APPENDIX B

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 18 SEPTEMBER 2025
QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER, CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Question to the Cabinet Member for Education and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

The recent SEND monitoring inspection by Ofsted and the CQC, carried out between 14–16 July 2025, confirmed that Nottinghamshire has taken 'effective action' to address all of the areas for priority improvement identified in May 2023.

This is a significant achievement, and it shows that the improvements and oversight put in place under the previous Conservative administration have led to real progress for children and families.

Will the Cabinet Member join me in recognising these improvements, and outline how the Reform administration will ensure the progress achieved under the Conservatives is not only maintained but built upon, so that families continue to see improvements in SEND provision across Nottinghamshire?

Response from Cabinet Member for Education and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Councillor Hana John

I join, as Cabinet Member for Education and SEND, in acknowledging the recent outcome of the local area partnership's Ofsted and CQC monitoring inspection. The report indicates that the partnership is taking effective action, making progress that is, to address the areas identified during our previous inspection in January 2023.

I extend my gratitude to all staff members involved in our improvement journey thus far, their dedication and the positive changes they have implemented are greatly appreciated, as they continue to support our children and families in Nottinghamshire.

Our shared goal is to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Across the partnership, SEND remains our Administrations highest priority within this department. We certainly are committed to ensuring that more children receive the right support at the right time. As the Cabinet Lead, I am sure the Council's continued collaboration with SEND Improvement Board to closely monitor and support ongoing progress across the partnership.

The importance of sustaining this momentum to enhance experiences and outcomes cannot be overstated. Any achievements in this department will always transcend any individual or Administration, reflecting a broader commitment to improvement across our local partnership and SEND system. This journey has required tremendous effort from hundreds of unseen faces, collaboration and dedication from all stakeholders including parents, carers, children and young people, as well as health leaders, social care workers, education services and providers.

Now, I hope you will join me Madam Chair, in a moment of cheer as I am also pleased to announce that just this week the partnership between the ICB (Integrated Care Board) and Nottinghamshire County Council, which has produced the SEND data dashboard has recently been recognised nationally as an award winning initiative, in the category of 'improving care for children and young people initiative of the year', by the national HSG Patient Safety Awards. This acknowledgement is an inspiring testament to our collective efforts and something we can all in this Chamber take pride in, emphasising our commitment to focussing on the welfare of the younger generations.

We understand that the recent monitoring inspection captures a specific moment in time, therefore we are committed to continuous improvement through our SEND transformation programme we aim to enhance outcomes for our children and improve services. We especially want to ensure that the voices of children, young people and their families are included in these improvements. Our commitment to advancing SEND provision and education in Nottinghamshire will continue to strengthen and support our families and communities as we move forward.

Question to the Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Board from Councillor Kelvin Wright

Vaccine uptake for common childhood diseases is now at a level which threatens herd immunity. We are seeing deaths in the paediatric population from diseases against which there is an effective and safe vaccination program. Nottinghamshire while slightly above the national average is well below the levels needed for herd immunity.

What is the approach and strategy of public health in Nottinghamshire to strengthen and increase vaccine uptake for children in our county?

Response from the Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Board, Councillor Dr John Doddy

It's not very often that I start off with challenge of a public health emergency, but it is a big question, and he (Councillor Wright) points out quite rightly that vaccination levels have decreased and that probably exists since about 2017 and throughout Covid and then thereafter we've dropped off from the levels required for herd immunity just trickling down such that now, although Nottinghamshire is a good player and we're better than most, we still don't reach the threshold of vaccination population to keep everybody else safe. I suppose MMR (Measles Mumps and Rubella vaccination) is around 93% and needs to be around 95% and that's just with the first one. The second vaccination is about 88%.

So, we're doing well, but we're not quite there, and what's the importance of the fact that it's drifting off, it's still sounds quite good? The reality is that, as mentioned in the question, that we're looking for herd immunity. Herd immunity is that ability to give protection to people who haven't been vaccinated and for certain diseases is higher than others and the highest one of all is measles, that the infectiousness of measles decides that we need to have 95%, which is really high. And why is it really important that we get that? Because some people can't have a vaccination. People who are

immunosuppressed, newborn children, people who've got cancer and undergoing treatment. There are a lot of people out there that can't actually vaccinate themselves. They can't be vaccinated for allergy purposes etcetera, and it beholds the rest of us to keep those people safe. It beholds us to bring that up to the 95%. And if you take out those people, that 95% is actually an even higher threshold, so it really is a challenge to actually achieve that.

Measles, one of the most infectious diseases known to man, has a reproductive rate of one in 15, so if you put a person with measles in a room, under laboratory circumstances, they'll infect 15 other people. You will remember in Covid times we were talking about reproduction rates of one and two and three. That gives you an idea of how hugely infectious it is. So, the fact is that number one, vaccinations are falling off, number two, we're losing the herd immunity, and herd does refer to cows as pointed out because that's where it was first noted before Edward Jenner noted the milkmaids who had less smallpox and then developed his vaccine. So what does that mean that the fact that we've got less herd immunity? It means more disease, and what are those diseases? Well, we've had outbreaks in the last year or so of measles in the Midlands. We've had deaths from measles. We've had a death of a baby from hooping cough because the mother wasn't vaccinated by it. We've had outbreaks of whooping cough, I myself in my career had seen a young person die from chickenpox, which is a horrible, horrible way to die, and therefore these diseases are reemerging and as I was asked in the question, that these are preventable diseases therefore they are preventable deaths, and therefore as they emerge they do become mandatory for us to intervene on a public health level, on a public health crisis level to actually reduce those deaths.

It's a strange indictment of society that the last disease that we actually eradicated from the planet was smallpox, some 45 years ago, the last case was somewhere in Somalia, and since then we've had the opportunity to eradicate disease and in 2016 the UK was a measles-free society, we hadn't had a case for a year, and therefore we had in our grasp the fact that we had no measles then since 2016 we've allowed that to inact more disease.

So if we look at that and we say to ourselves what is the origin of that, where's it coming from, because in order to answer the question how you address a public health emergency you have to understand where it's coming from and there's a number of areas in which we've been working with public health to do that. We've had such things as outreach clinics where we've gone with MMR vaccines and done catch up programmes. We've gone round communities, we've done programmes of education, we've educated frontline staff to make them confident and advocating vaccines for people and we have trained up Practice Nurses etcetera in vaccination, as well as doing a campaign on pregnant women to get them vaccinated against whooping cough.

We put a lot of effort in on the front line, one must remember that although we have a Public Health Protection team at County Hall, we do not administer a single vaccine. Would I like that to change? Would I like us to bring those services back in house and start to become a clinical provider of vaccinations? Absolutely I would, but that won't be today.

So, if we look at it, we look at complacency, people have become complacent. They think if somebody else gets vaccinated I don't have to get vaccinated. Convenience, that's the biggie. That's how in the modern world in which we live can people access things better and better and the answer to that could have come down in the 10-year plan where neighbourhoods are going to have centres which will be open 12 hours a day six days a week so people will be able to access the opportunity for vaccination particularly those in the most deprived areas which have got the greatest health inequalities. Conspiracy, we have heard it mentioned that there was talk about Covid vaccine being responsible for certain royal's prostate cancer etcetera and wherever we see conspiracy theories, we must sort of call it out, challenge it and put out proper information for the public etcetera. We do lots of campaigns, we put out lots of information etcetera and we work to inform the public to give them confidence. The public must be confident. They must understand that what they're doing for their children is the right thing to do. Put that on top of the fact that next January we bring out a new vaccine called Varicella for chicken pox. You have measles mumps and rubella and Varicella all in one jab and we'll be trying to convince people to have that jab for their children going forward.

So yes, we recognise a fall off in vaccinations. Yes, we recognise a fall in herd immunity. Yes, we recognise the emergence of significant disease that's killing our population in an unnecessary manner. And yes, Nottinghamshire County Council through its public health protection department recognises that as a challenge and we are doing our best to meet that challenge, but an awful lot more needs to be done.

Question to the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment from Councillor Stuart Matthews

Can the Portfolio Holder provide the latest information from Network Rail and Via with regards to the start date for the Kirk Hill Road closures; inform me and Councillor Andy Brown if all weight restrictions, road closures and diversion signs have been agreed and are ready to go; and inform us what information has been sent to satnav providers and haulage companies etc. so they can plan going forward?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment, Councillor Bert Bingham

As you know those works were long planned by Network Rail, originally linked to the electrification of the East Midlands Railways which are now not going ahead, and without any warning to anybody they brought those works forward. So, that's simply what's happened. That's not in the control of the County Council, although officers and Via have worked with and consulted with Network Rail to work out diversion signage and all of that and I do happen to know obviously that you managed to get to a Network Rail drop in centre last evening when I couldn't get there, at a Parish Council and you might be able to update us on what they've said there. But, we certainly will be following through with officers and Via to make sure that the public is informed of where diversions are because this is going to be a major disruption in the area. I think we all appreciate that.

Question to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health from Councillor Janette Barlow

On 6th June 2025 it was announced by the Reform administration that the Local Communities Fund had been postponed, with no official date for the scheme listed. As we enter September, with by-elections months in the past, we are still awaiting news that the scheme is going to run for the 2025/26 year.

The Local Communities Fund is one of the few ways Nottinghamshire County Council directly supports our villages, our schools, and our community groups. It helps parish halls stay open, sports clubs stay affordable, and volunteers keep doing the vital work that government can't do alone.

There is uncertainty that the fund may get swept up in the DOGE-like schemes that seek to save money, despite the long-term impact it could have on our most vulnerable and desperate residents.

Will you confirm, here and now, that the Local Communities Fund will be reinstated this year, with reassurances that it will continue at its present scale for years to come?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health, Councillor Dawn Justice

The Local Communities Fund, known as the LCF, is an important way to recognise the huge contribution that the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) has made and will continue to make to the lives of our residents. The importance of the Voluntary and Community Sector relates back to some of the comments made in the debate this morning regarding the Youth Justice Strategy delivered by Councillor Green.

The LCF is a very important discretionary financial contribution to support the delivery of projects that help to deliver the strategic aims of the County Council, investing in our communities to help Nottinghamshire thrive.

There have been some delays in opening the fund this year as you allude to in the question which were partially due to Purdah. Now this time is over and preparations are taking place to open the 2025/26 LCF in mid-October 2025. The fund does not need to be reinstated, it is merely that it's opening has been postponed. If anyone would like to be notified when the LCF launches, then please email LCF@nottscc.gov.uk and request to be added to the waiting list.

We are currently evaluating the impact of the current LCF and will define what the longer-term approach to the LCF will be to support the delivery of the ambitions of the new Strategic Plan by April 2026.

Question to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources from Councillor Stuart Bestwick

Reform has made bold and sweeping claims about delivering significant savings and transforming the Council's budget. However, residents across Nottinghamshire are still waiting to see any benefit from these promises.

With this in mind, could the Cabinet Member please explain why the Reform administration chose to borrow £9 million during Period Three?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, Councillor Stuart Matthews

The first bit about claiming significant savings and transforming the Council budget, I think you perhaps saw in the national press yesterday Reform Councils have saved £100 million in the period. But we all believe what we read in the newspaper, don't we, and I would that that your first question, what are we saving? I think after the eight years of your Administration, it'll be very difficult for me to find a lot more money. But, I work on logic in my life and I was told by an officer a couple of months ago and I won't mention if it was a lady or a man, but they told me, Stuart, never make promises until you can deliver them, then you can say the promises you're making and that's what we'll do.

Now, onto the second question, I can assume Councillor Bestwick is referring to the Period 3 monitoring report that I presented to Overview Committee earlier this month. An ample time for his group colleagues to ask the same question at the committee. Nowhere in the Period 3 monitoring report did it state that Reform UK or should have said that the Council has chosen to borrow £9 million more during that period. I think he has mistakenly taken the wording at paragraph 35 of the report that states

"It is anticipated that borrowing in 2025/26 will increase by £9.0m from the forecast in the Budget Report 2025/26 (Council 27/02/25). This increase is as a consequence of:

- £18.6m of net slippage of capital allocations from 2024/25 to 2025/26 and financing adjustments funded by capital allocation
- Net slippage in 2025/26 of £9.6m of capital expenditure funded by capital allocation identified as part of the departmental capital monitoring exercise."

For those doing the maths, that is £18.8 million less £9.6 million which is £9 million. That's the £9 million. This means that as part of last year's management accounts, last year's management accounts I hasten to add, some of the capital spend that slipped into this year along side the identified borrowing related to that spend. It would be wrong to state that the Council has taken an extra £9 million of borrowing in Period 3, a bit of an error I think on your part. I will also remind colleagues that what this really means is the Council requirements to borrow in this year is great than that when the Council approved the budget last February, not now.

I will also remind colleagues that just because the need to borrow to finance the capital programme has increased does not necessarily mean we have to borrow more. Stay with me on this. Using reserves and grants enables the Council to avoid the need to borrow. This is referred to as under-borrowing, effectively using internal resources to avoid external borrowing. If Councillor Bestwick was to turn to appendix F of the Management Accounts, specifically table one and paragraph 3.6, he would see the level of internal borrowing's done at £251 million at the end of March 2025. But we must remember the use of internal borrowing must eventually be borrowed from an external source, for example, Public Works Loan Board. As required by the Capital

Programme, the timing will depend on many factors including interest rates, future capital spend and the spending of reserves, plus of course additional savings. The Section 151 Officer and his finance team set out the expected need to borrow and the timing of such in the budget report approved by that Full Council last February. Maybe one of Councillor Bestwick's colleagues could show him this, especially when you consider that this was the last budget before they lost the election in May.

So, for the record Councillor Bestwick, we did not take any additional borrowing in Period 3, we will not be increasing the Council external borrowing this year and we are still planning to reduce our debt by £10 million in 2025/26.

Councillor Bestwick, I'll again state that my door is always open to you. I've offered you the opportunity four or five times to come and sit with me and talk things so we can do this properly, rather than trying to score points with these sorts of questions, why don't we talk together on how we can improve the finance of the Council. This is my genuine offer to talk to you.

Question to the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment from Councillor Bruce Laughton

The Labour Mayor recently posted a video on social media with the Labour Leader of Newark and Sherwood District Council in relation to the long-delayed improvements to Ollerton Roundabout and the A614. They appear to be taking credit for lobbying the Government to get this project 'over the line'.

Given that the scheme has already faced more than a year of delays after being paused by the Labour Government, can the Cabinet Member confirm whether we can now assume the scheme will finally be going ahead?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment, Councillor Bert Bingham

We actually received the news while we were in session this morning, that EMCCA (East Midlands Combined County Authority) have announced that the DfT (Department for Transport) has released a further £24 million towards the project. Due to the inflation really that you referred to there is still a gap there to be filled and we will be lobbying EMCCA hard to fill that gap. I don't know the exact amount but it's going to be in the single millions, we hope at the moment, and it's the start of a long journey to sign up all the agreements, legal, contractual, financial and to actually start, you know before we can put a spade in the ground even though it is known as a spade ready project. So, we'll fill in the details in the next couple of days hopefully and know more, well maybe a few weeks, but keep in touch and visit me as required to keep the discussion going.

Question to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Sam Smith

It has been widely reported that the Leader of Reform UK Nigel Farage would be speaking to you at the Reform Party Conference regarding your recent decisions.

Can the Leader please update the Council on the outcome of that discussion, and will there be any changes to Council policy as a result?

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mick Barton

Yes, I did meet the Leader at the conference, we had a lovely conversation and at the end of that conversation we said we're long overdue to have a pint. The last one we had was in May.

Regarding policy changes, no there won't be.

Question to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health from Councillor James Gamble

The Clipstone Headstocks Museum, based under the tallest mining headstocks in the world and on the historic site of Britain's largest army training camp, has recently opened its doors to schools, offering customisable educational experiences aligned with the national curriculum for children aged 5 and upwards.

The museum celebrates Nottinghamshire's rich heritage, including world-changing inventions linked to the county such as the steam roller and tarmac road, traffic lights, MRI scanner, HP sauce, and more. With military and industrial exhibits, and strong links to the county's mining history, the site offers a unique learning environment.

Can the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Public Health Dawn Justice outline how the Council can assist Clipstone Headstocks Museum in promoting and facilitating school visits from Nottinghamshire schools and other groups and what support may be available to ensure that local people benefit from access to this important part of our county's heritage?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health, Councillor Dawn Justice

I'm afraid the answer will be quite as long as the question. Clipstone Headstocks Museum is a hugely important part of our county's heritage, and I share the view that it should be accessible to schools and local groups so that young people and communities can connect with that history.

As part of our wider support for schools, our Outdoor Education and Environmental Service will offer support to the Museum helping them explore opportunities to promote and facilitate school visits. This includes looking at how they can make use of existing networks and programmes to help the Museum extend its reach and ensure that local people, particularly our young people, can benefit from what the site has to offer.

We are keen to see the Headstocks Museum thrive and will continue to work with them to ensure this important part of Nottinghamshire's story is celebrated and shared.

Question to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Asset Management from Councillor Penny Gowland

We are all aware of the shocking level of economic inequality across our County, and we are acutely aware of the impact that this has on residents in terms of health and opportunities. We know that the Council considerers variations in levels of need in planning its services. However, can you please explain what the Council is doing to help to reduce this economic inequality, directly or indirectly?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Asset Management, Councillor James Walker-Gurley

Thank you for highlighting the scale of economic inequality in our County and the fact that where someone is born, the school they attend, or their family background can limit their life chances. Greatly improving this is central to the Council's work. We are focussed, amongst others, on three key areas.

1) Education and skills – ensuring people can access high quality education, gain the right qualifications, and have opportunities to train and progress throughout their careers.

2) Employment – working directly with major employers and partners to create routes into good jobs. For example, on my visit recently, I think it was last week, we saw at Amazon how they employ over 2,000 local residents, offering flexible working and progression opportunities.

3) Targeted support – working with our district and borough partners who are delivering programmes through UK shared prosperity funding, providing tailored support to communities most in need.

Looking ahead, most future funding will be directed through EMCCA (East Midlands Combined County Authority) where Councillor Justice and I represent the County Council on the Skills and Employment Committee. We are committed to ensuring that this investment is focussed on reducing inequality. Current funded programmes include Connect to Work, helping people back into sustainable employment; Youth Guarantee Trailblazer, supporting young people to re-engage with education, training or work; and Youth Action Initiative, listening directly to young people and shaping provision around what they say they need.

Through these partnerships, funded programmes and targeted interventions, this Council is working hard to close the economic gap. Reducing inequality will remain a clear priority in the new Council Plan.