

Portfolio for Resources and Personnel Policy Councillor G Marshall

Report to Council – 14 October 2026

Finance Services Update

Audit of the Statement of Accounts

Alongside reporting the financial outturn to Cabinet on 30 June, the draft Statement of Accounts for 2025/26 were prepared and published on the Council's website on 29 June, in advance of the statutory deadline.

The accounts are now being scrutinised by Forvis Mazars, the appointed external auditors. The audit has commenced and is targeted to conclude in November. Regular updates will be provided to the Governance, Audit and Standards Committee.

Budget Setting

The budget setting process for 2027/28 was launched in September. The Finance Services team will work with service managers in preparing new business plans, proposing revenue and capital budgets and reviewing the fees and charges lists.

Business plans and financial estimates will be scrutinised by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18 and 19 January, before consideration at Cabinet on 2 February and a final recommendation onto Council to approve the budget on 3 March.

Medium Term Financial Strategy and Business Strategy

An updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and refreshed Business Strategy for 2027/28 is being prepared for approval by Cabinet.

As previously reported, there was an underspend of £2.5m on the General Fund budget in 2025/26. This was due to a variety of underspends, additional income from fees and charges, budget carry forwards, changes in provisions, government grants and effective financial management across the Council. Overall, there was a net contribution of £183k to balances resulting in a closing General Fund Reserve of £5.7m on 31 March 2026.

It is anticipated that the Council will continue to experience significant pressures that will impact on its 2027/28 budget. Whilst there is some certainty with the second year of the Government's 'Fair Funding Review', the amount of grant funding the Council is set to receive will be lower. Final details will not be known until the Local Government Finance Settlement is released in December. In terms of financing the budget, the main area of risk, volatility and complexity is Business Rates. With rating revaluations and a Business Rates Retention reset in April 2026, as part of the Fair Funding Review, all earlier growth has now been absorbed into the baseline position.

Further details, including the refreshed Business Strategy to identify potential revenue savings and additional growth and income to meet the projected budget gap, will be presented to Cabinet on 3 November. This is inevitably going to be another challenging budget round, particularly with the impact of inflation and the significant pressures on local government finances. Officers will continue to review the situation as part of the budget setting process and update the MTFS accordingly.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

As previously reported, the HRA showed a £276k net overspend for 2025/26, which resulted in an increased draw on working balances which amounted to £946k at 31 March 2026. With the budget deficit being higher than anticipated, the HRA balance has dipped below the Section 151 Officer's minimum recommended level of £1m.

This outturn position resulted from an accumulation of rising costs over several years and lower than anticipated rent income in year. The HRA is a ring-fenced fund and must be maintained in a surplus position. There is however no specific statutory minimum working balance, so whilst this dip below the minimum recommended level can be tolerated in the short-term, sustained efforts are required to bring the working balance back up above the minimum level.

An HRA Medium-Term Financial Strategy and Business Strategy is being developed for this purpose which will complement the long-term HRA 30 Year Business Plan. It is normal for the HRA to experience peaks and troughs in its working balances, and this was shown in the longer-term plan.

Budget Consultation

The Budget Consultation for 2027/28 is now live. The survey includes questions relating to a resident's opinion on Council services, methods of access to these services, the preferred means of interaction with the Council, the impact of the ongoing cost of living crisis, climate change and digital strategy. The web-based questionnaire, which is open until mid-November, will be promoted through social media, 'email-me' bulletins, press releases, website and direct engagement with those on the Council's stakeholder map. All responders will be entered into a prize draw. The Council received an encouraging level of response last year and is looking for similar levels of public engagement again to feed into the latest budget round.

Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Update

Revenues

The Revenues team are responsible for administering the Council Tax and Business Rates. The latest KPIs are up to August 2026:

KPI	Year to August 2026	Prior year comparison to August
Council Tax Collection	46.68%	46.82%
Business Rates Collection	49.21%	47.86%

The Revenues team have implemented the Civica OpenChannel module. This module within the Civica system allows customers to access online forms to notify the Council of their changes in circumstances. The forms provide an integrated platform making the process smoother and more efficient for those wishing to use this approach. The initial take up has been encouraging and we expect to see a longer-term shift from channels such as Customer Services and Email.

Council Tax

The team are preparing for the proposed change from 10 monthly instalments to 12 monthly instalments from April 2027. Council Taxpayers will be transferred to this new payment method automatically and should they still need to pay by 10 monthly instalments they will need to complete a change of payment method with the Council through the Civica OpenChannel module. We are anticipating this creating a significant increase in workload during April and May 2027.

Business Rates

As previously reported, there were several changes to the Business Rates system in April 2026. These changes related to the Revaluation and changes to the multipliers for Retail, Hospitality and Leisure sector. These changes are now being processed as business as usual. However, some businesses have contacted the Council recently to explain the additional burden these charges have placed on them during an already challenging time.

Benefits

The Benefit service is monitored externally by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) through key performance indicators (KPIs) relating to new claims, change in circumstance processing times and the annual subsidy audit.

KPI	Year to August 2026	Prior year comparison to August
Average time to process New Claims	7.82 days	7.59 days
Average time to process Change in Circumstances	2.20 days	2.47 days

Customer Services

The Customer Services team continues with its improved performance and is in the process of taking on additional services, which we anticipate going live with during October and November. The team was responsible for the following service areas as at September 2026:

- Switchboard
- Rents
- Benefits
- Council Tax
- Business Rates
- Grounds Maintenance
- Street Cleansing
- Refuse
- Garden Waste
- Housing Allocations

The percentage abandonment for the year up to August 2026 is 14.86% against a target of under 10%. We recognise that we are not currently achieving the challenging target set but much of this related to April where a number of factors contributed to a significantly higher than usual abandonment rate. These factors have been addressed and are not anticipated to contribute to any further disruption. Removing the month of April would result on an abandonment rate of 9.40% for the year.

Corporate Services Update

ICT Services – Business Transformation

The Business Transformation team has supported five business cases to help service areas improve delivery. These include introducing eBilling within the financial system for debtors, upgrading the existing Open Housing system to provide additional functionality and efficiencies, and implementing two new systems required for legislative compliance within Environmental Services. A further business case has also been approved for next financial year to migrate the existing Legal system from on-premises infrastructure to the cloud.

The team is also progressing digital-by-design initiatives to improve efficiency through internal automation, data cleansing and better integration between business systems.

Major network improvements are underway, including the replacement of the Council's core and edge network switching infrastructure. These improvements will enhance performance, strengthen security and provide increased visibility across Council network assets. The team will also support building improvement works at Kimberley Depot, including the relocation of the Council's Disaster Recovery data centre.

ICT Service Delivery

The ICT Service Delivery team continues to support end users with technical issues and guidance. All service level agreements continue to meet target, with system availability at 99.9% and customer satisfaction at 99.8% as at the end of August 2026.

The team is progressing with the Replacement and Development Programme and has replaced all laptops scheduled for this year. Mobile device replacements are also underway, with Multi-Functional Print Devices due to be replaced by the end of the year.

This year has seen the successful rollout of Microsoft 365 products, including Microsoft OneDrive, supporting more flexible and agile ways of working. Microsoft Copilot has also been approved as the Council's generative artificial intelligence tool to support more efficient working.

Annual upgrades to major business systems continue to take place, ensuring the Council remains on the latest software versions. These upgrades provide additional functionality and help protect systems from cyber-attacks.

Information Governance

The Information Governance team has processed and responded to 94 Subject Access Requests as at 31 August 2026, achieving a 100% success rate in meeting statutory timescales. In addition, 98.3% of Freedom of Information requests were answered within the statutory 20-working-day target. Actual data breaches have reduced by 20% when compared to the previous year, and the team has processed 37 surveillance disclosure requests from Nottinghamshire Police.

The surveillance monitoring system has been migrated to Broxtowe premises, providing enhanced functionality to support the Police during live and historical incidents.

The Annual Assessment of Information Risk Performance Report was completed, which provides assurance that risks to information assets across each service area are being managed effectively, including the identification of actions to mitigate any risks or issues. Overall, the report was positive across all service areas.

Business Support

The Business Support team has reviewed and updated the invoicing process to improve the proportion of invoices paid within 30 days and increase the numbers supported by a raised Purchase Order. As of 31 August 2026, 95% of invoices were paid within 30 days, and 96% of invoices received had an assigned Purchase Order. This is a significant improvement in performance.

Part of the team has relocated from Kimberley Depot to the Council Offices in Beeston. This has improved resource planning and coordination, with a positive impact on administrative support for service areas.

Parking Services

The team has reviewed existing assets across all car parks and identified several ticket machines that are due for replacement. New machines will continue to support payment by coin and phone, with the addition of contactless payments. Where appropriate, machines will be powered by solar panels to reduce energy costs and support the Council's carbon neutrality ambitions. Eight ticket machines are expected to be replaced by the end of 2026/27.

The car parks at Halls Road and Eaton Road in Stapleford have been resurfaced, whilst the Council's Park Mark (Safer Parking) accreditation has recently been renewed successfully for a further year.

With electric vehicle (EV) use becoming more prevalent in the area, new developments are increasingly including EV charging points as standard. The team has recently onboarded five new EV charging points at one of the Council's residential developments and will be taking on responsibility for the management of all EV charging points moving forward.

Parking Services is currently achieving 52% of its projected income for the year. Income received up to 31 August is shown below:

NET INCOME	Year 2026/27 to date
Pay and Display	£185,600
Penalty Charges	£13,200
Permits	£25,200
Total income	£224,000

Communications and Engagement Update

The Communications, Culture and Civic Services team continues to play a key role in supporting Council priorities through proactive communications and resident engagement. This includes:

- Supporting communications and engagement on the rollout of the upcoming food waste collection trial in parts of Nuthall and Watnall.
- Continuing to provide support for the Council's major investment projects across the Borough including Stapleford Towns Fund, Kimberley Means Business, initiatives in Eastwood and the new replacement Bramcote Leisure Centre.
- Preparing the upcoming budget consultation to gather feedback about where the Council should spend and save money to inform budget proposals, as well as

gauging resident satisfaction with services and Broxtowe as a place to live. In recent years, the team have supported an increase in the number of responses and are working to continue this increase again this year.

- Support the Annual Canvass process, helping to ensure electoral records remain accurate and up to date. Attention will soon be turning towards preparations for the local elections in May, where the Communications team will play a significant role in supporting election planning, voter information campaigns, member communications and arrangements associated with the electoral process.
- A key focus remains ensuring employees are well informed during the ongoing uncertainty surrounding Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Regular internal communications, leadership briefings and employee engagement activity are being used to provide updates, address concerns and maintain transparency.
- Developing the new Communications and Engagement Strategy to outline how the Council communicates and engages with residents, employees, businesses, elected members and stakeholders. The strategy will be presented to Cabinet next month for consideration and approval.

Civic

Nominations are now open for the Council's Voluntary Awards, which recognises the outstanding contributions made by volunteers, community groups and local organisations across Broxtowe.

The event has become a real highlight in the civic calendar as a way of expressing our thanks to the people who give their time and care to help others. Nominations can be made at www.broxtowe.gov.uk/broxtowevoluntaryawards and close on 29 November.

Planning is underway for this year's Remembrance programme, including the annual parade and service in Beeston. Officers are working closely with veterans' groups, civic representatives, community organisations and partners to coordinate events, ensure appropriate civic arrangements are in place and promote opportunities for residents to take part. Communications activity will also support awareness of Remembrance services taking place across other towns and communities throughout the Borough organised by voluntary groups and town and parish councils.

Following recent Cabinet approval, a Freedom Parade will take place in Beeston in March 2027 to honour the local armed forces and their contributions to the Borough. The Communications, Cultural and Civic Services team are working to further enhance the event with some family activities and community engagement with our military and uniformed organisations. The event will provide an important opportunity to celebrate civic pride, recognise service and strengthen community engagement across the borough. Further information will be shared with residents and partners as planning progresses.

Human Resources and Learning and Development Update

Training

The Learning and Development team has arranged the next tranche of Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) training courses. Both level 3 and level 5 courses have been booked, beginning in October 2026. ILM3 is the equivalent of an A-Level, and ILM5 is the equivalent of Foundation Degree level.

Employability and Equalities

On 24 September, representatives of the HR team attended the Stapleford Jobs Fair to promote career opportunities within the Council, provide information on recruitment processes, and engage individuals considering employment within the public sector. The event enabled officers to offer informal careers guidance and highlight the range of opportunities available across the Council. The team are also due to attend Job Fairs at Nottingham Trent University and also at HMP Sudbury in October 2026. These activities align with the Council's broader priorities around employability, inclusion and community engagement, while helping to raise awareness of opportunities at the Council.

Work Experience

The Council continues to host experience students across a variety of departments. One work experience student has successfully gained employment at Bramcote Crematorium as a Bereavement Assistant Apprentice.

Apprenticeships

Since its inception, a total of 65 apprenticeship courses have been offered, with 22 being successfully completed and 26 currently in progress (the other participants did not complete their course). Encouragingly, 100% of those who successfully finished their course were offered a role. Of the participants, 33 were recruited externally, while 32 were existing employees who were upskilled. Looking ahead, there are 10 new courses in the pipeline, including two brand-new apprenticeship roles (Regulatory Compliance Officer and Green Spaces Project Manager) while the remaining eight are focused on further upskilling current staff.

The table provides a breakdown of the apprenticeship:

Female	35 (54%)
Male	30 (46%)
Live in the Borough	26 (40%)
Ethnic Minority	9 (14%)
Disabled	6 (10%)
Under-25	36 (56%)

Hardship Grants and Loans

20 employees have received Hardship Grant support in this financial year, with one employee applying for a loan to defray unexpected and unforeseen expenses.

Well-person Checks

Two well-person clinics were successfully completed during September 2026 with over 30 employees being reviewed across the clinics run at Beeston and at the Depot. Requests for appointments were encouraging, with demand outstripping capacity. It is hoped to arrange another session possibly in the new year. The checks included blood pressure, cholesterol and PSA blood tests.

Winter Flu Jabs

Clinics are planned to take place at both the Depot and the Council Offices in October 2026 with invite emails sent out. Uptake is expected to be high and additional jabs may be ordered.

Disciplinaries/Grievances

There are currently 13 disciplinary investigations in progress and one grievance.