



## **Executive Board Meeting**

**10.00am, Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025**

### **AGENDA**

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes of the Executive Board Meeting 24<sup>th</sup> September 2025 \*
5. Local Government Reorganisation and Future Governance \*
6. Infrastructure and Growth \*
7. Asylum and Refugee Resettlement in the East Midlands \*
8. Local Authority Workforce and Pay – Regional Employers’ Board \*
9. Report of Management Group \*
10. Any Other Business

\*Papers attached





**EAST MIDLANDS COUNCILS EXECUTIVE BOARD  
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025**

**Present:**

Cllr Sean Matthews (Chair) – Lincolnshire County Council  
Cllr Elly Cutkelvin (Vice Chair) – Leicester City Council  
Cllr Tricia Gilby (Vice Chair) – Chesterfield Borough Council  
Cllr Jane Yates – Bolsover District Council  
Cllr Jewel Miah – Charnwood Borough Council  
Cllr Hardyal Dhindsa – Derby City Council  
Cllr Robert Reaney – Derbyshire County Council  
Cllr Phil King – Harborough District Council  
Mayor Andy Abrahams – Mansfield District Council  
Cllr Martin Griffiths – North Northants Council  
Cllr James Hakewill – North Northants Council  
Cllr Jay Hayes – Nottingham City Council  
Cllr Mick Barton – Nottinghamshire County Council  
Cllr John Doddy – Nottinghamshire County Council  
Cllr Gale Waller – Rutland County Council

Cllr Louise Gittens – LGA (For Item 6)  
Satvinder Rana – LGA (For Item 6)  
Tom Chapman – LGA (For Item 6)  
Jack Brereton – NESO (For Item 7)  
Melanie Taylor – NESO (For Item 7)

Stuart Young – East Midlands Councils  
Sam Maher – East Midlands Councils  
Andrew Pritchard – East Midlands Councils  
Lisa Hopkins – East Midlands Councils (Minutes)

**Apologies:**

Cllr Nadine Peatfield – Derby City Council  
Cllr Alan Graves Derbyshire County Council  
Cllr Craig Leyland – East Lindsey District Council

Cllr Stuart Bray – Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council  
 Cllr Dan Harrison – Leicestershire County Council  
 Cllr Neghat Khan – Nottingham City Council  
 Cllr Ashley Baxter – South Kesteven District Council  
 Cllr Mark Arnull – West Northants Council

		<b>ACTION</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>	
1.1	Cllr Sean Matthews welcomed members to the meeting.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Apologies</b>	
2.1	Apologies were received as noted above.	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
3.1	None.	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Minutes of Executive Board Meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2025</b>	
4.1	The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.	<b>SM</b>
4.2	Stuart Young confirmed that all matters arising from the minutes have been addressed. Many of these were in relation to the EMC AGM.	
4.3	In relation to Member allowances, Sam Maher confirmed she has been speaking to colleagues at other Local Authorities. Sam will also raise this issue at the Democratic Services Network and Member Development Network meetings and will update Members at the next Executive Board meeting.	
4.4	Cllr Sean Matthews feels some agreement and alignment would be beneficial.	
4.5	Cllr Gale Waller suggested alignment and joint work may be more appropriate with the new councils once LGR has been implemented.	
4.6	Cllr Tricia Gilby drew members attention to the concern that the risk of pension provision for councillors needs to be reconsidered by Government. The current system is a disincentive to young people in wishing to become councillors.	

		<b>ACTION</b>
4.7	Cllr Matthews echoed the need to attract more people. Younger Councillors do not tend to have a pension in place and are effectively on less than minimum wage and therefore find it difficult to continue in their role.	
4.8	Stuart Young confirmed that fuller information will be brought back to the next meeting after consideration by the Regional Employers' Board.	<b>SY</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Chair's Report – Summary of Key Issues</b>	
5.1	Cllr Sean Matthews introduced this report.	
5.2	Cllr Martin Griffiths formally nominated Cllr Chris McGiffin to Vice Chair of TfEM.	
5.3	Recent developments relating to the English Devolution Bill and its progress through the Parliamentary process were highlighted.	
5.4	Members noted that LGR proposals are due to be submitted end of November 2025.	
5.5	In relation to Local Government Funding Reform, Stuart highlighted the consultation process with regard to changes to fairer funding. In aggregate, our region is likely to benefit the most, although a number of district authorities are likely to be adversely impacted. Members noted that the region has lost out significantly on public investment over the last few years. Members agreed to write to the Minister about the proposed changes.	<b>SY</b>
5.6	Cllr Phil King confirmed Cllr Jonathan Wheeler has been appointed as the Conservative Vice Chair of Regional Employers' Board.	
5.7	<p><u>Resolution</u></p> <p>Members of the Executive Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Considered the issues highlighted within the report, the implications for the sector and for EMC.</li> </ul>	

		<b>ACTION</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Working on Behalf of Local Government – LGA Chair, Cllr Louise Gittens</b>	
6.1	Cllr Louise Gittens, LGA Chair addressed Members. She confirmed she is keen to understand what more the LGA can do to support authorities in the East Midlands.	<b>LG</b>
6.2	She updated members on work which the LGA are currently undertaking and their current priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fairer funding review.</li> <li>▪ Working closely with MHCLG politically and officer level around progress of devolution bill.</li> <li>▪ SEND reform and outcomes which are expected in the next month or so.</li> <li>▪ Adult Social Care and 10-year plan. LGA have stressed the need for quick actions.</li> <li>▪ Community cohesion and working with councils on this.</li> </ul>	
6.3	The LGA has undertaken a refresh of its strategic direction and vision. Changes to governance have also been implemented.	
6.4	Cllr Sean Matthews asked whether the LGA is confident that LGR will meet the timescales as proposed by Government.	
6.5	Cllr Gittens is confident that timescales will be met, and the priority programme is going ahead as scheduled.	
6.6	Cllr John Doddy asked whether the LGA are involved in the NHS 10 year plan in terms of the suggested local authorities public health responsibilities, which are subject to 5 yearly peer reviews.	
6.7	Cllr Louise Gittens feels the disparity needs to be addressed and will take this away to look at.	
6.8	Cllr Jewel Miah highlighted the funding gaps in relation to SEND and asked how this can this be funded appropriately to deliver services needed.	
6.9	Cllr Gittens stated it is not just about money but about reform and wanting to lead local SEND systems in Local Government. Inclusion is the main priority so children can be kept in their local school. If more capital money was available, this would	

		<b>ACTION</b>
	help schools build these facilities. She directed members to the following link <a href="#">Home   Champs Public Health Collaborative</a>	
6.10	Early interventions will help the child. The LGA's current position is available at: <a href="#">Towards an effective and financially sustainable approach to SEND in England   Local Government Association</a>	
6.11	Cllr Elly Cutkelvin asked that SEND and inclusion programmes also be tied to those relating to jobs and skills.	
6.12	Cllr Cutkelvin asked how the LGA will represent all councils in relation to fairer funding as each area will be different, and it is inevitable that there will be both winners and losers.	
6.13	Cllr Gittens confirmed that they are pushing for a better funding settlement for all councils. There is a need for wider systems reform and asked that Members share good practice on where savings may be made.	
6.14	Cllr Mick Barton highlighted the benefits of LGA peer reviews, being helpful from both an officer and member point of view to have a peer review at the start of new terms of office.	
6.15	Cllr Phil King expressed concerns that needs and requirements of more rural areas are being squeezed out. There is deprivation in rural areas but not in similar concentrations. The concern remains that much of the focus is upon larger urban areas.	
6.16	Cllr Gittens confirmed the fairer funding review is also looking at rurality.	
6.17	Mayor Andy Abrahams emphasised concerns relating to the compound effect of falling levels of funding. East Midlands voice needs to be heard and also there is a need for further investment.	
<b>7.</b>	<b>National Energy System Operator – Regional Energy Strategic Planning</b>	

		<b>ACTION</b>
7.1	Andrew Pritchard highlighted to Members the role of the National Energy Systems Operator (NESO), and the development of Regional Energy Strategic Plans (RESPs).	
7.2	The paper acknowledges the challenges facing the nation relating to the demand, supply and distribution of energy, but also highlights concerns about the impact of new energy infrastructure on the environment and on local communities.	
7.3	Members received a presentation from Melanie Taylor, Head of RESP Regions, and Jack Brereton, Head of Corporate Affairs for Nations and Regions.	
7.4	Jack explained why NESO has been set up and gave an overview of the work they are responsible for.	
7.5	Melanie Taylor highlighted the role of RESPs and the value they are intended to bring.	
7.6	A consultation will run in November 2025 on methodology and NESO would welcome engagement during this period. New governance is to be stood up at the end of Quarter 1 in 2026. RESP will be published at the end of 2027.	
7.7	Cllr Robert Reaney is pleased to hear that different solutions are being looked at. He feels MPs need to be engaged in this process as early as possible.	
7.8	Mayor Andy Abrahams welcomes the strategic plan for energy however he is concerned at the speed of this and how long projects take.	
7.9	Cllr Jim Hakewill highlighted that local authorities are not well prepared in relation to battery storage system proposals. He asked whether Northamptonshire can be included in East Midlands rather than outside of it.	
7.10	He also asked whether it matters where battery installation is installed and whether the railway network is protected where there is a substation to electrify. He also highlighted that power stations are being decommissioned and asked why battery storage can't be put in these locations.	
7.11	Jack stated these are related to connections process and are currently going through a process of reforming how the system operates. Reforms will ensure the	

		<b>ACTION</b>
	investment is prioritised on projects that are ready to deliver and also strategically aligned.	
7.12	Melanie confirmed how boundaries have been determined and Ofgen have set these based on Sub-National Transport Board boundaries. This was consulted on at the end of 2024 and confirmed at the beginning of 2025.	
7.13	Stuart Young highlighted the importance in relation to boundaries and to work with organisations that represent local government in the region. He would be keen to offer representation from the region onto the Strategic Board and also working groups.	
7.14	Cllr Martin Griffiths expressed disappointment in relation to boundaries. He also feels more time needs to be allocated to discuss this issue further.	
7.15	Members agreed this needs to be revisited in the near future and asked EMC officers to develop proposals to support future engagement.	<b>SY/AP</b>
7.16	<p><u>Resolution</u></p> <p>Members of the Executive Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Considered the report and received a presentation from the National Energy Systems Operator.</li> <li>▪ Considered and agreed specific issues at both the local and regional level, as the basis for on-going engagement with NESO, and to inform the development of an appropriately focused Regional Energy Strategic Plan.</li> </ul>	
<b>8.</b>	<b>Infrastructure, Housing &amp; Growth</b>	
8.1	Andrew Pritchard introduced this report and updated Members on latest developments.	
8.2	He highlighted the significant mismatch between levels of growth in the East Midlands and levels of public investment – particularly for transport.	
8.3	In relation to the Government investment decisions following the recent spending review, there was encouraging news for the East Midlands in that funding was	

		<b>ACTION</b>
	confirmed in principle for the A46 Newark Bypass, the A38 Derby Junctions, the A511 in Leicestershire and the North Hykeham Relief Road in Lincolnshire.	
8.4	However, no new rail investment for the East Midlands was announced and Midland Main Line Electrification has been indefinitely paused again.	
8.5	The TfEM Board will meet next week, with Sir Peter Soulsby and Cllr Chris McGiffin as Chair and Vice Chair respectively. The Board will consider updates from National Highways and also from East Midlands Railway on the introduction of the new inter-city Aurora rolling stock, the regional fleet refurbishment programme and additional services to be introduced in December 2025, including a new half hourly service along the Nottingham, Newark Lincoln corridor.	
8.6	TfEM will also be seeking endorsement of a new piece of research on the benefits of maintaining and enhancing rail connectivity to Lincoln, which we propose is launched jointly with the Greater Lincolnshire County Combined Authority later this year.	
8.7	Andrew confirmed that the Government has decided to end financial support for Midlands Connect and other Sub-National Transport Bodies in March 2027, with limited transitional funding only available for 2026/27 at a level yet to be determined. It is anticipated that the Midlands Connect Strategic Board will meet in November to discuss a Transition Plan for 2026/27.	
8.8	<p><u>Resolution</u></p> <p>Members of the Executive Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Endorsed the work of the TfEM Board.</li> <li>▪ Considered the rest of this report.</li> <li>▪ Directed officers accordingly.</li> </ul>	
<b>9.</b>	<b>Asylum and Refugee Resettlement in the East Midlands</b>	
9.1	Cllr John Doddy, Chair Regional Migration Board introduced this report which highlights issues that have been discussed at the recent board meeting and also highlights the role of EMC in supporting councils manage the different schemes, many of which are now mandatory.	

		<b>ACTION</b>
9.2	Cllr Doddy highlighted the reduction of the move on period from 56 to 28 days which could increase homelessness.	
9.3	Cllr Doddy informed members that £108,000 grant has been awarded to deliver a programme for improving childhood mental health service provision.	
9.4	Lack of asylum dispersal accommodation and inadequate funding are the 2 main issues currently.	
9.5	<p><u>Resolution</u></p> <p>Members of the Executive Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Considered the role of East Midlands Councils in the delivery of asylum and refugee resettlement programmes and provided advice in relation to the on-going work of EMC in addressing the concerns of local authorities.</li> <li>▪ Advised on the impact of the Full Dispersal plan in Local Authority areas including in those areas where numbers exceed agreed targets.</li> <li>▪ Considered and advised of the impact on Local Authorities of the changes of the move-on period from 56 days to 28 days (singles).</li> <li>▪ Advised on impact of the Afghan Resettlement Programme (ARP) and endorsed the proposed regional 'hub and spoke' model.</li> </ul>	
<b>10.</b>	<b>Local Authority Workforce and Pay – Regional Employers' Board</b>	
10.1	Cllr Jane Yates, Chair Regional Employers' Board, introduced this report and updated Members on the key issues currently being considered by the Board	
10.2	She confirmed that in relation to the national pay negotiations, these have mostly been completed.	
10.3	Consultation on the adult social care pay body is expected soon and EMC will be hosting meetings to help councils to consider the implications and prepare their responses to the consultations.	
10.4	The Employment Rights Bill is progressing through the Parliamentary process. EMC holds regular seminars and providing updates in monthly bulletins to ensure councils are up-to-date on these developments.	

		<b>ACTION</b>
10.5	On LGR, existing networks, new events and development programmes are being used to help councils with the workforce and leadership implications. It is also a standing item on the agenda for the Employers' Board and Regional Joint Council.	
10.6	Councils have reported recruitment and retention difficulties, and a regional priority has been to help councils with these challenges. EMC has facilitated the roll-out of a national recruitment campaign for the sector across the region in 2024/25. This received positive feedback from councils and an independent evaluation, and further government funding has been provided for a campaign for 2026. Again, EMC is taking a co-ordinating role and ensuring councils can shape the campaign to meet their needs.	
10.7	<u>Resolution</u> Members of the Executive Board: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Considered the issues highlighted in the report.</li> </ul>	
<b>11.</b>	<b>Report of Management Group</b>	
11.1	Cllr Elly Cutkelvin introduced this report and highlighted the roles and responsibilities of the Management Group.	
11.2	Cllr Cutkelvin confirmed that budgets and the delivery of the Business Plan remain on track and there are no concerns to report.	
11.3	<u>Resolution</u>  Members of the Executive Board: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Considered the issues detailed in the update report, including the assurance on financial, audit and corporate governance matters.</li> </ul>	
<b>12.</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
12.1	None.	
<b>13.</b>	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>	
13.1	Wednesday 10 <sup>th</sup> December 2025	



**Executive Board**

**10<sup>th</sup> December 2025**

**Chair's Report - Cllr Sean Matthews**

**Summary**

The following report provides a summary information on recent developments relating to proposed Local Government Reorganisation, future governance arrangements and devolution.

**Recommendation**

Members of the Executive Board are invited to:

- Consider the range of LGR proposals from councils in the East Midlands, and wider developments relating to devolution and local government funding.
- Consider the issues paper on future governance that relate to EMC as a partnership organisation, for comment and advice, as attached as Appendix 5(c).

## **1. Local Government Reorganisation**

- 1.1 The deadline for local authorities in the East Midlands to submit their full proposals for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) was 28<sup>th</sup> November 2025.
- 1.2 The East Midlands is one of the most 2 tier regions, with a local government structure comprising 4 county councils, 6 unitary councils, 29 district/borough councils and 1 National Park Authority. The implementation of LGR has a greater impact on this region than many other parts of the country.
- 1.3 While exact structures are not yet determined, it is likely that there will be 10/12 local authorities in the region once LGR is implemented. A summary of recently submitted proposals for LGR is attached as Appendix 5(a).
- 1.4 Members previously requested information on the LGR process and related timetable. A summary note is thus provided and attached as Appendix 5(b).
- 1.5 Members may be aware of recent concerns regarding the funding arrangements for future unitary authorities. As individual council's funding will be fixed for the next 3 years, councils will be asked to agree themselves how new funding will be divided between areas where authorities such as county councils are split as a result of reorganisation.
- 1.6 MHCLG confirmed that they will look to provide local authorities with guidance, but that if councils are not able to agree apportionment, then the Government will put in place a 'backstop' – in effect, making the decision itself 'to ensure any division of funding is made on a rational basis'. In many ways, this is similar to the LGR process itself, where councils were asked to come up with plans, and if they could not agree, then Ministers would have the final say.
- 1.7 It is worth reflecting that so far on LGR, not a single area has come up with a unanimous plan. It is therefore reasonable to question whether unanimity will be found in relation to funding, at a time of significant resource constraints for the sector.

### **Local Government-led Governance**

- 1.8 The implications of LGR are far reaching, and as one of the most two-tier regions nationally, will have a significant impact on the East Midlands. It will also impact upon EMC as an organisation, in terms of the work we do, our partnership and resource base.

- 1.9 Once the new local government and devolution arrangements are in place, if councils have an expectation that future unitary arrangements would benefit from a partnership structure to support collective work separate from the strategic authority construct, then this is a matter for local authorities to consider and agree, including on its form, its function and associated timings.
- 1.10 In consideration of the Government's stated timetable, EMC is now working within an 18-month timeframe with related budgetary assumptions and an expectation that shadow unitary authorities are established in April 2027. Future governance arrangements that relate to EMC will therefore need to be agreed, at least in principle, by end-2026/27.
- 1.11 Members have considered these matters, both within Board meetings and the AGM, with a commitment to explore proposals with member councils over the course of 2025/26 once the LGR proposition becomes clearer. However, conscious of timescales, with decisions on LGR not likely until the summer 2026, Members directed that initial issues paper be brought to a future meeting.
- 1.12 The purpose of the paper is to summarise the timings, scope and implications of LGR and devolution, and related issues for future arrangements of any regional partnership body that sits within the new structure for local government in the East Midlands.
- 1.13 The summary paper attached as Appendix 5(c), is presented for Member consideration, comment and advice, and explores the principles and broad options that may be considered when determining the future shape and resource implications of regional partnership arrangements, if any. It does not seek to propose or confirm the way forward but seeks Member advice on the way forward and in the determination of these matters.

## **2. Devolution – The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill**

- 2.1 The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill sets out how Government intends to deliver on its promised 'devolution revolution' over the course of this Parliament. Headlines include plans to extend devolution to all parts of England, additional powers and funding flexibility for mayors, and the replacement of two-tier local government with unitary authorities.
- 2.2 The Bill remains in the early stages of the legislative process having completed its Committee Stage and currently at Report Stage.

- 2.3 The Bill establishes the proposed role of Strategic Authorities that will have a statutory basis, with the following levels:
- a) Foundation Strategic Authorities: these include non-mayoral Combined Authorities and Combined County Authorities automatically, and (in ‘exceptional circumstances’) any Local Authority designated as a Strategic Authority without a Mayor.
  - b) Mayoral Strategic Authorities: the Greater London Authority, all Mayoral Combined Authorities and all Mayoral Combined County Authorities will automatically begin as Mayoral Strategic Authorities.
  - c) Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities: for those Mayoral Strategic Authorities that meet specified eligibility criteria, and a status that will unlock further devolution, most notably an Integrated Settlement.
- 2.4 The Bill clarifies the principles it will use to decide upon the geography for future devolution agreements: scale (with a preference for more than 1.5m people), economic geography, alignment to public service footprints and local identity.
- 2.5 It has also introduced a ‘Ministerial directive’ to compel areas to establish strategic authorities if they are unable to agree – or to prevent small devolution ‘islands’ being left out of the process.

### **New Powers for Combined Authorities**

- 2.6 Substantial new powers were announced in relation to spatial development and planning. All areas will be required to develop Spatial Development Strategies over a strategic geography including the apportionment of housing targets across local areas. In Mayoral Strategic Authorities, Mayors will be empowered to develop and propose the Spatial Development Strategy for their areas, working closely with Strategic Authority members.
- 2.7 Mayors will also be granted call-in powers, allowing them to override local planning decisions in some circumstances.
- 2.8 The Bill also confirms additional control over employment support and plans for new innovation funding for combined authorities with the role of mayors expanded in areas such as health, energy and net zero.
- 2.9 The Bill announced proposals for how combined authorities take key decisions including for mayors to be able to exercise their functions with simple majority support from other local leaders ‘wherever possible’. This is perhaps intended to

make it easier to implement spatial development, transport and investment strategies, where many existing current arrangements would require unanimous or two-thirds approval of combined authority boards.

- 2.10 It was recently announced that Mayors outside of London will be given greater influence over the Government's affordable housing programme. Mayors, working jointly with Homes England, will be able to prioritise indicative spending of £7bn and shape how affordable housing money will be spent in their regions, detailing the types of homes that get built and sites that will be prioritised for construction.
- 2.11 Established' Mayoral Strategic Authorities will be granted single-pot 'integrated settlements' that can be allocated flexibly in line with local preferences. As not all places will be ready to take on this level of responsibility, less advanced Mayoral Strategic Authorities will get separate consolidated funding pots covering local growth, place, housing, and regeneration, non-apprenticeship adult skills and transport following the next spending review.
- 2.12 To take advantage of these additional devolution powers, Mayor Clare Ward has written to the Government with an application for the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) to be granted 'Established Status'.
- 2.13 The recent Budget announced a number of significant new powers, flexibilities and funding for mayoral authorities, that include integrated settlements, business rates retention zones and growth funds, and tourism tax powers. However, there are a number of areas in the East Midlands that do not have devolution arrangements in place, and without a clear pathway to gaining access to these new opportunities, these areas risk falling further behind.

### **3. Recommendation**

Members of the Executive Board are invited to:

- 3.1 Consider the range of LGR proposals from councils in the East Midlands, and wider developments relating to devolution and local government funding.
- 3.2 Consider the issues paper on future governance that relate to EMC as a partnership organisation, for comment and advice, as attached as Appendix 5(c).

**Cllr Sean Matthews**  
**Chair**  
**East Midlands Councils**

## Summary of Proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in the East Midlands

The following report provides a summary of LGR proposals from councils in the East Midlands.

1. The East Midlands is one of the most 2 tier regions, with a local government structure comprising 4 county councils, 6 unitary councils and 29 district/borough councils. The implementation of LGR has a greater impact on this region than many other parts of the country.
2. The deadline for Local Government to submit their proposals was 28<sup>th</sup> November. In total, 15 proposals were submitted: 5 from Derbyshire, 3 from Leicestershire, 3 from Nottinghamshire, and 4 from councils in Lincolnshire.
3. A total of 38 proposals for LGR were submitted nationally across 21 two-tier areas. This does present a challenge to MHCLG capacity in terms of evaluating all proposals and confirming decisions by the summer 2026.

### Derbyshire

#### 4. Derbyshire County Council

The county council's preferred option is for a single unitary council for all of Derbyshire including Derby City.

#### 5. Derby City and District Councils

- Derby City Council and the 8 District Councils propose establishing 2 unitary councils for the Derbyshire area; a council for northern Derbyshire and a council for southern Derbyshire with Amber Valley council area being split between the northern and southern councils, albeit that councils have indicated different preferences for how the Amber Valley area should be allocated:
- Derby City, Chesterfield Borough, Erewash Borough and High Peak Borough support an option that divides Amber Valley between the two new authorities.
- North East Derbyshire District, Bolsover District and Derbyshire Dales District support a similar north-south structure but placing more of Amber Valley in the north.
- South Derbyshire District Council supports an option that places the whole Amber Valley area in the south.
- Amber Valley Borough Council supports Option A, which places the entire district within the new North Derbyshire authority.

## **Leicestershire**

### 6. Leicestershire County Council

Leicestershire County Council proposes a single Leicestershire and Rutland unitary, with the city boundary unchanged.

### 7. Leicester City Council

The city council's proposal would establish two unitary councils for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. Under the city council's preferred proposal, Leicester's boundary would expand to include parts of Blaby, Charnwood, and Harborough councils and all of Oadby & Wigston, and a second unitary authority would bring together the rest of the county area.

### 8. Leicestershire Districts and Rutland

- The 7 Leicestershire districts and Rutland County Council propose the 'North, City, South' model, advocating a 3 unitary council structure comprising North Leicestershire and Rutland, South Leicestershire, and Leicester City.
- The North Leicestershire and Rutland unitary would include the districts and borough areas of North West Leicestershire, Charnwood and Melton, and Rutland. The South Leicestershire unitary would include the district and borough areas of Hinckley & Bosworth, Blaby, Oadby & Wigston, and Harborough. Leicester City Council's boundary would remain unchanged.

## **Lincolnshire**

### 9. Lincoln City

City of Lincoln Council proposes an expanded Lincoln City Unitary (City of Lincoln and wards from North Kesteven and West Lindsey) and a Rural Lincolnshire Unitary covering the remaining county districts (West Lindsey, East Lindsey, Boston, South Holland, North Kesteven and South Kesteven).

### 10. South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

- East Lindsey, South Holland and Boston borough and district councils propose 2 new unitaries covering the entire GLCCA area, preserving existing boundaries and including both North and North East Lincolnshire Councils.
- The North Lincolnshire unitary includes the areas covered by North Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire, West Lindsey, Lincoln City.
- The South Lincolnshire unitary includes the areas covered by North Kesteven, South Kesteven, Boston, South Holland and East Lindsey.

11. Lincolnshire County Council

Lincolnshire County Council has submitted a single county-wide unitary proposal that covers the county and district councils and preserving the existing boundaries. This option is supported by North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire Councils.

12. North Kesteven and South Kesteven

North Kesteven and South Kesteven District Councils proposal is for 2 unitaries that preserve existing boundaries; a Southern Lincolnshire Unitary (North Kesteven, South Kesteven, South Holland), and a Central and Coastal Lincolnshire Unitary (City of Lincoln, West Lindsey, East Lindsey, Boston), alongside the existing northern unitaries.

**Nottinghamshire**

13. Nottingham City

- Nottingham City Council proposes a 2 unitary model, 1 for the North and East serving the more rural areas, and 1 for the Southwest based on the urban conurbation. The proposals are aligned to ward boundaries rather than those of districts.
- The North and East unitary with a population of 561,200 would include Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark & Sherwood, and parts of Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe. The Southwest unitary, with a population of 612,500, would cover Nottingham City, parts of Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe.

14. Nottinghamshire County Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council

The county council and Rushcliffe propose a unitary covering Nottingham City, Broxtowe and Gedling Borough Council areas, with a second unitary council covering the Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood and Rushcliffe Borough Council areas.

15. Bassetlaw, Gedling, Mansfield and Newark and Sherwood Borough Councils

- Bassetlaw, Gedling, Mansfield and Newark and Sherwood Borough Councils propose a unitary covering Nottingham City, Broxtowe and Rushcliffe Borough Council areas, with a second unitary council to cover Bassetlaw, Gedling, Mansfield and Newark and Sherwood Borough Council areas.
- North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire Councils are not included within LGR proposals, as both councils were only recently established in April 2021, replacing the previous county councils and district/borough councils.

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## Summary of Local Government Reorganisation: Process and Timetable

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the 2007 Act) provides the statutory framework and process for LGR.

### Process

1. Stage one: Inviting unitary proposals. Invitations went to the 21 two-tier areas and their neighbouring small unitary authorities and included statutory guidance, specifying criteria for establishing new unitary authorities and matters that should be considered. Councils must have regard to the criteria and guidance, including the specified deadline for proposals.
2. Stage two: Submission of formal unitary proposals. Each council can only make one formal proposal for unitary local government, and a proposal can either be submitted individually by a council or jointly with other councils that were invited. The Secretary of State can decide to take forward proposals that are submitted by areas with or without modification. If councils within an area cannot agree on a single proposal and want to submit separate proposals, the Government's stated preference was they be supported by a shared evidence base.
3. Stage three: Statutory consultation. The government will carry out a statutory consultation including first consulting any council affected that has not submitted the proposal, as well as any other persons considered appropriate, before a proposal can be implemented.
4. Stage four: Decision to implement a proposal. Once a statutory consultation is concluded, Ministers will decide, subject to Parliamentary approval, which, if any, proposal is to be implemented, with or without modification. In taking these decisions, Ministers will judge proposals in the round against the criteria, having regard to all the representations that were received, including the consultation responses, and any other relevant information available to Ministers.
5. Stage five: Making secondary legislation – the Structural Changes Order (SCO). Once a decision is taken on which proposal to implement, the Department will prepare the necessary legislation (the SCO) for Parliamentary approval. The SCO establishes the new single tier of local government in the relevant area and makes provision to abolish the predecessor councils. It will replace any currently planned elections with new elections for the new councils with appropriate wards/divisions for these new elections, amend the terms of office of current councillors as required, and give any preparatory functions needed. This means,

for example, any councillors elected in local elections in May 2026 will be elected for a normal term but, if the council is abolished during that term through the reorganisation process, their terms would be reduced.

- a) The Order: will specify arrangements for the first elections for the new unitary council/s, councillor numbers, the functions the new council has in the transition period and establish suitable governance arrangements for the transition period before new councils go live, by giving powers to the relevant executive or joint committee overseeing the transition.
  - b) Elections: Typically, the first elections to new unitary councils take place on electoral arrangements specified in the SCO, and which are built using a mixture of existing wards, divisions or, in some cases, parishes. The names of wards/divisions and the numbers of councillors to be elected are also specified in the legislation. A councillor can stand in elections for the new unitary authority at the same time as serving their term in the existing council. If elected to the new unitary council, this will be for a new term as set out in the SCO. They can simultaneously serve out the remainder of their term as a councillor for the existing local authority until such time as the existing local authority is abolished – this may be a reduced term, or in some cases their term may be extended to provide for the transition.
  - c) Transition period arrangements: The SCO will specify the governance arrangements for the new unitary councils in the transition period i.e. what sort of transition body will be in place during the transition period until predecessor councils are abolished and new unitary councils go live.
6. Stage six: Transition period. Once the SCO has been made, the existing councils carry on delivering services and fulfilling their duties until vesting day, while preparing to transfer all assets, functions and staff on vesting day when the predecessor councils are dissolved and the new unitary authority takes on the legal duties and powers for providing local government to the area. The relevant transition body will focus on getting ready for the go-live day for the new unitary authority and will be responsible for taking any decisions relating to the preparation for new unitary authority to be safe and legal on day one. MHCLG will require an Implementation Plan from the relevant transition body, which will set out what steps and decisions the body needs to take in order for the new unitary council to be ready for vesting day.

Key implementation issues likely to be included in the Implementation Plan include council tax harmonisation and preparing for the aggregation (and potentially disaggregation) of services.

7. Stage seven: New unitary authority goes live, called vesting day. While preparatory work may start with the development of proposals and continue through the process, a minimum of around a year is allowed to enable safe and legal transfer of key services from the point the legislation is made, to when the new unitary council/s goes live. Government is aiming for new authorities to go live on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2027 (for Surrey) and 1<sup>st</sup> April 2028 (for other areas) depending on the proposals received.

### **Timetable**

8. Note, Government has stated a number of caveats, including that the timetable is subject to a number of external factors and that they would like to move to new structures 'as soon as practicable'.
9. For areas not included within the Devolution Priority Programme (i.e., the East Midlands), it is anticipated that the final proposals are submitted at the end of November 2025, a consultation could be launched in the New Year, but it would likely close after the local elections in May.
10. Following this, decisions on which proposal to implement could be announced before the summer recess. Secondary legislation would then be prepared, to be laid in the House after the summer recess. The legislation could then be made, subject to Parliamentary approval. This would allow for elections to the new unitary authorities on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2027. The new authorities would then go live on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2028.



**Executive Board**

**10<sup>th</sup> December 2025**

**Infrastructure & Growth**

**Summary**

This report seeks endorsement for the work of the TfEM Board and provides an update on key regional economic indicators; the Government's planning reform agenda and the future of Midlands Connect.

**Recommendations**

Members of the Executive Board are invited to:

- Endorse the work of the TfEM Board.
- Consider the rest of this report.
- Direct officers accordingly.

## **1. Growth, Productivity & Investment in the East Midlands**

- 1.1 The East Midlands is now a region of 5.1 million people and 403,000 businesses. Total regional output in 2023 (as measured by GDP) was £157bn, equivalent to 5.8% of the UK economy. The East Midlands employment rate is just above the UK average at 75.3% (UK=75.0%). Median weekly earnings are below the UK average: £684 pw compared to £728pw. 10.7% of the workforce work in manufacturing, compared with 6.9% for the UK – although this percentage has declined significantly in recent years. The region’s unemployment rate has increased recently and is now just above the UK average: currently at 5.3% compared to 5.0%<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.2 Productivity has remained below the UK average over the last 20 years in the East Midlands and has been on a declining trajectory relative to the UK - currently 84.8% of the UK average in 2023<sup>2</sup>
- 1.3 The Treasury publishes an annual Public Expenditure Statistical Analysis (PESA) every July on where public money (capital and revenue) is spent and on what, in the previous financial year. The latest analysis<sup>3</sup> demonstrates that between 2019-20 to 2023-24, total expenditure on core public services has remained consistently below the UK and England averages.
- 1.4 Transport spend per head has been very significantly below the UK average level for the last 20 years and has now declined to just 54% of the UK average for 2023/24, the lowest level of any UK region or nation. The disparity in levels of investment spend per head between the East Midlands (£368) and the West Midlands (£687) continues to widen. This is likely due to large-scale infrastructure programmes including HS2, several new local rail stations and related highways investment.

## **2. Transport for the East Midlands (TfEM)**

- 2.1 Transport for the East Midlands brings together the Region’s Local Transport Authorities under the auspices of East Midlands Councils to provide collective leadership on strategic transport issues and meets on a quarterly basis. TfEM is chaired by Sir Peter Soulsby the City Mayor of Leicester. Cllr Chris McGiffen (North Northamptonshire) is the Vice Chair.

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<sup>1</sup> [SN06924.xlsx](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Annual regional labour productivity - Office for National Statistics](#)

<sup>3</sup> [CP 1363 – Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses 2025](#)

### **Transport Infrastructure Priorities**

- 2.2 Since 2017 TfEM and Midlands Connect have identified, developed and promoted a programme of shared strategic transport infrastructure priorities to support growth and productivity and help to address the historic underfunding of the East Midlands - which has endured under all Governments for the last 25 years.
- 2.3 These priorities have flexed from time to time to reflect changing circumstances and Government policy. The current version was published in March 2024 and includes the following:
- Midland Main Line Electrification
  - Nottingham-Leicester-Coventry Rail Connectivity
  - Midlands-Leeds & North East Rail Connectivity
  - A46 Growth Corridor & Newark
  - A50/A500 Growth Corridor
  - A5 Growth Corridor
  - Improving Safety Reliability on the A1
  - M1 Junction 24 & Surrounding Area
- 2.4 The Spending Review confirmed funding for the delivery of the A46 Newark Bypass, subject to the Development Consent Order (which was confirmed in October 2025) and value for money assessments. Following concerns about a delay from the most recently publicised start date of 2027 due to the number of unfinished RIS2 projects and the scale of new commitment such as the Lower Thames Crossing, the Chair of TfEM and the Chair of EMC wrote to the Secretary of State emphasising the need to expedite the scheme. The exchange of correspondence is set out in Appendix 6(a&b).

### **Rail Service Enhancements.**

- 2.5 In 2020 TfEM signed a Collaboration Agreement with the Department for Transport to provide local input into the management of rail services provided by East Midlands Railway (EMR). The Agreement is joint funded and has enabled the recruitment of a TfEM Head of Rail Improvement who is accountable to the TfEM Board but sits at the interface with the DfT Rail Markets Team managing EMR's contract. In recent years the influence of this role has been extended to include services in the East Midlands run by CrossCountry and Northern.

- 2.6 The RCA has also enabled TfEM to develop independent regional evidence to support the case for DfT investment in strategic enhancements, including Midland Main Line Electrification<sup>4</sup>; and improved regional rail services<sup>5</sup>.
- 2.7 The RCA is currently funding a comprehensive refresh of regional transport and economic evidence to inform a revised 'Rail Strategic Statement' and a suite of supporting documents to inform the emerging Great British Railways (GBR).
- 2.8 The first public product focuses on the case for sustaining and improving rail connectivity to Lincoln and was published on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2025 entitled Keeping Pace: Enhancing Lincoln City's rail connectivity - set out in Appendix 6(c) 2. The associated media release included quotes from the Chair of TfEM Sir Peter Soulsby, the GLCCA Mayor Dame Andrea Jenkyns and the Chair of EMC Cllr Sean Matthews<sup>6</sup>.
- 2.9 On the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2025 the Chair of TfEM Sir Peter Soulsby attended the launch of EMR's new Auroa 810 Intercity train in Derby<sup>7</sup>. The new trains provide:
- 24% more seats and 19% more legroom (in a five-carriage formation)
  - Plug sockets and USB points at every seat
  - Free, class-leading Wi-Fi and improved mobile signal strength through new glass technology
  - Modern, spacious interiors with improved lighting and accessible design
  - Increased luggage space (up to 136% more capacity)
- 2.10 The first of the new fleet of 33 trains will enter service in December 2025, with full roll-out expected by the end of 2026. However, in the meantime, the ongoing cascade to an 'open access' operator of EMR's existing Meridian rolling stock is resulting in over-crowding on some services.
- 2.11 The TfEM Board will next meet on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2025 to discuss the following agenda items.
- A presentation from East Midlands Airport.
  - Impact of the 2025 Budget on transport and the Region's Shared Priorities.
  - A progress update on the delivery of new and refurbished rolling stock and service enhancements by the MD of East Midlands Railway.

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<sup>4</sup> [TheFuturesElectric.pdf](#)

<sup>5</sup> [A-Platform-for-Growth.pdf](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Keeping Pace: Enhancing Lincoln City's Rail Connectivity](#)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7397305545516339201>

- An update by TfEM’s Head of Rail Improvement on work to develop and extend a regional evidence base to support revised priorities prior to the formal establishment of Great British Railways in April 2027.

### **3 Midlands Connect**

- 3.1 The Midlands Connect Strategic Board last met on the 27th November 2025 in Birmingham with Sir Peter Soulsby and Mayor Clare Ward in attendance representing the East Midlands. Mayor Dame Andrea Jenkyns sent apologies and submitted written comments. The Meeting was chaired on an interim basis by WMCA Mayor Richard Parker.
- 3.2 Following the recent Spending Review, DfT have decided to cease funding sub-national transport bodies from the end of 2026/7. Whilst the Midlands Connect budget for 2025/26 remains untouched, DfT has told all STBs to expect transitional funding only for 2026/27, and at a substantially lower level.
- 3.3 The meeting therefor considered a draft transition plan and 2026/7 budget for Midlands Connect as a basis for submission to the DfT by the 8<sup>th</sup> December, and proposals to explore the potential for a post March 2027 collaborative model which could be sustained in the absence of DfT grant funding. The Board will next meet again in the spring of 2026.

### **4 Planning Reform**

- 4.1 The Planning & Infrastructure Bill has now passed through both Houses of Parliament and is expected to receive Royal Assent very shortly. Amongst key proposals is the re-introduction of statutory strategic planning in the form of ‘Spatial Development Strategies (SDS). SDSs will be produced by Mayoral Combined Authorities where they exist, and ‘Strategic Planning Boards’ made up of constituent local authorities and designated by Government where they do not<sup>8</sup>.
- 4.2 Such is the pace of planning reform that the Government is still implementing key aspects of the Levelling Up & Regeneration Act (LURA) 2023. Following the Budget the Government published proposals to implement a 30-month local plan review process<sup>9</sup>, with formal regulations expected shortly. These regulations will apply to those Local Planning Authorities which fail to meet the December 2026 deadline for progressing local plans under the current system.

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<sup>8</sup> [Factsheet: Strategic planning - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Plan-making regulations explainer - GOV.UK](#)

- 4.3 Government proposals for draft ‘National Development Management Policies’ are expected shortly, which were also introduced by the LURA.
- 4.4 The Budget itself made available £48m over the next three years to boost capacity and capability in the planning system. This includes additional investment to recruit an extra 350 planners in England by expanding the Pathways to Planning graduate scheme<sup>10</sup>, and creating a new Planning Careers Hub to retain and retrain mid-career professionals. However, there is no sign of the Government removing the age 16-21 age restriction on Level 7 Apprenticeships, which have proven to be effective means of training local authority planners in recent years.

## **5 Recommendations**

Members of the Executive Board are invited to:

- 5.1 Endorse the work of the TfEM Board.
- 5.2 Consider the rest of this report
- 5.3 Direct officers accordingly.

**Andrew Pritchard**  
**Director of Policy & Infrastructure**  
**East Midlands Councils**

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<sup>10</sup> [Pathways to Planning | Local Government Association](#)



Secretary of State for Transport  
Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

9<sup>th</sup> October 2025

Sent by email

Dear Secretary of State

### **DELIVERY OF THE A46 NEWARK BYPASS**

We are delighted that the Spending Review confirmed funding for the A46 Newark Bypass and that the necessary Development Consent Order has now been issued.

As you will be aware, the scheme is vital not just to the town of Newark-on-Trent, it forms a key part of a wider 'trade corridor' linking the Humber Ports and East Midlands Freeports with key cities across the Midlands, and with the A1.

Consequently, the A46 Newark Bypass has been TfEM's top strategic road investment priority for the last decade.

With all the key elements now in place, we are keen to secure prompt delivery by National Highways of this long overdue scheme.

The last published estimated start date was 2027 with completion within the RIS3 period. It is vital that this timetable is not allowed to slip. Any delay will lead to further cost increases and traffic congestion and undermine delivery of planned large-scale housing and employment development across the East Midlands.

The indefinite 'pausing' of Midland Main Line Electrification was a bitter blow for the region and the latest Treasury figures published this July confirmed that the East Midlands remains rooted to the bottom of the league table for transport investment - just 54% of the UK average per head.

Turning this situation around after years of neglect by successive Governments will take time. As we hope that you will agree, kickstarting delivery of the A46 Newark Bypass represents an essential first step.

Yours sincerely



Sir Peter Soulsby  
Chair of Transport for the East Midlands



Cllr Sean Matthews  
Chair of East Midlands Councils

Copied to: James Naish MP (Rushcliffe), Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for the East Midlands



Department  
for Transport

From the Parliamentary  
Under Secretary of State  
**Simon Lightwood MP**

Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000  
E-Mail: [simon.lightwood@dft.gov.uk](mailto:simon.lightwood@dft.gov.uk)

Web site: [www.gov.uk/dft](http://www.gov.uk/dft)

Our Ref: MC/00050709

Sir Peter Soulsby  
Chair of Transport for the East Midlands

Councillor Sean Matthews  
Chair of East Midlands Councils

14 November 2025

Dear Sir Peter and Councillor Matthews,

Thank you for your letter of 9 October to the Secretary of State regarding the A46 Newark Bypass scheme. I am responding as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

I appreciate and acknowledge your comments on the importance of the A46 Newark Bypass, not only for Newark-on-Trent, but also as a vital part of the wider 'trade corridor' linking the Humber and East Midlands Freeports with key cities across the Midlands.

Following the Spending Review, the Secretary of State announced on 8 July 2025 that the government has set aside funding for the A46 Newark Bypass scheme. As you note, the necessary Development Consent Order has now been granted.

We continue to work with National Highways to identify the most efficient cost and delivery timelines, more information on delivery will be available as part of next year's RIS3 publications.

Looking ahead, I can assure you the Government remains committed to maintaining and renewing the road network to ensure that it works for all residents and businesses who use it.

Thank you again for taking the time to write to the Secretary of State about the A46 Newark Bypass scheme.

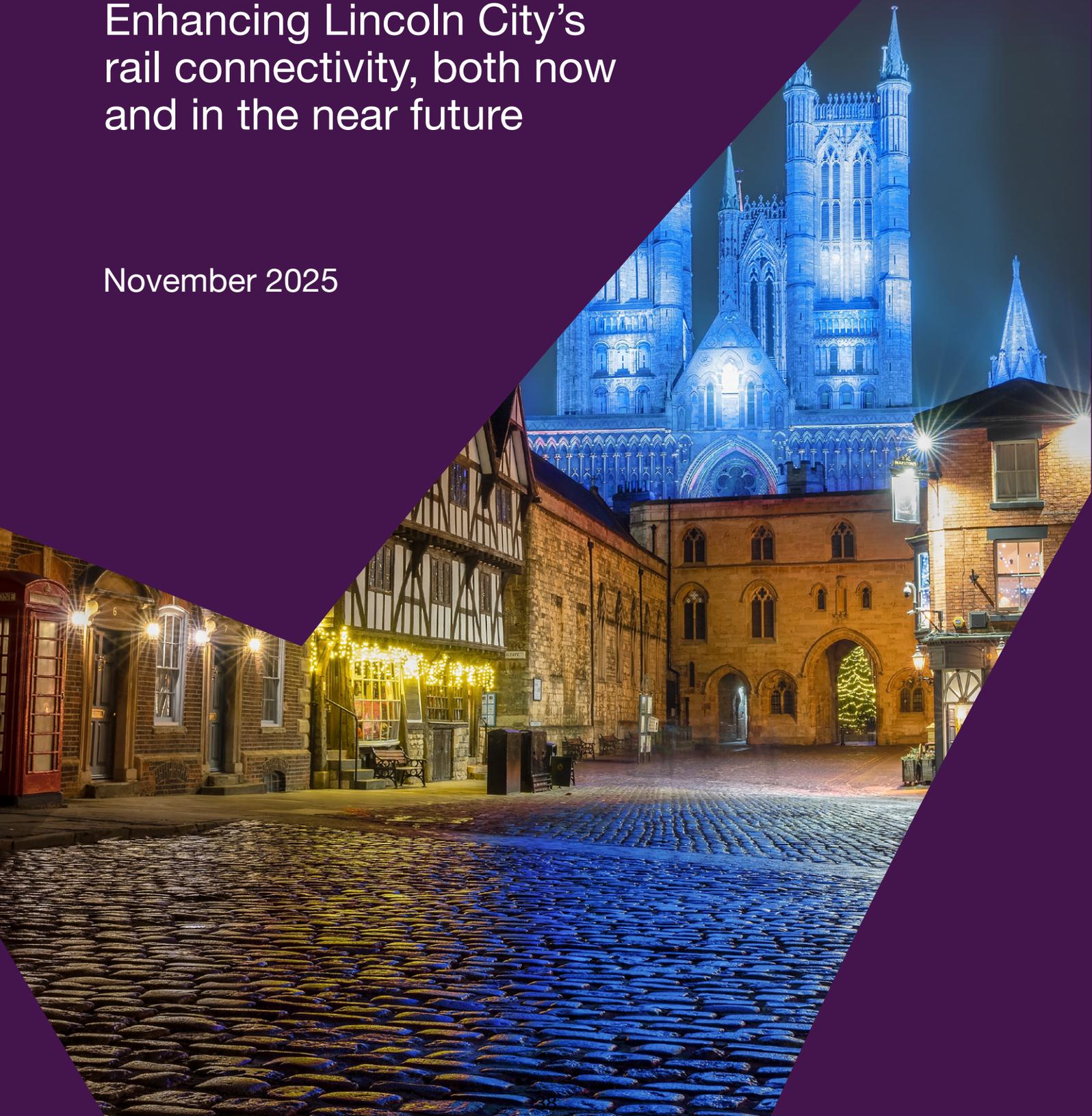
Yours sincerely,

**SIMON LIGHTWOOD MP**  
**MINISTER FOR ROADS AND BUSES**

# KEEPING PACE:

Enhancing Lincoln City's  
rail connectivity, both now  
and in the near future

November 2025



# FOREWORD: Keeping Pace with Growth

Lincoln is an ambitious city with a young and rapidly growing population. Lincoln's diverse economy spans agrifood, tourism, logistics and manufacturing, and its cultural and historic offer attracts millions of visitors each year. New homes and jobs are being created at pace, and the city is already home to two universities with a combined student population of over 20,000<sup>1</sup>.

But while Lincoln has moved forward, its rail services have not kept pace. Councils and local partners have long campaigned for better connections, recognising both the importance of frequent services to Nottingham and direct links to London.

That persistence is starting to pay off. From December 2025, services between Lincoln and Nottingham will double from hourly to half-hourly, a long-awaited breakthrough that will strengthen the city's role within the wider East Midlands economy. Together with the two hourly daily direct London services, this timetable should now be seen as the baseline level of connectivity that Lincoln requires.

As Lincoln grows, further investment in infrastructure and trains will be essential. Regional links made more convenient and resilient for passengers, faster journey times, and the removal of capacity constraints are all needed to match the scale of Lincoln's growth and ambition.

Transport for the East Midlands (TfEM) and the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority (GLCCA) have a shared vision that sees a better-connected Lincoln City as a priority for the East Midlands transport network and the East Midlands economy.

**Mayor**  
**Sir Peter Soulsby:**  
**Chair Transport for**  
**the East Midlands**



**Dame Andrea Jenkyns:**  
**Mayor of Greater**  
**Lincolnshire**  
**Combined County**  
**Authority**



**Cllr Sean Matthews:**  
**Chair of GLCCA**  
**Transport Board,**  
**Chair East Midlands**  
**Councils and Leader**  
**Lincolnshire County**  
**Council**



# Lincoln City: In Profile



**100,000+**  
population and one of  
the fastest-growing  
cities in the East  
Midlands



**12,000**  
new jobs by 2036



**3 million**  
visitors a year



**31,000**  
new homes expected  
by 2045



**£264**  
million  
of economic activity



**A young,  
ambitious city whose  
future success depends  
on reliable, frequent,  
and fast rail services**

## As Lincolnshire's only city - and its principal economic and administrative centre - Lincoln plays a critical role in driving the county's future. Regional partners see stronger transport links with Lincoln as essential to unlocking both the city and the county's full potential.

Lincoln's population increased by 11%<sup>2</sup> between 2011 and 2021 to more than 100,000 people, making it among the top five fastest-growing local authorities in the East Midlands. It has a young demographic, with 13% of residents classed as young adults, including over 20,000 students<sup>3</sup> studying at the University of Lincoln and Lincoln Bishop University.

The city's economy is diverse, with strengths in agrifood, tourism, logistics, and manufacturing, and employment opportunities are on the rise; a projected 12,000 new jobs<sup>4</sup> are planned by 2036, with a Government expectation of 31,000 new homes in the Lincoln housing area by 2045. These are particularly focused around Charterholme, an intensive growth corridor to the west of the city centre, close to the Castle Line, which links Lincoln with Newark and Nottingham.

Despite these positive trends, Lincoln faces challenges related to transport and productivity. More than a quarter (28.38%<sup>5</sup>) of its households do not have access to a car or van, creating clear transport disadvantages. Those who do, remain heavily reliant on car travel due to limited rail connectivity, contributing to high emissions and limiting progress on decarbonisation.

Rail has not kept pace with the city's growth, leaving tourism and business at a disadvantage. As a historic cathedral city with a strong independent retail scene,

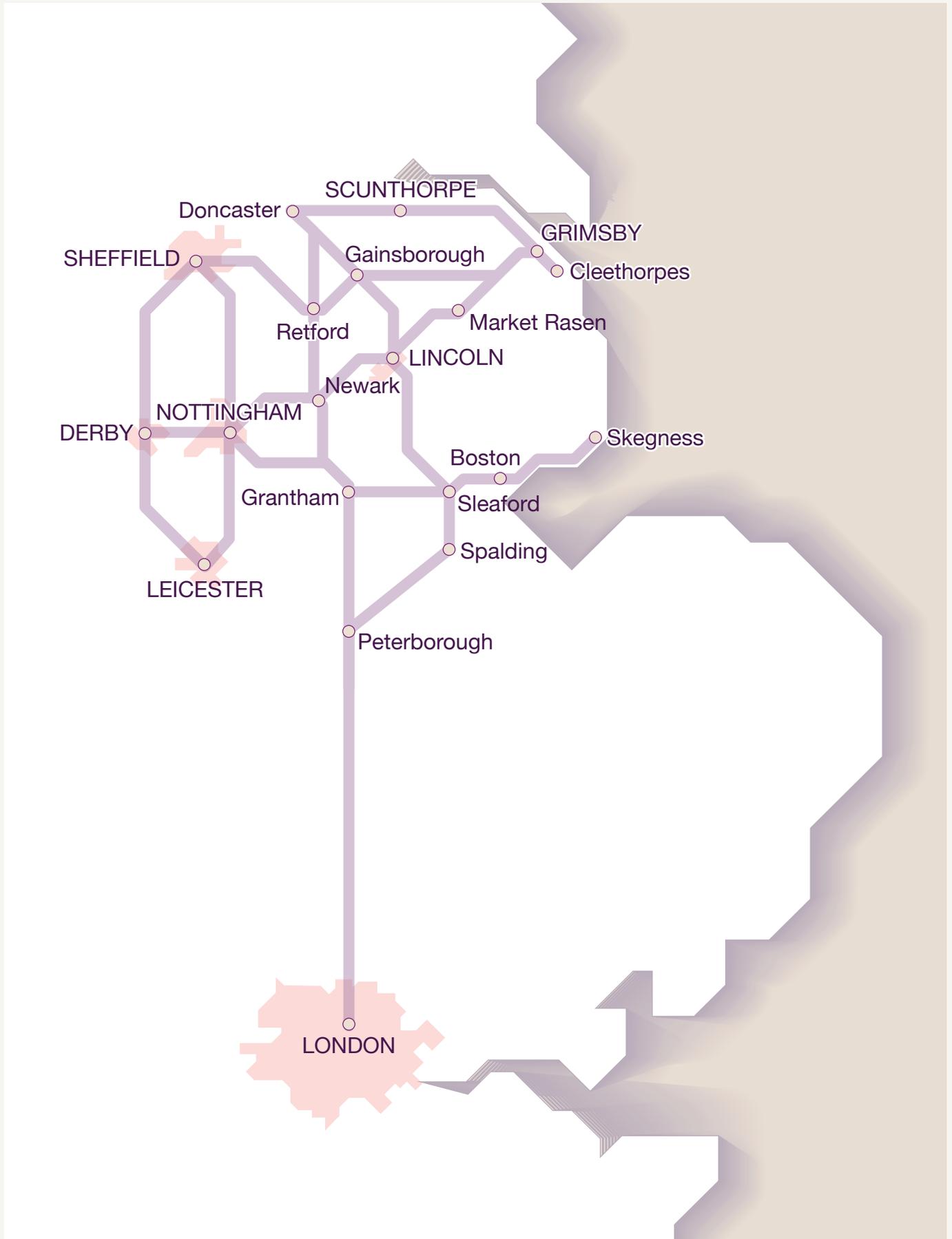
Lincoln attracts over 3 million visitors annually, generating £264 million for the local economy<sup>6</sup>. Yet it competes with better-connected cathedral cities such as Durham and York who, in the case of York, enjoy around 40 trains per day to London and a fastest journey time of under two hours.

Furthermore, the city's relative isolation has resulted in lower-than-average productivity and economic growth, as measured by GDP and GVA<sup>7</sup>, even as new initiatives like the Lincoln Science and Innovation Park point to its potential. Some important labour market opportunities also remain limited: Lincolnshire sits among the lowest third of local authorities for opportunities for 16-29-year-olds, and the bottom quarter in terms of promising prospects for 25-44-year-olds<sup>8</sup>.

With the right transport investment, Lincoln has the opportunity to change this trajectory and strengthen its role as a dynamic regional hub.



[By Isaac Newton Building, University of Lincoln by Oliver Mills, CC BY-SA 2.0](#)



# A Steep Hill: Lincoln's Rail Ambitions

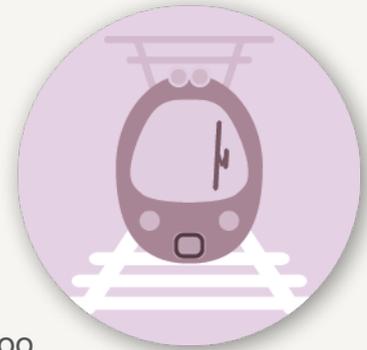
## A Regional Priority

Right now, train services from Lincoln to most major destinations are simply not good enough - they're too infrequent, too slow, and too often overcrowded, making driving the default choice for many.

This has direct consequences for the A46 corridor towards Nottingham and Leicester, with around 19,000 car and van trips daily creating unreliable journey times, and the corridor predicted to be approaching capacity at key junctions by 2035<sup>9</sup>. Commuters and leisure travellers are forced to compete with freight and agricultural traffic, compounding delays and unreliability. Improving the Lincoln-Nottingham rail corridor is a priority identified for both TfEM and Midlands Connect<sup>10</sup>.

Investing in better rail doesn't just mean faster and more reliable trains - it means connecting more people to jobs, education, and leisure across the region - making Lincoln a vibrant, accessible place to live and work within the wider region.

Upgrading Lincoln's rail links directly supports the goals of the Lincolnshire Local Transport Plan<sup>11</sup>:



**Supporting economic growth**

**Future ready, green transport**

**Promoting thriving environments**

**Promoting high aspirations**

**Supporting safety, security and a health lifestyle**

**Improve quality of life**

## Slow Progress

Yet, with some market shares stuck below 10%<sup>12</sup>, meaningful progress has been slow. The East Midlands as a whole has seen less government investment in rail than most other regions for nearly two decades<sup>13</sup>, and this reality is reflected in the rail service quality at Lincoln - slow journey times and a poor frequency of direct services. Trying to secure real improvements to rail for the city and wider region has often felt like a struggle against long-standing underinvestment.

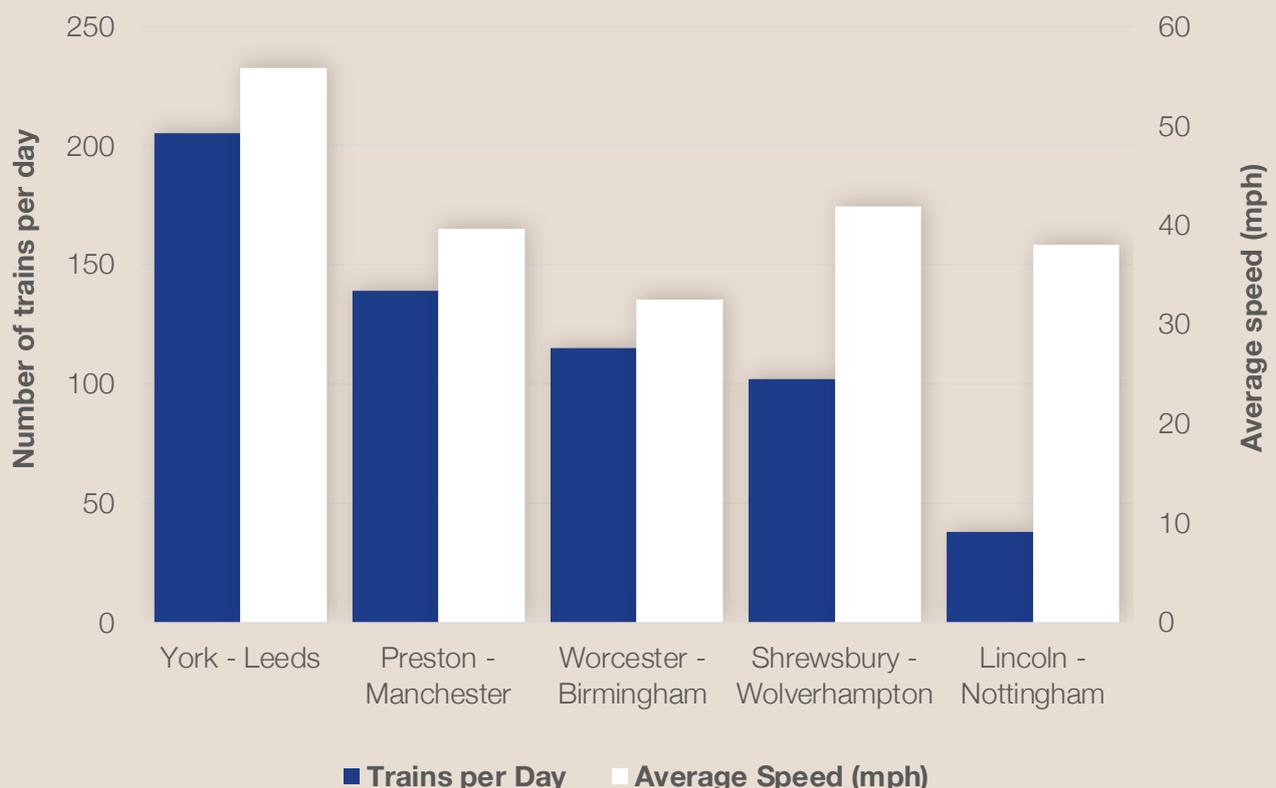
## Setbacks

Lincoln's rail service has at times lost ground, losing direct trains to key economic centres in the Midlands like Birmingham, and also its faster regional services to places such as Sheffield. Many promised regional link improvements for Lincoln from previous rail franchises, like those in the East

Midlands operators' 2019 agreement, have never materialised. In the years following the pandemic a number of Lincoln's rail services were also chosen to be paused for extended periods before being only partially reinstated<sup>14</sup>. Even this year, a scarce and economically significant direct London Sunday service is being cut from December 2025. These setbacks indicate that the true potential of Lincoln's growing market continues to be underestimated and underserved by the rail industry - a missed opportunity both for the industry and for the city's economy.

An example of how Lincoln is underserved is demonstrated in the graph<sup>15</sup> below, illustrating that Lincoln-Nottingham services, as an example, have lagged behind other regional city pairings for both service levels and average speeds.

Figure 1 Number of trains per day and average speed (mph) between comparable inter-city locations





Jayne Wingad: Lincolnshire County Council

## Building From a Low Base

Despite these challenges and low modal share, Lincoln has shown resilience. While rail passenger numbers across the UK between 2019/20 and 2023/24 dropped by 6%, demand at Lincoln actually grew, climbing 4.7% from 1.96 million to 2.05 million<sup>16</sup>.

Councils and local partners, such as the Nottingham to Lincoln Stakeholder Board, did secure some important service improvements between 2015-2018 that stepped up the timetable between Nottingham and Lincoln and at weekends, which led to a sustained increase in use.

The Castle Line is now seeing strong growth again, with over 1.1 million customer journeys in 2024, a rise of 21% compared with 2023. By 2030, passenger growth at Lincoln station is forecast to have increased by 11% compared to 2019<sup>17</sup>. This underlines the strength of local demand and signals to latent demand to be unlocked. Lincoln is well-positioned to capture further growth in leisure travel and tourism by rail<sup>18</sup>, but this potential can only be realised if the current gaps in connectivity are addressed and services are brought up to modern standards.

# Closing the Gap

## Breakthrough

The East Coast Main Line crossing at Newark-On-Trent has been a long-standing constraint to the East Midlands regional network to Lincoln. Now, planned changes to the East Coast Main Line this year have created a window of opportunity for local operators to be able to in-tandem rethink the Lincoln-Nottingham corridor. From December 2025, the hourly service will double to half-hourly, Monday to Saturday. With Nottingham being the largest economic hub of the East Midlands, and Lincoln ranking as the region's fifth largest city, these stronger rail links can promise to contribute to connectivity and economic opportunity at a regional scale.

## Improvements on Track

This uplift of the service will add 12 additional daily services in each direction between Nottingham and Lincoln and more than 2,000 extra weekday seats. It will make turn-up-and-go travel more attractive, reduce waiting times, and ease overcrowding. More frequent calls at route stations and new direct links, including to Derby, will also make many longer onward trips via one change more readily accessible. Analysis for TfEM conservatively estimates £8.4 million in economic benefit directly for users and 1 million additional passengers over 15 years for journeys from Lincoln, with other parties indicating the opportunity is even higher still.<sup>19</sup>

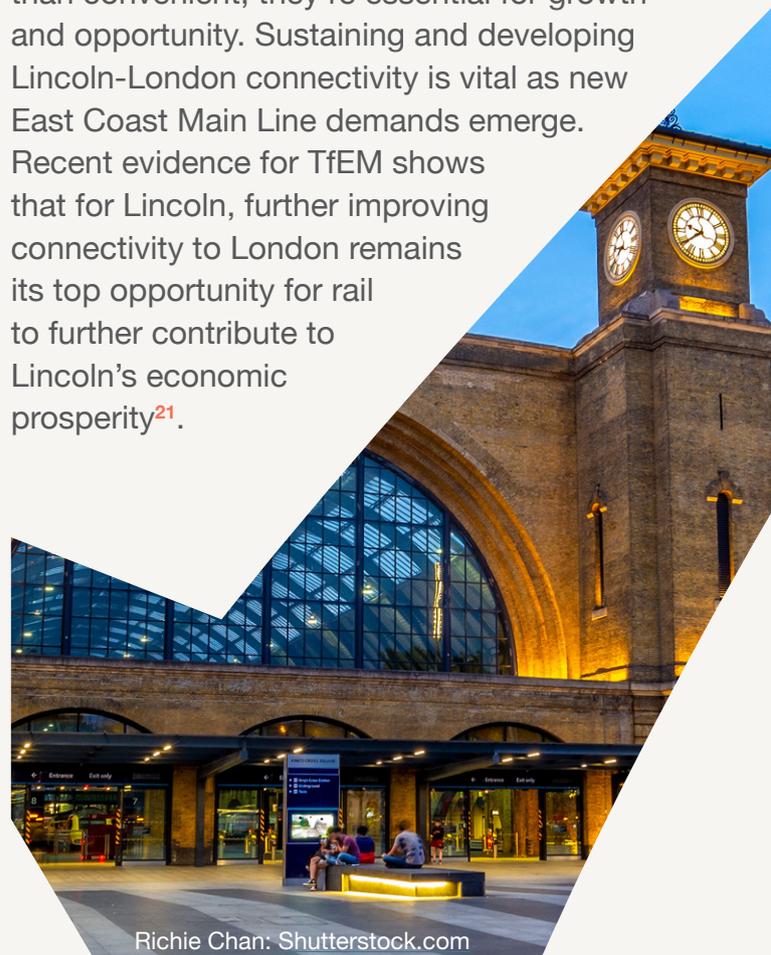
Coupled with the investment for the A46 announced in the 2025 Spending Review, this provides the basis for a transport

future that will finally bring this key regional corridor up to speed.

## Capital Gains

The transformation of Lincoln's London services shows what targeted investment can achieve. Until recently, Lincoln was one of the only English cities with a population over 100,000 without regular direct trains to the capital. Introducing six daily direct services led to a 51% surge in travellers to London, compared to just a 4% rise at many other East Coast Main Line destinations in the same period. London is now Lincoln's foremost, and fastest growing, rail destination<sup>20</sup>.

For Lincoln, direct London links are more than convenient; they're essential for growth and opportunity. Sustaining and developing Lincoln-London connectivity is vital as new East Coast Main Line demands emerge. Recent evidence for TfEM shows that for Lincoln, further improving connectivity to London remains its top opportunity for rail to further contribute to Lincoln's economic prosperity<sup>21</sup>.



# Keeping Pace

For Lincoln's rail services to keep up with the city's momentum, the recent promises for better rail services mustn't be just initially delivered; they need to become lasting improvements. Local partners may still need to play an active role in the coming years to ensure that the changes are made to stick.



TfEM's ambition is to see Lincoln City's rail services improved further still, such as faster journey times and improved frequencies.

It is clear that these can only be achieved by building on the foundation of the service levels in place from December 2025.

## Fragile

The planned doubling of services between Lincoln and Nottingham is welcome, but these valuable service commitments could yet be threatened. The uplift coincides with a complex and long-awaited restructure of the timetable on the East Coast Main Line. The concern is that previous major timetable changes have led to subsequent disruption and triggered immediate operational trade-offs, ultimately to scale-back committed plans. If tough decisions have to be made on how the network is performing overall, it could be all too easy for Lincoln's improvements to be vulnerable to cutbacks, such as the decision to cut the direct London Sunday service from December 2025.

There are wider risks too. The cancellation of HS2 to the Midlands and the north could threaten existing services over the longer term, including Lincoln's direct trains to London. This is because the rail industry still has the ambition to improve its long-distance rail services between London and the North; but is now forced to plan these using largely existing congested rail infrastructure. Ambitions to improve long-distance services from London to alternative destinations further north using the East Coast Main Line, could see Lincoln's direct London service made vulnerable to being eroded by a reallocation of the East Coast Main Line's constrained capacity.

Unlike other ECML cities like Bradford, Harrogate, or Middlesbrough, alternative routes to London from Lincoln are unattractive - adding extra time, cost, and complexity. Cutting Lincoln's direct link would be a disproportionate blow to its connectivity, as demonstrated by the alternatives currently available to passengers in Table 1.

Table 1 Existing journey options to Lincoln from London (December 2024 timetable)

Route	Frequency	Time (average)	Distance
<b>Direct service on the ECML to Lincoln via Newark Northgate</b>	Six trains per day	1hr 48 mins	137 miles
<b>Interchange at Newark Northgate</b>	Four pre-1200 and one late evening service	2 hr 03 mins	137 miles
<b>ECML to Newark Northgate, then walk to Newark Castle<sup>1</sup> for service to Lincoln</b>	Hourly	3hr 0mins	138 miles
<b>Interchange at Peterborough for service to Lincoln via GNGE</b>	Hourly	2 hr 15 mins <sup>2</sup>	131 miles
<b>MML London St Pancras service to Nottingham, interchange onto train to Lincoln</b>	Two direct southbound AM services followed by hourly Nottingham-Lincoln <sup>3</sup>	2 hr 42 mins	160 miles

- 1 Interchange walking allowance of 23 minutes.
- 2 Journey opportunities not available in every hour.
- 3 Planned to rise to two trains per hour from December 2025.

## Crossed lines

Lincoln needs industry drive towards a bold, long-term solution; one that tackles the real barriers holding rail services back. Chief among these is the Newark Flat Crossing - where the East Coast Main Line crosses the Castle Line at ground level. This outdated piece of infrastructure continues to limit trains on both lines, stifling Lincoln’s existing low-frequency links (e.g to Newark Northgate to access the ECML in the hours that the direct London service does not operate), and constraining the potential of future direct services. Relieving the crossing would have resilience benefits that would ripple across the whole ECML to places far afield that are nationally significant. Investing in ‘grade separation’ (aligning a junction of two or more lines at different heights) at this junction would transform what is possible on the network and enable trains to operate across both lines unimpeded.



J.Hannan-Briggs

## Full speed ahead

The trains that will operate between Lincoln and Nottingham will be refurbished over the next couple of years. These trains are capable of sustaining up to 100mph speeds where the infrastructure allows; yet stretches of the track are restricted to just 50mph. Boosting the line speeds in these sections between Lincoln and Nottingham is a further long-overdue improvement.

In part, the outdated Signalling has held progress back. Network Rail has already mapped out a plan to increase the speed provision of the Signalling system to 75mph; but delivery has been delayed. The commitment remains to deliver this awaited Signalling renewal this decade within Network Rails current Control Period.

With an additional £18 million investment (a modest sum in rail terms), Midlands Connect has shown some journey times could be cut by up to five minutes, with a benefit-cost ratio up to 2.0<sup>22</sup>, reflecting a 'high' value for money. This is an affordable, deliverable

scheme that could bring immediate benefits if Network Rail is given the tools to finish the job.

Line speed improvements would offer both the passenger service and existing freight services improved resilience. The measurable benefits that arise from the investment could also now be forecast to increase. This is because both more trains and passengers are to be positively impacted than when the speed benefits were modelled under previous lower-frequency assumptions.

Another key Lincoln inter-urban service that is prime for speed or journey time improvements is the Lincoln - Sheffield link, which averages just 35mph. Some welcome progress was achieved in 2018 through the delivery of an express service, but this was removed during the pandemic with no sign of return. Restoring and improving this connection should be a clear priority.

Class 170 in EMR livery



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## Unattractive

**“Stakeholders do not seek metropolitan frequencies, just hourly trains that inter-connect.”**

(Modern Railways, 2016, with reference to Lincoln's rail network during the East Midlands Franchise Tender process)

**“The new Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority is committed to working with the rail industry to improve rail services across the area. For Lincoln, rail services need to be more frequent and attractive to tourists, visitors and businesses alike. Despite promises made nearly ten years ago during the last rail franchise planning - such as better Sunday services - Lincoln's regional rail connections still fall short of providing hourly service every day and lack proper integration across the network.”**

Dame Andrea Jenkyns DBE, Mayor of Greater Lincolnshire

Despite progress on some corridors, many regional services through Lincoln will remain patchy. The current regional timetable is sparse through Lincoln to places such as Peterborough, Sleaford, Doncaster or Grimsby, and is not yet in any industry plan to be enhanced to hourly all day - every day. Until it is, it's tough for people to see rail as a real alternative to driving.

Reliability on these lines, although exhibiting amongst some of the stronger metrics for local routes, is also a challenge when set against what customers should expect from their transport fare. Punctuality on lines in the East Midlands is weaker than the experiences enjoyed on rail in most other English regions, compounding the challenge to passengers posed by the infrequent

service timetables, and undermining confidence in rail to its prospective passengers.

Some frequency improvements for these regional links were committed to as part of the last East Midlands franchise in 2019, such as to Sunday services, but these plans have not progressed. Other than the welcomed Nottingham improvements, there is no delivery plan for bringing Lincoln's wider regional rail links up to even these modest service level aspirations, which are seen as a minimum for rail to be more consistently viewed as an attractive choice.

## A New Agenda

But there's hope for change. In the next few years, new organisations such as the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority (GLCCA), and Great British Railways (GBR), and new collaborative frameworks for joined-up thinking on the railways, will all potentially bring a fresh approach.

In the coming years, Lincoln's case should consistently be heard at the highest level. The local plan for rail should be more tangible and integrated with interfacing national programmes, meaning integrated plans for the future, targeting: longer trains, traction decarbonisation and improved accessibility - such as renewal of the current Lincoln station platform footbridge, which is overdue for modernisation.

Also, new enthusiasm in planning 'beyond the horizon', such as enhancing the direct London service (including extending these trains to Cleethorpes), restoring Lincoln's direct links with Birmingham, and even creating new connections to York and Cambridge could all be properly reviewed by GBR hand-in-hand with the Local Authorities.

# A Shared Vision for Lincoln and the East Midlands

Transport for the East Midlands and the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority have a shared vision that sees better connecting Lincoln City as a priority for the East Midlands transport network and the East Midlands economy.

Lincoln has changed and now stands as a dynamic and even more regionally important city, and it should be well-connected for economic links - not just with Nottingham and London, but with more surrounding regional hubs. After years of watching other cities move ahead, Lincoln's time has come to be prioritised for rail improvement.

The upgrades coming in December 2025 are a welcome example of what's possible when 'can-do' thinking by industry drives real change, also reflecting the tireless advocacy of Councils and local partners. But this must be just the beginning. These gains cannot be allowed to slip away - they need to be protected and serve as the foundation for future improvements.

Strong local organisations will be around the table with newly integrated industry decision makers as they make early strides to ensure this year is just the first chapter. Authorities



will use new devolved arrangements to lead on advocating for rail improvements to Lincoln, whilst still leveraging strong collaboration across the whole East Midlands region.

We're making sure Lincoln's case is amplified. To **keep pace** with Lincoln's growth, it now needs further investment in infrastructure and rolling stock: faster lines, longer trains, and more frequent services, to make the railway a true match for the city it serves.



# Endnotes

- 1 [Lincoln City Profile – City of Lincoln Council](#)
- 2 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000138/>
- 3 <https://www.lincoln.gov.uk/council/lincoln-city-profile>
- 4 Lincoln Transport Strategy 2020-2036
- 5 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/housing/number-of-cars-or-vans/number-of-cars-3a/no-cars-or-vans-in-household>
- 6 <https://www.lincoln.gov.uk/downloads/file/1984/vision-2030>
- 7 Office for National Statistics, 2021 (GDP) and 2017 (GVA)
- 8 Social Mobility Index, 2023, <https://social-mobility.data.gov.uk/>
- 9 Midlands Connect, A46 Corridor Study, 2020
- 10 <https://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/TfEM-Shared-Vision-2024.pdf>
- 11 <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/7200/local-transport-plan-5>
- 12 Midlands Connect, 2025, 'The Castle Line: Connecting Commuters between Nottingham, Newark and Lincoln'
- 13 <https://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/official-statistics-show-10-8-billion-funding-deficit-in-east-midlands/>
- 14 Examples across: Lincoln<>Newark North Gate reductions, Sheffield<>Gainsborough Central - withdrawn, Sheffield<>Cleethorpes via Brigg route: Now only Saturday, SHF<>LCN reductions
- 15 Data extracted from the September 2025 Wednesday service pattern using National Rail Enquiries and Realtime Trains (including impact of current Transpennine Route Upgrade works). Services to/from Worcester include Worcestershire Parkway.
- 16 ORR station usage data, 2019/20 and 2023/24 (<https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates-of-station-usage>)
- 17 [https://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/EM\\_Rail\\_and\\_Growth\\_Study.pdf](https://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/EM_Rail_and_Growth_Study.pdf)
- 18 TEMPro estimates the growth in leisure-related rail trips in Lincoln to be up to 5% over the next 10 years.
- 19 East Midlands Railway estimate the economic benefit of the improvements to be £2.4 million per annum.
- 20 Source: ORR Origin-Destination Matrix 2018/19 and 2023/24
- 21 SYSTRA city connectivity modelling with Miranda 2025 for TfEM
- 22 Midlands Connect, 2023, Nottingham-Lincoln Strategic Outline Business Case





**Executive Board**

**10<sup>th</sup> December 2025**

**Local Authority Workforce and Pay – Regional Employers’ Board**

**Summary**

This report provides an update to Members on significant issues relevant to local government as employers and provides a regional perspective.

**Recommendation**

Members of the Executive Board are invited to consider the issues highlighted in this report.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 East Midlands Councils (EMC) through its role as the region's Employers Organisation, has the responsibility of supporting employment relations for the sector. The Regional Employers' Board provides political leadership on employment issues and councillor development and forms the Employer's side of the Regional Joint Council, which meets with joint trade unions to support employment relations on behalf of councils in the East Midlands. The Joint Council meeting follows on from each Employers' Board meeting.
- 1.2 This report provides an update for Executive Board Members from the Regional Employers' Board, as well as information on the significant issues affecting councils as employers and includes progress on key regional priorities such as:
- Pay and Rewards
  - Attracting, Developing and Retaining Talent
- 1.3 An update is also provided on significant employment law developments and regional support to councils.

## **2. Regional Employers' Board & Joint Council Updates**

- 2.1 The Regional Employers Board and Regional Joint Council met on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2025. The Employers Board reviewed the background to the Board and its Terms of Reference. It reviewed the regional priorities relating to workforce as well as councillor development matters. The Board was asked for input to help shape EMC's regional councillor development offer over the coming year.
- 2.2 The Regional Joint Council received a presentation on a refreshed recruitment campaign for local government. It also agreed an uplift to allowances for caretakers of 3.2%, reflecting the national pay award for Local Government Services.
- 2.3 At the time of writing, the Employers' Board and Regional Joint Council are due to meet on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2025. The Board will consider developments with pay and proposals relating to a new national negotiating body for Adult Social Care (see below). The Regional Joint Council's agenda includes the joint

unions' pay claim for 2026 which has just been submitted, along with the results of this year's regional sickness absence survey.

### 3. Pay and Rewards: Local Government Pay Negotiations

- 3.1 The National pay negotiations for 2026 have commenced. Unions representing the majority of council employees - those covered by the Local Government Services National Joint Committee (commonly referred to as "**Green Book**" terms and conditions) submitted a pay claim to the National Employers on 1st December 2025. A copy of the claim can be accessed here: [Local Government Services](#)
- 3.2 The headline summary of the claim is:
- An increase of at least £3,000 or 10 per cent (whichever is greater) across all NJC spinal column points
  - A minimum pay rate of £15 an hour for the NJC pay spine
  - A two-hour reduction in the working week
  - An increase of one day annual leave
  - The ability of all school support staff to take a day of paid leave during term time
  - The abolition of Level 1 Teaching Assistant role and instead all Level 1 role holders be moved onto Level 2
- 3.3 However, in the event of a multi-year settlement being proposed, the unions would seek the following structure to a three-year agreement:
- Year 1: £3,000 or 10 per cent (whichever is greater) on all spinal column points, alongside the introduction of a £15 minimum hourly rate
  - Year 2: An increase of RPI + 3 per cent
  - Year 3: An increase of RPI + 2 per cent
- 3.4 The representative body for **Chief Executives**, ALACE, has lodged its [claim on behalf of local authority Chief Executives](#). It seeks:
- A pay increase for all chief executives in April 2026 and subsequent years that is the same percentage increase (or equivalent percentage if expressed in £s) as those local government colleagues at the top point of the NJC pay spine.

- If the 2026 pay deal for NJC staff involves any further increase in annual leave, a matching increase in the minimum leave allowance to be provided for chief executives
- 3.5 The pay claim in respect of local authority **Chief Officers** is not expected to be tabled until the new year.
- 3.6 The National Employers will consult councils to seek their views on the claims and will respond formally to the unions in due course.
- 3.7 EMC will be hosting a regional pay briefing on 20th January 2026 which will provide an opportunity for leading councillors and senior officers to meet with national negotiators and members of the Employers' Side of the National Joint Committee. The aim of the meeting is to enable the negotiators to hear the views of councils to help inform any response or pay offer to the joint unions' pay claim. The meeting will take place virtually to make sure it is accessible as possible for officers and Members to attend.
- 3.8 While the Employers' side of the NJC will take account of councils' views, and take into consideration as far as possible issues such as affordability, a key influencing factor in recent years has been the National Living Wage for 2026 and the forecast rate for 2027, to ensure that local government remains compliant with statutory minimum pay levels.
- 3.9 In the Chancellor's budget on 26th November 2025, it was announced that the **National Living Wage** will rise to £12.71 per hour, an increase of 4.1%. This represents the second lowest increase since the National Living Wage's introduction. In local government, the current lowest pay level is £12.65, but from 1st April 2026 as an outcome of this year's pay award, the bottom point of the national pay spine will be deleted and the new minimum pay rate in local government will then be £12.85.
- 3.10 The National Living Wage applies to those aged 21 and over. Minimum rates for younger workers under the **National Minimum Wage** increased by a higher rate, (8.5% for those aged 18-20 and 6% for apprentices and those aged 16-17). In response to the Government's plans to move away from different age-related pay rates towards a single rate of NLW by the end of this Parliament.

- 3.11 The **Real Living Wage** is a voluntary minimum pay level that employers, including councils, can choose to comply with. The rate is set by the Living Wage Foundation and was increased last month by 6.7% for workers outside of London, resulting in a new rate of £13.45 per hour for UK. Employers that have chosen to adopt the Real Living Wage will need to implement this new rate by 1st May 2026 at the latest.
- 3.12 As stated at the last Executive Board meeting, agreements remained outstanding on 2025 pay award for a small number of bargaining groups. Since the last Board meeting, agreement has been reached on a **2025 pay award for Youth and Community Workers** for a 3.2% pay increase.
- 3.13 The remaining groups that have yet to agree any pay award for 2025 are **Soulbury** staff (covering officers such as education psychologists) and **Craftworkers** (employees working in trades such as electricians, plumbers, etc) For Craftworkers adopting opposite positions on agreeing and rejecting the National Employers' offer. The National Employers declined a request to meet with one of the unions, Unite, as being outside of the constitutional arrangements and re-stated their pay offer. Unite will now begin preparing to conduct formal ballots for industrial action.

#### 4. **Fair Pay Agreement for Adult Social Care**

- 4.1 The Government is proposing to establish two new national negotiating bodies for school support staff and for adult social care staff.
- 4.2 On 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025 the Government launched consultation on the proposals relating to Adult Social Care on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025. The consultation closes on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2026. It can be accessed through the following link: [fair pay asc consultation](#)
- 4.3 EMC hosted a briefing on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2025 that enabled councils from across the region to come together to discuss the proposals and meet with representatives from the Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) and from the LGA. As well as providing an opportunity to raise questions and provide initial feedback on the proposals, the meeting helped Councils to prepare their responses to the Consultation.

- 4.4 The meeting was attended by 22 officers, with all upper tier councils represented. Presentations from the briefing are attached as appendices 8(a&b) to this report: DHSC’s summary of the consultation and the LGA’s outline of implications for local government.
- 4.5 Officers attending the meeting welcomed the overall objective of improving adult social care, but the proposals also raised questions and concerns, with views broadly echoing those captured in the LGA presentation. DHSC officers said they had noted the comments and questions raised and would take them back for consideration.
- 4.6 EMC is offering a follow-up meeting for councils during December and is liaising with other regional employers’ organisations to share information and support the submission of regional responses, as well as a collective response.

## 5. Employment Law Developments

- 5.1 **The Employment Rights Bill** proposes sweeping changes to employment rights and is currently at the “ping pong” stage of the parliamentary process to consider amendments proposed by the House of Lords. On 27<sup>th</sup> November 2025 the Government announced a change to a significant provision within the Employment Rights Bill. Instead of protection against unfair dismissal becoming a day-1 right, this entitlement will now apply to employees after 6 months’ continuous service. (Currently, 2 years’ continuous service is required to gain protection against unfair dismissal.) The Government said it has reached the compromise to avoid delays with the Bill’s progression through Parliament. The latest indication is that the Bill could be finalised on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2025.
- 5.2 **The timeframe for ACAS Early Conciliation of Employment Tribunal Claims** has been extended from 6 weeks to 12 weeks from December 2026. Prior to an Employment Tribunal claim going forward, there is a period in which ACAS is involved to explore whether the claim can be resolved, referred to as **Early Conciliation**. The extension will be reviewed in October 2026.
- 5.3 **Consultation on a draft code of practice on electronic and workplace balloting for statutory union ballots** was launched in November. It seeks views from all interested parties to ensure the Code is clear and balanced.

The consultation document is available through the following link: [code of practice consultation](#)

## **6. Attracting Talent – National Recruitment Campaign**

- 6.1 Attracting, developing and retaining talent has been agreed as a regional priority by the Regional Employers Board and is featured in the Regional Joint Council's workplan as a shared priority to raise the profile of local government as an employer.
- 6.2 In support of this, EMC has been working in partnership with the LGA to roll-out a national recruitment campaign for the sector which is funded by Government. The campaign was first launched in 2025-26 and had a positive impact. Given its success, further funding has been provided by Government to continue the campaign for 2025/26.
- 6.3 The toolkit of resources available for Councils to use has been updated with new content which is now easier for councils to access and tailor. It includes new videos to promote a wider range of career opportunities, as well as early career opportunities. The revised toolkit was launched in November. A new advertising campaign will run across the country from January to March. EMC hosted a meeting at the end of October to raise awareness of the resources and toolkit amongst councils in the region.

## **7. Update on Regional Activity**

### **7.1 Councillor Development**

- 7.1.1 EMC has been gathering feedback to help inform its regional councillor development offer for the coming year. This has included suggestions from the Employers' Board, a survey, and input from the regional councillor development network.
- 7.1.2 From the survey results, there was most demand for development chairing skills, questioning skills (scrutiny), managing case work, social media, and personal safety. Respondents preferred the delivery to be virtual and in the evening.

7.1.3 The Councillor Development Network, which is for officers and councillors, met in November and discussed the results of the survey. The meeting also identified items for future network meetings, including sharing of hot topics; how to encourage councillors to engage with learning and development and how to keep it interesting for councillors; handling disruptions in meetings; sharing of e-learning that can be adapted for individual councils; signposting to good training providers. As an outcome of the discussion, a Teams channel has been set up so that councils can share information outside of network meetings.

7.1.4 The Scrutiny Network will meet on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2025, and the agenda is focused on two topics: a Prioritisation Tool and Matrix for Scrutiny, and Scrutiny of SEND.

## **7.2 Officer Learning and Development**

7.2.1 EMC co-ordinates a regional Learning & Organisation Development Network, which enables councils to share information and resources relating to learning and development, and helps inform regional programmes for EMC to deliver and/or co-ordinate.

7.2.2 The network met in November and discussed shared leadership development needs, and these are being met through EMC's forthcoming regional development programme (see below at 7.2.3). Participants also shared approaches to mandatory training, including how these are identified, delivered and monitored for completion. Finally, the network members identified topics and shared areas of interest to be covered at future meetings.

7.2.3 EMC is currently organising a range of programmes on Leadership and Management, Coaching and Mentoring, Change and Dealing with Uncertainty which are aimed at providing development that will be valuable in the context of LGR. These provide an opportunity for learners to gain additional qualifications and demonstrate professional and personal development.

7.2.4 EMC's regional coaching network is a popular way for councils to sharing coaching resources and interest has been shown from some new organisations who would like to join the network.

7.2.5 As an update on the two Continuous Professional Development programmes run by EMC for Environmental Health Officers and for Planners, since the last Board meeting, two events were held for Environmental Health Officers – one was on the theme of Food Safety Update and the other was an update from the UK Health Security Agency, which attracted over 200 delegates.

7.2.6 To ensure that HR officers in councils are kept up to date with employment legislation, EMC held an employment law update in November that was attended by over 90 delegates.

### **7.3 Consultancy**

7.3.1 Councils can access individual support from EMC on a not-for-profit basis on a range of workforce issues as well as in-house training.

7.3.2 Since the last Board meeting, assignments for councils have included:

- Facilitation of SLT/Cabinet development session
- Chief Executive appraisal facilitation
- Restructuring support
- Senior officer recruitment
- Advice and support on complex cases
- Disciplinary investigations
- Grievance investigations
- Psychometric testing

7.3.3 In addition to this work, EMC is supporting the delivery of a national programme of events for the Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO). A new programme of events for ADSO has been developed by EMC which will be delivered throughout 2026.

## **8. Recommendation**

8.1 Members of the Executive Board are invited to consider the issues highlighted in this report.

**Cllr Jane Yates**  
**Chair**  
**Regional Employers' Board**



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care



# **An Introduction to the Adult Social Care Fair Pay Agreement (FPA)**

28th October 2025

# What are we going to talk to you about?

## Background to the FPA

- What is a Fair Pay Agreement (FPA)
- Why is an FPA is being introduced
- When the FPA will be introduced
- How it will be funded

## Introduction to the consultation

- Why we are consulting
- What is in the consultation
- What else DHSC is doing to engage the social care sector
- Why your response is crucial and how you can get involved!

## Your chance to ask us questions!

# What is a Fair Pay Agreement?

A Fair Pay Agreement (FPA) **will set minimum pay and other terms and conditions for workers** specifically in adult social care. This will be the law and negotiations will happen annually. This agreement will be the first ever of its kind in the social care sector.

The agreement will be reached through 'collective bargaining'.

We will set up an ASC Negotiating Body that will bring together **employer and worker representatives** to do this.

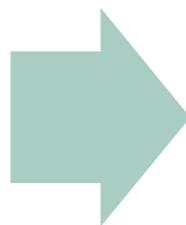
New Fair Pay Agreements will be complemented by **rights for trade unions to access workplaces**, in a responsible manner, for recruitment and organising purposes.

# Why are Fair Pay Agreements being introduced?

There have been many calls for pay and terms and conditions in adult social care to be negotiated by representatives of workers and employers.

## We know that...

- **Over 1.5 million people** work in adult social care.
- They provide **essential care and support** every day to people of all ages and with diverse needs.
- The adult social care sector faces **significant workforce challenges** including around recruiting and keeping staff.
- Adult social care is a historically **low paid sector** - most care workers are paid at or just above the National Living Wage.

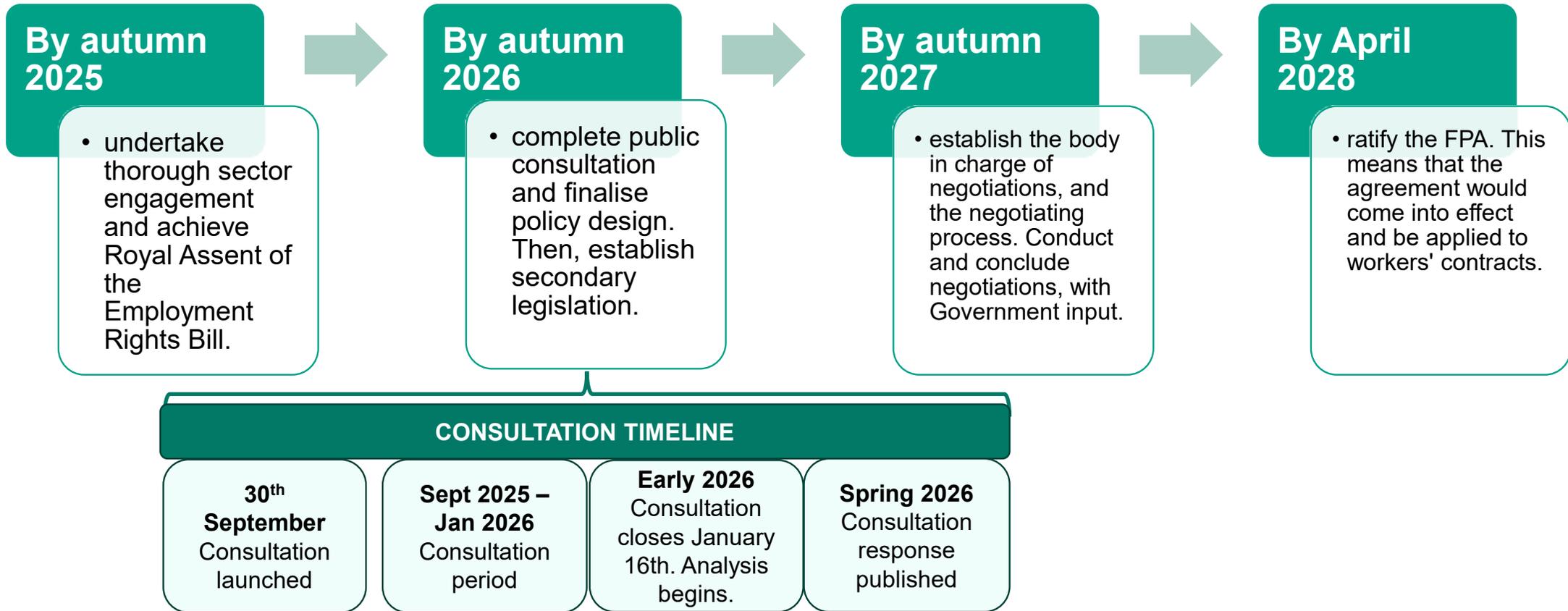


## What are we doing?

- This Government's aim of the Fair Pay Agreement is to:
  - **promote fairness**
  - **improve working conditions**, and
  - give the workforce much needed **recognition and reward** for their vital work in our society.
- Fair Pay Agreements are a key part of the government's [New Deal For Working People](#).

# When the FPA will be introduced?

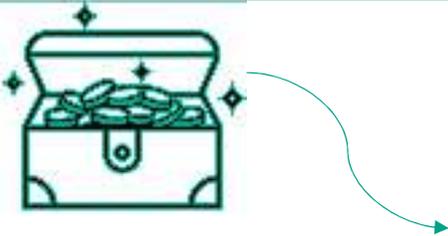
Implementation of the FPA requires several stages of preparation, as set out below.



# How will the FPA be funded?

As the majority of adult social care provision is funded by the state, through councils and the NHS, the **government will financially contribute to the fair pay agreement.**

The **2025 Spending Review** allows for an increase of over £4 billion of funding available for adult social care in the 2028-2029 financial year alone, compared to 2025-2026.



As part of this, **£500 million** has been earmarked for improving pay, terms and conditions, and other matters as part of the **first FPA**. This additional government funding will be paid to councils to reflect the increased cost of care.

To balance the need for greater pay for the social care workforce with the potential cost to taxpayers, we propose that the **ASC Negotiating Body will be given a cost envelope** at the start of negotiations. This will set out the maximum funding available to councils to cover increased costs resulting from the fair pay agreement. The ASC Negotiating Body will have to negotiate an outcome that is affordable within this envelope.



# Why are we consulting?

This consultation is a chance for anyone with an interest in adult social care to share their views with us about the design of the fair agreement process in England. The consultation does not look at the outcome of a Fair Pay Agreement. We are particularly interested in hearing from:



We have actively collaborated with the sector in the development of this policy but there remain many details to resolve. **We know that broader input from the sector will be vital to make sure this policy works in practice which is why this consultation is so important.**

# What is in the consultation?

The below gives you an overview of what is included in the consultation.

## Introductory sections

- Background to the policy and what the consultation is looking at and why. This includes information about funding and implementation timelines.

## Negotiating Body

- Who is involved in negotiations and the support available for the Body.

## Negotiating Process

- How negotiations could work including timelines and frequency of negotiations.

## Coverage and Remit

- Who and what is in scope of FPAs

## Dispute Resolution

- What happens when a decision cannot be reached

## Implementation

- How an FPA would be introduced to the sector

## Compliance and Enforcement

- How we will support the sector to comply with an FPA

## Closing sections

- This includes questions around equalities impact, a glossary of key terms and details on how to respond to the consultation.

# What else is DHSC doing to engage with the sector?

We are running a programme of engagement during the consultation period to provide the sector with different ways to raise awareness of FPAs with the sector and give people an opportunity to share their views.

## DHSC events

- Roundtable discussions
- Teach-ins and webinars
- Visits

## Sector events

- Speaking at conferences or events
- Attending membership organisation meetings
- Speaking on panels

## Information sharing

- Video
- ENewsletters
- Social media
- Blogs
- Briefings/FAQs

To try and maximise our reach we are making sure we are offering a mixture of online and in-person events which are aimed at different parts of the adult social care sector. **If you would like us to come to an event, please get in touch: [ASCFPA@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:ASCFPA@dhsc.gov.uk)**

# Why your response is important and how to get involved

This consultation is a crucial step in the design of this new policy. We need to hear from you to make sure this policy is workable for the adult social care sector and has the positive impact we want it to have.

## Engage with the consultation

- Read the consultation document
- Respond to the survey
- Attend engagement events (like this one)

## Share information for us

- Tell your members/networks about the consultation and encourage them to get involved
- E.g. via social media, newsletters, blogs, in meetings etc

## Invite us to events/meetings

- Please keep alerting us to events you have planned or events you think we should be aware of and attending

## Tell us what you are hearing

- We want to hear feedback about the consultation and our engagement, particularly if there are issues we can address

Get in touch with the FPA team by emailing: [ASCFPA@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:ASCFPA@dhsc.gov.uk)

**Do you have any experiences to share?**

**Do you have any concerns?**

# **Any questions for us?**

**Are you clear on the process?**

**Do you anticipate any challenges to your engagement with this process?**

# DHSC Consultation on the Adult Social Care Negotiating Body and Fair Pay Agreements

Naomi Cooke, Head of Workforce, LGA

# Adult Social Care Negotiating Body

- Government's 'Make Work Pay' agenda includes the introduction of a Fair Pay Agreement (FPA) in adult social care (ASC), to improve pay and conditions for those employed in the sector
- Employment Rights Bill, likely to get Royal Assent in autumn 2025, sets out the headlines of the body with further detail now being consulted upon
- The Adult Social Care Negotiating Body (ASCNB) is expected to be established in Oct 2026, and the first FPA to take effect in 2028.

# ASCNB consultation

- The consultation opened on 30 September 2025 and closes on 16 January 2026
- LGA webpage [DHSC consultation on the Adult Social Care Negotiating Body | Local Government Association](#)
- Encourage all councils to respond to consultation
- Comprehensive responses including perspectives as employer and commissioner

# Coverage

- Consultation proposal is for council employed ASC staff to be within scope of the FPA (including DASS, social workers, care assistants and anyone else deemed to work in ASC).
- The LGA has concerns about these staff being included in relation to both equal pay and potential conflict with existing local government collective bargaining.
- This could impact recruitment and retention of key staff including statutory officers, ASC staff and related workforces such as children's and public health workers.
- Inclusion of LG employed ASC workers increases the risk of equal pay claims and industrial action.
- LGA proposal is for directly employed staff are out of scope of FPAs to start with (this could be reviewed when wider reward in the ASC sector is closer aligned with LG workforce).

# Representation

- The constitution of the ASCNB must provide sufficient representation to recognise local authorities as statutorily responsible for the provision of ASC and the single largest commissioners of social care in their areas.
- As employers of over 100k council staff in scope of the FPA, the LGA will also need representation on the ASCNB in recognition of councils' role as an employer.
- DHSC rejected the LGA's proposal for the employer side of the ASCNB and are suggesting limited engagement with local government in the FPA process despite the sector being critical to the success of the ASCNB and FPA implementation.

# Funding

- Government have announced £500 million available for first FPA in 2028 drawn from the £4 billion announced in the SR.
- Implementing the uprated National Living Wage in 2025/26, a 6.7 per cent increase, cost the adult social care sector £1.85 billion.
- We are concerned that local government (without being able to affect the terms of FPAs) will be expected to either provide funding for FPA provisions; or compensate for any failures of providers resulting from FPAs.
- Councils may be required to meet further additional costs, including the incorporation of the FPA into procurement and monitoring processes, as well as costs for directly employed staff.
- The LGA believes the commitment to funding needs to be in addition to costs already flowing from, for example, National Living Wage.

# Other issues

## Timescales

- Ambitious timescales in the consultation for FPAs to be concluded and implemented.

## Industrial action

- Local government won't have a sufficient role in dispute resolution (at most this could be as one of many employers if directly employed workers are in scope).
- If unions/employers don't agree an FPA the Secretary of State can unilaterally determine the FPA.
- Ballot thresholds to be removed in 2026 – easier to ballot and take action

# Equal pay

- The LGA has concerns about increased risk of equal pay claims if directly employed council staff are in scope.
- If higher pay award under FPA than NJC then those with posts rated as equivalent under JE scheme, could have a potential equal pay case (or other claim). The same would apply in reverse if NJC delivers a higher pay rise.
- The impact of this could impact recruitment and retention of key staff, and affect morale.
- Could, potentially, be very costly for councils and a further course of industrial action risk.

# Links to consultation documents

- LGA's comments on consultation: [LGA's key issues with ASCNB proposals | Local Government Association](#)
- DHSC consultation document: [Fair pay agreement process in adult social care](#)



**Executive Board**

**10<sup>th</sup> December 2025**

**Report of Management Group**

**Summary**

The following report of the Management Group provides a summary on the following issues performance management and corporate governance.

**Recommendation**

Members of the Executive Board are invited to consider the issues detailed in this update report, including the assurance on financial, audit and corporate governance matters.

Management Group papers are available on EMC's website or on request to the Executive Director.

## **1. Membership**

1.1 The membership of EMC Management Group is confirmed as:

Cllr Elly Cutkelvin (Chair)                      Cllr Sean Matthews (Vice-Chair)  
Cllr Tricia Gilby (Vice-Chair)                      Cllr Gale Waller (Lib Dem Group Leader)  
Cllr Martin Griffiths (Reform UK Group Leader)  
Cllr Phil King (Cons Group Leader)  
Cllr Jewel Miah (Labour Group Leader)  
Cllr Ashley Baxter (Independent Group Leader)  
Cllr John Doddy (Chair, Regional Migration Board)  
Cllr Jane Yates (Chair, Regional Employers' Board)

## **2. Budget Report Period Ending August 2025**

2.1 The budget set for 2025/26 includes provision for a marginal surplus that is projected to be met or exceeded.

2.2 Members are reminded that EMC's income is split between:

- Membership Subscriptions.
- Grants and Contracts, principally from the Home Office, DfT, Midlands Connect.
- Earned Income, which consists of a mix of consultancy work, services, events and courses provided to member authorities.

2.3 Members are advised that in securing the anticipated budget out-turn, the following financial risks continue to be managed:

- a) The Earned Income budget is vulnerable to the demands and capacity of the sector. The budget has been largely constant for a number of years and maintaining income generation remains a challenge, but achievable.
- b) Staffing costs account for approx. 75% of the total expenditure, with pressure placed on non-staffing expenditure.
- c) Government grant funding, while confirmed in principle for 2026/27 and programmes delivered in line with grant conditions, remain vulnerable to Departmental spending pressures.

**3. Performance Management**

- 3.1 The Business Plan was developed in consultation with Members and agreed by Executive Board at its meeting in March 2025. The agreed KPIs reflect the revised approach of the current business plan, where EMC will work across four themes: evidencing, influencing, collaborating and delivering.
- 3.2 Performance against the KPIs in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter remains on track although additional activity will be focused upon supporting the member and officer development programme in order to meet the agreed stretch target and ensure the provision of value added to a greater number of members and officers.

**4. Corporate Governance**

- 4.1 Management Group noted the completion of EMC's external financial audit and statement of accounts 2024/25. This is a statutory requirement, as required by HM Certification Office.
- 4.2 Risk management continues to be considered in the context of local institutional changes (e.g., devolution and combined authorities) and external grant programme funding.

**5. Recommendation**

- 5.1 Members of the Executive Board are invited to consider the issues detailed in this update report, including assurance on financial, audit and corporate governance matters.

**Cllr Elly Cutkelvin  
Vice-Chair  
East Midlands Councils**