

Leicester  
City Council

**MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORT AND  
CLIMATE EMERGENCY SCRUTINY COMMISSION**

**DATE: WEDNESDAY, 11 MARCH 2026**

**TIME: 5:30 pm**

**PLACE: Meeting Room G.01, Ground Floor, City Hall, 115 Charles  
Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ**

**Members of the Committee**

Councillor Waddington (Chair)

Councillor Cassidy (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Bonham, Clarke, O'Neill, Osman, Porter and Rae Bhatia

Members of the Committee are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business listed overleaf.

For Monitoring Officer

**Officer contacts:**

***Julie Bryant and Ed Brown (Governance Services)***

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### Further information

If you have any queries about any of the above or the business to be discussed, please contact: **Julie Bryant and Ed Brown, Governance Services** on [Julie.Bryant@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Julie.Bryant@leicester.gov.uk) or [Edmund.Brown@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Edmund.Brown@leicester.gov.uk). Alternatively, email [governance@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:governance@leicester.gov.uk), or call in at City Hall.

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# **PUBLIC SESSION**

## **AGENDA**

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#### **1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

To issue a welcome to those present, and to confirm if there are any apologies for absence.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members are asked to declare any interests they may have in the business to be discussed on the agenda.

#### **3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

**Appendix A**

The minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development, Transport and Climate Emergency Scrutiny Commission held on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> January have been circulated, and Members will be asked to confirm them as a correct record.

#### **4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair is invited to make any announcements as they see fit.

#### **5. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE**

Any questions, representations and statements of case submitted in accordance with the Council's procedures will be reported.

#### **6. PETITIONS**

Any petitions received in accordance with Council procedures will be reported.

**7. TRANSPORT AFFORDABILITY** [Appendix B](#)

The City Transport Director submits a report to provide members of the commission with details as to the affordability of transport options across the city and to provide members of the commission with details on the actions being undertaken by the city council and partners to make passenger transport more affordable across the city.

**8. PLANNING SERVICE PERFORMANCE REVIEW** [Appendix C](#)

The Director of Planning, Development and Transportation submits a report providing an overview of planning performance.

**9. EDTCE SCRUTINY TASK FORCE - LABOUR MARKET WORKER EXPLOITATION - EXECUTIVE RESPONSE REVISITED** [Appendix D](#)

The Executive Response to the recommendations made by the Task Group on Worker Exploitation will be considered by the Commission.

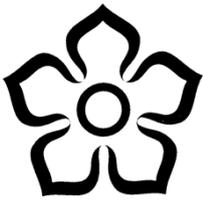
**10. CONNECT TO WORK PROGRAMME** [Appendix E](#)

The Director Tourism Culture and Economy submits a report providing an overview of the start of the Connect to Work programme for Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland.

**11. WORK PROGRAMME** [Appendix F](#)

Members of the Commission will be asked to consider the work programme and make suggestions for additional items as it considers necessary.

**12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**



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# Appendix A

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORT AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY  
SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: WEDNESDAY, 14 JANUARY 2026 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Waddington - Chair

Councillor Bonham

Councillor Osman

Councillor Rae Bhatia

Councillor O'Neill

Councillor Porter

In Attendance:

City Mayor Sir Peter Soulsby  
Deputy City Mayor Councillor Cutkelvin  
Assistant City Mayor Councillor Whittle

\* \* \* \* \*

## **190. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Councillor Clarke.

## **191. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have had in the business to be discussed.

There were no declarations of interest.

## **192. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

It was noted that Councillor Cassidy was present at the previous meeting on 5 November 2025 but had not been recorded as present in the minutes.

### **AGREED:**

- 1) That the minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development, Transport and Climate Emergency Scrutiny Commission held on 5th November 2025 be confirmed as a correct record.

- 2) Councillor Porter to receive a response from Andrew L Smith regarding the legality of the concrete blocks on Aylestone Road as noted in the previous meeting.

### **193. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no Chair's Announcements.

### **194. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE**

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

### **195. PETITIONS**

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

### **196. CALL-IN OF EXECUTIVE DECISION - LAND EXCHANGE TO ENABLE REGENERATION AT MIDLAND STREET/SOUTHAMPTON STREET IN THE CULTURAL QUARTER**

An Executive decision taken by the City Mayor on 26 November 2025 relating to a land exchange arrangement has been the subject of a 6-member call-in under the procedures at Rule 12 of Part 4D, City Mayor and Executive Procedure Rules, of the Council's Constitution.

The procedure rules state that a scrutiny committee or any five councillors may request formally that the decision be called-in for a further review by giving notice in writing to the Monitoring Officer within five working days of the decision.

The 6 Councillors who signed the call in were: Councillor Kitterick (Proposer), Councillor Porter (Seconder), Councillor Rae Bhatia, Councillor Chauhan, Councillor Westley and Councillor Kennedy-Lount.

The Chair clearly outlined the process that she would follow in determining how to resolve the call-in. The Commission was recommended to either:

- a) Note the report without further comment or recommendation. *(If the report is noted the process continues and the call in will be considered at a future meeting of Full Council); or*
- b) Comment on the specific issues raised by the call-in. *(If comments are made the process continues and the comments and call in will be considered at a future meeting of Full Council); or*
- c) Resolve that the call-in be withdrawn *(If the committee wish for there to be no further action on the call-in, then they must actively withdraw it. If withdrawal is agreed the call-in process stops, the call-in will not be considered at a future meeting of Full Council and the original decision takes immediate affect without amendment).*

The Chair invited the proposer of the call-in, Councillor Kitterick, to make their case. The following points were raised:

- Concerns regarding the overall value and strategic implications of the proposed land exchange. While acknowledging that the Council may reasonably seek to acquire land and pay an appropriate premium, it was argued that the proposal would result in the Council exchanging a larger area of land for a smaller site, with additional financial costs to the Council including paying the Stamp Duty to facilitate the exchange.
- Concerns were expressed regarding the valuation assumptions underpinning the decision, with Councillor Kitterick questioning whether sufficient weight had been given to the relative size, location and development potential of the land being disposed of by the Council. Councillor Kitterick highlighted that there are viable buildings on site, with there appearing to be a local training college on site although the revenue lost is unknown and details of the lease term terminations.
- It was noted that the land pursued does not seem to have any viable buildings that are lettable.
- Reference was made to the strategic importance of the existing land to the St George's Street area, including its proximity to the ring road, the Cultural Quarter and the Phoenix site, and concerns were raised that the Council could lose long-term control of a key gateway site.
- Councillor Kitterick further noted that previous land disposals of the area had resulted in fragmented ownership and reduced influence over future development and suggested that a clearer long-term strategy for the St George's area should be in place before proceeding with the exchange.

The Chair invited the seconder of the call-in, to the table to make their case. Councillor Porter and raised the following points:

- Questioned whether alternative options had been fully explored whether the Council approached the developer and the asked for details on the process, and whether the Council sought to acquire the land without disposing of its own assets.
- Reference was made to the valuations cited within the report on page 21, with concerns raised about transparency and clarity, including the absence of certain valuation details and comparative site sizes.
- It was suggested that, based on indicative calculations, the land being exchanged may represent a significant different in value, and that further information should be provided to enable members to assess whether the proposal represented best value.
- Councillor Porter emphasised that the call-in was not party-political but was intended to ensure that the Council had discharged its duty to taxpayers by fully scrutinising the financial and strategic implications of the decision.

*Councillor Osman entered the meeting and declared no interests.*

*The City Mayor entered the meeting at this point.*

The Director presented to the Commission and highlighted the following points:

- Provided context for the proposal within the Council's wider regeneration objectives. It was explained that the land exchange formed part of a broader strategy for the regeneration of the St George's area, in line with allocations in the adopted Local Plan and the Council's economic development and city-centre strategies.
- Officers explained that the Council had been engaged in a process of land assembly to enable comprehensive regeneration, similar to the approach previous taken in the Waterside area. It was stated that the proposed exchange represented a more proportionate and cost-effective alternative to compulsory purchase, which would be complex, time-consuming and potentially more expensive.
- The importance of securing control over key sites to enable delivery of office space, improved connectivity and enhanced public realm was emphasised, particularly given the site's proximity to the railway station, Cultural Quarter and Phoenix Cinema.
- Officers highlighted the intention to improve pedestrian access and create a strong gateway between St George's Street and the Phoenix area, thereby increasing footfall and supporting wider city-centre vitality.
- The Director summarised the Executive Decision involving site B, owned by the Council, being exchanged for site A owned by Rakal Limited who intend to develop Site B for apartment housing. The Council intend to consolidate land already acquired on Site C, establish strong pedestrian links connecting St Georges St and Queens Street to the Phoenix Cinema which is a key objective of the decision and has Department for Transport funds allocated for this.

The Director responded to the first Call-In question:

*“The plot of land the City Council is giving up is clearly larger than the received plot of land we are receiving in exchange”.*

- The Director highlighted that site B has a series of trees and a root area which is a non-developable area. Once the TPOs and root protection areas are discounted from site B, the developable area of the two sites are similar.
- Plot A is now demolished and has a higher land value per acre than Plot B, which still requires demolition at cost as buildings still remain on the plot.
- The Director referred to 'marriage value' noting that the Council owning Plot C, the value of plot A is enhanced through the consolidation of adjoining sites which provides further options and is more flexible, compared to the current arrangement where a road separates sites B and C.
- The Director shared that the two independent valuers took these factors into consideration with external professional advice being taken throughout the process.
- It was explained that the differences in site size needed to be

considered alongside constraints, including the presence of protected trees, route protection areas, existing buildings and tenancy agreements.

- It was further noted that the negotiated payment had been reduced from £195,000 to £180,000 and that the private landowner was under no obligation to sell the Council.

The Director responded to the second Call-In question:

*The Plot of land the City Council is giving up has at least one tenant who appears to be in situ "Wise Origin", yet no reference is made to the loss of rental or legal tenancy issues that may be involved in this transfer. The council is giving up a number of other buildings which appear to be in a poorer state of repair but may be viable for future rental. This compares with the land we are acquiring which has no buildings in place, with the site have been recently cleared."*

- The Director responded that the Council-owned land currently had no tenants and contained buildings in poor condition where there would be a significant cost to bring these into use to comply with modern building standards.

The Director responded to the third Call-In question:

*"The gateway to Phoenix could have been further enhanced had the City Mayor not sold the freehold of 50 St Georges Street for £1"*

- The director responded that the proposed pedestrian access gateway to the Phoenix can be constructed within the existing highway boundary to achieve a consistent width (c12m) with the first phase of pedestrianisation on St George Street and emphasised there is no need for further land and objectives can be achieved as the adjacent footpath is wide enough.

The Director responded to the fourth Call-In question:

*"The plot to be swapped fronts onto the Inner Ring Road, so the use, quality and design of any building in this location will be at least as important to the development of the area if not more so."*

- The Director responded that high quality design is expected throughout this regeneration area and will be controlled by the planning authority through the usual development management process.

The Director responded to the fifth Call-In question:

*"The plot to be swapped is adjacent to the Inner Ring Road so it fetters any further changes to the layout of access to the St Georges area from the ring road in this location"*

- The Director responded that the regeneration scheme for the area will not require any changes to Southampton St and Queen St adjoining the ring road

The Director responded to the sixth Call-In question:

*“The loss of 50 St Georges Street and Plot B mean that there is only a relatively narrow pinch point in the City Council's control between the two plots of land in developing the ambition for an attractive entrance to the Phoenix when entering from the Railway Station part of the City Centre.”*

- The Director responded that the width of the highway/footpaths here is c12m, consistent with the first phase of the St George Street pedestrianisation and sufficient space for good quality access.

Councillor Kitterick responded by reiterating that while the case for acquiring land had been clearly articulated, concerns remained regarding the disposal of Council-owned land and the loss of long-term control over a strategically important site. It was suggested that reliance on a private developer to deliver wider regeneration outcomes carried risk, and that future development intentions could change.

The Chair asked if the proposer wished to withdraw the call-in. It was noted that the proposer wished for the call-in to proceed.

*Councillor Kitterick left the meeting at this point.*

Members of the Commission discussed the report which highlighted the following points:

- Members of the Committee sought clarification on the relative size and constraints of the sites, the proposed pedestrian access arrangements, and how the exchange aligned with planning and regeneration policies. Officers confirmed that areas subject to tree preservation orders and route protection were taken into account in the development value calculations, and that the proposed pedestrian route could be delivered without the need to acquire additional land.
- In response to questions on design and quality, officers confirmed that any further development would be subject to the Council's normal planning processes, with expectations of high-quality design consistent with council's policies. Officers also confirmed that the regeneration proposals would not require changes to the ring road as they adjoined Southampton Street or Queen Street.

Councillor Cassidy moved that, following the points raised during the meeting, the call-in be withdrawn. This was seconded by Cllr O'Neill, and upon being put to the vote the motion was CARRIED.

*The City Mayor left the meeting at this point.*

## **197. DRAFT GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2026/27 AND DRAFT THREE YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2026/27**

As the reports on the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme were related, they were taken as one item.

The Director of Finance submitted a report setting out the City Mayor's proposed Draft General Fund Revenue Budget for 2026/27, and a report on the City Mayor's proposed Draft Three-Year Capital Programme 2026/27.

The Head of Finance (City Development & Neighbourhoods) gave an overview of the reports, key points to note were as follows:

- It was noted that the draft settlements were complex and included the amalgamation of existing grants.
- The Revenue report set out the budget for 2026/27, and the medium-term financial strategy for the following two years.
- The draft Budget reflected the Government's Fair Funding consultation over the summer; however, despite an improved financial position, a budget gap remained, requiring continuation of the five-strand strategy agreed by Council last year, including the following:
  - Budget savings of £23m
  - Constraining growth in areas such as Social Care and Homelessness
  - A reduction in the Capital Programme
  - Releasing one off monies to buy time
  - A programme of property sales, which was now planned to reduce the cost of borrowing
- It was proposed that the strategy be extended to March 2029.
- The budget built in scope to meet ongoing cost increases in Social Care, homelessness and housing benefits.
- The scope for additional investment was limited, but includes amounts for areas previously supported by grants that were no longer available.
- Revenue Budget points directly relevant to the EDTCE Scrutiny commission included:
  - £450k to cover the shortfall in market income
  - £1m to replace the loss of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- The General Fund Draft Capital Report sought approval of just under £130m over the next three years.
- In 2025/26, the Capital Programme moved to being funded primarily through government grants and borrowing, and this approach would continue in 2026/27.
- The aim was to alleviate the revenue pressure placed by borrowing Capital Programme, by using £60m of capital receipts.
- Draft Capital Programme points directly relevant to the EDTCE Scrutiny commission included the allocation of:
  - Just over £16m for the continuation of the highways maintenance programme
  - £12.35m in local transport grants to support transport

- networks
- £150k for the maintenance work at the LCB depot
- £1.2m for local environmental works
- £900k towards flood strategy work

The Chair invited questions and comments from the Commission, asking that matters be addressed separately for each item. The following key points were discussed in relation to the Draft General Fund Revenue Budget:

- The draft report included fair funding figures from the summer consultation.
- Proposals regarding parking charges were separate decisions and would be reported independently.
- It was clarified that Pride in Place and UK Shared Prosperity Fund were different funds. Pride in Place would be reflected in the Capital Programme Report to Council.
- Key Points discussed for the Draft Three Year Capital Programme included:
  - Final figures on pot-hole management, including multi-year grant figures would be included within the final report.
  - Under the Highways Grant, the amount of capital funding for road maintenance was as follows:
    - 2026/27 - £5.6m
    - 2027/28 - £6.6m
    - 2028/29 - £7.1m
    - 2029/30 - £8.1m
- 95.7% of identified pothole maintenance tasks have been completed.
- Maintenance work in flooding hotspots was ongoing. Coordination with the water supplier had resulted in issues being prioritised, and an additional £300k each year had been allocated to address them.
- Regarding the demolition of Rally House, members highlighted concerns with the site being temporarily used as a carpark.
- It was agreed that members could highlight specific issues to the Assistant City Mayor for Environment and Transport.
- Members queried issues with street lighting along the A46/47 and Hastings Road, and it was agreed that issues could be sent to the Director Planning - Development and Transportation.
- Issues with road cleaning could be taken up at the Overview Select Scrutiny with the Committee.

**AGREED:**

- 1) That the reports be noted.

## 198. GET LLR WORKING JAN 26 SCRUTINY FINAL

The Director of Tourism, Culture and Economy submitted a report updating on 'Get LLR Working'.

The Director of Tourism, Culture and Economy provided an overview of the report, key points to note:

- The Director provided a background into the formal governance arrangements, agreeing ways of working with partners, ongoing discussions with partners on addressing labour market challenges and data analysis of the labour market across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.
- It was noted that Leicester City Council would be the accountable body for the Get LLR Working ten-year plan.
- The Director also referred to the efforts to map existing provision for inactive cohorts involving health, skills and employment support. Further to this, identifying any duplication, gaps and opportunities for future action by the Council or collaborating partners.
- The overall aim was highlighted to improve the employment rates to 80%, it was noted that there are stark differences across the geography in districts and Leicester City.
- It was noted that 35,000 people need supporting into work across the LLR and highlighted that the Leicester City accounts for almost 31,000 of those individuals.
- The Director clarified that a new cross-LLR partnership has been developed from scratch over the past six months including partners in local authorities, DWP, health partners, Voluntary and Community Sector, Universities and Colleges as well as business representative organisations.
- A core working group will oversee delivery and review projects whilst wider engagement mechanisms will ensure broader stakeholder involvement as the plan evolves.
- The Regeneration Programmes and Projects Manager explained that the plan is intended to be a live, iterative document, providing a framework rather than a fixed set of final actions.
- Projected timelines were shared with the commission noting that the initial work would commence in late spring, a draft submission in June, final sign-off by October with publication by December 2026.

Members were invited to comment and ask questions; responses were as follows:

- A question arose whether there are resources currently allocated to deliver the plan, the Director responded that there are currently no additional national resources allocated specifically to deliver the full ambition of the plan, the plan is intended to provide a framework to support investment decisions and existing resources across partners are being aligned more effectively.

- A key funded element is the Connect to Work programme where £17.2m over five years funding from DWP would support economically inactive residents into work. Further resources from government would be required to full realise the long-term ambition.
- The Director responded to a question on the impact of Local Government Reorganisation on the plan, by informing the commission that despite potential changes in organisational structures the plan is designed to be flexible, adaptive and will evolve alongside governance changes as the core labour market challenges and partnership principles will remain relevant.
- The Director was asked about support for individuals intending to enter into local government employment and responded that Leicester City Council actively promotes apprenticeships and graduate routes across services. The Director informed that the City Council utilises the apprenticeship levy to support social care and other providers and noted over 1,000 apprentices have been supported over the past decade with annual graduation events recognising the achievement.
- A member asked why the economic inactivity was so high in Leicester, the Director informed of the various factors from the initial analysis and referenced health, long-term sickness and caring responsibilities as major drivers. It was also identified that female economic activity remains significantly lower than the national average and has been a long-standing issue. Commission members were reminded that the data provides a baseline, and further detailed analysis is required at the neighbourhood level.
- The Director responded to a question on why the plan involves Rutland and the wider county given that Leicester City has the most need, the Director explained that the geography was mandated by DWP and the LLR functions as a single economic area residents commute across boundaries. It was shared that Leicester City Council holds the lead role in the plan, ensuring the key city priorities are reflected and the scale of inactivity in Leicester City is recognised as a primary focus.

**AGREED:**

1. To provide further information to Councillor Porter on grants or other support available for individuals such as university leavers intending to start businesses.
2. A further report be brought to the Committee clarifying the relationship between initiatives aimed at reducing economic inactivity and trends in unemployment data, to enable the Committee to assess impact before reaching conclusions.

*Councillor Rae Bhatia left the meeting at this point.*

**199. EDTCE SCRUTINY TASK FORCE - LABOUR MARKET WORKER EXPLOITATION - EXECUTIVE RESPONSE**

The Director of Tourism, Culture and Economy gave a verbal update on the

task group on worker exploitation. It was noted that:

- The Director thanked commission members as well as the University of Leicester for their work on the task force, and noting the proactive approach taken by the City Council to address labour market exploitation in recent years, particularly in the garment sector, while recognising that exploitation was not unique to Leicester.
- Members were reminded that local authorities do not have formal labour market enforcement powers and that many drivers of exploitation sit at national level.
- The Commission was informed of ongoing national developments including the proposed Employment Rights Bill and the establishment of the Fair Work Agency expected to launch in 2026.
- Reference was made to the Council's Social Value Charter, which underpins procurement and commissioning processes and reflects aspect of the Task Force's recommendations.
- Reference was made to the role of the Local Government Association (LGA) in lobbying government for additional resources to support delivery.
- The Task Force's emphasis on partnership working was acknowledged and identified the 'Get LLR Working' programme as a key partnership framework through which labour market exploitation issues could be addressed including prevention, raising awareness and supporting individuals into work.
- The importance of trusted community and voluntary sector organisations in supporting vulnerable workers was emphasised.

The Deputy City Mayor for Housing, Economy and Neighbourhoods provided some comments:

- Commented on whether the City Council has sufficient resources to replicate the in-depth approach previously taken with the textiles industry across other sectors, including social care and the gig economy and whether Leicester faces challenges different to those experienced nationally.
- Noted engagements with the local Government Association (LGA), including the recent national work and evidence on workforce exploitation and its overlap with modern slavery particularly within licensed migration and social care settings.
- The role of LGA in promoting the introduction of funded modern slavery coordinators within local authorities was outlined, as pilot schemes elsewhere had demonstrated positive outcomes and this was an area that would require further government support.
- The Deputy City Mayor praised previous work undertaken on the textiles industry work and stressed the importance of continuing to challenge negative narratives while promoting fair working practices.
- Concerns were raised about the allegations of exploitation within social care linked to work visas, and the potential impacts of national policy changes,

- The Deputy City Mayor emphasised the importance of continued lobbying through the LGA, and monitoring developments such as the Fair Work agency to progress the agenda.

AGREED:

1. A meeting to be arranged with respect to a task group in a meeting to be arranged to discuss the issues raised.

## **200. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair referred to the local transport affordability topic which had been previously raised in the Overview Select Committee. The Committee agreed to hold one meeting where concerns raised by the Youth Representatives could be addressed in one sitting rather than commissioning a task group.

## **201. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There being no further items of urgent business, the meeting finished at 20:16.

# **Transport Affordability EDTCE Scrutiny**

Date of meeting: 11 March 2026

Lead director/officer: Daniel Pearman

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## Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All Wards
- Report author: Daniel Pearman
- Author contact details: 0116 454 3061
- Report version number: 01

### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide members of the commission with a report concerning the affordability of transport options in the city, with particular reference to passenger transport.

### 2. Background and context

- 2.1 Following a representation from young people on the cost of bus travel across the city, citing examples of significant subsidy schemes such as Greater Manchester's Our Pass, officers were asked to consider the affordability of passenger transport in the city.
- 2.2 As part of this overview, officers considered the relative cost of transport modes – accounting for set-up and per trip costs – such that bus fares were considered in context with other transport modes.

### 3. Non-Passenger Transport Costs

- 3.1 Of all modes, walking and cycling are the lowest cost per trip. Ongoing investment in expanding the city's network of safe, segregated infrastructure directly supports the uptake of these modes.
- 3.2 Whilst the initial purchase of a cycle – and especially an adapted or electric cycle – can be a barrier to entry the city council has a number of initiatives designed to improve access to equipment, including extended cycle loan or discount schemes for those on a low income.
- 3.3 As may be expected, there is a high-cost barrier to private vehicle ownership – especially for electric vehicles. This is matched by relatively high trip costs, although research has suggested that for most users these costs are hidden and mostly only seen at the pump or charging station.

### 4. Passenger Transport Costs

- 4.1 Nationally, the £3 bus fare cap operates until March 2027. This replaced the previous £2 fare cap, introduced by the previous government, and continues to represent a substantial subsidy to passenger journey costs.
- 4.2 Whilst it is recognised that cost remains a barrier to travel, the National Travel Attitude Survey notes this is not as much of a barrier as concerns over crowding or unreliability. The authority has delivered and will continue schemes to improve on these matters via our Enhanced Partnership Plan commitments to [Frequent](#) and [Reliable](#).

- 4.3 We are aware that cost disproportionately effects lower income households and may lead to exclusion from other opportunities. Equally, it is recognised that the reliance these households have on passenger transport further exacerbates the impact of costs.
- 4.4 Reducing the perceived cost barrier to bus usage can increase the attraction of bus use over private cars, which benefits not only congestion but also city air quality and our decarbonisation goals.
- 4.5 The city council, either directly or via the Leicester Buses Partnership, provides a number of initiatives to support ticket pricing, including:
- i Discretionary local enhancements to the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme, allowing disabled pass holders free travel before 9:30 should the journey begin in Leicester alongside free train travel between certain stations.
  - ii The Travel Aid scheme, which allows unemployed travellers access to half price fares for two months.
  - iii A variety of flexible ticket options that operate across the Greater Leicester area, which allow for fare capping at day or weekly rates (whatever provides best value) across multiple operators.
  - iv Student and concession ticket options which represent a 75% and 66% reduction when compared to the adult ticket respectively.
- 4.6 The authority has held flexi ticket costs for 2026 and is continuing to investigate options to work with partners to further reduce the premium.
- 4.7 In addition to the above, discounted student ticket schemes are administered by education establishments directly.

## 5. Benchmarking

- 5.1 It should be noted that there is a significant variance in local bus markets, including areas served, market composition, maturity, and level of concessions which impacts the commercial fare revenue that is set. This has been further complicated by the increase in franchised authorities, and the significant government funding made available to some metropolitan areas that has enabled the introduction of discount fare schemes in some areas.
- 5.2 Benchmarking has been undertaken against the adult flexi day ticket – as a multi-operator day ticket, it is a product commonly found across other networks. Prices are accurate as of website information at the time of publication.

Example	Authority	Cost
1 day Bee Bus	Greater Manchester Combined Authority	£5
nbus (West Midlands)	West Midlands Combined Authority	£5.20

Solo Ticket (Merseyside)	Merseytravel/Liverpool City Region Combined Authority	£5.70
West Yorkshire DaySaver	West Yorkshire Combined Authority	£6
Leicester Flexi	Leicester City Council	£6.30
Derby Spectrum	Derby City Council / East Midlands Combined Authority	£7

5.3 As can be seen, most areas offering lower costs are part of combined authorities or are larger areas that have more opportunity to cross-subsidise bus fares.

## 6. Example Fare Subsidy Schemes

6.1 Fare subsidy schemes are limited nationally. Officers have specifically looked at targeted fare subsidy schemes in operation – notably the Greater Manchester Our Pass and the Barnsley MiCard.

	Our Pass	MiCard
Eligibility	16-18 year olds	<18s
Eligible Area	Greater Manchester Combined Authority	Barnsley residents
Cohort Size	~69,000	~30,000
Operating Cost	~£15.9m per annum	~£3m per annum

6.2 Similar offers at a different scale are being operated by Transport for London as part of the various Zip Oyster cards and the Scottish government's offer of free bus travel for those under 22.

6.3 In terms of wider value there are no longitudinal studies that provide detail on lasting travel behaviour changes as people move beyond the age thresholds, nor any wider economic or societal benefits.

6.4 The cost of introducing and operating these schemes is very high and they are therefore deployed by national governments, authorities with access to high and relatively secure levels of government funding, or where there is a low level of eligibility and where opportunities for joint or cross funding are available.

## 7. Opportunities for local schemes

7.1 As noted, the city council currently offers discounted schemes that would be suitable for many young people across the city.

7.2 As part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan, the authority is committed to investigating potential additional options for a targeted fare subsidy scheme, which could for example include:

- i An overall fare subsidy – this would look to uniformly reduce all fares. Given limited available funding, this may not result in a significant enough difference to current bus fares to make them more attractive.

ii A targeted fare subsidy/discount scheme – this would look to specifically reduce the price of one ticket or type of ticket. For example, reducing the flexi family ticket pricing so that groups may travel at a reduced cost.

iii A discount focused primarily on student tickets – this would look to specifically target student tickets, for example introducing a student day ticket that provides a similar level of discount to the student annual ticket.

7.3 More work needs to be done to assess which – if any – of these options would be financially viable, deliver a meaningful outcome, and also not direct funding away from delivery of a reliable and frequent service network. We would welcome input from those present and members of the commission.

7.4 The authority is continuing to work in partnership with bus operators to ensure services in the city provide great value – via new buses, increased reliability, increased punctuality, and supporting the expansion of services to ensure both higher frequency and later hours of operation.

## **8. Financial, Legal, Equalities, Climate Emergency, and Other Implications**

### **8.1 Financial Implications**

The current programme of bus investment is maintained through the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) grant, to be replaced by the Local Authority Bus Grant (LABG) from 26/27 onwards. Statutory provision - the English National Concessionary Travel scheme - is funded by the authority. Potential future discount or fare arrangements will need to be affordable within the envelope of the budget and available grant funding.

Signed: Stuart McAvoy – Head of Finance

Dated: 25 February 2026

### **8.2 Legal Implications**

Conditions of any external funding will need to be complied, where available to the Authority. Where relevant procurement exercises will need to be conducted so as to comply with the Council's policy and legal obligations, specifically in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Procurement Act 2023 and supported by relevant officers. Likewise, any distribution of funds (including the need to match fund) to bus operators will be subject to an agreed Grant Funding Agreement in each case and prior assessment of Subsidy

Control will need to be addressed during the process ensuring the necessary arrangements are in place to ensure all projects are compliant with appropriate regulations for subsidy control ensuring robust due diligence has been undertaken

Signed: Mannah Begum, Principal Lawyer, Commercial Legal

Dated: 23 February 2026

### **8.3 Equalities Implications**

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which requires us to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010 (sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, race, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, age) and those who do not.

The affordability of transport is closely linked to equality of access to employment, education, health and leisure opportunities. Evidence indicates that transport costs can disproportionately affect people from lower income households, disabled people, younger and older residents, and some ethnic minority communities who are more likely to rely on public transport.

Current and proposed initiatives to improve the affordability of travel, including discounted and concessionary schemes, are expected to have a positive impact by supporting inclusion and reducing financial barriers. Continued investment in walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure also provides low-cost and accessible alternatives which can benefit a wide range of residents, including those with mobility needs.

Any future proposals to introduce or amend fare discount schemes should be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure that benefits are applied fairly across protected groups and that no group is unintentionally disadvantaged.

Signed: Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148

Dated: 17 February 2026

#### 8.4 Climate Emergency Implications

Over half of all transport emissions are generated from the use of passenger cars. It is therefore important to support solutions to increase active travel, the use of public transport, and shared mobility where the need to travel is unavoidable.

Reducing the barrier to bus travel that cost can present is an important part of achieving net zero within an acceptable timeframe. As sources of electricity are increasingly low carbon (renewable), increasing the number of bus users, supported by current and future development of electrical infrastructure in terms of increasing electrification of transport, compounds the potential positive impact of increased bus use where users would have otherwise travelled using a private vehicle.

It is also important to note the potential co-benefits of improved public health and wellbeing by reducing congestion and improving city air quality.

Signed: Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37224

Dated: 13 February 2026

#### 8.5 Other Implications

No other implications identified

**9. Appendices and Other Papers**

None





# Planning Service Performance Review

Economic Development, Transport and Climate  
Emergency Scrutiny Commission

Date of meeting: 11/03/2026

Lead director/officer: Grant Butterworth

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## Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Grant Butterworth Head of Planning,
- Author contact details: [grant.butterworth@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:grant.butterworth@leicester.gov.uk)
- Report version number: V2

### 1. Summary

The report provides an overview of planning performance as requested at OSC. It sets out recent national and local planning trends in terms of:

- Planning service delivery and policy development
- Performance in terms of determining planning applications
- Planning Income

The report confirms recent challenging national conditions affecting development delivery across the country. This has resulted in consequential government performance assessments and negatively impacted planning income.

Like many councils, performance has been affected by a national shortage of planners, creating staff recruitment and retention issues. This was compounded locally by significant disruption due to the cyber-attack in 2024. In response proactive management action was initiated through a comprehensive organisational review of the Planning Service to address staffing capacity and service capability which was largely completed in summer 2025.

As a result, planning performance has now substantively recovered as set out in the report. The decline in income from fewer applications has been partly offset by increases in national fees and pre-application advice fees and it is considered that there are now strong foundations in place to sustain planning service resilience and good performance as the development market recovers.

### 2. Recommendation(s) to scrutiny:

Economic Development, Transport and Climate Emergency Scrutiny Commission is invited to:

- Note the national economic context
- Note the recent recovery in terms of planning application processing and performance
- Consider and comment on the contents of the report

### 3. Detailed report

#### **3.1 Leicester City Council Planning Service Delivery & Development activity**

In recent years the planning service has suffered significant staffing pressures due to a range of factors primarily- a national shortage of qualified planners which has adversely affected planning performance.

To address these issues a comprehensive work force action plan was implemented which introduced:

- a new staffing structure and career pathways to improve staff retention and development of graduate roles
- new pay grades and job roles which recognised technical specialisms

- a new People Manager role to allow planning managers to concentrate on technical supervision and development of staff

Delivery pressures increased with a significant workload backlog which developed after the cyber-attack in 2024. This occurred mid-implementation of the above organisational review.

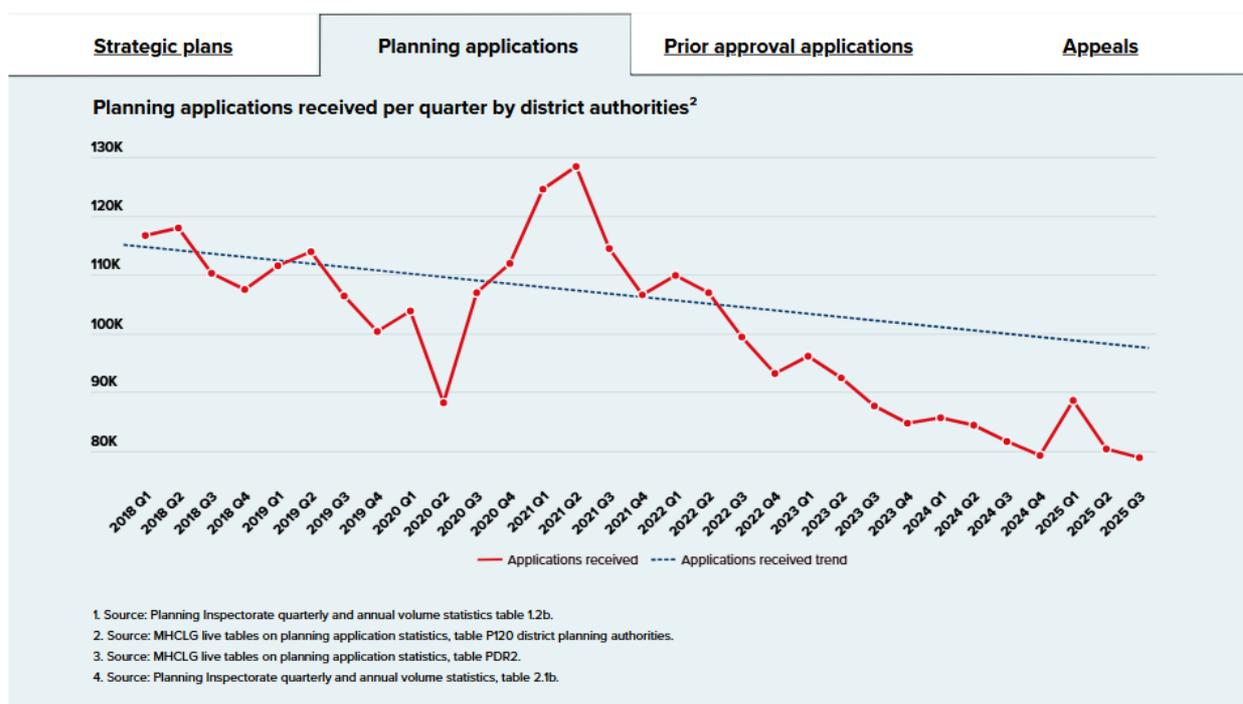
The staffing review was largely completed in summer 2025 and the service’s performance has consequently improved as can be seen in section 3.4 of this report.

### 3.2 National context: Planning consents

Nationally there has been a significant decline in planning application submissions in recent years, driven by national economic factors as can be seen in the charts below which shows planning application data from Q1 2018 to Q3 2025.

**Chart 1: National levels of Planning Applications in England to December 2025**

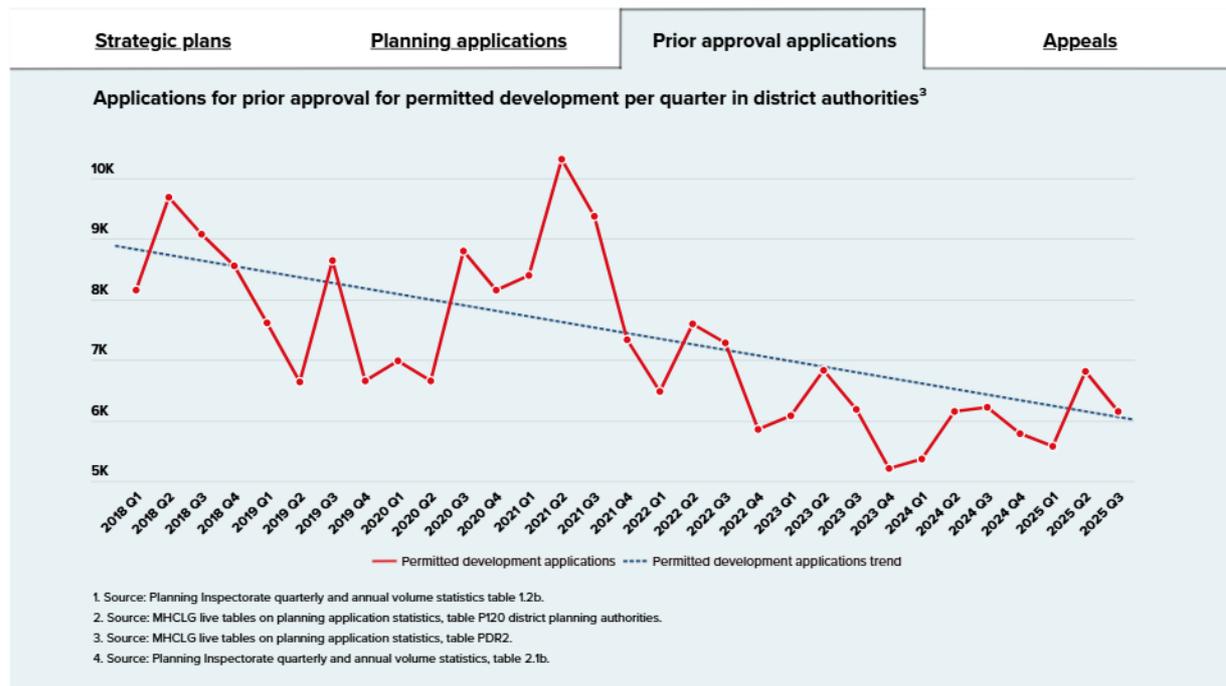
## Activity in the planning sector in England



The chart below shows prior Approval Application numbers over the same period. Prior approvals largely comprise small scale residential extensions and some changes of use.

**Chart 2: National levels of Prior Approval Applications in England to December 2025**

# Activity in the planning sector in England



The factors affecting this decline have been attributed to:

- International/national increases in energy costs due to Ukraine conflict and other factors
- Interest rates and the cost of borrowing and mortgages
- Construction and trade labour/skills shortages (particularly post Brexit)
- Materials cost increases
- Policy and regulatory costs such as the Building Safety levy (post Grenfell)
- Contraction in the SME builder's sector
- USA imposition of tariffs

The Government are in the process of deploying a very significant range of initiatives and policy levers to seek to reverse this decline:

- 2024 NPPF revisions: new standard method and new 'Grey Belt' policy provisions
- Planning and Infrastructure Act: new 30 Month Local plan system and new Spatial Development Strategies
- Proposed new national Scheme of Delegation to reduce scale of applications determined by Planning Committees
- 2025 NPPF consultation with significant amendments to promote development delivery

These initiatives have very recently begun to show results, although the bulk of recent developer activity is currently focussed on the new opportunities in Green Belt areas facilitated by the new NPPF 2024 Grey Belt provisions.

## 3.3 Local planning consents

### 3.3.1 Applications received

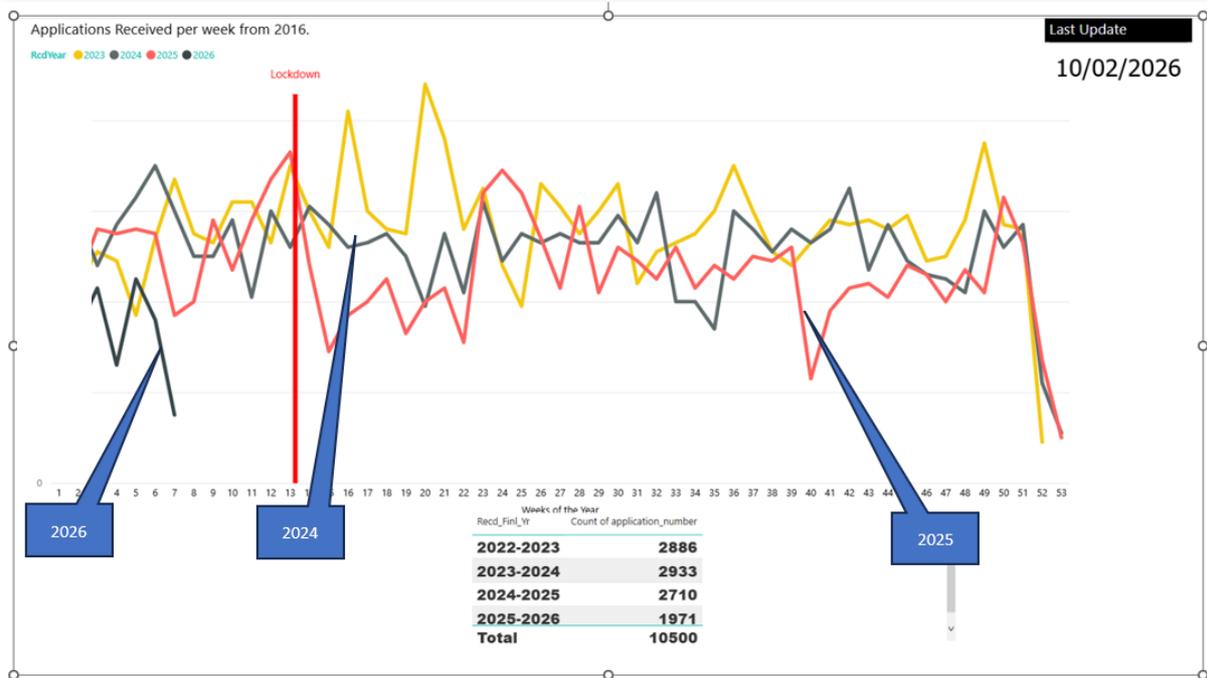
The numbers of applications received in recent years has reduced generally in line with national trends and major, non-major and prior approval trends are shown by category in Table 3 below.

**Table 3 Major/Non-Major and Prior Approval Applications received**

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	April 25 to 17/02/2026
Major applications received and validated	58	49	53	41	52	32
Prior Approvals	560	389	224	233	170	120
Non major applications	1,293	1,479	1,367	1,255	1,157	908

The Chart below shows the trends of total application numbers since 2023.

**Chart 3: Leicester planning applications Received 2023-2026**



**3.3.2 Leicester Performance in application Processing against Govt targets (September 2025)**

**Table 4: Application Performance against Govt Targets**

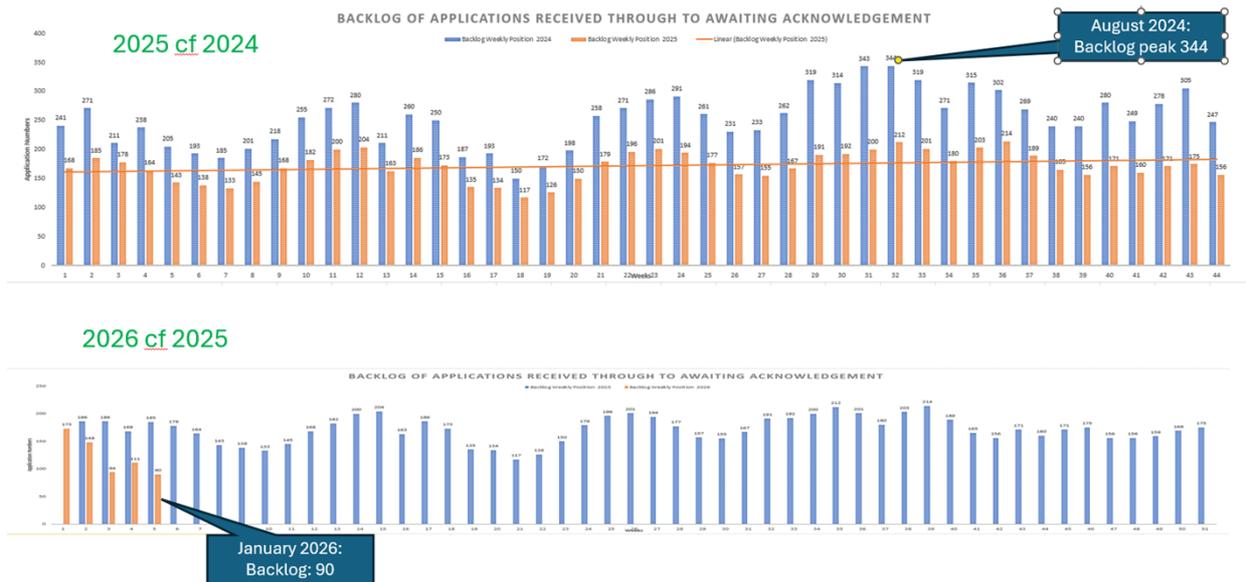
Category	Govt Target	LCC 2025 outcome (Rank of 329 LPAs)	Comments
Major applications in time (or with agreed Extension of Time)	Designation if < 60% over 12-month period	95.5% (Rank: 119)	Strong performance.

<b>Minor applications in time (or with agreed Extension of Time)</b>	Designation if < 70% over 12-month period	77.8% (Rank: 307)	Good recovery of position. Significant efforts made to improve performance over the year- from risk of designation in June 2025 at 62%. Latest performance data Sept 2025 to January 2026 <b>is very positive at 97%</b>
<b>% of Major decisions lost at appeal</b>	Designation if > 10% major application decisions lost at appeal	1.2% (Rank: 105)	Strong performance
<b>% of Minor decisions lost at appeal</b>	Designation if > 10% non-major application decisions lost at appeal	0.7% (Rank: 76)	Strong performance

### 3.3.3 Validation of Applications (applications awaiting commencement)

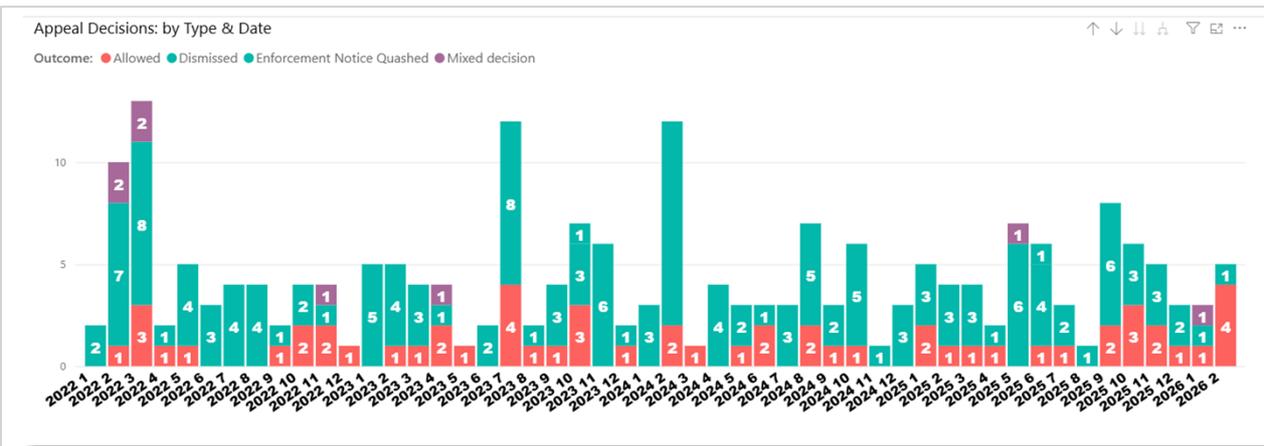
The level of applications awaiting validation hit a peak of 344 in summer of 2024 after the cyber-attack. The Chart below shows recovery of the position by the end of 2025 which has been sustained to a low level into 2026.

**Chart 4: Applications awaiting acknowledgement**



### 3.3.4 Planning Appeals

Chart 5 and Table 5 below show appeal decisions by type and date for 2022-February 2026



**Chart 5 Appeal Decisions (Numbers allowed/dismissed)**

**Table 5 Planning Appeal Performance (%)**

Appeal Outcome	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
% of Appeals dismissed	77.0%	70.1%	68.0%	70.0%	73.4%

In Leicester figure 26% of appeals were allowed in 24/25, which compares well with 30% of appeals allowed in 2024/25 in England.

### 3.4 Planning Income 2021/22- 2025/26

Table 6 below shows planning application and prior approval application income for the last 5 years as recorded from the planning monitoring system.

Planning fees are currently set nationally by the Government although there are provisions in the new Planning and Infrastructure Act for the future introduction of locally set fees to secure cost recovery.

**Table 6 Fee Income excluding Pre-application Advice 2021/22- 2025/26**

Recd_Finl_Yr	Fee_Income
2021-2022	£1,170,370.94
2022-2023	£990,153.20
2023-2024	£1,034,876.00
2024-2025	£1,177,553.50
2025-2026	£1,039,968.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>£5,412,921.64</b>

Source- Planning system data

Table 7 below shows Pre-application advice income for the last 5 years. Pre-application advice charges were increased in January 2025.

**Table 7 Pre-Application advice income 2021/22- 2025/26**

Recd_Finl_Yr	Fee_Income
2021-2022	£111,648.00
2022-2023	£107,280.00
2023-2024	£108,076.80
2024-2025	£99,536.00
2025-2026	£145,120.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>£571,660.80</b>

Source- Planning system data

#### 4. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

##### 4.1 Financial Implications

As a general performance update, there are no direct financial implications associated with this report. The issues identified within it have resulted in budget overspends for the Planning service, as reported through quarterly monitoring.

Signed: Stuart McAvoy

Dated: 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2026

##### 4.2 Legal Implications

As the report is a briefing of recent performance, there are no legal implications relating to the report itself.

The challenges relating to recruitment of experienced Planning Officers also extends into the legal remit. Nationally, there is a shortage of experienced planning lawyers and recruitment to planning roles within Legal has also been difficult to achieve. Training and development of existing internal staff members continues and measures have also been put in place to provide support from a neighbouring authority. Recruitment efforts also continue.

Signed: Zoe Iliffe, Principal Lawyer (Property, Highways & Planning)

Dated:

##### 4.3 Equalities Implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public-Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

This performance report on the Planning service has no direct equality implications, as it focuses on service delivery metrics, national trends, staffing recovery, and income. However, efficient planning processes indirectly support PSED by enabling timely housing delivery and building approvals, which can benefit protected groups through improved access to affordable, suitable homes. Ongoing service recovery, including the Local Plan adoption, will help maintain due regard to these needs in future applications.

Signed: Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148

Dated: 19 February 2026

#### **4.4 Climate Emergency Implications**

There are no direct climate emergency implications arising from this report.

Signed: Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer, Ext 372246

Dated: 19<sup>th</sup> February 2026

#### **5. Background information and other papers:**

None

#### **6. Summary of appendices:**

None



## Executive response to EDTCE Scrutiny Commission on worker exploitation across the labour market

11 March 2026

### **Background**

The council has for many years been working with partners to proactively address alleged concerns of non-compliance in Leicester's garment sector. Although the council is not an enforcement body, the City Mayor's priorities include a commitment to focus on sectors which may be blighted by low pay and poor conditions.

In response to alarmist media articles and allegations of modern slavery in the garment industry in the city, the government launched Operation Tacit, a major high-level enforcement programme undertaken by national enforcement bodies in Leicester from 2020 to 2023. The Director of Labour Market Enforcement has recently published her independent review of Operation Tacit. This review has found that allegations of widespread modern slavery and labour exploitation in the industry were unfounded.

During Operation Tacit, HMRC visited 318 garment manufacturing premises and interviewed workers. The operation found that the degree of non-compliance with the National Minimum Wage in the garment sector in Leicester was actually lower than in other manufacturing sectors. Forced or compulsory labour, as defined by the Modern Slavery Act 2015, was not found, with only one potential case being referred to the police.

Some key quotes from the Operation Tacit review:

*“there remained a disconnect between the image portrayed by media and stakeholder groups and the intelligence received by enforcement bodies”*

*“The allegations of the most severe exploitation were not supported when activity got underway.”*

The EDTCE Scrutiny Commission formed a task force to examine worker exploitation across Leicester's labour markets. A member working group drawn from the EDTCE and Culture and Neighbourhoods scrutiny commissions oversaw the work from November 2024 to February 2025. This has set out to identify business sectors where labour exploitation may be more prevalent, based on evidence rather than assumption.

Professor Nik Hammer, Director of the Future of Work Cluster at the University of Leicester, has supported the work of the task force, and this was funded by the council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund programme.

The objectives of the review were to:

- gain an overview of sectors and practices of worker exploitation across the UK
- develop a picture of the enforcement landscape, in particular as it appears from the perspective of local authorities
- map key local stakeholders and their intelligence/systems
- on the basis of broad stakeholder consultation, establish where in Leicester worker exploitation is prevalent (eg. across sectors, business models, communities)
- recommend, specifically as regards the local authority's remit, avenues to improve a) monitoring, b) compliance, c) remedy for exploited workers.

The review was completed in April 2025, and the findings of the review and recommendations have been referred to the Executive for consideration. A summary of the task force recommendations is attached at the end of this response.

### **Executive response**

The Executive would like to thank commission members for the thorough and comprehensive review of worker exploitation across Leicester's labour market. We also acknowledge and appreciate the work of the University of Leicester in undertaking the study.

We want to make sure that Leicester has the highest standards of employment; and that workers are properly paid, well-trained, and work in safe environments. We want to support our businesses to be the best they can, and to set an example that others can follow.

Worker exploitation is not exclusive to Leicester but is a national and indeed global issue. The issues are complex, and relate to the hidden economy and sometimes criminal activity. To tackle this, the scrutiny task force notes that local authorities do not have any formal role in labour market enforcement. Enforcement powers and resources rest exclusively with national regulators.

As the council is not an enforcement body, there are no quick fixes, and many aspects are out of the direct control of the local authority. Despite the lack of enforcement powers, Leicester City Council has, however, been taking a lead in this area, and this scrutiny task force is further evidence of Leicester's proactive approach in relation to this important issue.

### **National policy**

Key to informing the council's role in addressing the issues of worker exploitation is new national policy in this space, including the pending Employment Rights Bill, which is designed to help more people to stay in work, support workers' productivity and improve living standards.

As part of this agenda, the government is establishing the Fair Work Agency (FWA), as an Executive Agency of the Department for Business and Trade (DBT). This will bring together existing state enforcement functions and, over time, take on enforcement of a wider range of employment rights. This will be a single place where workers and employers can turn for help, supporting compliant employers, and taking action against non-compliant ones.

The FWA is set to launch in 2026, after the Employment Rights Bill becomes law. Council officers have spoken to the Director of Labour Market Enforcement's team about the FWA and will track progress as this is established, with a view to developing an ongoing relationship.

It is also worth referencing the work of the Local Government Association (LGA) around modern slavery. While the scrutiny task force defines worker exploitation as covering a spectrum that goes far beyond pay and conditions, in some cases labour exploitation impacts individuals who may have been trafficked and/or are being exploited by people who wish to control their movements and actions to exploit them for their labour. Labour exploitation can be an element of criminal offences of forced labour or human trafficking which themselves constitute modern slavery.

Modern slavery intersects with many different council services and a number of different officers might come across it while going about their everyday activities. Recognising that councils have a key role in tackling modern slavery, the LGA publishes guidance and resources to support councils and partners in identifying, referring and supporting victims, community safety services, and ensuring that supply chains are free from modern slavery.

## **Local partnerships/Get LLR Working**

The task force rightly recognises that partnerships are vital to address issues of worker exploitation, and that efforts should be made to build a collaborative approach with other agencies and stakeholders around this agenda. The report proposes an active role for the local authority in establishing a local partnership – a Fair Work Labour Market Partnership - with a focus on fostering joint work between agencies, local stakeholders and particularly community organisations that are engaged with people at risk of exploitation at work.

It recommends the approach followed by the previous Labour Market Partnership, which was launched by Leicester City Council in September 2019 to bring together key partners to proactively address concerns of non-compliance in Leicester’s garment sector. This pilot initiative employed a full-time partnership coordinator with external grant funding. Although effective, this time-limited activity finished when funding came to an end.

Local areas have been invited by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to develop detailed plans that address the challenges related to labour force participation (employment, unemployment and economic inactivity) and progression in work. Leicester City Council has developed a local Get LLR (Leicester, Leicestershire, & Rutland) Working plan, working closely with Leicestershire County Council, Rutland County Council, DWP/ Jobcentre Plus and the Integrated Care Board.

We are strengthening local partnerships of agencies working in the labour market as part of this Get LLR Working agenda. This work will encourage further alignment of local authority functions around employment, skills and health support. Although this will be primarily focused on supporting people into employment, improved coordination between organisations that engage with local residents should be used to raise awareness of worker’s rights and the breadth of support available, supported by the delivery of associated information campaigns. At the time of writing, government has not yet confirmed resources for the delivery of the Get LLR Working plan, but we continue to lobby for this.

## **Community voluntary sector organisations**

The scrutiny report recognises and values the role of established and trusted community organisations in supporting workers. These community organisations are often most likely to engage with people at risk of exploitation at work. While exploitation at work might be the root problem, workers might find it easier to first open up about a range of other issues

– food poverty, housing, and so on. We agree that this can be an important avenue to establish trust, not only with individuals but the wider community.

The task force recommends closer joint working and alignment between programmes that deliver English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses, with work and employment advice by community organisations across the city. ESOL is viewed to be an effective entry point to establish trust with organisations that can also provide support on work and employment issues. The Get LLR Working agenda can be used to progress this closer joint working.

### **Sector focus**

The council’s Labour Market Partnership work with the garment sector demonstrated the impact that could be achieved in a specific sector if resources are available. Starting in 2019, this laid the foundation for subsequent intensive activity in Leicester by national enforcement bodies. In July 2020, the Government launched Operation Tacit on the back of media articles and allegations of modern slavery in the garment industry. Operation Tacit was a high-level response involving several national enforcement bodies from 2020 to 2023.

The Director of Labour Market Enforcement has recently published her independent review of Operation Tacit. The Director had provided helpful input into the work of the scrutiny task force, attending a special session with members of the commission. This review of Operation Tacit has found that allegations of widespread modern slavery and labour exploitation in the industry were unfounded.

During Operation Tacit, HMRC visited 318 garment manufacturing premises and interviewed workers. The operation found that the degree of non-compliance with the National Minimum Wage in the garment sector in Leicester was actually lower than in other manufacturing sectors. Forced or compulsory labour, as defined by the Modern Slavery Act 2015, was not found, with only one potential case being referred to the police.

Some key quotes from the Operation Tacit review are as follows:

*“there remained a disconnect between the image portrayed by media and stakeholder groups and the intelligence received by enforcement bodies”*

*“The allegations of the most severe exploitation were not supported when activity got underway.”*

Following this work in the garment sector, the scrutiny task force set out to identify business sectors where labour exploitation may be more prevalent. Helpfully, this has identified two sectors where a “deep dive” approach to support workers would be more beneficial – social care, and the “online platform”/ gig economy. Adopting a similar approach for these other sectors will however require additional funding, and the council and community organisations need to continue exploring opportunities to attract external funding to support this area of work.

## **Commitments**

We can make the following commitments:

- To reassert our manifesto pledge to doing all we can to support good jobs, ensuring that Leicester has the highest standards of employment; that workers are properly paid, well-trained, and work in safe environments.
- To continue to track the establishment of the Fair Work Agency that is set to launch in 2026. Once this has been established, and the national policy environment is clearer, we will review our approach.
- To continue to value the role of the community and voluntary sector in developing trusted relationship with local communities, and the potential role in helping to identify and tackle worker exploitation.
- To embed partnership working in the Get LLR Working agenda that seeks to coordinate labour market interventions by local authorities, community voluntary sector organisations, the Integrated Care Board, DWP, and other partners, and use this to raise awareness of worker’s rights and the breadth of support available.
- To adopt the proposed focus for more detailed interventions in the social care and “online platform”/ gig economy sectors, with delivery subject to the availability of grant funding from government.
- To ensure that the council’s social value charter continues to underpin procurement and commissioning processes to drive employment standards in supply chains.
- To explore opportunities for grants to support this work, both by the council and community organisations.
- The council can continue to lobby government for funding, resources and powers, and to help shape national policy.

## **Appendix: summary of EDTCE Scrutiny Task Force recommendations**

1. Establish a local Fair Work Labour Market Partnership to provide leadership on the recommendations
2. To ensure that Leicester City Council has a relationship with the new Fair Work Agency that has been proposed in the government's Employment Rights Bill
3. Work with local partners to establish low-barrier and multi-issue 'fair work' points of support for workers at risk of exploitation.
4. Develop/support one 'fair work' point of support for online platform workers
5. Establish a partnership between Leicester City Council, trade unions, and social care providers to improve work and employment conditions for care workers
6. Align and expand ESOL provision with work and employment advice within community organisations and across the city
7. Develop information campaigns
8. Designate an Leicester City Council 'Fair Work' officer for coordination and support
9. Integrate the above local fair work recommendations with other local authority functions
10. Review procurement and commissioning processes within the local authority with a view to integrate and monitor work and employment standards in supply chain due diligence





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## **Connect to Work Programme**

EDTCE Scrutiny Commission

Date of meeting: 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026

Lead director: Peter Chandler,  
Director Tourism Culture and Economy

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## Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All wards
- Report author: Joanne Ives, Regeneration Projects & Programmes Manager
- Author contact details: joanne.ives@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: 1

### 1. Summary

- 1.1 This briefing and presentation provides an overview of the start of the Connect to Work programme for Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland.

### 2. Recommendation:

- 2.1 To note and comment on the Connect to Work Programme.

### 3. Detailed report

#### Background

- 3.1 Connect to Work is the new DWP funded supported employment programme that aims to support disabled people, people with health conditions and people from disadvantaged groups with multiple and complex barriers to move into and maintain employment.
- 3.2 DWP is providing an annual ring-fenced Connect to Work grant to support a maximum of 1,600 people per annum (at peak volumes) across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, with volumes ramping up over time. The funding formula indicates a total grant of up to £17.2m from 2024/25 to 2029/30 to cover programme management and delivery costs.
- 3.3 Connect to Work requires the commissioning or establishment of a supported employment programme to 'place, train and maintain' eligible participants to move into and maintain, or retain, employment. The service will be delivered by teams of 'Employment Specialists', who will work with individuals and co-ordinate access to integrated health and wider support (for example – debt, housing, skills).
- 3.4 There are two forms of delivery:
  - **Individual Placement and Support (IPS):** IPS integrates employment support alongside primary and secondary health services, and other support services, usually through co-location. This aims to help people accessing health services find work to aid their recovery and is typically successful in supporting individuals with low to moderate health and/or physical health conditions. Individuals will be supported for up to 12 months for out of work individuals and 4 months for in-work individuals, and DWP estimate 75% of individuals will require IPS support.
  - **Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF):** SEQF typically supports individuals with learning disabilities, autism and/or other complex disadvantages, and hence is a more intensive intervention than IPS, with individuals supported for up to 12 months for out of work individual and 4 months for in-work individuals. The

SEQF model does not involve integration/ co-location of Employment Specialists within into integrated services (i.e. clinical teams). It follows a five stage a process (client engagement, vocational profiling, job finding, engagement, on and off job support) by improving services for vulnerable job seekers, employees, and their employers. DWP estimate 25% of individuals will require this more intensive SEQF support.

### Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Scheme

3.5 A working group was established across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland to review the guidance, requirements of the DWP programme, led by Leicester City Council. A bid was developed and submitted in August 2025 for review by DWP, following clarification questions this was approved, and the funding contract was signed in December 2025.

3.6 The delivery approach is as follows:

- Leicester City Council: Accountable Body lead for the programme, including delivery of the SEQF model for Leicester City residents
- Leicestershire County Council and Rutland County Council to deliver the SEQF model for Leicestershire County and Rutland residents respectively.
- IPS model to be commissioned to external provider(s).

3.7 The total individuals to be supported across the life of the programme are as follows:

Area	Total Numbers
Leicester City	2333
Leicestershire County	2085
Rutland	244
Total Individuals	4662

3.8 The total targets for delivery are follows which are split across the delivery partners.

Description	No's	Percentage
Unemployed Individuals supported	3963	85%
In-Work individuals supported	699	15%
	4662	100%
<u>Performance Indicators</u>		
1) Unemployed Individuals into employment (starts)	1981	50%
2) Unemployed individuals in employment over 13 weeks at minimum wage	1585	40%
3) Unemployed individuals in employment over 26 weeks at minimum wage	1149	29%
4) In-work individuals returning to work from sick leave	559	80%

3.9 It is recognised the targets are ambitious, but these are the numbers set by DWP and what we will need to work towards. The maximum caseloads for each job coach are 20 individuals for SEQF and 25 individuals for IPS.

3.10 The total budget is split is detailed in the table below. This is the maximum allocation per year, and funding cannot be rolled into subsequent years.

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
IPS Service	0	250	1,370	3,442	2,880	800	8,742
Leicestershire County Council	45	525	531	919	951	373	3,344
Rutland County Council	0	42	76	99	118	60	395
Leicester City Council	95	583	843	1260	1251	737	4,769
Total	140	1,400	2,820	5,720	5,200	1,970	17,250

#### 4. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

##### 4.1 Financial Implications

This report proposes that Leicester City Council acts as accountable body for £17.2m of revenue grant funding from the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP). The grant agreement will set out the grant conditions.

Leicester City Council will need to incur expenditure (including payments to the other local authorities) in advance of receiving the funds from government. Any risk associated with having to repay grant money already handed over to other local authorities will be mitigated by mirror grant agreements with those organisations.

The grant includes a sum to cover the administrative cost to the Council of acting as Accountable Body. As such, it is not anticipated that there would be any net cost to the Council of the proposed arrangements.

Signed: Rohit Rughani, Principal Accountant (on behalf of HoF)

Dated: 24/02/2026

##### 4.2 Legal Implications

The report is an update - previous advice has been provided in respect of the Council's role as the accountable body, funding conditions, subsidy control and procurement obligations. Ongoing legal support to be obtained as needed.

Signed: Mannah Begum, Principal Solicitor, Commercial Legal

Dated: 13 February 2026

##### 4.3 Equalities Implications

Our Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires us to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010 (sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, race, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, age) and those who do not. The Council also has an obligation to treat people in accordance with their Convention rights under The Human Rights Act, 1998.

The report provides an update on the development of the Connect to Work Programme across LLR and its commencement from 1 April 2026. An equality impact assessment (EIA)

has been undertaken on the programme (attached) and a number of equality outcomes have been identified and will be taken forward via the action plan. These include reducing digital inclusion, disability inclusion and monitoring emerging risks. The EIA will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis, as the programme progresses over the five-year period. Monitoring uptake of the programme will also help identify any gaps or areas of concern, allowing appropriate mitigating actions to be put in place.

Signed: Sukhi Biring, Equalities Officer

Dated: 12 February 2026

#### **4.4 Climate Emergency Implications**

There are no significant climate emergency implications directly associated with this report. As service delivery generally contributes to the council's carbon footprint, any impacts could be managed as part of any changes made to the service, such as encouraging the use of sustainable travel options, using buildings and materials efficiently and following the council's sustainable procurement guidance, as appropriate and relevant to the option selected.

Signed: Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer, Ext 372246

Dated: 13th February 2026

#### **5. Background information and other papers:**

N/A

#### **6. Summary of appendices:**

Connect to Work Presentation



## CONNECT TO WORK

Funded by UK Government

# Connect to Work (CtW)

Connect to Work is a supported employment programme designed to help people with a wide range of health needs, disabilities, and other barriers to work to move into, and remain in, meaningful employment.



Appendix \*\*

# Connect to Work – Overview

**Connect to Work programme will be running for 4 years (financial years) across the LLR region from 1 April 2026 until 31 March 2030 (around £17m).**

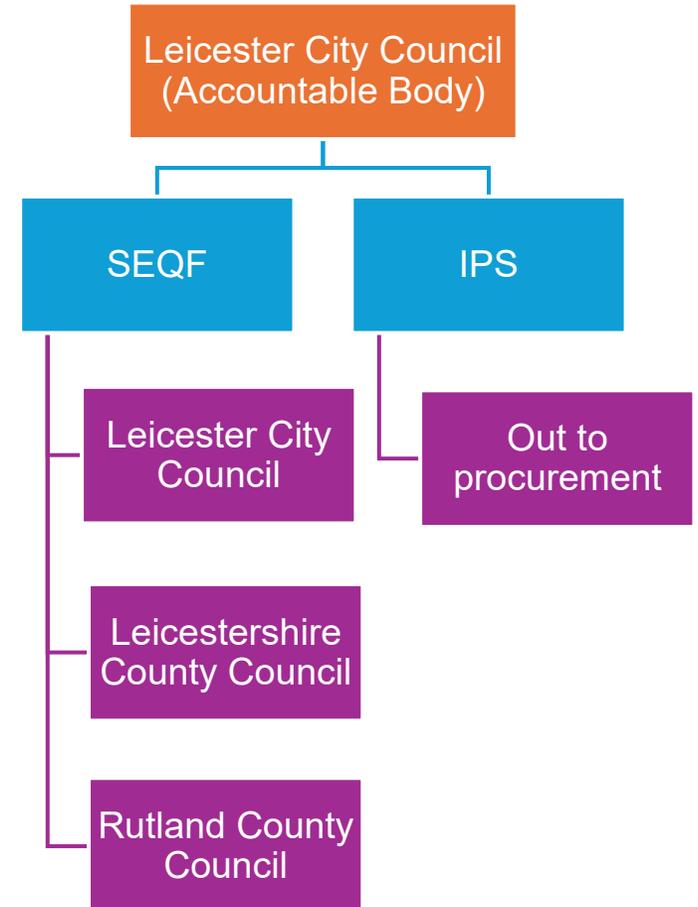
**Connect to Work is a supported employment model, known as “place then train”.**

- Individuals are supported to **find paid work quickly**, rather than after extended job preparation activities.
- Employment specialists then **continue to support** the individual and their employer to make the work placement successful.
- Supported employment is the best evidenced approach to enabling people who **face additional barriers to enter paid work.**
- Supports both **‘Out of Work and ‘In Work’** participant

# Connect to Work – Delivery Models

The programme is delivering two variations of the supported employment model:

- **Individual Placement and Support (IPS):** An evidence-based model of supported employment that helps people with mental health conditions and other complex needs find and retain paid, competitive jobs. It is widely used in the UK, particularly within the NHS and local authority drug and alcohol treatment services.
- **Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF):** A UK-developed framework that sets out the principles, standards, and practices to deliver high-quality supported employment for people with disabilities, health conditions, or other barriers to work.



# Connect to Work – Eligibility

Want to find work

Over 18

Live in Leicester, Leicestershire or Rutland

Have the right live and work in the UK

Have a Learning Disability or Autism

**From April 2026 the full Connect to Work programme launches across LLR.**

The programme can support more people with different needs and experiences, including people from the following groups:

- A person with a disability or health condition.
- A carer, an ex-carer., a homeless person.
- A former member of His Majesty's (HM) Armed Forces (AF), a member of HM AF reserves, or a partner of current or former Armed Forces personnel.
- A person for whom a drug or alcohol dependency, including a history of dependency, presents a significant barrier to employment.
- An offender (someone who is serving a community service) or ex-offender (someone who has completed a custodial or community sentence).
- Care experienced young person or a care leaver
- A refugee, a resettled Afghan, a person on the Ukrainian scheme.
- A victim/survivor of domestic abuse.
- Young people identified as being involved or at risk of being involved in serious violence.
- A victim of modern slavery.

# Different emphasis depending on the participant (Indicative)

IPS

Economically Inactive with long-term health condition or disability: integration with health services important (IPS)



SEQF

At risk young person may be engaged through a youth service or a youth hub (SEQF)



More intense vocational profiling may be needed for people who have experienced domestic violence (SEQF)



Refugee / AS may require less intense vocational profiling (IPS)

Job and employer match may require more intense work for offenders or ex-offenders (SEQF)



Care leavers may require more intense on the job support (SEQF)

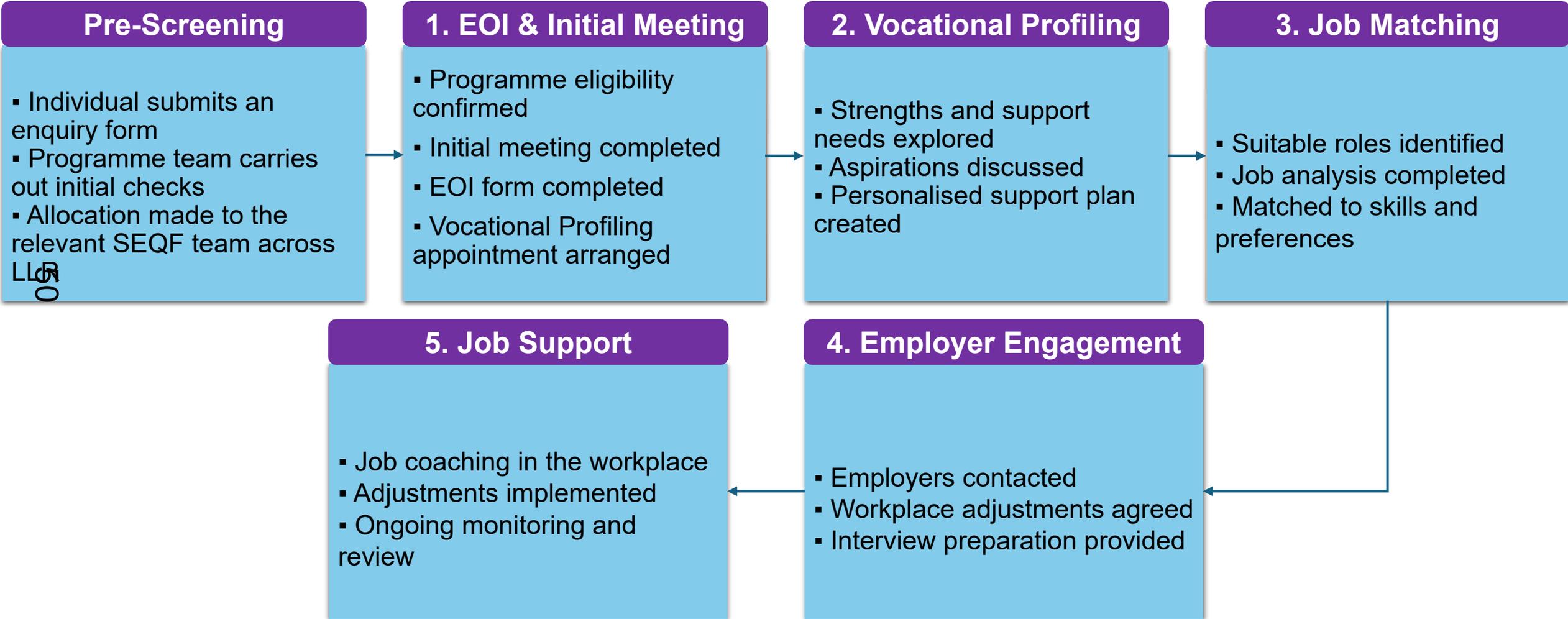
Ex Armed Forces may require less in work support provided job match is good (IPS)



Neurodivergent individuals and those with learning disabilities may require more structured support to develop the skills needed for the role, as well as assistance with travel training (SEQF)

# The Participant Journey

[Connect to Work](http://www.leicesteremploymenthub.co.uk/connect-to-work) (www.leicesteremploymenthub.co.uk/connect-to-work)



# Key Messages

**Programme Fully Live**

51

Connect to Work fully live **April 2026**

**Pre-Launch Restrictions**

No external marketing or public promotion before Mar 2026

**Current Delivery Model**

Only **SEQF** is active during the pre-launch period

Commenced Jan 26

**Target Cohort (Pre-Launch)**

SEQF support is for individuals with **Learning Disabilities and Autism only**

**Referral Pathway**

Online Enquiry MS Form

Individual and Employers

**Key Contact**

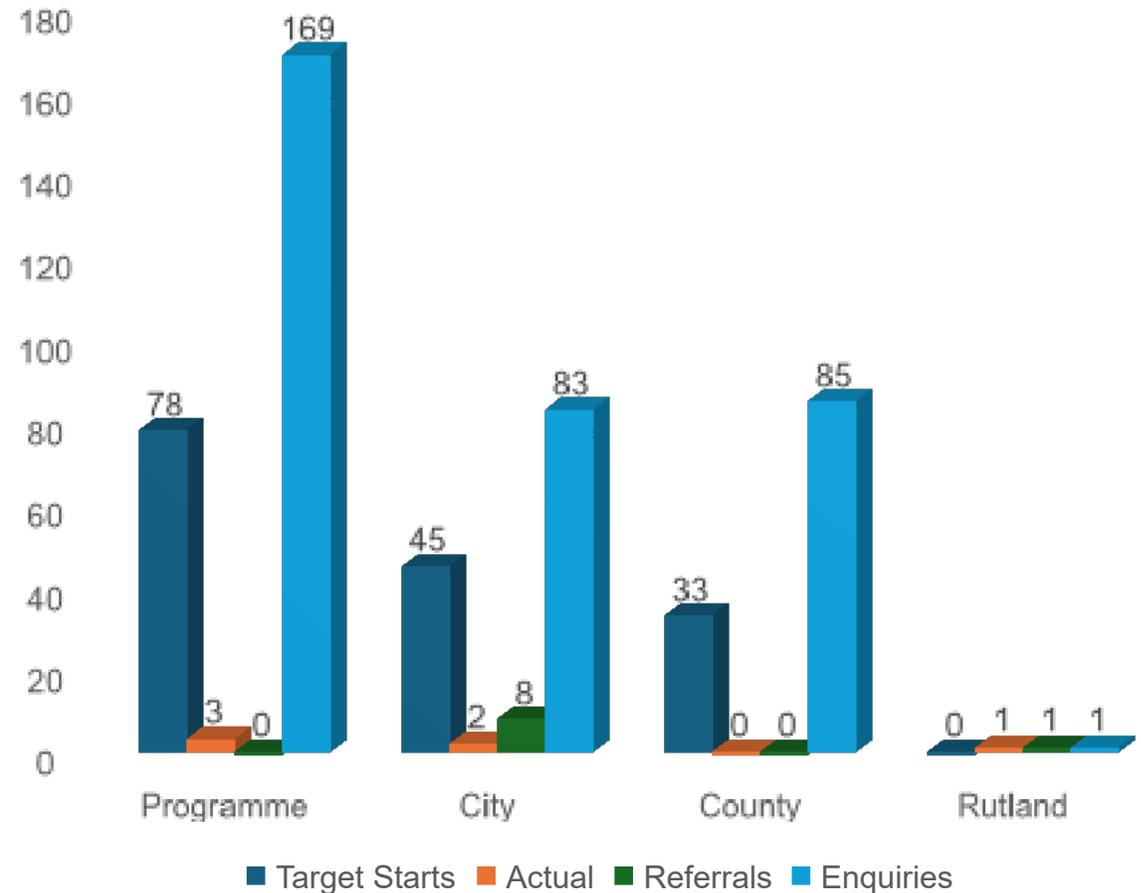
Programme Team  
**ConnecttoWork**  
**@leicester.gov.uk**

# Current Targets

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- Targets based on anticipated starts registered by 31 March 2026
- Enquiries have been received, but sign off for the programme was not able to be done until contract finally signed in December 2025
- Teams assessing enquiries to confirm eligibility to join the programme
- Leicestershire CC team started 1<sup>st</sup> week of February
- Starts expected to start ramping up but may not hit the 78 target in first few months due to timing of contract sign off.
- To count as starts Individuals need to have had:
  - Initial Meeting and Completed EOI
  - Checks done by Accountable Body team and DWP
  - Vocational profile meeting, plan and actions agreed including sign up to programme

## Starts on Programme



## Activities undertaken



53

Lots of forms created for each stage of client journey



Marketing material being created



Draft SLA created for Rutland/County



Procurement out to tender, deadline 12<sup>th</sup> Feb



Systems to record client info all in place, shared teams, spreadsheets



DWP reporting system being recorded/updated



Employer engagement started

## Next Steps

- Finalise agreements
- Finalise IPS procurement and put organisations into contract
- Complete year end reporting, finance, outputs
- Start new marketing, social media from end of April 26 onwards
- Finalise and implement CRM system with training
- Undertake any additional training
- Prep for Fidelity assurance review
- Prep for Finance audit review





Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
<b>5 November 2025</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Worker Exploitation – Verbal Update</li> <li>2) Development Areas in Heart of Leicester Plan</li> <li>3) Cycle lane demarcation.</li> <li>4) EV Strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Written executive response to come to meeting on 14 Jan.</li> <li>3a) Issues to be considered around concrete blocks obstructing turning and issues surrounding cyclists avoiding cycle tracks around driveways.</li> <li>3b) Legal advice to be sought on the requirements for consultation on cycle lane/track instalment under government legislation and report to be produced on this.</li> <li>3c) To investigate any sign of pedal-impaction concrete blocks and other signs of potential hazards.</li> <li>4a) Research on the most efficient ways to generate electricity (i.e. at-source or from a power station) to be carried out.</li> <li>4b) Consideration to be given to offering EV users certain perks to encourage use.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) On workplan</li> <li>3a) Response sent to members</li> <li>3b) Legal advice sought and response is being awaited.</li> <li>3c) Response sent to members.</li> <li>4a) Response sent to members.</li> <li>4b) Under consideration and will be kept under review.</li> </ul>
<b>14 January 2026</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Call in - Land exchange to enable regeneration at Midland Street / Southampton Street in the Cultural Quarter</li> <li>2) Budget</li> <li>3) Get LLR Working update</li> <li>4) Worker Exploitation – Executive Response.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3a) Information to be provided on grants or funding support available for individuals such as university leavers intending to start businesses.</li> <li>3b) A further report be brought to Committee clarifying the relationship between initiatives aimed at reducing economic inactivity and trends in unemployment data, to enable the Committee to assess impact before reaching conclusions.</li> </ul>	

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
11 March 2026	1) Transport affordability 2) Planning Service Performance Review 3) Connect to Work 4) Worker Exploitation – Executive Response re-visited	1) To include information on affordability for young people.	
22 April 2026	1) Car Park Usage	1) To show figures of Council car park usage to ascertain if car park usage has increased or decreased since charges have increased.	

### Forward Plan items (suggested topics)

Topic	Detail	Proposed Date
Get LLR Working update.	To include information on clarifying the relationship between initiatives aimed at reducing economic inactivity and trends in unemployment data, to enable the Committee to assess impact before reaching conclusions.	
Adult Skills Devolution	To come once more is known on local govt re-organisation and timeline for devolution.	
Local Transport Funding Progress		
Bio-Diversity Net Gain		
Local Plan Modifications Consultation.	To be briefed to all members following report from inspectors.	

Levelling up - Railway Station update.		
Budget reductions and areas under review	Requested at meeting of 31 <sup>st</sup> January 2024 when discussing Revenue Budget.	tbc
Market place update		