

Scrutiny Annual Report 2024/25



**Nottinghamshire
County Council**

Introduction from the Chairman of the Overview Committee

Welcome to the Scrutiny Annual Report that provides a summary of the work undertaken by Overview Committee and the three select committees during 2024/25. The report details how the Council's Scrutiny function has worked to support delivery of the work and ambitions of the Council in working towards and delivering a stronger, more prosperous Nottinghamshire for all of our residents.

This particular Annual Report marks the conclusion of the activities of Overview and Scrutiny over the last three years of the previous Council administration. As such, I would like to thank all the Scrutiny members, coopted members, members of Cabinet and the officers who supported the delivery of meaningful Scrutiny over the last three years. I would also particularly like to thank the previous Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview Committee for their hard work and commitment to building and establishing an effective scrutiny function at the Council since the reintroduction Executive decision making and Scrutiny in 2022.

2024/25 was a busy year for scrutiny. During the year, 19 scrutiny committee meetings were held, and five detailed task and finish reviews were completed. This work has played a vital role in holding decision makers to account; reviewing policies and strategies; as well as considering how the Council is delivering on its commitments to the residents of Nottinghamshire. Throughout the year Overview Committee and the three select committees continued to focus on the critical issues being faced by residents and communicates across Nottinghamshire Council and have provided constructive input to improve outcomes for our residents.

Important work carried out by Scrutiny this year has included:

- the detailed budget scrutiny that was carried ahead of the budget and Council Tax being agreed by Council.
- carrying out a review around the Blue Badge application service that made recommendations on how the delivery of this service to residents could be further improved.
- scrutinising the progress being made by the Nottinghamshire local area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Partnership in implementing improvements to the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND.
- reviewing the work carried out by the Council in advance of the severe flooding caused by Storm Babet in October 2023 and making recommendations on how the Council can work to best support communities impacted by flooding.
- examining how technological solutions are supporting more residents to be able to be able to live more independently in their own homes for longer.

The next year will be an exceptionally busy one for us as Scrutiny seeks to continue to support the delivery of the ambitions of the Council and I look forward to working with all Scrutiny members, Cabinet members and officers to deliver high quality Scrutiny throughout 2025/26.

Councillor Cathy Mason

Chairman of Overview Committee

What is scrutiny?

Scrutiny aims to ensure that the services delivered by the Council best meet the needs of Nottinghamshire's residents. Scrutiny acts as the check and balance to the Council's Executive decision makers, the Cabinet, by contributing to policy review and development, holding the Cabinet and delivery partners to account for decisions and performance and by investigating issues that matter to residents. Scrutiny is an essential part of ensuring that the Council remains transparent, accountable, and open—resulting in improved public policies, services and outcomes.

Who is involved?

Any Councillor who is not a member of the Cabinet can participate. Committees also have co-opted members and dedicated officer support. Cabinet Members, senior officers, and representatives of partner organisations are invited to attend meetings to discuss issues.

What kinds of things can scrutiny look at?

At the start of the municipal year, Overview Committee and the three select committees create their work programmes by each drawing up a list of possible items that its members it would like to look at over the coming year. From this long lists members then prioritise which issues that they would like to look in detail. Due to the time commitment and effort required to examine issues meaningfully it is not always possible to include all items in the scrutiny work programmes. When agreeing which items to look at, members will consider whether the issue:

- is one where can scrutiny make a meaningful impact.
- impacts on residents and communities across Nottinghamshire.
- supports the ambitions of the Nottinghamshire Plan.

Is scrutiny political?

Members across all political groups participate and look objectively at issues, basing their findings on evidence.

What happens in Scrutiny Committee meetings?

Scrutiny committee meetings are formal and are held in public. They provide a forum where councillors can:

- discuss written information they have received from the council and external bodies.
- hear evidence from witnesses, which could include other councillors, council officers, experts, representatives from other organisations and members of the public.
- question witnesses to gain a better understanding of the issues.
- draw conclusions from their discussions and the evidence examined, in the form of an outcome.

What is the role of each Committee?

The Council's Constitution details the role of each committee in detail. The main responsibilities of each committee are:

Overview Committee

- To scrutinise and review any matter under the responsibility of the Chief Executive's Department.
- Coordinate the work of three select committees (including approving each committee's work programme) to ensure the time of select committees is used effectively and efficiently.

- Scrutinise the implementation of the Nottinghamshire Plan.
- Support Cabinet in the creation of the Council's Budget.
- Consider valid Call-in requests.
- From May 2025, Overview Committee will also be scrutinising the delivery of Public Health, a responsibility that was previously carried out by the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee.

Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee

- To scrutinise and review any matter under the responsibility of the Adult Social Care and Health Department.

Children and Families Select Committee

- To scrutinise and review any matter under the responsibility of the Children and Families Department.

Place Select Committee

- To scrutinise and review any matter under the responsibility of the Place Department.
- To carry out the Council's statutory responsibility for flood risk management scrutiny.
- To carry out the Council's statutory responsibility for crime and disorder scrutiny.

What are Task and finish groups?

Task and finish groups are informal, usually small and time-limited bodies that are established by Overview Committee or one of the three Select Committee to undertake a specific piece of scrutiny work and report back to that committee with their findings and recommendations. Once the recommendations have been approved by the full committee they are passed to Cabinet for their consideration.

What is Call-in?

Call-in provides a mechanism for councillors to intervene when they feel that a decision being made by the executive needs to be revisited (or possibly changed) because they do not believe the principles of good decision-making have been followed. It provides a key check and balance in the leader/cabinet system of governance.

What about Health Scrutiny?

In Nottinghamshire, the Council's Statutory Health Scrutiny Committee that examines the delivery of externally delivered health services across the County, such as NHS dental services and access to GP's, operates independently from the Overview Committee and the three select committees. Coordination of work programmes between the committees does take place to ensure that the work of the Health Scrutiny Committee and of the other committees are aligned and are not duplicated. Further information on the work of the Health Scrutiny Committee can be accessed [here](#).

The Nottinghamshire Plan

The Nottinghamshire Plan is the Council's 10-year vision for a healthy, prosperous, and greener Nottinghamshire for everyone.

This vision is supported by nine ambitions and commitments to 2025 which act as a framework for all County Council activity. These ambitions currently are:

- Helping our people live healthier, more independent lives.
- Supporting communities and families
- Keeping children, vulnerable adults, and communities safe.
- Building skills that help people to get good local jobs.
- Strengthening businesses and creating more good-quality jobs.
- Making Nottinghamshire somewhere people love to live, work and visit.
- Attracting investment in infrastructure, the economy, and green growth.
- Improving transport and digital connections.
- Protecting the environment and reducing our carbon footprint.

A tenth ambition "A forward-looking and resilient Council" describes the Council's ambitions and commitments in terms of internal corporate improvement.

During 2024/25 the Overview Committee reviewed the delivery of the Annual Delivery Plan and accompanying Assurance Report that detailed how the activities to deliver on the ambitions of the Nottinghamshire Plan were progressing. With the majority of actions contained within the Annual Delivery Plan and Assurance Report being 'On Track' or 'Completed', the focus of Scrutiny has been on the specific areas that were not achieving the expected levels of performance or were behind schedule and sought assurances that focussed activity was in place to get these small number activities back on track

Throughout 2025/26 Overview Committee will continue to review how activity across the Council is delivering on the ambitions of the Nottinghamshire Plan.

The following sections provide a summary of the work undertaken by the Overview Committee and the three select committees during 2024/25 and details how the Council's Scrutiny function has worked to support delivery of the ambitions of the Nottinghamshire Plan.

Helping our people live healthier, more independent lives

Day Opportunities Strategy

In 2022, the Council introduced a new five-year Day Opportunities Strategy that set out a future vision for an inclusive society where mainstream leisure and employment support is accessible to people who access care and support. At the March meeting of the Adult Social Care and Public Health Select Committee, members examined the work that was being carried out in implementing the strategy and how this activity was supporting residents with additional needs to access high quality day opportunities that met their individual needs.

Blue Badges

The Blue Badge Scheme is a vital service that supports individuals with severe mobility issues, both visible and hidden by enabling them to park closer to their destinations. Each year the Council processes around 25,000 Blue Badge applications. As part of their Work Programming process during the summer of 2024, members of Overview Committee expressed concern on how

accessible and user-friendly applying for a Blue Badge was for residents since the application process had moved fully online, with paper applications no longer being accepted.

During the Autumn, members carried out a detailed task and finish review to examine the application and issuing processes for Blue Badges and to consider what further improvements could be made in order to ensure that residents received the best possible level of service when applying for a badge. Throughout the review process members learnt about the substantial work had been carried out over recent years to streamline and develop processes that would provide the most efficient and customer focussed service possible to residents.

The review made 10 recommendations on how the service offered could be further improved including:

- Maintaining a pilot activity enabling residents who are aged at least 75 years and who already have a Blue Badge to be automatically entitled to a new Blue Badge when they reapply.
- carrying further work and engagement activity with community groups across Nottinghamshire to enable them to provide support and guidance to residents who are not able to complete an online or phone application independently.
- exploring how information on whether a resident's condition is degenerative or will not improve could be recorded in order to enable future applications to be processed more swiftly.

The recommendations from the review were approved at the January meeting of Overview Committee with a full response to the recommendations being received from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources at the March 2024 meeting of Cabinet. All the recommendations from the review were accepted. During 2025/26 Overview Committee will be receiving a progress report on how the review recommendations are being implemented to further develop and enhance the Blue Badge service that is provided Nottinghamshire residents.

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Sexual Health Service

In October 2024, the new Nottingham, and Nottinghamshire Sexual Health Services was launched as a single service to deliver sexual health services across both the City and the County. This service is jointly commissioned with Nottingham City Council and provides all levels of sexual health care: from health promotion and education about sexual health and wellbeing, to testing and treatment of STIs and the provision of comprehensive contraception care

At the March meeting of the Adult Social Care and Public Health Select Committee, members received a report that provided an overview of the implementation of the new service and examined how it was supporting residents to maintain good sexual health and reduce inequalities in sexual health outcomes for Nottinghamshire residents.

Technology enabled care

Since 2007 the Council has provided a Technology Enabled Care (TEC) service to help adults maintain their independence at home. The service now supports around 4,600 people through a range of TEC solutions, including:

- Telecare – a range of sensors that can detect risks such as falls, incontinence, or a person with dementia leaving their home at an unusual time and which automatically alerts staff at a 24-hour monitoring service.

- **Reminder Aids** – to support people with memory problems to complete daily tasks such as taking medication, drinking regularly or locking up before they go to bed.

At the March meeting of the Adult Social Care and Public Health Select Committee, members welcomed how the use and development of TEC was having a positive impact on the daily lives of residents by enabling them to remain living in their own homes for longer with 82% of people receiving TEC saying that they felt more independent. As part of the wide ranging discussion at the meeting members sought and gained assurances around the Council's capacity and ability to be able offer TEC solutions to more residents and on how the TEC offer could be expanded to include further services as technology developed.

Supporting effective hospital discharges

At their March meeting, Adult Social Care and Public Health Select Committee members examined the progress that was being made in reducing the time taken to support people to go home from hospital as soon as they were well enough and how the National Discharge Grant was being used to support partners in achieving improved outcomes for residents. At the meeting members considered the continued progress being made in reducing the time being taken to discharge patients who were well enough to go home as well as the remaining challenges and how these were being addressed. Members also examined how partnership working by the Council with health services was enabling the delivery of effective, timely and safe hospital discharges.

Public Health Outcomes in Nottinghamshire

In November, Adult Social Care and Public Health Select Committee members received a report that provided information on the public health outcomes experienced by Nottinghamshire residents. At the meeting members sought further information and assurance on the activities that were being carried out to improve the public health outcomes of all Nottinghamshire residents, particularly of those residents who lived in areas of higher deprivation or who had other health disadvantages. Members also asked questions to gain further understanding of how data on public health outcomes was being used across the Council to support the effective development and delivery of impactful public health activity across Nottinghamshire.

During 2025/26 members will be using this report to identify further areas of Public Health activity that would benefit from more detailed scrutiny.

Progress and implementation of Prevention approach

The Council has a statutory duty to promote residents' wellbeing by providing services that reduce people and carers' need for support, and which contribute towards preventing or delaying the development of care needs. In November, members of the Adult Social Care and Public Health Select Committee examined the work that was being carried out by the Council to develop a new Prevention Framework, and which would support more residents to be healthier and to live more independently for longer.

Supporting communities and families

Healthy Families Programme

The Nottinghamshire Healthy Families Programme is a public health nursing service that supports families to give their children the best start in life. In September, scrutiny members examined the work that was being carried out to deliver the Healthy Families Programme once the current contract

with the Council's current delivery partner ended. Throughout 2024/25 scrutiny members also received regular progress reports on the work that was being carried out to ensure the continued delivery of an effective and impactful service to families once the current contract ended.

Household Support Fund

The Household Support Fund (HSF), which is provided by the Government and administered by the Council in partnership with the district and borough councils, offers help to Nottinghamshire residents facing financial hardship by providing grants and other types of financial support.

In March, members of Overview Committee attended a briefing session on the delivery of the latest phase of the HSF funding.

During this meeting, members expressed their support for:

- how learning from the implementation of the previous Phases of the HSF would be used to inform the delivery of this latest phase.
- the continued funding to the Citizens Advice Bureau to support the delivery of additional advice and support services.
- the flexibility of the eligibility criteria that would enable the delivery of support to residents in immediate financial need.

Members agreed that once this phase of the HSF had been implemented that it would be beneficial for information to be provided to all members so they would be able to signpost and support residents who may be entitled to access HSF support. Members also agreed that further work should be carried out to further develop partnerships across community and voluntary groups to support them to be able to make referrals for support on behalf of residents.

Family Hubs

In March, the Children and Families Select Committee examined the work that was being carried out to develop Family Hub Networks across Nottinghamshire. Family Hubs bring together the delivery of services that provide a range of help and support to families from pregnancy right through into early adulthood. Support offered through Family Hub Networks includes preparing for a baby, child development, parenting support, health and wellbeing, relationships and communication, finances and employment.

At the meeting members highlighted the importance of effectively communicating with communities the wide range of services that were provided through the Family Hub Networks, with a particular focus of communication being towards communicating with the families who might not be aware of the full range of services or who could most benefit from the services offered. Members agreed that Family Hubs had the potential to significantly improve outcomes for children right across Nottinghamshire, particularly for those in the most deprived areas of the county.

During 2025/26 members will be examining how the continued roll out of Family Hub Networks are having a positive impact on children and families.

Early Years Provision of Childcare

With the offer of free childcare places being expanded by the Government to include more children and families, the Children and Families Select Committee examined the work that was being carried out by the Council to ensure that there were sufficient childcare places across Nottinghamshire to meet demand. From the discussion at the December meeting, members learnt about the processes

that were in place to effectively monitor the provision and uptake of childcare places. Members were also satisfied that there were sufficient places available to meet demand and that detailed plans were in place to meet any challenges created by the increased offer of childcare to more families.

Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs)

During 2022/23 members of the Children and Families Select Committee carried out a task and finish review around the delivery of Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) by the Council.

The review made twelve recommendations on areas of EHCP service delivery including:

- ensuring the most impactful use of available resources.
- maximising the opportunities and benefits of partnership working with schools.
- increasing the number of Educational Psychologists employed by the Council.
- ensuring that parents and carers have a clear and accessible point of contact at the Council for queries and support during the process of applying for an EHCP.

The report and its recommendations were considered by Cabinet in December 2023 where all of recommendations from the review were accepted. In October, the Children and Families Select Committee received a progress report on the work that had been carried out in response to the review's recommendations in improving the experiences of children and families who have requested, or already had, an EHCP in place. Members welcomed the significant progress that had been made since the completion of the review in improving processes around the delivery of EHCPs and how these changes were having a positive impact on children and their families. Members also welcomed how the further development and implementation of a needs based approach around delivering EHCPs had supported the Council and other SEND partnership members in working together with families to meet the individual and specific needs of each child or young person with SEND in Nottinghamshire.

Partnership progress in improving the experiences and outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

In early 2023 Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspected the Nottinghamshire local area to assess how effective the local education, health and care services were at identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The local area inspection highlighted significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND in Nottinghamshire with the partnership being tasked to address these concerns urgently. The two areas of priority action that were identified for improvement were the timeliness of the delivery of Education Health and Care Plans and access to therapies that were predominantly, but not entirely, provided by the NHS Service. A further area of improvement that had been highlighted was around governance.

At every meeting of the Children and Families Select Committee members have received reports that have detailed the progress being made by the Nottinghamshire local area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Partnership in implementing the required improvements to the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND. These reports have enabled members of the committee to scrutinise and gain assurance on the activities that continue to be carried out to make positive changes to the experiences of young people with SEND and their families in Nottinghamshire.

To oversee SEND improvement activity in Nottinghamshire, a SEND partnership improvement board was set up. This is independently Chaired by Dame Christine Lenehan, who with over 35 years' experience, is nationally recognised for her expertise in working with children and young

people with SEND and families. During the last year, Dame Christine has attended two meetings of the Children and Families Select Committee. These meetings have provided members with a unique opportunity to gain further information and assurance on how the improvements in services are being delivered across the partnership. Members were also able to benefit from Dame Christine's detailed understanding of the ongoing challenges being faced by councils nationwide in delivering SEND services that are both sustainable and that also met the needs of children, young people, and their families.

During 2025/26 the Children and Families Select Committee will continue to closely scrutinise on the improvements being made across the SEND partnership.

Elective Home Education

Elective Home Education is when parents or carers choose to educate their children at home rather than sending them to school full-time. In March, the Children and Families Select Committee looked how the Council was delivering support to families who had made a choice to educate at home and how the Council was meeting its statutory duties in this area. Members also examined how the Council was preparing for the changes that are being introduced by the Government on how records of children who are being educated outside of schools should be maintained and monitored.

Keeping children, vulnerable adults, and communities safe

Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report

The Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP) provides the safeguarding arrangements under which safeguarding partners and relevant agencies work together to coordinate children's safeguarding services across Nottinghamshire.

In October the Children and Families Select Committee received the NSCP's annual report for 2023/24. Members took this opportunity to examine how the NSCP was fulfilling its duties and how the NSCP was coordinating the multi-agency arrangements that were in place to deliver effective safeguarding activity that would protect children and young people across Nottinghamshire. After an in-depth and detailed discussion, members were confident that the NSCP was fulfilling its duties but sought further information and assurance around:

- how the learning outcomes from the four rapid reviews that had been completed during the year would be embedded in work processes to further develop effective safeguarding practices.
- how families on a moving on plan which had followed the end of a child protection planning period were supported to sustain the positive changes that had been made.

From the further information that was provided, members gained the assurance that focussed and impactful activity was being carried out in these important areas of the partnership's work.

The Children and Families Select Committee will continue the important work of scrutinising safeguarding activity for children and young people when it receives the 2024/25 NSCP annual report at its October 2025 meeting.

Nottinghamshire's approach to tackling child exploitation

Child exploitation is when someone uses a child for financial gain, sexual gratification, labour or personal advantage. At the December meeting of the Children and Families Select Committee, members examined the work that is carried out across Nottinghamshire in tackling Child Exploitation and in supporting its victims and survivors. At the meeting members learnt that during 2023/24 there

had been a reduction in both the overall number of missing from home incidents as well as of child exploitation cases and welcomed how this decline was evidence of the effectiveness of the measures that had been implemented to tackle Child Exploitation across Nottinghamshire.

After an in-depth and detailed discussion, that also involved a representative from Nottinghamshire Police's Childhood Risk of Exploitation Team, members were assured that the Council, the Police, and the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Partnership had strong processes in place to tackle child exploitation, but sought further information and assurance around:

- the prevention measures that were taking place with schools and what more could schools do to strengthen the work already taking place.
- the work that was carried out with neighbouring local authorities in tackling "county lines" activities and exploitation.

From the further information that was provided, members were assured that focussed and impactful activity was in place in dealing with these important issues.

Provision of Youth Services

The Council has a long and proud history of directly delivering high quality youth services that make a positive impact on young people and their communities right across Nottinghamshire. In December the Children and Families Select Committee examined the delivery and priorities of the Youth Service across Nottinghamshire and how the services that were being delivered. Members also examined how services were being further developed in response the positive outcome of the LGA Peer Challenge that had been carried out in April 2023.

At the meeting members praised the work of the Youth Service in supporting young people to achieve their full potential. Members also discussed and sought assurances on how the Youth Service was embedded within the wider work of the Council and how it played a key role in identifying children at risk of exploitation, keeping children out of care and stopping breakdowns in relations between foster children and their foster parents.

The committee also examined in detail how the feedback that had been received during the LGA Peer Challenge was now being used to shape how Youth Services were delivered so as to provide the best possible level of support to young people and their communities.

Recruitment and retention of Foster Carers

The Council's Fostering Service has been facing significant challenges in recent years in being able to recruit and retain enough foster carers to care for our looked after children. In the Autumn, members of the Children Families Select Committee carried out a task and finish review that examined how the Council is working to increase the number of in-house foster carers. Having more of our own foster carers will not only provide a financial saving to the Council but will most importantly help to support the delivery of the best outcomes for our looked after children. The review group also considered what further initiatives and activities could be introduced to support the delivery of this vital work.

During the review process, members sought to understand the current challenges being faced by the Council in recruiting and retaining foster carers. As a result of the review, members the review made a series of recommendations on how the Council could work to encourage more people to become, and very importantly, to remain as foster carers with the Council around:

- making further enhancements to the Council's payment and benefits package for foster carers.
- ensuring that our foster carers feel valued and supported in providing such a vital service.
- reviewing the Council's Human Resources policies and practices to ensure that they are fully "Fostering Friendly".
- hosting a variety of high profile recognition events to further champion and publicise the vital role and achievements of foster carers across Nottinghamshire.

The report and its findings were endorsed by the Children and Families Select Committee in March and will be considered by Cabinet later this year.

Nottinghamshire Adults Safeguarding Board Annual Report and Plan

The Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Board (NSAB) is made up of representatives from organisations including, Nottinghamshire Police, the Crown Prosecution Service, the NHS, local councils, and voluntary organisations. Its main responsibility is to get these organisations working together to help adults who may have been abused and to help prevent adults being abused.

In November the Adult Social Care and Public Health Select Committee received the NSAB annual report for 2023/24 and took the opportunity to discuss with the Independent Chair how the NSAB was working to deliver on its strategic priorities and ensure that effective safeguarding practices were embedded across the partnership. After an in-depth and varied discussion members were confident that the NSAB was effectively delivering adult safeguarding across Nottinghamshire but sought further assurance around the activity was taking around delivering safeguarding in prisons and how concerns raised through whistleblowing were being used to further inform the priorities and activities of the Board.

The Adult Social Care and Public Health Select Committee will continue the important work of scrutinising safeguarding activity for adults when it receives the 2024/25 NSAB annual report later this year.

Crime and Disorder - Safer Nottinghamshire Board

Legislation requires that Councils to appoint a Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee that must meet at least once a year to look at crime and disorder issues. In Nottinghamshire the Place Select Committee carries out this role.

At their March meeting, Place Select Committee examined the implementation of the Safer Nottinghamshire Board's crime and disorder strategy, the Nottinghamshire Community Safety Agreement 2023-2025. Members also took the opportunity to discuss and examine the priorities of, and the work that was being carried out to develop a refreshed version of the Nottinghamshire Community Safety Agreement.

The Place Select Committee will continue to deliver its role in delivering crime and disorder scrutiny by receiving further reports on the delivery of the Nottinghamshire Community Safety Agreement during 2025/26.

Building skills that help people to get good local jobs

Strengthening businesses and creating more good-quality jobs

Employment and Skills Framework

Employment and skills are a key ambition of the Nottinghamshire Plan and includes actions that are focused on building the skills that help people get and sustain good jobs. In September, and as part of the development of the Council's Employment and Skills Framework, scrutiny members had attended a briefing session to learn more about the objectives of the Framework and to make suggestions on its contents and focus before the final document was considered for approval by the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Asset Management.

Members who attended the briefing agreed that the framework provided a high level and strategic, but clear iteration of the Council's role and ambitions in relation driving employment and skills activity across Nottinghamshire. Members also agreed that the contents of the action plan that would be put in place to drive forward the delivery the objectives and ambitions of the framework would be key in supporting its effective and impactful delivery and as such should contain specific, and clear activities that could be clearly measured and monitored in order to assess the impact of the implementation of the Employment and Skills Framework.

School readiness

During the Autumn, members of the Children and Families Select Committee worked with members of the Health Scrutiny Committee to carry out a joint task and finish review around the school readiness of children in Nottinghamshire. This review was carried out following concerns raised by some members that since the pandemic some children appeared to be less well prepared with the basic skills that they needed to be able to thrive and fully engage in learning when they started school.

The key objectives that guided the work of review were to identify the issues that were impacting on the school readiness of children across Nottinghamshire and to examine the role and impact of the services and support that were currently in place to help families in getting their children school ready and ready to learn.

This in depth review showed that the provision of Early Years services across Nottinghamshire, combined with the continued rollout of Family Hubs, was providing a wide and varied range of quality services that could be accessed by families and which supported children to be school ready. The review did find however that there was potential to further maximise the impact and reach of these services, particularly with the most vulnerable families and in more deprived areas, by enhanced working with community leaders to promote awareness of the importance of children's early years services. The review also made recommendations around how the further development of online information resources and partnership working with service providers would be beneficial in supporting children and families.

The report and its findings were endorsed by the Health Scrutiny Committee in March and will be considered by Cabinet later this year.

Secondary pupil place planning

In Spring 2024 members of the Children and Families Select Committee carried out a task and finish review to examine how the Children and Families and Place departments could best work together on the projects being implemented across Nottinghamshire to deliver additional school places.

The review made six recommendations on areas the delivery of additional school places around:

- how the mechanisms around how housing developer contributions could be reallocated to planning areas where there is a shortage of pupil places could be best utilised.
- how the Children and Families Department, together with academy trusts, should work further with the Department for Education on updating Academy Funding Agreements for secondary schools within Nottinghamshire.
- how all members should receive an annual update from the Pupil Place Planning Team about the surplus and deficit of pupil places per planning area within Nottinghamshire, with the specific purpose of identifying areas which are experiencing a deficit of places and to investigate appropriate actions to remedy the deficit of places.

The recommendations from the review were accepted by Cabinet in December 2024. Members of the Children and Families Select Committee will be receiving a progress report during 2025/26 on how the work that has been carried out in response to the review's recommendations to deliver additional school places across Nottinghamshire.

Making Nottinghamshire somewhere people love to live, work and visit

Nottinghamshire Library Strategy

In November, Overview Committee considered the refreshed Nottinghamshire Library Strategy in advance of it being submitted to Council for approval. This refreshed Library Strategy had been designed to provide the strategic foundation for the long-term development of the Council's library service and to ensure that the service was both financially sustainable and also meeting the evolving needs of residents and communities across Nottinghamshire.

At the meeting members considered how the refreshed Library Strategy would work to consolidate the position of Nottinghamshire's libraries at the heart of communities as welcoming community spaces that also provided access to other Council services for residents. Members also considered how well the proposed strategy would support the Library service to respond to future challenges and opportunities, as well as providing the flexibility required to meet ever-changing community needs.

Members welcomed how the refreshed strategy reaffirmed the Council's continued commitment to delivering a high quality library service and agreed that it provided a strong foundation for delivery of a library service that met and could continue to meet the needs of Nottinghamshire residents in the coming years.

Inspire - Culture, Learning and Libraries (Midlands) Contract

Inspire was established in 2015 by the Council as an independent Community Benefit Society with charitable status and in April 2016 was contracted to deliver the Council's statutory public library service, its archive function, and a range of cultural and learning activities across the county for a period of five years with the potential for a five-year extension. This contract had been extended for the additional five years in April 2021 after a successful initial term and, if not extended, was scheduled to end on 31 March 2026. At their November meeting Overview Committee considered proposals for the Council to carry out a direct award of a short-term two-year contract from 1 April 2026 in advance of the final decision on this being taken by the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health.

At the meeting members had the opportunity to discuss and examine the issues around the proposed contract award and to consider whether an extension was the best option for the future delivery of the library service. The comments and considerations of the committee were taken

forward and considered by the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health in advance of them making a final decision on the contract award.

Rights of Way

Nottinghamshire has an extensive network of public rights of way that includes nearly 3,000 km of footpaths, bridleways and byways. At their March meeting, Place Select Committee examined the work that was carried out by the Council's Countryside Access Team to maintain and develop the public rights of way network across the county and how the Council was working with the landowners and other delivery partners to ensure the public could use access, use and enjoy this network.

Improving transport and digital connections

Attracting investment in infrastructure, the economy, and green growth

Outcome of the review of residents' parking schemes

At the March 2024 meeting of the Place Select Committee, members considered a report on the current policy and processes that supported the introduction and modification of Residents' Parking Schemes in Nottinghamshire. As a result of this discussion members agreed that this issue would benefit from further detailed scrutiny work being undertaken through the establishment of a task and finish group that would enable members to fully consider a range of possible amendments around the processes that supported the planning and implementation of residents' parking schemes.

The review highlighted the importance of community support for implementing new schemes and the need for clear communication and engagement with residents. The review group recommended several improvements, including clearer guidance on the Council's website, better communication about permit fees, and on exploring ways to speed up the implementation process.

The recommendations from the review were approved at the September meeting of the Place Select Committee, and a full response was received from the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment at the November meeting of Cabinet where all the recommendations from the review were accepted.

During 2025/26 the Place Select Committee will be receiving a progress report on the activity that has been carried out in response to the recommendations from the review.

Highways

In January Place Select Committee received a report on the highway activities that had been undertaken across Nottinghamshire since April 2024. Place Select Committee will be receiving a further report during 2025/26 where members will have the opportunity to further scrutinise and monitor work being carried out to maintain and further improve Nottinghamshire's roads.

Proposed Lane Rental Scheme

At the December meeting of Place Select Committee members examined the work that was being undertaken to establish a Lane Rental Scheme for Nottinghamshire. Lane rental schemes allow Highways authorities to charge up to £2,500 per day for works that can cause congestion on critical parts of their highway network. These schemes can act as an incentive to organisations to either move their works to less busy times, or complete their works quicker to avoid accumulating charges, resulting in reduced congestion and improving journeys for road users.

To date there are only four active lane rental schemes in operation nationally and members agreed that the introduction of one in Nottinghamshire would have many benefits. Whilst utility companies are already encouraged to carry out works at the same time, members agreed that the financial

disincentives from having a lane rental scheme in place would present an additional reason for utility companies to work together to minimise the numbers and frequency of roadworks on busy parts of the highways network.

During 2025/26 Place Select Committee will be examining further the work that is being undertaken to develop and implement a scheme in Nottinghamshire

Access to Digital Services and Digital Inclusion

One of the key activities included in the Nottinghamshire Plan is to increase the coverage of Gigabit capable broadband across Nottinghamshire. In January, Place Select Committee examined the work of the Digital Connectivity Team in improving mobile and broadband connectivity across the county and the activity that was being carried out in the development of a new Digital Connectivity Framework that would set out the Council's vision, objectives and priorities around improving connectivity across Nottinghamshire.

At the meeting members welcomed the way the Digital Connectivity team was working closely with a range of partners to identify how digital infrastructure (broadband and mobile connectivity) could be improved or coverage expanded. Members agreed that the Council should fully utilise its role as a facilitator to work with private providers to encourage network improvements, influence the need for further improvement and secure funding to lead improvement schemes. Members also sought further information on the specific activities that had been taking place to improve digital connectivity in rural areas.

Protecting the environment and reducing our carbon footprint

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are a new system of spatial strategies for nature and environmental improvement across England that will deliver a locally targeted and co-ordinated approach to activity to help reverse the ongoing decline of nature and biodiversity. Locally, Nottinghamshire County Council is the responsible authority that has been tasked by the Government to create an LNRS for Nottinghamshire and Nottingham.

During 2024/25 Place Select Committee received two reports detailing the work that has been carried out so far in developing a draft LNRS for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Members welcomed the development of the strategy and the positive impact that it would have on bringing all stakeholders together to deliver a joined up approach to nature recovery in Nottinghamshire. Members were in agreement however that once adopted, the objectives of the LNRS should be supported by the creation of a clear and structured action plan. As such, Place Select Committee will be receiving a further report during 2025/26 to examine how the objectives of the new LNRS are being put into action.

Climate Change

In May 2021 Nottinghamshire County Council declared a Climate Emergency.

In March Overview Committee examined the activity that had been carried out by the Council in responding to the challenges of climate change since the declaration had been made and that would support the Council's ambition to become carbon neutral in all of its activities by 2030. As part of their considerations, members also examined the Council's Carbon Reduction Plan (a framework for action for activity on how the Council's greenhouse gas emissions are measured and reported in pursuit of the 2030 net zero ambition), and the challenges being faced in reaching this ambition.

Outcomes of the review of Flooding Response and Resilience

The severe flooding events brought about by Storm Babet in October 2023 were a clear indicator of the challenges posed by extreme weather conditions. During the storm and the subsequent flooding event over 1,200 properties were flooded with communities right across Nottinghamshire being impacted. In July, members of Place Select Committee carried out a detailed task and finish review around flooding that:

- reviewed the Council's preparation for and response to the flooding caused by Storm Babet.
- sought assurances that the County Council, as Lead Flooding Authority for Nottinghamshire, takes the strongest possible approach to improving flood resilience across Nottinghamshire.
- examined how County Council services were working to lessen the devastating effects of future floods by coordinating the efforts of partners, communities, and stakeholders to prepare and respond effectively to future flooding events.

The review process was extensive and involved multiple stakeholders, including representatives from Severn Trent Water and the Environment Agency.

The final report detailed several key findings and recommendations aimed at improving flood resilience across Nottinghamshire. These included enhancing communication during live flooding events, promoting community awareness and engagement, and exploring innovative flood management solutions. The review also highlighted the importance of the Council's focus on maintaining clear drainage systems and gullies as and the need to work closely with landowners to manage watercourses and land drainage effectively.

The findings of the review were considered by Cabinet in March where all of the recommendations were accepted. During 2025/26 Place Select Committee will be receiving a progress report on the activity that has been carried out in response to the recommendations from the review.

A forward looking and resilient council

Developing the use of Artificial Intelligence at the Council

In January Overview Committee members examined the activities that were being undertaken by the Council around the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and on how AI could be used support the delivery of Council services in the future.

With the use and potential benefits of AI technology growing and being recognised across all sectors in the economy, members agreed that it was important that the Council should be looking for ways of how AI could be used for the benefit of local residents by supporting the delivery of effective and efficient services. At the meeting members were assured however that the use of AI at the Council would always be focussed on supporting staff to deliver services as effectively as possible and not in the direct delivery of services where there was an essential need for human involvement.

Members also agreed that there was potential for AI to support councillors in carrying out their role in areas such as in case work management and agreed that the possibilities around this should be fully explored as part of the wider work being carried out in further developing the use of AI at the Council.

East Midlands County Combined Authority

The East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) was formed in March 2024 and covers the four local authority areas of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Derby and Nottingham and is led by an elected Mayor. EMCCA's ambition is to harness the full potential of the area by working alongside

partners and local authorities to make the East Midlands the best place to live, to work and to learn. In November 2024, Cabinet approved the Council's core priorities for its work with EMCCA with seven key themes being identified of Transport, Health and Communities, Education and Skills, Economy and Growth, Culture and Tourism, Housing and Planning, and Net Zero along with an accompanying list of priorities. As a constituent authority, the Council has a key role within EMCCA as a contributor and shaper of the Authority's strategy and direction. This role is fulfilled through Council member and officer representation on the Board, committees, and through officer representation on EMCCA technical officer groups.

In this context Overview Committee in December examined how the relationship between the Council and the EMCCA was being developed and established in order to realise the benefits of EMCCA for Nottinghamshire residents. Members welcomed the proactive work that had been carried out so far by the Council in establishing its relationship with EMCCA but agreed that whilst it was very early days for EMCCA it was important that all members were kept informed of how the relationship was developing and how the transfer of responsibility for public transport to EMCCA would be managed and delivered. Members will be receiving a progress report during 2025/26 on the development of this key relationship.

Catering and Facilities Management Service

The Catering and Facilities Management Service delivers a wide range of high-quality services to Nottinghamshire residents, including schools catering, meals on wheels, building cleaning and landscape maintenance.

At the December 2023 meeting, the Place Select Committee received a report that detailed the challenges that were being experienced by the Council in the delivery of this important service. At this time the Council had been facing significant financial pressures over a number of years in delivering these services with its expenditure exceeding its income by approximately £2.5 million in 2023/24.

During Spring 2024, Place Select Committee carried out a detailed task and finish review to consider the issues involved in detail and to examine how the Service could be delivered sustainably into the future. From the work carried out during review where a range of possible service delivery options were considered, members agreed that the option of forming a partnership with another service provider through a Joint Venture should be explored in detail. Members agreed that this option had the potential to enable the Council to sustainably deliver a high quality catering and facilities management services in the future, have the minimum impact on staff and ensure the continued delivery of high quality and nutritious school meals.

The recommendations from the review were approved at the May 2024 meeting of the Place Select Committee with a full response to the recommendations being received from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health at the July 2024 meeting of Cabinet. All of the recommendations from the review were accepted. At that meeting Cabinet agreed that a procurement exercise should be carried out to identify a preferred delivery partner and to establish a partnership operating model for the future delivery of catering and facilities management services.

During 2024/25 Place Select Committee members received regular progress reports on the activity being carried out to identify a suitable delivery partner. With the signing of the contract with Vertas Group Limited to create a new joint venture partnership (Vertas Nottinghamshire Limited) to deliver the catering and facilities management services from September 2025, Place Select Committee will be looking in detail at how this collaboration is delivering for staff, customers and the Council during 2025/26.

Progress report on the recommendations made from the review of Council office buildings

In Autumn 2022 members of the Overview Committee carried out a task and finish review that looked at how the Council's office buildings were used and how they could be used most effectively in the future to deliver effective, accessible value for money services to Nottinghamshire residents. Several recommendations emerged from the review that focussed on how the Council's existing buildings could be used most effectively in the future. These recommendations recognised the changes to working practices that had been accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic as well as by the ongoing budgetary pressures being faced by the Council.

At the September meeting, Overview Committee received a progress report on the activity that had been carried out around the recommendations arising from the review. Members took this opportunity to scrutinise the work that had been carried out around the best future use of the Council's office buildings and on how this activity was supporting the delivery of Nottinghamshire Plan ambition of a "forward looking and resilient Council".

Budget scrutiny

Budget development and budget monitoring

Overview and scrutiny is an integral part of the council's governance and decision-making structure, contributing to the Council's budgetary and policy making function as well enabling members to hold the executive to account on the Budget and on its management.

At the December meeting, Overview Committee received a report that provided an update on the current budget position for 2024/25 as well as that outlined the processes for developing the budget for 2025/26 and the related budget consultation with residents.

Overview Committee then carried out detailed scrutiny of the Council's budget position in January 2025 ahead of the formal Budget and Council Tax setting by Council in February 2025. At this meeting members had the opportunity to highlight specific areas for consideration by Cabinet as part of the budget setting process.

At this meeting members examined how:

- all the risks that could potentially impact on the delivery of the Budget had been fully understood and mitigated for.
- robust processes were in place to implement and monitor the transformational activity that would enable the delivery of both the current as well as of future Budgets.
- the Council had good levels of financial reserves and how these were being managed effectively.
- risks and the related assumptions had been used to inform the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- the consultation with residents on the proposed budget had been carried out effectively and that the responses received had been considered in its preparation.
- the proposed Budget would support the delivery of the objectives as detailed in the Nottinghamshire Plan 2021-31.

Throughout the year Overview Committee also considered Budget Monitoring reports which have enabled members to examine how the 2024/25 Budget was being delivered.

During 2025/26 Overview Committee will continue its important role of contributing to the development of the Council's budget. The committee will also continue to scrutinise budget activity to ensure that future budgets are robust, sustainable, and deliver high quality services to Nottinghamshire residents, supporting the delivery of the ambitions of the Nottinghamshire Plan.

Children and Families Department Performance

The Children and Families Select Committee receive regular reports that detail the financial position of the Children and Families department, its performance against the ambitions of the Annual Delivery Plan and a summary of the department's key risks to performance and delivery. As well as providing members with the opportunity to ask questions around specific areas of service delivery, members of the committee have also used these reports to highlight further areas of service delivery that would benefit from more detailed scrutiny activity.

Adult Social Care and Public Health Performance

At each meeting during 2024/25, members of the Adult Social Care and Public Health Select Committee received reports that detailed the financial position of the Adult Social Care and Public Health departments, their performance against the ambitions of the Annual Delivery Plan and a summary of each department's key risks to performance and delivery. In their consideration of these reports, members have been able to ask questions around specific areas of service delivery that were not achieving the expected levels of performance and to gain assurance around the activities that were in place to improve performance in these areas.

Call-in

Call-in is an important mechanism for Councillors to intervene when they feel that a decision being made by the Executive needs to be revisited due to a perceived procedural error. During 2024/25 there were no call-ins.

The year ahead

This report has provided an opportunity to reflect on the experiences of the last year and to recognise the challenges and opportunities that are ahead.

The next few years will continue to be challenging for the Council, operating as it does in an environment of diminishing resources and increasing demand for services. As such, it is important that scrutiny focuses on activity where it can support the Council to make the best use of the resources available and in ensuring that frontline services are still delivered to the highest possible standards.

As part of the further development of scrutiny at the Council, committee work programmes will continue be focussed and directed towards the key issues that face both the Council and Nottinghamshire residents.

Throughout 2025/26

the Overview Committee will:

- continue to review how activity across the Council is delivering on the ambitions of the Nottinghamshire Plan.
- be involved in the development of the Councils budget for 2026/27.
- carry out detailed scrutiny of the Council's budget proposals ahead of the formal budget and council tax setting by Council in February 2026.
- examine the activities that are being taken to improve public health and to reduce health inequalities across Nottinghamshire.

the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee will:

- be focussed on activities that support the continued delivery and development of high quality adult care services.
- consider how the use of technology can be further developed to enable more residents to live more independently and in their own homes for

the Children and Families Select Committee will:

- be focussed on activities that support families and that provide children and young people with the best start in life.
- examine how the new Family Hub networks are supporting children, young people and their families across Nottinghamshire.

the Place Select Committee will:

- be focused on the activities that will make Nottinghamshire cleaner, greener and that will provide good quality roads and transport infrastructure.
- examine the development and initial implementation of the new Nottinghamshire and Nottingham Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Issues scrutinised by each committee during 2024/25

Overview Committee

- Budget Monitoring, Budget Framework and Budget 2025/26 Development
- Nottinghamshire Plan Performance Monitoring and Annual Delivery Plan
- Outcomes of the scrutiny review of Blue Badges
- Climate Change activity
- Progress report on the recommendations made from the review of Council office buildings
- Nottinghamshire Library Strategy
- Inspire Contract – Proposed extension
- Establishing the relationship between the East Midlands Combined County Authority and the Council
- Current Approach to Artificial Intelligence in Nottinghamshire County Council
- Annual Delivery Plan – Waste Reduction Targets
- Household Support Fund Phase Seven

Adult Social Care & Public Health Select Committee

- Future delivery of the Nottinghamshire Healthy Families Programme
- Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2023/24
- Social Care Market – Progress Report
- Development of a Prevention Framework
- Progress Report on Discharge to Access
- Day Opportunities Strategy
- Technology Enabled Care
- Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Sexual Health Service

Children and Families Select Committee

- Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership – Annual Report 2023/24
- Outcomes and Experiences of Children and Young People with SEND
- Progress report on the recommendations from the review of EHCPs
- Outcomes of the scrutiny review of Pupil Place Planning
- Elective Home Education
- Introduction of Family Hubs
- Child Exploitation Support
- Early years provision and Youth Service provision
- Impact of introduction of VAT on school fees
- Outcomes of the scrutiny review of Fostering recruitment and retention

Place Select Committee

- Safer Nottinghamshire Board - Nottinghamshire Community Safety Agreement 2023-2025
- Outcomes of the scrutiny review of flooding preparation and response
- Access to Digital Services and Digital Inclusion
- Catering and Facilities Management Service – Progress report
- Outcome of the scrutiny review of residents' parking schemes
- Lane Rental Scheme
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Rights of Way

Scrutiny Minutes

Overview Committee

[5 September 2024](#)
[21 November 2024](#)
[5 December 2024](#)
[23 January 2025](#)
[6 March 2025](#)
[3 July 2025](#)

Adult Social Care and Public Health Select Committee

[9 September 2024](#)
[25 November 2024](#)
[3 March 2025](#)
[21 July 2025 \(Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee\)](#)

Children and Families Select Committee

[7 October 2024](#)
[2 December 2024](#)
[17 March 2025](#)
14 July 2025

Place Select Committee

[18 September 2024](#)
[11 December 2024](#)
[22 January 2025](#)
[12 March 2025](#)
[16 July 2025](#)

