

**MINUTES
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Monday 17 November 2025

Councillor Catherine Pope (Chair)

Councillor David Brocklebank	Councillor Andrew Dunkin
Councillor Michael Adams	Councillor Rachael Ellis
Councillor Pauline Allan	Councillor Darren Maltby
Councillor Roy Allan	Councillor Ron McCrossen
Councillor Jim Creamer	Councillor Grahame Pope

Apologies for absence: Councillor Sam Smith and Councillor Russell Whiting

Officers in Attendance: M Avery, B Hopewell, E McGinlay and P Whitworth

Guests in Attendance: S Mee, D Cumberlidge, S Cox, K Francis, H Siddique, J Smith and C Williamson

21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Smith and Whiting.

22 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

None.

23 TO APPROVE, AS A CORRECT RECORD, THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2025.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the above meeting, having been circulated, be approved as a correct record.

24 PARTNERSHIP REVIEW - CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

The Chair welcomed representatives from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to the Committee. As part of the council's Partnership Review Programme, the CAB delivered a presentation outlining their operational activities, current challenges, and the impact of their services on residents. Key highlights were as follows:

It was noted that the local CAB had been selected as a delivery partner in a new service providing support to residents with energy debt.

Recruitment had been scheduled to commence for up to twenty-two new members of staff. The roles had been described as skilled positions designed to expand the organisation's capacity to support residents with complex issues. It was further noted that these new roles had not only strengthened the organisation's ability to deliver vital services but had also created employment opportunities for local people.

The CAB reported that they had continued to take part in a wide range of community events to raise awareness of their services. They attended public events including the Arnot Hill event and the Kinshot Road Show, engaged in radio interviews, and participated in awareness-raising initiatives such as the "Credit Pause Café," which encouraged residents to feel comfortable discussing financial matters in a relaxed environment.

The CAB had highlighted the essential contribution made by volunteers, who had undertaken a variety of roles including advice provision, administration, research, fundraising, and trustee responsibilities. It was noted that volunteers had collectively contributed over nine thousand hours during the previous year, which had been formally recognised when the High Sheriff of Nottinghamshire had presented an award acknowledging their service. It was also explained that volunteering had helped individuals develop new skills and confidence, with some volunteers progressing into employment, including apprenticeship programmes.

Citizens Advice provided an overview of the Advice on Prescription program, which had been delivered for approximately three years across several primary care networks. This service enabled GPs and Social Prescribing to refer residents directly to Citizens Advice for support with non-medical challenges contributing to poor wellbeing. It was reported that the program had been highly valued by health professionals who often struggled to address these complex social issues during clinical appointments. The program was nominated for an Integrated Care Board Health Award.

The CAB shared case studies demonstrating the positive outcomes achieved through their services. One case involved a resident who received support to successfully claim a backdated severe disability payment amounting to approximately fourteen thousand pounds, enabling essential improvements to their home. Another case related to a resident who had been underpaid Employment Support Allowance; following support from Citizens Advice, the resident secured the correct entitlement, using the funds to install a walk-in shower. This adaptation not only improved their wellbeing but also prevented potential injuries.

The Chair then gave Members the opportunity to ask questions of the CAB.

Members queried what the CAB expected their main challenges would be over the next 12 months.

It was noted that the cost of living crisis would be the most difficult issue to contend with going forward.

Members had commended the work of the volunteers and had queried the methods used by the CAB to recruit new members.

It was noted that the CAB had opened recruitment programmes over a period of two to three weeks; however, it was further noted that recruitment had been less of an issue compared to the CAB's limited resources to support the volunteers.

Members queried how successful the managed migration programmes to Universal Credit were.

It was noted that the managed migration programme was expected to complete by early 2026 with great success.

Members had noted that charities were experiencing funding pressures and had asked what the CAB would have liked to achieve if such pressures were resolved.

It was noted that the CAB would have been empowered to help more residents if its funding streams had been increased. It was further noted that some social prescribing programmes had recently come to an end, which unfortunately had resulted in fewer people receiving essential support.

RESOLVED:

The Chair thanked the CAB for attending the meeting and the information provided.

25

PARTNERSHIP REVIEW - DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS.

The Chair welcomed Sarah Cox, Partnership Manager, and colleagues from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to the committee as part of the Council's partnership review programme. Sarah and colleagues gave an overview on the key areas of their work at the DWP, highlights of which were as follows:

Members noted that the Job Centre had worked in partnership with Inspire Learning to deliver Adult Learning courses. These included English language classes for individuals whose first language was not English, as well as IT skills sessions designed to enhance employability.

It was noted that the 50+ age group had been the largest demographic signing on at the Job Centre. This not only affected their financial security but also made them more vulnerable to health issues. The Job Centre, in partnership with Gedling Borough Council, had offered regular mid-life MOT health sessions at the Civic Centre.

Members noted that the DWP had regularly promoted the Council's outreach hubs across the borough, which provided local support and advice to residents who struggled to travel to the Civic Centre. Warm Home hubs had also been signposted for those who were most vulnerable or lonely.

It was noted that many residents had wished to become self-employed but were concerned that taking on such a venture could leave them financially struggling. The following support had been available to them:

- Those who were gainfully self-employed (working 50+ hours towards self-employment) had received a start-up period to allow time to reach a minimum income floor (approximately £1,600 per month).
- Free business surgeries, delivered in partnership with Gedling Borough Council, had offered one-to-one support and coaching for people during the start-up period. This included guidance on business planning, sustainability, growth strategies, and responding to business needs.

The Chair then gave Members the opportunity to ask questions of the DWP.

Members had asked what specific gaps the DWP had identified that they were unable to address for residents.

It was noted that work experience opportunities across the borough could have provided valuable experience for residents; however, such opportunities had not always been available. It was also noted that a lack of computer literacy among residents had posed a significant barrier to finding employment. While a number of providers had offered training, some residents had been resistant to pursuing it due to anxieties.

Members had asked how the fifty-plus age group could be better supported.

The DWP had emphasised the importance of confidence building and digital skills development. It was explained that gradual, supportive training had helped residents gain confidence in using digital tools.

Members had asked how homelessness referrals were followed up

The DWP had confirmed that Duty to Refer cases were followed up regularly and that officers maintained communication with housing services to track progress and ensure residents received appropriate support.

Members had queried how the DWP sought employer engagement for work experience opportunities.

The DWP had stated that partnerships with local employers and school advisers had continued to expand access to work experience opportunities.

RESOLVED:

To thank the DWP for attending the meeting and the information provided.

26

PROGRAMME OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER PERFORMANCE.

Members welcomed Councillor Jenny Hollingsworth, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth and Economy to the meeting to examine her portfolio. Councillor Hollingsworth gave an update to members on some key happenings within her portfolio.

Some questions were received from Members in advance of the meeting, so Councillor Hollingsworth delivered a presentation to provide an update on the various areas of responsibility within her portfolio, and to answer questions.

It was noted that over ten million pounds had been collected since the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy in 2015. Of this amount, approximately six million pounds had been spent on community infrastructure, including over four million pounds on Colliers Way and 1.5 million pounds on Gedling Country Park. Around one million pounds had been allocated to neighbourhood infrastructure in non-parished areas, and roughly one million pounds had been passed on to the relevant parish councils in accordance with the regulations.

Members had noted that major planning applications had been under consideration in Bestwood. Chase Farm projects, including employment units, a pub restaurant, and a drive-through restaurant, had been ongoing. The development of land at Killisick Lane had been brought forward for the erection of 172 dwellings, along with a change of use at Stoke House on Stoke Lane to create 17 self-contained apartments.

It was noted that 396 applications for building regulations approval had been received for the year to date, and 21 dangerous structures had been reported and investigated by the Council. Three notices had been served to ensure that structural concerns were corrected immediately.

Members had noted that the Be Global Small Business Advice sessions had been held twice monthly at the Civic Centre, with an average of six businesses receiving support. The Business Advisor had visited all the borough's high streets, provided business support, and monitored the

health of the high streets, with follow-up support visits underway. The Business Grant Programme, delivered by Nottinghamshire County Council, had received a good level of uptake, and monthly business grant surgeries had taken place at the Civic Centre alongside monthly Grant Panels to determine grant awards.

It was noted that Futures' 'Transform Your Future' Programme had been delivered with a good level of uptake and had remained on track to deliver key UK Shared Prosperity Fund outcomes. Sector-based work academy programmes had also taken place with care providers, including Tender Loving Care Carlton and Blue Sky Care Newstead.

The Chair then gave Members the opportunity to ask questions of Councillor Hollingsworth's portfolio.

Members had queried whether the housing planned for development over the next decade had given due consideration to infrastructure such as GPs, schools, shops, and public transport.

It was noted that a great deal of work in collaboration with partners had been and would continue to be undertaken to ensure that the allocation of infrastructure was viable. It was further noted that the Council had set out its requirements in the local area development plan.

RESOLVED:

To thank Councillor Hollingsworth for the information provided.

27 O&S ANNUAL REPORT

The Democratic Services Manager introduced a report, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting, presenting the Overview & Scrutiny annual report to the committee.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Note the report; and
- 2) Approve the report's submission to Council.

28 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME.

The Democratic Services Manager had introduced a report, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting, providing an update on the scrutiny work programme.

It was noted that Members had expressed an interest in considering alternative options for scrutinising the work of the portfolio holders. Members had agreed to consider these options and email the

Democratic Services Manager so they could be collated into a report for Members to decide on the preferred direction going forward.

It was further noted that more information could have been circulated in advance of meetings to allow Members additional time to prepare questions.

RESOLVED:

To note the report.

29

ANY OTHER ITEM WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT.

None.

The meeting finished at 7.36 pm

Signed by Chair:

Date: