

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

Cllr. Nick Brown (Chairman)
Cllr. Neil Wright (Vice-Chairman)

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

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, 15 JANUARY 2025 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



Gemma Dennis
Corporate Services Group Manager



SUPPLEMENTAL ITEMS

3. Budget Context Setting and Overview (Pages 3 - 28)

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

This will be followed with views from the Leader and Chief Executive on the financial settlement and white paper on devolution and government reorganisation.

4. Leader's Portfolio Statement (Pages 29 - 42)

All non-executive Members will have the opportunity to question the Leader's portfolio. (Portfolio Statement to follow)

5. 2025-2026 Draft Portfolio Budget Proposals (to follow) (Pages 43 - 140)

a) To consider the proposed 2025-26 budget and spending plans for the remaining Portfolio areas.

b) Prepare lines of questioning for a written response from Portfolio Holders in advance of the next Scrutiny Budget meeting on Wednesday 22 January 2025.

- Cllr. Maggie Wright - Finance, People & Performance – Page 43
- Cllr. Cheryl Cashmore - Health, Leisure, Climate and Economic Development – Page 65
- Cllr. Nigel Grundy - Neighbourhood Services & Assets – Page 85
- Cllr. Les Phillimore - Housing, Community Safety and Environmental Services – Page 105
- Cllr. Ben Taylor - Planning, Transformation and ICT – Page 121

Blaby District Council

Scrutiny of the Administration's Budget Proposals

Date of Meeting	15 January 2025
Title of Report	Budget Context Setting and Overview
Report Author	Executive Director (Section 151 Officer)

1. What is this report about?

- 1.1 This is an information report which gives Members an overview of the budget proposals for 2025/26 Financial year. This includes an update on significant points arising from the Settlement of December 2024 issued by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and also a projection of the Council's funding position into future years

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That Members considers the information contained within the reports and comments on the budget process and arrangements for the scrutiny of the budget proposals.

3. Reason for Decision(s) Recommended

- 3.1 To inform and seek Scrutiny's comments on the proposals.

4. Matters to consider

- 4.1 The purpose of the first budget session is to give Members a view of the following:
- Impact of the Settlement December 2024
 - Total Budget Requirement for the Authority 2025/26 financial year
 - Funding the Budget
 - Planned Utilisation of Reserve and Closing the Budget Gap
 - General Budget Assumptions
 - Impact on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) financial summary including Future Business Rates and Fairer Funding position

This will be followed with views from the Leader and Chief Executive on the financial settlement and white paper on devolution and government reorganisation.

The second Scrutiny Budget session will be an opportunity for Scrutiny to ask questions of Portfolio Holders regarding the individual portfolio budgets. The information regarding individual portfolio budgets is contained in Appendices F to K.

4.2 Proposal(s)

This information is presented in documents within the appendices and are provided to inform Scrutiny to understand and scrutinise the budget prior to Council considering the budget proposals at February Council. It is important to note that this budget is in draft format and may change prior to the February meeting should additional information becoming available.

4.3 Relevant Consultations

Officers from Finance and all services have worked closely together to compile the draft budget.

4.4 Significant Issues

None

5. Environmental impact

- 5.1 No Net Zero and Climate Impact Assessment (NZCIA) is required for this report. Any assessments required by the services to implement initiatives budgeted for will be undertaken by the services themselves.

6. What will it cost and are there opportunities for savings?

- 6.1 Detailed budgets for each portfolio are included within the appendices, as are the overall budget costs and funding levels.

7. What are the risks and how can they be reduced?

7.1

Current Risk	Actions to reduce the risks
Reductions in the Government Grant Settlement.	This report has been produced following the release of the draft Settlement. It is not expected that the Settlement Funding will alter significantly when finalised. The Council has historically taken a prudent approach in forecasting its core grant funding for the MTFS and modelled scenarios based on information currently available, however there are still risks that some specific funding outside of the Settlement will not be received at the anticipated levels.

	The Council has general fund balances available that can be used in the short to medium term to help address any funding gaps that may arise.
Withdrawal of external funding.	In most cases, external funding has only been built into the base budget where it has been confirmed by external partners. Officers continue to work with partners to minimise the impact of funding cuts on services.
Change to the Business Rate Retention Scheme and the Fair Funding Review.	Changes to Business Rate Retention and funding levels are now expected to be implemented in 2026/27, but it is unknown as to the extent of the changes. The draft MTFS attempts to forecast the impact of this potential change. As further technical consultation papers are released officers will attempt to understand how the changes may impact Blaby. Officers will respond to any consultation papers and if required, lobby central government should there be concern regarding the changes.

8. Other options considered

- 8.1 None. It is necessary for Members to understand the financial context in which the budget is set and the detail of the budget.

9. Appendix

- 9.1 Appendix A – 2025/26 Budget Overview 15th January (to follow)
- 9.2 Appendix B – Analysis of Reserves (to follow)
- 9.3 Appendix C – Schedule of External Funding (to follow)
- 9.4 Appendix D – Establishment Trend information (to follow)
- 9.5 Appendix E – Draft MTFS Financial Summary (to follow)
- 9.6 Appendix F – Leaders Portfolio Budget (to follow)
- 9.7 Appendix G – Finance, People & Performance Portfolio Budget (to follow)
- 9.8 Appendix H – Health, Leisure, Climate and Economic Development Portfolio Budget (to follow)
- 9.9 Appendix I – Neighbourhood Services & Assets Portfolio Budget (to follow)
- 9.10 Appendix J – Housing, Community Safety & Environmental Services Portfolio Budget (to follow)
- 9.11 Appendix K – Planning, Transformation and ICT Development Portfolio Budget (to follow)

9.12 Appendix L – Proposed Capital Programme 2025/26 (to follow)

10. Background paper(s)

None

11. Report author's contact details

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Appendix A

2025/26 Budget Overview 15th January 2025

Impact of the Settlement December 2024

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 2025/26 (referred to as 'the Statement' in this paper). The provisional Settlement was announced on the 18th December 2024.

Key elements of the Statement that impact on the budget position for 2025/26 are:

- Confirmation of provisional settlement figures for 2025/26, which were expected to align with those suggested in the 2024/25 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 2025/26.

And also on:

- The Local Authority Funding Reforms Objectives and Principles

A Policy Statement (28 November 2024) had already announced the key principles that ministers applied in the provisional settlement.

The funding position for 2025/26 is a one-year settlement only.

The Provisional Settlement delivered larger increases in funding than were expected for the sector, however Ministers have made efforts to direct grant funding to authorities with higher levels of deprivation and less ability to generate income from Council Tax.

Within the Settlement a Recovery Grant of £600m was made available for distribution and this has been targeted at high need authorities. Blaby has received none of this grant funding. Other areas of increased funding prioritise Social Care and Children's preventative services both of which are upper tier functions and have not benefitted Blaby.

Within the Settlement there is also a scaling back of the Minimum Funding Guarantee and as a result of all of the above, Blaby's Government Funded Core Spending Power has actually decreased from that of 2024/25.

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 now seems certain that the Government will now implement its reforms in

2026/27 and are looking to address the 'unfairness' of the existing system and are proposing to utilise the same principles put forward by the previous government in 2018. A consultation paper has been published regarding the reforms and whilst it suggests that many of the same building blocks of the 2018 Consultation will be present, there is also suggestion that Ministers may depart from that Consultation particularly in how funding should be prioritised and distributed.

Whilst these changes will not therefore directly impact on the budget for 2025/26 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 draft General Fund Revenue Account Net Budget Requirement for 2025/26 is **£15.775M**. The comparable Net Budget Requirement for 2024/25 that was approved in February 2024 was **£16.2M**.

It should be noted that funding of £913k will be received in 2025/26 from Defra relating to the Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging. This is based on the Council's recycling collections and tonnages and passes the cost of collection onto those who produce the packaging. This funding has therefore considerably reduced the cost to the Council of providing the recycling collection to residents and contributes to the reduction in Net Budget Requirement for 2025/26.

The Government have excluded the Defra Funding from the calculation of Core Spending Power in 2025/26.

Budget Gap 2025/26

The Settlement continues the series of increases in Core Spending Power for Local Government that started in 2020/21. As suggested earlier in this paper, much of the increase continues to be directed towards the Upper Tier Authorities to fund social care but additional funding has been provided for those authorities where there are high levels of need/deprivation.

When taking into account the Settlement the funding gap for 2025/26 before any utilisation of reserves is **£610k** before planned utilisation of reserves which are presented later within this appendix.

Funding the Budget

The table overleaf 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: -

	2024/25 Approved Budget £	2024/25 Revised Estimate £	2025/26 Proposed Budget £	Variance Compared to Approved Budget
Income from Business Rates	(3,387,423)	(3,762,727)	(5,429,170)	2,041,747
Contributions (from)/ To Business Rates Reserves	(290,204)	305,340	1,894,178	(2,184,382)
S31 Grant - Business Rates Compensation	(2,922,373)	(3,142,613)	(3,065,008)	142,635
Revenue Support Grant	(79,550)	(79,550)	(95,767)	16,217
New Homes Bonus Grant	(14,280)	(14,280)	(426,048)	411,768
Funding Guarantee	(2,245,863)	(2,245,863)	0	(2,245,863)
Funding Floor	0	0	(1,573,114)	1,573,114
Services Grant	(15,571)	(15,571)	0	(15,571)
Sub Total	(8,955,264)	(8,955,264)	(8,694,929)	(260,335)
Council Tax (Surplus)/Deficit	87,887	87,887	87,887	0
Council Tax Demand on Collection Fund	(6,526,402)	(6,526,402)	(6,557,973)	31,571
Funding Envelope	(15,393,779)	(15,393,779)	(15,165,015)	(228,764)

The table above illustrates that the Council's funding has remained fairly static, decreasing by £229k. It reflects a position comparable with funding in 2024/25 if an increase in Council Tax is also taken into account.

This is detailed as follows:

- Redistributed NNDR has been forecast at the moment to remain static with a positive out turn position that is being clarified currently. 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. There has been some growth this year with the prison coming on line and a number of appeals being finalised. Included in these figures is currently a contribution to the Business Rate Reserve of £1.89m. This is following a number of years where contributions from the Business Rate Reserve have been taken and assists in providing against the Business Rate Reset which is now expected to be brought in 2026/27.
- Revenue Support Grant £96k – represents no change in funding other than a small increase.
- Services Grant – No longer provided; reduced from £16k.
- Funding Guarantee – No longer provided - Replaced with Funding Floor Grant. £2.246m awarded in 2024/25 to Blaby. Designed to ensure each authority has an increase in core spending power of at least 3% in previous years.
- Funding Floor Grant – Awarded £1.573m. Reduction compared to Funding Guarantee awarded in 2024/25 takes into account an increase in funding for 2025/26 for New Homes Bonus and Council Tax raising ability which is now included in Core Spending Power calculations.

- New Homes Bonus (NHB) Grant £426k – an increase of £412k.
- Council Tax precept has increased by £32k. 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 2025/26. 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.

Many of the appeals that had been provided for previously have now been finalised. Valuations have also been finalised on new properties such as the Fosse Way Prison. As such we've seen additional growth which has been reflected in the contribution to the Business Rate Reserve. Some of this income is of a one-off nature and will not continue to be retained by Blaby after the Baseline Reset. We are continuing to finalise these figures prior to the budget setting in February. The resetting of the Business Rate Baseline is expected to be brought in for 2026/27, it is therefore proposed to transfer the increased Business Rate Income to the Business Rate Reserve to support the budget in 2026/27 onwards.

The resetting of the Business Rate Baseline and the Business Rate Reforms are expected to come into force in 2026/27. This does not impact on 2025/26 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 2025/26 an amount of only **£426k** is being utilised to fund services.

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 Government have now committed to ending NHB in 2026/27. There is expected to be a consultation paper specifically around a replacement for the NHB in the first half of 2025.

Funding Guarantee Grant - Discontinued

Introduced in 2023/24 to ensure every authority had an increase in Core Spending Power (CSP) of at least 3%. Blaby was allocated **£2.14m** for 2024/25.

Funding Floor Grant

A replacement for the Funding Guarantee Grant introduced in 2025/26. Blaby has been allocated **£1.573m**. The reduced amount is reflective of the both the increase in NHB received in 2025/26 and the fact that Blaby is able to raise £190k if choosing to raise Council Tax by the maximum 2.99%.

Service Grant – Discontinued

Blaby was allocated £16k in 2024/25

Planned Utilisation of Reserve and Closing the Budget Gap

The budget gap arising for the 2025/26 Financial Year is **£610k** before any planned contributions are made from reserves.

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.

The proposed planned utilisation of reserves and the resulting gap/surplus is detailed below.

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

Contribution to Property Fund Reserve

Income of **£45k** expected from the Property Fund Investment is proposed to be placed in the Property Fund Reserve to build up a reserve to provide for any devaluation of the Property Fund itself that may have to be recognised in the Income and Expenditure account.

Contribution from Contractual Losses Support Fund

As part of the support following the COVID pandemic funding was provided to compensate for reduced income from leisure contracts. It was necessary for Blaby to renegotiate the management fee in the contract arrangements with the leisure provider which spanned the remaining contract length. The proposed, planned release of this reserve over the remaining contract length is **£63,750** per annum.

Contribution from Blaby Plan Priorities Reserve

Proposed contribution from the Blaby Plan Priorities Reserve to support the Capital Grants Programme of **£54,500**. This reserve was provided to allow for future funding of initiatives that meet the priorities set out in the Blaby District Plan.

Contribution from Business Rate Pool Reserve

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 in receipt of distributed Pool monies for the years 2020/21 to 2022/23; an amount of **£1.8m**. In the 2024/25 budget these funds supported the activity to support the Economic Development of the District through the funding of the Economic Development Team; an amount of £300k. Further investment is proposed in the Economic Development team and it is propose to utilise an element of the Business Rate Pool monies to support the department this year and in the future. An amount of **£413k** is proposed to be utilised from the Business Rate Pool Reserve for 2025/26.

Funds from the Business Rate Pool are anticipated to continue to be distributed under this mechanism up to and including the year 2024/25. It is anticipated that the Business Rate Base-line Reset and the Business Rate Reforms may cause the Pool to be disbanded.

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. This year the calculation of the Council's Core Spending Power has assumed that each Council will increase the Council Tax levels. Council Tax increase threshold limits have remained static for District Council's in 2025/26.

For 2025/26 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 **£196k** which equates to an increase of £5.66 per annum. The Council Tax charge for Blaby would therefore be £194.79 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 £194.14 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 2024/25).

Police and Crime Commissioners are able to increase their Council Tax precept by £14 and Fire & Rescue Authorities are limited to a referendum principle of no more than £5.

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 2024/25) the total annual increase on a band D property would be approximately £80.

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 £781k.

Impact of proposed utilisation of reserves and Council Tax increase to close the budget gap:

	£
Budget Gap	609,923
Contribution to Property Fund Reserve	45,000
Contribution from Leisure Man't Contractual Lossess Support Reserve	(63,750)
Contribution from Business Rate Pool for ED function	(413,220)
Contribution from Blaby Priorities Reserve for Capital Grants Programme	(54,500)
Council Tax Increase	(196,085)
(Surplus)/Deficit	(72,632)

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. Appendix L

General Assumptions within Budget Requirement

- The establishment budget allows for an increase of 3% in establishment costs for 2025/26 within the services.

Staffing costs have been included for the introduction of food waste within the last months of the year. It is anticipated that transitional funding will be received to compensate for these costs of £209k. Should the funding provided not meet this cost there will be an additional burden on the budget.

The budget proposals for 2025/26 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 2024/25 2025/26" to be presented to Cabinet Executive on 13th January 2024).

Members will be aware that contribution rates and thresholds for 2025/26 have been announced and, therefore, contributions have been included in the budget at the new proposed rate of 15% with the revised thresholds from April 2025. The increase of 1.2% year on year and reduction in threshold leads to additional costs of £345,000 which could be partly or fully reimbursed. Clarity is still being sought as to what reimbursement will be made to the Council regarding this additional cost. We have included what is believed to be the worst-case scenario of £117,000 reimbursement in the budget.

- 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	2024/25	2024/25	2025/26
	Approved	Revised	Proposed
	Budget	Estimate	Budget
	£	£	£
Finance, People & Performance	3,504,581	3,473,600	3,740,117
Housing, Community Safety & Environmental Services	2,286,511	2,688,845	2,447,342
Health, Leisure, Climate and Economic Development	(62,982)	781,658	7,208
Leader	2,410,477	2,594,890	2,635,151
Neighbourhood Services & Assets	3,672,637	4,022,818	3,194,122
Planning, Transformation and ICT	3,047,156	3,073,267	2,575,055
	14,858,380	16,635,078	14,598,996
	14,858,380	16,635,078	14,598,996
Revenue Contributions towards Capital Expenditure	94,315	254,126	54,500
Minimum Revenue Provision	748,865	748,865	977,852
Voluntary Revenue Provision	300,000	300,000	250,000
Other Appropriations & Accounting Adjustments	205,390	(637,291)	(106,410)
Net Total Expenditure	16,206,950	17,300,778	15,774,938
Contribution to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	(349,315)	(2,043,363)	
Contribution to/(from) General Fund Balances	(463,856)	136,364	
Net Budget Requirement	15,393,779	15,393,779	15,774,938
Income from Business Rates	(3,387,423)	(3,762,727)	(5,429,170)
Contributions (from)/ To Business Rates Reserves	(290,204)	305,340	1,894,178
S31 Grant - Business Rates Compensation	(2,922,373)	(3,142,613)	(3,065,008)
Revenue Support Grant	(79,550)	(79,550)	(95,767)
New Homes Bonus Grant	(14,280)	(14,280)	(426,048)
Funding Guarantee	(2,245,863)	(2,245,863)	0
Funding Floor	0	0	(1,573,114)
Services Grant	(15,571)	(15,571)	0
Council Tax (Surplus)/Deficit	87,887	87,887	87,887
Council Tax Demand on Collection Fund	(6,526,402)	(6,526,402)	(6,557,973)
Funding Envelope	(15,393,779)	(15,393,779)	(15,165,015)
Funding Gap/(Surplus) before any contributions from reserves or Council Tax Increase			609,923

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ANALYSIS OF RESERVES - REVISED BUDGET 2024/25 & BASE BUDGET 2025/26

APPENDIX B

	GL Code	Actual 31/03/24 £	Movement in 2024/25 £	Balance at 31/03/25 £	Movement in 2025/26 £	Estimated 31/03/26 £
Leisure Centre Renewals Fund	9999/VBA	(73,607)	0	(73,607)		(73,607)
Computer Room Environment	9999/VBB	(135,820)	20,000	(115,820)		(115,820)
Licensing Reserve	9999/VBC	(27,868)	0	(27,868)		(27,868)
Insurance Reserve Fund	9999/VBD	(100,000)	0	(100,000)		(100,000)
Blaby Plan Priorities Reserve	9999/VBJ	(365,453)	85,500	(279,953)	54,500	(225,453)
General Reserve Fund	9999/VBK	(1,612,310)	0	(1,612,310)		(1,612,310)
Ongoing Projects Reserve	9999/VBM	(2,264,430)	2,264,430	(0)		(0)
Elections Reserve	9999/VBQ	(112,803)	95,445	(17,358)		(17,358)
Homelessness Grant Reserve	9999/VBR	(104,952)	40,000	(64,952)		(64,952)
New Homes Bonus Reserve	9999/VBT	0	0	0		0
Contractual Losses Support Reserve	9999/VBU	(255,000)	0	(255,000)	63,750	(191,250)
Economic Development Initiatives	9999/VBX	(50,000)	0	(50,000)		(50,000)
Provision - ERIE Sinking Fund	9999/VCA	(9,147)	0	(9,147)		(9,147)
Community Rights Reserve	9999/VCB	(48,724)	0	(48,724)		(48,724)
Hardship Reserve	9999/VCD	(325,000)	0	(325,000)		(325,000)
Parish New Homes Bonus Reserve	9999/VCE	(881)	0	(881)		(881)
NNDR Income Reserve	9999/VCF	(1,655,218)	(305,340)	(1,960,558)	(1,894,178)	(3,854,736)
Flexible Working Reserve	9999/VCG	(161,792)	0	(161,792)		(161,792)
Local Plan Reserve	9999/V CJ	(414,576)	48,821	(365,755)		(365,755)
Lottery Reserve	9999/VCK	(27,365)	6,233	(21,132)		(21,132)
IT System Replacement Reserve	9999/VCL	(39,815)	39,815	0		0
Property Fund Reserve	9999/VCM	(167,573)	(45,000)	(212,573)	(45,000)	(257,573)
Huncote Major Incident Reserve	9999/VCP	(642,526)	0	(642,526)		(642,526)
Court Fees Income Reserve	9999/V CQ	(31,813)	0	(31,813)		(31,813)
Business Rates Pool Reserve	9999/VBV	(1,065,210)	(511,881)	(1,577,091)	413,220	(1,163,871)
		(9,691,883)	1,738,023	(7,953,860)	(1,407,708)	(9,361,568)
General Fund Balance	9999/ZZA	(6,589,776)	0	(6,589,776)	(72,632)	(6,662,408)

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

Portfolio	Description	2024/25	Notes
<u>Health, Leisure, Climate and Economic Development</u>			
Leicestershire County Council	Hospital Housing Enabler Service	£279,730)	
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	£299,670)	
Leicestershire County Council	Lightbulb DFG Admin contribution	£28,600	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	£466,704	Share of non-fee earning cost of service (with staff retention scheme)
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 Safety & Environmental Services</u>			
EMH Housing	Floating Support Contribution	£0	
DLUHC	Homelessness Prevention Grant	£299,250	
<u>Leader</u>			
Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council	Contribution towards EIR costs	£23,000	Recovery of statutory costs associated with the provision of personal
Oadby & Wigston Borough Council	Contribution towards EIR costs	£9,000	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>Finance, People & Performance</u>			
DLUHC	UK Shared Prosperity Fund	£1,345,083	Year 3 Allocation.
<u>Planning, Transformation & ITC</u>			
DEFRA	Biodiversity Net Gain Grant	£26,807	To offset the annual cost of Biodiversity Net Gain work.
Oadby & Wigston Borough Council	Provision of Heritage advice	£9,315	To offset the annual cost of providing Heritage advice.
		<u>£4,228,260</u>	

SCHEDULE OF EXTERNAL FUNDING**Current Position 2025/26**

Portfolio	Description	2025/26	Notes
<u>Health, Leisure, Climate and Economic Development</u>			
Leicestershire County Council	Hospital Housing Enabler Service	£279,730)	
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	£299,670)	
Leicestershire County Council	Contributions towards Lightbulb Service	£679,460)	Service review underway
District Councils	Contributions towards Lightbulb Service	£937,900)	
SLM Ltd	Contribution towards Community Grant Scheme	£2,500	SLM funding to support small community grant payments
Leicestershire County Council	LRS Commissioning	£62,888	Indicative allocation - subject to LCC budget approval. Not in budget yet but similar funding to 2024/25
Leicestershire County Council	LRS school Support	£21,670	Not in Budget as awaiting LCC budget approval - Similar funding as 2024/25
Leicestershire County Council	Older Adults Funding	£49,360	Not in Budget as awaiting LCC budget approval - Similar funding as 2024/25
Leicestershire County Council	CCG Falls Prevention	£10,620	Not in Budget as awaiting LCC budget approval - Similar funding as 2024/25
Oadby & Wigston Borough Council	Sport & Physical Activity Funding	£68,200	O&W proposal awaiting confirmation of funding - not yet in budget
Oadby & Wigston Borough Council	Health Improvement Service	£26,000	O&W proposal awaiting confirmation of funding - not yet in budget
Other Leicestershire District Councils	Building Control Partnership	£565,099	Share of non-fee earning cost of service (with staff retention scheme)
<u>Housing, Community Safety & Environmental Services</u>			
DLUHC	Homelessness Prevention Grant	£309,348	Allocation confirmed
<u>Leader</u>			
Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council	Contribution towards EIR costs	£23,000	Recovery of statutory costs associated with the provision of personal
Oadby & Wigston Borough Council	Contribution towards EIR costs	£9,000	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.
DLUHC	Refuse and Recycling New Burdens	£208,950	Food waste reimbursement (3 months budgeted)
DEFRA	Refuse and Recycling	£913,000	Extended Producer Responsibility
<u>Finance, People & Performance</u>			
DLUHC	UK Shared Prosperity Fund	£691,969	Additional 1 year funding confirmed
<u>Planning, Transformation & ITC</u>			
Oadby & Wigston Borough Council	Provision of Heritage advice	£9,315	To offset the annual cost of providing Heritage advice.
		<u>£5,391,793</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	Movement in FTEs 2024/25 to 2025/26	No. of FTEs 2025/26 Budget	Notes
LEADER								
CHIEF EXECUTIVE & DIRECTORS	3.00	0.00	3.00	1.00	4.00	0.00	4.00	
PA TEAM	2.43	0.00	2.43	0.00	2.43	0.00	2.43	
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & GOVERNANCE	4.89	0.11	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT	2.32	-0.32	2.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	2.00	
ELECTORAL SERVICES	2.67	0.00	2.67	0.00	2.67	-0.06	2.61	
LAND CHARGES	5.81	-0.11	5.70	-0.70	5.00	0.00	5.00	
CORPORATE HEALTH & SAFETY	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	
COMMUNICATIONS	5.54	0.00	5.54	0.00	5.54	0.00	5.54	
CORPORATE SERVICES GROUP MANAGER	1.91	0.00	1.91	0.00	1.91	0.00	1.91	
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES & ASSETS								
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES GROUP MANAGER	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES MGMT & ADMIN	4.61	0.00	4.61	0.39	5.00	0.00	5.00	
CLEANSING	10.80	-0.30	10.50	0.50	11.00	0.00	11.00	
REFUSE & RECYCLING	44.00	0.00	44.00	3.00	47.00	0.00	47.00	
VEHICLE MAINTENANCE	5.00	0.00	5.00	1.00	6.00	0.00	6.00	
OPEN SPACES & GROUNDS MAINTENANCE	11.00	0.00	11.00	0.00	11.00	0.00	11.00	
PROPERTY SERVICES	2.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	2.00	
COUNCIL OFFICES/CLEANERS/CARETAKERS	2.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	2.00	
BUILDING CONTROL	25.25	-0.24	25.01	-0.27	24.74	0.00	24.74	
ASSETS & MAJOR PROJECTS MANAGEMENT	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.61	1.61	
FOOD WASTE	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	22.00	22.00	
FINANCE, PEOPLE & PERFORMANCE								
FINANCE	11.50	0.00	11.50	1.04	12.54	0.78	13.32	Additional Finance Assistant approved by Cabinet Executive, September 2023.
INCOME & COLLECTIONS	6.00	0.00	6.00	0.00	6.00	0.00	6.00	
REVENUES & BENEFITS	24.56	-0.92	23.64	-0.59	23.05	0.35	23.40	Changes to working hours.
CORPORATE PERFORMANCE	5.42	-2.07	3.35	-0.31	3.04	0.03	3.07	Changes to working hours.
HR & TRAINING	6.27	1.21	7.48	-0.89	6.59	0.00	6.59	
CUSTOMER SERVICES	14.89	-0.01	14.88	-1.15	13.73	-0.76	12.97	Changes in working hours; conversion to apprentice posts.
HOUSING, COMMUNITY SAFETY & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES								
COMMUNITY SERVICES GROUP MANAGER	1.50	0.00	1.50	0.00	1.50	0.00	1.50	
HOUSING SERVICES	13.00	3.00	16.00	0.00	16.00	2.00	18.00	
COMMUNITY SERVICES	7.48	-0.48	7.00	0.00	7.00	-4.00	3.00	
CHILDRENS SERVICES	2.11	-0.61	1.50	0.00	1.50	0.00	1.50	
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES	10.20	0.41	10.61	-3.61	7.00	0.00	7.00	
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH	10.56	0.00	10.56	3.61	14.17	0.00	14.17	
AIR QUALITY CONTROL	1.61	-0.61	1.00	-0.16	0.84	0.16	1.00	Externally funded - change in working hours.
CRIME & DISORDER	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	
COMMUNITY SAFETY - DOMESTIC ABUSE	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	
RESIDENTS SUPPORT	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	2.00	Externally funded - change in working hours.
PLANNING, TRANSFORMATION AND ICT								
PLANNING GROUP MANAGER	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	
LUK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	2.00	-2.00	0.00	
STRATEGIC GROWTH TEAM	0.86	0.00	0.86	0.09	0.95	0.00	0.95	
PLANNING DELIVERY	12.65	1.96	14.61	-0.63	13.98	0.17	14.15	Removal of vacant post.
PLANNING ENFORCEMENT	4.81	0.19	5.00	-1.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	Removal of vacant post.
PLANNING ADMINISTRATION	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY	5.50	1.01	6.51	-0.10	6.41	0.48	6.89	Changes to working hours.
WHETSTONE GARDEN VILLAGE	3.00	-2.00	1.00	-1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	Removal of vacant post.
RAIL FREIGHT HUB TEAM	0.50	0.50	1.00	-0.83	0.17	-0.17	0.00	Seconded post returning to substantive post.
NEW LUBBESTHORPE	2.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	2.00	
TRANSFORMATION	0.00	4.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	Addition of IT Business Partner
ICT SERVICES	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7.00	7.00	Addition of IT Business Partner
HEALTH, LEISURE, CLIMATE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT								
REGULATORY & LEISURE SERVICES GRP MGR	1.61	0.00	1.61	0.00	1.61	-1.61	0.00	
LIGHTBULB CENTRAL HUB	5.55	0.35	5.90	0.00	5.90	27.10	33.00	
LIGHTBULB LOCALITY TEAMS	17.06	-1.42	15.64	1.00	16.64	-16.64	0.00	Fixed term posts added.
HOSPITAL HOUSING ENABLER TEAM	6.00	0.00	6.00	4.77	10.77	1.77	12.54	Restructure following increase in external funding.
HOUSING OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST	0.81	0.00	0.81	-0.81	0.00	0.00	0.00	
LCC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST	1.00	-1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
ACTIVE TRAVEL	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	
HEALTH & RECREATION	2.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	2.00	
SOCIAL PRESCRIBING	2.58	-2.58	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
LEISURE DEVELOPMENT - SPORTS	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	
A PLACE TO GROW	0.53	0.02	0.55	0.00	0.55	-0.10	0.45	
COVID 19 CONTAIN FUNDING	1.54	-1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
CORPORATE HEALTH IMPROVEMENTS	0.81	0.00	0.81	0.00	0.81	0.00	0.81	
TOURISM	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	
DWP FLEXIBLE SUPPORT FUND	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	
COMMUNITY, BUSINESS, WORK & SKILLS	7.73	-0.51	7.22	0.00	7.22	2.00	9.22	
TOTALS	330.87	-1.96	328.91	8.35	337.26	46.11	383.37	

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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 2029/30 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 2025/26 remains more uncertain than in previous years with changes being brought in at pace by the government and potential changes with the Fair Funding Review; the reset of the Business Rates baseline, both of which are now expected to take effect from 2026/27, and the White Paper on Devolution and Local Government Reform recently published. As a consequence there is a high degree of risk and uncertainty around the future funding estimates within the MTFS which have been put together. The estimates take into account any information that can be gained from the national picture and documents within the public domain on this subject.

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 the estimates included attempt to illustrate possible financial impacts of the changes.

For this latest update of the MTFS, the provisional budget for 2025/26 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 2025. Alongside this will be a high level outline plan to illustrate how the future budget gaps may be met should they arise.

The MTFS Summary takes no account of the changes that may take place as a consequence of the White Paper on Devolution and Local Government Reform recently published.

Financial Summary

Forecast Net Revenue Expenditure						
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Portfolio:						
Finance, People & Performance	3,473,600	3,740,117	3,871,461	3,996,182	4,124,380	4,256,158
Housing, Community Safety & Environmental Services	2,688,845	2,447,342	2,536,461	2,628,190	2,722,606	2,819,792
Health, Leisure, Climate and Economic Development	781,658	7,208	40,862	75,614	111,495	148,545
Leader	2,594,890	2,635,151	2,710,298	2,787,641	2,867,245	2,949,189
Neighbourhood Services & Assets	4,022,818	3,194,122	3,349,791	3,510,400	3,676,093	3,847,049
Planning, Transformation and ICT	3,073,267	2,575,055	2,651,112	2,729,444	2,810,125	2,893,231
Net Direct Expenditure - Portfolio	16,635,078	14,598,996	15,159,985	15,727,471	16,311,944	16,913,964
RCCO	254,126	54,500	54,500	54,500	54,500	54,500
Minimum Revenue Provision	748,865	977,852	977,852	977,852	977,852	977,852
Voluntary Revenue Provision	300,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000
Appropriations & Accounting Adjustments	(637,291)	(106,410)	10,590	10,590	10,590	10,590
Contribution to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	(2,043,363)	(486,470)	(543,867)	(652,379)	(561,062)	(506,168)
Net Revenue Expenditure	15,257,415	15,288,468	15,909,060	16,368,034	17,043,824	17,700,738
Funding Envelope						
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Income from Business Rates	(3,762,727)	(5,429,170)	(1,606,786)	(1,673,159)	(1,745,352)	(1,819,053)
Contribution from Business Rates Reserves	305,340	1,894,178	(1,050,000)	(1,050,000)	(1,050,000)	(1,050,000)
S31 Grant - Business Rates Compensation	(3,142,613)	(3,065,008)	(1,276,280)	(1,315,486)	(1,349,898)	(1,394,036)
Revenue Support Grant	(79,550)	(95,767)	(95,767)	(95,767)	(95,767)	(95,767)
Funding Guarantee	(2,245,863)	0	0	0	0	0
Funding Floor	0	(1,573,114)	(1,573,114)	(1,573,114)	(1,573,114)	(1,573,114)
Services Grant	(15,571)	0	0	0	0	0
New Homes Bonus Grant	(14,280)	(426,048)	0	0	0	0
	(8,955,264)	(8,694,929)	(5,601,947)	(5,707,526)	(5,814,131)	(5,931,970)
Council Tax Deficit	87,887	87,887	0	0	0	0
Council Tax	(6,526,402)	(6,754,058)	(6,996,129)	(7,267,299)	(7,548,431)	(7,839,877)
Funding Envelope	(15,393,779)	(15,361,100)	(12,598,076)	(12,974,825)	(13,362,562)	(13,771,847)
Funding Gap/(Surplus)	(136,364)	(72,632)	3,310,984	3,393,209	3,681,262	3,928,891
Damping			(1,994,969)	(888,568)		
Adjusted Funding Gap/(Surplus)	(136,364)	(72,632)	1,316,015	2,504,641	3,681,262	3,928,891

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 2025/26 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 2025/26 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. There remains a

great deal of uncertainty over the precise impact, given we are unclear at what level the base-line will be set. The impact will be considerable and the likelihood of the reset actually taking place in 2026/27 seems more certain.

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 ensured that no authority had a Core Spending Power increase of no less than 3%. This has been replaced in 2025/26 with the Funding Floor grant but the same principles of the 3% do not apply.

Services Grant

Discontinued in 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 2024.

Council Tax Deficit

The amount by which council tax due in the previous year, falls short of the expected sum collectable.

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.

Release of Reserves

A programmed utilisation of reserves has been included within the MTFS Summary as detailed in the table below.

Earmarked Reserve	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
NNDR Income Reserve	1,894,178	(1,050,000)	(1,050,000)	(1,050,000)	(1,050,000)
Contractual Losses Support Reserve	(63,750)	(63,750)	(63,750)	(63,750)	0
Business Rate Pool Reserve	(413,220)	(425,617)	(434,129)	(442,812)	(451,668)
Blaby Plan Priorities Reserve	(54,500)	(54,500)	(54,500)	(54,500)	(54,500)
Property Fund Reserve	45,000	0	0	0	0
District Election			(100,000)		

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.

NHB is expected to be removed from the settlement from 2026/27 onwards and it is uncertain as to whether it will be replaced with any other form of grant to encourage house building.

- **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.

A full reset of the Business Rates Baseline will cause the Council to 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 results 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.
- **Funding Associated with Food Waste Implementation.** The Council is required to implement the collection of food waste by April 2026. Revenue funding is expected to be provided to compensate the Council for the additional costs arising. Whilst the Council have modelled the costs to date no confirmation has been received regarding the revenue funding that will be provided to support this. If the funding is insufficient to meet the costs additional costs the Council will be required to find additional funds to deliver the service.
- **Defra Funding :Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging.** Funding of £913k has been included in 2025/26 budget figures from Defra relating to the Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging. This is based on the Council's recycling collections and tonnages and passes the cost of collection onto those who produce the packaging. Whilst this funding is expected to be ongoing, it is uncertain as to whether it will be taken into consideration when the Fair Funding Review is completed. At the moment this falls outside of the Core Spending Power calculation. The amount received may also be impacted in future years as schemes for consumers to deposit items of recycling in return for cash are introduced. If this reduces the tonnage collected by Blaby DC the Defra funding will reduce and the operation will be required to downscale accordingly, otherwise this provides a further financial risk to the Council.

LEADER'S PORTFOLIO Councillor Terry Richardson	Appendix F
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The budget settlement we have received for the next financial year is very much as expected which means we have seen a real terms reduction in our Core Spending Power funding.

It is now apparent that the new Government has plans to bring change swiftly with both the Consultation on Funding Reform and the White Paper on Devolution and Local Government Reform being recently released.

Both will undoubtedly have significant impact on the future of this Council, especially the potential impact on Local Government reform. I am working at pace with the Leaders of all the other Councils in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, fully supported by our senior officers, to understand the possible implications. I am committed to keeping all members informed on progress and to make sure our staff is fully kept in the loop as well.

At this stage in the process it is extremely difficult to forecast the financial implications of the Funding Reforms however, 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.

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.

We have never been a Council that just reacts to events but one that looks for solutions and does the right thing by our residents. As we understand the implications of the Devolution and Local Government Reform White Paper a pro-active approach to find the best outcome for our residents will be key.

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 during what may be a turbulent time.

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 Directors, Corporate Services
Group Manager, Neighbourhood Services Group Manager,
Assets and Major Projects Group Manager**

Portfolio Total

	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
Leader - Total	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£1,854,621	£1,857,241	£1,967,820	£113,199 6.10%	£110,579 5.95%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£841,119	£1,379,912	£1,092,594	£251,475 29.90%	-£287,317 -20.82%
3. Direct Income	-£285,263	-£642,263	-£425,263	-£140,000 49.08%	£217,000 -33.79%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£2,410,477	£2,594,890	£2,635,151	£224,674 9.32%	-£10,826 -0.41%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	29.55	29.55	29.49	-0.06 -0.20%	-0.06 -0.20%

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, Web Development and Emergency Planning/Business Continuity.

The establishment budget for 2024/25 allowed for a 3% pay award within services, with an additional 1% provision held centrally. Following protracted negotiations, a flat rate increase of £1,290 for employees on grades 1 to 9 was agreed with the trade unions. The nationally agreed pay award for Chief Executives and Chief Officers was 2.5%. There is no increase in headcount built into the 2024/25 establishment budget. The establishment budget for 2025/26 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 2024/25 is due to the following reasons:

- The carry forward of unspent budget provision and external funding from 2023/24.
- An increase in external legal fees in connection with various planning issues, as well as increases in relation to the management of our Assets.
- Budget for the PCC Election held in May 2024, and General Election held in July 2024. This is offset with a reimbursement income budget.

In 2024/25, budget was added for the General Election, and PCC Election. The annual provision for local elections is included at £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. A County Council Election is planned for 2025/26, expenditure budget has been added, with reimbursement income expected.

Land Charges income has been reduced in both 2024/25 and 2025/26, the reduced income is due to the migration of part of the Local land charges function to HM Land Registry in October 2023.

Chief Executive, Directors and Health & Safety

Chief Executive, Directors, and Health & Safety	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment	£762,537	£762,537	£782,400	£19,863 2.60%	£19,863 2.60%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£34,022	£40,668	£37,624	£3,602 10.59%	-£3,044 -7.49%
3. Direct Income	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£796,559	£803,205	£820,024	£23,465 2.95%	£16,819 2.09%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	7.43	7.43	7.43	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 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 allows for the extension of commercial support from Charnwood Borough Council until 30th April 2024
3. Not applicable.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. No change.

Electoral Registration

Electoral Registration	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£122,460	£122,460	£129,730	£7,270 5.94%	£7,270 5.94%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£104,650	£497,100	£290,848	£186,198 177.92%	-£188,252 -39.29%
3. Direct Income	-£3,800	-£373,800	-£183,800	-£180,000 4736.84%	£190,000 -50.83%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£223,310	£227,760	£236,778	£13,468 6.03%	-£9,018 3.96%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	2.67	2.67	2.61	-0.06 -2.25%	-0.06 -2.25%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 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 unspent budget carried forward from 2023/24 and budget added for the PCC Election held in May 2024, and the General Election held in July 2024. The 2025/26 proposed budget includes expenditure in relation to the County Council Election.
3. Reimbursements for the PCC and General Elections. The 2025/26 proposed budget includes reimbursement for the County Council Election.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. 1 team member minor reduction in hours.

Democratic Services, Governance, Information Management and Legal Services

Democratic Services, Governance, Information Management & Legal Services	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£680,213	£682,833	£742,150	£61,937 9.11%	£59,317 8.69%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£475,916	£616,984	£526,779	£50,863 10.69%	£-90,205 -14.62%
3. Direct Income	£-281,463	£-268,463	£-241,463	£40,000 -14.21%	£27,000 -10.06%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£874,666	£1,031,354	£1,027,466	£152,800 17.47%	£-3,888 -0.38%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	13.91	13.91	13.91	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 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 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 2023/24. The 2025/26 budget includes an inflationary provision for members allowances.
3. Land charges income has been reduced in both 2024/25 and 2025/26 due to the migration of part of the Land charges function to HM Land Registry.
4. Net impact of the variances listed above.
5. No change in headcount.

Emergency Planning & Business Continuity

Emergency Planning & Business Continuity	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 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	£50,167	£51,567	£53,265	£3,098 6.18%	£1,698 3.29%
3. Direct Income	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£50,167	£51,567	£53,265	£3,098 6.18%	£1,698 3.29%
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.

Communications, Consultation and Digital Services

	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
Web Development	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£289,411	£289,411	£313,540	£24,129 8.34%	£24,129 8.34%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£176,364	£191,593	£184,079	£7,715 4.37%	-£7,514 -3.92%
3. Direct Income	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£465,775	£481,004	£497,619	£31,844 6.84%	£16,615 3.45%
5. 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 2025/26 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 allows for increases in software costs with Granicus-Firmstep Ltd due to a new contract and the addition of single sign on for the Citizen Access online revenues and benefits service.
3. Not applicable.
4. Net impact.
5. Not applicable.

Portfolio Priorities

- To lead the Council through the implementation of the Blaby District Plan and the implications of the Devolution White Paper.
- 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 continue to build on Peer Review recommendations
- Continue to maintain and develop the Council's corporate website www.blaby.gov.uk, www.visitblaby.org.uk, and www.lbc.co.uk Work also continues to support services with corporate branding and accessibility compliance of web solutions.

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 council (national election/referendums, 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.

Communications, Consultation and Web Development

Delivery of external and internal communications, consultation, 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><u>Leader, Directors & SLT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand the Devolution White Paper and take action to find the best outcome for our residents• The Senior Leadership Team to continue to deliver the Blaby District Plan• To implement 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 2025- Leicestershire County Council elections• Review of election processes following completion of the Election Act 2022 implementation• Neighbourhood plan referendums as required• Delivery of the annual canvass <p><u>Democratic Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of the Constitution <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">• Test service specific business continuity plans for robustness and resilience.• Continue to develop the incident specific action cards to assist with emergency response and recovery.• Focus on development and delivery of operational roles such as flood warden training and humanitarian assistance.• Develop tactical awareness across the Service Manager to continue to develop expertise in our collective emergency response to immediate and enduring events <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><u>Communications, Consultation and Digital Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To align communication activity to support the Council's delivery of strategic themes.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver meaningful consultation processes to improve service delivery and transparency • Continue to improve our self-service offer, implementing new digital systems to enable customers to easily obtain information and make service requests.
Income generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Information Governance team continues 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 been made to replace the audio-visual technology in the Council Chamber to better meet the needs of members and residents.

Key Performance Indicators

Land Charges - Turnaround time (smaller is better)

	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
2023/24	4.33	4.67	4.67	5	4	4.33	4.33	3.67	4	3.67	4.33	4.28
2024/25	4.33	5	5	5.33	4.67	5	4	3.33	-	-	-	-

Land Charges Income

	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
2023/24	£15,778	£15,584	£16,045	£15,021	£14,651	£19,410	£17,496	£9,546	£5,757	£19,808	£18,630	£18,524
2024/25	£14,592	£21,014	£14,095	£24,176	£15,418	£23,758	£17,236	£15,718	-	-	-	-

Information Governance

Complaints Escalated to the Local Government Ombudsman

	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
2023/24	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2024/25	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	-	-	-	-

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – CORPORATE SERVICES	2024/25 April - Nov	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
Number of online forms submitted by customers	45,589	64,606	63,907	64,637
Number of email subscribers	29,864	29,300	27,644	27,409
Number of customers logged into My Account	24,416	20,166	24,859	25,454
% of positive (4-5*) online form feedback ratings	88.1%	87.1%	86.9%	87.9%

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.

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FINANCE, PEOPLE AND PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO
Councillor 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 now expected to be implemented in 2026/27. Whilst a consultation paper has been released on the Local Authority Funding Reforms it provides little detail for us to predict the Council's future funding position with any certainty. 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.

The receipt of funding of £913k for the Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging (EPR) from Defra has impacted significantly to the closing of the Council's budget gap this year. This funding has considerably reduced the cost to the Council of providing the recycling collection to residents and contributes to the reduction in Net Budget Requirement for 2025/26.

However, the Settlement, that we received on 18th December was similar to our expectations, it is disappointing that the Council has not benefitted from additional funding that has been made available to areas of need. It is perhaps an indication that the Council will receive reduced funding levels when the reforms are introduced. The settlement also gives local authorities the ability to increase council tax by the greater of £5 or 2.99% at band D level. For Blaby, 2.99% gives a marginally higher outturn than £5 at band D level.

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 which is becoming embedded. This is now assisting with the monitoring of key priorities, projects and operational performance indicators.

2024 saw the navigation of some hugely varied and complex workload for our HR service amidst a backdrop of resourcing challenges within the HR team itself. Despite this the team have continued to work hard in collaboration with services across the organisation to ensure we continue to make progress in delivering against our People

and Organisational Development Objectives with alignment of projects to deliver the Blaby District Plan as we commence a new year.

Policy and procedural reviews continue to ensure they are relevant, up to date, and align with recognised industry standards, with emphasis on legislative changes and corporate values. HR remain committed to supporting and driving the development of all our people, ensuring we recruit and retain the best talent and maintain effective leadership, ensuring Blaby continues to be a great place to work.

The Council Tax and Benefits team have implemented 2 new systems during the year. A new document management system was implemented in October, followed by Citizen Access in November. This brings a suite of new online forms to help increase transformation and efficiency of the service.

The Finance Team has seen a significant change in staffing across the team, with 3 long serving employees retiring during the year. Recruitment to vacancies is ongoing. 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. The Financial Accounts for 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 were completed and signed on the 12th December 2024. The Audit of the 2023/24 Financial Accounts is currently being undertaken.

Customer Insights, Experience and Engagement Service continues to go from strength to strength. The service has expanded its data driven approach to gain valuable insights into our customer service delivery model enabling us to continue to put the Customer at the Heart of everything we do. Blaby District Council, like other councils and central government, has made more and more of its services available online, and this shift to digital will continue. Increasing the number of residents who regularly 'self-serve' rather than choosing to phone or visit the council offices will help us target our resources more effectively to prioritise the people and communities who need help and support the most.

We also understand that self-serve and accessing online services is not for everyone. Our communities are diverse and so are their needs and preferences, we will do all that we can to meet these.

Collectively the Finance, People and Performance portfolio continue to embrace change and challenge to ensure the council delivers excellent services to our residents

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Maggie Wright

Senior Officers: Executive Director (S151), Finance Group Manager,
Transformation and ICT Group Manager, Assets and Major
Projects Group Manager

Portfolio Total

Finance, People and Performance - Total	2024/25 Approved Budget [A]	2024/25 Revised Estimate [B]	2025/26 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£2,860,696	£2,790,697	£3,011,904	£151,208 5.29%	£221,207 7.93%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£12,607,722	£10,826,568	£10,873,613	-£1,734,109 -13.75%	£47,045 0.43%
3. Direct Income	-£11,963,837	-£10,032,601	-£10,145,400	£1,818,437 -15.20%	-£112,799 1.12%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£3,504,581	£3,473,600	£3,740,117	£235,536 6.72%	£266,517 7.67%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	66.95	67.73	65.35	-1.60 -2.39%	-2.38 -3.51%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This portfolio incorporates the establishment costs relating to the Finance, Council Tax and Benefits, Income and Collection, HR, Customer Services, Business Systems and Information teams. The establishment budget for 2024/25 allowed for a 3% pay award within services, with an additional 1% provision held centrally. Following protracted negotiations, a flat rate increase of £1,290 for employees on grades 1 to 9 was agreed with the trade unions. The nationally agreed pay award for Chief Executives and Chief Officers was 2.5%. There is no increase in headcount built into the 2024/25 establishment budget. The establishment budget for 2025/26 allows for a 3% estimated pay award, contractual increments where appropriate, and employer's national insurance and pension contributions within service budgets.

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 £250,000 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. The budget has been revised to reflect the estimate from DWP. This expenditure is covered by housing benefit subsidy, which is included within the direct income line. The interest payable budget has been increased to reflect borrowing to support the planned Capital Programme. Although no external borrowing has been undertaken to date this financial year and is also unlikely in 2025/26 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 original budget and revised estimate include provision for expenditure on projects funded from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The UKSPF scheme was due to end on 31st March 2025, however confirmation has been received that the scheme will continue for 2025/26, budget has been added to reflect this.

Investment income has continued to perform well, as had been seen in the prior year. It is expected to remain at a similar, although slightly reduced, level for 2025/26.

Financial Services

Financial Services	2024/25 Approved Budget [A]	2024/25 Revised Estimate [B]	2025/26 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£671,255	£682,037	£734,950	£63,695 9.49%	£52,913 7.76%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£1,304,072	£1,104,976	£1,240,514	-£63,558 -4.87%	£135,538 12.27%
3. Direct Income	-£1,045,000	-£1,382,255	-£1,145,000	-£100,000 9.57%	£237,255 -17.16%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£930,327	£404,758	£830,464	-£99,863 -10.73%	£425,706 105.18%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	12.54	13.32	13.32	0.78 6.22%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The revised estimate allows for an amendment to the Insurance Officer post as approved by Cabinet Executive in September. The 2025/26 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. Budget for the Income Management System maintenance has been removed from the Customer Services budget and added to the Finance budget.
3. Investment income has performed well during the year, the revised budget reflects the increase in the additional income expected to the end of the year, and estimated Investment income for 2025/26 based on forecasted interest rates.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. As per point 1.

Council Tax & Benefits

Revenues and Benefits	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£939,472	£939,472	£1,028,090	£88,618 9.43%	£88,618 9.43%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£9,508,600	£8,593,228	£8,468,278	-£1,040,322 -10.94%	-£124,950 -1.45%
3. Direct Income	-£9,395,304	-£8,347,200	-£8,309,200	£1,086,104 -11.56%	£38,000 -0.46%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£1,052,768	£1,185,500	£1,187,168	£134,400 12.77%	£1,668 0.14%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	23.05	23.05	23.40	0.35 1.52%	0.35 1.52%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 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. 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.
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. Small change in hours.

Income & Collections Team

Income and Collections	2024/25 Approved Budget [A]	2024/25 Revised Estimate [B]	2025/26 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£259,675	£259,675	£275,840	£16,165 6.23%	£16,165 6.23%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£16,240	£17,130	£18,190	£1,950 12.01%	£1,060 6.19%
3. Direct Income	-£178,450	-£124,950	-£126,990	£51,460 -28.84%	-£2,040 1.63%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£97,465	£151,855	£167,040	£69,575 71.38%	£15,185 10.00%
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 2025/26 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	2024/25 Approved Budget [A]	2024/25 Revised Estimate [B]	2025/26 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	£265,223	£294,943	£302,888	£37,665 14.20%	£7,945 2.69%
3. Direct Income	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£265,223	£294,943	£302,888	£37,665 14.20%	£7,945 2.69%
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. Cost of Shared Internal Audit service.
3. Not applicable.
4. See note 2 above.
5. Not applicable.

Performance

Performance	2024/25 Approved Budget [A]	2024/25 Revised Estimate [B]	2025/26 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£171,611	£171,611	£176,180	£4,569 2.66%	£4,569 2.66%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£32,245	£42,000	£66,378	£34,133 105.85%	£24,378 58.04%
3. Direct Income	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£203,856	£213,611	£242,558	£38,702 18.98%	£28,947 13.55%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	3.04	3.04	3.07	0.03 0.99%	0.03 0.99%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 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. System maintenance budget which was previously split across Planning and Performance has been amalgamated, as reflected in the proposed budget.
3. Not applicable.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Minor changes in hours.

Human Resources

Human Resources	2024/25 Approved Budget [A]	2024/25 Revised Estimate [B]	2025/26 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£243,426	£243,426	£270,524	£27,098 11.13%	£27,098 11.13%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£199,260	£203,551	£208,551	£9,291 4.66%	£5,000 2.46%
3. Direct Income	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£442,686	£446,977	£479,075	£36,389 8.22%	£32,098 7.18%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	6.59	6.59	6.59	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, additional apprenticeship levy and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. Increase in 2024/25 relates to staff advertising costs, and employee training. Inflationary increases have been included where appropriate.
3. Not applicable.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. No change.

Customer Services

Customer Services	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£494,476	£494,476	£526,320	£31,844 6.44%	£31,844 6.44%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£17,780	£6,530	£4,605	-£13,175 -74.10%	-£1,925 -29.48%
3. Direct Income	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£512,256	£501,006	£530,925	£18,669 3.64%	£29,919 5.97%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	13.73	13.73	11.97	-1.76 -12.82%	-1.76 -12.82%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 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 the Income Management System maintenance has been reallocated to the Finance budget.
3. Not applicable.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Apprentice and Advisor roles removed in the 2025/26 Establishment budget. Part time roles replaced with full time.

UKSPF

UKSPF	2024/25 Approved Budget [A]	2024/25 Revised Estimate [B]	2025/26 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£80,781	£80,781	£0	-£80,781 -100.00%	-£80,781 -100.00%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£1,264,302	£372,365	£564,210	-£700,092 -55.37%	£191,845 51.52%
3. Direct Income	-£1,345,083	-£178,196	-£564,210	£780,873 -58.05%	-£386,014 216.62%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£0	£274,950	£0	£0 0.00%	-£274,950 -100.00%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	2.00	2.00	0.00	-2.00 -100.00%	-2.00 -100.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024-25 approved budget and revised estimate remain consistent show funding allocated to establishment posts.
2. The revised budget includes unspent budget carried forward from 2023/24. Unallocated funding is included within this line.
3. The revised budget and proposed budget reflect the income to be used towards revenue expenditure.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. The approved and revised budgets supported 2.00 FTE posts. Once projects have been agreed for the funds to be utilised the establishment budgets will be allocated.

Portfolio Priorities

Financial Services

- To lead on the understanding and implications of the financial reforms and take action to identify savings measures and efficiencies in order to address forecast financial shortfalls within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- Understand costs and deliver a responsive, cost effective and high-quality financial service.
- Upgrade to the latest version of Efinancials and migrate to the cloud.

Council Tax & Benefits

- To continue 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.

Human Resources (HR)

- Support and drive the development of all our employees, ensuring we recruit and retain the best talent and maintain effective leadership.
- Support and advise on the effective management of casework
- Support and advise on organisational change

Customer Insights, Experience and Engagement (CIEE)

- To ensure that we are front and centre as advocates for Blaby District Council's commitment to our customers. Placing our customers at the heart of everything we do recognising the importance of diversity of customers' needs across Blaby District.

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)

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.

Customer Insights, Experience & Engagement (CIEE)

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 (included in Appendix H).

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

Key Points

<p>Doing things differently – plans for the coming year</p>	<p><u>Financial Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The financial settlement for 2025/26 is as expected, the Council hasn't benefited from additional funding which has been made to areas of need. New Homes Bonus has been confirmed for another year. With some management of vacancies and utilisation of the Business Rate Pool monies to support Economic Development Expenditure the funding gap for 2025/26 is manageable. The medium to longer term position however remains the uncertain with the expectation that there will be considerable shortfalls forecast from 2026/27 onwards with the likelihood of a business rate baseline reset taking effect from 1st April 2026. The Finance team will, therefore, continue to understand the consultations relating to the Local Government Finance Reforms and 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. • The Finance team will continue to challenge budgets and support services to ensure full cost recovery in relation to shared services. • Upgrade the Finance System to the latest version and migrate to the Cloud. • Provide additional training and support sessions to Budget Holders, and finance system users to increase knowledge and understanding. <p><u>Council Tax & Benefits</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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, increasing the number of forms available on the Council Website. <p><u>Income & Collections</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Income & Collections team continues to work with external agencies, including bailiffs and legal experts, to implement additional debt recovery measures in line with the Corporate Debt Policy. <p><u>Audit</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
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	<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"> • Enhance data intelligence at Blaby by expanding the use of Microsoft Power BI (Business Intelligence). This system can automatically connect to our databases to provide valuable management information and insight via live and intuitive dashboards. In turn, this will improve our evidence-based decision making. Progress has already been made with the Lightbulb team, Information Governance (Complaints & FOIs) and Health & Safety. The team are confident that significant benefits to efficiency and insight can also be achieved in 2025 in Planning, HR, Building Control and Environmental Services. • Ensure Business Systems & Information team members are developing competence and confidence in the use of Microsoft Power BI so that the Council has an effective 'in-house' data analyst function to support our services. • Continue to work alongside the Transformation team to explore and suggest ways of enhancing how the council aligns its project portfolio and performance indicators to the aims of the corporate plan. • Continue to enhance the use and functionality of the iPlan system to help services manage their objectives and promote active business planning discussions and prioritisation. <p><u>Human Resources (HR)</u></p> <p>People and Organisational Development (POD) is one strand of our Transforming Blaby Together Strategy, which acknowledges the vital role that employees have in every aspect of service delivery.</p> <p>Woven through our strategy are specific People and Organisational Development (POD) objectives, which ensure that these are embedded in all our transformation activities. These objectives support and drive the development of all our employees, ensuring we recruit and retain the best talent and maintain effective leadership. 2025 will see HR aims include:</p>
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- Recruitment & Retention: to include our corporate approach to new starters, potential exploration of the LGA graduate programme, and our use of the apprenticeship levy and the shape of our offer
- Learning & Development: through a continued robust programme of training and development we will empower and support managers to deliver transformational services which are sustainable and deliver positive outcomes to include effective use of our new Learning Management System.
- Review the People and Organisational Development Delivery Plan to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose in terms of driving the importance of our people as our greatest asset.
- We will continue our commitment to developing strong relationships with recognised Trade Unions, to help us shape our culture together based on best practise and compliance with negotiated agreements

Customer Insights, Experience & Engagement (CIEE)

Our purpose is to put the customer at the heart of everything we do. When customers get in touch with us, we always aim to consistently provide an excellent and efficient service regardless of the reason for contact.

We take pride in treating people well, being accessible and providing a helpful resolution to any enquiry.

We are committed to providing all our customers with an excellent service and in continuing to deliver on this aim we will:

- Continue to 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
- 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
- Continue to provide consistent online forms, that are concise, easy to understand, and collect all the relevant information at the first point of contact
- Work in collaboration with our new in-house ICT team and digital subject matter experts to research and explore artificial intelligence (AI) solutions for customers looking for simple advice and/or factual information
- 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 experience and engagement

Income generation	Income from the Council's central treasury function is included in this portfolio. As was seen in 2023/24 and continuing in 2024/25 returns have improved considerably from previous years 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 2025/26.
Capital plans for the portfolio	<p>The Finance team monitors and maintains oversight of the overall Capital Programme. In terms of Finance-specific schemes, an upgrade to the Efinancials system is planned, with a view to moving to the Cloud. Implementation of the upgrade to the Income Management system is due to Go Live in February 2025.</p> <p>Within HR there was some carryover into the 2024/25 budget as enablement for greater use of the iTrent HR/Payroll systems functionality to support process improvements in the shape of automation where possible/appropriate. Unfortunately, due to resourcing challenges and other priorities this was not a project we were in a position to progress. This will remain in our service plan as a key area of focus during 2025/26.</p> <p>The Council's UKSPF allocation for 2025-26 contains £127,759 capital budget. A 'Call for Projects' process will be undertaken in January 2025 to identify corporate priorities and those approved by SLT will be presented to Cabinet for a funding decision. All approved projects will be delivered within the 2025-26 financial year, according to UKSPF grant requirements.</p>

Key Performance Indicators

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR – FINANCE	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 YEAR TO DATE	COMMENTS
Invoices Paid within 10 days	87.48%	86.15%	85.57%	The team continue to work with departments to ensure all invoices received include a purchase order number which enables more automation within the system and increases the number of invoices paid in a timely manner. The Finance Team have experienced a high staff turnover over the last 2 years, including loss of long term staff, whilst recruitment within

				the team has been largely successful, time required for training does have an impact to the work that can be undertaken.
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PERFORMANCE INDICATOR - REVENUES AND BENEFITS	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 YEAR TO DATE	COMMENTS
Percentage of cases checked which were paid correctly	87.50%	82.50%	91.65%	Revenues and Benefits team have experienced a turnover of staff over the past 2 years, intensive training of new staff continues to be undertaken, however this takes 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.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR - HR	2022/23 RESULTS	2023/24 RESULTS
% total working days lost to sickness absence	7.66 days	10.73 days
% Staff Turnover Rate	16.02%	15.51%

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 due to DWP migration to Universal Credit will receive careful and consideration and preparation. The team is also responsible for discretionary housing benefits payments and 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.

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 and transformation.

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. There is still substantial uncertainty surrounding how changes to Business Rate Retention and the Fair Funding Review will impact on Blaby in future years. It is expected that the Government will implement its reforms in 2026/27. New Homes Bonus is being phased out, it has been confirmed for 2025/26 however it is still unclear as to whether it will be replaced with a different funding stream in future years.
- **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, 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial accounts were signed off by our external auditors on 25th November 2024, following the implementation by Government of backstop measures to bring the outstanding audits up to date. Due to the delay in the accounts being signed the 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** – Failure to recruit and retain the right people for the right roles continues to be a challenge and one which is captured and monitored as a corporate risk. Other risks monitored and mitigated include HR and Payroll systems failure.
- **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.

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The areas covered in this portfolio are wide ranging and complex, with four of the Council's highest-profile partnerships; Lightbulb, Housing Enablement Team, Health, Sport, Physical Activity and Tourism, sitting in this group.

Lightbulb

In Lightbulb we have produced a new business case document looking to introduce a caseworker model to the delivery method better supporting our vulnerable service users and modernise our performance reporting for partners. This is currently being considered by all partners and will hopefully see a new legal agreement signed by all for a period up to five years. It is planned that the Lightbulb offer will include the continuation of the pilots to provide support re hoarding (Safe Spaces), providing assisted technology (Home Gadgets), and a respiratory health and housing pilot.

Hospital Enablement Service

The Hospital Enablement Service has seen another very busy year with increasing demand for housing support for hospital discharge and the introduction of new pilot projects including Children Adolescent Mental Health Project (CAMHS) this is focused around supporting young people who are receiving support from CAMHS to alleviate any issues around housing that the family may also be facing. Funding has been also extended for the County wide relationship enabler project providing extra support to the most vulnerable patients being discharged from hospital back into the community.

Equalities , Diversity and Inclusion

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) also sits within this portfolio. The lead for this provision is our Customer Insights, Experience and Engagement (CIEE) Service Manager. As we progress through 2025, we will continue the great work already completed to streamline and digitalise the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process and provide training to staff and councillors. We will also look for alternative ways of embracing the power of technology positively to tackle exclusion from services and communities, ensuring everyone has equal access to the information and help they need, regardless of their individual circumstances.

Health, Leisure and Tourism

The 2025-26 financial year represents an exciting opportunity for Blaby District Council to build on the momentum of its ongoing work in Health, Leisure and Tourism Services. Through innovation, strategic partnerships and a focus on community outcomes, the council will deliver on several key initiatives designed to enhance the quality of life for

residents. Below, we outline the key achievements and priorities that will define our progress over the coming year.

The Health, Leisure, and Tourism Service is focused on creating opportunities for residents to lead active, healthy lifestyles while promoting the district as a vibrant destination. For the year ahead, the team will continue to deliver on its commitments to improve health outcomes, support sustainable tourism growth and manage leisure services effectively. Highlights include:

- 1. Strategic Sports Planning:** With the successful completion of the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) update, the council will now focus on implementing its technical recommendations playing fields and sports facilities across the district.
- 2. Active Blaby Programme:** Building on progress to date, the Active Blaby initiative will see the continued rollout of updates to the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, website and digital tools. These enhancements will ensure a more user-friendly experience for residents accessing sport and physical activity services.
- 3. Health & Wellbeing Services:** The council will deliver targeted programmes under its Health & Wellbeing Service for Oadby and Wigston Borough Council (O&WBC) and Blaby residents. These initiatives include tailored interventions to promote physical activity and wellbeing among priority groups.
- 4. Tourism Growth Plan:** The implementation of the Tourism Growth Plan will focus on supporting local businesses, enhancing visitor experiences and raising the profile of Blaby as a key tourism destination.
- 5. A Place to Grow (APTG):** The award-winning A Place to Grow community garden will continue to provide a space for health, education and social inclusion, with new programmes and activities being planned to engage a wider audience.
- 6. Leisure Contract Management:** The council will maintain its robust partnership with SLM, ensuring high-quality leisure provision through monthly and quarterly contract meetings. Additionally, new opportunities for programme development and infrastructure upgrades, such as the installation of solar panels, will be explored.

Community Health & Wellbeing Plan

The Community Health & Wellbeing Plan 2023-26 will guide the delivery of health interventions and support for residents. This includes initiatives such as e-bike training, aimed at promoting sustainable transport and active lifestyles. Programmes supporting sports participation will continue to be delivered across the district, with a focus on increasing accessibility and inclusivity.

Work and Skills Agenda

The Work and Skills Agenda focuses on empowering residents and businesses by providing access to resources, training and opportunities to develop local skills and drive economic growth. Key initiatives for 2025-26 include:

1. **Youth Engagement and Leadership:** The Youth Council will provide young people with a platform to influence decision-making and engage with local governance. This initiative will support the next generation of leaders while fostering civic pride and responsibility.
2. **Support for the Armed Forces Community:** The council will enhance its engagement with the armed forces community through tailored initiatives that recognise their unique contributions and needs, strengthening the council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.
3. **Job Fairs and Employment Support:** Continued delivery of Job Fairs will connect residents with employers, training providers and support services. These events will focus on raising awareness of sector-based opportunities and increasing employment rates.
4. **Business Support and Growth:** The council will further its Business Support Programme by delivering regular Business Breakfasts and newsletters. These efforts will provide local businesses with vital information, networking opportunities and access to innovation grants and funding for growth
5. **Access to Financial Support:** Future initiatives will improve Access to Debt Advice and Finance for businesses and residents, ensuring economic resilience and fostering financial stability across the district.
6. **Securing External Funding:** Efforts to secure external funding will continue, with a focus on supporting key projects and services. This will involve identifying new funding streams to bolster community and economic initiatives.

Community Engagement and Voluntary Sector Support

Blaby District Council remains committed to fostering a strong and resilient community by supporting voluntary organisations and encouraging civic participation. For the 2025-26 year, priorities include:

1. **Community Grants and Blaby Lottery:** The council will deliver Community Grants to support local projects that improve the quality of life for residents. The Blaby Lottery will continue to provide an innovative funding source for local voluntary groups.
2. **Voluntary Sector Support:** Providing guidance and resources for voluntary organisations will be a key focus, ensuring these groups can thrive and continue their invaluable work in the community.
3. **Innovation and Collaboration:** New initiatives to promote Access to Grant Funding for Innovation will help organisations explore creative solutions to local challenges. This will be complemented by efforts to encourage collaborative working across sectors.

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Cheryl Cashmore

**Senior Officers: Environmental Health, Housing & Community Safety Group
Manager, Assets and Major Projects Group Manager**

Portfolio Total

Health, Leisure, Climate and Economic Development - Total	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£2,338,679	£2,512,398	£2,958,400	£619,721 26.50%	£446,002 17.75%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£456,128	£1,787,161	£454,757	-£1,371 -0.30%	-£1,332,404 -74.55%
3. Direct Income	-£2,857,789	-£3,517,901	-£3,405,949	-£548,160 19.18%	£111,952 -3.18%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	-£62,982	£781,658	£7,208	£70,190 -111.44%	-£774,450 -99.08%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	48.50	47.50	62.02	13.52 27.88%	14.52 30.57%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This portfolio incorporates the establishment costs for Health & Leisure Services, Lightbulb, the Housing Enablement Team, and the Community Development, Work & Skills. The establishment budget for 2024/25 allowed for a 3% pay award within services, with an additional 1% provision held centrally. Following protracted negotiations, a flat rate increase of £1,290 for employees on grades 1 to 9 was agreed with the trade unions. The nationally agreed pay award for Chief Executives and Chief Officers was 2.5%.

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 2024/25 approved budget and the proposed budget for 2025/26, since the external funding was only secured after the budget was approved last February.

Establishment costs have however increased within Community, Business Work and Skills and in the Lightbulb Service as additional posts have been accounted for.

Other gross direct expenditure in the 2024/25 revised estimate is inflated by several factors. These include external funding (mainly for Health & Leisure Services) which is unconfirmed for 2025/26, and unspent budget provision carried forward from 2023/24 (non-recurring). The contractual arrangement with Oadby and Wigston Borough Council to run their Sport and Physical Activity programme has continued for a further year during 2024/25. Discussions are currently being undertaken with the potential to continue for a further year. Budget will be added to reflect this once confirmed.

In terms of income for this portfolio, the same principles apply to the 2024/25 revised estimate as described above, i.e., since the original budget was approved in February 2024, 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 2025/26 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.

Leisure Centres

Enderby Leisure Centre	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 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	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
3. Direct Income	-£857,247	-£866,140	-£779,012	£78,235 -9.13%	£87,128 -10.06%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	-£857,247	-£866,140	-£779,012	£78,235 -9.13%	£87,128 -10.06%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00%
				0.00%	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 2025/26,
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Not applicable.

Health, Leisure & Tourism

Health & Leisure	2024/25 Approved Budget [A]	2024/25 Revised Estimate [B]	2025/26 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£285,392	£457,374	£310,040	£24,648 8.64%	-£147,334 -32.21%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£101,429	£385,026	£68,438	-£32,991 -32.53%	-£316,588 -82.23%
3. Direct Income	-£7,000	-£269,267	-£7,400	-£400 5.71%	£261,867 -97.25%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£379,821	£573,133	£371,078	-£8,743 -2.30%	-£202,055 -35.25%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	5.36	5.36	6.26	0.90 16.79%	0.90 16.79%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 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 2025/26)
3. Awaiting level of external funding to be confirmed for 2025/26.
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 2025/26. Active Travel Advisor included in 2025/26 budget.

Community, Business, Work & Skills

Community, Business, Work & Skills	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£354,729	£354,729	£508,720	£153,991 43.41%	£153,991 43.41%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£103,512	£237,748	£80,476	-£23,036 -22.25%	-£157,272 -66.15%
3. Direct Income	-£25,756	-£46,095	-£12,500	£13,256 -51.47%	£33,595 -72.88%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£432,485	£546,382	£576,696	£144,211 33.34%	£30,314 5.55%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	8.22	8.22	10.22	2.00 24.33%	2.00 24.33%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 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 2023/24. These have been removed for 2025/26, which also reflects a reduction in costs relating to the Blaby Lottery (income also reduced).
3. Only funding that has been confirmed is included in the Direct Income. Income earned via the Blaby Lottery has reduced in 2025/26.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. 3 FTE posts funded through the Department of Work and Pensions (funding received in 2024/25) and Business Rates Pool Reserve, supporting economic development.

Lightbulb

Light Bulb, Housing Enablement, DFGs and Home Gadgets.	2024/25 Approved Budget [A]	2024/25 Revised Estimate [B]	2025/26 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£1,564,131	£1,693,379	£2,139,640	£575,509 36.79%	£446,261 26.35%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£248,827	£872,224	£305,844	£57,017 22.91%	-£566,380 -64.94%
3. Direct Income	-£1,967,786	-£2,271,186	-£2,607,037	-£639,251 32.49%	-£335,851 14.79%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	-£154,828	£294,417	-£161,553	-£6,725 4.34%	-£455,970 -154.87%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	33.31	33.31	45.54	12.23 36.72%	12.23 36.72%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 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 includes additional posts added to the Housing Enablement Team (HET) funded by increased partner contributions and additional posts added to the Lightbulb project. The revised estimate also includes externally funded projects in respect of Assisted Technology and Dementia Pilot, removed for 2025/26 as funding unconfirmed.
2. The revised estimate includes underspent budget provision brought forward from 2023/24 (non-recurring in 2025/26), much of which is externally funded. It also allows for additional funding received towards projects such as Housing Occupational Therapist.
3. Additional HET funding secured from health partners is included in both the revised estimate and 2025/26. The Lightbulb budget for 2025/26 takes into account increased partner contributions to contribute to the additional posts added to the establishment.
4. This represents the net impact of the variances listed above.
5. As per point 1.

Management and Admin

Management and Admin	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£134,427	£6,916	£0	-£134,427 -100.00%	-£6,916 -100.00%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£2,360	£292,163	£0	-£2,360 -100.00%	-£292,163 -100.00%
3. Direct Income	£0	-£65,213	-£0	£0 0.00%	£65,213 -100.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£136,787	£233,866	£0	-£136,787 -100.00%	-£233,866 -100.00%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	1.61	0.61	0.00	-1.61 -100.00%	-0.61 -100.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 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 2023/24, and expenditure offset with Ukrainian Refugee Scheme funding received in the year.
3. Ukrainian Refugee Scheme funding received in year.
4. This represents the net impact of the variances listed above.
5. Post removed following a change to the Structure of Senior Management approved in November 2023. 1 part time post transferred to Assets and Major Projects Management in Neighbourhood Services and Assets budget.

Movement in budget and staff from last year

Leisure Centres

Enderby Leisure Centre continues to thrive with an attractive range of services and the number of visits. Huncote's performance is slowly increasing. Quarterly performance and financial reports are shared with the group manager and portfolio holder.

Health & Leisure Services

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 for 2025-26

Tourism

Members of the tourism partnership remain committed to delivering the new Tourism Growth Strategy 2025-30. Feedback from the businesses has been very positive in terms of visitor numbers.

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 business case has been developed for the future delivery of the service which is currently progressing through each partners governance process.

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.

Portfolio Priorities

The priorities for our portfolio are: -

Health, Leisure and Tourism

- To ensure that our Leisure Contract delivers the expected financial return
- Influence local plan (Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan/Built Facilities Strategy/Playing Pitch Strategy/Tourism Policy)
- 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

Community, Business, Work and Skills

- 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

Lightbulb and Housing Enablement Team

- To gain agreement by all partners to the new business case document for Lightbulb from 2025 to 2030, including agreeing new information sharing and legal agreements.
- To continue to develop the Home Gadgets, Safespaces, and the Housing & Respiratory Illness pilots over the next 12 months to inform whether they become business as usual.
- To deliver the Housing Enabler Service across all hospital settings in Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland.
- To review the pilots currently running with the intention of making integrating select pilots into HET's main offer.
- To begin to develop a new business case model for the agreement of all partners to be taken forward in 2025.
- Maintaining awareness of Equalities and Human Rights across the council by staff and members to ensure equitable access to services remains a focus for 2025/26.

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, soft play centre and meeting room. 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.

Community, Business, Work and Skills

This team offers a wide 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 (adopted by Cabinet Executive in September 2023) 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.

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: -

- Some 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 designed 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.

Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

The Equality Act 2010 sets out the public sector general equality duty requiring public authorities to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation, and harassment; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations. These requirements apply across the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage and civil partnership.

The Council's commitment to equality and diversity goes beyond the equality objectives which are set in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty. We are determined to do more than just meet our statutory obligations. We promote equal opportunities, and we respect and acknowledge the diversity of staff, councillors, and the wider community we work with.

Key Points

Doing things differently – plans for the coming year	<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 continued implementation 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 develop and implement a new Tourism Growth Strategy• 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 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 2025.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To undertake a review of the structure of the service to ensure we have the resource needed to deliver how Lightbulb operates now, and incorporating the outcomes of the Business Case decision. Look to review, and where appropriate 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 deliver the CAMHS funded role supporting families with housing issues. <p><u>Climate Change & Net Zero</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devise and start to implement a new Smoke Control Area plan/ policy for the district. Deliver the 2030 Net Zero Council Action Plan Work with Partners in the Green Living Leicestershire Group to deliver the installation of an Electric Vehicle Charging hub and charge points across the district. To continue to work towards the 2050 Net Zero Target for the District, including development of a 2050 Action Plan To continue to lead on projects for the County such as Solar Together and Collective Switching. To review and update the Climate Change Strategy
Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training, information, communications and advice continue to be coordinated by the Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) lead with support from Human Resources and other colleagues across the organisation. Continue developing awareness around EDI and specifically training on the EIA process to ensure the culture at BDC always considers the needs of communities and colleagues when implementing a change. Continue to explore and develop our corporate approach to EDI
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.
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 from the Better Care Fund. The funding allocation is expected to be similar to the current financial year, unless it is top sliced to cover any ongoing pilot projects through Lightbulb. The annual Capital Grants Programme has been included for 2025/26. Expenditure linked to the replacement of gym equipment at our leisure centres, as part of the £5m refurbishment undertaken in 2019/20 will be undertaken.</p>

Key Performance Indicators

Health, Leisure & Tourism Services:

- Active Lives Survey (measures levels of physical activity).
- STEAM Data (provides 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

Lightbulb

New performance reporting measures have been agreed amongst all partners including: first contact, end to end times for completion of DFG's etc.

Net Zero and Climate Change

This measure is the number of tonnes of carbon dioxide which makes up the Councils Carbon footprint, it demonstrates progression towards the target of net zero by 2030 as a Council.

Number of Solar PV installations achieved since starting solar together programme, BDC is the contracting Authority for this project

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2023/24 RESULTS	2024/25 YEAR TO DATE	COMMENTS
Number of DFG Applications made. (Total number of applications made some may result in refusals or withdrawals)	146	94	There is a slight dip in the amount of DFG applications that have been made for 24/25 so far however I expect this gap to close towards the end of the financial year this is reflective of the point we were at in 23/24.
Number of DFG's completed.	67	62	We have been able to complete more DFG's for residents in 24/25 so far, there has been support from HSC's during this period and this will have had a positive effect on simple cases and being able to complete DFG's. Processes have

			also been going through review and simple efficiencies made.
End to End time taken to complete DFGs (from initial enquiry by customer to completion of work, broken down by stages)	203 days	198 days	Due to new agreed reporting methods across The Lightbulb Partnership end to end times are now recorded in days and not weeks. This may cause a slight change in how data is presented as the stages we gather information from has also changed. Overall completion days remain similar to last year.
Number of holistic housing needs assessments carried out for Blaby Residents (through The Lightbulb Partnership).	376	247	The figure remains the same for the Holistic Housing Needs Assessments carried out however for reporting purposes this now only reflects Blaby Residents.
Number of patients supported to be able to leave Hospital through intervention by The Housing Enabler Team.	1515	1558	There will be a significant increase in hospital discharge cases for 24/25, this is due to and reflects the homeless situation among Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. The Housing Enablement Team are working closely with Health and Local Authority Partners to manage this increase in numbers.
Number of tonnes of carbon dioxide which makes up the Councils Carbon footprint, it demonstrates progression towards the target of net zero by 2030 as a Council.	488.38	185.9 total for 2023/24	23/24 is the first complete year following the switch to HVO from diesel. The 77% decrease in emissions from the baseline year is primarily as a result of this change. However main office gas consumption has increased by 11.6% from the previous year (2022/23) and annual business mileage also continues to rise with a 12.2% increase.
Number of Solar PV installations achieved since starting solar together programme, BDC is the	76	36	The scheme is running for a third year at present (2024/25) and

contracting Authority for this project			initial estimates demonstrate an uptake similar to that of 2022/23.
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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

- External funding supports 2 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.
- The Integrated Care Board and Leicestershire Partnership Trust are unable to meet the full funding of the funding for the Housing Enabler Service earlier than the three years agreed.
- 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.
- All Partners do not sign up to the new Lightbulb business case document and/or do not agree to extend the pilots and undertake work to look at minor adaptations becoming part of the Lightbulb offer.

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NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES & ASSETS PORTFOLIO

Councillor Nigel Grundy

As we stand on the threshold of a new financial year, Blaby District Council faces a landscape filled with both challenges and opportunities. The year ahead will demand resilience, innovation, and a steadfast commitment to serving our community. Here, we outline the key challenges that will shape the journey in my portfolio:

1. **Financial Stability and Resilience:** With shrinking revenues and increasing demands on our key services, maintaining financial stability will be a critical challenge. The uncertainty around new burdens revenue streams, and the performance of the wider economy requires us to consider more radical ideas to increase income and reduce operational expenditure.
2. **Adoption and development of Advanced Technologies:** Embracing new technologies will be essential to enhance the services we deliver to our Blaby residents and businesses.
3. **Employee Recruitment and Retention:** Attracting and retaining skilled employees in a competitive job market is crucial for maintaining high-quality public services. We need to create a supportive and rewarding work environment to keep our workforce motivated and engaged.

Neighbourhood Services

To deliver on these broader challenges, the Neighbourhood Services Team will be focussing 2025-26 in preparing for and delivering the following:

1. **Weekly Food Waste Collection:** By April 2026, we are required to implement a weekly food waste collection service. This initiative aims to reduce landfill waste and promote recycling. We will also support businesses in fulfilling their obligations to arrange for separate food waste collections in 2025.
2. **Open Spaces Management:** We will continually review our open spaces portfolio, seeking to transfer parks and open spaces to local parishes or work with third parties for maintenance. This approach will ensure these spaces are well-maintained and accessible to the community in perpetuity.
3. **Digitising Services:** To overcome financial challenges, we will focus on innovative ways to deliver services. This includes investing in our district cleaning and parks and open spaces services to digitise processes and introduce the latest technologies for improved efficiency.
4. **Garden Waste Management:** We will consider developing our existing in-cab infrastructure to manage garden waste subscriptions more effectively. Additionally, we will explore alternative options to the annual waste collection calendars to provide more flexible and user-friendly options.
5. **Fleet Management and Depot Development:** Our fleet management operation will focus on maintaining the council's fleet of vehicles efficiently. We will continue to develop the depot, maximizing efficiencies through the installation of solar panels on workshop roofs. Additionally, we will progress

towards transitioning our fleet to all-electric vehicles by ensuring the necessary infrastructure is in place to future-proof the service.

6. **White Paper Implications:** The upcoming white paper presents both challenges and opportunities. We must be prepared to adapt to its implications, ensuring that our policies and practices align with new regulations and standards.

Property and Assets

As we enter the 2025-26 financial year, Blaby District Council remains committed to delivering robust services and ambitious projects that address the evolving needs of our community. This year will require resilience, innovation and proactive strategies to ensure our resources are used effectively. Below are the key priorities and initiatives within the Property Services and Health & Safety areas, which will be instrumental in shaping our progress over the coming year.

Property Services

The Property Services team plays a pivotal role in managing Blaby District Council's assets, ensuring the efficient operation of council-owned facilities while driving forward strategic projects. For the 2025-26 financial year, the team will focus on several key areas of Business as Usual (BAU) and major projects:

1. **Operational and Facilities Management:** The team will continue to manage the day-to-day operations of the council's estate, including scheduled and reactive maintenance to ensure facilities remain functional and compliant with health and safety regulations.
2. **Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM):** A detailed schedule of works, including statutory testing and servicing, will remain a priority to maintain compliance across all council properties.
3. **Asset Disposals and Land Transfers:** The team will oversee land valuations, GIS research and asset register updates to support disposals, transfers and potential community use opportunities.
4. **Commercial Opportunities:** Expanding the commercial use of council assets, including lease renewals and the identification of new revenue streams, will underpin efforts to enhance financial sustainability.
5. **Strategic Projects:** Projects such as exploring innovative approaches to managing encroachments on council land will remain central to the portfolio. The integration of modern technologies, including digital solutions for property management, will also be explored.
6. **Sustainability Goals:** The continuation of initiatives supporting the council's Net Zero ambitions will include expanding solar panel installations and improving energy efficiency across assets.

Health & Safety

The Health & Safety portfolio underpins the safety and wellbeing of staff, contractors, and visitors. For the upcoming year, the focus will remain on ensuring robust health and safety compliance, alongside delivering targeted training and maintaining a positive organisational safety culture. Key priorities include:

1. **Policy and Procedure Updates:** A systematic review and update of corporate risk assessments and health & safety policies will ensure alignment with new legislation and best practices.
2. **Training and Capacity Building:** Comprehensive corporate health & safety training will be delivered, including tailored programmes to address service-specific risk assessments.
3. **Incident Management:** The central accident log will be actively managed, with thorough investigations and corrective actions taken to address reported incidents.
4. **Strategic Projects:** Specific projects, such as reviewing the Drug & Alcohol Policy, updating the asbestos register and enhancing first aid capabilities, will be key deliverables for the year.
5. **Cultural Initiatives:** Promoting a proactive health & safety culture will remain a priority, ensuring all staff and stakeholders understand the importance of compliance and risk mitigation.

Leicestershire Building Control Partnership

The Leicestershire Building Control Partnership is new to my portfolio. It operates an excellent value for money regulatory Building Control service for both its customers and Partners. It does this whilst operating in competitive environment against other private sector providers.

The BC team are continuing on their journey of implementing required operational changes to comply with the Building Safety Act 2022 and the Building Act 1984 as amended. This task will take some years to fully implement.

Both Local Authority and Private Sector Building Control providers must now report to the Building Safety Regulator (Health and Safety Executive) on various key performance indicators and operational standards rules on a quarterly and annual basis. The team are putting measures in place to facilitate this requirement from the 1st of April 2025

The Surveyors are continuing to take the competency assessments and validation exams required to be taken, so that officers can legally perform their duties under the Building Inspector Registration process. Despite high failure rates nationally throughout the UK for those taking the exams, those staff that have sat and taken the exams within the LBCP have all passed those exams. This has not happened by

coincidence but is down to the dedication and extra training that those officers have undertaken both in works time and in their own time getting ready and preparing for those exams.

LBCP has recently been audited by both the Councils internal Audit team and by the external LABC/ BSI Audit team with successful outcomes.

A third Audit by the Building Safety Regulator is planned to take place in mid-January 2025 which is likely to take at least 100 hours auditing hours to complete taking us into February/ March 2025 by the time it is completed. Other, subsequent audits cannot be ruled out.

Due to the national shortage of validated and qualified/competent Surveyors now available and operating within the UK (extremely low numbers available) LBCP has had no choice but to prepare a recruitment and retention policy/package so as to try to recruit and retain staff. This package needs to be agreed and signed off by all Partner members, as it will mean their financial contribution to the Partnership will increase, in addition to Blaby DC who run the Partnership.

The initial LBCP delegation legal agreement signed in April 2022 by all Partners comes to an end by 1st April 2025. A new legal agreement will therefore need to be drafted for all Partner Members to agree and sign off.

Looking Ahead

The year ahead promises significant challenges and opportunities, requiring robust action in both the Property Services and Health & Safety domains. By focusing on operational excellence, sustainability and strategic sites, we aim to deliver lasting value for Blaby District Council and its community. Together, these initiatives will ensure our assets, staff and services remain fit for purpose, supporting the council's broader mission of building a thriving, resilient future for all.

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Nigel Grundy
Senior Officers: Executive Directors, Neighbourhood Services Group
Manager, Assets and Major Projects Group Manager,
Corporate Services Group Manager

Portfolio Total

Neighbourhood Services & Assets - Total	2024/25 Approved Budget [A]	2024/25 Revised Estimate [B]	2025/26 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£4,990,808	£5,113,242	£5,692,380	£701,572 14.06%	£579,138 11.33%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£2,555,273	£2,713,004	£2,706,808	£151,535 5.93%	-£6,196 -0.23%
3. Direct Income	-£3,873,444	-£3,803,428	-£5,205,066	-£1,331,622 34.38%	-£1,401,638 36.85%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£3,672,637	£4,022,818	£3,194,122	-£478,515 -13.03%	-£828,696 -20.60%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	109.74	110.74	133.35	23.61 21.51%	22.61 20.42%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The establishment budget for 2024/25 allowed for a 3% pay award within services, with an additional 1% provision held centrally. Following protracted negotiations, a flat rate increase of £1,290 for employees on grades 1 to 9 was agreed with the trade unions. The nationally agreed pay award for Chief Executives and Chief Officers was 2.5%. The establishment budget for 2025/26 allows for a 3% estimated pay award, contractual increments where appropriate, and employer's national insurance and pension contributions within service budgets.

The food waste collection service is due to Go Live from 1st April 2026. Establishment budget has been added to enable recruitment to be undertaken in the latter months of 2025/26. The costs are expected to be reimbursed via New Burdens Grant Funding.

There have been several changes to other gross direct expenditure budgets in both 2024/25 and 2025/26. Some of these are one-off in the current year only, mainly for unspent budget provision brought forward from 2023/24. Other changes are expected to be ongoing and reflect contractual or inflationary increases. Following the introduction of new legislation within Building Control, there will be a requirement for the service to increase the regulatory element of the work and more investment may be required from Blaby and its partners.

Fees and charges have been increased where necessary to ensure that full cost recovery is achieved. Refuse and Recycling includes £913,000 grant income due to be received for extended producer responsibility to manage packaging waste.

One of the key income streams for this portfolio is building control services. Under the delegated model for Building Control, Blaby retains all the income generated, no matter to which district it relates. The revised estimate on income has been reduced to reflect predicted final income for 2024/25, and this lower amount is then inflated by 4% for 2025/26. Overall, an increased net deficit is anticipated for the Building Control service due to lower take up by customers and economic pressures in addition to new and increased regulatory burdens, but any deficit will be 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 will need to be increased given recent legislative changes.

Parks & Open Spaces

Parks and Open Spaces	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£485,099	£510,906	£536,840	£51,741 10.67%	£25,934 5.08%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£239,029	£241,843	£247,451	£8,422 3.52%	£5,608 2.32%
3. Direct Income	-£55,969	-£55,969	-£55,969	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£668,159	£696,780	£728,322	£60,163 9.00%	£31,542 4.53%
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 2025/26 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. An independent job evaluation exercise was undertaken during the year, and following the outcome 5 posts were regarded, this is reflected in the revised estimate.
2. Inflationary increases in relation to open space development work, and tree maintenance.
3. No change.
4. The net impact of changes referred to above.
5. No change.

District Cleansing

District Cleansing	2024/25 Approved Budget [A]	2024/25 Revised Estimate [B]	2025/26 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A] 	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£436,010	£436,010	£470,340	£34,330 7.87%	£34,330 7.87%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£74,550	£70,700	£74,531	£19 -0.03%	£3,831 5.42%
3. Direct Income	-£102,000	-£102,000	-£102,000	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£408,560	£404,710	£442,871	£34,311 8.40%	£38,161 9.43%
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 2025/26 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. Savings have been identified and the budget revised to reflect this. The proposed budget includes an estimate for mobile phone usage costs, which previously were amalgamated with all department phone costs and held within the ICT budget.
3. No change.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. No change.

Refuse Collection & Recycling

Refuse Collection & Recycling	2024/25 Approved Budget [A]	2024/25 Revised Estimate [B]	2025/26 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£2,177,501	£2,177,501	£2,342,500	£164,999 7.58%	£164,999 7.58%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£654,552	£709,162	£666,203	£11,651 1.78%	-£42,959 -6.06%
3. Direct Income	-£1,814,050	-£1,785,300	-£2,742,389	-£928,339 51.17%	-£957,089 53.61%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£1,018,003	£1,101,363	£266,314	-£751,689 -73.84%	£835,049 -75.82%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	53.00	53.00	53.00	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 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 revised estimate includes additional budget for domestic bins, this is due to the timing of the bin order and may not be fully utilised in year.
3. The proposed budget includes £913,000 grant income due to be received for extended producer responsibility to manage packaging waste.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. No change.

Fleet Management

Fleet Management	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£363,621	£363,621	£394,270	£30,649 8.43%	£30,649 8.43%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£667,040	£620,340	£665,006	-£2,034 -0.30%	£44,666 7.20%
3. Direct Income	-£16,790	-£19,200	-£19,200	-£2,410 14.35%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£1,013,871	£964,761	£1,040,076	£26,205 2.58%	£75,315 7.81%
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 2025/26 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 budget has been reviewed and in year saving identified, reductions to the vehicle repair budgets and fuel.
3. Increase in fees and charges income.
4. Net impact of the variances listed above.
5. No change.

Assets

Assets	2024/25 Approved Budget [A]	2024/25 Revised Estimate [B]	2025/26 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A] 	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£190,796	£287,423	£343,270	£152,474 79.91%	£55,847 19.43%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£795,919	£822,025	£835,081	£39,162 4.92%	£13,056 1.59%
3. Direct Income	-£454,984	-£459,255	-£484,969	-£29,985 6.59%	-£25,714 5.60%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£531,731	£650,193	£693,382	£161,651 30.40%	£43,189 6.64%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	4.00	5.00	5.61	1.61 40.25%	0.61 12.20%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 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 post was added following a change to the Structure of Senior Management approved in November 2023. 1 part time post has been transferred from Health, Leisure, Climate and Economic Development Portfolio.
2. Revised budgets and proposed budget includes expenditure relating to the Council owned temporary accommodation.
3. Income budget for Enderby Road Industrial estate has been revised to account for lease renewals.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. As per point 1.

Food Waste Collection

Food Waste Collection	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£0	£0	£208,950	£208,950 100.00%	£208,950 100.00%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
3. Direct Income	£0	£0	-£208,950	-£208,950 100.00%	-£208,950 100.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	0.00	0.00	22.00	22.00 100.00%	22.00 100.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 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. Direct expenditure costs unknown at this time.
3. New burdens funding expected to offset costs of providing the service.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. New Service, roles budgeted for final 3 months of 2025/26 to allow recruitment prior to go live on 1 April 2026.

Building Control

Building Control	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£1,337,781	£1,337,781	£1,396,210	£58,429 4.37%	£58,429 4.37%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£124,183	£248,934	£218,537	£94,354 75.98%	-£30,397 -12.21%
3. Direct Income	-£1,429,651	-£1,381,704	-£1,591,589	-£161,938 11.33%	-£209,885 15.19%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£32,313	£205,011	£23,158	-£9,155 -28.33%	-£181,853 -88.70%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	24.74	24.74	24.74	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 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 unspent budget carried forward from 2023/24 to be used in year. Additional budget has been added for training required as a result of new legislation, estimated Audit fees, and estimated costs of a recruitment and retention policy/package.
3. Revised estimate shows a reduction of £192,000 in fees and charges reflecting the reduced income received to date. 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. No change.

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.
- Prepare for the introduction of Food Waste in April 2026.
- Deliver the actions within the agreed POS strategy.
- Maximise income generating and savings opportunities.

Assets

- Maximising the use of the council's assets.
- Providing quality and inspiring places for staff to work.

Services

Neighbourhood Services

- **Refuse & Recycling**

The Refuse and Recycling service provides an alternate weekly collection service to approximately 45,000 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 20 HGV's all operating on Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil, 1 x fully electric HGV bin lorry , 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 Operator 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.

- **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. The LBCP contributes to all Partner Councils Corporate plans in various ways and will continue to do so.

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.

The Building Control team will continue to work to embed the new legislation into Leicestershire Building Control Partnership including ensuring all staff undertake the required training and exams to be able to practice.

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 prepare fully for the implementation of separate food waste collections • To explore collaborative opportunities with partner authorities • To identify digital 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 2025-26. • The Council will explore opportunities to undertake chargeable fleet services on behalf of other organisations in 2025-26. <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. <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 2025 by 4% 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 2025-26 Capital Programme includes the following proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £304,000 for replacement of fleet vehicles.

Key Performance Indicators

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR – NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES	2024/25	COMMENTS
Percentage of waste collected which is recycled.	42.5%	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
Income generated by the Leicestershire Building Control Partnership	£582,837	The figure for 2024/25 is to the end of November 2024

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.

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 demonstrate 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, we have seen examples of this within our own workforce and are focussing on recruitment and retention packages to mitigate this risk.

Forecasted economic downturn and the impact of this on all our businesses, on unemployment rates and on income in terms of building control.

In addition, the new regulatory expectations and requirements brought about by the Building Safety Regulator will adversely affect our ability to bring income in, with the same staff resources. The additional regulatory burdens being imposed on Building Control are likely to mean that staff can do less work and therefore income levels will likely fall to reflect this position.

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Foreword

This year has seen a continued rise in demand across the services within the Portfolio for the provision of frontline support for residents and businesses. Demand pressures have been driven by the ongoing national increase in homelessness numbers, asylum and refugee accommodation demands, rise in general living costs, running alongside the continued delivery of the core aims of the business.

The work undertaken by the group crosses a wide spectrum and ranges from regulatory inspections such as food & health and safety, to school sessions focusing on healthy relationships, noise and ASB investigations, specialised support for residents who have experienced Domestic Abuse, through to the provision of temporary accommodation and tenancy sustainment measures.

Housing Services have in the last year worked hard to deliver our own temporary accommodation units working to provide 15 units of self-contained accommodation for families who are experiencing homelessness. The team are continuing to respond to the increased numbers of households that are presenting as homeless by, where possible, utilising external funding streams to recruit into posts to meet the additional need presenting and trying to find an appropriate accommodation solution as quickly as we are able.

We have run several projects to support our businesses and residents through the year such as job seekers support, identification of properties in the private rented sector for homeless households, support for domestic abuse survivors presenting as homeless, CCTV provision for safety in the nighttime economy all funded through UKSPF.

The Community Services team have taken part in multiple community action days promoting community cohesion and raising awareness and offering support around important issues such as HATE, Domestic Abuse, White Ribbon and Serious Violence. The team continue to operate the community hub support providing access to food banks, food and support parcels, fuel bank referrals and beat the chill packs supporting our most vulnerable residents.

Our aim to ensure compliance with the Serious Violence Duty has seen the refocusing of the Children's Worker services to provide preventative input in schools (wellbeing, inclusion, healthy relationships, ASB Busters, Healing Together and Safety Crew) alongside their regular therapeutic work, this has had a very high uptake with the team reaching so far over 1200 pupils.

The Environmental Health team have continued to deliver 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. Campaign work has also taken place with regard to envirocrime, including a joint campaign with Leicestershire districts on littering, a number of successful fly tipping enforcement actions and campaigns working with local businesses in hot spot areas.

The Environmental Services team have now fully introduced the long-term site management plan for the Huncote site, have implemented ongoing management plans for 2 other Council owned former landfill sites and are actively working with other site owners in the district. This year has also seen the decision to revoke 3 of the Air Quality Management Areas in the District due to improving Air Quality standards. The Car Parking Strategy, and the DEFRA grant funded projects have also been delivered.

The Net Zero Programme Delivery 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 worked with other services on the electrification of the fleet and the depot. The Green Officer has also delivered members masterclass training, given presentations to scrutiny and delivered a project using UKSPF money where trees were given to community groups to improve biodiversity and educate on the green agenda.

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 Safety Group
Manager**

Portfolio Total

Housing, Community and Environmental Services - Total	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£2,391,150	£2,452,045	£2,654,620	£263,470 11.02%	£202,575 8.26%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£1,159,652	£1,630,426	£1,164,646	£4,994 0.43%	-£465,780 -28.57%
3. Direct Income	-£1,264,291	-£1,393,626	-£1,371,924	-£107,633 8.51%	£21,702 -1.56%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£2,286,511	£2,688,845	£2,447,342	£160,831 7.03%	-£241,503 -8.98%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	48.01	49.01	50.17	2.16 4.50%	1.16 2.37%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This portfolio incorporates the establishment and operational costs in respect of Housing, Community Services, and Environmental Health & Services. The establishment budget for 2024/25 allowed for a 3% pay award within services, with an additional 1% provision held centrally. Following protracted negotiations, a flat rate increase of £1,290 for employees on grades 1 to 9 was agreed with the trade unions. The nationally agreed pay award for Chief Executives and Chief Officers was 2.5%

Unspent budget from 2023/24 has been carried forward to be used in the year and is reflected in the revised estimate within Environmental Health, Environmental Services and Community Services.

The Homelessness Service has seen an increase in homeless approaches over the past 5 years with a significant increase in the last year. Government grant funding has been used in the year towards staffing and is proposed to be used in 2025/26 to help support the service.

Grant funding where confirmed has been included in the Direct Income. Car Parking income has been revised to reflect what is expected to be received by the end of the financial year and estimated for 2025/26.

Environmental Health and Environmental Services

Environmental Health	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£1,090,048	£1,090,048	£1,123,590	£33,542 3.08%	£33,542 3.08%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£290,612	£486,984	£321,014	£30,402 10.46%	-£165,970 -34.08%
3. Direct Income	-£447,776	-£497,576	-£476,076	-£28,300 6.32%	£21,500 -4.32%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£932,884	£1,079,456	£968,528	£35,644 3.82%	-£110,928 -10.28%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	22.01	22.01	22.17	0.16 0.73%	0.16 0.73%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 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 and external funding carried forward from 2024/25 for specific projects is included within the revised estimate.
3. The income budget for car parking has been revised in line with income received.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Minor changes in hours.

Community Services

Community Services	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£445,858	£445,858	£467,680	£21,822 4.89%	£21,822 4.89%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£35,100	£118,947	£32,966	-£2,134 -6.08%	-£85,981 -72.29%
3. Direct Income	£0	-£24,700	£0	£0 0.00%	£24,700 -100.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£480,958	£540,105	£500,646	£19,688 4.09%	-£39,459 -7.31%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	8.50	8.50	8.50	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 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. One off budget provision carried forward from 2023/24 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 2025/26 due to uncertainty over external funding.
4. This represents the net impact of the variances listed above.
5. No change.

Housing Services

Housing Services	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£729,652	£790,547	£928,290	£198,638 27.22%	£137,743 17.42%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£831,900	£1,022,455	£808,521	-£23,379 -2.81%	-£213,934 -20.92%
3. Direct Income	-£816,515	-£871,350	-£895,848	-£79,333 9.72%	-£24,498 2.81%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£745,037	£941,652	£840,963	£95,926 12.88%	-£100,689 -10.69%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	16.00	17.00	18.00	2.00 12.50%	1.00 5.88%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 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 increase in establishment and proposed budget is due to additional posts funded from the Homelessness prevention grant.
2. Revised includes unallocated Grant funding received in the year and Government grant funding carried forward from 2023/24 to be used for reducing homelessness. The Grant allocation for 2025/26 has been confirmed and is included in the budget.
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. As per note 1.

Management & Administration

Group Manager	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2024/26 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£125,592	£125,592	£135,060	£9,468 7.54%	£9,468 7.54%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£2,040	£2,040	£2,145	£105 5.16%	£105 5.16%
3. Direct Income	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£127,632	£127,632	£137,205	£9,573 7.50%	£9,573 7.50%
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 2025/26 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. Proposed budget reflects inflationary increases.
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.
- Build upon and expand the current Council owned temporary accommodation units, providing more appropriate self-contained accommodation for families.
- Continue to work with partners to 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

- To continue to improve in house Domestic Abuse Services through reviewing referral and case management processes, improving data collection and reporting, awareness and marketing campaigns, delivery of 121 and group work and delivery of projects such as Smart Doorbell and Target Hardening packs
- Continue to work with partners to reduce Serious Violence in the district (encompassing Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Night-Time Economy, Terrorism, Hate, Exploitation, Knife crime and substance misuse related crime).
- Review and deliver our Community Safety Partnership Strategy Action Plan
- Support the implementation and embedding of new ASB recording system across LLR and Police
- To continue deliver a programme of work with young people including 121 and group work interventions, schools work and diversionary activities.
- To deliver the PLF funding programme

Environmental Health

- Ensure the statutory food inspection programme is continued to be delivered in line with the Council's Food Safety Service Plan 2024/2025.
- To continue to tackle Envirocrime across the district using marketing campaigns, social media, partnership working and enforcement.
- To ensure private rented housing sector standards are maintained/improved within the district.
- To review and update the Public Spaces Protection Order for dogs for the Council to ensure it is robust and enforceable.
- To continue to utilise transformation priorities to examine the taxi licensing service to ensure value for money and ensure that the drivers and operators are receiving the most efficient service that suits their needs.

Environmental Services

- Continue to deliver the long-term strategy for management of former landfill sites owned by the Council.
- Continue to risk assess and investigate contaminated land in the district in line with the objectives of the Contaminated Land Strategy.
- Develop a new Air Quality Action Plan for the district.
- Assess current Smoke Control areas in the district and undertake a project to consider any amendments to these.
- Continue to deliver the Particulates Matter Defra funded air quality project working in partnership with health partners.
- Continue to implement the objectives of the Car Parking Strategy.

Key points

<p>Doing things differently – plans for the coming year</p>	<p><u>Housing Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enable high quality affordable homes that meet the needs of the District.• Deliver a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.• Enabling new supported provision within the district.• Ensure appropriate support is in place for victims of Domestic Abuse who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.• To enhance and expand the Council owned temporary accommodation offer. <p><u>Environmental Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver the required processes to enable us to adopt and implement a new Air Quality Action Plan for the district• Devise and start to implement a new Smoke Control Area plan/ policy for the district.• Deliver the 2030 Net Zero Council Action Plan• Deliver the management plan for council owned former landfill sites in the district• Deliver the objectives in 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 2025-26• To maintain compliance with the Serious Violence Duty• To deliver innovative projects (Smart Doorbell project, Warm Packs, Fuel Bank etc) that have a measurable impact on vulnerable people's wellbeing and safety
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure a programme of ASB and Crime prevention work in schools paired with therapeutic 121 and group sessions and diversionary activities for young people to reduce likelihood of young people being drawn into crime. • 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 review work areas and structure within the team to ensure competency and suitable officers in all work areas. • To explore opportunities of collaborative working and shared efficiencies. • To explore opportunities of mobile working and development of online inspection proformas.
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 • Contaminated Land Search enquiries • 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 24/25 to progress the actions contained within the Contaminated Land Strategy. • £2,958 included for the replacement programme for the Air Quality Analysers. • £147,200 LEVI Fund included for 2024/25 for the purchase of the Electric Vehicle Charging hub for Enderby Leisure Centre. (Delivery facilitated by the Green Living Leicestershire Partnership). • £15,000 included for 2025/26 to progress the Contaminated Land Strategy. • £28,000 included for 2025/26 to replace equipment installed as part of the landfill gas mitigation at Huncote Leisure Centre. • £21,000 included for 2025/26 to replace and update signage regarding the Public Spaces Protection Order for Dogs.

Key Performance Indicators

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2022/23	2023/24	2024/2025 YEAR TO DATE	COMMENTS
Number of cases where homelessness has been prevented	255	272	224	The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) places a duty on the Council to work with applicants for longer to help prevent them from becoming homeless. This figure continues to rise year on year and is expected to exceed 330 for 2024/25.
Number of homelessness	948	1014	740	<p>The total number of homelessness approaches to the Council continues to rise year on year. However, we have seen a significant increase in the numbers from August 2024 which is continuing to rise.</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	51	131	34	Delivery remains consistently slow with overall house building. 131 new affordable homes were built in 23/24 which exceeded previous years, however this was mainly due to sites that had previously stalled (during the pandemic) being completed.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2022/23	2023/24	2024/2025 YEAR TO DATE	COMMENTS
Number of ASB cases reported in Blaby	562	607	167	The figures for 22/23 and 23/24 are Police figures including all ASB reported across several systems. A review of data as part of the procurement of a new ASB recording system revealed that this data is not necessarily robust due to the different classification thresholds for the systems and risk of duplication. This may account for the increase in cases recorded. The figures for 24/25 are those taken from Sentinel which avoids possible duplication.
Support services (Resident Support/Childrens Worker/Domestic Abuse)– number of people supported	424	322	154	<p>Figures are to the end of Q2. Children Workers and DA figures were down due to the focus on launching the Schools work programme. These sessions have been delivered to over 1500 young people since the launch in Q3 2023/24 in addition to the 121 and group work.</p> <p>Domestic abuse referrals are on track to reach the same as last year however the focus for 25/26 is to increase the number of survivors receiving support and increase the range and breadth of support offered to survivors through group work, target hardening projects and awareness raising campaigns.</p>

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2022/23	2023/24	2024/2025 YEAR TO DATE	COMMENTS
Total number of long-term (6 months+) empty properties in the district.	269	390	354	The team have continued to work with property owners to bring empty homes back in to use. The figure of long-

Figures reported on annually in October.				term empty homes for 2024 has decreased.
Number of large fly tipping incidents	665	741	615 year to date	There has been an increase in reported incidents in 23/24 compared to 22/23. The team will continue to take action where we are able and are actively partaking in Countywide campaigns to raise awareness of individual responsibilities and potential sanctions that could be faced.
Number of food premises with a rating of 3 or above (satisfactory)	592 out of 611 relevant food outlets 96.9%	601 out of 623 relevant food outlets 96.5%	584 out of 607 relevant food outlets 96.1%	The proportion of compliant food businesses (rating of 3 or above) has been very consistent over the last three years.

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.

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.
- Impacts of rising cost of energy and food increasing demand on services and impacting crime figures
- 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 or PLF (Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner) 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 other 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.
- The limited capacity of Registered Providers to pick up the affordable housing gain on major schemes remains a concern and may lead to less affordable homes coming forwards.
- Key personnel leaving or reducing their hours within the key frontline services currently experiencing very high demand.

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**Planning, Transformation, and ICT Portfolio
Councillor Ben Taylor**

With changes to planning fee income, national planning policy, HNRFI, our ICT in-house project and transformation projects across the Council, my portfolio has seen plenty of challenges and positive results. We continue to punch above our weight as a District whilst ensuring we provide an open and transparent service that residents can be proud of.

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

Development Services

We have generated more income from planning applications this last year than ever before, whilst continuing to ensure we deliver decisions in line with national targets. With mandatory BNG now firmly fixed in our processes, we continue to invest in the transformation programme to streamline the validation process and customer journey.

Planning Enforcement

We continue to progress a number of sensitive enforcement appeals with an excellent record in obtaining successful outcomes from the process. Our Enforcement Policy is now embedded into our activities ensuring we do the best for residents on a day-to-day basis. Whilst continuing to strive for efficiencies and taking advantage of technology by implementing the use of drones across the service.

Strategic Growth

Our Strategic Growth team have been hard at work this year challenging the HNRFI proposals, which led to a decision by the planning inspector that consent should be withheld. This is an enormous achievement. The final decision is with the Secretary of State, and we will continue to press for a refusal.

New Lubbesthorpe continues to develop, including the new local centre which is due to open soon. It's great to see place-shaping working so well, creating a great place to live, work and visit. Work on other potential strategic sites continues ensuring they are right for Blaby District.

Local Policy

Our emerging Local Plan continues to progress despite the backdrop of continuing Planning reforms in the form of a new NPPF and Planning Infrastructure Bill. In addition, the team have designated Braunstone Village Conservation Area as well as developing a new Planning Obligations SPD.

The local plan member development group will continue to meet regularly, allowing group leaders to feed into the process and feed back to their respective groups. We will run further full member workshops too. Engagement from members at this stage is so important as we progress towards our draft new local plan in July.

Corporate Transformation (Transformation, Projects & ICT)

Transformation & Projects

Delivering against the backdrop of our Transforming Blaby Together strategy our transformation journey continues to make good progress. Though still small in size our Transformation and Projects Team continue to work consistently across the organisation to enable and support impactful change at Blaby District Council.

Our network of Transformation Champions brings together officers across the organisation, raising the profile and enabling the cross pollination of ideas. Champions are supporting and empowering staff to take personal responsibility for transformation, developing digital solutions to eliminate paper and deliver process efficiencies.

Transformational project examples include, the implementation of a new Citizen's Access system enabling residents to self-serve many aspects of their council tax online, opening our service up to 24/7 access and releasing capacity to provide swifter responses to customers. The introduction of Hybrid mail which will see a reduction in officer time on postal related activity whilst helping us on journey to Net Zero. The use of a new digital app to support undertaking on site inspections, and newly introduced remote verification of documents enabling applications across a range of services to be initiated more quickly.

ICT

We are excited to see our ICT service provision bought in-house during 2025. BDC recognises an absolute need to change the way our ICT service provision is delivered to achieve its digital ambitions, and to have available a reliable, resilient and secure ICT service. In response to this our new ICT service will provide BDC a complete level of assurance, influence and decision making to meet its digital aspirations for ongoing transformation of services and accelerate BDC towards achieving the ambitions of the Blaby District Plan.

With plenty of challenges ahead I am pleased to see our dedicated in-house team building and progressing with the project, to ensure the new service is something we can all be proud of. Our ICT workshops will continue and many thanks to the cross-party support here.

Future

We will continue our transformation & ICT project work and embark on further projects to ensure our culture of transformation and continuous improvement continues to be undisputedly embedded at Blaby District Council.

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

I am extremely proud of what the team has achieved over the last 12 months. I know the next 12 may be challenging with many local projects and national legislation updates; however, our officers will continue to deliver for residents. It has been an enormous privilege to be the lead on the Planning, Transformation, and ICT portfolio. Thank you to all the officers across my portfolio.

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ben Taylor

Senior Officers: Planning & Strategic Growth Group Manager,
Transformation & ICT Group Manager

Portfolio Total

Planning Delivery & Enforcement and Corporate Transformation - Total	2024/25 Approved Budget [A]	2024/25 Revised Estimate [B]	2025/26 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£2,031,285	£2,031,285	£2,497,770	£466,485 22.97%	£466,485 22.97%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£1,669,871	£2,086,935	£968,600	-£701,271 -42.00%	-£1,118,335 -53.59%
3. Direct Income	-£654,000	-£1,044,953	-£891,315	-£237,315 36.29%	£153,638 -14.70%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£3,047,156	£3,073,267	£2,575,055	-£472,101 -15.49%	-£498,212 -16.21%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	34.51	34.51	41.99	7.48 21.67%	7.48 21.67%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This portfolio includes the establishment and operational costs relating to Planning, Transformation and ICT.

The establishment budget for 2024/25 allowed for a 3% pay award within services, with an additional 1% provision held centrally. Following protracted negotiations, a flat rate increase of £1,290 for employees on grades 1 to 9 was agreed with the trade unions. The nationally agreed pay award for Chief Executives and Chief Officers was 2.5%. The establishment budget for 2025/26 allows for a 3% estimated pay award, contractual increments where appropriate, and employer's national insurance and pension contributions within service budgets.

Other gross direct expenditure includes one-off unspent budget brought forward from 2023/24, and additional funding released from the Local Plan Reserve for consultancy work is reflected in the revised 2024/25 budget.

The ICT Service is being brought in-house in 2025/26 and the proposed budget reflects the new ICT service.

Planning income has increased substantially during the year, the budget has been revised to reflect this. This income stream can be challenging to predict, the robustness of the general economy can have a big impact on the planning applications received, and income generated.

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Development Strategy	2024/25 Approved Budget [A]	2024/25 Revised Estimate [B]	2025/26 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£375,875	£375,875	£417,610	£41,735 11.10%	£41,735 11.10%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£132,254	£425,187	£93,552	-£38,702 -29.26%	-£331,635 -78.00%
3. Direct Income	-£4,000	-£34,000	-£42,000	-£38,000 950.00%	-£8,000 23.53%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£504,129	£767,062	£469,162	-£34,967 -6.94%	-£297,900 -38.84%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	6.41	6.41	6.89	0.48 7.49%	0.48 7.49%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 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 for 2024/25 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 associated with the local plan.
3. The revised budget for 2024/25 includes a government grant relating to Neighbourhood plans.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Planning Policy Officer increased to 1 FTE.

PLANNING DELIVERY

Planning Delivery	2024/25 Approved Budget [A]	2024/25 Revised Estimate [B]	2025/26 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£726,485	£726,485	£777,750	£51,265 7.06%	£51,265 7.06%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£155,497	£193,525	£137,454	-£18,043 -11.60%	-£56,071 -28.97%
3. Direct Income	-£600,000	-£970,437	-£809,315	-£209,315 34.89%	£161,122 -16.60%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£281,982	-£50,427	£105,889	-£176,093 -62.45%	£156,316 -309.99%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	13.98	13.98	14.15	0.17 1.22%	0.17 1.22%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 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 and funding utilised for specialist consultancy advice. One off expenditure items from 2024/25 have been removed from the proposed budget.
3. The income budget has been increased in 2024/25 to reflect the forecast outturn position, and a forecasted income budget added for 2025/26.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Slight increase in hours.

ENFORCEMENT

Planning Enforcement	2024/25 Approved Budget [A]	2024/25 Revised Estimate [B]	2025/26 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£196,234	£196,234	£176,390	-19,844 -10.11%	-£19,844 -10.11%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£26,108	£24,663	£23,669	-£2,439 -9.34%	-£994 -4.03%
3. Direct Income	£0	-£516	£0	£0 0.00%	£516 -100.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£222,342	£220,381	£200,059	-£22,283 -10.02%	-£20,322 -9.22%
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 2025/26 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. Minor reduction is due to an increased delay from the Planning Inspectorate in determining Enforcement appeals, as such cases have not progressed to a state where direct action and legal fees are required.
3. The 2024/25 revised budget takes into account income from Enforcement appeals; however this cannot be forecasted,
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. No change.

STRATEGIC GROWTH

Strategic Growth	2024/25 Approved Budget [A]	2024/25 Revised Estimate [B]	2025/26 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£213,269	£213,269	£212,510	-£759 -0.36%	-£759 -0.36%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£30,480	£109,972	£11,670	-£18,810 -61.71%	-£98,302 -89.39%
3. Direct Income	-£50,000	-£40,000	-£40,000	£10,000 -20.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£193,749	£283,241	£184,180	-£9,569 -4.94%	-£99,061 -34.97%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	3.12	3.12	2.95	-0.17 -5.45%	-0.17 -5.45%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 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. 2024/25 revised estimate includes non-recurring expenditure brought forward from 2023/24, for Whetstone Garden Village and Lubbethorpe.
3. Revised budget and proposed budget include confirmed external funding.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Slight reduction in hours in one post.

TRANSFORMATION & ICT

	2024/25 Approved Budget	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
Transformation & ICT	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£175,517	£175,517	£566,750	£391,233 222.90%	£391,233 222.90%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£1,248,520	£1,249,540	£644,617	-£603,903 -48.37%	-£604,923 -48.41%
3. Direct Income	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£1,424,037	£1,425,057	£1,211,367	-£212,670 -14.93%	-£213,690 -15.00%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	3.00	3.00	10.00	7.00 140.00%	7.00 140.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2025/26 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. Also includes 7 FTE posts as a result of bringing ICT Services back in house.
2. The approved and revised budget includes the costs following the ICT options appraisal. The 2025/26 budget reflects the ICT service being brought in house.
3. Not applicable.
4. Net impact of the variances listed above.
5. As per point 1.

MANAGEMENT & ADMINISTRATION

Management & Admin	2024/25 Approved Budget [A]	2024/25 Revised Estimate [B]	2025/26 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£343,905	£343,905	£346,760	£2,855 0.83%	£2,855 0.83%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£77,012	£84,048	£57,638	-£19,374 -25.16%	-£26,410 -31.42%
3. Direct Income	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£420,917	£427,953	£404,398	-£16,519 -11.06%	-£23,555 -13.12%
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 2025/26 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. System maintenance budget which was previously split across Planning and Performance has been amalgamated and moved to the Performance department, as reflected in the reduction in the proposed budget.
3. Not applicable.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. No change.

Portfolio Priorities

Priorities for 2025/26 for the portfolio include:

1. **Strategic projects** - The strategic growth team continue to manage a full range of large-scale projects. These include:
 - a. Continued engagement relating to Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange (HNRFI) due to its delayed government decision in 2024;
 - b. Homes England garden village project
 - c. Potential development of a large scale site known as Land West of Stoney Stanton.
2. **Emerging Local Plan** - The next 12 months will see a number of critical milestones for the emerging Local Plan, including Regulation 19 and submission in late 2025/early 2026.
3. **Response to Planning Reforms** - During 2024 consultations on proposed planning reforms were undertaken which have already led to significant impacts on the way we work in both Development Strategy and Development Management with the imposition of the new National Planning Policy Framework and mandatory housing targets. We are expecting further changes in 2025 which will further impact all areas of Planning in the form of the Planning & Infrastructure Bill.
4. **Delivering an effective and efficient Development Management Service** - Planning application levels continue to be high, however the complexity of these has also increased. However, the team continue to deliver in line with government timeframes. The focus for 2025 is to move forward with transformational changes via a number of projects including the validation process and the introduction of a pre-application charging project for larger developments.
5. **Enforcement action** - Ongoing action will continue at pace with a number of Enforcement Notice appeal outcomes expected in 2025. In addition the team will continue to develop their pro-active approach across the District, whilst also continuing to deal with the broad range of investigations on a day-to-day basis.
6. **Joint Strategic Planning** – we continue to work collaboratively with other local authorities across Leicester and Leicestershire and engage with external stakeholders to support the delivery of key infrastructure to enable future growth across the District and wider area.
7. **Delivery of the Lubbethorpe Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE)** - The development continues to be held up as a beacon of best practice for how to deliver an SUE, as not only has it delivered a place but also a community. There are currently over 1250 occupied dwellings, a full and thriving Primary School and a Local Centre (including health centre and retail outlet) under construction due for completion in mid 2025.
8. **Transforming Blaby Together**. Continue to implement and embed priority projects and key initiatives which are managed through our Corporate Project Framework and iPlan (our Business Planning System), which ensures we maintain focus on delivering our objectives and realising tangible savings for our District.

9. **ICT.** To ensure that the ICT provision for Blaby District Council is stable, robust, reliable and the infrastructure is fit for purpose. Once stabilised as an in-house service following exit from the Leicestershire ICT Partnership, the Blaby ICT provision will move towards steady state during 2025/26.

Services

The portfolio comprises the following services:

Planning & Strategic Growth:

Development Strategy

The key purpose of the Development Strategy Service is to ensure that the district has a robust and up-to-date strategic framework for planning decisions. This comes in the form of the Development Plan. The key components of this are the Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans as well as other key planning policies, which are pivotal for place shaping and the delivery of our corporate objectives.

This budget includes the costs of Planning Policy Officers and a Planning Obligations Officer. Whom are all integral to developing the robust policies and guidance. In addition, they are also key to the gathering and interpreting of data which is necessary in the formation of these documents. They are also essential in 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 in line with government timescales.

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 proactively monitor larger development across the district, whilst also carrying out reactive investigations, enforcing planning controls, and take forward prosecutions where appropriate.

Strategic Growth Team

This team manages a range of high profile, 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 – typical examples would be that of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) or 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 & ICT:

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 a Service Manager, and Project Support Officers associated costs.

ICT Services

In 2025/26 the ICT provision for Blaby District Council will move to an in-house service model. A core deliverable of this team for 2025/26 will be to stabilise our provision and commence progressing towards a steady state of positive and successful service delivery during 2025/26.

Management & Administration

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

Key Points

Doing things differently – plans for the coming year

The portfolio continues to excel, despite a further challenging year due to planning reform, increasingly complex development applications and the imposition of mandatory housing numbers. However, staff are undeterred, remain motivated and continue to shine. The focus of the portfolio continues to be on our emerging local plan but with an emphasis on the broader area of infrastructure planning and strategic growth.

As set out in the priorities for the forthcoming year; we expect the next 12 months to be equally challenging – but also featuring exciting opportunities.

Strategic Growth

The team will continue to project manage and deliver some of the district's most high profile and complex strategic projects. This includes a wide range of sites; from the award-winning SUE at Lubbethorpe to the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange, as well as two new potential strategic sites.

Development Strategy

The team will continue to focus on strategic planning and the emerging Local Plan. Work will continue during 2025/26 on the key objective and corporate priority of delivering a new Local Plan which aims to progress to Regulation 19 and submission to the Secretary of State.

Planning Delivery

The workload of the team has continued to increase in particular the complexity of said applications. As such the team will focus on the determination of these complex applications, whilst striving to focus on some key projects which will streamline the process for both customers and officers and ensure the continued delivery of an excellent service to customers.

Enforcement

The enforcement team will continue its proactive monitoring approach next year with the addition of a drone to its capabilities. In addition, work on the high profile and sensitive sites will also continue.

Transformation

Our Transforming Blaby Together Strategy remains in place since its inception and approval in November 2023.

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.

The Groups Individual Objectives and Delivery Plans support the strategy, setting out action-based approaches. These documents continue to form the basis of the Transformation Groups Service Plans for 2025. This in turn will support delivery of the Blaby District Plan (2024-2028).

Transformation and Projects

- We 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
- We have invested in a small Transformation Team to act as enablers for change. Our team will continue to work with staff to empower them to challenge ways of working and deliver process efficiencies
- We have implemented Project Management and Business Planning Frameworks. We will continue to use and embed these to ensure all our activities are joined up and deliver what they should when it is needed
- We have a renewed focus on performance data and will further develop and use management information to ensure our processes are managed efficiently
- We will actively engage with other authorities through the Local Government Association to ensure we maintain awareness of current thinking and engage with transformation initiatives

Our transformation enabling journey continues into 2025, and our network of Transformation Champions will grow and develop bringing together more officers across the organisation, raising the profile and enabling the cross pollination of ideas for transformation.

Project Management Training will continue, with 2025 seeing a continued emphasis and focus on strategic prioritisation to facilitate delivery of the Blaby District Plan. Business cases will be expected to provide the robust basis for evidence-based decisions, which will continue to strengthen the position of the Corporate Programme Board in the provision of robust challenge to ensure best value spend against benefits and consider resource conflicts.

The Transformation Team is an enabler for change and will continue to work collaboratively and cohesively with other key corporate services and enabling functions to shape and refine our organisation to ensure Blaby District Council is in the best possible position as we move positively forwards on the back of the recent Government White Paper on Devolution.

ICT

The focus of the new Blaby District Council ICT team for 2025/26 will predominantly be robust stabilisation of this business-critical core service before moving positively toward steady state provision.

Management & Administration

The focus for 2025/26 continues to be on the delivery of high-quality services, whilst supporting and enabling staff development.

Income generation	<p>The fees and changes for the service are constantly being reviewed to ensure that we maximise our income without impacting on the service from both a customer and officer perspective.</p> <p>Income generation across the group is currently restricted to fees for documents; and nationally set planning application fees. However we anticipate this to change in 2025/26 with the Planning and Infrastructure Bill which is likely to include an element of locally set planning fees. In addition a project to look at charging for pre-application advice will continue to delivery in 2025/26.</p> <p>The group continues to seek efficiencies and opportunities for cost saving through the commissioning of joint working, particularly through evidential and technical work relating to the emerging Local Plan.</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 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.</p>
Capital plans for the portfolio	<p>The capital programme for 2025/26 allows for £100,000 to be spent on various ICT schemes. Additionally, there will likely be some carryover from 2024/25 for continuation of infrastructure improvement/project works to further support our journey to successfully bring the provision in-house.</p>

Key Performance Indicators

Planning & Strategic Growth	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 Apr - Dec
Number of planning applications received	1305	943	961	938	731
Planning application fee income	£513,563	£572,724	£464,613	£546,461	£817,174
Number of planning applications determined	1004	1280	842	536	602
% of major applications determined in 13 weeks	100	100	88.89	93.33	100
E2E (householders)	74.12	91.65	80.59	67.83	68.69
E2E (majors)	218.88	256.22	197.89	492.59	253.23
E2E (non-majors)	60.7	74.6	82.42	104.48	88.34
E2E (DOC)	104.9	90.59	84.3	94.01	120.38

Customers

- The Planning Delivery and Enforcement services in particular have heavy interaction with residents, and we continue to monitor customer feedback to ensure that all interactions with customers and stakeholders to these services are conducted appropriately and professionally, whilst continuing to deliver any efficiencies where possible.
- During 2025/26 we will be conducting a significant consultation on the next stage of the emerging Local Plan which is our Regulation 19 consultation (a full draft plan).

Risks

- The level of complex planning applications being determined has continued to increase whilst the number of applications has remained constant. It is expected that this trend will continue into 25/26. As such the team are reviewing resourcing, in line with income growth, to determine future requirements. This will ensure we continue to meet national performance targets whilst delivering the housing growth Blaby requires.
- Failure to progress the emerging Local Plan could leave the district vulnerable to unacceptable types of future development.
- High numbers of appeals would increase 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.
- Continued delivery of Lubbethorpe against the current timetable is essential, as a failure to do so would have a detrimental effect on the Councils 5-year housing land supply.
- Whilst clarity on plan making reforms has been provided further planning consultations of planning reform are expected in 2025/26. Therefore, further delays or lengthy periods of uncertainty could cause delay to plan making and decision making.
- Failure to deliver an effective enforcement service could result in reputational damage to the Council.
- Failure to ensure a robust and risk assessed approach to enforcement investigations, could leave staff at risk of harassment or violence.
- Inability to retain and/or recruit ICT resource
- Cloud hosting costs as they emerge throughout the next 12 months during stabilisation
- 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.

Project	Planned Capital Expenditure					
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
<u>Invest to Save Schemes</u>						
Revenues & Benefits - DMS & Citizens Access	0	0	150,000	0	0	150,000
	0	0	150,000	0	0	150,000
<u>Essential/Contractual Schemes</u>						
Landfill Gas Monitoring Works	43,000	28,000	18,000	9,000	59,000	157,000
Leisure Centres	175,292	0	0	0	0	175,292
Fleet Vehicle Replacement Programme	304,000	397,000	3,115,000	55,000	3,806,000	7,677,000
Capital Grants Programme	54,500	54,500	54,500	54,500	54,500	272,500
Replacement/Upgrade of Service Specific IT Systems	45,000	0	60,000	150,000	166,000	421,000
	621,792	479,500	3,247,500	268,500	4,085,500	8,702,792
<u>Desirable Schemes (subject to affordability)</u>						
Car Parks	15,000	0	0	0	0	15,000
Public Spaces Protection Order Signage	18,720	0	0	0	0	18,720
	33,720	0	0	0	0	33,720
<u>Externally Funded Schemes</u>						
Disabled Facilities Grants	630,000	630,000	630,000	630,000	630,000	3,150,000
Housing Support Grants	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	150,000
	660,000	660,000	660,000	660,000	660,000	3,300,000
TOTAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURE	1,315,512	1,139,500	4,057,500	928,500	4,745,500	12,186,512

	Future Years Planned Capital Expenditure					
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
<u>Financed by:</u>						
Borrowing	573,012	25,000	3,325,000	0	3,972,000	7,895,012
Capital Receipts	28,000	400,000	18,000	214,000	59,000	719,000
Disabled Facilities Grants	660,000	660,000	660,000	660,000	660,000	3,300,000
Capital Reserves	54,500	54,500	54,500	54,500	54,500	272,500
TOTAL CAPITAL FINANCING (excluding S106)	1,315,512	1,139,500	4,057,500	928,500	4,745,500	12,186,512

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