

# Nottingham City Council

## Executive Board

**Minutes of the meeting held at Loxley House, Nottingham on 21 January 2025  
from 2.00 pm - 3.03 pm**

### Membership

Present

Councillor Neghat Khan (Chair)  
Councillor Ethan Radford (Vice Chair)  
Councillor Cheryl Barnard  
Councillor Jay Hayes  
Councillor Corall Jenkins  
Councillor Pavlos Kotsonis  
Councillor Sam Lux  
Councillor Linda Woodings

Absent

Councillor Kevin Clarke

### Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Stuart Fair	- Interim Corporate Director for Finance and Resources
Beth Brown	- Director of Legal and Governance
Nicki Jenkins	- Interim Corporate Director for Growth and City Development
Lucy Lee	- Strategic Director for Transformation and Change
Sarah Nardone	- Interim Corporate Director for Children and Education Services
Colin Parr	- Corporate Director for Community, Environment and Resident Services
Sajeeda Rose	- Chief Executive
Phil Wye	- Governance Officer

### Call-in

Unless stated otherwise, all decisions are subject to call-in. The last date for call-in is 30 January 2025. Decisions cannot be implemented until the working day after this date.

### 82 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Kevin Clarke – work commitments  
Vicky Murphy

### 83 Declarations of Interests

None.

### 84 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

## **85 Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2025/26**

Councillor Linda Woodings, Executive Member for Finance and Resources, presented the report seeking a decision on the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2025-2026 having regard to the feedback obtained through the 6-week consultation exercise. Executive Board's recommendation will be presented to Full Council for approval on 27 January 2025. The scheme will be regularly reviewed.

### **Resolved to**

- (1) note and consider the consultation feedback attached to the report as appendix 1;**
- (2) recommend the proposed changes to the Council Tax Support scheme attached to the report as Appendix 2 for 2025-2026 to Full Council on 27 Jan 2025;**
- (3) delegate approval for the Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2025-2026 Regulations to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources.**

### Reasons for decisions:

- The Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme, which replaced the previous national Council Tax Benefit scheme from April 2013, provides financial assistance to households on low incomes or benefits through a reduction in Council Tax. Each year the Council is required to consider whether to revise its CTS scheme.
- The Local Government Finance Act 1992 sets out the process by which Councils must approve a local CTS scheme. Regulations continue to prescribe the scheme for households who have reached state pension age (pensioners), allowing up to 100% support against Council Tax liability.
- The current scheme provides a maximum amount of 80% support for working age claimants.
- With the financial pressures to close the substantial budget gap, Nottingham City Council must look to all options, including reduced support for CTS.
- Statutorily the scheme must be agreed by 11 March 2025 for the new scheme to take effect for the following year and to enable the Council to make the required savings of £0.260m for the year 2025/26. If the Council does not meet this deadline and agree the changes to the scheme, the Council will be required to continue to deliver the current CTS scheme and will need to find an alternative way to manage the budget gap.

### Other options considered:

- Not to revise the Council Tax Support Scheme. This option was rejected as an alternative way to manage the budget gap has not been identified.

## **86 2025/26 Budget Strategy Update**

Councillor Linda Woodings, Executive Member for Finance and Resources, presented the report representing an update in the Council's budget planning process, seeking to refresh the future budget gaps the Council is likely to be facing based on the latest available information including the provisional settlement announced in December 2024. This includes likely recurring budget issues identified as part of forecast in-year budget monitoring and expert external advice on possible settlement and related funding.

The working assumptions underpinning the MTFP previously assumed in March 2024 and reiterated in June 2024 have been refreshed with the 2025-26 gap reducing from £69.0m to the latest projection of £23.4m.

A core assumption in setting the base for 2025-26 includes successfully managing demand related cost pressures within the current financial year 2024-25 and sustaining this position over the medium term. Closing the structural deficit is foundational to the medium- and longer-term financial stability of the Council. Successful delivery of transformational change and efficiency savings will be fundamental to the elimination of the embedded structural deficit.

The proposed budget strategy, process and modelling will be further refined and will include any further adjustments arising from the final budget settlement announcement and the outcome of the request to Government for Exceptional Financial Support.

Executive Members thanked Councillor Woodings and finance officers for their hard work in reducing the budget deficit but acknowledged there is still work to be done.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that the rate of council tax will not need to rise by 10% as could be permitted in exceptional circumstances, and that the Council's ambition will be to not use all of the exceptional financial support available to it if possible.

### **Resolved to**

- (1) note the revised forecast budget gap of £23.4m after new saving options currently being consulted on for delivery within 2025-26, with an indicative cumulative budget gap of £56.8m over the 4 years of the new MTFP period of 2025-26 to 2028-29;**
- (2) note the updated Capital Programme;**
- (3) note the progress made in delivering the agreed budget strategy and developing new saving proposals;**
- (4) Note the budget preparation timetable as set out in the report.**

Reasons for decisions:

- The report is a part of the Council's annual budget setting and business planning process and seeks to update the projected MTFP gaps so that decision makers are aware of the potential quantum of saving options that might be required to balance the budget.
- The overarching objective of the agreed budget strategy is to ensure that the Council sets a priority-led budget over the medium term that is balanced and realistic supported by achievable saving plans. However, it must be recognised that the Council continues to face budget challenges which requires the Council to transform the way it delivers services and doing things differently.
- The Council continues to face budget pressures in future years and uncertainty, including the continuing level of support from Central Government, over the medium term as Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) announced a one-year settlement in the provisional budget announcement in December 2024. Due to an increased demand for services, alongside the backdrop of the cost-of-living and where demand change can lead to material budget variances. This is further exacerbated by the current global and national political and economic environment and the prospect of reducing local government funding and support from government.

Other options considered:

- None - as a result of the financial challenge faced by the Council in 2025-26 and beyond the Council needs to set a budget strategy providing a strategic financial framework and direction of travel for the Council to work within.

## **87 Library Provision and Service Delivery to 2030**

Councillor Sam Lux, Executive Member for Carbon Reduction, Leisure and Culture, presented the report setting out proposals for the strategic direction of the Library Service to 2030 taking account of the overall financial position of the Council and the need to deliver a modern and sustainable Library Service. It provides an overview of the work undertaken to date and the evidence base used to support the case for the changes being proposed.

The proposals have been developed from an updated Library Assessment and public consultation exercise, which has resulted in a refreshed vision and a set of strategic outcomes for the Service as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report. The report seeks to determine the future core statutory provision for library provision for Nottingham City, in line with requirements of the Public Libraries and Museums Act (1964).

Executive Members thanked Councillor Sam Lux and officers for their hard work resulting in the retention of library facilities.

### **Resolved to**

- (1) note the context, evidence, information, and findings from the library consultation set out in the Libraries Assessment Future Library Provision to 2030 Report (Appendix 1), which has led to the final recommendations for the future provision and delivery of the Library Service to 2030;**

- (2) agree the officer recommended proposal set out in section 3 of the report in order to deliver a sustainable library service to 2030 whilst achieving the agreed MTFP budget saving for the Service of £1.524m. The savings will be allocated to the appropriate budgets where costs savings will be achieved for each affected site;**
- (3) recognise that this level of library provision is considered to fulfil the City Council's statutory obligations. Where additional service provision can be delivered by external partners or voluntary support, this is supplementary to the City Council's statutory requirement;**
- (4) actively work and engage with community and third sector partners to develop and deliver community activity and library provision for the city.**

Reasons for decisions:

- The proposal will enable the authority to provide a sustainable library service going forward to 2030, achieving the MTFP saving agreed for the service whilst providing its statutory duty of comprehensive and efficient service. The recommendation has fully considered a range of factors including cost, usage, library performance, location, and community need, as well feedback from an extensive consultation process regarding the future delivery of the service.

Other options considered:

- In reaching the recommendations, a range of alternative options were considered, none of which were ultimately taken forward:
  - Option 1 Maintain Current Library Network Recommendations
    - Benefits: No immediate changes to access
    - Impacts: Fails to meet budget savings, requires costly maintenance, does not support a modern, agile service and align to Best Value and the Duties and Powers review previously undertaken.
  - Option 2 Consultation Proposal
    - Benefits: Achieves budget savings, retains a core network, meets statutory duties, eliminates some maintenance liabilities. Allows for potential community asset transfer.
    - Impacts: Does not respond to concerns raised by citizens and stakeholders from the consultation in relation to operational hours and the longer-term potential to build back.
  - Option 3 Further Reduced Network
    - Benefits: Achieves savings through reduction of buildings without reducing opening hours for the remaining library network, retains a modern efficient network of quality facilities and with skilled staff. Enables capital receipts from asset sales.
    - Impacts: Reduces household access to libraries (below 70% of households would be within a 20 min walk of a library), risks not meeting residents needs, statutory duty and legal challenges. Diminishes Nottingham's standing of library points per 1,000 population compared to all other core cities.
  - Option 4 Community/ Volunteer Run Libraries
    - Benefits: Engages citizens and reduces staff costs.

- Impacts: Low resident interest in managing libraries, long setup times, unresolved liability issues and limited cost savings.
- Option 5 Outsource to a Third-Party Provider
  - Benefits: Potential for cost efficiencies through economies of scale and opportunity to transfer risks and liabilities of buildings and service delivery.
  - Impacts: Required detailed appraisal and procurement work, unlikely to meet savings targets on time, involves staff transfers (TUPE).

## **88 Nottingham City Council Concessionary Travel Scheme Arrangements 2025-26**

Councillor Neghat Khan, Executive Member for Strategic Regeneration, Transport and Communications presented the report seeking approval for the Nottingham Concessionary Travel Scheme for 2025-26, and to publish the Scheme, which it is required to do by 3rd March 2025, 28 days prior to the Scheme commencing from 1 April 2025.

### **Resolved to**

- (1) approve the Nottingham Concessionary Travel Scheme (NCTS) for 2025-2026, and the publication of the final scheme statutory notice on 3 March 2025;**
- (2) approve the following additional discretionary elements of the scheme from April 2025;**
  - a. free travel on the tram by city residents that possess a valid City Council issued concessionary travel pass and;**
  - b. the companion facility attached to passes issued to city residents for certain disabilities.**
  - c. free travel on the bus or tram for disabled city residents before 9:30am on weekdays, from start the of service. This is funded by the government's Bus Services Improvement Plan (BSIP).**
- (3) grant delegated authority to the Corporate Director for Growth and City Development, in consultation with the Executive Member for Strategic Regeneration, Transport and Communications to;**
  - a. agree reimbursement arrangements and associated financial commitments for statutory and discretionary concessionary fare payments for 2025-26 and;**
  - b. review the Scheme throughout 2025-26 as part of the transitioning process to a new East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA).**

### Reasons for decisions:

- To ensure that the Council meets its statutory duty in relation to concessionary fares and also continues to provide a wide range of travel opportunities and choices for the residents of Nottingham, aligning with the Council and Government's strategic objectives in the context of public transport.

### Other options considered:

- No other options are available for the national scheme as the provision of concessionary travel for elderly and disabled people is a statutory duty.
- Consideration was given to removing the free tram travel benefit for city resident concessionary pass holders and the companion facility attached to passes issued to city residents with certain disabilities. If the tram was excluded from the concessionary travel scheme there would be a large migration from tram to bus as Nottingham residents would most likely have a local bus service available as an alternative option to the tram, meaning there would still be a considerable cost to the Council. There would also be a loss of accessibility for the elderly and for people with mobility difficulties. NET is particularly well suited for travel by people with mobility difficulties as it is designed to offer fully accessible trams and stops. Trams are 100% low floor throughout with level boarding at stops. Removal would also mean that a large number of residents would not have a public transport service within walking distance on which they could use their concessionary card. These restrictions would not align with Nottingham's strategic aims. The companion card ensures that residents who cannot travel alone are able to use public transport, and removal would create barriers to travel and potentially result in vulnerable people being isolated.

**89 Letting of Suite 6, Second Floor, The Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Building (EGA), Nottingham Science Park, Jesse Boot Avenue, Nottingham NG7 2RU**

Councillor Ethan Radford, Executive Member for Skills, Growth and Economic Development, presented the report regarding a letting at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Building, Nottingham Science Park, the terms of which represent best consideration. The letting will provide a significant rental income and remove existing void costs.

**Resolved to**

- (1) approve the lease terms agreed with the prospective tenant in respect of the subject property as set out in the attached exempt appendix to the report;**
- (2) approve the payment of associated fees;**
- (3) delegate the approval of any required final terms and conditions, save for rent, to the Director of Economic Development & Property.**

Reasons for decisions:

- Suite 6 is currently vacant, with the opportunity marketed by an external agent on behalf of the Council. Heads of terms for lease have been negotiated with the prospective tenant at market rent and a deal which represents Best Consideration.
- External agents' fees have been incurred to secure the letting and approval to their payment is required.
- A delegation to the Director of Economic Development & Property will enable the transaction to progress at pace and generate revenue and remove void costs.

Other options considered:

- Not to proceed with the letting to the prospective tenant – this is not recommended as this is a significant letting at the property on market facing terms providing a rental income at market rental value over the lease term which will remove the Council's liability for ongoing void costs.

**90 Exclusion of the Public**

**Resolved to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining items in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, under Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraph 3, on the basis that, having regard to all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining an exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.**

**91 Letting of Suite 6, Second Floor, The Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Building (EGA), Nottingham Science Park, Jesse Boot Avenue, Nottingham NG7 2RU - Exempt Appendix**

Councillor Ethan Radford, Executive Member for Skills, Growth and Economic Development, presented the exempt appendix which was noted by the Board.