

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Minutes of a meeting held at the Council Offices, Narborough

WEDNESDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER 2025

Present:-

Cllr. Nick Brown (Chairman - Scrutiny Commissioner)

Cllr. Royston Bayliss
Cllr. Adrian Clifford
Cllr. Luke Cousin

Cllr. Roy Denney
Cllr. Susan Findlay
Cllr. Janet Forey

Cllr. Antony Moseley

Officers present:-

Julia Smith	- Chief Executive
Nicole Cramp	- Democratic & Scrutiny Services Officer
Avisa Birchenough	- Democratic & Scrutiny Services Officer

Also in attendance:-

Cllr. Ben Taylor, Leader of The Council

Apologies:-

Cllr. Neil Wright, Cllr. Stuart Coar and Cllr. Maggie Wright

85. DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

No disclosures were received.

86. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2025 as circulated, were approved and signed as a correct record.

87. STATE OF THE BLABY DISTRICT

Considered – Presentation of the Chief Executive & Cllr. Ben Taylor, Leader of the Council.

The Chairman, Cllr. Nick Brown welcomed the Chief Executive and Cllr. Ben Taylor, Leader of The Council to the meeting to present the State of the Blaby District.

Cllr. Ben Taylor presented challenges in 2025/26:

- Homelessness, with 86 Children currently in temporary accommodation.
- Proposed planning changes and Local Plan
- Fair funding review implications
- Balancing the budget at the end of the year.
- Introduction of food waste now that the consultation is complete.
- Local Government Reorganisation.

Cllr. Ben Taylor's current focuses:

- Local Government Reorganisation November 2025 submission
- New Member Champions for Net Zero and ICT Digital Transformation
- Implications and response for fair funding
- Housing and homelessness
- Currently hold the Armed Forces silver covenant award working towards achieving the gold award
- Recruitment and retention of staff

The Chief Executive added that some staff have been concerned about LGR and job security, advising that herself and the Senior Leadership Team are communicating and upskilling staff where appropriate. Workshops have been held to enable staff to feed into the proposals.

Cllr. Ben Taylor added that he is working hard on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and is supporting new Cabinet Members in their roles.

Cllr. Roy Denney asked if future Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) briefings will be private with Councillors or public.

Cllr. Ben Taylor responded that public sessions will be held to be as transparent as possible with residents.

Cllr. Luke Cousin raised concerns within the communities regarding national policy and worldwide issues, asking what Blaby District Council are doing to ensure that communities are supported?

Cllr. Ben Taylor responded that the Council was currently considering this issue with support from partners such as Leicestershire County Council to set up community cohesion groups to aid, help and support residents.

Cllr. Nick Brown expressed the importance of correcting misinformation and getting a more proactive approach when distortions occur.

Cllr. Ben Taylor responded that Officers are fact checking information on social media and providing the correct information to help reduce incorrect information being shared.

The Chief Executive added that where incorrect information is posted on our webpages, this can be corrected. However, the Council is unable to comment or correct other private groups on social media sites. Officers have sought further guidance from the Local Government Association on this too as a response to a comment can generate further comments and misinformation.

Cllr. Nick Brown, asked if there was any reason for concern of potential cuts for homelessness funding in the near future?

The Chief Executive responded that the Council is not expecting any financial cuts for homelessness or housing however there could be a potential risk in other areas which could add a higher risk to homelessness funding in the future.

Cllr. Nick Brown questioned the role of Member Champions (who were categorised into Lead and Support roles), adding that it was raised during Scrutiny's Work Programme Workshop. Members expressed concerns about their knowledge and value. Some roles were high profile, such as the Youth Council Champion, however recently the Leader had added 2 further roles to the list of Champions. Cllr. Nick Brown questioned what value they were bringing.

Cllr. Ben Taylor responded that the Digital Transformation Champion has been invited to meetings with the Portfolio Holder to add their expertise and knowledge including supporting the Portfolio Holder in achieving the digital charters.

The Green Champion has been rebranded as Net Zero to match in the corporate priority and is leading on creating and establishing the cross-party Climate Change Members Group.

The Leader added that he has met individually with the Members who have been appointed, and the Chief Executive is planning on meeting them to highlight areas where they can have an input. Cllr. Taylor provided an example of the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Champion who is consulting on the equalities sections of reports and processes with officers.

Cllr. Nick Brown responded that it would be useful to see the Champions providing updates to Council on work they have been doing, or where they have had an input. Similarly, Scrutiny provides comments on Council reports – these are transparent, and you can see the value Scrutiny has added, the Member Champions ought to follow the same route. The Leader responded

that he would be happy to consider this suggestion.

88. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Members accepted the 25/26 Scrutiny Work Programme.

The Chairman, Cllr. Nick Brown encouraged Members to attend Scrutiny Working Groups.

89. CONSIDERATION OF FORWARD PLAN ITEMS

No items were raised for further information or examination.

90. FURTHER ACTIONS FOR SCRUTINY ARISING FROM MEETING

Members debated the update the Leader had provided on Member Champions, it was agreed that a Task & Finish Group be created to enable Scrutiny to consider roles and responsibilities of each Champion, how they are held accountable, how they are appointed (e.g. on expertise and knowledge).

The Task and Finish Group would also allow the Champions to share their ambitions, priorities and background on what's expected of them in their Member Champion roles.

THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 6.20 P.M.