

To Members of the Scrutiny of the Administration's Budget Proposals

Cllr. Nick Brown (Chairman)
Cllr. Roy Denney (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr. Shabbir Aslam
Cllr. Royston Bayliss
Cllr. Lee Breckon JP
Cllr. Cheryl Cashmore
Cllr. Nick Chapman
Cllr. Adrian Clifford
Cllr. Stuart Coar
Cllr. Luke Cousin
Cllr. Tony Deakin

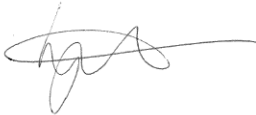
Cllr. Alex DeWinter
Cllr. Susan Findlay
Cllr. Janet Forey
Cllr. Helen Gambardella
Cllr. Hannah Gill
Cllr. Paul Hartshorn
Cllr. Richard Holdridge
Cllr. Mark Jackson
Cllr. Becca Lunn
Cllr. Antony Moseley

Cllr. Ande Savage
Cllr. Tracey Shepherd
Cllr. Dillan Shikotra
Cllr. Mike Shirley
Cllr. Roger Stead
Cllr. Matt Tomeo
Cllr. Bob Waterton
Cllr. Bev Welsh
Cllr. Jane Wolfe
Cllr. Neil Wright

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of the **SCRUTINY OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S BUDGET PROPOSALS** will be held in the Council Chamber - Council Offices, Narborough on **WEDNESDAY, 10 JANUARY 2024 at 5.30 p.m.** Please find attached a number of supplemental items that are required for the meeting and are in addition to the agenda and report pack that has already been circulated.

Yours faithfully



Louisa Horton
Monitoring Officer



SUPPLEMENTAL ITEMS

3. Budget Context Setting and Overview (Pages 3 - 24)

To consider the report of the Executive Director (S.151 Officer) (enclosed).

4. 2024-2025 Draft Portfolio Budget Proposals (Pages 25 - 130)

- a) To consider the proposed 2024-25 budget and spending plans for each Portfolio area.
- b) Prepare lines of questioning for a written response from Portfolio Holders in advance of the next Scrutiny Budget meeting on Wednesday 17 January 2024.
 - Cllr. Terry Richardson – Leader’s Portfolio – Page 25
 - Cllr. Maggie Wright – Finance, People & Performance Portfolio – Page 37
 - Cllr. Terry Richardson, Cllr. Nigel Grundy & Cllr. Les Phillimore – Health, Wellbeing, Community Engagement & Business Support Portfolio – Page 57
 - Cllr. Nigel Grundy – Neighbourhood Services and Assets Portfolio – Page 77
 - Cllr. Les Phillimore – Housing Community & Environmental Services Portfolio – Page 91
 - Cllr. Ben Taylor – Planning Delivery and Enforcement & Corporate Transformation Portfolio – Page 107

Appendix A

2024/25 Budget Overview 10th January 2024

Impact of the Settlement December 2023

Councillors will be aware that the Settlement figures are normally distributed to the Council in December and at the same time the Secretary of State makes his statement on local government funding for 2024/25 (referred to as 'the Statement' in this paper). The Settlement was announced on the 18th December 2023.

Key elements of the Statement that impact on the budget position for 2024/25 are:

- Confirmation of settlement figures for 2024/25, which were expected to align with those suggested in the 2023/24 Settlement.
- Continuation of New Homes Bonus
- Council Tax increase thresholds
- Any changes to Business Rate Baseline
- Information relating to additional funding streams.

Alongside the Settlement the government also published a technical consultation paper on:

- The provisional local government finance settlement 2024/25.

As such the funding position for 2024/25 is a one year settlement only.

There is still substantial uncertainty surrounding how changes to Business Rate Retention and the Fair Funding Review will impact on Blaby in future years.

Members will recall that these changes were originally proposed to be put in place for 2020/21. It is now expected that these changes will not be brought in until 2026/27.

These changes will not therefore directly impact on the budget for 2024/25 but the MTFS at Appendix E illustrates the impact this may have on the Council's finances in future years. It is with the future funding gaps that may arise from these changes that the Council needs to consider as we work towards the Council continuing to be financially sustainable into the future.

Throughout this document reference is made to the Settlement Statement within the relevant section to provide information to Members.

Total Budget Requirement

The proposed General Fund Revenue Account Net Budget Requirement for 2024/25 is **£15.767M**. The comparable Net Budget Requirement for 2023/24 that was approved in February 2023 was **£14.665M**. It should be noted that since that time the Council has experienced considerable increased costs but also some increases in income (investment income specifically) and the current budget requirement for the 2023/24 financial year is expected to require a contribution from reserves of **£154k**, which is similar to the £166k included in the original budget.

Budget Gap 2024/25

The Settlement continues the series of increases in Core Spending Power for Local Government that started in 2020/21. Much of the increase continues to be directed towards the Upper Tier Authorities to fund social care.

Blaby has continued to benefit from the Funding Guarantee Grant which ensures that every authority has an increase in core spending power of at least 3%. It is this grant that has compensated for the forecast loss of New Homes Bonus funding, lost over a number of years, and has contributed significantly (£2.136m) to minimise the funding gap for 2024/25.

When taking into account the Settlement the funding gap for 2024/25 is **£981k** before taking measures to close this gap which are put forward later within this appendix.

Funding the Budget

The table below illustrates how the budget is funded and how the grants provided in the Settlement have contributed to reducing the budget gap forecast in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

Note that revenue income from services is netted off against the costs within the net budget requirement, so is not shown in the funding figures below. The economic climate continues to impact on some of the Council's revenue streams and is reflected in income levels for some service areas.

Sources of funding are as follows: -

	Approved Budget 2023/24 £	Working Budget 2023/24 £	Base Budget 2024/25 £	Variance Compared to Approved Budget
Income from Business Rates	(1,749,109)	(1,724,322)	(3,435,400)	1,686,291
Contribution from Business Rates Reserves	(1,955,656)	(2,277,333)	(287,423)	(1,668,233)
S31 Grant - Business Rates Compensation	(2,587,873)	(2,290,983)	(2,577,177)	(10,696)
Revenue Support Grant	(74,608)	(74,608)	(79,550)	4,942
Lower Tier Services Grant			0	0
Services Grant	(90,200)	(90,200)	(14,193)	(76,007)
Funding Guarantee	(1,530,635)	(1,530,635)	(2,135,789)	605,154
New Homes Bonus Grant	(430,029)	(430,029)	(14,280)	(415,749)
	(8,418,110)	(8,418,110)	(8,543,812)	125,702
Council Tax Deficit	64,864	64,864	94,927	(30,063)
Council Tax	(6,311,930)	(6,311,930)	(6,336,927)	24,997
Funding Envelope	(14,665,176)	(14,665,176)	(14,785,812)	120,636

The table above illustrates that the Council's funding has remained fairly static, only increasing by £120k (£286k if you take into account the fact that the contribution from the Business Rate reserve has reduced from £453k down to £287k).

This is detailed as follows:

- Redistributed NNDR has been forecast at the moment to remain static. This may change as we are in the process of assessing the NNDR income which has become more complex following a number of recent changes to how the multiplier is applied across different sizes of business. Unlike previous years there has been little growth to include and increase the Business Rate income. Included in these figures is currently a release of £287k from the Business Rate Reserve.
- Revenue Support Grant £80k – two grants (Council Tax Admin Grant & Family Annex grant) that in the past were provided directly and not part of the settlement have now been badged as RSG. This therefore represents no change in funding other than a small increase.
- Services Grant – reduced from £90k to £14k.
- Funding Guarantee – £2.136m awarded to Blaby to ensure each authority has an increase in core spending power of at least 3% this is an increase of £605k. In Blaby's case the increase in this grant is reflective of and compensating for the decline in New Homes Bonus funding and the reduction in Services Grant.
- New Homes Bonus (NHB) Grant £14k – a reduction of £416k. This reflects the fact that the Council have not exceeded the base line for NHB to be awarded for growth in housing this year but have benefitted only from affordable properties being built.
- Council Tax precept has increased by £25k. This is before any increase is applied but reflects the increase in the tax base (increase in properties) in the district.

Business Rates

Since the Localisation of Business Rates in 2013/14 local authorities have been in a position to benefit from a proportion of growth in business rates and Blaby has, like most councils, needed to release this growth to support the budget.

It continues to be difficult to forecast the growth within the budget figures in 2024/25. This is due to:

- New properties not being officially rated by the Valuation Office (VO) and estimates have been included.
- Estimating an allowance for the number of empty business properties that may arise.
- The ever-present risk that appeals put forward by businesses may impact unfavourably on the amount of income that Blaby is able to release.
- With the changes to Business Rates in the Settlement we are still awaiting the full impact of this to be reflected in the NNDR1 to give certainty of the figures. The NNDR1 will be completed by the end of January.

Blaby use advice from experts to understand the appeals that have been put forward and to make a provision for these appeals. Increasing the provision will reduce the amount of business rate income that can be retained.

Councillors will be aware that the mechanism for the distribution of business rates was expected to be changed in 2021/22 but has been delayed further. This does not impact on 2024/25 financial year but will be a consideration for future years.

New Homes Bonus

The Council has continued to generate New Homes Bonus (NHB) from the increase in houses built in the district. Since 2013/14 the New Homes Bonus has been used to underpin the budget requirement as government funding has reduced. In 2024/25 an amount of only **£14k** is being utilised to fund services; a reduction of £416k.

This is reflective of the decline in new properties coming on board and the Council not exceeding the baseline threshold of 0.4% increase in new properties in the Council's tax base.

The Council has benefitted from the increase in affordable housing that has been delivered; an increase of 51 units at £350 NHB funding, of which Blaby is able to retain 80%.

Initially NHB earned was paid for a period of 6 years and then in 2018/19 this was reduced to a further 4 years. Since 2020/21 the government have only paid NHB earned for one year and payments of NHB have been expected to be phased out. 2022/23 was the last year that Blaby benefitted from a NHB legacy payment (£781k). At the height of NHB Funding Blaby utilised £2.9m funding within the 2019/20 Budget.

The future of NHB continues to be uncertain and poses a considerable future financial risk for the Council. There has been little mention of the future of NHB in the Fair Funding review discussions and it was expected that a decision would be made on the future of NHB funding before the 2024/25 Settlement, however no detail has been forthcoming.

Funding Guarantee Grant

A new grant introduced in 2023/24 to ensure every authority had an increase in Core Spending Power (CSP) of at least 3%. Funded from the discontinuation of the Lower Tier Services Grant and the reduction in the payment nationally of New Homes Bonus. Blaby has been allocated **£2.14m** for 2024/25. This reflects the lost NHB legacy payments and lower build numbers that were forecast to reduce Blaby's funding from 2022/23 to 2024/25.

Service Grant

Also included in the funding table is a Service Grant of **£14k** reduced from £90k. This was a new grant in 2022/23 and was the mechanism used to distribute an element of the £1.5bn additional funding to Local Government that was announced in the Spending Review of 2022/23. Although operating in the same way as in 2023/24 the overall amount distributed across local government has reduced from £483m to £77m.

Addressing the Budget Gap

The budget gap arising for the 2024/25 Financial Year is **£981k**.

Officers anticipating a budget gap have sought opportunities to reduce costs or ensure income from fees and charges reflect the costs to provide the service. These have all been included in the base budget figures that are presented within portfolio reports and contribute to reducing the budget gap to this level.

A number of options to reduce this gap further are included below.

The budget gap arising is before any Council Tax increase – the financial implications of a Council Tax increase are presented below.

Council Tax Increase

Members will be aware that over recent years there has been more of an expectation nationally that Council's will increase Council Tax as a mechanism for closing the financial gap. The calculation of the 3% Funding Guarantee Grant has not assumed that each Council will increase the Council Tax levels. Council Tax increase threshold limits have remained static for District Council's in 2024/25.

For 2024/25 the threshold for Council Tax increases for "core" Band D Council Tax remains static with local authorities able to increase their Council Tax by up to 3% (2.99%) or £5 without triggering a referendum.

An increase of 2.99% would generate an additional amount of **£189k** which equates to an increase of £5.49 per annum. The Council Tax charge for Blaby would therefore be £189.14 for a Band D equivalent property.

The option to increase Council Tax by **£5** generates **£173k**; marginally less than the 2.99% increase. The Council Tax charge for Blaby would therefore be £188.65 for a Band D equivalent property.

For Shire County Councils threshold increases for 'core' Band D Council Tax has also remained unchanged, with an increase of up to 2.99% being allowed.

It is important to also note that within the Settlement those Authorities with responsibility for Adult Social Care, such as Leicestershire County Council, retain the additional flexibility to increase their current Council Tax referendum threshold by up to 2% on top of the core principle for an Adult Social Care precept.

The Leicestershire County Council proportion of the total Council Tax charge forms approx. 70% of the total charge (based on 2023/24).

Police and Crime Commissioners are able to increase their Council Tax precept by £13 and Fire & Rescue Authorities are limited to a referendum principle of 2.99%. The additional flexibility of increasing by £5 has been removed this year for Fire & Rescue Authorities.

There is no council tax referendum limit for either mayoral combined authorities or town and parish councils.

Should all preceptors decide to increase Council Tax at the maximum levels (with Parish Councils increasing by the average amount based on 2023/24) the total annual increase on a band D property would be approximately £77.

Cumulative Impact of Council Tax increases

It is important to understand the cumulative impact of not increasing Council Tax. For a three year period from 2011 the Council chose not to increase Council Tax but instead chose to be compensated with a Council Tax Freeze grant which the Council no longer benefit from. Had Council Tax been increased during that three year period the Council Tax income would today be higher by £753k.

Utilisation of Business Rate Pool Monies

The Council, along with Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council, all Leicestershire District Councils and Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland Fire Authority since 2015/16 Pooled Business Rates under the Rates Retention Scheme. This has allowed additional monies raised through Business rates to be retained in the sub-region. The monies retained under the agreement have historically been distributed by the LLEP with applications submitted to fund projects to support economic growth and infrastructure connected to this as per the terms of the pooling agreement.

In recent years however, the distribution of the pooled monies has been revised to distribute across the participating Council's on an agreed basis with Pool members utilising their allocation to support "economic health and vibrancy of our communities".

The Council is now in receipt of distributed Pool monies for the years 2020/21 and 2021/22; an amount of **£1m**. It has long been the intention that an element of these funds should support the activity that the Council funds to support the Economic Development of the District through the Economic Development Team. The budget for this department is approx. **£300k** and therefore it is suggested to utilise an element of the Business Rate Pool monies to support this expenditure this year and potentially in the future.

Funds from the Business Rate Pool are anticipated to continue to be distributed under this mechanism up to and including the year 2024/25.

Increase in Vacancy Savings Provision

Included within the budget is an allowance for vacancies occurring throughout the course of the year. This is an estimate of how much the Council will underspend due to posts not being filled in a timely manner. While we do often fill vacant posts temporarily, we have been seeing an underspend net of temporary staff costs of almost £300k. In our initial budget an allowance of £200k provision had been budgeted. We are therefore proposing to increase this provision by a further £50k so reducing the establishment budget by a further **£50k**. Note that the Council will not delay employment of staff to keep within this vacancy savings provision should we be in a position to fill the posts.

Impact of proposed measures to close the budget gap:

Budget Gap	£981,146
Increase in Council Tax by 2.99%	£189,475
Utilisation of Business Rate Pool for ED	£300,000
Increase in Vacancy Savings Provision	£50,000
Remaining Budget Gap to be funded from Reserves	£441,671

How the Budget has been formulated

The budget figures shown in the appendices providing more detail by portfolio are put together jointly by Finance officers working with service managers across the Council.

The substantial part of the costs is the establishment budget, i.e. the costs of employing staff which are then put alongside any other expenditure costs of running the service.

Where income is generated within a portfolio, officers have considered whether charges reflect the costs of delivering that service and if they are able to increase these charges. Inflationary increases will be applied where applicable.

It is important to note that some cases charges are set nationally and we are unable to alter the income received.

The income is netted off against the costs within each portfolio to give the net direct expenditure by each service area and each portfolio in total.

Each of the portfolio budget appendices highlight the capital expenditure for each portfolio and what it relates to. Where borrowing is required to fund the capital costs have been included within the budget for interest. MRP charges will be built in from the year after delivery of the capital project. The full Capital Programme will be detailed within the Report to Council in February, detailing the forecast programme for a 5 year period.

General Assumptions within Budget Requirement

- The establishment budget allows for an increase of 3% in establishment costs for 2024/25 within the services. An additional provision (£164k) equating to a further 1% increase has been made centrally to provide further prudence.

The budget proposals for 2024/25 take into account the cost of employers' national insurance and pension contributions, contractual increments, and the Apprenticeship Levy. (More detail relating to this point is included within the report "Establishment 2023/24 2024/25" to be presented to Cabinet Executive on 15th January 2024).

- Planning appeals are not included within the budget requirement, but expenditure will be funded from balances if it is necessary.
- Portfolio figures are shown before any recharges from department to department in order that the spending service is scrutinised rather than the method of apportionment across departments.

Financial Budget Summary

Budget Summary By Portfolio	2023/24	2023/24	2024/25
	Approved	Revised	Proposed
	Budget	Estimate	Budget
	£	£	£
Finance, People & Performance	3,188,022	2,694,058	3,042,180
Housing, Community & Environmental Services	1,978,956	3,262,288	2,286,511
Health & Wellbeing, Community Engagement & Business Support	399,359	2,038,035	47,946
Leader	1,619,061	1,835,478	1,799,347
Neighbourhood Services & Assets	3,221,948	3,583,276	3,646,324
Planning Delivery, Enforcement & Corporate Transformation	3,565,377	4,196,255	3,649,565
	13,972,723	17,609,390	14,471,873
Net Recharges	0	0	0
Employee Benefits Accruals	0	0	0
Capital Charges	0	0	0
IAS19 Adjustments	0	0	0
	13,972,723	17,609,390	14,471,873
Revenue Contributions towards Capital Expenditure	100,000	200,729	94,315
Minimum Revenue Provision	478,077	484,445	748,865
Voluntary Revenue Provision	250,000	300,000	300,000
Other Appropriations & Accounting Adjustments	271,400	(867,990)	201,220
Net Total Expenditure	15,072,200	17,726,574	15,816,273
Contribution to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	(241,017)	(2,906,912)	(49,315)
Contribution to/(from) General Fund Balances	(166,007)	(154,486)	
Net Budget Requirement	14,665,176	14,665,176	15,766,958
Income from Business Rates	(1,749,109)	(1,724,322)	(3,435,400)
Contributions from Business Rates Reserves	(1,955,656)	(2,277,333)	(287,423)
S31 Grant - Business Rates Compensation	(2,587,873)	(2,290,983)	(2,577,177)
Revenue Support Grant	(74,608)	(74,608)	(79,550)
New Homes Bonus Grant	(430,029)	(430,029)	(14,280)
Funding Guarantee	(1,530,635)	(1,530,635)	(2,135,789)
Services Grant	(90,200)	(90,200)	(14,193)
Council Tax (Surplus)/Deficit	64,864	64,864	94,927
Council Tax Demand on Collection Fund	(6,311,930)	(6,311,930)	(6,336,927)
Funding Envelope	(14,665,176)	(14,665,176)	(14,785,812)
Funding Gap/(Surplus)			981,146

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ANALYSIS OF RESERVES - REVISED BUDGET 2023/24 & BASE BUDGET 2024/25
Appendix B

	GL Code	Actual 31/03/23 £	Reallocations 2023/24 £	Movement in 2023/24 £	Estimated 31/03/24 £	Movement in 2024/25 £	Estimated 31/03/25 £
Earmarked Reserves							
Leisure Centre Renewals Fund	0001/VBA	(73,607)	0	0	(73,607)	0	(73,607)
IT Reserve Fund	0001/VBB	(140,840)	0	50,020	(90,820)	0	(90,820)
Licensing Reserve	0001/VBC	(27,868)	0	0	(27,868)	0	(27,868)
Insurance Reserve Fund	0001/VBD	(100,000)	0	0	(100,000)	0	(100,000)
Blaby District Plan Priorities Reserve	0001/VBJ	(365,824)	0	47,000	(318,824)	54,500	(264,324)
General Fund Reserve	0001/VBK	(1,612,310)	0	10,000	(1,602,310)	0	(1,602,310)
Ongoing Projects Reserve	0001/VBM	(3,762,841)	0	3,762,841	(0)	0	(0)
Elections Reserve	0001/VBQ	(141,944)	0	100,000	(41,944)	0	(41,944)
Choice Based Lettings Reserve	0001/VBR	(952)	0	0	(952)	0	(952)
New Home Bonus	0001/VBT	(41,327)	0	31,327	(10,000)	0	(10,000)
Contractual Losses Support Reserve	0001/VBU	(700,000)	445,000	0	(255,000)	0	(255,000)
Economic Development Reserve	0001/VBX	(50,000)	0	0	(50,000)	0	(50,000)
ERIE Sinking Fund	0001/VCA	(26,777)	0	0	(26,777)	0	(26,777)
Community Rights Reserve	0001/VCB	(48,724)	0	0	(48,724)	0	(48,724)
Hardship Reserve	0001/VCD	(325,000)	0	0	(325,000)	0	(325,000)
Parish New Homes Bonus Reserve	0001/VCE	(881)	0	0	(881)	0	(881)
NNDR Income Reserve	0001/VCF	(2,453,926)	0	760,541	(1,693,385)	287,423	(1,405,962)
Agile Working Reserve	0001/VCG	(162,678)	0	0	(162,678)	0	(162,678)
Local Plan Reserve	0001/VCJ	(456,306)	0	10,600	(445,706)	0	(445,706)
Lottery Reserve	0001/VCK	(26,466)	0	5,334	(21,132)	0	(21,132)
IT System Replacement Reserve	0001/VCL	(39,815)	0	0	(39,815)	39,815	0
Property Fund Reserve	0001/VCM	(128,462)	0	(45,000)	(173,462)	(45,000)	(218,462)
S31 Grant Reserve	9999/VCO	(1,516,792)	0	1,516,792	0	0	0
Huncote Major Incident Reserve	9999/VCP	(500,843)	(200,000)	0	(700,843)	0	(700,843)
Court Fees Income Reserve	9999/VCQ	(31,813)	0	0	(31,813)	0	(31,813)
Business Rates Pool Reserve	9999/V**	0	0	(1,065,210)	(1,065,210)	0	(1,065,210)
Total - All Earmarked Reserves		(12,735,996)	245,000	5,184,245	(7,306,751)	336,738	(6,970,013)
General Fund Balance	9999/ZZA	(4,619,445)	(245,000)	154,486	(4,709,959)	981,146	(3,728,813)

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SCHEDULE OF EXTERNAL FUNDING
Current Position 2023/24

Portfolio	Description	2023/24	Notes
<u>Health & Wellbeing, Community Engagement & Business Support</u>			
Leicestershire County Council	Hospital Housing Enabler Service	£279,760)	
Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust	Hospital Housing Enabler Service	£204,000)	- Contract now covers expanded structure including overheads.
NHS Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland ICB	Hospital Housing Enabler Service	£299,673)	
Leicestershire County Council	Mental Health Discharge Support	£35,000	One-off grant for 2023/24 only.
Leicestershire County Council	Lightbulb DFG Admin contribution	£25,000	To compensate for the cost of an additional administrative post.
Leicestershire County Council	Contributions towards Lightbulb Central Hub	£131,486)	
District Councils	Contributions towards Lightbulb Central Hub	£132,828)	_ Based on budgeted establishment and subject to year end review.
Leicestershire County Council	Lightbulb Locality Contributions	£275,165)	
District Councils	Lightbulb Locality Contributions	£274,543)	
Leicestershire County Council	Housing Occupational Therapist project	£20,020	Top sliced funding from DFG allocations agreed by Better Care Fund.
Leicestershire County Council	LRS Commissioning	£89,840	Indicative allocation subject to LCC budget approval. Not in budget yet.
LLEP	Walk & Ride Funding	£31,660	To cover staffing costs related to the development of a cycling route between Lubbethorpe and Leicester.
Oadby & Wigston Borough Council	Sport & Physical Activity Funding	£115,593	To cover Blaby's costs of running the SPA service on behalf of OWBC.
Oadby & Wigston Borough Council	Health Improvement Service	£68,520	Blaby running service on behalf of OWBC.
Leicestershire County Council	Ukrainian Refugee Scheme	£60,517	Primarily used to offset homeless costs.
Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust	Neighbourhood Mental Health	£49,000	One-off grant for 2023/24 only.
Other Leicestershire District Councils	Building Control Partnership	£201,701	Share of non-fee earning cost of service.
Department for Works & Pensions	Flexible Support Scheme	£33,770	Fixed term post funded for 12 months.
SLM Ltd	Contribution towards Community Grant Scheme	£2,500	
<u>Housing, Community & Environmental Services</u>			
EMH Housing	Floating Support Contribution	£10,000	Confirmed for 2023/24.
			Additional allocation of £74,232 received August 2023 as a top-up for
DLUHC	Homelessness Prevention Grant	£216,939	additional work involved in dealing with Ukrainian Refugee Scheme.
DLUHC	Domestic Abuse Statutory Duty	£35,129	
<u>Leader</u>			
Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council	Contribution towards EIR costs	£22,314	Recovery of statutory costs associated with the provision of personal
Oadby & Wigston Borough Council	Contribution towards EIR costs	£8,500	search responses which are not permitted to be charged to customers.
<u>Neighbourhood Services & Assets</u>			
Various Developers	S106 Commuted Maintenance contributions	£20,114	To offset the annual cost of maintaining transferred open spaces.
<u>Planning Delivery & Enforcement & Corporate Transformation</u>			
Tritex Symmetry (Hinckley) Limited	Planning Performance Agreement - HNRFI	£130,000	To cover salary costs and other project related expenditure.
DLUHC	UK Shared Prosperity Fund	£513,390	Year 1 and 2 Allocations.
		<u>£3,286,962</u>	

SCHEDULE OF EXTERNAL FUNDING**Current Position 2024/25**

Portfolio	Description	2024/25	Notes
<u>Health & Wellbeing, Community Engagement & Business Support</u>			
Leicestershire County Council	Hospital Housing Enabler Service	£279,760)	
Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust	Hospital Housing Enabler Service	£204,000)	- Contract now covers expanded structure including overheads.
NHS Leicester City CCG	Hospital Housing Enabler Service	£299,673)	
Leicestershire County Council	Lightbulb DFG Admin contribution	£25,000)	To compensate for the cost of an additional administrative post.
Leicestershire County Council	Contributions towards Lightbulb Central Hub	£154,597)	
District Councils	Contributions towards Lightbulb Central Hub	£156,077)	_ Based on budgeted establishment and subject to year end review.
Leicestershire County Council	Lightbulb Locality Contributions	£337,821)	
District Councils	Lightbulb Locality Contributions	£397,791)	
Leicestershire County Council	LRS Commissioning	£62,888)	Indicative allocation - expected to be reduced by 30% compared to 2023/24 but subject to LCC budget approval. Not in budget yet.
Oadby & Wigston Borough Council	Sport & Physical Activity Funding	£57,797)	_ expected reduction due to OWBC funding cuts - not yet in budget.
Oadby & Wigston Borough Council	Health Improvement Service	£34,260)	
Other Leicestershire District Councils	Building Control Partnership	£312,371)	Share of non-fee earning cost of service.
Department for Works & Pensions	Flexible Support Scheme	£13,256)	Fixed term post funded for 12 months.
SLM Ltd	Contribution towards Community Grant Scheme	£2,500)	
<u>Housing, Community & Environmental Services</u>			
EMH Housing	Floating Support Contribution	£0)	
DLUHC	Homelessness Prevention Grant	£150,100)	Provisional - awaiting allocation.
<u>Leader</u>			
Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council	Contribution towards EIR costs	£22,314)	Recovery of statutory costs associated with the provision of personal
Oadby & Wigston Borough Council	Contribution towards EIR costs	£8,500)	search responses which are not permitted to be charged to customers.
<u>Neighbourhood Services & Assets</u>			
Various Developers	S106 Commuted Maintenance contributions	£20,114)	To offset the annual cost of maintaining transferred open spaces.
<u>Planning Delivery & Enforcement & Corporate Transformation</u>			
DLUHC	UK Shared Prosperity Fund	£1,345,083)	Year 3 Allocation.
		<u>£3,883,902</u>	

Service	No. of FTEs 2022/23 Budget	Movement in FTEs 2022/23 to 2023/24	No. of FTEs 2023/24 Budget	Movement in FTEs 2023/24 to 2024/25	No. of FTEs 2024/25 Budget	Notes
LEADER						
CHIEF EXECUTIVE & DIRECTORS	3.00	0.00	3.00	1.00	4.00	New post approved by Cabinet Executive, November 2023.
PA TEAM	2.43	0.00	2.43	0.00	2.43	
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & GOVERNANCE	4.89	0.11	5.00	0.00	5.00	
INFORMATION MANAGEMNT	2.32	-0.32	2.00	0.00	2.00	
ELECTORAL SERVICES	2.67	0.00	2.67	0.00	2.67	
LAND CHARGES	5.81	-0.11	5.70	-0.70	5.00	Vacant post removed.
CORPORATE HEALTH & SAFETY	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES & ASSETS						
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES GROUP MANAGER	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES MGMT & ADMIN	4.61	0.00	4.61	0.39	5.00	Changes to working hours.
CLEANSING	10.80	-0.30	10.50	0.50	11.00	Changes to working hours.
REFUSE & RECYCLING	44.00	0.00	44.00	3.00	47.00	Additional loaders approved by Cabinet Executive, September 2023.
VEHICLE MAINTENANCE	5.00	0.00	5.00	1.00	6.00	Support Officer approved by Cabinet Executive, September 2023.
OPEN SPACES & GROUNDS MAINTENANCE	11.00	0.00	11.00	0.00	11.00	
PROPERTY SERVICES	2.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	2.00	
COUNCIL OFFICES/CLEANERS/CARETAKERS	2.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	2.00	
FINANCE, PEOPLE & PERFORMANCE						
FINANCE	11.50	0.00	11.50	1.04	12.54	Additional Finance Assistant approved by Cabinet Executive, September 2023.
INCOME & COLLECTIONS	6.00	0.00	6.00	0.00	6.00	
REVENUES & BENEFITS	24.56	-0.92	23.64	-0.59	23.05	Changes to working hours.
CORPORATE PERFORMANCE	5.42	-2.07	3.35	-0.31	3.04	
HR & TRAINING	6.27	1.21	7.48	-0.89	6.59	Removal of 2 x part-time vacant posts plus increase in working hours for another.
HOUSING, COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES						
COMMUNITY SERVICES GROUP MANAGER	1.50	0.00	1.50	0.00	1.50	
HOUSING SERVICES	13.00	3.00	16.00	0.00	16.00	
COMMUNITY SERVICES	7.48	-0.48	7.00	0.00	7.00	
CHILDRENS SERVICES	2.11	-0.61	1.50	0.00	1.50	
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES	10.20	0.41	10.61	-3.61	7.00	Change in reporting lines for Licensing team.
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH	10.56	0.00	10.56	3.61	14.17	Change in reporting lines for Licensing team.
AIR QUALITY CONTROL	1.61	-0.61	1.00	-0.16	0.84	Externally funded - change in working hours.
PLANNING DELIVERY & ENFORCEMENT & CORPORATE TRANSFORMATION						
PLANNING GROUP MANAGER	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	
UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	2.00	Externally funded Business Support posts.
STRATEGIC GROWTH TEAM	0.86	0.00	0.86	0.09	0.95	
PLANNING DELIVERY	12.65	1.96	14.61	-0.63	13.98	Removal of vacant post.
PLANNING ENFORCEMENT	4.81	0.19	5.00	-1.00	4.00	Removal of vacant post.
PLANNING ADMINISTRATION	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY	5.50	1.01	6.51	-0.10	6.41	Changes to working hours.
WHETSTONE GARDEN VILLAGE	3.00	-2.00	1.00	-1.00	0.00	Removal of vacant post.
RAIL FREIGHT HUB TEAM	0.50	0.50	1.00	-0.83	0.17	Seconded post returning to substantive post.
NEW LUBBESTHORPE	2.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	2.00	
CORPORATE SERVICES GROUP MANAGER	1.91	0.00	1.91	0.00	1.91	
TRANSFORMATION	0.00	4.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	Addition of IT Business Partner
CUSTOMER SERVICES	14.89	-0.01	14.88	-1.15	13.73	Changes in working hours; conversion to apprentice posts.
COMMUNICATIONS	5.54	0.00	5.54	0.00	5.54	
HEALTH, WELLBEING, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & BUSINESS SUPPORT						
REGULATORY & LEISURE SERVICES GRP MGR	1.61	0.00	1.61	0.00	1.61	
LIGHTBULB CENTRAL HUB	5.55	0.35	5.90	0.00	5.90	
LIGHTBULB LOCALITY TEAMS	17.06	-1.42	15.64	1.00	16.64	Fixed term posts added.
HOSPITAL HOUSING ENABLER TEAM	6.00	0.00	6.00	4.77	10.77	Restructure following increase in external funding.
HOUSING OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST	0.81	0.00	0.81	-0.81	0.00	End of fixed term contract.
LCC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST	1.00	-1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	Discontinued in 2023/24.
BUILDING CONTROL	25.25	-0.24	25.01	-0.27	24.74	Changes in working hours.
HEALTH & RECREATION	2.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	2.00	
SOCIAL PRESCRIBING	2.58	-2.58	0.00	0.00	0.00	Discontinued in 2023/24.
LEISURE DEVELOPMENT - SPORTS	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	
A PLACE TO GROW	0.53	0.02	0.55	0.00	0.55	
COVID 19 CONTAIN FUNDING	1.54	-1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	Discontinued in 2023/24.
CORPORATE HEALTH IMPROVEMENTS	0.81	0.00	0.81	0.00	0.81	
TOURISM	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	
DWP FLEXIBLE SUPPORT FUND	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	Externally funded fixed term post.
COMMUNITY, BUSINESS, WORK & SKILLS	7.73	-0.51	7.22	0.00	7.22	
TOTALS	330.87	-1.96	328.91	8.35	337.26	

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Appendix E

Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is the Council's key financial planning document.

The MTFS supports the '**Blaby District Plan**' which is our most important document clearly setting out our vision, values and strategic themes for the next four years.

The current MTFS document contains a financial forecast which is updated each year to reflect the changes to funding. This update has been extended to include the years up to 2028/29 to ensure the Council continues to consider the financial picture with a longer-term strategic view and understand the financial resources available.

The future funding envelope beyond 2024/25 remains quite uncertain given there are changes to funding in future years with the Fair Funding Review and the anticipated reset of the Business Rates baseline, both of which are now expected to take effect from 2026/27. The future funding estimates within the MTFS consider any information that can be gained from the national picture and documents within the public domain on this subject although, as always, there is a high degree of risk and uncertainty around these.

Whilst the future funding levels are uncertain it is not unrealistic to assume there will continue to be funding reductions or higher demand placed upon the Council. It is important that the Council understands the potential future funding gaps and scenarios have been included to illustrate possible financial impacts of the changes.

For this latest update of the MTFS, the provisional budget for 2024/25 has been used as the baseline for projecting the future budget requirement. However, priorities and services may have to be revised to ensure the Council remains financially sustainable.

The updated MTFS Summary will form part of the General Fund Budget Proposal report to be considered at Council in February 2024. Alongside this will be a high level outline plan to illustrate how the future budget gaps may be met should they arise.

Financial Summary

Forecast Net Revenue Expenditure						
	2023/24 £	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £
Portfolio:						
Finance, People & Performance	2,694,058	3,042,180	3,338,910	3,673,256	3,941,359	4,182,971
Housing, Community & Environmental Services	3,262,288	2,286,511	2,340,603	2,395,778	2,452,051	2,509,459
Health & Wellbeing, Community Engagement & Business Support	2,038,035	47,946	144,580	215,088	73,099	79,504
Leader	1,835,478	1,799,347	1,835,316	1,871,991	1,909,404	1,947,566
Neighbourhood Services & Assets	3,583,276	3,646,324	3,731,949	3,824,315	3,912,554	4,002,267
Planning Delivery, Enforcement & Corporate Transformation	4,196,255	3,649,565	3,710,369	3,772,382	3,835,633	3,900,145
Net Direct Expenditure - Portfolio	17,609,390	14,471,873	15,101,727	15,752,810	16,124,100	16,621,912
RCCO	200,729	94,315	54,500	54,500	54,500	54,500
Minimum Revenue Provision	484,445	748,865	1,004,446	1,164,078	1,226,361	1,629,425
Voluntary Revenue Provision	300,000	300,000	250,000	0	0	(250,000)
Appropriations & Accounting Adjustments	(867,990)	201,220	204,500	207,846	211,259	214,740
Contribution to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	(2,906,912)	(49,315)	(9,500)	(9,500)	(109,500)	(9,500)
Net Revenue Expenditure	14,819,662	15,766,958	16,605,673	17,169,734	17,506,720	18,261,077
Funding Envelope						
	2023/24 £	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £
Income from Business Rates	(1,724,322)	(3,435,400)	(3,779,077)	(1,115,142)	(1,212,311)	(1,305,477)
Contribution from Business Rates Reserves	(2,277,333)	(287,423)	278,450	(561,471)	(561,471)	(561,470)
S31 Grant - Business Rates Compensation	(2,290,983)	(2,577,177)	(2,638,720)	(1,723,611)	(1,770,167)	(1,822,108)
Revenue Support Grant	(74,608)	(79,550)	(81,141)	(82,764)	(84,419)	(86,107)
Funding Guarantee	(1,530,635)	(2,135,789)	(1,966,000)	0	0	0
Services Grant	(90,200)	(14,193)	(14,193)	0	0	0
New Homes Bonus Grant	(430,029)	(14,280)	0	0	0	0
	(8,418,110)	(8,543,812)	(8,200,681)	(3,482,988)	(3,628,368)	(3,775,162)
Council Tax Deficit	64,864	94,927	0	0	0	0
Council Tax	(6,311,930)	(6,526,402)	(6,760,501)	(7,022,828)	(7,294,795)	(7,576,750)
Funding Envelope	(14,665,176)	(14,975,287)	(14,961,182)	(10,505,816)	(10,923,163)	(11,351,912)
Funding Gap/(Surplus)	154,486	791,672	1,644,491	6,663,918	6,583,557	6,909,165
Damping				(3,707,307)	(2,579,304)	(1,475,432)
Adjusted Funding Gap/(Surplus)	154,486	791,672	1,644,491	2,956,611	4,004,253	5,433,733

Forecast Assumptions

Set out below is a commentary relating to the key assumptions that have been made in drafting the future financial forecast.

Net Direct Expenditure

Net Direct Expenditure budgets have been compiled by rolling forward the 2024/25 draft budget numbers and applying inflationary factors where appropriate to the elements. Key areas of note are:

- Establishment – assumes a 3% increase to cover the annual pay award, increments and increases in national insurance and pension contributions.
- Other costs – increases in line with contractual arrangements or by reference to appropriate inflationary factors, dependent upon the nature of the expenditure.
- Fees and charges – non-statutory income budgets have been increased by inflation and with a view to achieving full cost recovery.

RCCO

Revenue Contributions towards Capital Outlay – this is where revenue expenditure (including earmarked reserves) is used to finance capital expenditure.

Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)

MRP is a proxy for depreciation used in local government finance. It is charged on any capital expenditure funded through borrowing, over a period commensurate with the estimated life of the asset. Much of the current MRP relates to the purchase of fleet vehicles, investment in our leisure facilities, and historic disabled facilities grants. The increase in MRP from 2024/25 reflects the impact of new expected borrowing to fund our 5-year Capital Programme.

Voluntary Revenue Provision (VRP)

VRP is in addition to MRP and is applied to smooth the impact of introducing the Council's new MRP policy.

Contributions to/(from) Earmarked Reserves

This represents the release of reserves to support one-off expenditure items, brought forward budget or spend to save initiatives.

Net Revenue Expenditure

The Council's forecast net expenditure position prior to the application of balances, government grants and council tax.

Income from Business Rates

The Council retains 40% of the net rates collectable from businesses. However, it is also required to pay a tariff to government from its share, as well as a levy payment to the Leicestershire Business Rates Pool based on any growth above the baseline. Blaby has benefitted from considerable growth since the current Business Rates Retention Scheme was introduced in April 2013. The MTFS anticipates a reset of the business rates baseline in 2026/27 and this is likely to have a major impact on the

amount of business rates that Blaby will have to support its budget. However, there remains a great deal of uncertainty over the precise impact.

S31 Grant – Business Rates Compensation

The amount of business rates collectable is reduced by various reliefs that have been introduced by the government, for example, to freeze the business rate multiplier. This results in a loss of income to the Council, which is usually compensated by the government through Section 31 grant.

Funding Guarantee

The 3% Funding Guarantee was introduced in 2023/24 and ensures that no authority has a Core Spending Power increase of less than 3% without having to increase their Band D council tax. This helps to compensate for any loss in New Homes Bonus (below). This grant is not expected to continue after 2025/26.

Services Grant

A new grant introduced in the 2022/23 settlement. The Services Grant has been reduced significantly in 2024/25 to pay for grants elsewhere. Like the Funding Guarantee this grant is expected to end after 2025/26.

New Homes Bonus

New Homes Bonus has again been extended by a further year based on the existing distribution mechanism. Blaby's settlement is based on housing growth up to October 2023 and, due to lower growth in new housing, coupled with an increase in empty homes, has been almost completely eradicated in 2024/25.

Council Tax Deficit

The amount by which council tax due in the previous year, falls short of the expected sum collectable. The government introduced new legislation in 2020/21 enabling local authorities to spread any unusual deficit arising from the pandemic across three years. This arrangement has now come to an end so that any deficit on 31st March 2024 must be fully recovered in 2024/25.

Council Tax

The expected amount of revenue receivable from Council Taxpayers, assuming an increase of 2.99% on Band D council tax each year and an assumed increase in the tax base to reflect new build.

Damping

An assumption has been built into the MTFs in anticipation that the government will introduce some form of damping mechanism to smooth the impact of the expected reduction in funding. Until the Fair Funding review is complete and the government has made a decision in relation to the business rate baseline reset, the full extent of this impact poses a significant risk.

Financial Risks

- **New Homes Bonus (NHB)** When the New Homes Bonus commenced it was a non-ring fenced grant introduced to encourage the building of new housing. This, in effect, was top sliced from the existing funding streams for local government and therefore has provided an alternative source of funding as the core grant has been reduced. In the early years Blaby was in the position to support local housing schemes with some of the New Homes Bonus. However, in recent years it has been necessary to include the NHB as a source of funding to underpin the budget requirement.

In 2024/25, Blaby's allocation has reduced to just £14,280.

NHB is expected to be removed from the settlement from 2025/26 onwards and, as yet, there is no indication from government that it will be replaced. If it is replaced, there is a strong likelihood that any new grant will be more weighted towards upper tier authorities.

- **Business Rates Retention Reform**

The latest information suggests that this will take effect in the year 2026/27 at the same time as the result of the Fair Funding Review is expected to be implemented.

If there is a full reset of the Business Rates Baseline as expected, the Council may lose the benefit of any significant growth that has been generated in recent years. This element of the changes to Business Rates provides a substantial risk to the Council which would result in growth being lost. The financial impact of this is illustrated by the considerable financial gap from 2026/27 onwards.

Blaby will benefit from any future growth in Business Rates, however quantifying the benefit is not yet possible.

- **Fair Funding Review**

It is expected that this will take effect in the year 2026/27. Whilst the historic consultation detailed considerations that may be being taken into account it is not possible to assess how Blaby District will be impacted by this change. How future changes are softened through a 'damping process' will be key as to how Blaby's financial position may change.

- **County Council Funding Reductions.** The County Council has openly illustrated the level of funding cuts that they will be required to make over the coming years. Whilst we can plan to mitigate any obvious impacts of this, some are more subtle and the increased demand that results from this is difficult to

quantify financially. This is a considerable risk to which we will put financial values to as and when we are in a position to do so.

- **New Demands from Residents.** Blaby has an ageing population which brings with it challenges such as dealing with dementia and issues such as loneliness. We have also seen considerable increase in homelessness costs and the cost of living crisis may also drive further demands. What role Blaby will play in our community to combat these challenges and what different demand this drives for services that are needed have not yet been identified. However, we have taken opportunity to reduce such costs by taking advantage of funding initiatives to support such demand e.g. the investment in properties to utilise for temporary homelessness using the Local Authority Housing Fund.

The budget settlement we have received for the next financial year is very much as expected which means, allowing for inflation, we will have seen a real terms reduction in our funding.

However, this was not unexpected and the financial prudence we have shown over the last few years does mean that we have the financial reserves available to make the necessary adjustments to how we operate going forward without facing the 'knee jerk' reaction that other councils have made. This process will be supported by the roadmap we have put in place with the newly adopted Blaby District Plan supported by a transformation strategy that will be delivered by a new Senior Leadership team structure.

Clearly the process we are about to undertake as we work through the budget process gives an opportunity to fully understand our situation and look for further opportunities to ensure we remain financially viable but still able to deliver the quality services our residents expect. Indeed, there are already exciting changes happening imminently in for example the homelessness arena where we have looked at a proactive solution which we help address pressing issues for impacted residents and provide some revenue expenditure benefits. The continuing delivery of our 'Green' agenda not only means we are doing the 'right thing' but is likely to provide further savings going forward.

We have never been a Council that just reacts to events but one that looks for solutions and that is willing to take calculated risks. This can sometimes mean taking difficult decisions but that is after all, why we were all elected. A further demonstration of this has been the ability to increase the amount of grant funding we have secured following a Council decision to invest in this area and is an activity which I believe we can grow further also using these skills to support our Parish and Town Councils.

Our residents and businesses must always be at the heart of what we do, and we will focus not just on those statutory services we must deliver, but also those other services, which truly add the greatest value. Coupled with this we owe a duty of care to our employees to provide a stable platform on which they can carry out their duties and develop their careers. I believe this last point has been fully illustrated in the recent series of promotions both external and internal that we have seen which shows our staff are seen to be amongst the best.

The strength in depth we see in our staff gives me full confidence that we have the talent to meet the undeniable challenges ahead.

I remain both optimistic and confident about the future, changes to services will be inevitable and difficult decisions, as I said earlier, will need to be taken but our staff

should be in no doubt that they remain our greatest asset and we will continue to invest in them as we have fully demonstrated over the last 12 months.

We are a forward-thinking Council that will find the solutions we require and in all of this we will retain the 'Blaby Way' of doing things. I said last year that I believe few Councils are as open, effective, and harmonious as Blaby and I am committed to making sure this does not change.

Within my own portfolio responsibilities, the notes attached to the budget below are self-explanatory.

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Terry Richardson

Senior Officers: Chief Executive, Executive Director (S151), Executive Director, Corporate Services Group Manager, Neighbourhood Services and Assets Group Manager.

Portfolio Total

	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
Leader - Total	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£1,212,565	£1,212,565	£1,421,345	£208,780 17.22%	£208,780 17.22%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£712,796	£927,946	£663,265	£-49,531 -6.87%	£-264,681 -28.52%
3. Direct Income	£-306,300	£-305,033	£-285,263	£21,037 -6.87%	£19,770 -6.48%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£1,619,061	£1,835,478	£1,799,347	£180,286 11.14%	£-36,131 -1.97%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	21.80	21.80	22.10	0.30 1.38%	0.30 1.38%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Leader's portfolio includes establishment and running costs in respect of the Chief Executive, Directors, Health and Safety, Elections, Democratic Services, Land Charges, Legal, and Emergency Planning/Business Continuity.

The establishment budget for 2023/24 allowed for a 3% pay award. Following protracted negotiations, a flat rate increase of £1,925 for employees on grades 1 to 9 has been agreed with the trade unions. The nationally agreed pay award for Chief Executives and Chief Officers was 3.5%. There is no increase in headcount built into the 2023/24 establishment budget. The establishment budget for 2024/25 allows for a 3% estimated pay award, contractual increments where appropriate, and employer's national insurance and pension contributions within service budgets.

The increase in other gross direct expenditure between approved and revised stage for 2023/24 is due to the following reasons:

- The carry forward of unspent budget provision and external funding from 2022/23.
- An increase in external legal fees in connection with various planning issues, including Fosse Park extension, Lubbesthorpe and the Hinckley National Rail Freight as well as increases in relation to the management of our Assets.
- Extension of the shared Director position with Charnwood Borough Council.

In 2024/25, the annual provision for local elections has been reduced back down to £40,000 as there are no planned district elections. This will be added to the Elections Reserve if unused. The reserve is maintained to smooth the impact of district elections so that the cost does not fall in one financial year.

Land Charges income has been reduced in both 2023/24 and 2024/25 following the migration of part of the local land charges function to HM Land Registry in September.

Chief Executive, Directors and Health & Safety

Chief Executive, Directors, and Health & Safety	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment	£585,388	£585,388	£762,537	£177,149 30.26%	£177,149 30.26%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£43,302	£73,492	£34,022	-£9,280 -21.43%	-£39,470 -53.71%
3. Direct Income	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£628,690	£658,880	£796,559	£167,869 26.70%	£137,679 20.90%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	6.43	6.43	7.43	1.00 15.55%	1.00 15.55%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions. The proposed budget also includes the addition of an Executive Director post following approval at Cabinet in November 2023.
2. Revised estimate allows for the extension of commercial support from Charnwood Borough Council until 31st March 2024.
3. Not applicable.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. As per Note 1.

Electoral Registration

Electoral Registration	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£96,686	£96,686	£122,460	£25,774 26.66%	£25,774 26.66%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£153,200	£182,772	£104,650	-£48,550 -31.69%	-£78,122 -42.74%
3. Direct Income	-£1,800	-£3,800	-£3,800	-£2,000 111.11%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£248,086	£275,658	£223,310	-£24,776 -9.99%	-£52,348 -18.99%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	2.67	2.67	2.67	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. The revised estimate includes budget a non-recurring carry forward from 2022/23 and running expenses relating to the District Elections held in May 2023. Next financial year is reduced since there are no local elections planned.
3. New Burdens funding in relation to the Electoral Integrity Programme.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. No change in headcount.

Democratic Services, Information Management, Land Charges and Legal Services

Democratic Services, Governance, Information Management & Legal Services	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£530,491	£530,491	£536,348	£5,857 1.10%	£5,857 1.10%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£468,302	£623,690	£474,426	£6,124 1.31%	-£149,264 -23.93%
3. Direct Income	-£304,500	-£301,233	-£281,463	£23,037 -7.57%	£19,770 -6.56%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£694,293	£852,948	£729,311	£35,018 5.04%	-£123,637 -14.50%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	12.70	12.70	12.00	-0.70 -5.51%	-0.70 -5.51%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions. A vacant Land Charges Officer post has been removed from the 2024/25 Establishment.
2. The increase in the revised estimate mainly relates to additional legal costs in relation to Planning, HR and Asset Management matters. It also includes non-recurring budget carried forward from 2022/23. The 2024/25 budget includes an inflationary provision for members allowances.
3. Land charges income has been reduced to reflect the migration of part of the service to central government.
4. Net impact of the variances listed above.
5. As per Note 1.

Emergency Planning & Business Continuity

Emergency Planning & Business Continuity	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£47,992	£47,992	£50,167	£2,175 4.53%	£2,175 4.53%
3. Direct Income	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£47,992	£47,992	£50,167	£2,175 4.53%	£2,175 4.53%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. No establishment costs associated with this service.
2. Proposed budget includes increase in contribution for Business Continuity Resilience Partnership.
3. Not applicable.
4. Net impact.
5. Not applicable.

Portfolio Priorities

- To lead the Council through the implementation of the new Blaby District Plan
- To oversee the measures taken to meet the financial challenge for the Council to remain sustainable
- To ensure the Council has robust arrangements in place for responding to emergencies and can fulfil its statutory obligations
- To ensure the Council has robust Health and Safety advisory capacity and arrangements in place for fulfilling its statutory obligations.
- To continue to oversee major projects and building on Peer Review recommendations

Services

Chief Executive & Directors

Includes costs for the Chief Executive and Directors' budgets and in addition the costs for the PA team and Health and Safety Officer budgets.

Electoral Services

Includes costs for electoral registration and elections, note that District Elections are paid for by the district (national election/referenda, County and parish election expenses are recoverable).

Democratic Services, Land Charges, Information Management & Legal

Includes costs for the Legal, Land Charges, Democratic Services and Information Management budgets.

Emergency Planning

Includes the costs associated with the provision for Emergency Planning within the Authority, which is delivered across the Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland area.

Key Points

<p>Doing things differently – plans for the coming year</p>	<p><u>Leader, Directors & SLT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senior Leadership Team to implement and deliver the New Blaby District Plan. • Continue to develop the Place Narrative • All members of the Senior Leadership Team will be supporting the Transformation agenda and to work towards to the Council becoming financially sustainable. <p><u>Electoral Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elections 2024 – PCC Election • Boundary Review – final implementations • Elections Act 2023 changes (Voter ID, Absent votes and Overseas Electors) • Neighbourhood plans <p><u>Land Charges and Legal Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronic signature/sealing • Migration to HM Land Registry <p><u>Emergency Planning/Business Continuity arrangements</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop tactical and strategic awareness across the Senior Leadership Team to continue to develop expertise in our collective emergency response to immediate and enduring events. • Complete review of Blaby DC incident management plan to incorporate incident specific action cards. • Focus on development of robust power outage plan and participation in national exercise to ensure LLR and Blaby are prepared for power outages. • Participation in exercises to develop resilience and business continuity arising from risks to cyber security. • Continue to manage the safety of the Huncote Leisure centre campus. <p><u>Corporate Health & Safety</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The safety of our staff will continue to be a key focus and our organisational Blueprint, and all Health & Safety policies will continue to be reviewed with particular reference to staff working in a more agile manner and consideration of mental health and the support available to staff.
<p>Income generation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Legal Service Team and Information Governance continue to offer services for other authorities. Land Charges income will be impacted in future by the transfer to HM Land Charges, however

	it is felt that the budget included is realistic and achievable Land Charges undertake work for OWBC and HBBC.
Capital plans for the portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision has also been made to replace the audio-visual technology in the Council Chamber.

Key Performance Indicators

Land Charges - Turnaround time (smaller is better)

	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
2022/23	5	5	4.67	5.67	4.67	4	4	4	4	5.67	4	4
2023/24	4.33	4.67	4.67	5	4	4.33	4.33	3.67				

Income

	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
2022/23	£15,835	£18,781	£20,450	£17,824	£16,785	£15,899	£17,146	£15,193	£11,711	£16,530	£10,328	£17,210
2023/24	£14,752	£14,919	£14,427	£16,170	£12,992	£15,862	£16,146	£14,651				

Information Governance

Complaints Escalated to the Local Government Ombudsman

	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
2022/23								0	0	1	0	0
2023/24	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0				

Customers

The Council will continue with its focus on delivering services that our customers need. This is going to be a particular focus as we transform and ensure that our customers remain at the heart of what we do.

Risks

A full risk register is maintained in relation to the teams within this portfolio and is regularly reviewed to ensure its accuracy. However, significant potential risks include the following issues:

- **Impact of Cost of Living on Residents** – It is vital that our Council is prepared to support our residents and local economy as they continue to cope with the Cost-of-Living Crisis. There is reputational risk to the Council if we are not in a position to assist our locality and along with partners, we will continue to develop strategies to support both residents and business.
- **Emergency Planning** – reputational risk with partners and customers if appropriate response not available or given. Lessons learnt from both flooding incidents, landfill gas site management and the pandemic situation has helped us to review our plans and add to them to support our residents specifically in relation to recovery following an incident.
- **Health and Safety** - financial, legal, moral, reputational risk - negligence. Control measures managed through advisory service and internal policies, procedures and departmental audits.
- **Carbon Zero Target** – the Council is committed to meeting its net zero ambition by 2030 but the potential future financial gap represents a risk to that aim.
- **Reduction in Land Charges Income** as a result of the HM Land Registry migration and the downturn in the Housing market.

FINANCE, PEOPLE AND PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO
Cllr Maggie Wright

The Autumn Statement issued in November brought little comfort to District Councils with regard to future finances. As in previous years it is only a one-off guarantee.

The long-awaited changes to the business rates baseline and Fair Funding are not now expected to be implemented before 2026/27. This means that our updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) will still contain several high-level assumptions, although the underlying message of significant future funding gaps remains unchanged.

Again, this year we saw the pay award agreed at levels above that which we had budgeted for and, whilst this was good news for staff during the cost-of-living crisis, a further substantial increase in the 2024/25 budget has had to be provided for. This ongoing increase along with inflationary elements to the Council's cost base puts added pressure on an already tight budget.

However, the Settlement, that we received on 18th December was similar to our expectations. New Homes Bonus has continued for another year but with no legacy payments. The Council has continued to benefit from the Funding Guarantee Grant introduced to ensure that local authorities' core spending power is increased by at least 3%. It is this grant that is currently compensating for loss of NHB as that funding source has considerably reduced. The settlement also gives local authorities the ability to increase council tax by the greater of £5 or 2.99% at band D level. Blaby band D level has now surpassed 2.99% being higher than £5 but only marginally.

The ever-complicated picture surrounding business rates is even more difficult to predict this year and the precise position will not be known until the NNDR1 return has been completed towards the end of January.

Once again, we will have to look closely at our 5-year capital programme to ensure that it remains affordable. We will continue to assess the requirement to take forward capital projects or whether it might be appropriate to defer if possible.

The Business Systems and Information team has worked hard with all services to introduce a performance management system. This is now assisting with the monitoring of key priorities, projects and operational performance indicators.

Improvements continued across the HR service in 2023. We saw the successful implementation of the Midland HR iTrent system upgrade. The team are now working on understanding how the system can deliver further efficiencies.

Policy and procedural reviews continue with emphasis on current legislation and corporate values. HR remain committed to supporting our people to embed hybrid working and ensure our ways of working enable quality and effectiveness of our

services. This will go hand in hand with a leadership development programme designed to support our people managers to lead and develop our staff, ensuring Blaby continues to be a great place to work.

The Council Tax and Benefits team are in the process of implementing a new document management system, to be followed later in the year with a project to implement Citizen Access. This will bring a suite of new online forms to help drive transformation and efficiency of the service.

Recruitment to vacancies within the Financial Services Team in 2023/24 was extremely difficult and I'm pleased to say we now have a full complement of staff. It is key for all officers of the Council to be financially astute. The finance team are, therefore, looking to develop and grow the financial awareness across all service areas to help support the financial challenges and the transformation agenda. This of course goes alongside the ongoing operational requirements to produce the financial statements and respond to the external audit backlog.

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Maggie Wright

Senior Officers: Executive Director (S151), Executive Director, Corporate Services Group Manager, Finance Group Manager, and ICT & Transformation Group Manager

Portfolio Total

Finance, People and Performance - Total	2023/24 Approved Budget [A]	2023/24 Revised Estimate [B]	2024/25 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£2,241,734	£2,279,416	£2,335,439	£93,705 4.18%	£56,023 2.46%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£10,271,945	£11,308,902	£11,325,995	£1,054,050 10.26%	£17,003 0.15%
3. Direct Income	-£9,325,657	-£10,894,350	-£10,619,254	£1,293,597 13.87%	£275,096 -2,.53%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£3,188,022	£2,694,058	£3,042,180	-£145,842 -4.57%	£348,122 12.92%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	52.97	53.01	51.22	1.75 -3.300%	-1.79 -3.38%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This portfolio incorporates the establishment costs relating to the Finance, Council Tax and Benefits, Income and Collection, HR, and Business Systems and Information teams. The establishment budget for 2023/24 allowed for a 3% pay award. Following protracted negotiations, a flat rate increase of £1,925 for employees on grades 1 to 9 has been agreed with the trade unions. The nationally agreed pay award for Chief Executives and Chief Officers was 3.5%. Whilst individual service budgets have yet to be adjusted to reflect the settlement, provision of £145,000 has been included centrally, and this represents the estimated impact on pay of a further 1%. The establishment budget for 2024/25 allows for a 3% estimated pay award, contractual increments where appropriate, and employer's national insurance and pension contributions within service budgets. Again, a further 1% provision of £164,000 has been included within the budget at a corporate level. The establishment budget for this portfolio also includes central provisions for statutory sick pay, maternity pay, the apprenticeship levy, and a vacancy savings provision. The current vacancy savings provision of £200,000 recognises that the Council is unlikely to be fully staffed throughout the financial year.

In terms of other gross direct expenditure, the most significant movement relates to housing benefit payable, which is showing a significant increase due to the impact of homelessness. This is partially covered by housing benefit subsidy, which is included within the direct income line. The interest payable budget has been increased to reflect additional borrowing to support the planned Capital Programme. Although no external borrowing has been undertaken to date this financial year and is also unlikely in 2024/25 due to the current higher level of borrowing rates, there is still a requirement to provide for potential borrowing, whether that be internal or external. The Council is currently using internal borrowing (by applying reserves and balances) in lieu of external borrowing as a means of reducing interest costs but also reducing the counterparty risk associated with investment.

The 2023/24 revised estimate includes items of non-recurring expenditure in relation to council tax support (funded by external grant), and recruitment costs associated with the two Director posts.

The increase in direct income in 2024/25 is largely reflective of the additional housing benefit payable which, in the main, can be recovered through subsidy. The Council can claim 100% subsidy on most rent allowance and rent rebates payable, although where some payments are made in error, they attract a lower rate of subsidy. The increase in homelessness is also causing a disparity between housing benefit payable and the amount of subsidy that can be reclaimed, because there is a cap on the rent amount which can be subsidised. This will be partially addressed through the purchase of 16 dwellings for homelessness purposes.

Investment income in 2023/24 has risen considerably, linked to the bank rate, and is expected to remain at a similar, although slightly reduced, level for 2024/25.

Financial Services

Financial Services	2023/24 Approved Budget [A]	2023/24 Revised Estimate [B]	2024/25 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£633,936	£654,118	£671,255	£37,319 5.89%	£17,137 2.62%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£1,059,821	£1,108,928	£1,1304,572	£244,751 23.09%	£195,644 17.64%
3. Direct Income	-£405,500	-£1,245,500	-£1,045,500	-£640,000 157.83%	£300,000 -22.30%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£1,288,257	£517,546	£930,327	-£357,930 -27.78%	£512,781 122.81%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	11.50	12.54	12.54	0.04 0.32%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The revised estimate allows an additional Finance Assistant post approved by Cabinet Executive in September. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. The loan interest payable reflects the latest, draft capital programme and any changes to borrowing plans between now and February, when the budget is approved, will be reflected in the final budget proposals. The budget for card transaction fees has been increased to reflect current charges and payment methods. Charges are currently under review as part of the Income Management system procurement, with a view to achieving a reduction in transaction fees.
3. Investment income has increased significantly throughout the current financial year, in line with increases in the bank rate imposed by the Bank of England. Whilst the bank rate is considered to have reached its peak, rates are not expected to begin to reduce until later in 2024/25.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Additional Finance Assistant post approved by Cabinet in September.

Council Tax & Benefits

	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
Revenues and Benefits	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£890,631	£898,131	£939,472	£48,841 5.48%	£41,3411 4.60%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£8,733,254	£9,655,000	£9,508,600	£775,346 8.88%	-£146,400 -1.52%
3. Direct Income	-£8,741,707	-£9,370,400	-£9,395,304	-£653,597 7.48%	£24,904 0.27%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£882,178	£1,182,731	£1,052,768	£170,590 19.34%	£129,963 -10.99%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	23.64	23.64	23.05	-0.59 -2.50%	-0.59 -2.50%

Reasons for Variances

1. The revised estimate includes £7,500 for an Interim Team Leader to cover a vacant position that is now filled. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions. A vacant post equating to 0.59 FTE, has been removed from the establishment.
2. Gross Direct Expenditure mainly comprises the amount of estimated housing benefit that is due to be paid out by the authority to assist residents in staying in their homes because they are on a low income, or in receipt of certain benefits. The caseload is reducing as new claimants are transferred to Universal Credit, administered by the Department for Works and Pensions. However, benefit payable in respect of temporary bed and breakfast accommodation has increased compared to the pre-pandemic position. The revised estimate includes one-off costs in relation to the Energy Bill Support Scheme, for which funding has been received, as well as budget carried forward from 2022/23 to fund specific projects.
3. The Direct Income figures include all government grants, one off costs, new burdens, rewards, and subsidy. Housing Benefit Subsidy no longer completely offsets benefit payable as the amount that can be claimed in relation to bed and breakfast accommodation is capped.

4. This represents the net impact of the variances listed above.
5. Vacant Senior Team Leader post removed from establishment.

Income & Collections Team

Income and Collections	2023/24 Approved Budget [A]	2023/24 Revised Estimate [B]	2024/25 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£243,896	£243,896	£259,675	£15,779 6.47%	£15,779 6.47%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£19,979	£16,240	£16,240	-£3,739 -18.71%	£0 0.00%
3. Direct Income	-£178,450	-£178,450	-£178,450	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£85,425	£81,686	£97,465	£12,040 14.09%	£15,779 19.32%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	6.00	6.00	6.00	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. Budget revised in line with expenditure to date and future expectations.
3. The budget relates to income for the recovery of summons and liability costs.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. No change.

Audit & Fraud

Audit & Fraud	2023/24 Approved Budget [A]	2023/24 Revised Estimate [B]	2024/25 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£251,167	£252,694	£265,223	£14,056 5.60%	£12,529 4.96%
3. Direct Income	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£251,167	£252,694	£265,223	£14,056 5.60%	£12,529 4.96%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. No establishment costs are applicable to this service.
2. Increased cost of Shared Internal Audit service.
3. Not applicable.
4. See note 2 above.
5. Not applicable.

Business Systems & Information

Performance	2023/24 Approved Budget [A]	2023/24 Revised Estimate [B]	2024/25 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£156,930	£156,930	£171,611	£14,681 9.36%	£14,681 9.36%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£32,150	£42,995	£32,245	£95 0.30%	-£10,750 -25.00%
3. Direct Income	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£189,080	£199,925	£203,856	£14,776 7.81%	£3,931 1.97%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	3.35	3.35	3.04	-0.31 -9.25%	-0.31 -9.25%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. The increase in the 2023/24 revised budget includes one-off provision brought forward from 2022/23. Inflationary increases have been included where appropriate.
3. Not applicable.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Minor changes in hours.

Human Resources

Human Resources	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£316,341	£326,341	£293,426	-£22,915 -7.24%	-£32,915 -10.09%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£175,574	£233,135	£199,115	£23,541 13.41%	-£34,020 -14.59%
3. Direct Income	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£491,915	£559,476	£492,541	£626 0.13%	-£66,935 -11.96%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	7.48	7.48	6.59	-0.89 -11.90%	-0.89 -11.90%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions. The post of Strategic HR Manager (0.71 FTE) has been deleted from the establishment following the recent management restructure. An Assistant post has also been removed, and an Advisor post has increased hours.
2. The revised estimate allows for £50,000 towards the cost of recruitment to two Director posts, in line with the new management structure.
3. Not applicable.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Strategic HR Manager and Assistant post removed, 1 post increase in hours as per Note 1.

Portfolio Priorities

Financial Services

- To lead on the identification of savings measures and efficiencies in order to address the forecast financial shortfall within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- Understand costs and deliver a responsive, cost effective and high-quality financial service.
- Procurement of a new income management system ahead of the expiry of the current contract on 31st March 2024.

Council Tax & Benefits

- To implement a new Document Management System and Workflow system within the team.
- To introduce new on-line forms, as part of the new Council Tax and Benefits software contract, with the aim of driving more efficient working practices and widen the availability of digital services for our customers.

Income & Collections

- To maximise income collection and recovery of outstanding debt.

Audit & Fraud

- Continue a culture of transparency with emphasis on internal controls, audit, and having due regard for the prevention of fraud and management of risk.

Business Systems & Information

- To ensure that effective performance and fair practices are in place across the Council, including the embedding of the new performance framework and implementation of IPlan.

Human Resources

- Commence on delivery on the November 2023 approved People and Organisational Development (POD) Objectives and Delivery Plan developed as part of the Transforming Blaby Together (TBT) Strategy
- Ensure the embedding of the new (cloud based) Midland HR iTrent system and commence development of understanding and utilising functionality to support Blaby District council's ambitions for working as efficiently as possible.

Services

Financial Services

The Finance team is responsible for the provision and monitoring of financial information to maintain control of the Council's finances. The team also prepares the annual accounts, and looks after various other functions including treasury management, taxation, insurance, payroll, procurement, and payment of supplier invoices.

Council Tax & Benefits

This team is responsible for the billing and collection of council tax and business rates, and processing and payment of housing benefit and council tax support claims. The team also provides additional help to customers via the provision of discretionary or government funding.

Income & Collection

The Income & Collection team is responsible for maximising income generation in respect of council tax, business rates, and overpayment of housing benefits, in terms of the collection of unpaid debt. The Council Tax Income and Debt Manager also ensures that all guidance in relation to fraud and risk management are up to date and procedures are in place to prevent fraud and manage risk.

Audit

Internal Audit Services is provided by North West Leicestershire District Council as part of a shared service arrangement which includes Blaby District Council and Charnwood Borough Council.

Business Systems & Information

This includes staffing and operational costs for the Business Systems and Information team, including licences costs for corporate systems such as Pentana and Idox. The team also help other services succeed by ensuring that our systems work effectively, projects are managed successfully, providing advice on measuring, monitoring and improvement of processes and performance.

Human Resources

HR is an advisory and enabling service, offering employee relations advice, and learning and development support for colleagues across the authority. HR coordinates a number of integral corporate processes including but not limited to recruitment, DBS vetting, health and wellbeing support and organisational change. Our HR objectives will drive us to deliver on appropriate support and development of all our employees, ensuring we recruit and retain the best talent and maintain effective leadership.

Key Points

Doing things differently – plans for the coming year

Financial Services

- The financial settlement for 2024/25 is as expected and, along with a further year of New Homes Bonus and a reduced level of Service Grant, includes an element of funding guarantee that means the 2024/25 Settlement is broadly similar to 2023/24. With some management of vacancies and utilisation of the Business Rate Pool monies to support Economic Development Expenditure the funding gap for 2024/25 is manageable. The medium to longer term position however remains the same, i.e., a considerable shortfall is forecast from 2026/27 onwards. This coincides with the likelihood of a business rate baseline reset taking effect from 1st April 2026. The Finance team will, therefore, continue to work with services to identify opportunities to reduce costs and generate additional income.
- Continue to review fees and charges to ensure that, as a minimum, the Council recovers its full costs of service delivery.
- In line with the recommendations of the peer review, we will produce an overall financial plan which sets out how the Council will meet existing and future funding gaps.
- The Finance team will continue to challenge budgets and support services to ensure full cost recovery in relation to shared services.
- The procurement of a cloud-based Income Management system is underway and is expected to be implemented early in 2024/25.
- Introduce lower-level efficiencies, including the reduction of paper payslips produced and driving a move towards digital purchase orders.

Council Tax & Benefits

- Continue to revise the service to take account of any legislative changes or phasing of Universal Credit.
- To encourage residents and customers towards self-serve options and exploration of other digital options. Current processes will still be available to those customers that are unable to use online services.
- To replace the document management storage and retrieval system along with options for workflow.

Income & Collections

- The Income & Collections team is working with external agencies, including bailiffs and legal experts, to implement additional debt recovery measures in line with the Corporate Debt Policy.

Audit

- The Internal Audit Shared Service will continue to comply with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). The annual audit plan and individual audit programmes will be developed using a risk-based approach. This will ensure that our resources are focused on the areas of highest risk across the council so that our assurance work adds value. The Internal Audit Shared Service had an external inspection in early December 2020 (the PSIAS require this every 5 years). The assessor's opinion was that internal

	<p>audit at Blaby, Charnwood and North West Leicestershire Councils conforms to the PSIAS. The assessor identified no areas of non-compliance with the standards that would affect the overall scope or operation of the internal audit activity and the team takes a flexible, structured, and focussed approach to their audit assignments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The audit plan will include planned and ad-hoc advisory work, in addition to the continued support for assurance on grants, to ensure that the Internal Audit team can provide relevant support for both changes that are occurring due to external forces and new developments across the Council and try to ensure that appropriate controls are built into new systems and ways of working. • The shared service continues well, providing further business continuity and sharing knowledge across the authorities. <p><u>Business Systems & Information</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed the new Performance Framework across the Council. • Deliver an integrated IT system as part of the Leicestershire Building Control Partnership delegated service project. • Support the Council in delivering the actions identified in the Corporate Plan. <p><u>Human Resources (HR)</u></p> <p>A major focus for 2023 was to define a Transformation Strategy (Transforming Blaby Together) for Blaby District Council, the strategy was approved by Cabinet in November 2023.</p> <p>Transforming Blaby Together brings together our aspirations and plans for Customer Insights, Experience, and Engagement; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Transformation and Projects; and People and Organisational Development into one place. The strategy will support the delivery of the new Corporate Plan, providing a foundation of skills, culture, and policies for the authority.</p> <p>The Groups Individual Objectives and Delivery Plans support the strategy, setting out action-based approaches. These documents form the basis of the Transformation Groups Service Plans for 2024. This in turn will support delivery of the new Corporate Plan (2024-2028).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review our policies and procedures to ensure they are relevant, up to date, and reflect current legislation and corporate values for all key employment areas. • When meeting any additional needs of our people, we will ensure our processes flow to enable provision of the right tools and enabling technology to fulfill their roles the best way they can • Revisit our recruitment and induction process to ensure it sets the right tone and offers robust support for those starting out on their team Blaby journey to deliver quality services, excellent customer experience and support the council's transformation programme
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through a robust programme of training and development we will empower and support managers to deliver transformational services which are sustainable and deliver positive outcomes. • Maximise the use of the apprenticeship levy to develop our existing employees and attract our employees of the future • Make better use of our existing packages and support mechanisms¹ for employees, shaping our approach to address known health inequalities and the differing needs of our staff. • Continue to support managers and staff in the new Blaby “Way We Work” (agile/hybrid working model). • Continue to work in partnership with services to explore new initiatives and deliver a health and wellbeing offer to support our people.
Income generation	<p>Income from the Council’s central treasury function is included in this portfolio. Returns for 2023/24 and 2024/25 have improved considerably in line with increases in the Bank of England base rate, designed to combat inflation. Whilst rates are expected to reduce in future years, they should remain fairly static for much of 2024/25.</p> <p>Collection of Council Tax and Business Rates.</p>
Capital plans for the portfolio	<p>The Finance team monitors and maintains oversight of the overall Capital Programme. In terms of Finance-specific schemes, the implementation of a new Document Management System and digital self-service are expected to be completed early in the new financial year. Similarly, procurement of a new income management system will be completed before the end of March 2024, with implementation early in 2024/25.</p> <p>Within HR 2023-24 saw capital investment in our Payroll and HR system. Implementation of this upgrade has progressed well and there will likely be some carryover into the 2024/25 budget as enablement for greater use of the systems functionality to support process improvements in the shape of automation where possible/appropriate.</p>

¹ Existing support mechanisms include; flexible working hours, Mental Health First Aiders, Occupational Health, Blaby Benefits, Employee Assistance Programme, coaching, line management, staff support networks and self-managed groups

Key Performance Indicators

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR – FINANCE	2023/24 Apr-Dec	2022/23 Full Year	2021/22 Full Year	2020/21 Full Year
Invoices Paid within 10 days	86.76%	87.48%	86.30%	87.99%

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 YEAR TO DATE	COMMENTS
Percentage of cases checked which were paid correctly	88.06%	87.50%	89.92%	We have experienced a turnover of staff, also new staff that have joined the team have left. In terms of training this is a perpetual wheel of work taking Team Leaders away from other priorities. Replacement staff have no direct experience, and this can be reflected in the accuracy checking. Internal Audit continue to observe good practise and substantial levels of assurance found in many of the areas of work they have examined. 89.92% is a good out-turn taking into account all of these factors.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2022/23 RESULTS	2023/24 YEAR TO DATE*	COMMENTS
% total working days lost to sickness absence	3.07%	4.6 %	*As at 30 September 2023
% Staff Turnover Rate	16.13%	7.32%	*As at 30 September 2023

Customers

The Finance team's external customers include suppliers who invoice the Council for goods and services, and companies and individuals who owe the Council money. Otherwise, the team's customers are largely internal, i.e., colleagues from other service areas, and Members.

Customers of the Council Tax and Benefits team include council taxpayers, business ratepayers, and claimants in receipt of housing benefit and/or council tax support. Changes or phasing for the DWP Universal Credit process will receive careful and considered preparation. The team is also responsible for the service level agreement with South Leicestershire Citizens Advice Bureau.

The Income and Collection team has a variety of customers, mainly residents of the district and business rate payers who have incurred debts by not paying Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates or Housing Benefit overpayments. These range from customers that owe small to very large amounts of money to the Council. Some customers have other debts too, so the teamwork at collecting payments from them in a manageable way and signpost them to other agencies that can assist them. Often customers will have vulnerability issues that need addressing in other ways so key skills must be used when dealing with the debt collection.

Risks

Corporate and service risks are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are up to date, still valid, and accurately rated. Significant risks attached to this portfolio include the following issues:

- **Overall Financial Risk** – The financial risks facing the Council are not necessarily specific to this portfolio but the Finance team's input into financial issues across all aspects of the Council's services will continue. Officers work closely with the various services to monitor budgets but also to provide sound financial input into all decisions that have financial implications.
- **Local Government Funding** – the Government has stated its intention to undertake two major reviews of the Business Rates Retention Scheme, and the wider Fairer Funding mechanism. The results of both reviews pose a significant risk to the Council's future financial position although they are now unlikely to take effect until 2026/27. New Homes Bonus is being phased out, and it is still unclear as to whether it will be replaced with a different funding stream.
- **The cost-of-living crisis** is having a significant impact on the Council's financial position, in the form of high inflation and utility prices.
- **Business Rates Appeals** – the Council still faces a risk in terms of businesses registering appeals against their rateable value. Where these are successful the Council loses 40% of any reduction in rates payable, and the extent to which these appeals are submitted and upheld is outside of the Council's control.
- **Council Tax and Benefits** - errors made by less experienced staff that may then impact on residents. The cost-of-living crisis is also likely to result in an increase in the number of residents experiencing financial difficulties.
- **Internal Audit** – insufficient resources to complete the audit plan due to unplanned corporate investigations, being unable to recruit to vacant positions, or long-term staff absences. As the service is provided through a shared service arrangement there is a risk that any party may want to withdraw from the arrangement which would impact all three partners.
- **External Audit** – the Council's 2020/21 financial accounts have not yet been signed off by our external auditors, following resourcing issues experienced by the auditors during the pandemic and since. There is a national backlog in terms of the external audit of local authority accounts and, whilst the government has proposed the introduction of backstop measures to bring outstanding audits up to date, those

proposals have yet to be finalised. The main risk arising from the backlog is the lack of certainty over the financial position while the accounts remain in draft form. This can cause issues with future planning, although the Council has a good track record where audit adjustments are concerned.

- **Human Resources** - The non-delivery of the related elements of the Transforming Blaby Together Strategy may have an impact on staff absence, morale, and overall performance. A shortage of staff with the appropriate and necessary skills to keep up with demand, failure to have compliant policies and practices in place which are maintained, and HR and Payroll systems failure, continue to be recorded and monitored corporate risks.
- **Business Systems & Information** - lack of engagement in the performance framework may impact on rate of service improvement.
- **Idox Database and associated systems** – if the system is not maintained and working effectively, a number of statutory services and duties may not be able to be delivered.
- **Staffing** – whilst the overall recruitment picture has improved in recent months, some services continue to suffer in terms of the availability of the required skill set, including Finance, and Council Tax and Benefits.

<div style="text-align: right;">Appendix H</div> <div style="text-align: center;">HEALTH, WELLBEING, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & BUSINESS SUPPORT PORTFOLIO</div> <div style="text-align: center;">Councillors Terry Richardson, Nigel Grundy & Les Phillimore</div>
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The areas covered in our portfolio are both wide ranging and complex, with five of the main partnerships; Lightbulb, Housing Enabler Team, Building Control, Health, Sport, Physical Activity and Tourism sitting in this group.

In Lightbulb we have developed a new visioning document setting the future for what the service will look like for 2024 to 2029. This will see a new legal agreement signed by all partners for a period up to five years. The Lightbulb offer will include the continuation of the pilots to provide support re hoarding (SafeSpaces), providing assisted technology (Home Gadgets), a green homes pilot and a new respiratory pilot. We have also updated our regulatory reform order to include additional grants to help people remain independent in their own home. We were successful in securing funding and commitment from our health and social care partners to not only continue the Housing Enablement Service but to expand it across all hospital settings. We have nominated the service for an LGC award.

The Leicestershire Building Control Partnership continues to operate an excellent service for customers and value for money for the partners. The team have worked hard to prepare for the changes in the legislation which will see staff being required to take competency exams to be able to operate.

We took on an additional delegated service in terms of running another local authority's Community Health & Wellbeing Service and their sport and physical activity. We've developed a Community Health and Wellbeing Plan for Blaby District and supported hundreds of our more vulnerable residents through our Exercise Referral and Falls Prevention (Steady Steps) programmes.

We have developed an Economic Development Framework the delivery of which is underpinned by 5 themed action plans - supporting local businesses and innovation, shaping our work and skills agenda, growing and supporting the green economy, building pride in place, and identifying investible propositions.

The Tourism Partnership is currently at 67 members and growing. It has been great to see collaboration happening between partners too as a result of the partnership, for example Nemo's at Stoney Cove invited Mason il Cappo del Caffè van down for their bonfire night event.

Social media channels continue to grow with over 4000 followers. The events page on our website is still the most popular and we have been developing the inspiration section further. We have seen partners winning awards including Cosby Yarn Bomb and Everards at the Leicestershire Promotions Tourism and Hospitality Awards 2023.

This summer we saw some fantastic events bringing visitors to the district including GlastonBlaby, Cosby Yarn Bomb (20,000 visitors over the three weeks) and The Victory Show (15,000 visitors over the weekend, and location wise visitors came from all over including Aberdeenshire, Ireland, Durham, Cumbria, to Kent and Cornwall. All counties across the UK with also international visitors from China, Florida and New Zealand). We have been displaying the Visit Blaby District banner at key events to raise awareness.

Ice House Tours were popular this year with 86 visitors, most dates were a sell out and extra dates were added.

We have run several projects to support our businesses and tourism partners funded through UKSPF. Including offering free membership to the Chamber of Commerce for our SME's, a business support package and a Blaby District Taste the Place campaign.

We have amended the criteria for the community grants scheme to support our community and voluntary groups through the cost-of-living crisis and helped venues establish warm spaces. This has been supported through external funding and the Blaby Lottery.

Alongside the above we have continued to successfully secure external funding. To the end of November 2023, we have secured over £1.4 million including over a million for temporary housing, £45,000 from the Department of Work & Pensions for a Work & Skills Officer to support young people into work and £10,000 from national grid to address fuel poverty.

Portfolio Holder: Councillors Terry Richardson, Nigel Grundy & Les Phillimore

Senior Officer: Business, Partnerships & Health Improvement Group Manager

Portfolio Total

Health, Wellbeing, Community Engagement and Business Support - Total	2023/24 Approved Budget [A]	2023/24 Revised Estimate [B]	2024/25 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£3,144,694	£3,876,352	£3,676,460	£531,766 16.91%	-£199,892 -5.16%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£574,084	£2,417,141	£580,311	£6,227 1.08%%	-£1,836,830 -75.99%
3. Direct Income	-£3,319,419	-£4,255,458	-£4,208,825	-£889,406 26.79%	£46,633 1.10%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£399,359	£2,038,035	£47,946	-£351,413 -87.99%	-£1,990,089 -97.65%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	67.55	77.55	73.24	5.69 8.42%	4.31 -5.56%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This portfolio incorporates the establishment costs for Health & Leisure Services, Lightbulb, the Housing Enablement Team, Building Control, and Community Development, Work & Skills. The establishment budget for 2023/24 allowed for a 3% pay award. Following protracted negotiations, a flat rate increase of £1,925 for employees on grades 1 to 9 has been agreed with the trade unions. The nationally agreed pay award for Chief Executives and Chief Officers was 3.5%.

Many of the posts within Health & Leisure Services are externally funded and as such they are not included within the budget until that funding has been confirmed. This is the reason why the revised estimate is significantly higher than both the 2023/24 approved budget and the proposed budget for 2024/25, since the external funding was only secured after the budget was approved last February.

Other gross direct expenditure in the 2023/24 revised estimate is inflated by several factors. These include external funding (mainly for Health & Leisure Services) which is unconfirmed for 2024/25, and unspent budget provision carried forward from 2022/23 (non-recurring). It also allows for a one-year contractual arrangement with Oadby & Wigston Borough Council to run their Sport and Physical Activity programme.

In terms of income for this portfolio, the same principles apply to the 2023/24 revised estimate as described above, i.e., since the original budget was approved in February 2023, we have secured additional external funding in respect of Health & Leisure Services, and Housing Enablement (HET). These income streams have not been recognised in the 2024/25 budget except where there is certainty over the availability of external funding. The additional funding received from HET partners has allowed us to expand the team and service provision, as well as to recover some of our internal overheads.

The key income streams for this portfolio are Building Control and the leisure centre management fee. Under the delegated model for Building Control, Blaby retains all the income generated, no matter to which district it relates. The revised estimate has been reduced by £200,000 to reflect the predicted income for 2023/24, and this lower amount is then inflated by 4% for 2024/25. Overall, an increased net deficit is anticipated for the Building Control service due to lower take up by customers, but that deficit is shared by all partners so that the financial burden does not just rest with Blaby. Where possible the service will try to reduce this deficit by managing headcount and costs however, there is an element of building control that is regulatory and non-fee earning and the proportion of this is expected to increase given recent legislative changes.

Income from the leisure management contract is expected to increase by over £100,000 in 2024/25, in line with the business case. It is evident from the information in the detail that follows that the income received from our leisure centres exceeds that of the costs of our Health, Leisure and Tourism section.

Leisure Centres

Enderby Leisure Centre	2023/24 Approved Budget [A]	2023/24 Revised Estimate [B]	2024/25 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
3. Direct Income	-£544,268	-£673,260	-£778,632	-£234,364 43.06%	-£105,372 15.65%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	-£544,268	-£673,260	-£778,632	-£234,364 43.06%	-£105,372 15.65%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00 0.00%	£0 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. Not applicable.
2. Not applicable.
3. This is income to be received through the leisure management contract. The revised estimate reflects a contractual uplift that was not included in the approved budget. Inflation is also applied to arrive at the estimated management fee for 2024/25.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Not applicable.

Health, Leisure & Tourism

Health & Leisure	2023/24 Approved Budget [A]	2023/24 Revised Estimate [B]	2024/25 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£267,836	£558,379	£285,392	£17,556 6.55%	-£272,987 -48.89%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£92,334	£385,569	£101,429	£9,095 9.85%	-£284,140 -73.69%
3. Direct Income	-£6,100	-£390,994	-£7,000	-£900 14.75%	£383,994 -98.21%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£354,070	£552,954	£379,821	£25,751 7.35%	-£173,133 -31.31%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	5.36	13.36	5.36	0.00 0.00%	-8.00 -59.88%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions. The revised estimate includes externally funded posts that hadn't been confirmed at the time of budget setting.
2. Revised estimate includes externally funded project expenditure (level currently unknown for 2024/25) as well as various non-recurring expenditure carried forward from 2022/23.
3. Awaiting level of external funding to be confirmed for 2024/25. We are aware that Public Health are reducing their funding, for Blaby this could see a reduction up to £35,000.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Externally funded posts have been removed from the budget where this funding has not yet been confirmed for 2024/25.

Building Control

Building Control	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£1,261,985	£1,261,985	£1,337,781	£75,796 6.01%	£75,796 6.01%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£126,033	£178,483	£124,183	£-1,850 -1.47%	£-54,300 -30.42%
3. Direct Income	£-1,407,467	£-1,287,181	£-1,429,651	£-22,184 1.58%	£-142,470 11.07%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£-19,449	£153,287	£32,313	£51,762 -266.14%	£-120,974 -78.92%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	25.01	25.01	24.74	-0.27 -1.08%	-0.27 -1.08%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. Revised estimate includes one-off budget provision for additional training required as a result of new legislation. The 2024/25 budget reflects the original business plan but with additional mileage costs.
3. Revised estimate shows a reduction of £200,000 in fees and charges, which are then increased by 4% for 2024/25. The income line also includes assumed increases in partner contributions, reflective of a rising deficit position due to the current economic climate.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Some minor changes in working pattern are reflected in 2024/25.

Community, Business, Work & Skills

Community, Business, Work & Skills	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£322,944	£347,444	£354,729	£31,785 9.84%	£7,285 2.10%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£142,254	£207,345	£103,512	-£38,742 -27.23%	-£103,833 -50.08%
3. Direct Income	-£50,259	-£66,064	-£25,756	£24,503 -48.75%	£40,308 -61.01%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£414,939	£488,725	£432,485	£17,546 4.23%	-£56,240 -11.51%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	7.22	8.22	8.22	1.00 13.85%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. The revised estimate includes several one-off budgets that were carried forward from 2022/23. These have been removed for 2024/25, which also reflects a reduction in costs relating to the Blaby Lottery (income also reduced).
3. Income earned via the Blaby Lottery has reduced in both 2023/24 and 2024/25.
4. No change.
5. 1 FTE post funded through the Department of Work and Pensions.

Lightbulb

Light Bulb, Housing Enablement, DFGs and Home Gadgets.	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£1,163,254	£1,580,155	£1,564,131	£400,877 34.46%	-£16,024 -1.01%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£211,103	£1,299,721	£248,827	£37,724 17.87%	-£1,050,894 -80.86%
3. Direct Income	-£1,311,325	-£1,777,442	-£1,967,786	-£656,461 50.06%	-£190,344 10.71%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£63,032	£1,102,434	-£154,828	£217,860 -345.63%	-£1,257,262 -114.04%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	28.35	29.35	33.31	4.96 17.50%	3.96 13.49%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions. The revised estimate and 2024/25 both allow for an increase in the structure for The Hospital Enablement Team (HET), funded by increased partner contributions. The revised estimate also includes externally funded projects carried forward from 2022/23, in respect of Occupational Therapy, and Assisted Technology, both of which are removed for 2024/25.
2. The revised estimate includes underspent budget provision brought forward from 2022/23 (non-recurring in 2024/25), much of which is externally funded. It also allows for additional running expenses for HET (all externally funded).
3. Additional HET funding secured from health partners is included in both the revised estimate and 2024/25. The Lightbulb budget for 2024/25 takes into account increased partner contributions to cover the pay award, as well as recovery of some of Blaby's internal overheads.
4. This represents the net impact of the variances listed above.
5. Additional Lightbulb Technical Officer included – 100% externally funded. Also reflects new HET structure which is also externally funded.

Management and Admin

Management and Admin	2023/24 Approved Budget [A]	2023/24 Revised Estimate [B]	2024/25 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£128,675	£128,389	£134,427	£5,752 4.47%	£6,038 4.70%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£2,360	£346,023	£2,360	£0 0.00%	-£343,663 -99.32%
3. Direct Income	£0	-£60,517	£0	£0 0.00%	£60,517 -100.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£131,035	£413,895	£136,787	£5,752 4.39%	-£277,108 -66.95%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	1.61	1.61	1.61	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. The revised estimate includes Contain Management Funding and Ukrainian Refugee Scheme Funding brought forward from 2022/23, which is likely to be spent this financial year.
3. Ukrainian Refugee Scheme funding received in year.
4. This represents the net impact of the variances listed above.
5. No change.

Movement in budget and staff from last year

Leisure Centres

Enderby Leisure Centre has returned to its pre covid levels in terms of the number of visits, Huncote's performance is slowly increasing. Quarterly performance and financial reports are shared with the group manager and portfolio holder. The introduction of the soft play equipment at Enderby will see an increase in income levels.

Health & Leisure Services

The reduction in income and expenditure in relation to Health & Leisure Services is in recognition of the fact that no confirmation has yet been received of external funding. External funding currently supports services such as exercise referral, positive activities for young people, heartsmart and 'falls prevention' programmes.

The service provides a range of outreach services across the district engaging over 5,000 residents and continues to be successful in securing significant levels of external funding from various sources.

In terms of the Oadby & Wigston Contract the current indication from them is that they want to continue this service but at a reduced level and cost.

Tourism

Members of the tourism partnership remain committed to delivering the tourism action plan. Feedback from the businesses has been very positive in terms of visitor numbers. Work continues on taking forward the actions in the tourism plan.

Lightbulb

The funding for staffing comes from Leicestershire County Council and all those district and borough councils for which we are running Lightbulb. In terms of the central hub team this is a shared cost with all 8 partners making contributions based upon an assumed caseload. A small contingency budget remains out of the Transformational Challenge Award Grant, some of this was used towards the cost of the visioning work in 2023/24. A new document has been developed for delivery of the service from 2024 to 2029. All districts have agreed to continue the pilots and fund these from their Disabled Facilities Grant allocation. They have also agreed to look at whether minor adaptations become part of the Lightbulb model going forward.

Housing Enablement Team

The Housing Enablement team is funded through Leicestershire and Leicester City Better Care Fund and with a contribution from Leicestershire Partnership Trust (LPT). In April 2023 partners agreed to fund this project for a further three years. The business case for the funding included a restructure which has now taken place and funding to cover Blaby's costs.

Building Control Services

The Service currently operates as a lean self-financing business unit, competing for work against the private sector. However, following the introduction of new legislation this will require the service to increase the regulatory element of the work and more investment may be required from Blaby and its

partners. All fees across the six partners are now aligned and the plan is to increase partnership fees by 3% from 1st April 2024.

Portfolio Priorities

The priorities for our portfolio are: -

- To ensure that our Leisure Contract delivers the expected financial return
- Deliver the action plans that underpin the Economic Development Framework
- To work with all our businesses to ensure the growth of the economy across Blaby District
- Deliver UKSPF Projects
- To gain agreement by all partners to the new delivery document for Lightbulb from 2024 to 2029, including agreeing new information sharing and legal agreements.
- To develop the Home Gadgets, Safespaces, Housing Occupational Therapist, Green Homes and Respiratory pilots over the next 12 months to inform whether they become business as usual.
- Influence local plan (Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan/Built Facilities Strategy/Playing Pitch Strategy/Tourism Policy)
- To embed the new legislation into Leicestershire Building Control Partnership and prepare our staff for undertaking the training and exams to be able to practice.
- Ensuring that BDC can benefit from Tourism, including delivering the tourism growth plan. We will continue to work with partners on the tourism partnership board, ensuring we bring them with us as the district's tourism offer grows and evolves.
- To work with partners to deliver the Community Health & Wellbeing Plan
- To deliver the Housing Enabler Service across all hospital settings in Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland, including the pilot working with families who are accessing CAMHS provision.

Services

Leisure Centres

Huncote provides a range of leisure services including a fitness suite (gym), exercise classes, all weather pitches, squash courts, sports hall, café, dance studio, Virtual Spinning Studio, and meeting room. This service is delivered through a leisure contract with SLM (expires 2029).

Enderby Leisure Centre provides a range of leisure services including a swimming pool, swimming lessons, fitness suite, health suite, indoor bowls, golf course, fitness studios, all weather pitches, café and meeting room. From January 2024 it will also provide a soft play area. This service is delivered through a leisure contract with SLM (expires 2029).

Health & Leisure

- Health Improvement– services include A Place to Grow, Dementia Action Alliance, Health Promotion, delivering the Community Health & Wellbeing Plan and playing an active part in the Community Health & Wellbeing Partnership. This includes partners such as our Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Public Health, Primary Care Networks and other partners around health.
- Tourism & Heritage – services include the delivery of the Blaby District Tourism Growth Plan, a range of projects such as Walk & Ride, Heritage and Tourism Map and the VisitBlaby digital offer.
- Sport & Physical Activity – these services complement the universal offer in our Leisure Centres by providing outreach programmes throughout our District to residents who may not be able to access our centres. They also provide support to help develop our network of community sports clubs. The services include exercise referral, outreach physical activity sessions, cardiac rehabilitation scheme, falls prevention, older people activities, weight management, inclusive activities, sports development, events, the Positive Activities Referral Scheme (PARS), JUST (women's activity programme) as well as national and local awareness campaigns. This service secures a significant amount of external funding from Public Health (this amount is still to be confirmed for 2024/25, but we are expecting to see a reduction in Public Health funding).
- Delivery of several UKSPF funded projects to support both Tourism and Health & Leisure.

Building Control

A statutory service that safeguards public health and safety within the built environment in addition to controlling accessibility and improving energy efficiency of buildings by ensuring the requirements of the Building Regulations and associated legislation are complied with. Due to new legislation being introduced via the Building Safety Act 2022 and the Building Safety Regulator this service has begun and will continue to see major changes to how it operates.

This service competes with other private sector building control providers. Additional services are provided to deal with dangerous structures, safe demolition of buildings and street naming and numbering, in addition to providing support and added resilience to the Council's Property Services

Team and other services as and when required. It is important to note that some elements of this service are not fee earning.

Blaby District Council currently delivers the Leicestershire Building Control Service which covers Harborough District Council, Oadby & Wigston Borough Council, Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council, Melton Borough Council and Rutland County Council under a delegated service agreement.

Community, Business, Work and Skills

This team offers a whole range of support to our businesses including financial, training, access to specialist support and advice, skills including digital skills to enhance how businesses operate. The team have developed an Economic Development Framework and five action plans that sit under this which support the delivery of the framework. They will coordinate activity across different teams within the local authority to ensure the delivery of these plans.

Alongside the above the team delivers a series of jobs fairs and business breakfasts to help our residents gain employment and our businesses to fill vacancies and ensure our businesses can share good practice and network. They deliver numerous projects funded through UKSPF to help our residents develop their skills within the workplace and our businesses to thrive.

This service has established a Work and Skills Forum which is well attended by both our SME's and our larger businesses. Together they have produced a recruitment and retention pathway.

The Community Grants scheme supports the voluntary and community sector to develop and strengthen facilities and activities. The health checks that are offered to community group's support them to have the correct governance structure and documentation in place. Over the last twelve months our focus has been helping these groups to continue to operate whilst going through a cost-of-living crisis.

The Love Blaby Lottery is a weekly online lottery created to support local good causes within the district. The lottery mission is to raise money in the community for the community and has an annual income of around £30,000.

Our funding officer continues to identify opportunities to secure external funding such as bids to DEFRA and Sport England.

Lightbulb

Lightbulb is about helping people to remain independent in their home for longer. It provides a range of practical housing support into a single service. It is delivered through a hub and spoke model with Lightbulb Team's in every district across the county.

The team offer: -

- Minor adaptations
- Disabled facilities grants
- Range of other grants to support both hospital discharge and people remaining independent in their own home.
- Wider Housing Support
- Assisted technology, falls prevention
- Housing options (planning for the future)
- Advice & signposting

Lightbulb's approach is to deliver benefits to customers and partners. Improving the customer journey, making services easier to access and navigate. Delivering the right support at the right time while delivering savings in service delivery. It is part of the unified prevention offer within the Better Care Fund.

Housing Enablement Team

The Housing Enablement Team (HET) places specialist housing professionals into inpatient settings, with the goal of assisting patients with housing issues so that they can be safely discharged, reducing or preventing discharge delays and improving patient outcomes. HET is a Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland service, also covering patients from out-of-area and those with no recourse to public funds, where they are occupying an inpatient bed and have a housing related barrier. The total funding for this service comes from external sources.

Key Points

<p>Doing things differently – plans for the coming year</p>	<p><u>Leisure Contract:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase usage of facilities across both sites <p><u>Health & Leisure:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop our walk and ride offer including the development of our Active Travel Strategy and Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan • To work with partners to deliver our Community Health & Wellbeing Plan. • Secure agreement from Oadby & Wigston to manage their Community Health & Wellbeing and sport & physical activity services. <p><u>Tourism:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review the current Tourism Growth Plan and develop a new one. • To deliver UKSPF projects supporting our tourism agenda. • To support the Economic Development Framework and specifically the Building Pride in Place Action Plan. <p><u>Community, Business, Work & Skills</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To deliver the five action plans that underpin the Economic Development Framework. • To deliver our work & skills pathway to support our businesses with recruitment and retention. • To deliver our UKSPF projects which will support our residents in securing employment and our businesses to grow and increase their economic viability. • To identify and submit applications for external funding to support delivery of Blaby's priorities and corporate plan. • To support our young people to have a voice through the Youth Council on what matters to them. • To deliver our community offer to support our community and voluntary groups and thus our residents. <p><u>Lightbulb</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To gain agreement from all partners to sign up to a new legal agreement from April 2024. • To establish project teams to look at minor adaptations becoming part of the lightbulb offer and the implementation of Charnwood into the full model. • To undertake a review of the structure of the service to ensure we have the resource needed to deliver how Lightbulb operates now. • Expand the service offered via the pilots, e.g. Home Gadgets and Housing Occupational Therapist. <p><u>Housing Enablement Team</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that the service is a key part of the Integrated Discharge Team and the Community Care Partnership • To secure a new contract for the clean and clear service offered so patients can be discharged from hospital. • To deliver the new CAMHS funded role supporting families with housing issues. • To nominate the service for the LGC Awards now that it is overs all hospital settings across Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland.
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Income generation	<p><u>Health & Leisure</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure income from the Leisure Contract. • Continue to secure external funding to support front line delivery. • Continue to secure external funding to support our Health & wellbeing agenda e.g., mental health coordinator & mental health cafes. <p><u>Building Control</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To monitor our income levels and market share. Fees will be increased from April 2023 by 3% across all partners. • To review the demand data annually to ensure each partners contribution to the cost of the service matches their demand. • Ensure that Blaby's costs for leading the service are included within each partners contribution. • To review how the service operates following the introduction of the new Building Act 2022 legislation and the regulatory requirements verses an income generation service.
Capital plans for the portfolio	<p>The main capital spending for this portfolio is on Disabled Facilities Grants (including Housing Support Grants) which are funded by way of a government grant. The funding allocation is expected to be similar to the current financial year, around £660,000, unless it is top sliced to cover any ongoing pilot projects through Lightbulb.</p> <p>The annual Capital Grants Programme has been included at £54,500 for 2024/25, unchanged from the current year.</p> <p>Expenditure linked to the replacement of gym equipment at our leisure centres, as part of the £5m refurbishment undertaken in 2019/20, has been deferred until 2025/26. The life expectancy of the equipment can be extended due to lack of use during the Covid lockdown period.</p>

Key Performance Indicators

- Health, Leisure & Tourism Services:
- Active Lives Survey (measures levels of physical activity).
- STEAM Data (provides local Tourism statistics).
- Leisure Contract (Enderby & Huncote Leisure Centres):
- Usage levels
- Income levels
- Number of complaints
- QUEST score (independent inspection)
- Community, Business, Work & Skills
- Number of people supported to take up a work placement, trial and or a job.
- Number of businesses supported.
- Number of VCS groups supported via the Community Grants Programme and Income from Blaby Lottery
- Amount of external funding secured
- Building Control
- Income generated
- Lightbulb
- End to end times for completion of DFG's

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2022/23 RESULTS	2023/24 YEAR TO DATE	COMMENTS
Number of visits to Enderby & Huncote Leisure Centres	607,020	381,057	The figure for 2023/24 is to the end of quarter two (October).
Income generated by the Leicestershire Building Control Partnership	£1,024,879.00	£588,231.00	The figure for 2023/24 is to the end of quarter two (October).
Total number of people supported through our work and skills programme	651, 236 for HMP Fosseway.	917	<p>2023/2024</p> <p>Figures come from 3x job fairs, construction (site visits, apprenticeships), curriculum support, work experience, dwp employment coach based at BDC, Young people (16-24yrs) work and skills officer.</p> <p>Job fairs continue to be successful and generate a lot of positive outcomes for residents and local employers</p>
Amount of external funding secured	£1,261,618.00	£1,400.072.50	In the current year there are bids for funding that we are still awaiting the outcome from.
End to end times for completion of DFGs (time taken from receipt of a completed application to approval of grant – average days)	20 weeks	19 weeks	Increased complex cases especially in multigenerational homes

Time taken to complete DFGs (from initial enquiry by customer to completion of work, broken down by stages)	58 Weeks	60 weeks	Increased complexity of cases in terms of health for residents. Wait times for Occupational Therapist assessments and builders to get quotes / materials etc – being monitored locally – knock on effects from pandemic and Brexit
Demand for DFGs (number of recommendations received)	80	32	Slight dip since last year but each case increasing in complexity. Social care are also utilising reablement OT's before cases get to Lightbulb team to extend the preventative work
Number of holistic housing needs assessment carried out (through Lightbulb Programme).	3709	948	More reviews are being carried out for appropriateness of equipment and if customers are using the equipment – resulting in alternatives being sort.
Number of patients supported to be able to leave Hospital through intervention by The Housing Enabler Team.	1260	1171	There has been a significant increase in demand however this is reflective of the social issues within Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland. Through to the end of the financial year we are due to have the highest number of referrals ever recorded.

Customers

- Use data to understand our customers and local trends, such as the Joint Strategy Needs Assessment, Community Health & Wellbeing Plan, Sport England data, Lightbulb data and Mosaic.
- Conduct evaluations and seek customer feedback to improve services.
- Collection of positive comments and compliments from our customers and partners.
- SLM – monthly joint working meetings and quarterly contract monitoring

Risks

- Impacts to Building Control of the new Building Safety Act 2022 and the Building Safety Regulator and the requirement for all building control surveyors to undertake training and exams to proof competence. There is a risk that these new demands will lead to the loss of experienced building inspectors, particularly those that are nearing retirement age.
- External funding supports 4 posts (Physical Activity Development Officers – PADOs) across the Health and Leisure Services Team. These posts currently deliver our Active Blaby initiative which includes a wide range of Physical Activity and Active Referral services that support the inactive, vulnerable, elderly, people with dementia and disability, residents at risk of developing health conditions including mental health and vulnerable young people. Securing external funding is, therefore, essential to continue these services. A significant amount of this is received from Sport and Physical Activity Strategic Commissioning funded by Leicestershire County Council Public Health (PH). Informal indications for 2024/25 suggest we will receive a reduced level of funding compared to 2023/24, although this has not been confirmed. The team are continually seeking and applying for funding.
- The Integrated Care Board and Leicestershire Partnership Trust pull out of the funding for the Housing Enabler Service earlier than the three years agreed.
- Commitment from partners to deliver joint services for example, health, construction, retail, tourism, other local authority partners.
- Performance of Leisure Contractor (SLM) and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on the leisure industry
- Reducing Council budgets
- Recruitment and retention of qualified staff.
- Forecasted economic downturn and the impact of this on all our businesses, on unemployment rates and on income in terms of building control.
- All Partners do not sign up to the new Lightbulb visioning document and/or do not agree to extend the pilots and undertake work to look at minor adaptations becoming part of the Lightbulb offer.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES & ASSETS PORTFOLIO
Councillor Nigel Grundy

2023/24 has been a very challenging year in many respects for the portfolio. The cost of living crisis has been keenly felt by all staff resulting in industrial action at the depot. Whilst the effects of this were well managed and much of the impacts on residents mitigated there were obvious impacts on the delivery of key Neighbourhood Services initiatives. The settling of the dispute means the service can look forward to developing efficiencies from its mobile working aspirations, working collaboratively with partners, and deliver the latest packaging reforms.

Despite the challenges during the summer there were a number of achievements within my portfolio. Firstly, it was great to see the POS Strategy being well received by the Scrutiny Working Group after comprehensive work by the team to help shape the future of our open spaces, so they provide accessible yet sustainable spaces for people, place and nature. The completion of capital projects at The Osiers and Crow Mills were also well received by residents. The team also completed the landscape framework procurement to ensure the Council continues to obtain value for money when delivering hard landscaping schemes such as the car park resurfacing works at Fosse Meadows which was completed at the start of the year. The focus this year will be on implementing the actions within the new strategy including looking at innovative ways to make the parks self-sustaining.

Route optimisation has been completed on the waste collection rounds to ensure the appropriate resource is in place and is efficient. Approximately, 4,000 new homes have been absorbed into the service since the last main service change in 2018. The new changes will be implemented during the middle of January with day changes kept to a minimum of 2,000 properties to minimise impacts of day changes to residents. In addition, the team have completed a comprehensive procurement of the in-cab technology to ensure real time information between front line and back office teams to improve the customer experience and efficiency of the service.

The fleet team have procured and implemented the latest fleet management software with support from the transformation team. The service will continue its journey to digitise the service next year to further streamline its record keeping and compliance monitoring to improve driver safety standards. This year the team will undertake a greater number of taxi vehicle inspections throughout the district resulting in greater standards of safety of taxi's licenced by Blaby District Council.

This year the main depot project will see the completion of the work to install solar panels at the depot and begin the transition towards providing electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

Much has been happening in terms of Council assets to help pave a positive way forward for the long-term future of the Council with the outcomes of various feasibility studies coming to fruition to help meet our pressing housing needs and ensure we gain best use of Council assets. More immediately the team have delivered a number of projects including the complete refurbishment of the office accommodation, the

installation of the gas boilers, completing the final phase of the transition to LED lighting and delivering the Changing Places toilets in Blaby.

Another year I extend my thanks to the team who have faced and overcome many challenges whilst at the same time achieving much in a very busy operational and key front-line service.

2024/25 promises to be a very exciting year ahead following a restructure within the Senior Leadership Team to prepare the Council to deliver a number of significant asset related projects.

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Nigel Grundy
Senior Officer: Neighbourhood Services & Assets Group Manager

Portfolio Total

Neighbourhood Services & Assets - Total	2023/24 Approved Budget [A]	2023/24 Revised Estimate [B]	2024/25 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£3,236,288	£3,330,312	£3,649,027	£412,739 12.75%	£318,715 9.57%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£2,307,938	£2,573,770	£2,431,090	£123,152 5.34%	-£142,680 -5.54%
3. Direct Income	-£2,322,278	-£2,320,806	-£2,433,793	-£111,515 4.80%	-£112,987 4.87%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£3,221,948	£3,583,276	£3,646,324	£424,376 13.17%	£63,048 1.76%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	80.11	83.50	85.00	4.89 6.10%	1.50 1.80%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The establishment budget for 2023/24 allowed for a 3% pay award. Following protracted negotiations, a flat rate increase of £1,925 for employees on grades 1 to 9 has been agreed with the trade unions. The nationally agreed pay award for Chief Executives and Chief Officers was 3.5%. The revised estimate allows for an increase in headcount in the Refuse and Recycling team, and the Vehicle Maintenance team, following approval by Cabinet Executive on 18th September. The increase for the Refuse and Recycling team is for 3 additional loaders which will provide sufficient budget to enable an additional round to be undertaken. The increase to the Vehicle Maintenance team is to make the Transport Services Support Officer post full time on the back of an increase in compliance work in relation to the safe operation and upkeep of the Council's fleet vehicles.

The establishment budget for 2024/25 allows for a 3% estimated pay award, contractual increments where appropriate, and employer's national insurance and pension contributions within service budgets.

There have been several changes to other gross direct expenditure budgets in both 2023/24 and 2024/25. Some of these are one-off in the current year only, mainly for unspent budget provision brought forward from 2022/23. Other changes are expected to be ongoing and reflect contractual or inflationary increases.

Fees and charges have been increased where necessary to ensure that full cost recovery is achieved. Income from garden bins has been increased by £50,000 in 2024/25, with a similar increase being applied to bulky waste collections.

Parks & Open Spaces

Parks and Open Spaces	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£438,751	£438,751	£485,099	£46,348 10.56%	£46,348 10.56%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£211,584	£222,449	£239,029	£27,445 12.97%	£16,580 7.45%
3. Direct Income	-£45,969	-£55,969	-£45,969	£0 0.00%	£10,000 -17.87%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£604,366	£605,231	£678,159	£73,793 12.21%	£72,928 12.05%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	11.00	11.00	11.00	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. £10,000 has been added to the budget for both years to reflect increased costs in relation to open space development work, and tree maintenance.
3. Additional income from grass cutting expected in 2023/24.
4. The net impact of changes referred to above.
5. No change.

District Cleansing

District Cleansing	2023/24 Approved Budget [A]	2023/24 Revised Estimate [B]	2024/25 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A] 	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£375,937	£375,937	£436,010	£60,073 15.98%	£60,073 15.98%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£68,550	£69,550	£74,550	£6,000 8.75%	£-5,000 -6.29%
3. Direct Income	-£109,000	-£109,000	-£102,000	£7,000 -6.42%	£7,000 -6.42%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£335,487	£336,487	£408,560	£73,073 21.78%	£72,073 21.42%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	10.50	10.50	11.00	0.50 4.76%	0.50 4.76%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions. A part-time District Cleansing Operative post (0.5 FTE) was temporarily removed from the current year budget and has been reinstated for 2024/25.
2. The budgets for equipment and removal of fly tipping have been increased to reflect current spending levels.
3. Minor reduction in anticipated income from emptying of litter and dog bins because of reduced demand from some parishes.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Additional 0.5 FTE reinstated for 2024/25 as above.

Refuse Collection & Recycling

Refuse Collection & Recycling	2023/24 Approved Budget [A]	2023/24 Revised Estimate [B]	2024/25 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£1,961,743	£2,020,767	£2,177,501	£215,758 11.00%	£156,734 7.76%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£591,052	£692,552	£654,552	£63,500 10.74%	-£38,000 -5.49%
3. Direct Income	-£1,728,250	-£1,705,250	-£1,814,050	-£85,800 4.96%	-£108,800 6.38%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£824,545	£1,008,069	£1,018,003	£193,458 23.46%	£9,934 0.99%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	49.61	53.00	53.00	3.39 6.83%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions. Three additional refuse loaders have been added to the budget to facilitate an increase in rounds from 7 to 8 as approved by Cabinet in September 2023. An increase in hours was also approved for the Assistant post. The proposed budget includes a fixed term Apprentice position, and the removal of the Assistant post which has been moved to Fleet.
2. Revised estimate includes a one-off £27,000 for external support with refuse collections during the industrial action last summer. Other increases relate to composting fees (offset by income), commercial waste fees, postages, and computer equipment.
3. Income from garden waste recycling credits, garden bin rental, and bulky collections has been increased. This is offset by a reduction in trade refuse income.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. As per Note 1.

Fleet Management

Fleet Management	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£274,256	£309,256	£363,621	£89,365 32.58%	£54,365 17.58%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£633,040	£633,040	£667,040	£34,000 5.37%	£34,000 5.37%
3. Direct Income	-£16,790	-£16,790	-£16,790	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£890,506	£925,506	£1,013,871	£123,365 13.85%	£88,365 9.55%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	5.00	5.00	6.00	1.00 20.00%	1.00 20.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions. It also allows for an increase in overtime based on additional work from necessary increase in vehicle fleet, taxi vehicle testing, and other ad hoc repairs for partners.
2. The fuel budget has been increased in 2024/25 in line with expected price rises. The vehicle repair budget has also been increased to reflect the rising cost of parts.
3. No change.
4. Net impact of the variances listed above.
5. See above – Transport Services Support Officer moved from Refuse and Recycling.

Assets

Assets	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£185,601	£185,601	£186,796	£1,195 0.64%	£1,195 0.64%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£803,712	£956,179	£795,919	-£7,793 -0.97%	-£160,260 -16.76%
3. Direct Income	-£422,269	-£433,797	-£454,984	-£32,715 7.75%	-£21,187 4.88%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£567,044	£707,983	£527,731	-£39,313 -6.93%	-£180,252 -25.46%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	4.00	4.00	4.00	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. Non-recurring budget has been carried forward from 2022/23, including a sum to cover the initial phase of the Office Options Appraisal, and added to the 2023/24 revised budget. The revised estimate also includes a sum for repair and maintenance works in connection with two units at Enderby Road Industrial Estate. This has been covered by budget transfer from central provisions. Contractual and inflationary increases have been applied where appropriate.
3. The income budget for industrial estate rents has been increased to allow for new lettings.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. No changes.

Portfolio Priorities

Neighbourhood Services

- To deliver an efficient and cost-effective refuse and recycling service; and provide a clean and tidy district with well-maintained areas of open space.
- Deliver the actions within the agreed POS strategy.
- Maximise income generating and savings opportunities.

Assets

- Maximising the use of the council's assets.

Services

Neighbourhood Services

- **Refuse & Recycling**

The Refuse and Recycling service provides an alternate weekly collection service to over 44,000 households and a chargeable garden waste collection service to over 25,000 households. The service also provides bulky waste collection services with over 2,000 collections made per year. Trade waste collections are provided to over 500 local businesses.

- **Parks & Open Spaces**

The Grounds Maintenance service carries out the amenity mowing and horticultural services on all the Strategic Parks and Open Spaces owned by Blaby District Council. Additional works are also carried out for several Parishes and external partners, and on behalf of in-house teams such as Environmental Services, Building Control, and support with emergency response.

- **District Cleansing**

District Cleansing delivers the litter picking, dog and litter bin emptying and street sweeping throughout Blaby District. In addition to this we also offer a litter and dog bin emptying service and the option of additional litter picking operatives for Parish Councils at agreed rates. We currently have approximately of 1,000 litter and dog bins which are emptied on frequencies dependant on their usage.

- **Fleet Management**

The Fleet consists of 21 HGV's, 25 Vans (below 3.5 Tonnes), 1 pool car, 1 tractor and side arm, 1 compact sweeper, 7 ride on mowers, 6 trailers, 12 assorted plant and

equipment all of which are maintained and serviced in house at Whetstone Depot. The O licence for the fleet, for which there is a legal requirement in order to operate the service, is held by the Transport Services Manager.

- **Assets**

This includes costs for the Council Offices and the Depot, including the facilities management and maintenance of the buildings and the associated grounds maintenance. Also includes expenditure incurred in relation to public conveniences, the Glebe Road Caravan site in Countesthorpe, bus shelters, car parks, Enderby Road Industrial Estate and costs associated with the administration of property and assets owned by the Council. The team also administers Asset of Community Value applications made by residents.

Key Points

<p>Doing things differently – plans for the coming year</p>	<p><u>Refuse & Recycling</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To deliver requirements under new waste packaging reforms • To explore collaborative opportunities with partner authorities • To identify mobile working enhancements to improve the customer experience. <p><u>District Cleansing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop digital working arrangements to improve processes and efficiencies in the service. • Develop and build on the success of the Council's volunteer litter picking initiative and complete the transition to dual waste across the district to release opportunities for fuel savings by accessing disposal facility. <p><u>Parks and Open Spaces</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To deliver the actions within the approved POS strategy including a review of options to help parks be financially sustainable. <p><u>Transport</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore the feasibility of delivering fleet services on behalf of other Councils and partners. • To continue to embed digitisation in fleet operations. <p><u>Assets</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To progress strategic site projects through the next stages to ensure the Council's assets are utilised to gain best value. • To support the delivery of the solar panel and EV charging infrastructure at the depot. • Help internal customers to self-serve and reduce ad hoc demand on asset team.
<p>Income generation</p>	<p><u>Refuse & Recycling</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council will continue to charge for larger or additional bins following the introduction of alternate weekly collection. • The Council will continue to charge for Garden bins. • The Council will review its fees and charges to identify options of further growth in income. <p><u>District Cleansing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council will continue to provide chargeable services to parish councils and developers for litter bin collections. <p><u>Parks and Open Spaces</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service will continue to provide services for Parish Council's and will explore other opportunities to maximise income. <p><u>Transport Services</u></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council will continue to offer chargeable taxi vehicle inspections and MOTs for all taxi services in 2024-25. • The Council will explore opportunities to undertake chargeable fleet services on behalf of other organisations in 2024-25. <p><u>Assets</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The utilisation of the Council's assets to obtain revenue or improve usage is an ongoing initiative. The lease of a section of the Council offices to NHS bring revenue opportunities but also better outcomes for our customers with partners such as these delivering services alongside our own officers. The asset team will be looking for opportunities to lease the vacant area of the Council officers now the refurbishment has been completed. • Income generation is also obtained via leased rental agreements on the Enderby Road Industrial Estate and Countesthorpe Mobile Home site. The team actively work with the Council's letting agent to ensure that units at the industrial estate are let quickly following them becoming vacant.
Capital plans for the portfolio	<p>The 2024/25 Capital Programme includes the following proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1.3m for replacement of fleet vehicles. • £130,000 to resurface the car park at Fosse Meadows subject to securing external funding. • £440,000 for car park improvements at Bouskell Park, subject to identifying external funding opportunities.

Key Performance Indicators

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR – NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES	2022/23	COMMENTS
Percentage of waste collected which is recycled.	42.4 %	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Recycling rates have remained static which is usual when there is no service change such as reduced refuse capacity or no additional recyclable material collected such as food

Customers

The portfolio delivers many frontline services. Customer feedback is essential with all services to ensure we are outcome focussed and are delivering what really matters to and is valued by the customer. This information is used to help shape and measure service delivery.

The Assets team has a variety of different customers, both internal and external. These include, for example, requests from staff and managers for changes to the layout of the offices, local businesses in respect of the Enderby Road Industrial Estate, and Parish Councils and a variety of legal representatives. Internally the team provides professional property advice as required. The team also has a clear responsibility to ensure that all council buildings are accessible and meet the wide needs of residents who visit the offices.

Risks

Increased cost of living affecting prices, unavailability and/or long lead times of some key products and services, and national shortages in skilled staff may result in some service disruption throughout the year.

At the time of writing the funding allocation for implementing the new waste packaging reforms has not yet been announced.

Foreword

The teams across the Portfolio continue to experience a high demand for their services this year with the ongoing impact of the national increase in homelessness numbers, asylum and refugee accommodation demands, the rise in general living costs, an increased focus on private rented housing sector standards alongside continued delivery of the core aims of the business.

The work undertaken by the group has ranged from regulatory inspections such as food safety, through to drop-in sessions providing advice and guidance to residents on cost and energy efficiency measures.

Housing Services specifically have continued to respond to the increased numbers of households that are presenting as homeless by, where possible, utilising external funding streams to recruit into fixed term posts to meet the additional need presenting and trying to find an appropriate accommodation solution as quickly as we are able.

The team continue to provide homeless households, including those with complex needs and those who face losing their homes, with a safe place to stay. In addition to this the team have successfully secured 1.3 million in grant funding to provide more suitable, self-contained, temporary accommodation for residents facing homelessness.

The Community Services team has employed a Welfare Support co-ordinator to bring together Council and external services to support residents through the continued cost of living crisis. This has resulted in new webpages, a series of roadshow events, the setting up of a fuel bank, support for Warm Spaces and successful bids for funding to provide Beat the Chill services.

Our aim to ensure compliance with the Serious Violence Duty has seen the refocusing of the Childrens Worker services to provide preventative input in schools (wellbeing, inclusion, healthy relationships, ASB Busters, Healing Together and Safety Crew) alongside their regular therapeutic work, commissioning of LCFC to provide Leicester City in the Community sports sessions and commissioning targeted work at several hotspot locations.

The Community Safety team has also been involved in several prosecutions for breaches of Community Protection Notices which has been an additional draw on staff time.

There has been a backdrop to our services of heightened community tensions throughout the year with increased risk arising from the current Israel/Hamas situation

and earlier in the year, the threat of activism from far-right groups related to the war in the Ukraine and immigrant accommodation issues.

The Environmental Health team have managed to get back onto the full inspection programme well within the target date set by the Food Standards Agency, ensuring standards of food and health & safety within the district are being effectively monitored. In addition to the routine work Environmental Health have also been heavily involved in the Homes for Ukraine scheme ensuring that all houses participating in the scheme meet the required standard.

The Environmental Services team have continued to undertake monitoring and work towards a new, long term management plan for the Huncote site whilst delivering the new Car Parking Strategy, and the DEFRA grant funded projects.

The Green Officer has continued to work as the lead officer for Solar Together for the County and supported external funding opportunities for future green projects. Alongside this the Green Officer has applied for grant funding and installed workplace EV chargers at the main offices and worked with other services on the electrification of the fleet and the depot. The Green Officer has also delivered members masterclass training and launched an updated Net Zero Action Plan.

A key priority across the portfolio areas of Net Zero, Community Safety and Housing in the coming year will be to maximise the external funding opportunities to deliver key priorities and services.

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Les Phillimore

**Senior Officer: Environmental Health, Housing & Community Services
Group Manager**

Portfolio Total

Housing, Community and Environmental Services - Total	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£2,233,397	£2,275,176	£2,391,150	£157,753 7.06%	£115,974 5.10%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£775,332	£2,287,790	£1,159,652	£384,320 49.57%	-£1,128,138 -49.31%
3. Direct Income	-£1,029,773	-£1,300,678	-£1,264,291	-£234,518 22.77%	£36,387 -2.80%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£1,978,956	£3,262,288	£2,286,511	£307,555 17.31%	-£975,777 -28.84%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	48.17	50.17	48.01	-0.16 0.33%	-2.16 -4.31%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This portfolio incorporates the establishment and operational costs in respect of Housing, Community Services, and Environmental Health & Services. The establishment budget for 2023/24 allowed for a 3% pay award. Following protracted negotiations, a flat rate increase of £1,925 for employees on grades 1 to 9 has been agreed with the trade unions. The nationally agreed pay award for Chief Executives and Chief Officers was 3.5%.

The revised estimate for establishment allows for additional posts in Community Services and Housing Services. In Community Services, this relates to a fixed term post that has been removed for 2024/25. Homelessness Prevention Grant from central government is covering a fixed term post in Housing Services. The Licensing Team have transferred from Environmental Services to Environmental Health following a management restructure that was approved in 2022/23. Other Gross Direct Expenditure has increased in 2023/24, partly because of unspent budget brought forward from 2022/23, and partly because of homelessness pressures. Increasing numbers of families and individuals presenting as homeless continue to require bed and breakfast accommodation, although around 70% to 75% of the additional cost is met from housing benefit.

Direct income has increased due, mainly, to additional homelessness grant receipts and housing benefit contributions towards the cost of bed and breakfast accommodation. This is partially offset by a reduction in car parking fees and charges, to reflect a fall in usage since the pandemic.

Environmental Health and Environmental Services

Environmental Health	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£1,031,672	£1,013,821	£1,090,048	£58,376 5.66%	£76,227 7.52%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£311,670	£1,133,070	£290,612	-£21,058 -6.76%	-£842,458 -74.35%
3. Direct Income	-£614,666	-£463,278	-£447,776	£166,890 -27.15%	£15,502 -3.35%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£728,676	£1,683,613	£932,884	£204,208 28.02%	-£750,729 -44.59%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	22.17	22.17	22.01	-0.16 0.72%	-0.16 0.72%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions. The revised estimate reduction is due to a change in hours for the externally funded Air Quality Monitoring Officer.
2. Budget and external funding carried forward from 2022/23 for specific projects is included within the revised estimate.
3. The income budget for car parking has been reduced to reflect the downturn in footfall following the pandemic.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Minor changes in hours.

Community Services

Community Services	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£421,501	£447,521	£445,858	£24,357 5.78%	-£1,663 -0.37%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£36,615	£178,380	£35,100	-£1,515 -4.14%	-£143,280 -80.32%
3. Direct Income	£0	-£13,100	£0	£0 0.00%	£13,100 -100.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£458,116	£612,801	£480,958	£22,842 4.99%	-£131,843 -21.51%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	8.50	9.50	8.50	0.00 0.00%	-1.00 -10.53%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions. The revised estimate includes a fixed term post which is removed from the budget for 2024/25.
2. One off budget provision carried forward from 2022/23 is included in the revised estimate to fund specific projects.
3. Revised Estimate includes external contributions towards Resident Support service expenses, and youth provision. Neither of these are included in 2024/25 due to uncertainty over external funding.
4. This represents the net impact of the variances listed above.
5. See 1 above.

Housing Services

Housing Services	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£663,008	£696,618	£729,652	£66,644 10.05%	£33,034 4.74%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£425,007	£974,300	£831,900	£406,893 95.74%	-£142,400 -14.62%
3. Direct Income	-£415,107	-£824,300	-£816,515	-£401,408 96.70%	£7,785 -0.94%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£672,908	£846,618	£745,037	£72,129 10.72%	-£101,581 -12.00%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	16.00	17.00	16.00	0.00 0.00%	-1.00 -5.88%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions. The revised estimate includes a fixed term post, funded from the Homelessness Protection Grant which ends in March 2024.
2. Revised includes unallocated Grant funding received in the year and Government grant funding carried forward from 2022/23 to be used for reducing homelessness. Both years reflect a significant increase in bed and breakfast accommodation costs.
3. This represents income from Housing Benefit for households placed in temporary accommodation as well as Government grant funding.
4. This represents the net impact of the variances listed above.
5. See establishment – revised estimate includes fixed term post as per Note 1.

Management & Administration

Group Manager	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£117,216	£117,216	£125,592	£8,376 7.15%	£8,376 7.15%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£2,040	£2,040	£2,040	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
3. Direct Income	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£119,256	£119,256	£127,632	£8,376 7.02%	£8,376 7.02%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	1.50	1.50	1.50	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. No change.
3. No income in respect of this cost centre.
4. Net impact of the variances listed above.
5. No change.

Portfolio Priorities

Housing Services

- Increasing the supply of Affordable Homes.
- Investigate and try to identify a longer-term and more appropriate solution to the current temporary accommodation on offer.
- Provide more self-contained temporary accommodation to reduce the time that families are accommodated in hotels / B&B.
- Provide specialist housing for vulnerable groups.
- Continue to work to prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping.
- Continue to work to minimise the environmental impact of the existing and future housing stock.

Community Services

- Complete the Prevent Action Plan in light of new statutory guidance
- Review the Serious Violence Duty Action Plan annually
- Deliver our Community Safety Partnership Strategy Action Plan
- Support the Community Safety Team in the LLR wide procurement of a new joint ASB recording system
- Procure a case recording system for Community Services.

Environmental Health

- Ensure the statutory food inspection programme is continued to be delivered in line with the Council's Food Safety Service Plan 2023/2024.
- To continue to tackle Envirocrime across the district using marketing campaigns, social media, partnership working and enforcement.
- To review the engagement and enforcement with owners of empty properties within the district.
- To ensure private rented housing sector standards are maintained/improved within the district.
- To promote a positive health and safety culture in workplaces across the district through campaigns of advice and enforcement.
- To ensure that the Licensing service have sufficient capacity to process and service the large increase in licensed taxi drivers and vehicles due to the recent policy changes

Environmental Services

- Continue to deliver the long-term strategy for managing the landfill gas at the Huncote Leisure Centre site, and other sites within the district.
- Implement the objectives of the new contaminated Land Strategy for the district
- Declare a new Air Quality Management Area, Revoke 3 Existing Air Quality Management Areas and develop a new Air Quality Action Plan for the district.
- Continue to implement the objectives of the Car Parking Strategy.

Green Initiatives/Actions

- Deliver our 2030 Net Zero Council Action Plan.
- To maximise external funding opportunities to support local businesses and residents to work towards net zero.

Key points

<p>Doing things differently – plans for the coming year</p>	<p><u>Housing Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To continue to influence housing requirements on major planning applications• Assess temporary accommodation options across the district• Improve housing statistics reporting and information management• Enabling new supported provision within the district• Continue to operate an effective private rented sector service for both tenants and landlords <p><u>Environmental Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver the required processes to enable us to declare a new Air Quality Management Area• Deliver the required processes to enable us to revoke 3 current Air Quality Management Areas due to a consistent reduction in recorded levels.• Devise and start to implement a new Air Quality Action Plan for the district.• Deliver the 2030 Net Zero Council Action Plan• Deliver the Contaminated Land Strategy <p><u>Community Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To produce the Annual Community Safety Partnership Strategy Action Plan for 2024-25• To maintain compliance with the Serious Violence Duty• To review the Prevent Action Plan• To increase the reach of Community Safety campaigns and messages• To ensure that vulnerable people get the right support, at the right time, in the right way <p><u>Environmental Health:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To continue to deliver the Envirocrime work plan, liaising with colleagues from the Neighbourhood Services Team and partners across the county.• To increase core competencies across a wider range of staff within the team to increase resilience.• To explore opportunities of collaborative working and shared efficiencies.
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Income generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car parks • Licensing for animal health • Taxi Licensing • Permitted process income • Regulatory income • Provision of Accommodation certificates • Food Hygiene Re-Score requests. • Provision of Food Product Export Certificates • Focus on identifying unlicensed HMO's • Seeking to establish Primary Authority agreements where possible with businesses in the district
Capital plans for the portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £40,000 included for routine works to landfill gas monitoring system.

Key Performance Indicators

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2021/22	2022/23	2023/2024 YEAR TO DATE	COMMENTS
Number of cases where homelessness has been prevented	260	287	221	The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) places a duty on the Council to work with applicants for longer to help prevent them from becoming homeless. The figure currently remains consistent with previous years.
Number of homelessness	849	948	706	<p>The total number of homelessness approaches to the Council continues to rise year on year.</p> <p>This figure represents all approaches and takes account of both prevention, relief and main duty cases that the team are managing.</p>
Number of Affordable Houses	77	51	46	Delivery remains consistently slow with overall house building. However we are expecting completions on all affordable schemes which should result in over 100 completions by the end of the financial year.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2021/22	2022/23	2023/2024 YEAR TO DATE	COMMENTS
Number of ASB cases reported in Blaby	687	562	323	These are Police figures of total ASB reported from April 2022 to September 30, 2022 (the most up to date figures available). The trend data is downward for ASB and has been for 4 years both locally and nationally. However, there has been a corresponding rise in the number of crimes reported, particularly following the move out of lockdown. In 20/21 the ASB spikes corresponded to periods where covid restrictions were lifted and there were consequently high number of youth ASB reported. It must be noted that each report is counted although they may refer to the same incident.
Support services (Resident Support/Childrens Worker/Domestic Abuse)– number of people supported		478	222 (year to date)	Figures are to the end of October. Children Workers figures are down due to the work stream being redesigned and a new programme of group work sessions are being run – 20 more sessions are now booked in to run until the end of the year. There were fewer referrals to Domestic Abuse in house services in the early qtrs. of this year, but since a change in the Police working procedures, this has started to pick up although it should also be noted that there has been a reduction in the number of cases referred from our in-house housing service since the Domestic Abuse Act burdens funding was used to strengthen housing related DA support, options and mechanisms directly within the team.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2021/22	2022/23	2023/2024 YEAR TO DATE	COMMENTS
Total number of long-term (6 months+) empty properties in the district. Figures reported on annually in October.	383	269	390	Unusually low figure in Oct 2022. Likely to be primarily due to the impact of market forces when coming out of the covid pandemic. Oct 2023 figure is more comparable with 2020 (413) and 2021 (383).
Number of large fly tipping incidents	812	665	516 (year to date)	At the same point last in 2022 the figure was 438 which represents an increase of 18%. In particular there were more incidents over the summer months in 2023 compared to the corresponding months in 2022.
Number of food premises with a rating of 3 or above (satisfactory)	594 out of 611 relevant food outlets 97.2%	592 out of 611 relevant food outlets. 96.9%	592 out of 611 relevant food outlets. 96.6%	The proportion of compliant food businesses (rating of 3 or above) has been very consistent over the last three years with a difference of just 0.6%. The overall number of registered food businesses has dropped since April 21 which is in part due to officers regularly reviewing the food register to make sure it is up to date.

Customers:

- Community Services carry out an annual Community Safety Partnership survey asking residents for their views on how safe the district is and what their community safety priorities are.
- Licensing have and will be continuing to consult on changes in Policies and Practices within the Licensing function.
- Information on how many ASB reviews and their outcomes are now on the website and the approach is continuing to be reviewed.

Risks:

- Recruitment and retention of qualified staff.
- Lack of temporary accommodation and appropriate temporary accommodation options.
- Impacts of the rising costs such as energy, food, maintenance etc on businesses within the districts and their standards.
- Introduction of new legislation or workstreams that increases the workload of the teams.
- Lack of affordable housing will increase homelessness.
- Any reduction in the homelessness grant funding will impact on service delivery.
- The increase in homelessness cases has and will continue to impact on the availability of temporary accommodation within the district which is further impacted by the homes for the Ukrainian scheme and resettlement programmes.
- Lack of supported provision for single households with complex needs will increase the time some people stay in temporary accommodation.
- A reduction in affordable housing funding or strategic partnership funding will impact upon new affordable housing for both general needs and supported accommodation.
- Lack of land availability or suitability for Registered Providers to acquire land will result in a drop in new affordable housing units and available public subsidy being repositioned elsewhere.
- Key personnel leaving or reducing their hours within the key frontline services currently experiencing very high demand.

We continue to win awards, fight for positive transformational change, reduce backlog times, improve services, and continue to make decisions that help us punch above our weight as a District, while being prudent with our Council's finances.

Planning Delivery (Development Services, Planning Enforcement, Strategic Growth & Local Policy)

Development Services

We have reduced our backlog by around 80%. Our yearly timescales for decisions both majors and non-majors continues to be way above national targets. Project work continues towards the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain, and the transformation programme including the validation process and introduction of pre-application charging.

Planning Enforcement

A number of high-profile cases have progressed to successful outcomes and some other sensitive enforcement cases are ongoing. Our new Enforcement Policy is being progressed to ensure we do the best we can for residents. We continue to be successful in defending enforcement appeals.

Strategic Growth

Our dedicated team for large scale projects has been hard at work ensuring these developments are right for Blaby District. Including HNRFI, New Lubbethorpe and potential strategic sites. We have a Blaby Growth Plan that pushes for Infrastructure Led proposals and the team always push for this ethos.

Local Policy

Our new Local Plan is progressing well, we continue to be mindful of future impacts including Leicester City's unmet need, and potential planning reforms arising from the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act. We have run several workshops around our New Local Plan, and these will continue.

Corporate Transformation (Transformation & Projects, ICT, Customer Services & EDI)

Transformation & Projects

We introduced our Transforming Blaby Together strategy, this sets out how BDC aims to meet the needs, expectations, and aspirations of Blaby District residents, communities, businesses, and our people. Our quick win projects have been going well, for example the planning development services team have seen an 80% reduction in operational backlog following a robust review of their process and procedures. Similarly, in Licensing, time to issue a new license has been reduced to 4 weeks (50% reduction), this has enabled the service to become more competitive, increase licences issued and develop new initiatives such as a "School Transport Only" license to bring in additional income to the Council.

Customer Services

Customer Services and its importance in terms of customer experience continues to be of high priority. Our Service Manager started at BDC in January 2023 and over the last 12 months has utilised prior knowledge, experience, and skills in the utilisation of the Storm telephony system to create detailed reporting for all service areas which also includes avoidable contact which in some services, is drilled down to specific enquiries. This baseline data provides valuable insights, signposting to where we can work together to continuously improve the customer journey.

Equalities Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

The Council's commitment to equality and diversity goes beyond the equality objectives which are set in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty. Blaby District Council are determined to do more than just meet our statutory obligations. With an EDI Champion in place, we want to continue our desire to make BDC a leading authority in our commitment to EDI. Recent changes include an improved prayer room, a new wellbeing room, and a separate quiet room.

ICT

It is no secret that we have had our challenges with ICT over the past year, however, this is a high priority for the administration. We must improve this service for our staff, members, and customers. Thank you to the opposition groups representatives for joining us in a recent ICT workshop. Members will see further reports soon on a potential new direction for our Council. It is so important we get this right and see the trust restored in our ICT, the benefits of evolving technologies and financial stability.

Digital

Some of our digital achievements over the last year:

- Garden waste campaign – 82% of subscriptions submitted online, up from 80% previous year and 87% customer satisfaction with digital process.
- Trained over 70 staff members to become editors of the corporate website and make documents accessible to people with disabilities.
- Developed 11 digital forms, including Noise Complaint, Change Council Tax Payment Frequency and Sharps Collection. Six of these forms seamlessly integrate with the back office system, eliminating the need for manual data entry by staff.
- Newsletter subscribers – 28,979 (increased by over 1k in the last 12 months)

Future

Our focus continues to be on delivering for the customer and for our place. We will continue the transformation work underway and embark on further projects to ensure our culture of continuous improvement goes from strength to strength.

We will ensure that we continue to provide and improve digital access to services for residents and businesses.

We will continue our proactive approach to place-shaping and growth, to ensure the district is a great place to live and work.

Finally, can I thank officers across my portfolio who continue to work tirelessly to ensure our residents remain at the heart of everything we do in what continue to be challenging times.

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ben Taylor

**Senior Officer: Executive Director, Planning & Strategic Growth Group
Manager, IT & Transformation Group Manager, Corporate
Services Group Manager**

Portfolio Total

Planning Delivery & Enforcement and Corporate Transformation - Total	2023/24 Approved Budget [A]	2023/24 Revised Estimate [B]	2024/25 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£2,872,276	£2,878,663	£3,039,818	£167,542 5.83%	£161,155 5.60%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£1,536,013	£2,452,182	£2,752,528	£1,216,515 79.20%	-£300,346 12.25%
3. Direct Income	-£842,912	-£1,134,590	-£2,142,781	-£1,299,869 154.21%	-£1,008,191 88.86%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£3,565,377	£4,196,255	£3,649,565	-£84,188 -2.36%	-£546,690 -13.03%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	59.61	60.16	57.69	-1.62 -2.73%	-2.47 -4.11%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This portfolio includes the establishment and operational costs relating to Planning, Transformation (including Projects, Customer Insights, Experience & Engagement and ICT) and Communications.

The establishment budget for 2024/25 allows for a 3% estimated pay award, contractual increments where appropriate, and employer's national insurance and pension contributions within service budgets. The budgets reflect a reduction in headcount for Customer Services of just over 1 FTE because of the deletion of 1.95 FTE vacant posts, changing advisor posts to an apprenticeship position, and changes in working patterns for some staff. Two vacant posts in Planning have also been removed from the establishment. This is offset by the addition of an IT Business Partner, approved as part of the final budget considerations in February 2023.

Other gross direct expenditure includes one-off unspent budget brought forward from 2022/23, reflected in the revised estimate for 2023/24. In addition to this, the revised estimate and 2024/25 budget include provision for expenditure on projects funded from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The cost of the ICT options appraisal also forms part of the revised estimate.

Direct income includes sums in both financial years in recognition of allocations from the UKSPF. The sums receivable will be allocated to individual services once funding bids have been reviewed. The income budgets also reflect the nationally agreed increase in planning fees and charges, effective from December 2023.

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Development Strategy	2023/24 Approved Budget [A]	2023/24 Revised Estimate [B]	2024/25 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£330,661	£330,661	£375,875	£45,527 13.77%	£45,527 13.77%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£94,471	£105,071	£132,254	£37,783 39.99%	£27,183 25.87%
3. Direct Income	-£4,000	-£4,000	-£4,000	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£421,132	£431,732	£504,129	£82,997 19.71%	£72,397 16.77%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	6.51	6.51	6.41	-0.10 -1.54%	-0.10 -1.54%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. The revised budget includes expenditure relating to the Local Development Framework, for which funding is from the Local Plan Reserve. The increase in 2024/25 is for consultancy work, also associated with the local plan, which is not covered by the earmarked reserve.
3. No change.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Minor change in working hours.

PLANNING DELIVERY

Planning Delivery	2023/24 Approved Budget [A]	2023/24 Revised Estimate [B]	2024/25 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£670,655	£670,655	£726,485	£55,830 8.32%	£55,830 8.32%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£136,247	£163,054	£155,497	£19,250 14.13%	-£7,557 -4.63%
3. Direct Income	-£560,000	-£500,000	-£743,698	-£183,698 32.80%	-£243,698 48.74%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£246,902	£333,709	£138,284	-£108,618 -43.99%	-£195,425 -58.56%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	14.61	14.61	13.98	-0.63 -4.31%	-0.63 -4.31%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. The revised budget includes non-recurring budget carried forward from 2023/24. Increases in 2024/25 include contractual and inflationary increases, and specialist consultancy advice.
3. The income budget has been reduced in 2023/24 to reflect the forecast outturn position, but for next year is expected to increase significantly based on the national increase in fees and charges.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Change in FTEs in 2024/25 is due to the removal of a vacant Development Services Support Assistant post, and a return to substantive post following end of fixed term secondment.

ENFORCEMENT

Planning Enforcement	2023/24 Approved Budget [A]	2023/24 Revised Estimate [B]	2024/25 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£240,596	£240,596	£196,234	-£44,362 -18.44%	-£44,362 -18.44%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£19,628	£26,828	£26,108	£6,480 33.01%	-£720 -2.68%
3. Direct Income	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£260,224	£267,424	£222,342	-£37,882 -14.56%	-£45,082 -16.86%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	5.00	5.00	4.00	-1.00 -20.00%	-1.00 -20.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions. 1 vacant post has been removed from the Establishment.
2. Increases are for consultants' fees relating to enforcement action and associated legal fees.
3. Not applicable.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. As per Note 1.

STRATEGIC GROWTH

Strategic Growth	2023/24 Approved Budget [A]	2023/24 Revised Estimate [B]	2024/25 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£281,841	£281,841	£213,269	-£68,572 -24.33%	-£68,572 -24.33%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£154,766	£291,880	£30,480	-£124,286 -80.31%	-£261,400 -89.56%
3. Direct Income	-£266,712	-£115,000	-£50,000	£216,712 -81.25%	£65,000 -56.52%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£169,895	£458,721	£193,749	£23,854 14.04%	-£264,972 -57.76%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	4.86	4.86	3.12	-1.74 -35.80%	-1.74 -35.80%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions. A vacant Major Schemes Officer post has been removed from the Establishment.
2. 2023/24 revised estimate includes non-recurring expenditure brought forward from 2022/23, for HNRFI, Whetstone Garden Village, and Lubbethorpe.
3. Revised budget and proposed budget include confirmed external funding.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Slight decrease in hours and 1 vacant post removed.

TRANSFORMATION, CUSTOMER INSIGHT & ICT

Transformation, Customer Insight & ICT	2023/24 Approved Budget [A]	2023/24 Revised Estimate [B]	2024/25 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£797,353	£771,527	£847,490	£50,137 6.29%	£75,963 9.85%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£862,058	£939,834	£889,331	£27,273 3.16%	-£50,503 -5.39%
3. Direct Income	-£9,400	£0	£0	£9,400 -100.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£1,650,011	£1,711,361	£1,736,821	£86,810 5.26%	£25,460 1.49%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	18.88	18.73	18.73	-0.15 -0.79%	-1.15 -5.78%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions. Reflects changes in headcount within Customer Services, and the new post of IT Business Partner, as described in the Executive Summary,
2. The revised estimate includes one-off budget provision brought forward from 2022/23, the cost of the IT options appraisal, and the mobile working pilot. The 2024/25 budget allows for inflationary increases including the ICT contract, until the outcome of the options appraisal is known and understood.
3. Income in relation to rent of floorspace to the Citizens Advice Bureau has been transferred to Property Services.
4. Net impact of the variances listed above.
5. See note 1 above.

MANAGEMENT & ADMINISTRATION

Management & Admin	2023/24 Approved Budget [A]	2023/24 Revised Estimate [B]	2024/25 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£265,394	£265,394	£310,273	£44,879 16.91%	£44,879 16.91%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£102,129	£87,229	£78,192	-£23,937 -23.44%	-£9,037 -10.36%
3. Direct Income	-£2,800	-£2,200	£0	£2,800 -100.00%	£2,200 -100.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£364,723	£350,423	£388,465	£23,742 6.51%	£38,042 10.86%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	3.91	3.91	3.91	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. Budget for one-off administration fees associated with the Levelling Up bid moved to UKSPF.
3. Contribution towards the cost of provision of open data, not applicable in 2024/25.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. No change.

UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

UK Shared Prosperity Fund	2023/24 Approved Budget [A]	2023/24 Revised Estimate [B]	2024/25 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£0	£32,213	£80,781	£80,871 0.00%	£48,568 150.77%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£0	£661,572	£1,264,302	-£1,264,302 0.00%	£602,730 91.11%
3. Direct Income	£0	-£513,390	-£1,345,083	-£1,345,083 0.00%	-£831,693 162.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£0	-£180,395	£0	-£0 0.00%	-£180,395 305.19%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	0.00	1.00	2.00	2.00 0.00%	1.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. Administrative posts paid for out of the UKSPF allocation.
2. Represents the cost of projects covered by the UKSPF allocation.
3. The UKSPF allocation for years 2 and 3 of the 3 year programme.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. See note 1 above.

COMMUNICATIONS

Management & Admin	2023/24 Approved Budget	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£285,776	£285,776	£289,411	£3,635 1.27%	£3,635 1.27%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£166,714	£176,714	£176,364	£9,650 5.79%	-£350 -0.20%
3. Direct Income	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£452,490	£462,490	£465,775	£13,285 2.94%	£3,285 0.71%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	5.54	5.54	5.54	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. Contractual increases in relation to the Customer Relationship software maintenance, and web development.
3. Not applicable.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. No change.

Portfolio Priorities

Priorities for 2024/25 for the portfolio include:

- 1. Large scale strategic projects.** The strategic growth team is managing a full range of large-scale projects. These include a rail freight terminal, garden village, further potential large-scale site near to Stoney Stanton, and Fosse Park West. Significant milestones for 2024 include the completion of the rail freight terminal project and subsequent Government decision.
- 2. New Local Plan.** The next 12 months will see a number of important milestones for the new Local Plan, as we move closer to a submission version. Further detailed work will result in a draft final version of the Plan during 2024.
- 3. Neighbourhood Plans.** Work will continue to progress and finalise a number of Neighbourhood Plans, to support our parishes to shape their places.
- 4. Respond to Planning Reforms.** During 2023, consultations continued to be undertaken by the Government on proposed reforms to the planning system. These reforms, should they be taken forward, will have a significant impact on the way we work in most planning related areas. We are hopeful of further consultation and guidance from Government as quickly as possible, which enables us to start considering the changes.
- 5. Delivering a high performing Development Management Service.** Planning application levels continue to be high, and the team have delivered a quality and customer focussed service despite these demands. The focus for 2024 will be on continuing with this approach, progressing a number of specific projects such as the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain and pre-application charging project.
- 6. High profile enforcement action.** Ongoing action will continue for a number of current high-profile cases; with Enforcement Notice appeal outcomes expected during 2024. In addition, the team will continue their pro-active approach across the district, in dealing with a varied case load of investigations.
- 7. Joint Strategic Planning –** work continues across Leicester and Leicestershire to support the delivery of the Strategic Growth Plan, key infrastructure to enable future growth, and other 'cross boundary' projects. We are exploring all opportunities to work collaboratively with other local authorities; to ensure that we can maximise opportunities and efficiencies.
- 8. Delivery of the Lubbesthorpe Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE).** The new community is going from strength to strength. Around 1000 houses are now occupied, the first primary school is thriving, and works continue to deliver the road infrastructure. To date the development has now won five awards. Key milestones for 2024/25 will include the opening of the first Local Centre (including health centre), and development of the leisure offer and secondary school.
- 9. Customer Insights, Experience and Engagement and Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion.** Implement and embed priority projects and key objectives as outlined

in Service Delivery Plans and the Transforming Blaby Together Strategy and appended documents.

- 10.Transforming Blaby Together.** Implement and embed priority projects and key objectives as outlined in Service Delivery Plans and the Transforming Blaby Together Strategy and appended documents.
- 11. ICT.** To ensure that the ICT provision for Blaby DC is robust, reliable and the infrastructure is fit for purpose. In addition, the Blaby ICT provision should support Blaby to realise future digital ambitions.
- 12.Digital service delivery and integration for Council Tax and Benefits.** Review and improve the digital transformation activities for Council Tax and Benefits. Implementing solutions to further improve operational efficiency with the service, whilst retaining or improving the customer experience.
- 13.Raise the profile of the Leicestershire Building Control Partnership.** Following the launch of the partnership, including the new website and online forms communication and marketing activities will continue throughout the year to help raise the profile and reputation of LBCP.
- 14.Acting on the Recommendations from the LGA Communications Review.** Continuing to support new initiatives and service delivery whilst making improvements to internal and external communication.
- 15.Continue to maintain and develop the Council's corporate website** www.blaby.gov.uk, www.visitblaby.org.uk, and www.lbcp.co.uk Work also continues to support services with corporate branding and accessibility compliance of web solutions.

Services

The portfolio comprises the following services:

Planning & Strategic Growth:

Development Strategy

The purpose of the Development Strategy Service is to ensure that the district has a robust and up-to-date strategic framework for planning decisions. The Local Plan, and other key planning policies, are the key mechanisms for place shaping and the delivery of many other corporate priorities.

This budget includes the costs of Planning Policy Officers and a Planning Obligations Officer; all involved in developing robust policies and guidance, gathering, and interpreting the data necessary to do this, advising on the interpretation of policies and designing and implementing initiatives to deliver strategic objectives.

Planning Delivery

The purpose of the Planning Delivery Service is to ensure that development is acceptable whilst determining planning applications as fast as possible.

This budget includes the costs of Planning Officers and Technical staff involved in providing advice to potential applicants and determining applications.

Planning Enforcement

This budget includes the costs of Enforcement Officers, who monitor development across the district, carry out investigations, enforce planning controls, and take forward prosecutions where necessary.

Strategic Growth Team

This team manages a range of high profile, large-scale, strategic projects. These are considered to be projects which fall outside of the usual planning process, due to their profile and need for a more complex range of skills – a typical example would be housing developments of more than 1,000 houses.

This budget includes the cost of a manager and Major Schemes Officers, along with some external funding which covers the cost of two of these posts.

Transformation & Customer Insight:

Customer Services

The team provide the main front of house services for the authority – at present this includes answering general queries, payments, incoming / outgoing post and telephony services. The team also assist with linking residents and businesses to our other Partners, Services and promote the use of online / web services. The Customer

Insights, Experience and Engagement Manager is also our organisational lead for Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion.

This budget includes Customer Insights, Experience and Engagement Manager, Customer Service Team Leaders, and Customer Service Advisors associated costs.

Transformation [Transforming Blaby Together]

The Transformation and Projects service consists of a small team, working with colleagues throughout the authority to support and facilitate Transformation. The team has significant experience in project management, process development and continuous improvement methodologies.

Core activities of the team include:

- Project Management Office – Project governance and reporting
- Project Support – Project related guidance and training
- Continuous Improvement – Guidance and training relating to process improvements
- Process Controls – Facilitating the measurement and control of processes
- Business Analysis – Data driven analysis to support decision making
- Digital Support – Facilitating the transition to digital and increasing self-service

This budget includes Transformation Group Manager, Service Manager, and Project Support Officers associated costs.

ICT Services

The Council currently receives ICT support and services from the Leicestershire ICT Partnership (LICTP), this includes provision of an insourced ICT service from Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (HBBC) for Blaby District Council and Melton Borough Council.

Management & Administration

This budget includes the costs of the Transformation Group Manager, the Planning & Strategic Growth Group Manager and the support staff who manage the portfolio budgets and systems.

Communications

Delivery of external and internal communications, management of the website and intranet and digital improvements for customer access.

Key Points

<p>Doing things differently – plans for the coming year</p>	<p>The portfolio continues to perform well, despite a further unprecedented and challenging year due to the economic crisis. Staff are working hard but remain motivated. Over the last year the remit of the portfolio has continued to grow – particularly in the areas of strategic growth and infrastructure planning.</p> <p>As set out in the priorities for the forthcoming year; we expect the next 12 months to be equally challenging – but also rewarding and exciting.</p> <p><u>Strategic Growth</u></p> <p>The team will continue to project manage some of the district's most high profile and complex strategic projects. This includes a wide range of sites; from retail and commercial developments to a garden village, a strategic rail freight interchange and of course Lubbethorpe.</p> <p><u>Development Strategy</u></p> <p>The team will continue to focus on strategic planning, Neighbourhood Plans, planning obligations and the Local Plan</p> <p>Work will continue during 2024/25 on the final stages of the new Local Plan.</p> <p><u>Planning Delivery</u></p> <p>The workload of the team has reached a steady level over the last year, as application levels have become more manageable, and this will enable focus to turn to the delivery of a number of specific projects.</p> <p>During 2024/25 the team will focus on ensuring the continued delivery of an excellent service to customers.</p> <p><u>Enforcement</u></p> <p>The enforcement team will continue its proactive monitoring approach next year. In addition, work on the high profile and sensitive sites will also progress.</p> <p><u>Transformation</u></p> <p>A major focus for 2023 was to define a Transformation Strategy (Transforming Blaby Together) for Blaby District Council, the strategy was approved by Cabinet in November 2023.</p> <p>Transforming Blaby Together brings together our aspirations and plans for Customer Insights, Experience, and Engagement; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; and Transformation and Projects into one place. The strategy will support the delivery of the new Corporate Plan, providing a foundation of skills, culture, and policies for the authority.</p> <p>The Groups Individual Objectives and Delivery Plans support the strategy, setting out action-based approaches. These documents form the basis of the</p>
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	<p>Transformation Groups Service Plans for 2024. This in turn will support delivery of the new Corporate Plan (2024-2028).</p> <p><u>Transformation and Projects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver Quick Win training to promote continuous improvement, enabling services to focus on improving the customer journey, reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and avoidable contact. • Continue to introduce triage systems to ensure customer enquiries are acted upon quickly and workflow managed effectively. • Continue to improve our self-service offer, implementing new digital systems to enable customers to make service requests and amend account information through our website. • Continue supporting the transition to SharePoint which will enable us to start our journey into automation and free up our time to support customers. • Explore working with community groups and parish councils to promote digital literacy across our District. <p>The approach for 2024 will be to adopt a more typical Project Management Office (PMO) function, providing guidance, tools, and training for project managers. As a result, project managers and Senior Responsible Officers (SROs) will carry responsibility for compliance with the project framework and maintaining reporting standards on iPlan.</p> <p>Project Management Training will continue, on a quarterly basis, with additional sessions being scheduled specifically for SROs.</p> <p>2024 will see an increased emphasis on strategic prioritisation to facilitate delivery of the Corporate Plan. Business cases will provide the basis for evidence-based decisions, and the Programme Board will be better positioned to challenge spend against benefits and consider resource conflicts.</p> <p>Transformation is everyone's journey and one of the challenges for 2024 is to ignite the transformation spark within the authority.</p> <p>The Transformation Team is an enabler for change and will work with the Communications Team to define a communication strategy for Transforming Blaby Together.</p> <p>2023 was a year of creating a foundation for transformation and demonstrating that improvements can be made, 2024 will be more focused on data and delivery of tangible savings.</p> <p><u>Customer Insights, Experience Engagement and Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will revisit our approach to managing customer demand to ensure our customer contact operating model is the most efficient and effective way of meeting our customers' needs.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a customer experience survey to seek views on contacting and engaging with council services for day-to-day business. • Work will councillors through our member development group to support meaningful engagement and communication with our customers and communities. • Develop customer satisfaction measures across all customer touchpoints to ensure we are achieving the aims. • Review and implement a corporate Customer Record Management system to improve customer processes and provide increased personalisation for customers. • Continue to adopt a digital first approach; increasing online availability which will reduce service delivery costs through efficiency savings. Thereby we will strive to develop a self-serve digital pathway to meet our customer needs. • Provide consistent online forms, that are concise, easy to understand, and collect all the relevant information at the first point of contact. • Research and explore artificial intelligence (AI) solutions for customers looking for simple advice and/or factual information. • Develop and implement an in-depth customer insight and experience review programme of council services. • Explore the re-design of services to improve the customer experience journey and value for money, prioritising services which have a high volume of customer interaction, and/or where we want to improve customer satisfaction. <p><u>ICT</u></p> <p>A dependency exists on the outcome of the (exempt) report going to full council on 27th February 2024 on the future of the ICT service provision.</p> <p><u>Management & Administration</u></p> <p>The focus for 2024/25 will be on the delivery of high-quality services, whilst supporting and enabling staff development.</p> <p><u>Communications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the recommendations from the LGA Communications Review
Income generation	<p>The fees and charges for all aspects of the services will be kept under review to ensure that these maximise income without impacting on the quality of communications and applications submitted and increasing costs elsewhere in the delivery of the services.</p> <p>Income generation across the group is restricted to fees for documents; and nationally set planning application fees. A project to look at charging for pre-application advice will continue to delivery in 2024/25.</p> <p>The group will seek to maximise opportunities for cost saving through collaborative working, particularly on Local Plan technical work.</p> <p>The Transformation and Projects team will continue to work in close collaboration with services to review current ways of working and in doing so will</p>

	look to identify potential income opportunities as well as efficiency savings. It is important to note that these would then be reflected in service budgets.
Capital plans for the portfolio	The capital programme for 2024/25 allows for £500,000 to be spent on various ICT schemes and the spend will be dependent on the outcome of the (exempt) report going to full Council on 27 th February 2024 concerning the future of the ICT service provision. Additionally, there will likely be some carryover from 2023/24 for upgrades and infrastructure improvement/resilience works.

Key Performance Indicators

Planning & Strategic Growth	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 Apr - Dec
Number of planning applications received	1104	1305	943	961	684
Planning application fee income	£647,370	£513,563	£572,724	£464,613	£221,768
Number of planning applications determined	1043	1004	1280	842	518
% of major applications determined in 13 weeks	96.3	100	100	88.89	100
E2E (householders)	46.2	74.12	91.65	80.59	67.29
E2E (majors)	219.61	218.88	256.22	197.89	551.11
E2E (non-majors)	71.83	60.7	74.6	82.42	95.95
E2E (DOC)	69.2	104.9	90.59	84.3	94.2

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – CORPORATE SERVICES	2023/24 Apr - Nov	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Number of followers on Facebook	7,880	6,089	5,558	5,118	3,893
Number of followers on Twitter	5,475	5,377	5,294	5,010	4,502
Number of followers on LinkedIn	2,174	1,938	1,636	1,422	1,159
Number of online forms submitted by customers	43,406	63,907	64,637	66,832	54,385
Number of email subscribers	28,830	27,644	27,409	25,843	22,002
My Account Subscribers	55,293	51,649	46,914	40,771	32,434
% of positive (4-5*) online form feedback ratings	87.1%	86.9%	87.9%	86.4%	84.7%

- The Planning Delivery and Enforcement services in particular have heavy interaction with residents, and we will continue to monitor customer feedback to ensure that all interactions with customers and stakeholders to these services are conducted appropriately and professionally.
- There are a number of significant public consultations planned for 2022/25 including the next stage of the new Local Plan, and a number of large strategic sites.
- Customer Insights, Experience and Engagement will continue to be pivotal as the 'face' (virtual or in person) of Blaby District Council when customers make contact. As such we will prioritise monitoring interactions, measuring performance, and seeking feedback as critical enablers for continuous improvement.
- Maintaining awareness of Equalities and Human Rights across the Council by staff and members to ensure equitable access to services remains a focus. Training, information communications and advice are provided by the Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) team supported by Human Resources (HR).

Risks

- Planning application levels have stabilised, but should they increase suddenly this will place significant demands on the service. Ongoing resource and service delivery reviews are essential to help to mitigate against this.
- Failure to progress the new Local Plan could leave the district vulnerable to unacceptable types of future development.
- High number of appeals would place further pressures on the Development Services Team.
- Inability to progress with the delivery of a clear and robust policy framework would put delivery of sustainable development at risk.
- Delivery of Lubbethorpe against the current proposed timetable is essential – failure to do so could further affect the 5-year housing land supply, and in turn the council's ability to defend against undesirable development.
- Ongoing lack of clarity, or a long period without further guidance, on planning reform proposals would lead to long periods of uncertainty; and could in turn delay the new Local Plan.
- Failure to deliver an effective enforcement service could result in reputational damage.
- Failure to ensure a robust and risk assessed approach to enforcement investigations, on sensitive and high-risk sites, could leave staff at risk of harassment or violence.
- The Council has experienced downtime in key ICT systems during 2023 and there remains an on-going risk to infrastructure.
- Failure of the STORM telephone system. This is a separate system from the back office (Jabba) system and provides the platform for the Customer Services Team.
- Disengagement with the Transforming Blaby Together Strategy, Programme Management, and ethos of continuous improvement will likely hinder/halt progress to make sustainable corporate efficiency savings.
- With regard to the communications and digital team there is a risk in ensuring that there is capacity and skills to deliver the improvements identified by the LGA Communications Review.