes need a certain level of support to help them make the transition to independent living. It can be difficult for young people to find somewhere to live. Private landlords can be reluctant to let to young people with low incomes and especially if claiming benefits. The County Council aims to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of young people. We seek to prevent homelessness and return young people to their families wherever possible. Where necessary, we support them to find the most suitable accommodation and support them to remain there and move on when appropriate.

- 5.12** In Nottinghamshire, a Joint Working Protocol has been developed to guide how the County, the homelessness teams in each District and Borough and supported accommodation providers will work together to prevent youth homelessness, provide a pathway for referral to accommodation and support and how services will operate.
- 5.13** In Nottinghamshire, the County Council takes responsibility for the [statutory duty](#) to accommodate all homeless 16- or 17-year-olds whilst the District or Borough housing authorities lead on the prevention of homelessness for 18–21-year-olds. Referrals are made by the housing authorities to the County Council if supported accommodation is required. As part of our [local offer](#) for [care leavers](#), the County Council Borough and District Councils actively work to prevent care leavers from becoming homeless, especially street homelessness and we have a shared corporate responsibility with the District and Borough Councils around this aspect.
- 5.14 Over the next five years our principal actions will be to:**
- Ensure information and advice for young people is readily available about housing options to help prevent homelessness
  - Liaise with Schools and Academy Trusts in Nottinghamshire to help provide access into schools for Broxtowe Youth Homeless who are commissioned by our Districts and Boroughs to offer homeless preventative work
  - Ensure a full range of supported accommodation services is available in each locality in Nottinghamshire to help safeguard and support young people at risk of becoming homeless and promote their independence in preparation for adulthood and managing their own tenancy
  - Work with supported accommodation providers, the local housing authorities, and landlords in the private and social sectors to make a range of safe, decent, and affordable move on options for young people, using both shared and self-contained accommodation
- 5.15** We will monitor our progress towards this outcome by assessing the effectiveness of mediation and advice to help maintain young people in family networks, monitoring the schools uptake of youth homelessness prevention sessions and reviewing the care leaver offer to ensure consistency of approach. We will work with local schools, Academy Trusts, and District/ Borough Councils on these actions.

## Enabling secure and stable homes for children who need them



- 5.16** Looked after children are children that are cared for by us. By law we must look after children or young people who cannot live with their families. This can be for a number of reasons but generally, we look after children because their parents or the court think it is in the best interests of the child. Most children and young people in need of care are looked after by a foster carer. For a small number of children, residential care may be more suitable. After an assessment of the situation, we will make a plan to help the child return home.
- 5.17** Our future housing provision for children we look after for whom we are the “corporate parent” will therefore continue to rely principally on the homes provided by our foster carers - either directly working for the County Council or through one of the independent fostering agencies and there is a continuing need for more foster homes. Residential children’s homes are still however needed to support some children with the County Council operating several and some private provisions.
- 5.18** We offer a range of services for children and young people when they leave care. This includes advice, support and guidance to 16–25-year-olds leaving care about obtaining accommodation.
- 5.19 Over the next five years our principal actions will be to:**
- Review our property portfolio to ensure that our residential care for children is fit for purpose and support planning applications when made to our District or Borough Councils for the provision of new specialist children’s homes
  - Continue to work with housing partners to provide appropriate supported accommodation for young people leaving care
  - Continue to support young people to prevent homelessness by working with our partner housing authorities
  - Work on a D2N2 basis (across Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire) to ensure the sufficiency of places for young people in our care
- 5.20** We will monitor our progress towards this outcome by continually assessing the adequacy of property in which the children we look after are cared for, the accommodation provided for care leavers, the supported accommodation provided for those 16+ and work with providers of children’s



## Provision of safe accommodation to support and protect adults and children affected by domestic abuse



- 5.21** We have a [statutory duty](#) from the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to coordinate, commission and drive activity to ensure survivors and their children have access to the right accommodation-based support when they need it. This includes moving on, refuge or other safe accommodations or making their own homes safe, through the fitting of safety equipment via Sanctuary schemes.
- 5.22** We provide support and protection for adults and children affected by domestic abuse within safe accommodation. Our funding from Government helps to commission support services in partnership with district and borough councils, domestic abuse services, the police and the Police and Crime Commissioner. The Covid 19 pandemic led to an increase in domestic abuse referrals. 4800 domestic abuse survivors received support in Nottinghamshire in 2020/1 and around 5000 in 2021/22.
- 5.23** A needs assessment was completed in 2021 which informed the commissioning plan. Further deep dives into the needs of male survivors and women with protected characteristics have been completed in 2022. These documents are available on the [Nottinghamshire Insight](#) domestic abuse page
- 5.24** We have completed commissioned support services within refuges for women and children, training for front line staff, pet projects and embedded domestic abuse specialists within the district and borough council housing teams. We have also provided flexible funding to refuges and district and borough councils to unblock issues that prevent survivors from moving through the housing pathways. We have also supported district and borough councils on their journey to become [Standing Together Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance](#) accredited. Evidence shows that these projects are working well, and we are continuing to build on these by increasing therapeutic support for survivors of domestic abuse, funding sanctuary schemes which provide measures to enable survivors to remain in their own home and investing in “co-production” to put the experience and voice of survivors at the heart of decision making.

### 5.25 Over the next five years our principal actions will be to:

- Review and deliver our commissioning plan to support and protect adults and children affected by domestic abuse within safe accommodation (in partnership with district and borough Councils, domestic abuse services, the Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner)
- Use co-production processes to better understand the needs and barriers for domestic abuse survivors and develop future commissioning plans
- Ensure all district and borough councils are Standing Together Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accredited
- Develop further safe accommodation units and move on accommodation in partnership with domestic abuse providers and district and borough councils

**5.26** We will monitor our progress towards this outcome by assessing the number of domestic abuse survivors receiving support and monitor the delivery of our commissioning plan via the Statutory Domestic Abuse Partnership Board.



# 06

## Implementing and Monitoring



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- 6.1** Our [2024/25 Annual Delivery Plan](#) commits us to implement our Housing Strategy, in partnership with local District and Borough Councils.
- 6.2** The Strategy has been designed as a five -year document and regular reviews of the actions are proposed to ensure we are working to implementing its goals and outcomes.
- 6.3** The actions contained in this Strategy highlight the different roles NCC will play in delivery – whether that is in a lead role, where we have shared responsibility as part of a partnership, or where we are playing a supporting or influencing role to help achieve outcomes. Following approval of the Strategy, we will monitor our actions on a quarterly basis and establish Housing Oversight Group within the County Council to promote improved inter-departmental working.
- 6.4** We will also monitor implementation in partnership with our local Borough and District Councils, the new East Midlands Combined Authority and the East Midlands Mayor and explore what forums might be used to help this objective.
- 6.5** Whilst its actions are ambitious, most of them reflect work which is already underway within the County Council. The Strategy itself does not therefore commit NCC to new expenditure with all activity referenced being delivered using existing resources.



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**REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND  
ENVIRONMENT****HIGHWAY SERVICES CONTRACT – VIA EAST MIDLANDS LTD****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of the report is to seek Cabinet approval for the Council to extend its contract with Via East Midlands Limited for an additional five years to 2031. The contract provides for the in-house delivery of highways & transportation maintenance services, and it is considered that an extension will benefit the Council in the delivery of services in support of the Nottinghamshire Plan.
2. This is a Key Decision and was published in November 2023.

**Summary**

3. The proposed contract extension will continue to provide a sustainable way of meeting the financial challenges facing the Highways and Fleet management services while retaining a good level of service, having flexibility in times of emergency and providing a model to build on the opportunities that devolution will provide.

**Information**

4. Via East Midlands Limited, trading as Via, is registered at Companies House (09903246) and operates under a Teckal exemption.
5. The governance of Via is conducted under the Articles of Association (AA). which includes extensive governance provisions regarding the appointment of Statutory Directors, conduct of meetings, publication of accounts and contains a list of 25 “Reserved Matters”.
6. The company has seven officers/directors registered with Companies House, six Directors and one Secretary. The County Council is recorded at Companies House as a Person with significant control because it owns all of the shares of the business and is therefore the only shareholder.
7. Services are provided by Via to the Council under the Highway Services Contract. Via has an exclusive 10-year Term Service Contract (2016-26) with the Council, with the potential for a 5-year extension through to 2031.
8. As a Teckal company, Via also undertakes third-party work with both public and private-sector organisations. Via is a public contracting authority, procuring goods and services in the delivery of its activity in compliance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015.
9. Via delivers multi-disciplinary design and consultancy services, highway maintenance, construction, signals and lighting, environmental management, fleet services and road safety. It also provides

key highway management services to the Council including customer liaison, street works coordination and highway asset management.

### **The Highways Services Contract (HSC) and its Extension Provisions**

10. The HSC allows either the Council or Via (*The Parties*) to request for a contract extension. This is achieved by one Party sending an 'Extension Notice' to the other.
11. Once an 'Extension Notice' has been submitted both Parties then meet to decide whether the proposed extension aligns with their strategic priorities and agree any revisions to the HSC they feel are necessary.
12. If The Parties are unable to mutually agree to the proposed extension, the HSC will continue until it expires on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2031.
13. The Council received an 'Extension Notice' from Via. on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August 2023, Officers representing the Parties subsequently met and agreed that:
  - It would be appropriate to seek Members' approval to extend the HSC, and
  - No key changes to the HSC are required (mindful that some elements of the contract have evolved since the start of the contract such as the performance management framework).
14. Although the HSC sets out specific dates and deadlines to apply for – *and grant* – a proposed contract extension, the County Council is both Via's Client and its owner, therefore obtaining mutual agreement to alter the HSC extension dates and deadlines is possible.

### **Outcomes of the Highway Services Review**

15. On 15 June 2021, the Council's Transport and Environment Committee agreed to undertake a review of the Council's Highway Services. This review was overseen by a Cross-Party Panel which met five times and undertook additional "fact finding" panel meetings with highways lead members and officers from Derbyshire, Staffordshire, and Hertfordshire County Councils.
16. The Panel also considered the outcomes from the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review of the Council's Highways Services which involved members and senior officers from Kent, Cumbria, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, and Wiltshire County Councils.
17. The Panel subsequently produced a comprehensive series of recommendations which were used to develop the Highways Improvement Plan. The activities set out in the Plan were closely aligned with the wider Council Plan and were resident focussed.
18. The recommendations contained in the Plan are detailed in the Report to Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation taken on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 2022, and can be summarised as:
  - Move to a right first-time approach to our highway maintenance and reduce the need to use reactive short-term maintenance.
  - Recognise that prevention is better than cure and that whole street approaches are desirable.
  - Publish a longer-term programme of capital works to support our ability to plan for the long term and keep residents well informed about this.
  - Maintain our overall network condition and seek to improve it within financial constraints, whilst prioritising local roads (the unclassified network) alongside our footways wherever possible.
  - Improve communications, so that residents are better informed about our work, and understand our approaches.
  - Improve major capital programme management.

- Increase effectiveness and efficiency, maximising the return on our investment in highways by ensuring that our highways policies and strategy drive our maintenance priorities and treatments/techniques, alongside our increased use of innovation and technology.
19. The Plan was embraced by Council and Via staff and the vast majority of recommendations now delivered. Any remaining or ongoing recommendations have been incorporated into a Joint Innovation and Continuous Improvement Plan which is overseen by the Innovation and Continuous Improvement Board.
20. Key aspects of progress around these recommendations and outputs from the highways review were reported to Cabinet on 15th December 2022 and **at the time** these were:
- *A new three-year highways capital programme has been introduced and approved for the first time moving away from annual programmes allowing more longer-term efficient planning and coordination of repairs.*
  - *Via have increased the number of structural patching gangs that operate on the network from four to eight to move to a right repair, right first time, approach that delivers permanent repairs whenever possible. This allows work to tackle the areas of the highway most affected by repeat visit pothole repairs.*
  - *Via have reviewed the plant that they use to maximise efficiency and effectiveness. Output per gang per day has increased from 50m<sup>2</sup> to 100m<sup>2</sup> since the start of the highways review. 67,000m<sup>2</sup> of repairs have been completed this year (up to Sept 2022), with the annual volume of works set to be four times higher than in previous years due to the combination of the additional investment and increased efficiency of the operation.*
  - *Via have established an operational Hub bringing together staff from different disciplines to coordinate maintenance works to improve efficiency and productivity and ensuring a whole street approach is taken.*
  - *As a result of the above, the amount of cold lay treatments used for emergency Category 1 defects continues to reduce. A 61% reduction in the use of cold lay bagged materials such as Vifix has been delivered since the start of the highways review.*
  - *The lengthsman scheme has been relaunched allowing the council to fund local community groups to undertake some locally important highway maintenance activities including drainage. This has been taken up by 41 parish, town councils and community groups and four training events have taken place this year for those staff involved.*
  - *A refreshed communications and engagement plan has been developed embracing the need to be more pro-active and better inform and engage with residents on highway's activity. Examples include the increase in use of video explainers, increasing opportunities for feedback from residents, and improving the quality and accessibility of highways information to a wider audience through traditional, digital, and social media.*
21. In order to continue with the momentum created by the highways review and to build on the improvement ethos and culture within the Via and NCC highways teams, a formal approach to innovation and continuous improvement has been embedded in our highway functions with the creation of a joint Innovation and Continuous Improvement Board and Plan across the activities of the Council and, Via and its supply chain.
22. In addition, the Highway Services Review has also resulted in significant improvements in Via's cost control and commercial management arrangements.
23. Positive work is continuing between Via and the Council to develop its approach to the Strategic Asset Management and associated policies and procedures including the Asset Management Policy, Asset Management Strategy, Asset Management Plan, the Highways Inspection and Risk Manual, Highways Network Management Plan, Highways Maintenance Plan, and cross asset prioritisation and life cycle modelling.

## **Via East Midlands Limited Business Plan 2022-2025 (30 months)**

24. In October 2022, a new business plan was put in place for the period 2022-2025 (30 months) aligned to the Nottinghamshire Plan 2021-2031 and its vision and nine core ambitions. Via's Business Plan on a page (which has approval of Nottinghamshire County Council as shareholder) is included at **Appendix 1**.
25. Appropriate governance arrangements are in place in Via in addition to the scrutiny provided by the Via Board. Joint forums between Via and the Council include, the Innovation and Continuous Improvement Board, Major Projects Board, Asset Management Board, and additional subgroups for SHEQ, Commercial, Financial and Performance.
26. A comprehensive Performance Management Framework is used to assess Via's contractual compliance and contains a series of challenging Key Performance Indicators setting out:
- Performance levels required, and
  - Service Credits payable should these levels of performance not be met.
27. Via has achieved high levels of compliance against these standards - over the last two financial years Via has met or exceeded 83% of targets. Examples of non-compliance have been minor in nature with no detrimental impact on service delivery.

## **Capability, Competence and Capacity**

28. The Council's Strategic Highways Model continues to develop to meet changing priorities and objectives across the Council's highways asset portfolio. Via continues to play a key role in its ongoing development.
29. Via continues to strive to be recognised within the Council and across the wider East Midlands public and highway sectors as a best practice model in collaborative highways service delivery, focused on value for money, high quality output and customer excellence, underpinned by social responsibility and a strong public sector ethos. Via's portfolio of delivery programmes and projects has grown in terms of diversity, complexity, and risk since 2016.
30. In April 2024, Via had an establishment of 769 posts with 697 employees in post (563FTE), with 72 vacancies. 79.6% of employees live within the D2N2 area, with the remainder across the wider East Midlands area.
31. Via continues to drive efficiencies. The 2022-2023 staff budget was £29.2m, while or 2024-25 the budget will be £28.9m, an actual planned overall saving of £0.3m. Via is supported from a central services perspective from eight functions within the business and also payroll, pension and elements of ICT support are brought back services from the Council.
32. As a multi-disciplinary business, Via has focused heavily in recent years on competence, capability, and capacity to meet the changing needs of the Council and third-party trading requirements. Key to this is Via's Competence Framework it continues to develop at a business, team, and individual level to meet both the requirements of Professional Bodies, and the current and emerging national legislation focused on the Highways Act 1980, Traffic Management Act 2000, Safety Act 2022, and the Net Zero Strategy (Build Back Green) 2021.
33. A key requirement of the framework is establishment of a "golden thread" from end to end of the highways management process, which is central to Via's developing Strategic Asset Management Model. This also extends to Via's subcontractor supply chain partners.

34. Via delivers a mixed economy approach to service delivery which includes:

- direct delivery,
- in-direct delivery through subcontractor/material supply chain partners, and
- open tender where it represents value for money, underpinned by a commitment to local spend.

35. Via East Midlands has proven capacity, capability, and competence to continue to support the ongoing and changing priorities and objectives of the Council. In addition, it is well positioned to both support the Council, in benefitting from, the establishment of the East Midlands County Combined Authority and the wider investment across the East Midlands over coming years.

### **Spend Local**

36. In 23-24, Via engaged 786 subcontractors/suppliers with a total local spend within the D2N2 area of £26.4m (61%) out of a total spend of £43m. Via continues to rationalise its supply chain arrangements with a focus on collaboration and long-term local partnering.

37. Local spend is now a key internal performance indicator, which is reported quarterly to the Via Board. By way of example the £26.4m of local spend as a proxy value in terms of measure of economic value to the local area resulting from this spend equates to £19.8m. It is also important to note that a significant percentage of Via's subcontractor partners are classed as SME's.

### **Operational Performance**

38. During 2023/24 Via successfully delivered a range of key highways maintenance activities for the Council utilising £24.1m of Capital and £20.1m of revenue budgets.

39. Achievements include:

- 411 significant road surface improvements and 291 large patching schemes contributing to 465,500m<sup>2</sup> of highway improvements (equivalent to 58 miles of continuous carriageway).
- 41,595 potholes repaired and 61,060 planned inspections.
- 56,975 gullies and offlets cleansed and 7 structural drainage improvement schemes and 14 drainage repairs.
- 7176 street light lamps repaired, and 894 columns replaced.
- 179 new trees planted and 4967 trees where epicormic growth was removed and 469 trees were pollarded.
- 74,507 customer reports received and over 2000 incidents responded to.

40. Via continues to have a good track record in respect of safety, health, environment, and quality management (SHEQ). Through a SHEQ forum, positive trend reviews, minor accidents including lessons learned, near misses, observations and end user feedback is actively managed. Via continues to maintain a positive safety culture underpinned by leadership, ownership, and commitment.

41. Via's Carbon Reduction Plan is operational and aligned to the Council's environmental policy and performance is reported quarterly. Via will also play a key role in the Council's wider objectives associated with decarbonisation of Nottinghamshire's highways and infrastructure.

### **External Assurance of Quality Management**

42. External assurance of organisational capability continues through external verification against the following accreditations maintained by Via, those being: ISO 9001:2015 including National Highway Sector Scheme 8, ISO 14001:2015, ISO 45001:2018 including Safety Schemes in Procurement,



## Financial Performance

43. Via delivered a good financial performance for 2023-2024, once again delivering a Net Operating Profit. At 31 March 2024, Via had a positive cash position, retained profit on its balance sheet, robust project / business resources, no significant debtors, and continued to pay its supply chain to terms (or better).
44. Via's financial and commercial position is governed through the Company Board, but the financial position is also reviewed formally by the Council's Corporate Finance Team. Pension arrangements are managed in accordance with the Pension Regulations of both the Local Government Pension Scheme and Royal London.
45. Via continues to build financial resilience through creating reserves, to support a difficult economic position, changing complexities / profile of projects undertaken, and operational investment needed. Via has continued to manage the budgets and spend with consideration of building resilience for 2024. Via will continue with this approach into 2024-2025 by delivering further efficiencies throughout the business.
46. Via has visibility of a strong order book for 2024-2025, and its third-party commissions are diverse but are based on a risk based sustainable business development model.
47. Via continues to drive efficiencies across both its business functions and in service delivery has achieved efficiency savings of £333k in 2024-2025 and will make savings of £333k for 2025-2026 and £334k in 2026-2027. In addition, historical contractual inflation has been suppressed through efficiency savings which has saved the Council £1.8m.
48. The table below summarises Via's recent financial performance from 2019-2020 to 2023-2024, and a forecast for 2024-2025. The profit has either been returned to the Council as dividends to reinvest or has been kept in the company to build a strong and resilient balance sheet to provide the basis of a strong, independent trading entity.

	<b>Actual 2019- 2020 £</b>	<b>Actual 2020- 2021 £</b>	<b>Actual 2021- 2022 £</b>	<b>Actual 2022- 2023 £</b>	<b>Actual 2023- 2024 £</b>	<b>F'cast 2024- 2025 £</b>	<b>Total £</b>
Operating Profit/(Loss)	782,400	541,298	1,520,958	715,050	534,295	708,840	<b>4,802,841</b>
Other Income/Interest Payable	6,086	(740)	(2,147)	(1,045)	180,853	N/A	<b>183,007</b>
Total Profit/(Loss)	788,486	540,558	1,518,811	714,005	715,148	708,840	<b>4,985,848</b>

49. The table below summarises the dividends returned by Via to the Council including a forecast for 2023-2024.

NCC Dividend Summary	
Declared in Published Accounts	Amount (£)
April 2019 - March 2020	400,000
April 2020 - March 2021	400,000
April 2021 - March 2022	600,000
April 2022 - March 2023	600,000
April 2023 - March 2024 (TBC)	600,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,600,000</b>

### Social Value

50. Via's Social Value Policy sets out how it builds social value into the procurement, commissioning, and delivery of its services, explicitly evaluating social value, ensuring it forms part of Via's and its supply chain partners method of operation. Via continues to formalise its Social Value Plan to ensure it complements the County Council's objectives within this area.
51. Whilst Via is committed to delivering social value, it and its delivery partners will be guided by the Council. To attribute a financial value to this planned activity, Via uses national social, economic, and environmental measures developed by the National Social Value Taskforce – these provide a standardised, consistent methodology to social value. A key strand of that activity is local spend and Via continues to deliver its services through a mixed economy approach to procurement based on direct delivery. Via procure local supply chain frameworks where appropriate.
52. In 23-24, Via engaged 786 subcontractors/suppliers with a total local spend within the D2N2 area of £26.4m (61%) out of a total spend of £43m. Via continues to rationalise its supply chain arrangements with a focus on collaboration and long-term local partnering. Social value is a key output in all of supply chain arrangements.
53. Local spend is now a key internal performance indicator in Via, which is reported quarterly to the Via Board. By way of example the £26.4m of local spend as a proxy value in terms of measure of economic value to the local area resulting from this spend equates to £19.8m. It is also important to note that a significant percentage of Via's subcontractor partners are classed as small to medium sized enterprises.
54. Via is also committed to local direct employment and the vast majority of its employees live within the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire area. (of 709 employees 83% live in the Nottinghamshire / Derbyshire area) Via continues to have strong links with all the local Further Education Colleges and the local Universities in terms of both recruitment and placements .
55. Via is also active in the local communities delivering sponsorship and fund-raising activities in support of its chosen charities. Via is an active Member of the Armed Forces Covenant it's commitment exemplified by it being the main sponsor of the County Council's annual Boots and Berets Awards.

## Awards and Accreditations

56. Since its establishment in 2016 Via and its staff have received several external awards that recognise outstanding service delivery, including:

- 2016 Nottinghamshire & City of Nottingham Fire Authority - Creating Safer Communities' Award for delivering road safety education to schools, the public and at events.
- 2018 Considerate Construction, Collaboration Award
- 2018 ICE East Midlands, Winner - Small Projects for the Pedestrianisation of Hucknall High Street
- 2019 Considerate Construction, Winner - Environmental Best Practice
- 2019 CIHT East Midlands, Highly Commended - Sustainability Award for GAR Ecological Mitigation Work for Glebe Farm Bat House
- 2019 CIHT East Midlands, Highly Commended - Best Highways & Transportation Award for Trent Bridge Inn Junction Refurbishment
- 2019 CIHT East Midlands, Highly Commended - Best Highways & Transportation Award for Protecting Crowded Spaces
- 2020 Association of Public Sector Excellence Street Lighting Innovation Award
- 2021 Institution of Civil Engineers East Midlands Merit Awards
- 2023 ICE East Midlands Major Project Award for GAR
- 2023 ICE East Midlands - Highly Commended for Regatta Way Cycling Scheme 2023 ICE East Midlands, Highly Commended for Lowes Wong School / Southwell Flood Scheme

## National Trends in Highways “Teckal Companies”

57. When Via was formed in 2016 there were only two other “Teckal Companies” providing highway services, these being Cormac and Norse. These are owned by Cornwall Council and Norfolk County Council respectively.

58. Since then, a fourth highways “Teckal Company”, NY Highways - *owned by North Yorkshire Council* has come into existence.

59. Other Local Highway Authorities are also now actively investigating the Teckal approach as it offers a number of significant advantages such as:

- Contributing to the long-term sustainability of highways services. Legislation allows up to 20% of the company's turnover to be made up of work for third parties. This allows both a profit to be generated but also that the company's fixed costs/overheads to be spread over a broader customer base.
- Local Authority direct ownership is very flexible. Specifications and service standards can be changed to meet changes in budget without having to re-negotiate contractual terms.
- Agile emergency response - the workforce is more flexible in times of emergency with all staff being directed to take part in emergency response (other models have been shown to be less fit for purpose in this regard).
- Ability to provide services for Neighbouring Authorities as a trusted provider and part of the “local government family.” Devolution may well provide opportunities for Via to build on current working relationships with Derbyshire County Council for instance, providing further economies of scale and therefore benefits for Nottinghamshire County Council too.
- Ability to operate as Client Agent for Highways Act agreements.
- Market alignment of employment terms and remuneration.
- Sharpened Commercial focus as a driver for cultural change.

## **Extension of Contract and consideration by Overview Committee**

60. As set out above, extending the contract with Via East Midlands Limited builds on significant learning and transformational journey undertaken to date. Key considerations can be summarised as:

- Strong financial performance with ability to generate dividend.
- Sustainable business model and reserves in situ.
- Track record of delivering efficiencies with the potential to deliver more.
- Good operational performance that offers value for money to the Council.
- Via is wholly owned and provides high levels of control to the Council to deliver its priorities.
- Ability to exploit commercial acumen and approaches blended with a strong public sector ethos.
- Strong collaborative approach and relationships between the Council and Via are in place.
- Day to day operational independence ensures agility to respond to fast moving situations.
- Reduced overhead cost for the Council by Via exploiting margin generating opportunities for third parties.
- Via can be a trusted provider for other Authorities.
- Significant Transformational journey has been undertaken based on the last 8 years of learning and refinement of the model.
- Strong externally verified quality management systems in place.
- Agile emergency response capability.
- Strong business plan in place to deliver and drive performance.
- Capable, competent, and high performing workforce in the business with multiple external accreditations.
- High levels of local spend and strong social value performance
- Opportunity to deliver more exceptional externally recognised schemes.

61. The extension of the Highway Services Contract was considered by Overview Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2024. During the discussion, a number of issues and observations were made by Members of the Committee including:

- Members expressing their thanks to the staff at Via for all of their help and hard work in delivering services in what is a difficult area of work.
- Members noted that road and highway maintenance, in particular pothole repairs, was an issue of significant importance to many residents. Members also noted however the funding challenges that existed and how this impacted on the delivery of road and highway maintenance.
- Members considered whether the contract could be reviewed in advance of being extended, whether the extension to the contract could be made for one year in order to enable the review to be undertaken or whether a mid-term review could be built into the contract extension. In response members were advised that as the Council was the sole owner of Via, the Council can choose to review the contract at any time.
- Members noted that there were some areas of Via's activity where there was some capacity for delivering further improvement. Members agreed that it was important that Via should always ensure that work carried out by other parties (such as utility providers) was completed in a timely manner and that the reinstatements of highways that were carried out by these other parties were always good quality.
- Members noted that the that the contract should be extended for a further five years in order to provide stability and enable long term service delivery planning.

62. It is proposed to extend the Council's Highways Services Contract with Via for a further 5 years from 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026. This would result in a new contract end date of the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2031.
63. This approach fits in with the need to continue to retain and attract the best local talent from across Nottinghamshire and the wider D2N2 area within Via, particularly at a time when a number of senior leaders and technical leads will be retiring from the organisation over the next three years.
64. Extension of the Highways Services Contract gives certainty to the future of Via for both those employed within it, and its supply chain partners, and those the organisation needs to attract and employ in the future in a time of skills and labour market shortages. It also enables the organisation to continue its innovation and continuous improvement journey and ongoing change programme.

### **Legal Implications**

65. Via East Midlands Limited is a wholly owned company established under Part V of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, operating as referred to at part 12.3 of the Council's Financial Regulations (set out at Section 9 of the Council's Constitution).
66. As a company under the control of the local authority (a regulated company) it is subject to a number of requirements over and above an ordinary company limited by shares and trading. These requirements include in relation to information, such as restrictions on payments to regulated directors, audit matters and a declaration on all business publications that it is a local authority controlled company, under the Local Authorities (Companies) Order 1995 and such matters as the recovery of the Council's costs in any assistance provided to it under the Local Government (Best Value Authorities) (Power to Trade) (England) Order 2009.
67. Governance of the company is managed by operation of the Council as single shareholder, via the shareholder agreement and the relevant Council's decision making body, any financing agreements and through the operation of this contract.
68. Directors of a company owe a duty to act in the companies interests. Where the directors are also officers or members of the Council this may cause a conflict of interest which, as a public body, the Council cannot waive. The directors of the company are not a decision maker in respect of this decision to potentially extend the contract with Via.
69. An extension to the Highway Services Contract would include a legal review of the terms and conditions including any ancillary legal documentation relating to it to ensure it is updated so it continues to remain operationally viable for the period of the extension.

### **Other Options Considered**

70. The other options considered are:
- Bring the services currently being delivered by Via back "in-house".
  - Undertake a complete externalisation of these services and enter into contract with a commercial provider.
71. The option of bringing the services back "*in-house*" has been discounted because:
- This option would not deliver significantly more control over Via.
  - It would cause significant disruption to both organisations because approximately 600 staff would be required to transfer to the Council.



- In 2016 it was determined that the continued “in-house” delivery of these services was unsustainable because of revenue budget reductions, increased demand, and a growing asset base.
- Bringing the services back “in-house” may result in increased costs. Via’s staff who have joined since 2016 would be given access to the LGPS. The exact costs are undefined.
- The commercial advantages available to a ‘Teckal Company’ would be lost i.e.: the ability of the Company to undertake up to 20% of its turnover for external clients. The skills and aptitudes developed when undertaking work for commercial clients also serves to enhance the quality of the service Via offers the Council.
- Via is currently able to mitigate the difficulties it experiences recruiting staff to certain areas of its business by aligning its salaries and terms & conditions more closely to those offered by the market. This ability may be lost if the service is brought back “in-house”.
- The Council may become liable for any de-mobilisation costs arising from Via exiting its on-going contracts to provide services for third parties.
- Via’s existing contracts with suppliers and sub-contractors would require novation to the Council. This would be a time-consuming process and require extensive support from external legal advisors.
- The advantages outlined earlier in this report would not all be available.

72. The option of undertaking a complete externalisation has been discounted because:

- This will involve a lengthy and expensive procurement process.
- The uncertainties arising from a complete externalisation may make it difficult for Via to recruit and retain staff.
- It would become more challenging to alter specifications and methods of working, these would have been subject to a commercial offer at the time of tendering and any changes would require a renegotiation of this offer with the in-coming Contractor.
- Each year Via pays the Council a dividend. The Council can choose to either re-invest this dividend in the highway service or use it to support some other area of its business. In the case of a complete externalisation this dividend would be payable to the in-coming contractor’s shareholders.
- An extensive reorganisation within the Council’s own establishment would be required to manage such a commercial arrangement, for example a much larger Contract Management Team would be required, and investment would be required in an electronic works management system.
- The benefits associated with the services being by a “Teckal Company” outlined earlier in this report would be lost.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation**

73. The proposed contract extension will continue to provide a sustainable way of meeting the financial challenges facing the Highways and Fleet management services while retaining a good level of service, having flexibility in times of emergency and providing a model to build on the opportunities that devolution will provide. The recommendation to extend the contract for five years was considered by Overview Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2024 and all issues and comments made at that meeting have been considered in making the recommendation in this report.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

74. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability, and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken

and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Financial Implications**

75. Future revenue and capital budgets for the delivery of highways and transportation maintenance services will be dependent upon the availability of funding (including Government and other grants) and will be agreed as part of the annual budget setting process in accordance with the ambitions as set out in The Nottinghamshire Plan 2021-2031.

### **Human Resources Implications**

76. There are no human resource implications arising from this report.

### **Implications for Residents**

77. The Highway Services Review has already delivered a series of tangible improvements for residents, including the right repairs at the right time, improved assistance offered during times of emergencies, improved communications with customers and greater levels of co-ordination with the District Councils and other agencies. The implications of other improvements such as the development of a three-year capital programme and cross asset prioritisation will become more pronounced with the passage of time.
78. As well as these improvements another lasting legacy of the Highway Services Review will be the embedding of a culture of continuous improvement and innovation which will allow the Council to offer good services combined with value for money, quality of output and customer excellence for the residents of Nottinghamshire.
79. There is no requirement to carry out consultation as this decision falls within the scope of the current Highways Services Contract.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

80. That Cabinet:

- a) Approves the extension of the Highway Services Contract with Via East Midlands Ltd for the delivery of highways and transportation maintenance services for a further five years up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2031, in line with the option in the service contract.
- b) Delegates approval to the Executive Director (Place), in consultation with the Group Manager Legal, Democratic and Information Governance, to approve all necessary legal steps required to give effect to implementation of the decision, including updating the terms and conditions of the Highway Services Contract and any ancillary legal documents relating to it.

**COUNCILLOR NEIL CLARKE MBE**  
**CABINET MEMBER – TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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### **Constitutional Comments (SSR 05.09.2024)**

81. The recommendations fall within the terms of reference which may be approved by Cabinet.

### **Financial Comments (PA 19/08/2024)**

82. VIA financial performance data going back to 2019/20 is set out in paragraphs 43 to 49 whilst the financial implications are set out in paragraph 75 of the report.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

83. Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Report of Policy Committee, Highways and Fleet Management Joint Venture Company (20th May 2015)
- Report of Policy Committee, Proposal to Acquire Shares in Via East Midlands (14th November 2018)
- Report of Transport and Environment Committee, Highways Review Update Report (15th of June 2021)
- Report of Cabinet from Cabinet Member for Highways and Environment, Highways Review (15th of December 2022)
- Report of Overview Committee, Highway Services Contract (22<sup>nd</sup> of July 2024)

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All



# Business Plan

## 2022-2025

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### Overview





# Delivering real value, together

## Our Vision

Our vision is to support Nottinghamshire County Council in the creation of an efficient, safe, and sustainable highway network and environment, delivering integrated customer-focused services, value for money, and supporting regeneration and economic growth.



## Our Mission



Our mission as a wholly owned subsidiary of Nottinghamshire County Council is to be recognised both internally and externally, as a best practice model in collaborative service delivery, which is socially responsible, focused on value for money, quality of output and customer excellence.

## Our Values

### Visible

We build loyalty and trust with our partners, and ensure our services are customer centric.



### Integrated

We provide collaborative, safe and outcome-focused services within our communities, delivered by professional, competent, and committed teams.

### Accountable

We accept our individual, team, and collective responsibility for our performance and honour our commitments.



# Our Goals for 2022-2025

- 1 Delivery of a net profit of £620k respectively over three years, on base revenues of £64m, £65m, and £66m, whilst maintaining a positive cash, debt and work in progress position, underpinned by solid business reserves and ensuring all contractor/supply chain partners' payments are managed in line with credit terms.
- 2 Continuous development of our Integrated Management System focusing on maintaining an accident frequency rate of zero as well as reducing our all-accident frequency rate and our lost time injury frequency rate. We will also maintain all relevant accreditations including BSI ISO, NHSS8 and NERS. We will also ensure compliance with our CDM, pre-construction / design and risk management arrangements.
- 3 Continuous development of our Outcome-Based Performance Management Framework that meets the aspirations / objectives of our customers – ensuring upper quartile KPI performance against all business measures, underpinned by robust management information that supports the enhancement of service delivery.
- 4 Continued development and delivery of a sustainable third-party trading model, with active collaboration with Nottinghamshire County Council, District, Borough and Parish Councils, Arc Partnership, other Nottinghamshire County Council Alternative Service Delivery Models and SCAPE.
- 5 Continued focus on Nottinghamshire County Council's corporate priorities, and Client and Member collaboration and engagement as advocates of Via.
- 6 To secure an extension of the wholly owned subsidiary model to 2031.
- 7 To ensure Via is positioned within the Target Operating Model to support Nottinghamshire County Council's plans for devolution.

# Via's Operational Plans

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Achievement of our Business Goals will be supported by 11 Via Operational Plans, which support the delivery of our Vision, Mission, and Values. Our Operational Plans will span the duration of our Business Plan 2022-2025, will be designed, and delivered collaboratively with our Nottinghamshire County Council client and, where needed, external third-party challenge and support. We will blend the prioritisation and implementation of these Operational Plans with the delivery of a sustainable business model.

Our Operational Plans and areas of focus are detailed as follows:



PEOPLE



SAFETY,  
HEALTH &  
ENVIRONMENT



FINANCIAL &  
COMMERCIAL



CLIENT &  
CUSTOMER  
EXPERIENCE



STRATEGIC ASSET  
MANAGEMENT



DATA &  
DIGITISATION



BUSINESS  
PROCESS



BUSINESS  
GROWTH



MARKETING,  
COMMUNICATIONS  
& PR



RESPONSIBLE  
BUSINESS



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INNOVATION & CONTINUOUS  
IMPROVEMENT

**REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND  
ASSET MANAGEMENT****ARC PROPERTY SERVICES PARTNERSHIP LIMITED CONTRACT****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of the report is to seek approval to the Council extending its contract with Arc Property Services Partnership Limited (Arc Partnership) for an additional five years to 2031. The contract provides property and construction related services and the relationship over the course of the contract to date has matured with additional services added and to give certainty for the future it is considered that an early extension will benefit the Council in delivery of services in support of the Nottinghamshire Plan.
2. This is a Key Decision as it will have a significant effect on two or more Electoral Divisions and was published on the Forward plan on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024.

**Information**

3. Arc Property Services Partnership Limited, trading as Arc Partnership, is a Joint Venture Company formed by Nottinghamshire County Council and SCAPE on 1 June 2016. The Council is in an exclusive 10-year Service Contract (2016-2026), with the potential for a 5-year extension through to 2031.
4. Under the contract Arc Partnership delivers multi-disciplinary property design, consultancy, masterplanning, regeneration, project/programme management, emergency, reactive, compliance asset management and planned services on behalf of the Council and the communities and people it represents.
5. Arc Property Services Partnership Limited is registered at Companies House (10074366). Its ownership structure means that it is a "Teckal" Company for Procurement purposes. As a "Teckal" Company, this means it must comply with conditions set out in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, i.e. it must be controlled by a Local Authority or Authorities and can trade outside that Local Authority(s) by up to 20% of its turnover.
6. The ownership of Arc Partnership is underpinned by a Shareholders Agreement ("SHA") which provides that shares have been allotted on the basis of 80 "A" Class shares held by Scape Group Ltd and 20 "B" class shares (which attract a dividend payment at 2.5x that available to "A" Class shares). Accordingly returns from the performance of Arc

Partnership are to be shared equally. The SHA also provides for extensive governance provisions and a list of 22 “Reserved Matters”, which prevent any departure of Arc Partnership’s operations from the model agreed without unanimous agreement of both Shareholders. Arc Partnership is a public contracting authority in its own right, procuring property constructing and related services on behalf of the Council.

7. The key driver for early extension of the Joint Venture Contract focuses upon continued improvement and development of ARC Partnership, which is already recognised as a best practice Public Sector Model across the East Midlands Public And Construction Sectors. Arc supports the Council in the creation of a an efficient, safe and sustainable land and property portfolio, that delivers more integrated customer focused services, value for money and supports regeneration and economic growth.
8. It is possible that the Council will continue to transfer services into the Joint Venture where it would benefit the Council by improvements to both service delivery and capacity. Allied to this is the need to continue to retain and attract the best local talent from across Nottinghamshire and the wider D2N2 area within the Joint Venture, particularly at a time when a number of senior leaders will be retiring from the organisation over the next three years. Extension of the Arc Partnership Contract gives certainty to the future of Arc Partnership for both those employed within it and it’s supply chain partners, and those the organisation needs to attract and employ in the future in a time of skills and labour market shortages.
9. Further to the above, a report considering the options for the future delivery of a long-term sustainable Estates Practice service for the Council was presented to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Asset Management on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024. Subsequently, approval was granted to the transfer of professional estates services to Arc Partnership by adding the professional estates services as an extension of the scope of services under clause 17.6 of the Service Agreement between the Council and Arc Property Services Partnership Limited.
10. This is subject to agreement on the transfer with Arc and formal consultation being undertaken with affected staff on a transfer to Arc under TUPE. Formal consultation commenced on the 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024, and workstream workshop events having been arranged between the Arc Partnership, both in and out of scope staff within Property & Estates, support teams (Data, IT etc) and colleagues within Legal Services to consider the detail of the transfer, which are scheduled throughout September/October 2024.
11. Whilst all parties are working towards a transfer date before the end of this financial year, this date is subject to the outcomes of the consultation process and the workstream workshops to ensure a smooth transition that is of benefit to all parties.

## **Original Drivers for Change**

12. There were four key Original Drivers for Change within the Council which led to the establishment of Arc partnership, those being: -
  - Mitigation of an expected reduction in Council Capital Spend from £45m in 2016/2017 to £25m in 2017/2018, and then lower over subsequent years.
  - Mitigation of a reduction in the Property Services establishment at an equivalent



rate to its future income (circa 50% reduction in the current establishment over medium / long term at a redundancy cost of up to £1m).

- Mitigation of the loss of key skills to the Council, and an increasing reliance on specialist external expertise at a cost premium.
- Contribute to the development of Council's new Corporate Landlord Model.

13. There were also a number of other key objectives set for the Partnership, including but not exhaustive of value for money, quality of output and customer excellence.

14. The overall vision for the Joint Venture is to support the Council in the creation of an efficient, safe, and sustainable land and property portfolio, that delivers more integrated customer focused services, value for money and supports regeneration and economic growth.

15. The current Arc Partnership Business Plan 2021-2024 supports a number of key strategies and plans within the Council and is inextricably linked to supporting the delivery of The Nottinghamshire Plan 2021-2031: Healthy > Prosperous > Green. The new Arc Partnership Business Plan 2024-2027 will be amended to reflect any changing objectives and priorities of the County Council.

### **Capability, Competence and Capacity**

16. The Council's Corporate Property Landlord Model continues to develop and change to meet changing priorities and objectives across the Council's property and land portfolio. Arc Partnership has, and will continue to, play a key role in its ongoing development as the Council's Alternative Service Delivery Model for property.

17. Arc Partnership as a Joint Venture is now recognised both within the Council, and across the wider East Midlands public and construction sectors as a best practice model in collaborative property service delivery, focused on VfM, quality of output and customer excellence, underpinned by social responsibility and a Public Sector ethos.

18. At the point of transfer, 74 employees, and £1.2m of external consultancy support transferred into the Joint Venture. Today, despite a broadening of both service provision and revenue, Arc Partnership has an establishment of 101 posts, with a current establishment of 90 staff. Over 95% of employees live within the D2N2 area, with the remainder within the East Midlands area. Strong links exist with the two local universities, evidenced best by the 3-year Strategic Partnership with NTU which recently won the Collaborative Partnership of the Year Award at the National Construction News Workforce Awards in November 2023.

19. Arc Partnership are supported from a central services perspective from eight functions within SCAPE Group and payroll / pension support is a brought back service from the Council.

20. As a multi-disciplinary business, Arc Partnership has focused heavily in recent years on competence, capability and capacity to meet the changing needs of the Council and third-party trading requirements. Key to this is the Competence Framework Arc Partnership has developed at a business, team and individual level to meet both the requirements of

Professional Bodies, and the current and emerging national legislation focused on the Building Safety Act 2022 and the Net Zero Strategy (Build Back Green) 2021. A key requirement of that being competence and the establishment of a “golden thread” from end to end of the property management process, which is central to our changing and developing Corporate Property Landlord Model.

21. Arc Partnership delivers a mixed economy approach to service delivery based upon direct delivery, in-direct delivery through supply chain partners, and open tender where it represents VfM, underpinned by a commitment to local spend. Arc Partnership through it's own Delivery Frameworks engages 45 SME's, 87% of which are based within the D2N2 area, and 9 Tier One Construction Partners through the SCAPE Frameworks, 100% of which are based within the D2N2 area. This represents £283m of local spend since 1 June 2016.
22. Arc Partnership has proven capacity, capability and competence to continue to support the ongoing and changing priorities and objectives of the Council. In addition, it is well positioned to both support the Council, in benefitting from, the establishment of the East Midlands Combined Authority and the wider investment across the East Midlands over coming years. Discussions are currently in train with Arc Partnership on the transfer of additional services to support the Council's on this area going forward.
23. Schedule 13 of the Arc Partnership contract sets out the required insurances for the contract setting minimum levels of cover for public liability, employers liability and professional indemnity insurance. As a result of inflation and to bring in line with other Council contracts it is required to increase the minimum requirement for each of the insurances to £50M. Aligned to this it is also required to increase the total aggregate liability (clause 24.1.3 of the Arc contract) of Arc Partnership to NCC to £50M per annum.

## Operational Performance

24. The table below summarises works commissioned and delivered through Arc Partnership from 1 June 2016 – 31 December 2023.

Value Band	Number of Projects	Value of Projects	Local Spend (D2N2)
£0-50K	2,538	£20,427,734	£283,146,940: 92% of total spend
£50-100K	206	£14,542,121	Calls to Arc Assist
£100-250K	194	£31,309,641	45,360
£250-500K	75	£26,054,097	Responsive Maintenance Job Tickets
£500K-1M	78	£54,795,875	45,959
£1-3M	39	£58,419,959	Service Schedules
£3M+	18	£117,622,306	55,876
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,148</b>	<b>£323,171,733</b>	

25. Arc Partnership's portfolio of delivery programmes and projects have grown in terms of diversity, complexity and risk since 2016, managed by the Arc Partnership in-house

multi-disciplinary team set out below and the services they deliver on behalf of the Council.

- |                                    |                                   |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ➤ Project Management               | ➤ Construction Services           |
| ➤ Commercial Management            | ➤ Planned Maintenance             |
| ➤ CDM/SHEQ                         | ➤ Regeneration and Major Projects |
| ➤ Architectural Design             | ➤ Risk Management Services        |
| ➤ Mechanical and Electrical Design | ➤ Client Agent Role               |
| ➤ Structural Design                | ➤ School Capacity Assessments     |
| ➤ Arc Assist 24/365                | ➤ Asset Management                |
| ➤ Responsive Repairs and Servicing |                                   |

26. Arc Partnership continues to act as a deliverer, developer and an enabler on behalf of the Council through its regeneration and major projects service as evidenced by the key development projects of Lindhurst, Top Wighay, Cauldwell Road, Lowmoor Road, County Hall, Eastwood, and more recently STEP and the East Midlands Development Corporation, all fundamental to the delivery of the Council's The Nottinghamshire Plan 2021-2031.
27. Arc Partnership continues to deliver at pace on key projects for the Council including, but not exhaustive of, Top Wighay Office Development, Clayfields Secure Unit, Gateford Primary School, Ravensdale SEN School, Millside Spencer Academy, Rosecliffe Spencer Academy expansion, Oakhurst and Westview Children's Homes and Sutton-in-Ashfield Library refurbishment alongside this Arc Partnership continues to support the wider Investing in Nottinghamshire programme.
28. Arc Partnership continues to deliver the planned programmes of activities on behalf of the Council including Basic Need, Schools Building Improvement Programme, School Access Initiative, Vacant Property Management, alongside 24/365 Arc Assist, Responsive Repairs and Servicing and Risk Management Services.
29. Arc Partnership, again acting as an enabler, represents the Council's interest on School Capacity Assessments to determine their capacity to expand, and then used to evaluate basic need and S106 Agreements. Alongside a Client Agent Role monitoring both design and VfM for Council forward projects delivered by third parties and the DfE School's Rebuilding Programme of Nottinghamshire's Maintained Schools or with Council capital contribution. Internally, Arc Partnership continues to support the Council on revised standards / specifications and its Strategic Asset Management and Plan.
30. Contractual KPI Performance of Arc Partnership remains strong across its suite of current KPI's, driven by a joint Performance Management Forum that supports a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement. The tables below demonstrate the current Q4 2023/23 performance for project delivery, repairs and whole business measures. ARC are exceeding all of its targets other than professional fees, which is in effect a positive performance resulting in a saving to the Council on fees charged by ARC

## Project Delivery

Ref	KPI	Owner	Target	Score
1	Project Cost Predictability	Arc	75%	100%
2	Project Contract Cost Management	Arc	80%	100%
3	Professional Fees	Arc	16.17%	11.6%
5	Project Delivery Timelines	Arc	75%	100%
6-8	End User Satisfaction	Arc	95%	100%
9-10	Client Satisfaction	Arc	95%	100%

## Responsive Repairs, PPM and Servicing (Arc managed Supply Chain)

Ref	KPI	Owner	Target	Score
15	Response times	Arc	85%	95%
17	Completion times	Arc	90%	92%
18	Maintenance Satisfaction Surveys	Arc	80%	100%
20	Failure to provide access to site	NCC	95%	100%
22	Compliance with schedule (statutory services)	Arc	95%	99%
23	Compliance with schedule (non-statutory services)	Arc	95%	96%
24	Risk Assessment Programme (Fire, Asbestos & Legionella)	NCC	95%	100%

## Whole Business Measures

Ref	KPI	Owner	Target	Score
25	RIDDOR reportable accidents	Arc	0	0
26	Waste diversion from landfill	Arc	95%	98%
27	Local spend (in year)	Arc	90%	92%
28	Local spend (all time)	Arc	90%	92%

31. Performance Framework development continues with the introduction of post occupancy evaluation, ensuring end user and occupier feedback across the spectrum of activities

delivered

to ensure continuous improvement in all aspects of service delivery.

29. From a safety, health, environment and quality perspective, Arc Partnership continues to have zero Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations (RIDDORs) since 1 June 2016. Through the joint SHEQ forum positive trend reviews, minor accidents including lessons learned, near misses, observations and end user feedback is actively managed. Arc Partnership continues to maintain a positive safety culture underpinned by leadership, ownership and commitment, endorsed by external ISO45001 accreditation and via endorsement at the Council's Health and Safety and Compliance Board.

30. Arc Partnership is well placed to meet the requirements of the Building Safety Act 2022, and its Carbon Reduction Plan is operational and aligned to the County Council's Environmental Policy and performance is reported on quarterly.

## Financial Performance

31. Set out below is a summary of financial performance from 1 June 2016 – 31 December 2023.

	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Forecast	Total
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	
TRADING Profit / (Loss)	(118,135)	371,742	545,679	654,936	531,275	603,120	720,262	753,000	4,061,880
Other Set-Up / Non-Operating Costs	241,993	20,000	(60,537)	0	0	0	0	0	201,456
<b>Total Profit / Loss (excl IAS19 Pension Adj)</b>	<b>123,857</b>	<b>391,742</b>	<b>485,142</b>	<b>654,936</b>	<b>531,275</b>	<b>603,120</b>	<b>720,262</b>	<b>753,000</b>	<b>4,263,336</b>

32. It is important to note that Arc Partnership retained responsibility for the performance of its Local Government Pension Scheme at the point of transfer on 1 June 2016. The financial year 2022-2023 for the first time reported a surplus pension position, which enabled the payment of a Dividend of £1m for that year.

33. As at 31 December 2023, Arc Partnership has retained profit on its balance sheet, has a strong cash position and robust project / business resources, has no significant debtors and continues to pay its supply chain to terms (or better). Arc Partnership's financial and commercial position is governed through the Joint Venture Board, but the financial position is also reviewed formally by the Council's Corporate Finance Team.

34. Arc Partnership also utilises, where appropriate, the SCAPE Group Frameworks, of which the Council is a Shareholder. This represents a contribution since 1 June 2016 of £913k in fees to SCAPE Procure for the use of the frameworks, which when consolidated into SCAPE Group accounts, has supported an additional dividend to the Council of £3.141m from Scape Group in total to date.

35. Set out in the table below is a summary of the historical contractual inflation incurred compared to the actual inflation received, which has benefited the Council by 29.1% in lieu of same increases. Arc Partnership also set aside an element of reserve into an Invest to Grow fund which supported activities that would not have been funded by the Council but benefited both parties. Alongside this Arc Partnership project fee matrix for



projects has not been increased since 2012-2013 which was the base year used to set the fee/% to be used.

Financial Year	Inflation Rate	Inflation Awarded	Shortfall
2017-18	3%	2%	1%
2018-19	3%	-	3%
2019-20	3%	-	3%
2020-21	3%	2.5% 2-year rate review for 2020-22	0.5%
2021-22	5%		5%
2022-2023	12.3%	2.5%	9.8%
2023-2024	9.3%	2.5%	6.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>38.6%</b>	<b>9.5%</b>	<b>29.1%</b>

36. Set out below is a summary of Arc Partnership's third-party income since 2016. It needs to be recognised that whilst Arc Partnership has four priorities for growth, priorities 2, 3 and 4 will never be at the expense of priority one.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
Target	250,000	300,000	350,000	400,000	500,000	600,000	800,000	1,000,000	
Actual	405,160	395,872	398,180	525,537	595,109	725,434	1,047,935	1,076,957	5,170,184
P1 - Maximising all Capital and Revenue Streams from Nottinghamshire County Council through demonstrable VFM, Quality of Output and Customer Excellence.									
P2 - Delivery of Third Party Multi-Disciplinary Design Services, with a focus on earned reciprocal trading opportunities with our SCAPE Framework Delivery Partners.									
P3 - Delivery of Risk Management Services (compliance, responsive repairs and servicing).									
P4 - Emerging opportunities through national and local funding / bidding opportunities.									

37. Arc Partnership has visibility of a strong order book for the remainder of this financial year and for 2024-2025. It's third-party commissions are diverse but are based on a risk based sustainable business development model. Current commissions include design of three primary schools for Staffordshire CC, design of a nursery for UKAEA Oxfordshire, three commissions from Districts / Parishes of Nottinghamshire, design of Bramcote College new school and additional SEN provision on site and delivery of risk management services across 123 sites for 23 Academy Trusts across 5 Local Authorities.

## Social Value

38. Arc Partnership's Social Value Policy sets out how it builds social value into the procurement, commissioning, and delivery of its services, explicitly evaluating social value, ensuring it forms part of Arc Partnership's and its supply chain partners method of operation. Whilst Arc Partnership is committed to delivering social value, they and their delivery partners will be guided by its principal client, the Council. To attribute a financial value to this planned activity, they will use national social, economic, and environmental measures developed by the National Social Value Taskforce – these provide a standardised, consistent methodology to completing social value.

39. The Joint Venture is pulling together a Social Value Report through the Social Value Portal that summarises Arc Partnerships outputs since 2016. By way of example the £283m of local spend as a proxy value in terms of measure of economic value to the local area resulting from this spend of £212.25m.

## **Overview Committee**

40. The extension of the contract with Arc Property Services Partnership Limited (Arc Partnership) for an additional five years to 2031 was considered by Overview Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2024. During the discussion, a number of key observations were made by Members of the Committee including:

- Members requested that it be noted that Arc Partnership's excellent record in Health and Safety in having zero reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations (RIDDORs) since 1 June 2016, be commended.
- Members were advised that a report had been commissioned on social value and it will be shared with Overview Committee in the Autumn.
- It was noted that Arc had its own carbon reduction targets including targets for diverting materials from landfill for itself, as well as for the companies that it works with. Larger companies already have sophisticated carbon reduction plans in place, Arc are working with the small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) it works with to develop their carbon reduction plans. One of the original targets when setting up Arc was to employ locally and that is still their focus.
- Innovative building solutions and practices are part of each project and Arc has a good relationship with Nottingham Trent University and their Centre of Sustainable Design which has put the Council ahead in respect of new ideas and innovations.
- Members were advised that there is currently a three-year plan in place for succession planning. The organisation had diversified and has worked hard to bring more young people on board. It was noted that succession planning was on the organisations risk register.

## **Other Options Considered**

41. The other options considered are: -

- Transfer the services currently being delivered by Arc Partnership back "in-house".
- Undertake a complete externalisation of these services currently being undertaken by Arc Partnership and enter into a contract with a commercial provider.
- Transfer the services currently being delivered by Arc Partnership into a Wholly Owned Subsidiary Model.

42. The option of bringing the services back "in-house" has been rejected because: -

- This option would not deliver significantly more control over Arc Partnership.
- It would involve significant TUPE transfer involving the posts within Arc Partnership and associated central services from within SCAPE Group, alongside associated harmonisation of terms and conditions. Significant set up costs would also be required.
- It would involve significant novation of 54 supply chain partners and cut over of works in progress.
- The original drivers within the Council for establishing Arc Partnership would still exist, albeit they have been mitigated by the current Joint Venture arrangements, which could be subsequently threatened.
- The advantages outlined earlier in the report in terms of the Joint Venture performance would no longer be available.
- The impact on delivery of current Council priorities and objectives could be compromised.

43. The option of undertaking a complete externalisation has been rejected because: -

- This option would deliver significantly less control than the Council currently has over Arc Partnership.
- This would involve a lengthy and expensive procurement process.
- It would involve significant TUPE transfer of posts within Arc Partnership and associated central services posts within SCAPE Group, and would involve significant set up costs.
- It would involve significant novation of 54 supply chain partners and cut over of works in progress.
- The original drivers within the Council for establishing Arc Partnership could be compromised.
- The advantages outlined earlier in this report in terms of the Joint Venture performance cost be lost.
- The impact of delivery of current Council priorities and objectives could be compromised.

44. Transfer the services currently being delivered by Arc Partnership into a wholly owned subsidiary model has been discarded because: -

- This option would by nature give greater control over Arc Partnership, although the current Joint Venture arrangements have well established governance arrangements and 'reserved matters' that already offer the Council a significant level of control over Arc Partnership.
- It would involve significant TUPE transfer involving posts within Arc Partnership and associated central services posts within SCAPE Group. Significant set up costs would also be incurred.
- It would involve significant novation of 54 supply chain partners and cut over of works in progress.
- The original drivers within the Council for establishing Arc Partnership still exist, albeit they have been mitigated by the existing Joint Venture arrangements, which could be subsequently weakened.
- The advantages outlined earlier in this report in terms of the Joint Venture

- performance could be compromised.
- The impact of delivery of current Council priorities and objectives could be compromised.

## **Reason for Recommendation**

45. On the basis of the benefits of the Joint Venture set out within this paper in terms of mitigation of the Council's original drivers for change, and its performance to date both financially and operationally in supporting key objectives set out within The Nottinghamshire Plan 2021-2031. The recommendation of this report is to extend the Council's contract with Arc Property Services Partnership Limited for a further five years, resulting in a new contract end date of 31 March 2031.

46. As covered in the report, Overview Committee considered the extension to the Arc Partnership Contract on 22 July 2024 and all issues and comments made at that meeting have been considered in making the recommendation in this report.

## **Financial implications**

47. The proposed contract extension will commit the Council to a further period operating the contract.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

48. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Implications for Sustainability and the Environment**

49. The contract extension will enable Arc Partnership to continue to support Council initiatives towards the greening of its estate in support of the Nottinghamshire Plan.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1) It is recommended that the Council extends its existing contract for the provision of property and construction related services with Arc Property Services Partnership Limited for a further 5 years up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2031.

## **Councillor Keith Girling**

### **Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Asset Management**

#### **For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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## **Constitutional Comments (LPW 30/08/2024)**

51. The recommendation falls within the remit of the Cabinet by virtue of its terms of reference.

### **Financial Comments (GM 30/08/2024)**

52. The budget available to support the Arc Partnership Contract is approved within the Council's revenue budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy. ARC's financial performance data going back to 2016/17 is set out in paragraphs 31 to 34 of the report whilst the financial implications are set out in paragraph 48.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Arc Property Services Partnership Limited Contract – Report to Overview Committee 22 July 2024
- Provision Of A Sustainable Estates Practice Service – Report to Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Asset Management 1 July 2024

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All



**REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND PUBLIC  
HEALTH****RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SCRUTINY REVIEW –  
COST OF LIVING****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide a response to the recommendations of the Overview Committee arising from the committee's review around the Cost of Living.

**Information**

2. At the meeting of the Overview Committee held on 22 July 2024 members considered the report from the task and finish scrutiny review that had been carried out around the cost of living. The report is attached as **Appendix A**. At the meeting it was resolved:

***That the recommendations from the scrutiny review of around cost of living pressures, as detailed in the report, be endorsed, and referred to Cabinet for consideration.***

3. In accordance with Section 21B of the Local Government Act 2000, Cabinet is required to provide a response to the recommendations of the Overview Committee. In providing this response the Cabinet is asked to state whether or not they accept each recommendation and the reasons for this decision. Cabinet must also indicate what action, if any, it proposes to take in response to each recommendation.
4. The responses to the recommendations from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health are set out in the table at **Appendix B**.

**Other Options Considered**

5. None. In accordance with Section 21B of the Local Government Act 2000, Cabinet is required to provide a response to the recommendations of the Overview Committee.

**Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

6. To detail the response of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health on the recommendations arising from the Overview Committee's review around the Cost of Living.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

7. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability, and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Financial Implications**

8. There are no direct financial implications relating to the recommendations of this report.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 1) That the recommendations from the Overview Committee's review around the Cost of Living be received.
- 2) That the response to the recommendations arising from the Overview Committee's review around the Cost of Living be approved.

## **COUNCILLOR SCOTT CARLTON CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND PUBLIC HEALTH**

### **For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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## **Constitutional Comments (EKH 27/08/2024)**

9. The content of the report falls within the remit of the Cabinet by virtue of its terms of reference.

## **Financial Comments (PAA29 02/09/2024)**

10. "There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report. The Council will consider all competing demands including those from cost of living pressures, the rising demand for statutory services and the cessation of external funding for various schemes as well as the impact of rising taxes on Nottinghamshire residents as part of the annual budget setting process.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act.

None

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All



**REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF OVERVIEW COMMITTEE****OUTCOMES OF SCRUTINY REVIEW : COST OF LIVING****Purpose of the Report**

1. To share with the Overview Committee the findings that have arisen from the task and finish review around the Cost of Living.
2. To seek the endorsement of the committee for the recommendations from the scrutiny task and finish review around Cost of Living to be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

**Information****Background**

3. As part of their Work Programming process, members of Overview Committee expressed their concern for residents who were being impacted by the recent sharp increase in the cost of living.
4. After being agreed by Overview Committee for inclusion on its Work Programme, work was carried out to “scope” the review. This work was carried out by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview Committee, in consultation with the Service Director - Finance, Infrastructure and Improvement. This work identified the key objectives for review as well as setting out the strategic context in which the issues involved would be considered.
5. As a result of the scoping work that was carried out, the key objectives that would guide the review were identified as being:
  - To gain a clear understanding of the impact of the increase in the cost of living on Nottinghamshire residents.
  - To gain an understanding of the activities being carried out by the Council, delivery partners and other organisations to support Nottinghamshire residents with cost-of-living pressures.
  - To consider how the activities being carried out by the Council are addressing the needs of residents and the cost of living pressures that they are facing.
6. The current situation around the cost of living presents multifaceted challenges, however the focus for scrutiny has been to gain a full understanding of how cost of living pressures have impacted on Nottinghamshire residents and to consider how the Council’s response has worked to alleviate these pressures.



## Link to Council Priorities

7. The work of the Council's scrutiny function should always be focussed on supporting delivery of its strategic priorities, which will in turn support the delivery of the best possible services to the residents of Nottinghamshire. The work that was carried out in scoping the review identified that a review of consultation and resident engagement supported a wide range of strategic priorities, as well as the strategies and policies that underpinned them.

## The Nottinghamshire Plan 2021 - 2031

8. The Nottinghamshire Plan 2021 - 2031 is an ambitious plan for the County Council that sets out the Council's strategic vision for the future of Nottinghamshire and the local authority. The activity in the Nottinghamshire Plan is built around achieving a bold 10-year vision for a 'healthy, prosperous and greener future for everyone'. This vision is supported by nine ambitions which will act as a framework for all County Council activity. The scoping of the review supports the following ambitions as set out in the Nottinghamshire Plan:

- Supporting communities and families
- Keeping children, vulnerable adults, and communities safe

## Review activity

9. The members of the review group were:

- Councillor Boyd Elliott (Chairman)
- Councillor Glynn Gilfoyle
- Councillor Kate Foale

10. The first meeting of the review took place on Monday 17 April 2023. At this meeting members received a presentation that provided detailed information on:

## 11. The cost-of living situation and cost-of-living pressures impacting on the population.

- The global and domestic factors that were impacting on inflation and cost-of-living pressures that included:
  - the global effects arising from the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
  - Strong global demand for consumer goods (due to the pandemic)
  - Related supply chain disruption.
  - Labour costs - low unemployment, high vacancies, return of large numbers of migrant workers, withdrawal of certain groups from labour market participation (e.g. over 50s).
  - Increased energy and fuels costs passed on to consumers.
- Other circumstances that were affecting household budgets, that included:
  - The threshold above which people start to pay basic rate and higher income tax having been frozen that had meant that more people might fall into the higher tax threshold as wages rise.
  - How low-income households were affected more by inflation and rising prices as they tended to spend a larger proportion than average on energy and food.

- That rising interest rates had led to increases in mortgage rates and monthly repayments for homeowners.
- How private landlords were also being impacted by rising interest and mortgage rates and how they might pass these increases on to tenants in increased rents.
- Office for National Statistics data that detailed that amongst the UK adults who had reported a rise in their cost-of-living expenses that the most significant impacts were increased food prices, increased energy prices, increased fuel costs and increased housing costs. This data also showed that in response to these increases in the cost-of-living, that of those reporting an increase that 63% had reduced spending on non-essentials and that 54% had reduced energy use in their home.
- Information on the “Financial Resilience” of the UK population. Financial Resilience is the ability of individuals and families to cope financially when faced with a sudden fall in income or unavoidable rise in expenditure. It was noted that:
  - 12.9 million UK adults had low levels of financial resilience – 1 in 4 (24%). And that this number had increased by 2.2million since February 2020.
  - Some groups in society had lower levels of financial resilience than others. These included – females, the young, unemployed, those employed in the gig economy, renters, and ethnic minorities.
- Royal Society for Public Health data that detailed the possible effects of the cost-of-living increases on the health and wellbeing of the population.
- The Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee and Office for Budget Responsibility’s latest predictions on inflation and Real Household Disposable Income (RHDl). It was noted that RHDl per person was expected to fall by a cumulative 5.7 per cent over the two financial years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, the largest two-year fall since ONS records began in 1956/57.
- An overview of the cost of living support that had been provided through the Council. Members considered this information in more detail at the December 2023 meeting.

12. After receiving the information members of the review group took the opportunity to ask questions of Nigel Stevenson, Service Director - Finance, Procurement and Improvement and Sophie Snodin, Group Manager for Transformation and Change on the information that had been provided and to discuss the issues that had been raised.

### **Meeting with Citizen’s Advice Bureau**

13. The second meeting of the review took place on Monday 3 July 2023. At this meeting members met with Sally Bestwick - Chief Executive, and Neil Clurow - Development Manager, from Broxtowe Citizen’s Advice Bureau (CAB) who provided a presentation on how cost of living pressures were impacting on residents across Nottinghamshire and on how the CAB was responding.

14. At the meeting members were advised:

- that the CAB had seen a significant increase in client numbers across Nottinghamshire since cost of living pressures had started increasing.
- 50% of clients faced a negative budget where their income was not enough to cover their essential costs such as housing, utilities, and food, even after receiving advice and support from the CAB.
- that the financial position of residents who were on a low income, on, or just above Universal Credit levels was not sustainable.
- that the groups of residents who were most at risk of experiencing a negative budget were those in single households, living in rented accommodation, with long term illness (but not in receipt of disability benefits) or on a low income (especially older working people).
- there had been an increase in the number of people seeking emergency help, however residents who were starting to struggle with debts were seeking help early.
- that the CAB was supporting clients to become more financially resilient through support that addressed issues around income and budget management.
- that a focus of CAB was to provide early intervention and support for the most vulnerable and at risk households to try and avoid future social and economic crisis.
- how the cost of living pressures that were being felt by residents were informing the development of how CAB delivered its services.
- that preparations were being made in anticipation of a new group of clients who would be negatively impacted by rising interest rates.

15. After receiving the information members of the review group took the opportunity to ask questions of Sally Bestwick and Neil Clurow on the information that had been provided and to discuss the issues that had been raised.

### **Meetings with Hope Nottingham and Disability Nottinghamshire**

16. The fourth meeting of the review took place on Wednesday 23 October 2023. At this meeting members met with Nigel Adams, the Founder of Hope Nottingham, and Ivan Smith, Disability and Welfare Rights Advisor at Disability Nottinghamshire to learn how cost of living pressures were impacting on the residents who accessed their services and how cost of living pressures were impacting on the services that they delivered. Hope Nottingham is a charity that, with the support of partners, provides community support and foodbanks to communities in Nottinghamshire. Disability Nottinghamshire is a registered charity that provides free information, advice, and advocacy for people with disabilities across Nottinghamshire. After receiving the information members of the review group took the opportunity to ask questions of Nigel Adams and Ivan Smith on the information that had been provided and to discuss the issues that had been raised.

### **The County Council's response to Cost of Living**

17. The fifth meeting of the review took place on Monday 18 December 2023. At this meeting members of the review group considered the activity that had been carried out in response to the cost of living situation by the Council in order to support residents.

### **Financial Resilience and Inclusion Project**

18. The Financial Resilience and Inclusion Project was initiated in 2022 to consolidate the activity that was taking place across the Council in response to increasing levels of financial insecurity and to oversee a coordinated, joined up response to support collaborative work in supporting residents and communities with the cost-of-living pressures.
19. The initial response and activities that had been coordinated through the Financial Resilience Group had focused on the Council's response to the increased cost of living. The project later moved towards a focus on the activities that would support the longer-term financial resilience of the most vulnerable residents and increase their financial security and stability. This approach had focussed on helping to prevent residents' situations worsening by supporting them to become more resilient to the impacts of the changing cost of living. The ultimate objective of the project was that the work coordinated through the Financial Resilience Group would become embedded as "business as usual" across Council's departments.

### **Household Support Fund**

20. The Government Household Support Fund (HSF) that has been delivered through the Council, has provided financial support for energy, food, and other essentials (including white goods) to over 300,000 households across Nottinghamshire. The fifth round of the HSF, which is worth £5.6 million is currently being distributed.
21. In addition to enabling the Council to provide direct financial support to residents to support them in managing cost of living pressures, HSF money has also been distributed by the Council to the Citizen's Advice Bureau which has enabled additional advice services to be delivered across the County, supporting households with longer term planning, budgetary support and to develop financial resilience. Funding has also been provided from the HSF to support Discretionary Housing Payments for all Districts and Borough Councils. This funding has enabled them to provide assistance with housing costs, rent shortfall, rent deposits, and rent in advance.

### **Corporate Communications**

22. Luke Barrett - Group Manager for Communications and Marketing provided an overview of the communication activity that had been carried out with both residents and staff around the Council's cost of living activity and how this activity had developed and evolved over time in order to become more responsive to the cost of living needs and concerns of residents.
23. Communication activity that had been carried out included:
- The dedicated cost of living web page that had been created to help residents access information which had been accessed over 180,000 times with a specific web page focused on the Household Support Fund having been viewed over 124,000 times (as of December 2023). A dedicated page had also been created on the intranet to provide information for staff on cost of living support.

- A Cost of Living booklet that had been specifically designed to meet the needs of residents without internet access. Over 32,000 copies were distributed to residents who were eligible for the Household Support fund, with 5,000 copies also being distributed through libraries, Children's Centres as well as by the Benefits Team and community workers.
- The extensive work that had been carried out with the media and across social media to raise awareness of, and to promote the help and support that was available to residents both through the Council as well as from partners, district/borough councils and the community and voluntary sector.
- The launch of communications signposting to support Council staff access information on cost-of-living support.

## **Adult Social Care**

24. Nicola Peace – Group Manager - Ageing Well provided an overview of the activity that had been delivered by Adult Social Care as part of the Council's response to supporting residents and staff with cost of living pressures. This activity had included the delivery of ongoing benefits overview and awareness sessions to staff and partner organisations. This activity had focussed on raising awareness with staff of what support was available and to empower them to have confident conversations about benefits with residents as well as knowing when and how to refer to the Benefits Team. Face-to-face drop in advice sessions for residents had also been delivered at locations across Nottinghamshire.

## **Public Health**

25. Vivienne Robbins – Interim Director of Public Health provided information on the Public Health Reserve Grant funding of £960,000 that had been used to support initiatives in response to cost of living pressures. These had included:

- additional capacity being provided in the Benefits Team, with the Benefits Team attending drop-in events across the County, working in partnership with the District and Borough Councils and other delivery partners.
- a grant scheme to support the voluntary sector with increased running costs (The Local Communities Fund).
- a scheme to support efficient use of energy for the public to access.

## **Place**

26. Joelle Davies – Group Manager - Growth, Infrastructure and Development provided an overview of the activity that had been delivered by the Place department as part of the Council's response to supporting residents and staff with cost of living pressures.

27. The Place department had delivered the Government Household Support Fund (HSF) that had provided financial support for energy, food, and other essentials (including white goods) to over 300,000 households across Nottinghamshire.

28. Other activity and support that had been delivered through the Place department had also included:



- Community Friendly Nottinghamshire had worked across the county holding cost of living events that had provided guidance and support to low income and vulnerable residents. These sessions had enabled residents to access advice and guidance around cost of living pressures from representatives from public health, benefits support, energy, housing, the district/borough councils, and advice services being in attendance.
- Managing the delivery of the Local Communities Fund which had supported over 170 community groups across Nottinghamshire by providing or facilitating access to affordable, nutritious food for families and individuals experiencing food insecurity and helping with energy costs to keep services open.

## **Children and Families**

29. Irene Kakoullis - Group Manager - Early Childhood Services provided an overview of the impact of cost of living pressures on children and families and on the activity that had been delivered by the Children and Families department as part of the Council's response to supporting residents with cost of living pressures. In introducing the activities that had been carried out by the Children and Families department it was noted that children who grew up in poverty lacked many of the experiences and opportunities that others took for granted and as such could be exposed to severe hardship and social exclusion.
30. The Children and Families department had delivered a comprehensive package of support to provide an activities and food programme to children and young people who are eligible for free school meals during the school holidays through the delivery of the Holiday Activity Fund (HAF). This Department for Education funded programme offers funded activities and food for children receiving benefits related free school meals. The HAF Team also attended a variety of events around the County to raise the profile of the programme with stakeholders and to engage Nottinghamshire families, supporting them to understand free school meal eligibility and offering wider signposting for support.
31. Other activity and support that had been delivered through the Children's and Families department had also included:
- Ensuring that as many eligible families as possible were claiming Free School Meals and Healthy Start vouchers.
  - Supporting families by making referrals to charities e.g. food banks, furniture schemes, housing, and money management.
  - Supporting parents to be work ready and to have an increased confidence in managing their finances effectively.
  - Supporting parental relationships that had become strained due to cost of living pressures with multi-agency staff trained in reducing parental conflict.
  - Communicating with families and providing information to assist them in accessing support through channels including Notts Help Yourself and the Families Information Service.
  - A targeted mailout to 17,900 homes in receipt of free school meals to explain the application process for winter support payments.

32. The support that had been delivered through the Children and Families department has had some notable and positive impacts for residents, with 11,519 young people attending HAF sessions over Spring, Summer, and Autumn 2023, an increased take up to 70% of those entitled to Healthy Start Vouchers and 85% of the individuals who had received support delivered through Children's Centres advising that they felt more work ready or had increased confidence in budgeting and managing their finances.

### **Member survey**

33. Members of the group agreed that councillors, from the work that they carried out in their communities would have had significant experience in working with and supporting residents who were experiencing difficulties around cost of living pressures, and as such would have a good understanding of how the current situation was impacting on communities across Nottinghamshire. Members agreed that that this knowledge and information, if combined and analysed could provide a valuable resource in enabling the review group to gain a thorough understanding of how the cost of living situation was impacting on residents.

34. The survey was circulated to all 66 councillors in January 2024. The responses that were received to the survey highlighted how:

- Councillors had seen a significant increase in residents raising concerns with them around costs related to food, utilities, and housing.
- Residents were also advising of difficulties in managing debt and the impact that cost of living pressures were having on their physical and mental health.
- Cost of living pressures were being felt by many different groups of residents, however older people (aged 65 and over), families and working people on low incomes appeared to be feeling these pressures most acutely. Housing costs were a particular area of concern for younger residents.
- The use of foodbanks by residents had increased significantly in comparison to when cost of living pressures started to be felt.
- Families who were on a low income, but whose income was too high to claim free school meals were particularly feeling cost of living pressures.
- Charities and services provided by the voluntary and community sector were struggling to keep up with the increased demand for their services.

### **Research and information**

35. As part of the review process, members utilised a range of information resources in order to gain further understanding of how cost of living pressures were impacting on residents.

Resources that were used included:

- Citizens Advice Cost of Living dashboard
- House of Commons Library: Constituency Dashboard
- Financial Lives 2022 survey: insights on vulnerability and financial resilience relevant to the rising cost of living
- LGA Cost of Living Hub

36. Members of the review group also utilised the data from the LG Inform report (from the LGA) report on Financial Hardship and Vulnerability to gain further insight into how cost of living pressures were impacting on Nottinghamshire residents.

## **Review activity and recommendations**

### **How the Council responded to cost of living pressures**

37. At the December 2023 meeting of the review, members received information on the extensive range of activities that had been carried out by the Council to help support residents and staff who were being impacted by cost of living pressures. Whilst some of the activities that had been delivered by the Council to support residents had been delivered through the utilisation of existing budgets and resources, most of the activity that had been delivered had been made possible through specific funding streams. Members of the review group recognise that many of the factors that have led to the increase in cost of living pressures such as the war in Ukraine, the rate of inflation and increased energy costs and that continue to impact on residents are outside of the control of the Council. As such the Council has had a limited ability to be able to mitigate against the impact of these pressures on Nottinghamshire residents.
38. Throughout the period of heightened cost of living pressures, effective communication with both residents and staff has been an integral part of the Council's response in supporting staff and residents by ensuring that they knew what support was available and how that support could be accessed.
39. £960,000 of Public Health Reserve Grant funding has enabled the delivery of initiatives in response to cost of living pressures. These have included the provision of additional capacity in the benefits team, a grant scheme to support the voluntary and community sector to build community resilience and the delivery of a scheme to support the efficient use of energy at home. Members of the review group agreed that the use of Public Health Reserves to enable the provision of activities that developed community resilience had been an effective way of delivering support as it had the potential to deliver longer term benefits to communities that may not have been seen if the funding had been used to deliver short term solutions.
40. In delivering the Holiday Activity Fund (funded by the Department for Education), the Council has developed a comprehensive package of support for children receiving benefits related free school meals. The Nottinghamshire Holiday Activities and Food programme that has been delivered using this funding has provided much needed support by offering healthy activities, social engagement, and food for children who receive free school meals benefits. The HAF programme has proven to be a valuable initiative in supporting vulnerable families during the school holidays. Department for Education funding for the delivery of this support will end at the end of the 2024/25 financial year.
41. In October 2021, the Government launched Phase One of the Household Support Fund (HSF) to the Council to allocate to those in immediate need in the County. The fifth round of the HSF is currently being distributed by the Council. Whilst the funding has been provided by the Government, how the money has been used to support residents has been decided by the Council in order to best support local need. Support provided through the HSF has included:
- Energy support and food support payments to eligible households.
  - Discretionary Housing Payments delivered through the districts and borough councils.

- Providing white goods e.g. cookers and washing machines to households with exceptional needs.
- Funding to the Citizens Advice Bureau to support their advice services supporting residents.

42. Members of the review group noted how the funding that had been made available to the Council had enabled the delivery of significant levels of support to residents and communities who were facing cost of living pressures which would not have been possible without Government funding. Members also agreed that whilst HSF funding had been provided by the Government, that the decisions that had been taken by the Council about how the funding had been used to deliver the support had enabled the funding allocated to have the maximum possible impact in supporting residents and communities across Nottinghamshire facing cost of living pressures.

### **Recommendation One**

***That given the limitations of its role and available resources, that Council's activity in responding to the cost of living pressures that have been impacting on residents across Nottinghamshire be commended.***

43. Members of the review group acknowledged that the Council continues to operate in an extremely challenging and uncertain financial environment following a period of significant budget reductions and on-going spending pressures. As the majority of support provided through the Council had been made possible through additional specific Government funding, it would not be possible for the Council to continue to deliver the level of activity that had supported residents facing cost of living pressures when this funding comes to an end. However, due to the significant positive outcomes that had been achieved through the delivery of these activities and the continuing impact of cost of living pressures being felt by communities across Nottinghamshire, members of the review group agreed that consideration should be given to how elements of some of the activities, for example the Holidays Activity Fund, that had been delivered through specific funding streams, could continue to be delivered into the future.

### **Recommendation Two**

***That consideration should be given to whether any elements of the wide range of activities that have been delivered to support residents and communities with cost of living pressures, and that have been made possible through specific funding streams, could continue to be delivered once those funding streams end.***

### **The Financial Resilience Project**

44. The Financial Resilience and Inclusion Project was initiated in 2022 to consolidate the activity that was taking place across the Council in response to increasing levels of financial insecurity in Nottinghamshire and to oversee a coordinated, joined up response to support collaborative work to support residents and communities with the cost-of-living pressures.
45. Having a dedicated central capacity through the Financial Resilience Group to organise activities in response to cost of living pressures has enabled the Council to proactively target cost of living support to the most vulnerable residents, providing them with information, advice, and guidance. A cross departmental group was also established to identify gaps in support and

to put in place additional initiatives in response to emerging needs. Prior to the initiation of this project there was insufficient capacity in established Council teams and services to co-ordinate the response alongside delivery of existing activity and without this dedicated co-ordinating capacity the Council would have been unable deliver the required support to residents in such a timely manner.

46. Members of the review group noted with approval how the Financial Resilience Project had enabled the effective coordination of the delivery of the activities that were being carried out across to the Council as well as with delivery partners. This coordination and collaborative approach had enabled the impact of the activities, that were being carried out to support residents who were facing increased cost of living pressures, to be fully maximised. Members of the review group were in agreement that the bringing together of activity to support residents had been particularly beneficial in supporting the delivery of the clear and comprehensive communication activity that had been carried out to inform residents of the cost of living support that was available.
47. Members of the review group agreed that the Financial Resilience Project and the work of the Financial Resilience Group had played an integral and essential role in delivering support to residents who were facing cost of living pressures.

***Recommendation Three (a)***

***That the work of the Financial Resilience Group in coordinating and supporting the delivery of Council wide activity to support residents and staff impacted by cost of living pressures be commended.***

48. The ultimate objective of this time limited project was that the work coordinated through the Financial Resilience Group in supporting the delivery of the Council's response to cost of living pressures would, in time, become embedded as "business as usual" across the Council's departments. Whilst significant cost of living pressures are still being faced by residents across Nottinghamshire, the situation has now stabilised and the activities that have been delivered through the Financial Resilience Group have now been well integrated across the Council.
49. Members of the review group agreed that should the situation around cost of living change, with either new challenges being faced by the residents or by the Council in providing its response, then there could be a benefit in re-establishing the Financial Resilience Project in order to meet these challenges and to coordinate the activity that would be required that would support residents with cost of living pressures.

***Recommendation Three (b)***

***That should new challenges arise in the cost of living pressures that are being faced by Nottinghamshire residents, and which require an immediate and coordinated response, that the Financial Resilience Project should be re-established.***

**The Community and Voluntary Sector**

50. As during the Covid-19 pandemic, the voluntary and community sector has played a significant role in supporting residents deal with the impact of the rapid rise in the cost of living. The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) have not only supported in areas such as advice and guidance on financial issues and on the running food banks but have also been involved in helping with wider community issues that have been exacerbated by cost of living pressures.



51. As part of the review process members of the review group met with representatives of Citizen's Advice Bureau, Disability Nottinghamshire, and Hope Nottingham to learn how cost of living pressures were impacting on residents and on how they were responding. These meetings highlighted how activities and support that were tailored to build community resilience, and which were based on local knowledge of communities' needs were key in lessening the impact of the sharp rise in the cost of living. Through these meetings, members had their experience from working in their communities reaffirmed, that demand for services from by the VCS had risen during the period of cost of living pressures. It was also highlighted through the survey that was carried out with elected members that charities and services provided by the VCS were struggling to keep up with the increased demand for their services.
52. In order to address the challenges that were being faced by residents, a key area of activity for the Citizen's Advice Bureau has been to provide early intervention and support for the most vulnerable and at risk households in order to try and avoid future social and economic crisis. Hope Nottingham has also taken a broader holistic view in order to provide additional support to residents who were accessing foodbanks and other services in order to address the underlying issues which people were facing. This approach has also been taken by Disability Nottinghamshire who signpost clients to other organisations who can provide specialist and tailored support.
53. The valuable role of the VCS, who can use local knowledge and expertise to provide support to individuals and communities has long been recognised by the Council. The Council has a strong record in supporting the VCS by empowering local communities to be more self-sufficient. The Council's Local Communities Fund is a discretionary fund run by the Council to support the delivery of projects that help to deliver the strategic aims of the Council. Members of the review group noted how the delivery of this funding to the VCS has had a positive impact on residents who had been struggling with cost of living pressures. Members of the review group agreed that the existing opportunities that are available to the VCS to apply for funding through the Local Communities Fund should be promoted as widely as possible in order to enable VCS organisations to continue to deliver services that meet the needs of communities across Nottinghamshire.
54. Throughout the period of increased cost of living pressures the Council has provided additional funding through the delivery of the Household Support Fund to the Citizens Advice Bureau. This funding has enabled additional support to be provided to households to deal with immediate budgetary difficulties as well supporting them to build greater financial resilience. Through use of Public Health reserves and the Financial Resilience Project, £450,000 of funding has also been provided to support the voluntary sector with increased running costs.
55. Members of the review group agreed that the work of voluntary and community organisations, which had been supported by the Council, had been essential in supporting residents across Nottinghamshire to deal with the wide ranging impacts of the rise in the cost of living. Members also noted how many individuals and communities were already struggling before the cost of living started rapidly rising due to the continuing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
56. Members of the review group acknowledged how the Council continues to operate in an extremely challenging and uncertain financial environment. However, due to the significant value that VCS services provide to communities across Nottinghamshire, and increasing levels

of demand, members of the review group agreed that the Council should aim to provide as much support as is possible to these organisations.

#### **Recommendation Four**

***That the provision of financial and other support to the Voluntary and Community Sector, that enables these organisations to support individuals and to build community resilience, continues to be an ambition for the Council.***

#### **The impact of effective communication**

57. Throughout the period of heightened cost of living pressures, effective communication with both residents and staff has been an integral part of the Council's response in supporting staff and residents to access the information, advice and support that has been available, not only from the Council but also from the district and borough councils and voluntary organisations.
58. A new dedicated web page was created soon after cost of living pressures started increasing to help residents access information on cost of living support. Additionally, extensive work has been carried out with the media and across social media to raise awareness of, and to promote the help and support that was available through the Council. A cost of living booklet was also produced for residents without internet access and households that were entitled to receive financial support through the Household Support Fund. Members of the review group agreed that the Council's comprehensive approach to communication throughout the period had effectively enabled residents and staff to be informed about and access the cost of living support that was available.
59. Good and effective communication is a two way process, with listening being a central part of communication. During the review process members were keen to learn about the activities that had been carried out during the period of cost of living pressures to get to know about how residents were being impacted and on the kinds of help and support that they were looking for. Members of the review group were advised that a communications technique known as "social listening" had been used as part of communication activity around cost of living pressures. This work had involved engaging with community discussions online in order to gain further understanding of the issues around cost of living that were being discussed by residents across Nottinghamshire. Members welcomed this proactive approach and agreed that it had the potential to gather information that could then be used to shape and target communication about services and support to where they were most needed. Members of the review group acknowledged however that the process of "social listening" whilst having significant potential was a very time consuming and resource intensive process to carry out.

#### **Recommendation Five**

***That the potential to further develop and use "social listening" as part of the Council's approach to communicating with residents be explored in order to support the delivery of future communication activity with residents.***

#### **The use of data and information**

60. Members of the review group noted that given the limitations around the Council's ability to support residents with the impact of the rising cost of living it was essential that the support that was able to be provided should be targeted at the residents in most need and in the areas where the support will have the maximum impact. Members of the review group noted with approval how the use and analysis of data from a wide variety of sources had been an integral part of the Council's response and welcomed the processes that had been put in place for sharing data and information across departments. This data analysis and sharing has played an integral and vital part in informing decisions on how and where the services and support to residents have been provided.
61. From the research carried out as part of the review (including the member survey), and from their work supporting their communities, the members of the review group noted how the impact of the increase in the cost of living on residents in Nottinghamshire was uneven, both demographically and geographically, with some groups of residents and locations being impacted more. Members of the review group agreed however that it was not always straightforward to identify groups of residents, or areas of deprivation, if these groups of residents did not always seek support or if a deprived area was surrounded by more affluent areas.
62. Members of the review group agreed that to ensure that services and support continue to be provided in a way and where they are most needed, that there should be an ambition, where possible to analyse data and information from a wide range of sources at the most local and detailed way possible. Members noted that this ambition would ensure that groups of residents and the areas in most need were not overlooked, with services and support continuing to be delivered where they are most needed. Members of the review group recognised however that the level of detail provided by different data sources did vary, and as such the ability to always analyse data at a very local level may not always be possible.

### **Recommendation Six**

***That the use of data and insight activity continues to be used and further developed in order to inform and target the delivery of activities and services that work to alleviate the cost of living and related pressures that continue to be experienced by residents.***

### **Final conclusions**

63. Throughout the review process, members expressed their concern about the situation both nationally and within Nottinghamshire around cost of living pressures that continued to be faced by residents, the causes of which were beyond the scope of influence of the Council.
64. Members of the review group recognise the factors that have led to the sharp increase in the cost of living and that continue to impact on residents are outside of the control of the Council, with the Council having a limited ability to be able to mitigate their impact on Nottinghamshire residents. The Council, its services and staff have also not been immune to the impact of the factors that have led the cost-of-living pressures being faced by residents. The impact of high levels of inflation, particularly the increases that have been seen in the cost of fuel and energy have significantly increased the costs involved in the delivery of many Council services. The Council's ability to mitigate the effects on residents are also unfortunately limited. Members of the review group, through the process of carrying out the review were however assured that

the Council has done as much as was possible within its powers in supporting Nottinghamshire communities and residents who have been impacted by cost of living pressures.

65. There is significant work going on within the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Council to support Nottinghamshire residents. Much of this work pre-dates the increase in the cost of living and is incredibly valuable in providing support, particularly for the most vulnerable groups of residents. However, members of the review group do have concerns about the capacity for the sector's work to continue long-term without adequate support and funding, with many organisations within the sector struggling to cope with increases in demand and the difficulties that they are supporting residents with becoming more complex. The meetings that were held with Citizen's Advice Bureau, Disability Nottinghamshire and Hope Nottingham highlighted how the voluntary and community sector can create community resilience which can then in turn lessen the impact of situations like cost of living pressures or the Covid-19 pandemic.
66. Members of the review group hope that in future there will be some further support from the Government that will enable the Council and the voluntary and community sector across Nottinghamshire to carry out further work together to support the delivery of further impactful and robust support to residents and communities.

#### 67. Summary of recommendations

	<b>Recommendation</b>
1.	That given the limitations of its role and available resources, that Council's activity in responding to the cost of living pressures that have been impacting on residents across Nottinghamshire be commended.
2.	That consideration should be given to whether any elements of the wide range of activities that have been delivered to support residents and communities with cost of living pressures, and that have been made possible through specific funding streams, could continue to be delivered once those funding streams end.
3a.	That the work of the Financial Resilience Group in coordinating and supporting the delivery of Council wide activity to support residents and staff impacted by cost of living pressures be commended.
3b.	That should new challenges arise in the cost of living pressures that are being faced by Nottinghamshire residents, and which require an immediate and coordinated response, that the Financial Resilience Project should be re-established.
4.	That the provision of financial and other support to the Voluntary and Community Sector, that enables these organisations to support individuals and to build community resilience, continues to be an ambition for the Council.
5.	That the potential to further develop and use "social listening" as part of the Council's approach to communicating with residents be explored in order to support the delivery of future communication activity with residents.
6.	That the use of data and insight activity continues to be used and further developed in order to inform and target the delivery of activities and services that work to alleviate the cost of living and related pressures that continue to be experienced by residents.

## **Acknowledgments**

68. The Chairman and the members of the review group would like to express their thanks for the invaluable support provided during review process by Nigel Stevenson - Service Director - Finance, Infrastructure and Improvement, Sophie Snodin – Group Manager – Transformation and Change as well as expressing their thanks to all of the officers who provided information to the review group on the work that had been carried out across the Council to support residents and staff with cost of living pressures.
69. The Chairman and the members of the review group would also like to express their thanks to Sally Bestwick and Neil Clurow of Broxtowe Citizen's Advice Bureau, Ivan Smith of Disability Nottinghamshire, and Nigel Adams of Hope Nottingham for meeting with them to discuss how cost of living pressures were impacting on residents and on the services and support that they offered.

## **Other Options Considered**

70. None. The Overview Committee had previously agreed to undertake this review. Therefore as required by the Constitution, the recommendations of the review, if approved are required to be submitted to Cabinet for their consideration.

## **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

71. To comply with the requirements of the Constitution that the findings of a scrutiny review are submitted to the Cabinet for their consideration.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

72. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Financial Implications**

73. There are no direct financial implications relating to the recommendations of this report.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That the recommendations from the scrutiny review of around cost of living pressures, as detailed in the report, be endorsed, and referred to Cabinet for consideration.

**Councillor Boyd Elliott**  
**Chairman, Overview Committee**

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## **Constitutional Comments (SF 26/6/2024)**

74. The recommendation falls within the remit of the Overview Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

## **Financial Comments (NS 24/6/2024)**

75. There are no direct financial implications relating to the recommendations of this report. However, some of the recommendations relating to considering continued support post external funding finishing may have financial implications which will need to be considered in any response to these recommendations.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All



## Appendix B

### Response to the Recommendations from the Scrutiny Review – Cost of Living

Overview Committee recommendation		Cabinet Decision (Accept/Not accept)	Action to be taken (if any) and timescale for completion
1.	That given the limitations of its role and available resources, that Council's activity in responding to the cost of living pressures that have been impacting on residents across Nottinghamshire be commended.	<b>Accept</b>	<b>This has been a whole-council approach to meeting the needs of our residents and I commend the support our staff have provided through this difficult time for our communities.</b>
2.	That consideration should be given to whether any elements of the wide range of activities that have been delivered to support residents and communities with cost of living pressures, and that have been made possible through specific funding streams, could continue to be delivered once those funding streams end.	<b>Accept</b>	<b>The County Council like all local authorities face significant financial challenge in delivering support to the most vulnerable in our communities. The Council will endeavour to support our communities, but this will have to be considered against the backdrop of the rising funding gap. Each year the Council considers all these competing demands, especially the rising demand for our statutory services, as well as the impact of rising taxes upon our residents, as it sets budget for the coming year.</b>
3a.	That the work of the Financial Resilience Group in coordinating and supporting the delivery of Council wide activity to support residents and staff impacted by cost of living pressures be commended.	<b>Accept</b>	<b>This has been a whole-council approach to meeting the needs of our residents and I too commend the support our staff have provided through this difficult time for our communities.</b>
3b.	That should new challenges arise in the cost of living pressures that are being faced by Nottinghamshire	<b>Accept</b>	<b>The Council will take the learning from coordinating this activity across the Council via a specific group into meeting future cross-council work.</b>

	residents, and which require an immediate and coordinated response, that the Financial Resilience Project should be re-established.		
4.	That the provision of financial and other support to the Voluntary and Community Sector, that enables these organisations to support individuals and to build community resilience, continues to be an ambition for the Council.	<b>Accept</b>	<b>Similarly to the review group's findings the Council acknowledges the work of the VCS. The Council will continue to support our VCS recognising the significant value that their services provide to communities across Nottinghamshire.</b>
5.	That the potential to further develop and use "social listening" as part of the Council's approach to communicating with residents be explored in order to support the delivery of future communication activity with residents.	<b>Accept</b>	<b>This communications technique already forms part of the total communications strategy of the Council.</b>
6.	That the use of data and insight activity continues to be used and further developed in order to inform and target the delivery of activities and services that work to alleviate the cost of living and related pressures that continue to be experienced by residents.	<b>Accept</b>	<b>The considerations from this review will be included in the wider work on the Councils digital and data strategy.</b>

**REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER – EDUCATION AND SPECIAL  
EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES****NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL RESOURCE TO SUPPORT  
ACADEMISATION OF SCHOOLS****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the activity needed to increase the rate of academisation for schools in the current pipeline, and to seek Cabinet approval for:
  - a. The establishment of a fixed-term Project Coordinator post to manage the administration, tracking and communication activity in order to improve throughput, and
  - b. further activity to explore the feasibility of Option 3 (to include clarification of the legal position and any consultation with schools) with a view to bringing a report back for approval by relevant Cabinet Members at the earliest opportunity.

**Information and Background**

2. There are currently 22 schools in the pipeline for academisation in Nottinghamshire, of which three are subject to a Directive Academy Order (DAO) and 19 are voluntary and have received an Academy Order. The three schools subject to DAOs are projected to be completed over the next three months. At the current conversion rate, it will take upwards of two years to academise all of the schools in the pipeline. This backlog draws criticism from key stakeholders and presents a risk of reputational damage.
3. In late July, the DfE confirmed that work on ongoing sponsored and intervention cases was on hold. Since then, guidance published 02/09/2024 indicates that there is unlikely to be a forced academisation route for schools that would previously have been judged as Requiring Improvement on two subsequent inspections.
4. On 06/09/2024 the DfE confirmed that the pause for voluntary schools in the pipeline has been removed and that they expect these to continue towards completion. Schools seeking voluntary conversion that are not already in the pipeline can still contact the DfE to submit applications, however there is still no DfE activity to progress any new applications whilst further direction from Ministers is awaited, therefore at this time the pipeline is unlikely to increase. We will await further updates regarding the future policy direction.



5. Work was commissioned over the summer to assess the current conversion process and develop a set of options to improve the rate at which Nottinghamshire County Council can complete academy conversions.
6. A number of factors have driven the decline in conversion rates and the resultant backlog of conversions.
  - Staffing & recruitment challenges – the number of staff working on academisations has reduced, and it has become increasingly difficult to recruit to professional posts in a timely manner. There are significant difficulties in recruitment of professional roles across the public sector which has contributed to vacancies being unfilled. Whilst agency or externally procured resource is an option, it is costly and exerts pressure on already stretched budgets.
  - Costs - Whilst a significant proportion of the work is carried out as business-as-usual, there is limited scope within existing resources across departments to reduce costs and timescales without this having a detrimental impact on existing support that teams provide for the Council to meet its statutory duties. Extra costs are therefore incurred by departments in an attempt to progress the work more quickly or are incurred as a result of duplication of work due to slippage from unrealistic completion dates.
  - Complexity & demand – In Nottinghamshire the Council saw a sharp increase in the number of voluntary conversions in 2023/24. 19 schools obtained academy orders and joined the pipeline, of which 16 were voluntary academisations. Transfers often involve protracted negotiations around maintenance/repair costs, boundary lines, access roads, groups using school buildings and other buildings-related issues which require much of our legal and surveying capacity, and naturally this reduces the pace for the entire pipeline.
7. Of the six options developed, three were deemed viable and were presented to the Cabinet Member and Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and Special Educational Needs & Disabilities for consideration. The options considered were:
8. **Option 1** – Do nothing: maintain the current process and accept the current pace of academy conversions within the existing resources available.

This option is not recommended as it does not address any of the concerns raised by key stakeholders regarding the rate of conversion and meeting expected timescales.
9. **Option 2** – Establish a Project Co-Ordinator post that will manage administration, tracking and communication duties, review the existing process and resourcing and make iterative improvements to reduce costs and timescales.

This option will deliver a modest increase in conversion rate and will address a number of the current issues around tracking, engagement and costs. This approach would support the delivery of 9-10 conversions per year, and so the current pipeline will take up to 24 months to clear.

This option proposes that a 2-year fixed-term Project Co-ordinator post (estimated Grade 5) is established within the Children & Families department to manage the administration and tracking of all academisation activity. This post will ensure that work is triaged and allocated to the right function and will keep track of risks, escalate issues appropriately, and be a point of contact for all stakeholders.

Further work will be implemented to review the cost of academy conversions to the Council, with a view to requesting an increase to the voluntary contributions that schools provide from their Academisation Support Grant and thus achieving realistic cost recovery.

Finally, work will be completed to reduce or improve process activity, provide greater transparency on activity and timescales to schools, and consider whether work can be done in advance that will shorten timescales in future.

10. **Option 3** - Initiate temporary remedial action to clear or reduce backlog by increasing resources and improving processes.

This option proposes that additional temporary resources are procured/recruited to increase academisation activity capacity so that we can significantly increase the rate at which schools are converted into academies and clear the backlog as soon as possible.

The target rate is two conversions per month, and we estimate that this will enable the Council to significantly reduce the current backlog within 12 months.

This option proposes the recruitment of the following 12-month fixed-term posts:

- Project Co-ordinator (Grade 5) to manage administration, tracking and communication
- Property Surveyor (Band E) to increase the rate at which the key site planning activity can be completed
- Solicitor (Band D) to provide dedicated support

11. Estimated costs per annum:

Resource	Cost estimate
Option 1	£0
Option 2	£36,000
Option 3	£168,000 - £256,000

12. The most viable option at this stage is to progress with option 2 as the coordinator post can be funded within existing financial resources (the voluntary contribution by schools will fund this post), whilst undertaking further feasibility work to determine whether a full cost recovery model can be developed for option 3. This will include exploring any legal and policy implications and consultation as necessary with schools.

### Proposed next steps

13. That activity to deliver **Option 2** is approved and that further work is commissioned to explore delivery of full cost recovery for **Option 3**.

## Other Options Considered

14. Option 1 has been discounted for the reason set out in **paragraph 8**.
15. The following options have been explored as part of the discovery and design process but have been discounted due to unsuitability/ unviability.
- Increase the conversion rate by increasing resources permanently – this was discounted because it would require a base budget increase of a minimum of £168,000.
  - Development of an ‘associate membership’ model<sup>1</sup> which would provide a stepping stone towards the benefits of full academisation. This option was discounted because it can be difficult to manage risks around staff transfer.
  - Develop a ‘fast-track’ paid service which can be accessed by schools that can pay for the extra resource needed to complete their conversion in the minimum timescale – this was discounted because schools most in need of academisation due to poor outcomes/ leadership etc. are much less likely to hold reserves to access the fast track, plus coordination of work across two tracks (fast and standard) would make overall delivery too complicated and would impact existing Council services.

## Reasons for Recommendations

16. The delivery of option 2 will address a number of the current issues, will increase throughput, and can be funded through existing voluntary contributions. Further activity to achieve full cost recovery of option 3 followed by the recruitment of the extra posts would increase the rate of conversions significantly and support delivery within a reduced timeframe – however, work is required to clarify a number of legal policy and technical issues and to engage with schools and will be dependent on being able to secure the necessary professional resources.

## Statutory and Policy Implications

17. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability, and the environment and where such implications are material as described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## Financial Implications

18. Costs of each option are set out in **paragraph 11**.

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<sup>1</sup> Schools considering joining a Trust can join as an associate member, accessing some benefits of being in that Trust whilst they await formal transfer.

The establishment of a Project Co-ordinator post will cost £36,000 and will be funded through the existing contribution of £7,000 per conversion.

### **Human Resources Implications**

19. Recruitment for the new post arising from this report will follow normal procedures and will be advertised internally in the first instance. Trades Unions have been notified.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That:

- 1) approval is given to establish the Project Co-ordinator post (Grade 5) and progress wider work as outlined in option 2; and
- 2) approval is given to explore the feasibility of Option 3 (to include clarification of the legal position and any consultation with schools) with a view to bringing a report back for approval by the Cabinet Member for Education & SEND by at least the start of December.

**Councillor Sam Smith**

**Cabinet Member, Education and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**

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### **Constitutional Comments (SSR 11/09/24)**

20. These recommendations may be approved by Cabinet.

### **Financial Comments (SH 11/09/24)**

21. The costs set out in **paragraph 18** of the report will be met from existing resources.

### **HR Comments (MR 11/09/2024)**

22. The staffing implications are contained within the body of the report. Any new posts will be subject to job evaluation and recruited to in line with the Council's recruitment procedures.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None.

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.