



**Annual General Meeting
10.00am, Friday 3rd July 2026**

Council Chamber, Leicestershire County Council

9.00am Registration

9.30am Political Group Meetings

Guthlaxton – Conservative Group

Goscote – Independent Group

Framland – Labour Group

Gartree - Liberal Democrat Group

Council Chamber – Reform UK

10.00am Annual General Meeting

1. Apologies
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Minutes of EMC Meeting held on 27th February 2025 *
4. EMC Chair's Report *
5. Presentation of the Annual Report 2025/26 *
6. Political Appointments
 - a) Political Group Leaders
 - b) Vice Chairs of East Midlands Councils
 - c) Chair of East Midlands Councils
7. Regional Employers' Board *
8. Motion(s) to East Midlands Councils
9. Regional Infrastructure and Investment*
10. Asylum and Refugee Resettlement in the East Midlands *

*attached



Minutes of the East Midlands Councils General Meeting

Friday 27th February 2026

(Newark & Sherwood District Council)

Cllr Sean Matthews chaired and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Apologies

Cllr Claire Arnold, Cllr Mark Arnull, Cllr Peter Bales, Cllr Stuart Bray, Cllr Dale Broughton, Cllr John Clarke, Cllr Peter Dobbs, Cllr Alan Graves, Cllr Beverley Gray, Cllr Mary Green, Cllr Michael Mullaney, Cllr Elaine Pantling, Cllr Paul Peacock, Cllr Nadine Peatfield, Cllr Claire Rylott, Cllr Jonathan Slater, Cllr Mark Smith, Cllr Sam Smith, Cllr Michael Squires, Cllr Naomi Tweddle, Cllr James Walker-Gurley, Cllr Elizabeth Wright, Cllr Martin Wright.

2. Declarations of Interest

2.1 None.

3. Minutes of EMC AGM held on 11th July 2025

3.1 These were agreed as a true and accurate record. All action points have been completed.

4. Asylum and Refugee Resettlement in the East Midlands

4.1 Alex Norris MP, Minister for Border Security and Asylum addressed members.

4.2 He confirmed the commitment for the Home Office to treat Local Government as partners and the need to reset relations.

- 4.3 He confirmed that are starting to see claims for asylum reduced and the backlog is clearing which is helping to take pressure off the system.
- 4.4 There were significant changes announced in November. Right to work checks have been improved, there has been the closure of hotels and also the use of larger sites.
- 4.5 There have been significant changes around packages of support and significant strides have been made in removal of people who have no right to remain.
- 4.6 Alex Norris MP confirmed that Home Office are currently looking at 28/56 days move on period and are keen to get people's views on this.
- 4.7 In relation to the next model for providing supported accommodation the Government is looking at alternative models.
- 4.8 Cllr Sean Matthews highlighted the Government's intention to cease using contingency hotels by the end of parliament. If larger, disused military sites are to be used as alternative accommodation, then Cllr Matthews emphasised that local partners should be afforded as much advance notice as possible.
- 4.9 Cllr Ashley Baxter highlighted concerns in Grantham, where a disproportionately high number of HMOs have been procured in a limited number of streets, with incidents of anti-social behaviour and wider community concerns.
- 4.10 Cllr Jim Hakewill asked in relation to the 56 day move-on period whether KPIs are kept on the time it takes to access accommodation?
- 4.11 Alex Norris MP confirmed that in relation to the use of military sites, he intends to ensure that local partners are informed as early as possible in the process.
- 4.12 Alex Norris MP confirmed he would like the move on period to be based on data and guided by evidence.

- 4.13 Cllr Phil King stated there is no confidence from the public in relation to continuation of boats crossing and the stopping of these. He highlighted the importance of border security.
- 4.14 Cllr Robert Reaney highlighted age assessments for migrants and guidance for this.
- 4.15 Alex Norris MP confirmed the boat issue is of importance and there is a need to break the embedded model. Net migration is down and progress is being made.
- 4.16 Alex Norris MP stated that ensuring accurate age assessment remain a challenge. There is age estimation at borders, and the Home Office is currently exploring the use of AI and facial recognition.
- 4.17 Cllr Neil Clarke sought reassurance in relation to hotel closures, both in terms of timing and approach.
- 4.18 Cllr Alex Dale highlighted the asylum dispersal model and the distortion of housing market by Serco offering higher than market rents and longer term contracts. He asked what could be done around this. He feels the asylum dispersal model has to be based on being fair and authorities have to be seen to be doing their fair share. Serco continue to focus procurement in lower costs areas and suggested that greater fairness needs to be introduced into the model.
- 4.19 Cllr Jewel Miah asked in relation to funding and will the government look at sufficiently resourcing in future.
- 4.20 Cllr John Doddy highlighted the Nottingham Trent UASC report which had been recently commissioned. He asked whether there will be a budget created for research.
- 4.21 Alex Norris MP stated that the best possible sites and location will be used. He agreed the need for a good spread of locations. There is a replace and maintain in place although there is a challenge with this.

4.22 Alex Norris MP confirmed that funding support for individuals placed is available per head. He wants authorities to have maximum support.

4.23 Alex Norris confirmed that a lot of research is undertaken, and he wants the best insight and feels research is exceptionally important.

4.24 Resolution

Members of East Midlands Councils:

- Considered the impact 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.
- Advised on the impact of the Full Dispersal plan in Local Authority areas.
- Advised on the impact of the Afghan Resettlement Programme (ARP).

5. Local Government Reorganisation

5.1 Tony McArdle addressed members to discuss and highlight the challenges of Local Government Reorganisation.

5.2 He stated that in Northamptonshire this should have originally been a 2 year process but was extended to 3 years.

5.4 He also urged members to make the most of opportunities as and when they arise.

5.5 Cllr Sean Matthews asked whether less than a year is a reasonable and sensible approach to take.

5.6 Tony McArdle confirmed the advice consistently provided is to allow as much time as possible for local authorities to deliver the agreed propositions, hence the current consultation being earlier than originally proposed.

5.7 Tony McArdle agreed that devolution deals are highly political however other priorities need to be considered.

5.8 He highlighted the importance to identify challenges as early as possible in order to free up time for other priorities.

- 5.9 Cllr Phil King stated the need for greater clarity in relation to announcements and elections, their timings and the way forward.
- 5.10 Cllr John Doddy asked what a good shadow year looks like.
- 5.11 Tony McArdle stated the need for very clear options for decisions at earliest possibility. There is a need for clear options of what is practical and in the time scales.
- 5.12 Cllr Pip Allnatt highlighted the analysis of policies and asked what advice there would be for members as to how to harmonise these policies across authorities.
- 5.13 Tony McArdle stated that officers should be looking at policies and identifying any obstacles. Contracts will all finish on different dates and these all need to be integrated and prioritised.
- 5.14 Cllr Neghat Khan asked around the structural changes order and when would this be in place.
- 5.15 Tony McArdle stated that guidance will be coming out soon. He stressed this is bespoke to each area and the things which are important to each area need to be included in this. This will happen prior to shadow authorities being established.
- 5.16 Cllr Anthony McKeown highlighted cross-border working and specific problems that relate to joint arrangements between councils that cut across county areas.
- 5.17 Cllr Sean Matthews stressed the importance of the public consultation and the completion of this.
- 5.18 Resolution
Members of East Midlands Councils:
- Considered the range of LGR proposals from councils in the East Midlands, including issues relating to the preparation for, and implementation of, agreed propositions and wider developments relating to devolution.

6. EMC Chair's Report

- 6.1 Cllr Sean Matthews introduced his report which highlights a number of the key concerns for the region.
- 6.2 He highlighted the EMC Business plan and core priorities. The Business Plan is based on 4 areas.
- 6.3 Cllr McKewon highlighted the priorities and feels TfEM needs to be looked at in line with EMCCA responsibilities.
- 6.4 Stuart Young confirmed the challenges around alignment and transition and there is a need to be clear what organisations are responsible for what.
- 6.5 Resolution
Members of East Midlands Councils:
- Considered and advised on core priorities for inclusion within EMC's business plan 2026/27.
 - Considered the issues paper on future governance that relate to EMC as a partnership organisation, for comment and advice.

7. Motion(s) to East Midlands Councils

- 7.1 None received.

8. Local Authority Workforce and Pay – Regional Employers' Board

- 8.1 Cllr Jane Yates, Chair Regional Employers' Board introduced this report which highlights a number of significant issues for local authorities as employers.
- 8.2 The report also sets out national pay negotiations. There is no further progress for craft workers' pay for 2025.
- 8.3 The pay briefing in January was well attended and the National Employers' will next meet on 24th March.

- 8.4 Cllr Yates highlighted the 2 key workforce priorities currently which are recruitment and retention and LGR.
- 8.5 As part of the discussion on Councillor training, development and wider engagement, Cllr Yates highlighted the briefing event on Regional Energy for members.
- 8.6 Cllr Ashley Baxter enquired what support will be available when pay structures are being set in new organisations i.e. Chief Executives, and how will this be pitched to attract the right person.
- 8.7 Sam Maher confirmed there are considerations for shadow authorities to develop this. EMC will offer support to shadow councils in the set-up years in the development of this work.
- 8.8 Resolution
Members of East Midlands Councils:
- Considered the issues raised within the report.
 - Raised awareness of the councillor development programme amongst councillor colleagues.

9. Regional Investment, Infrastructure and Growth

- 9.1 Andrew Pritchard introduced this report and highlighted the key issues to members.
- 9.2 Cllr Simon Ford expressed concern in relation to charging of trains which can only run for 50 miles. The pause in electrification has a huge effect.
- 9.3 Andrew Pritchard confirmed the detail is still being looked at and this adds to the argument of needing to do something long term.
- 9.4 Cllr Phil King stated that Midland Mainline Electrification has been completed up to Wigston and asked what the plan is to get government to complete the electrification.
- 9.5 He also highlighted the increase in housing numbers and the unintended consequences of this.

- 9.6 Andrew Pritchard confirmed the government has stated it will not fund Midland Mainline Electrification. Currently trying to build evidence around the need for this.
- 9.7 Andrew confirmed that spatial development strategies allow different choices to be made around housing numbers and distribution of development.
- 9.8 Resolution
Members of East Midlands Councils:
- Endorsed the work of the TfEM Board.
 - Considered the rest of the report.
 - Directed officers accordingly.

Cllr Sean Matthews closed the meeting at 12.22pm



Annual General Meeting

3rd July 2026

Chair's Report

Cllr Sean Matthews

Summary

The following report provides summary information on the recent local councils elections, legislative and other developments that relate to local government reorganisation and devolution.

Recommendation

Members of East Midlands Councils are invited to consider and advise on the implications of the recent local authority elections and other developments highlighted in this report, in particular, those matters relating to Local Government Reorganisation.

1. Summary of Local Authority Election Results

- 1.1 Elections were held across 136 English local authorities, including London boroughs, metropolitan boroughs, county, district and unitary councils.
- 1.2 The only council that had an election in the East Midlands was Lincoln City Council (with one third of its seats up for election)
- 1.3 Nationally, over 5,000 council seats were contested.

Headline results

- 1.4 The 2026 elections represent a major shift in the political landscape, with a move away from the traditional two-party dominance.
- 1.5 In summary, the gains and losses of seats of each main political party are:

Reform UK	+1,451 councillors
Green Party	+441 councillors
Liberal Democrats	+155 councillors
Labour	-1,496 councillors
Conservatives	-563 councillors
- 1.6 In terms of the numbers of councils gained or lost:

Reform UK	gained 14 councils
Labour	lost 38 councils
Conservatives	lost 6 councils
Lib Dem	gained 1 council
Greens	gained 5 councils

The number of councils becoming No Overall Control increased by 23.
- 1.7 Overall, it seems that Reform UK made a particular breakthrough in former industrial areas and parts of the Midlands and North. The Green Party made strong gains in urban areas and London, including mayoral wins.
- 1.8 Labour retained control of the City of Lincoln Council. The authority is made up of 33 councillors representing 11 wards. One seat from each ward was up for election. Reform UK made the biggest gain taking four seats, with the Liberal Democrats and Green Party winning one each. Labour lost 3 seats, and the Conservatives lost all three seats they contested.

2. Political Balance

- 2.1 The single council election in Lincoln has a negligible effect on the region's, and therefore EMC's, political balance. At the national level, the LGA remains Labour-led, but Reform UK became the largest political group at the County Councils Network (CCN) and has appointed Cllr Sean Matthews as its new chair elect.
- 2.2 A more notable effect on the region's political balance was the withdrawal from EMC membership by West Northants Councils, reducing the share of Reform UK from 29.5% to 28.2%.
- 2.3 The revised political balance for the region excluding West Northamptonshire:

Overall Political Balance	
Reform UK	28.2%
Labour	24.9%
Conservative	23.6%
Liberal Democrats	8.0%
Independents	15.4%

3. The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act

- 3.1 The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill completed its passage through Parliament and received Royal Assent to become an Act on 29th April 2026.
- 3.2 The Act introduces 'Strategic Authorities' into law, to make it quicker to devolve powers out from Whitehall. Strategic Authorities with elected Mayors will receive more devolved powers over transport, planning, housing, and economic regeneration.
- 3.3 The Act also establishes Local Scrutiny Committees for mayoral authorities, which will provide scrutiny of local public spending and decision making.
- 3.4 Further measures in the Act include:
- Mandating Mayoral Strategic Authorities to develop local growth plans, aligning regional economic strategies with national policy.
 - A new bespoke duty for Mayors and Strategic Authorities to ensure they formally consider local health improvement and health inequalities when making policy decisions.

- New powers for Mayors to intervene in planning applications of potential strategic importance, make mayoral development orders and charge a mayoral community infrastructure levy on developers.
- The establishment of the Local Audit Office to help manage council finances, ensuring auditing is carried out more efficiently and transparently.
- It should be noted that the Act does not give powers for the Government to impose strategic authorities or mayors upon local areas without that council's explicit consent.

3.5 In effect, while the Government initially sought to impose or expand boundaries to enforce a 'devolution by default' model, in a move away from the old 'negotiated deal' model, the enacted legislation strictly preserves local autonomy by ensuring that the creation of new combined or mayoral strategic authorities remains a voluntary, locally-led process.

3.6 The Act provides the statutory legislative framework for LGR and regional devolution in England that includes the 'power of direction' for the Secretary of State to require councils in two-tier areas to develop and submit LGR proposals alongside 'Section 24 Directions' empowering the Secretary of State to implement financial and administrative controls on outgoing predecessor councils to ensure a smooth transition of assets and services into new unitary authorities.

4. Local Government Reorganisation

4.1 It is a helpful reminder that LGR is not just a policy proposition of Government, it is, importantly, a tightly defined legal process.

4.2 While there have been questions about capacity and commitment of delivering LGR in line with initial proposals, MHCLG have been clear that timescales will not slip, and despite the current political 'flux' at Westminster, there is no indication to the contrary. Indeed, the Minister for Local Government stated (after the PM's resignation announcement) that the Government is "on track to announce decisions before the summer recess period.", which would be immediately prior to Andy Burnham becoming the new Prime Minister (if unopposed), potentially on 17th July.

4.3 The current decision schedule and milestones are:

- w/c 13th July 2026 (expected) – Final decisions on remaining areas
- Late 2026 – Structural Change Orders and implementation planning
- May 2027 – Elections to shadow councils

- April 2028 – Vesting for new councils
- 4.4 Members are reminded that there are a number of mandatory legal stages that every area, and its proposal, must pass through.
 - 4.5 The key statutory ‘gateways’ are Consultation, Ministerial decision and Structural Changes Order approved by Parliament. Everything else (planning, engagement, workforce change) sits around these legal steps - but cannot replace them.
 - 4.6 The law requires that Government must consult councils and the public before deciding its LGR proposals. The completion of the statutory consultation, undertaken between 5th February to 26th March 2026 was a critical milestone with the Government meeting its legal consultation duty.
 - 4.7 The next, and imminent stage, is for the Secretary of State to decide whether to proceed and which proposal to adopt (with or without modification). The decision must be made against statutory criteria and evidence.
 - 4.8 The Ministerial decision for councils in the East Midlands is expected w/c 13th July 2026. This is the next major statutory ‘gateway’ decision.
 - 4.9 After decision, councils then enter the legal implementation phase, requiring a formal statutory instrument. The law requires a statutory instrument must be made and approved by Parliament. The expected timing for this is late 2026 to early 2027.
 - 4.10 The crucial legal instrument is the Structural Changes Order (SCO). This is a Statutory Instrument made under Section 7 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (2007) and is the legal mechanism that actually creates the new councils.
 - 4.11 The SCO must legally include the structural changes, the name of the new unitary council with a definition of their boundaries, and the transfer of functions and assets including services, staff, property, finance (e.g. council tax harmonisation), contracts and liabilities.
 - 4.12 The SCO must be laid before and approved by Parliament. Without Parliamentary approval, no reorganisation can take effect. At this point, everything becomes formal and irreversible, because a Structural Changes Order will lock in the new councils, and the existing councils will be legally abolished.

- 4.13 Once the SCO is made, local authorities in the East Midlands move into two statutory transition periods; Transition period 1 (pre elections) where Councils must establish a Joint Committee for implementation, preparing transfer of services and staff, with the Transition period 2 (post elections to vesting day) where the Shadow council elected and takes over preparation of the new authority.
- 4.14 The key consideration is to ensure safe and lawful continuity of services on vesting day.
- 4.15 in his discussion with Members at their meeting in February, the advice from Tony McArdle MHCLG Advisor, was to take a first principles approach and design services and corporate teams at an early stage to ensure that existing inefficiencies are not carried forward and built into future structures.
- 4.16 It is noted that the new Reform UK leadership in both Suffolk and Essex County Councils have stated their intention to pursue legal action against the Government's reorganisation plans. The impact on the wider LGR process is not clear.
- 4.17 EMC will continue to support councils throughout the LGR process. As part of this programme, all councillors are invited to attend a fully subsidised policy summit on Thursday 16th July, '*Devolution, LGR and Planning Reform: the Perfect Storm*', in Leicester. The timings of this event should coincide with date of the Government's decision of agreed structures.

5 The Implications for East Midlands Councils

- 5.1 The implications of LGR are far reaching and will have a significant impact on the East Midlands. It has previously been highlighted to Members that LGR will also impact upon EMC as an organisation, in terms of the work we do, our partnership and resource base.
- 5.2 It has also been emphasised that once the new local government and devolution arrangements are in place, if councils have the view 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.

- 5.3 The shadow unitary council arrangements will need to consider these arrangements in advance of vesting day. This suggests that the future governance proposition that relate to EMC will need to be in place by end-March 2026.
- 5.4 Members have previously considered these matters with a commitment to explore proposals with member councils once the LGR proposition becomes clearer. However, conscious of timescales, Executive Board has also considered an initial 'issues paper' that summarised the timings, resources, scope and implications of LGR, devolution, and other related issues for any future regional partnership.
- 5.5 To move these discussions on, a number of chief executives have agreed to be part of a working group, alongside senior EMC officers, to oversee the development and agreement of preferred options for any new regional body, with an advisory but preferred 'direction of travel' then set by EMC's existing political leadership. The decision of course, rests with the new shadow councils as part of their responsibility for establishing the new structure of local government in the region.
- 5.6 It is envisaged that a draft report will be considered by EMC Executive Board at its meeting in December 2026, and the wider EMC membership at its meeting in February 2027, to support a final proposition to be agreed by the Executive Board in March 2027.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 Members of East Midlands Councils are invited to consider and advise on the implications of the recent local authority elections and other developments highlighted in this report, in particular, those matters relating to Local Government Reorganisation.

Cllr Sean Matthews
Chair
East Midlands Councils



Annual General Meeting

3rd July 2026

Presentation of Annual Report

Summary

The following report presents EMC's Annual Report 2025/26 for the consideration and endorsement of Members.

Recommendations

Members of East Midlands Councils are invited to consider progress of EMC in meeting the priorities set by its Members and endorse the Annual Report 2025/26, attached as Appendix 5(a).

1. Presentation of the Annual Report

- 1.1 The Annual Report is a summary of our work over the past 12 months and is part of EMC's accountability to the membership for the work we undertake in meeting agreed priorities.
- 1.2 It covers EMC's main programmes and services, including support for the region's investment and growth priorities, development programmes for members and officers, transformation and HR support, EMC's wider role as the Regional Employers' Organisation, and the management of refugee and asylum resettlement programmes.
- 1.3 The Annual Report 2025/26 is attached as Appendix 5(a). It summarises key achievements over the year. For example, every member council used at least one EMC service; EMC helped deliver £494,000 in savings for the sector; more than 70 workforce assignments were completed; 2,465 places were taken up on EMC training and development programmes; 12 strategic rail research projects were completed or commissioned; and 270 pieces of immigration legal advice were provided to local authorities.
- 1.4 Annual Report is a summary of the progress of EMC in meeting the priorities set by its Members. However, alongside this, Members are invited to consider the changing context and future challenges that faces the sector, and East Midlands Councils as a local government representative body, that include local government reorganisation and the role and responsibilities of strategic authorities.
- 1.5 These matters, as they become clearer during the course of 2026/27 are included within the current Business Plan and will be reported to Members.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Members of East Midlands Councils are invited to consider progress of EMC in meeting the priorities set by its Members and endorse the Annual Report 2025/26, attached as Appendix 5(a).



EMC Annual Report 2025/26



East Midlands
Councils

Foreword

This Annual Report provides an overview of our work in delivering the priorities agreed by our members. It reflects the breadth of East Midlands Council's programmes and services, including our own activity and that of our partners. Over the past year, we have supported progress on the region's agreed road and rail investment plans and wider growth proposals; assisted councils with the implementation of the revised National Planning Policy Framework and housing delivery; delivered targeted development programmes for members and officers; and continued to provide transformation, HR support, and our wider responsibilities as the Regional Employers' Organisation. We have also advanced the management of key refugee and asylum resettlement programmes.



The year has brought significant political change across the region, requiring EMC to update its governance arrangements and constitution to reflect the new landscape. Despite these changes, members have continued to collaborate constructively on shared priorities.

All councils in membership made use of our discounted services during 2025/26, generating estimated savings of £494,000. EMC delivered an extensive development programme for officers and Members, offering regular policy briefings, skills development sessions, and training events. Participation increased again this year, with 2,465 councillor and officer places taken.

We continued to add value by providing free advice and guidance on employment legislation and national terms and conditions. Demand for employment-related support remained high, with more than 48 separate assignments undertaken for member councils during the year.

EMC also strengthened its partnerships with the region's MPs through the East Midlands All-Party Parliamentary Group, and with the Institution of Civil Engineers (East Midlands), to champion investment in the region's wider economic infrastructure.

In addition, EMC has led work to support councils in engaging with the newly established National Energy Systems Operator (NESO), which is responsible for developing Regional Energy Strategic Plans (RESPs). These plans will guide future investment decisions by electricity distribution network operators. As part of this work, EMC convened expert speakers for a seminar for councillors and senior officers in March 2026.

We continue to work closely with local authorities, the Home Office, Ministry of Defence and MHCLG to secure accommodation and wrap-around support for Afghan refugees and those displaced by the war in Ukraine. Alongside these schemes, EMC supports councils in delivering the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) National Transfer Scheme and plays a key role in implementing the Home Office Full Dispersal Model to ensure a more equitable distribution of asylum seekers across the region.

Financially, EMC continues to manage its budget carefully, maintaining a balanced mix of external grants, consultancy income and membership subscriptions. Our financial position remains stable, and we achieved a small surplus from traded services, which will be reinvested to support future activity.

We are grateful to EMC staff, councillors, and officers across the region for their dedication and collaboration. As we look ahead to 2026/27, we remain committed to working closely with colleagues across the East Midlands. Our Business Plan sets out the activity and engagement we will take forward in the year ahead.

[Business Plan](#)



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sean Matthews".

Cllr Sean Matthews,
Chair, East Midlands Councils



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Elly Cutkelvin".

Cllr Elly Cutkelvin,
Vice-Chair, East Midlands Councils



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tricia Gilby".

Cllr Tricia Gilby,
Vice-Chair, East Midlands Councils

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East Midlands
Councils



**Delivering Our Priorities
for 2025/26**

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Refreshed Communications

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Our Leadership

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Our Staff

36

Our Key Outcomes 2025/26

2,465

Places taken on EMC training and development programmes

£

£494,000

Savings delivered for member councils



1,742

Councillors sent our weekly Policy Brief

100%

of councils in the East Midlands benefitted from at least one of EMC's services

12



Rail Research Projects/ Reviews Completed or commissioned

12

HR Research
Assignments
Completed



270

separate pieces
of immigration legal
advice provided to
local authorities



68

Requests for HR
support received
and actioned

14

Organisations
and 66 Coaches in
EMC's Coaching
Network



1,350

Vulnerable refugees
resettled in
the region

Our Role and Purpose

The East Midlands is a region of 5m people, and over the last 10 years, the population has grown above the UK average and in line with London and the South East. The region is a mid-sized but fast-growing business region, home to 368,000 businesses (2024), with a total regional output of approximately £146bn, equivalent to 5.8% of the UK economy.

EMC is a membership body that works on behalf of and is the voice for local government in the region, being proud to represent councils in the East Midlands with membership drawn from our county and unitary councils, 29 district & borough councils and the Peak District National Park Authority.

Our small team of staff work across the range of services and programmes that EMC delivers on behalf of its member councils. Our role is to provide support to all member councils to improve their services and be a strong collective voice for the East Midlands on matters of strategic importance.

Our core objective is to ensure value-added, whether this be through ensuring excellence in the provision of our services and sector-led support or the development of policies and delivering programmes that respond to the needs and priorities of our membership.

The common thread throughout this Annual Report is one of collaboration and partnership working. Working with our membership, through leading and developing regional networks, commissioning research and programmes, sharing learning and best practice, and supporting the development of joint approaches across the region to meet common priorities, we build a stronger, more effective region for the benefit of its councils and their communities.



What We Do

Local Government Workforce and Councillor Development

EMC is the statutory Employers' Organisation for local government in the East Midlands. We represent the interests of councils as employers, providing support on workforce issues and development, including councillor development. EMC also provides the Regional Joint Council which brings together employers and trade union representatives and gives support to councils on dispute resolution.

Transport and Growth

EMC supports the work of Transport for the East Midlands (TfEM), which brings together the region's ten local transport authorities to provide collective leadership of strategic transport issues, including through a Rail Collaboration Agreement with Department for Transport for the enhancement of the region's rail services. EMC also supports collective work to maximise the regional economic benefits of transport infrastructure and provides regular updates on key regional metrics on growth and public investment.

Asylum and Refugee Resettlement

EMC, through its Strategic Migration Partnership, co-ordinates collaborative activity on asylum and refugee resettlement. EMC works on behalf of councils in the East Midlands in managing the delivery of national UK Government programmes. These programmes currently include Asylum Dispersal, Ukrainian visa schemes, Afghan and wider UK resettlement schemes, the National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC), and those arriving from Hong Kong with British National (Overseas) status.

Strategic Leadership

EMC provides the secretariat for the East Midlands All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), ensuring that the region's priorities are effectively represented in Westminster. EMC has led council engagement with NESO in the initial work on regional energy strategy development, and with MHCLG on the implications of the revised NPPF. EMC also nominates representatives to the national asylum and resettlement group (ARCSEG), and the Midlands Connect Strategic Boards. In addition, EMC facilitates collaborative work for Children's and Adult Services Lead Members and convenes meetings of all 40 Chief Executives across the region.

How We Work



As a small organisation, East Midlands Councils adds value to the work of councils across the region by:

- ▶ Evidencing proposals for change and improvement
- ▶ Influencing national decisions and decision-makers
- ▶ Collaborating across the sector and with national bodies to deliver shared outcomes
- ▶ Delivering cost effective services and products on behalf of all our member councils

EMC with its range of roles and responsibilities, has continued to focus its resources where it can add most value, delivering a greater impact through a regional partnership approach and securing funding to deliver against membership priorities.

EMC continues to build effective relationships with Government Departments including with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Department for Transport, the Home Office, the Ministry of Defence, Department for Education and the new Departments for Energy Security and Net Zero, and Business and Trade.

We have also worked with business, health, and voluntary and community sector partners, and play an active and supportive role with wider regional partnerships, in particular with Midlands Connect.

Our Finances



EMC continues to tightly manage its budget, ensuring a balance of income from a combination of annual membership subscriptions, grant funding in support of programme delivery and that from our traded services provided at a discounted rate to our membership. EMC's total income budget for 2026/27 is £1,686,700 and closely aligns to the objectives of our 2026/27 Business Plan.

	Actual 2024/25 (£)	Budget 2025/26 (£)	Budget 2026/27 (£)
Income			
Subscriptions	296,200	299,200	305,700
Grants – MHCLG	370,899	619,700	372,300
Contracts – MC - DfT	251,808	295,000	207,500
Grants – Home Office	437,623	588,000	480,000
Earned Income	286,472	301,800	321,200
TOTAL	1,643,002	2,103,700	1,686,700

Expenditure			
Staffing	1,098,735	1,447,500	1,370,500
Members Allowances	11,496	22,000	22,000
Premises	25,840	27,800	28,600
Service Level Agreements	16,700	18,500	18,500
Other Direct Costs	492,070	582,100	246,800
TOTAL	1,644,841	2,097,900	1,686,400

Surplus / (Deficit)	(1,839)	5,800	300
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Delivering on our Priorities for 2025/26

Local Government Workforce and Councillor Development

EMC's work programme was reshaped during 2025/26 to provide support for the sector on the emerging issues of wide-sweeping employment law changes and the workforce implications and learning/development needs arising from LGR. Progress on agreed regional workforce priorities continued: recruitment and retention, improving availability of workforce and pay data to support benchmarking and informed decision-making, supporting positive employee relations, and addressing skills and knowledge through regional programmes. The Regional Joint Council remains a forum for positive employment relations, covering matters such as pay, employee wellbeing, sickness absence, and LGR.

It continues to provide an opportunity to work jointly to progress issues of mutual concern. Highlights from 2025/26 include:



- ▶ On recruitment, EMC supported the LGA to roll-out a further funded national recruitment campaign, enabling councils in the region to input on the campaign's focus. The regional jobs portal, East Midlands Jobs, continued to be offered to promote councils' vacancies and support the national campaign. EMC delivered a project for a group of councils to collaborate and share resources to promote local government careers with universities and schools, tailoring the national campaign resources to meet local needs.
- ▶ EMC facilitated a range of networks on key themes to share information, good practice and advice. Additionally, an online benchmarking system – Infinistats was offered to councils to enable benchmarking of workforce data, including pay, terms and conditions and workforce capacity information, e.g. use of agency workers, sickness absence.

▶ EMC ensured councils were informed with developments on national pay negotiations for 2025. For the 2026 pay negotiations, EMC hosted the regional pay briefing in February, ensuring councils were able to meet with national negotiators and input their views and understand the issues that would inform 2026 pay offers.

▶ EMC provided two seminars in November and March attended by 171 delegates to ensure councils were informed and prepared for the wide-sweeping changes introduced by the Employment Rights Act 2025. EMC has also supported responses to government consultations, e.g. EMC hosted an event to enable councils to meet with the Department for Health & Social Care as part of a consultation on the introduction of a national negotiating body for adult social care.



- ▶ Learning and development programmes have been developed and delivered to ensure officers and councillors have relevant development to meet current and future challenges facing the sector. This includes:
 - Accredited regional leadership and management and coaching and mentoring programmes, along with programmes for senior leadership teams on leading change and transformation.
 - Low-cost Continuing Professional Development programmes for Planning and Environmental Health, which enable learning and experience to be shared across councils. In 2025/2026, the two programmes attracted 1,182 delegates.
 - A councillor development programme and a network for officers and councillors to support scrutiny.
- ▶ Design and delivery of a national development programme for the Association of Democratic Services Officers. 27 courses were provided to 441 delegates in 2025/26.
- ▶ Throughout the year, EMC has provided additional capacity and support to councils through its free advice and research service and consultancy support on a not-for-profit basis, including coaching, mediation, investigations, restructuring, recruitment and chief executive appraisals.

Transport and Growth

- ▶ EMC has continued to focus on opportunities for economic growth, improving strategic infrastructure and securing additional investment. TfEM made a comprehensive submission to the 2025 Spending Review and engaged with local MPs including through the East Midlands APPG to advocate for regional investment. On planning reform, EMC pulled together an East Midlands response to the Government's National Planning Policy Framework consultation.
- ▶ Continued to promote the TfEM/Midlands Connect Shared Investment Priorities published in 2024 (Our Shared Vision for the East Midlands) and continued to promote the regional rail priorities which guide the TfEM/Department for Transport Rail Collaboration Agreement, including the role out of the new Aurora inter-city trains, the ongoing refurbishment of regional and commuter rolling stock, and the doubling of services between Lincoln, Newark & Nottingham which took place from December 2025.
- ▶ Published and launched 'Keeping Pace, enhancing Lincoln's Rail Connectivity' jointly with Greater Lincolnshire County Combined Authority: [Keeping Pace: Enhancing Lincoln City's Rail Connectivity](#), and contributed to the development of EMCCA's Transport Strategy.

- ▶ Procured a comprehensive package of economic and transport evidence to inform a planned refresh of regional transport priorities and development of regional advice for emerging Great British Railways (GBR).
- ▶ Completed a joint document with ICE East Midlands highlighting priorities for wider economic infrastructure in the East Midlands: [build-to-grow-emip-report.pdf](#), which was launched in April 2025 and provided the basis for two further joint engagement events through the East Midlands Infrastructure Partnership.
- ▶ Worked with NESO and the Midlands Net Zero Hub (hosted by Nottingham City Council) to run a major seminar of Members and senior officers on the future of energy generation and distribution in March 2026 [Have we got the Energy?](#), including publishing an introductory guide on energy issues for Members: [Energy](#).
- ▶ Produced regular updates on regional economic performance for the EMC Executive and EMC General Meetings.

Asylum and Refugee Resettlement

East Midlands Councils manages the Strategic Migration Partnership - funded by the Home Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to co-ordinate activities regarding the dispersal, accommodation and support of asylum seekers, refugees and wider migration issues across the region. During 2025/26, key achievements included:



- ▶ EMC has collaborated with Children's Services in the delivery of a regional UASC programme approach which includes increasing UASC placement sufficiency; developing online training for foster carers; publishing a UASC strategic needs analysis; and delivering a mental wellbeing project for former UASC Care Leavers.
- ▶ EMC has enhanced the East Midlands Immigration Advice Service offering specialist legal advice and training to Children's Social Care and Legal Teams.

- ▶ The Home Office has increased core UASC funding for local authorities as a direct result of EMC policy work, with an additional £2.2m for the region's Children's Services.
- ▶ The ongoing delivery of the asylum full dispersal model that provides for a more balanced distribution of asylum seekers across the East Midlands while continuing to address concerns associated with the use of temporary contingency accommodation including the closure of hotels.
- ▶ Maintained co-ordination of East Midlands' response to the Ukraine crisis, supporting local authorities to welcome 674 displaced people seeking safety via priority visa routes in 2025/26.
- ▶ Led the ongoing delivery of the ARP and UKRS across the region, coordinating the full regional matching process and acting as the primary liaison for local authorities, the Home Office, MHCLG, and the Ministry of Defence.
- ▶ Expanded the legacy of EMC's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Programme by collaborating with Migrant English Support Hub to energise sub-regional provider networking, to launch Learning English in the East Midlands (leem.org.uk).

Strategic Leadership

Providing strategic insight to Government on the impact of national policies and initiatives across the East Midlands remained a core focus this year. Working closely with councils and partners across key policy areas, EMC concentrated on:

- ▶ **Strengthening the collective voice of the region by offering coordinated leadership on issues of strategic importance to Ministers and senior civil servants, including work on flood mitigation and management, and engaging with the newly established National Energy Systems Operator in its development of Regional Energy Strategic Plans.**
- ▶ **Engaging directly with Alex Norris MP, Minister of State for Border Security and Asylum, at an EMC General Meeting to raise regional concerns and explore practical mitigations relating to the delivery of Government asylum programmes.**
- ▶ **Building deeper relationships with locally based Government Departments—such as the Department for Business and Trade, MHCLG, MoD, DfE, DHSC and the UK Health Security Agency—as well as with the region’s Mayoral County Combined Authorities, to support alignment of responsibilities and work programmes.**

- ▶ Working alongside the East Midlands Chamber of Commerce to provide secretariat support to the East Midlands All-Party Parliamentary Group. In addition to completing detailed reviews, EMC supported the Chair and regional MPs in securing and contributing to a Westminster Hall debate on investment and funding levels in the East Midlands and identifying regional priorities for the 2025 Spending Review: **APPG-Report-2025-FINAL-002.pdf**
- ▶ Delivering a nationally recognised, exemplar programme of sector-led improvement for children's services through the Regional Improvement and Innovation Alliance. This included jointly funded regional immigration legal advice and training, and initiatives aimed at increasing foster care capacity.



Refreshed Communications

Throughout 2025/26, EMC has continued to support councils through a period of sustained uncertainty, including Local Government Reorganisation, devolution developments, and ongoing financial pressures. Clear, timely communication has remained essential in helping members respond to a rapidly changing environment.

EMC has maintained a consistent flow of information and advice through newsletters, briefings, and targeted updates, ensuring members are informed on key regional and national issues. This has included tailored communications to different audiences, improving the relevance and accessibility of information for officers and partners.

Alongside this, EMC has strengthened its external voice, supporting regional advocacy on key priorities. Media engagement, stakeholder briefings, and coordinated messaging have helped amplify member priorities at a regional and national level.

EMC has also expanded its use of digital content, including video, case studies, and campaign material, to better demonstrate impact and engage wider audiences, particularly across regional events and programme delivery. This approach has helped translate complex policy areas into accessible content, supporting engagement with a wider range of audiences and strengthening understanding of regional priorities.



Our Leadership



39 councils in the East Midlands are members of EMC and meet twice a year in plenary sessions to shape the organisation's priorities and agree our budget. In between these sessions, the work of EMC is managed through Boards made up of councillors nominated following the AGM. We send our thanks to our 25/26 board members for their support.

EMC Executive Board

Cllr Sean Matthews – Chair

Lincolnshire County Council

Cllr Elly Cutkelvin – Vice Chair

Leicester City Council

Cllr Tricia Gilby – Vice Chair

Chesterfield Borough Council

Cllr Jewel Miah

Charnwood Borough Council

Cllr Nadine Peatfield

Derby City Council

Cllr Alan Graves

Derbyshire County Council

Cllr Craig Leyland

East Lindsey District Council

Cllr Phil King

Harborough District Council

Cllr Stuart Bray

Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council

Cllr Dan Harrison

Leicestershire County Council

Mayor Andy Abrahams

Mansfield District Council

Cllr Martin Griffiths

North Northamptonshire Council

Cllr Neghat Khan

Nottingham City Council

Cllr Mick Barton

Nottinghamshire County Council

Cllr Gale Waller/

Cllr Christine Wise

Rutland County Council

Cllr Ashley Baxter

South Kesteven District Council

Cllr Mark Arnall

West Northamptonshire
Council

EMC Management Group

Cllr Elly Cutkelvin – Chair

Cllr Sean Matthews – Vice Chair

Cllr Tricia Gilby – Vice Chair

Cllr Phil King – Conservative Party Group Leader

Cllr Ashley Baxter – Independent Group Leader

Cllr Jewel Miah – Labour Party Group Leader

Cllr Gale Waller – Liberal Democrats Party Group Leader

Cllr Martin Griffiths – Reform UK Group Leader

Cllr Jane Yates – Regional Employers' Board Chair

Cllr John Doddy – Regional Migration Board Chair

Transport for the East Midlands

Mayor Peter Soulsby – Chair

Leicester City Council

**Cllr Chris McGiffen –
Vice Chair**

North Northamptonshire Council

Cllr Carmel Swan

Derby City Council

Cllr Charlotte Hill

Derbyshire County Council

Cllr Carol Wood

Derbyshire County Council

Cllr Charles Whitford

Leicestershire County Council

Cllr David East

Lincolnshire County Council

Cllr Linda Woodings

Nottingham City Council

Cllr Bert Bingham

Nottinghamshire County Council

Cllr Christine Wise

Rutland County Council

Cllr Richard Butler

West Northamptonshire Council

Mayor Claire Ward

East Midlands Combined
County Authority



Regional Employers' Board

Cllr Jane Yates – Chair

Bolsover District Council

**Cllr Jonathan Wheeler –
Vice-Chair**

Rushcliffe Borough Council

**Cllr Harrison Fowler –
Vice-Chair**

Leicestershire County Council

Cllr Jonathan Slater

Bassetlaw District Council

Cllr Peter Bales

Broxtowe Borough Council

Cllr Tom Catton

Lincolnshire County Council

Cllr Mary Green

North Kesteven District Council

Cllr Graham Cheatley

North Northamptonshire Council

Cllr Sam Smith

Nottinghamshire County
Council

Cllr James Walker-Gurley

Nottinghamshire County Council

Cllr Rosemary Powell

Rutland County Council

Cllr Gale Waller

Rutland County Council

Cllr David Wilby

Rutland County Council

Regional Migration Board

Cllr Dr John Doddy – Chair

Nottinghamshire County Council

Cllr Elly Cutkelvin – Vice Chair

Leicester City Council

Cllr Alex Dale – Vice Chair

Derbyshire County Council

Cllr Sarah Chambers

Derby City Council

Cllr Craig Leyland

East Lindsey District Council

Cllr Phil Knowles

Harborough District Council

Cllr Beverley Gray

Leicestershire County Council

Cllr Michael Squires

Leicestershire County Council

Cllr Alex McGonigle

Lincolnshire County Council

Cllr Frank Adlington-Stringer

North East Derbyshire

District Council

Cllr Mark Smith

North Kesteven District Council

Cllr James Hakewill

North Northamptonshire Council

Cllr Elizabeth Wright

North Northamptonshire Council

Cllr Corall Jenkins

Nottingham City Council

Cllr Neil Clarke

Rushcliffe Borough Council

Our Staff

Stuart Young

Executive Director

Andrew Pritchard

Director of Policy and Infrastructure

Sam Maher

Director of HR & Councillor Development

Anna Anderson

Business Support Officer

Brein Fisher

Head of Migration Partnerships

Camila David

Resettlement Policy Officer

Kyle Butterworth

Head of Rail Improvement

Lisa Bushell

Business Support Manager & Events Lead

Lisa Butterfill

HR & Development Manager

Lisa Hopkins

Business Support Officer



Maria Brambles

Resettlement Manager

Matthew Clarke

Asylum Manager

Mila Pereira

Business Support Officer

Noel Oxford

Resettlement Policy Officer

Rachael Pengelly

Communications & Marketing Specialist

Richard Herrick

Asylum Policy Officer

Stuart Turner

Programme Manager

Suzanne Boulton

HR & Learning & Development Manager

Harpreet Kaur (contract staff)

Regional Immigration Solicitor

Sarika Kohli (contract staff)

Immigration Solicitor



East Midlands
Councils



General Meeting

3rd July 2026

Local Government Workforce, Pay & Councillor Development

Summary

This report provides an update to Members on significant issues relevant to local government as employers and includes information on opportunities for councillors' development.

Recommendations

Members of East Midlands Councils are invited to:

- Consider the issues raised within this report.
- Raise awareness of the councillor development programme amongst Member colleagues.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The 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.
- 1.2 This report provides information for members on the work of the Regional Employers' Board and highlights key issues affecting councils as employers. The report outlines regional support to councils, and summarises progress on key regional priorities such as:
- Pay and Rewards
 - Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)
 - Councillor development

2. Regional Employers' Board & Joint Council Updates

- 2.1 The Regional Employers Board and Regional Joint Council have met twice since the General meeting in February.
- 2.2 On 13th March 2026, the Employers Board discussed updates relating to pay and employment legislation. The Board also discussed the regional councillor development offer and provided guidance on content and timescales for future events. The Regional Joint Council meeting was focused on LGR and received a presentation from the senior HR Leads of North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire Councils, sharing their experience of LGR and key lessons. Both Members and union representatives said the presentation was excellent and useful.
- 2.3 On 5th June 2026, the Employers' Board were provided an update on progress with the Councillor Development programme and regional work to support councils on workforce issues. The Regional Joint Council received an excellent presentation from union representatives from the Northamptonshire area sharing their experience of LGR and key learning points from a union perspective.
- 2.4 The Regional Joint Council also considered initial results of regional sickness absence benchmarking, which had indicated absence levels had increased

compared to the previous year. The three main causes of absence were mental health, musculo-skeletal and post-operative/surgical reasons.

- 2.5 The Employers raised concerns regarding difficulties recruiting and retaining planners, and it was agreed to work on this jointly to explore ways of addressing the issue.

3. Pay and Rewards: National Pay Negotiations for Local Government

- 3.1 The representatives of employees within the main negotiating groups – Local Government Services (known as Green Book) covering most council employees, Chief Officers and Chief Executives – all submitted pay claims for 2026. These are available through the following link: [Pay and Rewards](#)
- 3.2 Following consultation with councils, including an event hosted by EMC in February, the National Employers met on 24th March 2026 and made full and final offers were made to all three groups of a 3.3% pay increase with effect from 1st April 2026.
- 3.3 On 2nd June 2026, agreement was reached on the pay award for Chief Officers, which reflects the Employers' offer of 3.3%. Details of the award are set out in the pay circular which is available here: [Chief Officers](#)
- 3.4 Representatives of Chief Executives are awaiting completion of the negotiations for Green Book employees before giving their full response to the offer.
- 3.5 With regard to the 3.3% offer to Green Book employees, two unions – Unison and Unite - rejected the offer without consulting their members. Unison will be balloting its members on taking industrial action, with the ballot running from 9th July to 6th August in strategically targeted employers. Unite said it, *"...will be announcing next steps soon, including targeted strike ballots over the summer."* We are awaiting further details on this.
- 3.6 In May GMB balloted its members on the pay offer on a neutral basis and the outcome of the ballot was to reject the offer. Following a meeting of GMB's national committee, on 23rd June GMB announced that *"...further consultation will now take place at local level to determine potential employers and workplaces where GMB can deliver targeted local industrial action."*

- 3.7 In addition to pay negotiations, work is continuing at national level to jointly review the national pay spine. A new pay spine is required to address the impact of the National Living Wage in recent years, and to better reflect salaries being paid locally by councils that are above the pay spine in roles below chief officer level. The work is likely to take 2 years, based on past experience, and EMC will continue to keep authorities updated on progress and support the flow of information between councils and national colleagues. In May, a joint circular was issued which set out the agreed terms of reference for this work.
- 3.8 There remains a stalemate situation on national negotiations for Coroners', since the withdrawal of the Coroners' Society of England and Wales (CSEW) from the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Coroners and has opted instead to negotiate on an individual basis directly with their relevant local authority. EMC is supporting councils that employ coroners to ensure they receive information to inform their approach.
- 3.9 There is also no progress on pay negotiations for Craftworkers for 2025, with the majority union (Unite) rejecting the offer and the minority union agreeing it. Unite conducted industrial action ballots in some councils on this issue, none of which were in the East Midlands. The unions have not submitted a pay claim for 2026.
- 3.10 Negotiations are also taking place nationally on pay for 2026 for two other groups of employees. The Soulbury Committee negotiates national terms and conditions for employees in professions such as educational psychologists. The unions representing these employees submitted a pay claim for an increase of RPI plus 5%. The National Employers have conducted a survey of councils on the claim, and we are currently waiting for the Employers' offer in response to the claim.
- 3.11 Unions representing Youth and Community Workers submitted a pay claim for "a substantial pay rise of 10%" as well as other elements such as reducing working time without loss of pay. The National Employers are in the process of consulting councils to help inform their response to the claim.

4. Employment Law Developments

- 4.1 The Employment Rights Act 2025 provides significant changes to employment law, with implementation dates spanning 2 years since its enactment in December.
- 4.2 From the regional perspective, EMC is supporting councils by providing advice and training on employment law changes, as well as promoting or engaging in

consultations relating to the proposals where appropriate. EMC has hosted two seminars over the last six months to provide HR teams with sector-specific guidance, attended by over 140 delegates.

- 4.3 Some of the proposals within the Employment Rights Act are subject to consultation, and the following consultations are currently open:

(a) Consultation on Zero Hours & Similar Contracts

- 4.3.1 On 2nd June the Government launched consultation relating to zero hours and similar contracts. The consultation relates to measures proposed through the Employment Rights Act 2025 that aim to address a viewpoint that there is “one-sided flexibility”.
- 4.3.2 The proposed changes, which are expected to come into effect in 2027, would see:
- Employers being required to offer qualifying workers guaranteed hours that reflect the number of hours worked over a set reference period.
 - Workers being entitled to reasonable notice of shifts, and changes to shifts.
 - Payment when shifts are cancelled, shortened or moved at short notice.
- 4.3.3 The consultation seeks views on how these new rights should be implemented, including how long the reference period should be that will be used to calculate guaranteed hours - the Government’s preferred option is 12 weeks. The consultation closes on 25th August 2026 and can be accessed through the following link: [Make Work Pay: ending one-sided flexibility – reforms of zero hours and similar contracts - GOV.UK](#)

(b) Call for Evidence on Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE)

- 4.3.4 In April the Government launched a call for evidence regarding the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (the TUPE Regulations). There is no indication within the call for evidence of what changes might to the Regulations in future, save for indicating a commitment to strengthening the existing set of rights and protections for employees going through the TUPE process, and ‘modernising’ the Regulations to improve efficiency.
- 4.3.5 The call for evidence seeks views from those who have experience of TUPE (either as employees, employers, or unions) on the effectiveness of the current Regulations, and how they might be improved, with questions relating to a range

of different aspects. Councils, who will have been through TUPE transfers (both insourcing and outsourcing) may wish to contribute their views based on their experiences to inform any changes to the Regulations. That may include any observations on the anticipated impact of a TUPE approach applying to Local Government Reorganisation. This call for evidence closes on 1st July 2026.

4.4 Increase to HMRC Mileage Rates and Increases to Statutory Compensation Limits

4.4.1 Most councils have moved away from the mileage allowances within the national terms and conditions set out in the Green Book, and instead apply the HMRC rates. In May the Government announced an increase to the HRMC rate, moving to 55p per mile (from 45p) for mileage below 10,000 miles annually. The increase was backdated to 6th April.

4.4.2 With so many councils no longer applying the Green Book mileage rates, there is no appetite from the National Employers to review and negotiate changes to the rates within the Green Book.

5. LGR

5.1 LGR clearly presents significant implications for the local government workforce, as well as for councillors, including their development. EMC has ensured that its business and service plans reflect support for councils who will be affected by LGR.

5.2 While the Government's decision on the model for LGR in each area is awaited, EMC has been supporting councils with preparations that can be made ahead of this milestone in the reform process.

5.3 LGR has been reflected throughout EMC's activities – as a standing item for the Regional Employers' Board and Regional Joint Council meetings, through networks co-ordinated and supported by EMC, and events being run regionally and in-house for councils.

5.4 In April EMC hosted a webinar for HR leads to learn from the experience of LGR from their counterparts in North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire. The session was attended by 56 colleagues from councils across the region and the event received positive feedback in providing an opportunity to understand learning points and ask questions to assist their understanding of issues that were

faced. A similar session is being arranged to hear about the trade union experience and learning points, given the success of the presentation for the Regional Joint Council in June.

- 5.5 EMC has also been providing development for senior leadership teams and managers on leading change. These sessions have been delivered in-house and have been well-received.
- 5.6 Providing development opportunities for managers in the lead up to LGR is a recognised requirement, and EMC has co-ordinated and supported the delivery of a range of training and development programmes, with options for gaining qualifications. Coaching and mentoring for leaders is also being supported through the regional coaching network and the provision of training in coaching and mentoring. Feedback on EMC's development programmes have been excellent.

6. Regional Activity and Support

6.1 Councillor Development

- 6.1.1 EMC's councillor development programme for 2026 has focused on popular events that are particularly valuable for new councillors to complement in-house induction programmes, as well as training for councillors who are taking up new roles, along with policy briefings on key issues facing the sector. The programme is steered by the Regional Employers' Board, as well as suggestions from EMC's regional scrutiny and councillor development networks.
- 6.1.2 The programme includes a mix of in-person and virtual events, and take place during the day and as evening sessions where possible to help with accessibility.
- 6.1.3 So far, the following events have taken place:
 - A briefing event in March 2026 on energy "Have We Got the Energy?", which was attended by over 80 delegates.
 - Civic Heads
 - Chaining Skills
- 6.1.4 Events to come include:
 - Planning Policy Reform and Devolution – an in-person briefing to provide an update on reforms first announced in 2025. This is tailored for officers and members and is being held at Devonshire Place, Leicester on 16th July 2026.
 - Making an impact at meetings

- Influencing and questioning skills to realise the potential of overview and scrutiny
- Building resilience through effective time management for councillors
- Staying Safe Online – Cyber Security for councillors
- Being an effective political mentor
- One Year On – a follow-up workshop from the Hitting the Ground running workshop provided for councillors newly elected in 2025.

6.1.5 In addition to the events, councillors are supported through networks such as the regional Scrutiny Network and the councillor development network. The Scrutiny Network met on 12th June 2026, with a focus on Scrutiny and Audit. This included a briefing on Understanding the Finance Risk and Governance Divide. The network will next meet on 11th September.

6.2 **Officer Learning and Development Programmes, Resources & Networks**

6.2.1 Planning Officers and Environmental Health Officers are professions that councils find challenging in terms of recruitment and retention. Development opportunities are a significant factor in retention, and EMC offers **low-cost continuing professional development programmes** so that councils can access high quality development for their planning and environmental health teams. The programmes are designed by a steering group from each profession, which ensures that the content is relevant and topical. Each event typically attracts 100+ delegates.

6.2.2 EMC provides a **regional coaching and mentoring network** that councils can subscribe to which enables them to share a pool of qualified coaches and materials to support coaching and mentoring. The network is proving popular and has seen organisations joining each year. A number of free CPD events are offered through the network each year to support the quality assurance and ongoing development of the coaches.

6.2.3 Qualification-based development in leadership and management and in coaching and mentoring is being co-ordinated by EMC to enable councils to access lower cost training and provide opportunities for officers across the region to learn together and build their networks. These programmes will run through to 2027.

6.2.4 EMC co-ordinates and supports a range of networks to enable councils to share information, good practice and identify opportunities to collaborate to make effective use of resources. The networks also inform EMC's service plan and development programmes.

6.2.5 The networks are focused on key themes, including county-based HR leads, councillor development, scrutiny, performance, cyber security, EDI, learning & development and organisational development.

6.3 **Consultancy**

6.3.1 Councils can access individual support from EMC on a not-for-profit basis on a range of workforce issues and in-house training/development. Since the EMC meeting in February, EMC has assisted councils with:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| ▪ Mediations | ▪ Chief Executive recruitment |
| ▪ Chief Executive appraisal facilitation | ▪ Psychometric testing |
| ▪ Restructuring support | ▪ Coaching and mentoring |
| ▪ Service reviews | ▪ Grievance investigations |
| ▪ Pay benchmarking | ▪ Policy development |
| ▪ Advice and support on complex cases | ▪ Job evaluation |

6.3.2 In addition to this work, EMC is supporting the delivery of a national programme of events for the Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO). Feedback from the events has been extremely positive – both from delegates and tutors, with additional sessions being held due to the high levels of demand.

7. **Recommendations**

Members of East Midlands Councils are invited to:

7.1 Consider the issues raised within this report.

7.2 Raise awareness of the councillor development programme amongst councillor colleagues.

Cllr Jonathan Wheeler
Vice-Chair
Regional Employers' Board



Annual General Meeting

3rd July 2026

Asylum and Refugee Resettlement Report

Summary

This report updates Members on the key issues for the region in the delivery of national asylum and refugee resettlement policy and programmes. The report further outlines the matters relating to asylum dispersal, UASC and the Afghan Resettlement Programme (ARP).

Recommendations

Members of East Midlands Councils are invited to:

- Consider the impact of asylum and refugee resettlement programmes in local areas and inform the on-going work of EMC in addressing the concerns of local authorities.
- Advise on the impact of the Full Dispersal plan in Local Authority areas including in those areas where numbers exceed agreed targets.
- Advise on the policy changes to the Afghan Resettlement Programme (ARP).

1. Introduction

- 1.1 EMC provides leadership and coordination on migration (asylum and refugee resettlement matters) through its Government funded Strategic Migration Partnership (SMP).
- 1.2 EMC provides a 'critical friend and challenge' role to Government to support the effective development and cost-effective delivery of programmes and is the central point for collaboration between national government, local government and other key partner organisations on asylum and refugee resettlement matters. A glossary and members briefing has been produced which outlines details of each workstream and attached as Appendices 9(a) and 9(b).

2. Asylum Dispersal

- 2.1 Office for National Statistics (ONS) showed data that, by the of end of March 2026 there were approximately 93,500 asylum seekers supported in contingency (hotel), initial and dispersal accommodation. In the East Midlands, there were approximately 7,500 asylum seekers in contingency hotels, initial and dispersed accommodation, a decrease of 2% on the last quarter. These figures highlight the scale of demand on local services and communities continues across the region.
- 2.2 Asylum seekers are housed in 32 separate local authority areas across the region. The number of dispersal areas has steadily increased since the introduction in April 2023 of the 'full dispersal model'. An increase in the number of dispersal areas is generally seen as a positive development as it supports a more equitable distribution of asylum seekers across the region and reduces pressures from both hotels and dispersal accommodation.
- 2.3 EMC's position remains that councils must be fully informed in advance of any decisions on opening or closing asylum accommodation rather than after any decision being made. There are a number of instance where local authorities have not been fully engaged in the procurement and subsequent housing of asylum seekers, with the effect often being disproportionate pressures being placed on a limited number of streets and communities in a given area.
- 2.4 However, while progress has been made with the region achieving 67% of its agreed asylum dispersal target, there remain significant concerns in the 3 city areas as all remain significantly above agreed plan limits. Despite these LAs being subject to 'maintain and replace', there are no signs that the number of asylum

seekers in each of these areas is decreasing. EMC is continuing to work with Serco to seek plans for their proposals to reduce these numbers.

- 2.5 ONS figures show that 35,802 migrants arrived on 551 on small boats along the Kent coast between 15th June 2025 and 14th June 2026. These numbers demonstrate that irregular migration continues at scale and remains a major driver of pressure on the asylum system. Further information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/migrants-detected-crossing-the-english-channel-in-small-boats>

Contingency Accommodation

- 2.6 By the end of March 2026, approximately 21,000 asylum seekers were accommodated in contingency hotels, down from its peak of 56,000 in September 2023. In the East Midlands, 1,037 asylum seekers are housed in 13 hotels, approximately 5% of the national total. These hotels are in Charnwood, Chesterfield, Derby, East Lindsey, Erewash, Leicester, West Northants and Nottingham. This reflects a significant contribution made by the region and its local authorities.
- 2.7 The Government has stated its intention to end the use of hotel accommodation for asylum seekers by the end of this Parliament, and it was recently announced that 3 hotels in the East Midlands will close before end-July 2026. There remain several significant operational challenges to closing the remaining hotels, not least in reducing the inflow (numbers) of asylum seekers and/or increasing the size of the asylum dispersal estate (potentially through several larger sites).
- 2.8 However, concerns were raised relating to the pace in which families are being moved from the hotels into alternative hotels or dispersed accommodation across the UK. This has impacted on adults and children with additional health and education needs including children undertaking exams. Future hotel closures should be co-ordinated jointly with local authorities and statutory stakeholders to support individuals with additional needs and to ensure that resulting service pressures on local authorities are minimised.
- 2.9 Information gathered and coordinated by EMC, including accommodation pressures, community impacts, policing concerns and local authority intelligence, continues to support and influence Home Office considerations relating to the future configuration of the asylum accommodation estate across the East Midlands. The Home Office has confirmed that this information will

continue to inform any future closure decisions, alongside the need to maintain sufficient capacity and operational resilience across the asylum estate.

- 2.10 Current accommodation capacity remains sufficient in the short term, partly due to seasonal reductions in crossings. However, pressures are expected to increase as arrivals rise. Progress is being made in securing additional dispersal accommodation, with the East Midlands currently at 64% of planned provision.
- 2.11 The Government announced (26th June) that it intends to use 3 additional former military sites to house about 3,700 asylum seekers. These sites are in Oxfordshire, Suffolk and North Yorkshire. Although it is likely that the Home Office will continue to explore the potential for procuring further large sites, EMC is not aware of any large sites being considered in the East Midlands. Continued investment and delivery will be essential to avoid renewed reliance on emergency accommodation.
- 2.12 EMC is also working with the Home Office to ensure they fully consider the impact of LGR, as unitarisation could further add pressures to those urban areas, i.e. Derby, Leicester, Nottingham that already have higher than profile numbers but may experience additional procurement when combined with district areas that are somewhat off their current targets.

Funding

- 2.13 The Home Office provides funding to councils to assist with the costs of accommodating asylum seekers. This includes £1,200 per individual across all accommodation types, and £100 per month for each occupied dispersal bed space. While this funding is important, councils continue to report that it does not fully reflect the wider pressures placed on housing, health, education, and community services.

ICIBI Engagement and Local Authority Evidence Submission

- 2.14 The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) is undertaking an inspection of the Home Office's engagement with local authorities in the planning and development of asylum accommodation. In response, the EMC coordinated a regional submission on behalf of participating local authorities across the East Midlands.
- 2.15 Key concerns included limited transparency around procurement decisions, inconsistent communication, short consultation timescales, insufficient data

sharing and ongoing pressures relating to local housing markets and service capacity. Data remains a particular problem as local authorities have not been provided with 'full dispersal packs' since October 2025 due to an 'leak' by stakeholders. This data pack is required as it provides LAs with a clear month on month progress towards targets. This should be urgently resolved as data transparency is lacking and undermines trust between Home Office and LAs.

- 2.16 Authorities also highlighted concerns regarding the cumulative impact of asylum accommodation within specific neighbourhoods and wider pressures associated with healthcare provision, voluntary sector support, community cohesion and homelessness prevention activity. Several responses referenced difficulties associated with reactive engagement processes, limited escalation routes and a perceived lack of consideration of local authority evidence and operational concerns within procurement decision-making.
- 2.17 EMC also met directly with representatives from the ICIBI to discuss the role of Strategic Migration Partnerships, regional engagement arrangements and operational experiences relating to asylum accommodation delivery across the region. Discussions included partnership working with the Home Office and accommodation providers, communication and consultation arrangements, and wider pressures associated with asylum accommodation procurement and delivery.

3. Afghan Resettlement Programme (ARP)

- 3.1 The Afghan Resettlement Programme (ARP) brings together existing Afghan resettlement schemes into a single scheme. This new policy was confirmed on 19th December 2024 with the plan to further resettle approximately 6,000 Eligible Persons per year to the UK by 2029.
- 3.2 Local Authorities were encouraged to support the delivery of the programme through providing transitional accommodation and/or helping to resettle and integrate newly arrived Afghans into accommodation within their local areas.
- 3.3 Due to the ongoing situation at the Pakistan–Afghanistan border, the MoD has reported operational challenges and continuing uncertainties. As a result, ARP transitional sites across regions/nations have experienced a decrease in the number of Afghan arrivals. In December 2025, for the same reason, the MoD requested that the EM regional pilot be paused for the 2025/2026 financial year.

- 3.4 On 26th February 2026, MoD and MHCLG ministers wrote to all LAs to advise on the 2026/2027 regional allocations. The regional allocation for the East Midlands is 492 individuals. Currently, EMC is collaborating closely with the MoD as part of their 'stage 1' engagement. Ongoing discussions focus on the EM regional approach, the requirements to advance the proposed model, and how to involve EM LAs amid increasing uncertainty regarding Afghan arrivals.
- 3.5 On 28th April, following a statement by MoD Minister of State, the government confirmed an end to in-country assistance for movement out of Afghanistan for those deemed eligible under ARP. Eligible Persons (EPs) and their immediate family members (IFMs) have 12 months from the date they receive their eligibility letter to attend a Visa Application Centre (VAC) in a third country and enrol their biometrics, after which the MoD will finalise the application for entry clearance on their behalf. Once eligible Afghans reach a Third Country, the UK government will continue to provide the current level of support, including entry clearance applications and flights to the UK. The government will also continue to offer the resettlement and integration support package upon entry to the UK; this remains unchanged. More information is available here:
[Written statements - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#)
[Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy: further information on eligibility criteria and offer details - GOV.UK](#)
- 3.6 In addition to this, the UK government will also now enforce a December 2028 cessation date, where the MoD will cease support in third countries, including submission of an entry clearance application to the UK. This will mark the end of relocations to the UK.
- 3.7 Due to the complexities of ARP funding arrangements put in place by MHCLG, a number of local authorities are experiencing significant delays in receiving payments from Government. EMC has been working with officials at MHCLG to resolve these issues, and we progress is now being made.
- 3.8 Currently, due to operational uncertainties from the MoD, fewer Afghans are arriving in recent months. This unpredictability of future arrivals makes it difficult for LAs to plan effectively, especially given recent policy changes that limit the UK government's ability to forecast arrivals, as there is no data on how many families are presenting at Visa Application Centres (VACs) in neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Tajikistan and Pakistan. These uncertainties also affect the delivery of LAHF and discussions on the new regional allocation for the East Midlands.

Afghan Resettlement Numbers

3.9 According to Home Office national data, since the first arrivals in 2021, the ARP has resettled a total of 38,617 people. In the year ending March 2025, 6,936 Afghan individuals were resettled in the UK, a 36% decrease from the 4,409 resettled in the year ending March 2026. As of March 2026, the East Midlands region has welcomed 1,457 Afghan individuals.

3.10 To date in 2026, the East Midlands region resettled 38 Afghan individuals, representing 8 households. A total of 8 new properties are now occupied, comprising 7 LAHF properties and 1 PRS.

4. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children, the National Transfer Scheme and Spontaneous Arrivals

4.1 The National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) was introduced on 1 July 2016 as part of a suite of measures included in the Immigration Act 2016. At that stage, the NTS was a voluntary agreement between local authorities to ensure a more equitable distribution of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children across local authorities.

4.2 The voluntary model was not able to sufficiently keep pace with the intake into the asylum system. Consequently, under existing powers in the 2016 Act, the government made participation in the NTS mandatory for all local authorities with Children's Services across the UK from February 2022. However, no council with levels of UASC in care at or above 0.1% of its general child population is required to accept NTS transfers while they remain above that threshold.

4.3 In 2023, the High Court found that the NTS is enforceable by the Home Secretary, i.e., a local authority that is under its 0.1% quota must accept children allocated through the NTS within the timescales prescribed (10 working days).

4.4 EMC takes the lead role on influencing government in relation to UASC policy. In collaboration with all upper tier authorities in the region, EMC has successfully lobbied government over the past few years to make changes to the national UASC funding tariff, initially equating to an annual increase of over £3m to Children's Services in the region at the time of the increase, and last year a further annual increase in UASC funding to the region of £2.2m.

4.5 The work of EMC has seen some success including to the funding of the National Transfer Scheme, with the introduction by the Home Office of incentivised funding

for timely transfers in 2023. In 2025, this equated to an additional £1.74m funding to the region's Children's Services.

East Midlands Position

- 4.6 Transfers from November 2021 are counted towards mandated NTS allocations. To date, under the mandated NTS, the region has received 1,125 transfers.
- 4.7 The total number of unaccompanied children looked after by East Midlands authorities was 525 at the end of March 2026, with 2% increase from the levels in March 2025. However, the number of former UASC care leavers in the region is currently 1,557, a year-on-year increase of 17%.

Regional Approach to UASC Programme

- 4.8 In light of the expectations of the mandatory NTS on local authorities in the East Midlands, and in order to deliver cost-efficient and effective services, as well as significant cost savings, the Regional Migration Board has asked EMC to consider further development of the regional UASC strategy and explore possible innovative approaches to the care of unaccompanied children. This collaborative approach, comprising a regional work programme and legal service, is being delivered by EMC in partnership with local authorities and is overseen by East Midlands Directors of Children's Services Group. To support this, the regional UASC programme has been advancing across three workstreams:
 - Workstream 1 – recruitment of additional UASC foster carers and supported lodgings providers.
 - Workstream 2 – joint regional programme to improve efficacy of local authority age assessments, particularly in response to referrals from asylum contingency hotels.
 - Workstream 3 – regional strategic needs analysis of further efficiencies that may be secured in the joint delivery of NTS responsibilities.
- 4.9 The jointly-procured Regional Immigration Advice Service provides expert, strategic legal advice and training to upper tier local authorities across the East Midlands on complex matters involving immigration law and child protection, in relation to children in care, care leavers, and families with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). This is a highly specialised service, unique within the UK, and delivers cost savings and operational benefits to participating local authorities in the region.

- 4.10 The service delivers substantial cost savings for all participating authorities, estimated to be £145,000 p.a. in dealing with 480 separate case enquires. The service is exclusively available to East Midlands LAs and demand for the service is significant and growing. Quarterly performance reports are provided to DCSs.

5. Recommendations

Members of East Midlands Councils are invited to:

- 5.1 Consider the impact of asylum and refugee resettlement programmes in local areas and inform the on-going work of EMC in addressing the concerns of local authorities.
- 5.2 Advise on the impact of the Full Dispersal plan in Local Authority areas including in those areas where numbers exceed agreed targets.
- 5.3 Advise on the policy changes to the Afghan Resettlement Programme (ARP).

Cllr John Doddy
Chair
Regional Migration Board



Migration Glossary

- **Asylum seeker:** An individual who has applied for protection in the UK under the 1951 Refugee Convention and is awaiting a decision from the Home Office.
- **Refugee:** A person whose asylum claim has been accepted and who has been granted refugee status.
- **Migrant:** Not a formal legal term in UK law. Generally, refers to anyone who moves from one country to another to live, work, or study, temporarily or permanently. Home Office equivalent: “person subject to immigration control.”
- **Immigrant:** Commonly used to describe a person who comes to live in the UK long-term or permanently, usually with permission.
- **No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF):** Some immigration statuses have a condition of ‘NRPF’. The NRPF condition means you will not be able to claim most benefits, tax credits or housing assistance that are paid by the state.
- **Leave Outside the Rules (LOTR):** A discretionary immigration status granted by the Home Office in exceptional circumstances, allowing individuals to stay in the UK despite not meeting standard visa requirements. This can be for a temporary stay and is known as ‘Limited Leave to Remain’.
- **Indefinite Leave to Remain:** Also called ‘settlement’. It gives the right to live, work and study in the UK indefinitely, and apply for benefits if eligible. Those with ILR can apply for British citizenship.
- **EMSMP:** East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership, hosted by East Midlands Councils.
- **VCSE (Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise):** Independent organisations supporting asylum seekers through housing, legal advice, language classes, and community integration.

Asylum Glossary

- **UASC (unaccompanied asylum-seeking child):** An unaccompanied asylum-seeking child is a person who: a) is under 18 years of age when the asylum application is submitted; b) is applying for asylum in their own right; and c) is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who in law or by custom has responsibility to do so.
- **Section 98 support:** Emergency financial assistance and accommodation for asylum seekers pending Section 95 assessment.
- **Section 95 support:** Financial assistance and accommodation for destitute asylum seekers during claim consideration.

- **Section 4 support:** Temporary, emergency assistance for failed asylum seekers unable to return home, under strict criteria.
- **Eligibility:** Applicants must be destitute and unable to leave the UK for valid reasons (e.g., medical, legal, human rights). “Fresh Claim” restores asylum seeker status.
- **Unsupported:** Asylum claimants who do not require housing support; usually reside with family or friends.
- **NASS:** National Asylum Support Service, part of the Home Office.
- **Dispersal accommodation:** Housing allocated across the UK under the Home Office dispersal system.
- **Serco:** Public services company supporting the Home Office in managing accommodation, transport, and detention centres.

Resettlement Glossary

- **Eligible Person (EP):** Afghan national who is eligible under the ARP/ACRS/ARAP schemes
- **Guest:** A beneficiary of the Homes for Ukraine or Ukraine Permission Extension visa schemes, whether living with a host or not. Ukrainian Guests have rights to work, study, healthcare and to claim benefits, but at present have no route to ILR or UK citizenship and are not refugees under the strict legal definition.'
- **Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF):** 3 rounds of capital funding from MHCLG to support local authorities in England to obtain housing for those who are unable to find settled accommodation on resettlement schemes.
- **International Office for Migration (IOM):** Supports refugee resettlement by processing cases and facilitating selection. It also provides pre-migration health activities, movement assistance in-country and across borders, and pre-departure and post-arrival integration support.
- **Resettlement:** Resettlement is the transfer of refugees from an asylum country to another State, that has agreed to admit them and ultimately grant them permanent residence.
- **UNHCR:** Works in third countries to identify refugees for resettlement in the UK.

Asylum Seeker: *Asylum is the protection that a country grants to a non-citizen in its territory. Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that everyone has the right to seek asylum from persecution.*

An asylum-seeker is an individual who has left their country of origin in order to seek asylum in another country. Practically and legally, it is necessary for that person to formally apply for asylum as soon as possible. [UNHCR]

Refugee: *The definition of a refugee according to the 1951 Refugee Convention is someone who: 'Owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.' Refugee Status Determination is the process in which either the host government or UNHCR determine whether an asylum-seeker meets the definition of a refugee. [UNHCR]*

For more information about the history of UDHR, visit: www.un.org.

How Asylum works in the UK

ARRIVAL IN THE UK

An asylum seeker may enter the UK legally (e.g., with a visa) or irregularly (e.g., via small boats or lorries). They must declare their intention to claim asylum as soon as possible, ideally at the point of entry, or at a designated location if already inside the UK.

For arrivals on the Kent coast, they are processed at an initial holding facility before being transferred to a short-term holding facility in Manston, Kent. Here, initial asylum registration may begin, along with security checks, health screenings, risk assessments and age assessments, if needed – see unaccompanied asylum-seeking child (UASC) section for more.

If UK Border Force encounter an individual without valid leave to enter the UK, they are detained by Border Force officers under the Immigration Act 1971. The individual is taken to a Border Force processing unit where identity, nationality, and circumstances of arrival are recorded. Screening and Initial Interviews conducted for those claiming asylum. Assessment of circumstance to determine detention or to be released on immigration bail.

HOUSING/ HOTELS

After processing, Asylum seekers will be transferred to initial temporary asylum accommodation (usually hotels) and will often be dispersed into longer-term housing in towns/ cities across the UK, where they will begin the formal asylum claim process. People seeking asylum have no choice over where the Home Office places them.

The hotels that accommodate people seeking asylum are often budget hotels or repurposed buildings. The rooms are small, often shared, with no kitchens. The hotels being used are typically those with available space or not in high demand, and these are procured by the Home Office via their contractor (SERCO), not the local authority.

Government rules do not allow people seeking asylum to work while awaiting a decision. This is a government policy and not their personal choice. Asylum seekers in hotels receive £8.86 a week to cover essentials like toiletries. Those in self-catered accommodation receive £49.18 a week to cover food, clothing and toiletries. Some charities provide basic support to help asylum seekers stay connected with loved ones, but mobile phone or even internet access is not part of the government asylum support, nor are they provided by the council.

MOVING ADULTS SEEKING ASYLUM / FULL ASYLUM DISPERSAL

The Full Asylum Dispersal Model is a mandatory system under which all local authority areas in England, Scotland and Wales are considered dispersal areas.

Although asylum support is directly managed by the Home Office, local authorities contribute significantly to welfare, safeguarding, and community integration:

- **Safeguarding:** Councils are responsible for protecting children and vulnerable adults in both dispersal housing and temporary hotels.
- **Education:** Authorities ensure school placements and support for English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners.
- **Social Care:** UASC receive assessments and care under the Children Act 1989.
- **Public Health:** Councils facilitate access to healthcare, including screening, mental health services, and preventative programmes.
- **Community Cohesion:** Local authorities play a role in fostering positive integration and managing community tensions.

For more information on Full Asylum Dispersal in the East Midlands, contact Brein Fisher:

brein.fisher@emcouncils.gov.uk.

MOVING UASC / NATIONAL TRANSFER SCHEME

The Home Office is responsible for accommodating adults and families seeking asylum. Responsibility for accommodating UASC falls to local authorities, not the Home Office, and UASC should not be housed in adult asylum accommodation. Where the Home Office identifies a UASC, they will be referred to the relevant local authority. Arrangements are in place through the National Transfer Scheme for UASC to be transferred from the local authority area where they first arrive to other areas if appropriate, to avoid creating unmanageable pressures in local authorities where large numbers of UASC initially make a claim. Local authorities are responsible under the Children Act 1989 for care, including foster placements or supported accommodation, and educational provision. Children seeking asylum are entitled to school placements, frequently requiring EAL support. Schools may encounter trauma-related behavioural needs and safeguarding considerations. Initiatives such as Schools of Sanctuary promote inclusion and social cohesion.

For more information on the National Transfer Scheme, contact Matthew Clark:

Matthew.clarke@emcouncils.gov.uk

UASC: *An Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child is defined as an individual who is under 18 when the asylum application is submitted, is not being cared for by an adult who, by law, has responsibility to do so, is separated from their parents and has applied for asylum in the United Kingdom in their own right.*

FOLLOWING AN ASYLUM DECISION

Every asylum claim is assessed carefully by the Home Office. Asylum seekers often wait months, or even years, in temporary accommodation allocated by the Home Office.

Once granted refugee status, individuals can apply for social housing or rent privately, and find work, like any other eligible resident. They go through the same housing application process as everyone else. Being granted refugee status does not give automatic priority. All applications are assessed based on need.

For more information on resettlement and when refugees arrive here following their asylum decision in another country, visit the briefing for members on Resettlement.

AFGHAN RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME (ARP)

The ARP is the UK's resettlement route for Afghan nationals, combining the previous Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). The scheme prioritises those who worked with the UK Government and Armed Forces including vulnerable groups such as women, girls and minorities.

From 1 July 2025, the ARAP scheme closed to new applications; however, applications submitted before this date will still be processed.

ARP individuals are granted indefinite leave to remain, entitling them to work, access healthcare, claim benefits, and apply for housing support. From 1 March 2025, all ARP arrivals receive transitional accommodation (TA) for up to nine months. TA includes a mix of serviced accommodation, Reception, Staging and Onward Movement (RSOM) sites, and hotels. During this time, the UK Government works with local authorities to locate appropriate settled accommodation (SA), while also encouraging Afghan families to self-serve through the "Find Your Own" pathway. SA includes properties from the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF), Private Rental Sector (PRS), MOD Service family accommodation (SFA), and MOD procured properties via their contractor Mears. The UK government allocates funding to local authorities, healthcare and education providers to support Afghan families throughout the duration of the scheme, which lasts up to three years. More information: [Afghan Resettlement Programme](#)

HONG KONG BRITISH NATIONAL (OVERSEAS) (HKBNO)

The HKBNO route is a visa route, not a resettlement programme. This means that individuals and families are free to live wherever they choose in the UK, rather than being allocated to a particular council. Those arriving under the HKBNO route are permitted to live, work, and study in the UK for up to five years, with the right to apply for settlement afterwards. However, their visas are subject to a condition of No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). This means they cannot access most welfare benefits or social housing. They must be able to support themselves financially and pay for their own accommodation, as well as visa and NHS surcharge fees. If they later face destitution, they may apply to have their Visa conditions lifted in order to access benefits. Some local authorities and charities provide light-touch support via SMP welcome hub funding, but integration is largely self-funded. They are eligible for English Language classes from their day of arrival. More Information: [HKBNO Visa](#)

COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP & COMMUNITIES FOR AFGHANS

Community sponsorship enables community groups to directly welcome and support a resettled family into their local community. Sponsors are vetted by the Home Office and are supported by the Home Office's contractor, the International Rescue Committee.

The Communities for Afghans programme is a community-led pathway for families fleeing Afghanistan to be supported to settle into the UK with the support of a sponsor. Sponsors are vetted by the UK government and its partners and are funded via LAs to provide integration support. Sponsored arrivals are linked with their agreed sponsor, who welcomes them either at the airport or directly at their new home.

Approved Sponsors are responsible for sourcing accommodation for Community Sponsorship or Communities for Afghan families.

More information: [Community Sponsorship](#) and [Communities for Afghans](#)

Safe and Legal Routes of Arrival in the UK

HOMES FOR UKRAINE (HFU)

Ukrainian nationals can enter the UK under the HFU visa scheme. Under HFU, arrivals ('guests') are matched with sponsors who agree to provide accommodation for up to six months. From the point of arrival, guests can work, access healthcare, and claim Universal Credit and other benefits. Initially, guests were granted three years' leave to remain, but this was reduced to 18 months to align with the Ukraine Permission Extension scheme, which allows a further 18 months' stay once the initial visa expires.

Local authorities are responsible for carrying out checks on accommodation and safeguarding assessments for hosts. If sponsorships break down, councils must provide emergency housing or arrange a rematch to a new host. Councils receive a tariff of £5,900 per person (£10,500 for unaccompanied minors) to support guests to rebuild their lives and integrate into communities. This funding can be used flexibly to meet local and individual needs. Hosts receive a monthly £350 'thank you' payment, though Ukrainians hosting family members are not eligible. Sponsors must be British or Irish citizens or have the right to reside permanently in the UK. Ukrainians cannot sponsor visas but may host guests if local authority checks are passed.

More information: [Homes For Ukraine](#)

UNITED KINGDOM RESETTLEMENT SCHEME (UKRS)

Launched in March 2021, UKRS is the primary UK resettlement scheme for individuals worldwide. The scheme is conducted in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) as part of a joint effort to ease the humanitarian crisis in regions affected by conflict and instability by providing resettlement opportunities for vulnerable individuals within UK communities.

Individuals from conflict regions are identified by the UNHCR, granted refugee status according to their criteria, and referred to the UK Government, which matches them with a property in the UK before their arrival, relying on Local authorities' capacity. This means that the scheme does not require transitional accommodation. When families arrive in the UK with the IOM, they are welcomed by the local authority and moved straight into their settled accommodation.

The UK government provides funding for local authorities, healthcare and education providers to support refugees during the scheme, which currently lasts up to five years.

More information: [Safe and legal routes - GOV.UK](#)

ADDITIONAL FUNDING – HOMES FOR UKRAINE AND ARP

The Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) is distributed by the Government to selected councils, primarily those with higher numbers of arrivals under the Homes for Ukraine scheme or Afghan Resettlement Programme, and those experiencing acute housing pressures. Funding allocations are based on national modelling of need and local delivery capacity, rather than an open bidding process. Councils receiving LAHF grants are expected to use the money to purchase or refurbish housing stock for refugee families and, in some cases, to help ease wider local homelessness pressures.



Annual General Meeting

3rd July 2026

Infrastructure & Growth

Summary

This report provides a regional economic overview and seeks endorsement for the work of the TfEM Board. It discusses the implications for the East Midlands of the Government's recent RIS3 announcement, and issues relating to rail investment, planning reform, flood risk and energy planning.

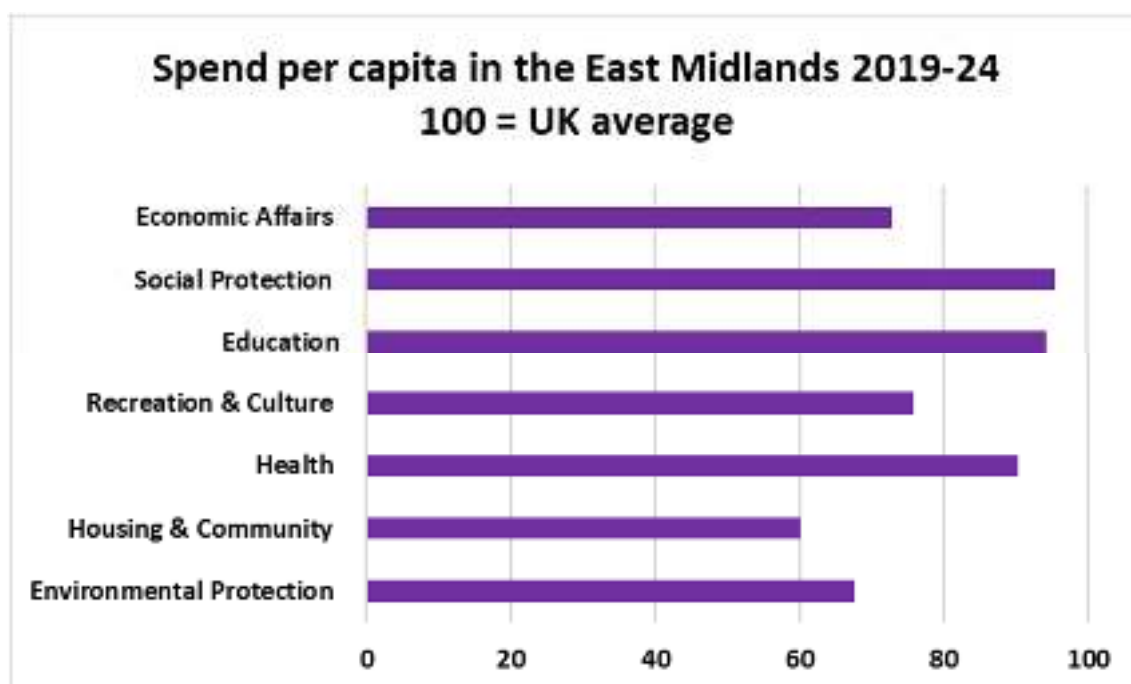
Recommendations

Members of East Midlands Councils 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 close to the UK average at 75.1% (UK=75.0%). Median weekly earnings are below the UK average: £721 pw compared to £767pw. 10.4% 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 above the UK average: currently at 5.5% compared to 4.9%¹.
- 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 2023²
- 1.3 The Treasury publishes an annual Public Expenditure Statistical Analysis (PESA) towards the end of each July on where public money (capital and revenue) is spent and on what, in the previous financial year. The latest analysis³ demonstrates that between 2019-20 to 2023-24, total expenditure on core public services has remained consistently below the UK and England averages.



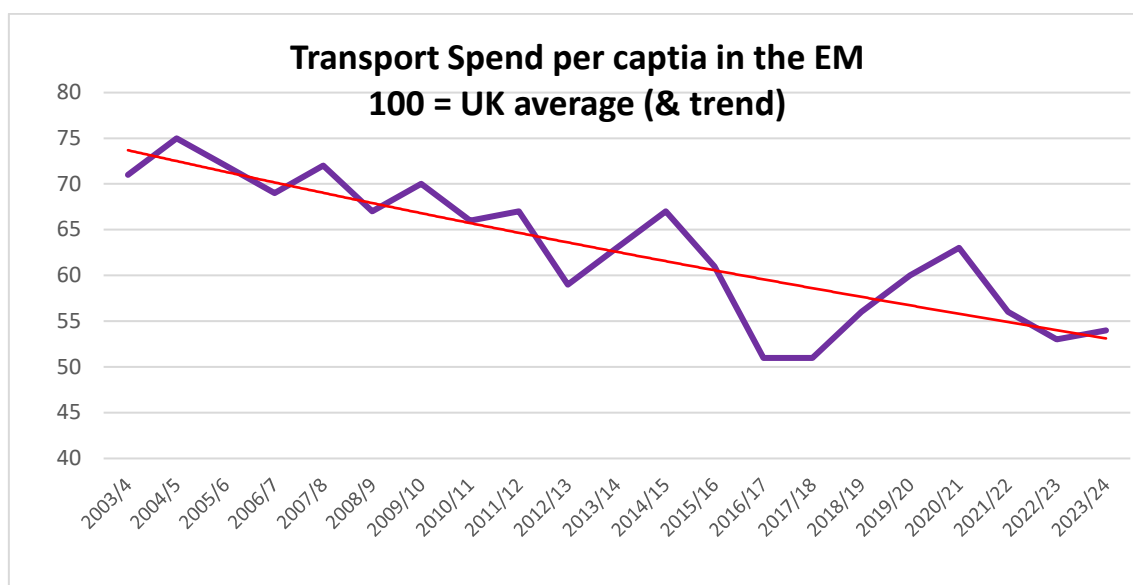
Source: [CP 1363 – Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses 2025](#)

¹ [Regional and National Economic Indicators - House of Commons Library](#)

² [Annual regional labour productivity - Office for National Statistics](#)

³ [CP 1363 – Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses 2025](#)

- 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.



Source: [CP 1363 – Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses 2025](#) & previous releases

- 1.5 The latest PESA release will likely be published towards the end of July 2026. EMC will provide an updated analysis of this regional investment data and disseminate to partners including GLCCA and EMCCA. While some data may be available at the local level (and so may be aggregated at the combined authority level) it is certainly less robust than that provided at the regional level.

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.

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

Road Investment

- 2.4 The Government published its **Roads Investment Strategy (RIS)** for five-year period between 2026/7 and 3031/2 (known as RIS3) at the end of March 2026: [Road Investment Strategy 3 \(RIS3\): 2026 to 2031](#). A number of schemes in the East Midlands have been identified by RIS3 for investment in the following categories.

Major Enhancements Continuing Construction in RIS3

- 2.5 **A52 Nottingham Junctions:** The scheme was originally announced in 2014 and consists of a package of measures to improve several junctions along the length of the A52 in Nottingham, including signalisation and junction reconstruction. The final phase will address the two larger western junctions: Nottingham Knight and Wheatcroft.

Major Enhancements starting in RIS3

- 2.6 **A38 Derby Junctions:** This scheme has been subject to several legal challenges going back many years, but the Development Consent Order (DCO) was finally confirmed in March 2025. The scheme is designed to relieve congestion at three key junctions to the west and north of the city centre, but also to enable major planned housing growth across the Derby Housing Market Area.
- 2.7 **A46 Newark Bypass:** This has been TfEM's top strategic road investment priority for some time. The scheme will remove a long-standing bottleneck on the A46 between the East Midlands and the Humber Ports by widening 6.5km of the existing single carriageway to a dual carriageway, providing two lanes in each direction between Farndon and Winthorpe roundabouts and improving the

junction with the A1. It will also support major housing and employment growth across Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire.

- 2.8 At present, there is no clarity on when construction work on either of these schemes will commence. It is likely the A38 Derby Junctions will start first to prevent the DCO (originally granted in 2023) becoming time expired. The indications are that the A46 Newark Bypass will not start until 2030 at the earliest with completion in RIS4. The start date will be after the next General Election, which introduces a level of political jeopardy. It also exposes the scheme to cost inflation pressures resulting from ongoing instability in the middle east. **Further collective political action is therefore likely to be required to expedite delivery of this scheme, including from the respective Mayors for EMCCA and Greater Lincolnshire.**

Large Renewals – Concrete Roads

- 2.9 **A46 Concrete Reconstruction Scheme:** The A46 north of Leicester between Six Hills and Widmerpool is part of National Highways' legacy concrete network and has been prioritised for full reconstruction due to its deterioration.

Small Scheme Programme

- 2.10 These schemes will focus on addressing localised congestion, supporting economic growth and improving opportunity. The following potential locations have been highlighted in the East Midlands:

- **A38/A50 (Toyota Island)**
- **M1 Junction 29**
- **A1/A606 Junction, Stamford**

- 2.11 Further assessment will be undertaken and a prioritised programme for delivery developed. Schemes remain subject to feasibility and value for money. Further detail to be provided in National Highways' Delivery Plan, which is expected shortly.

National Safety Programme

- 2.12 **A5 Weedon Bec to M1 J11a:** This is one of 24 routes that have been identified across the country, with completion of 18 planned by the end of RIS3. Schemes remain subject to feasibility and value for money. Further detail to be provided in National Highways' Delivery Plan.

RIS4 Pipeline

- 2.13 Development funding has been identified for the following enhancements:

- **A5/A426 Junction Gibbet Hill:** Junction improvement to support major planned commercial and housing growth along the A5 Corridor.
- **A5 Dodwells to Longshoot:** Improving performance and capacity of the A5 to support commercial and housing growth along the A5 Corridor. A similar proposal was prioritised by the 2010-15 Coalition Government as a ‘pinch-point’ scheme but subsequently cancelled due to value-for-money concerns.
- **M1 Junction 28/A38:** Delivering junction improvements to support growth by reducing congestion on the A38 Corridor.

2.14 Any delivery of these schemes will be subject to feasibility and value for money assessments and will also be dependent on the decisions of a future Government about investment priorities for RIS4 (2032/3-2037/8).

2.15 In addition the Government is supporting the **A14 Junction 10a (to begin delivery in RIS3, subject to Third Party Funding and obtaining the necessary planning approvals)**, comprising developer-led proposals to build a new junction to the A14 to support major housing growth to the east of Kettering.

Major Road Network: Continuing Schemes

2.16 Away from the Strategic Road Network, three previously supported schemes being taken forward by Local Highway Authorities in the East Midlands received confirmation of Government funding in 2025 and are progressing:

- **A614/A6097 Corridor (Nottinghamshire):** Improvements to several junctions along the A614/A6097 corridor between the A46/A6097 junction at Bingham and the A614/A617/A6097 Ollerton roundabout.
- **North Hykeham Relief Road (Lincolnshire):** New dual carriageway to the south of the Lincoln urban area south of North Hykeham to form a ring road around Lincoln.
- **A511 Growth Corridor (Leicestershire):** A package of measures, including improvements to eight junctions, a dual carriageway between Thornborough Road and Whitwick Road in Coalville and an extension to Bardon Link Road.

2.17 In addition, the **A43 Northampton - Kettering Phase 3** (Dualling of the A43 between Overstone Grange roundabout and Holcot/Sywell roundabout) has now been recommended to continue scheme development.

2.18 Finally, another MRN scheme in Leicestershire, the **Melton Mowbray North and East Distributor Road (aka ‘The Pork Pie Way’)** opened in May 2026: [New](#)

[Melton Mowbray bypass named Pork Pie Way after public vote - BBC News](#). The scheme comprises a single carriageway road to the east of Melton Mowbray from the A606 Burton Road to the A606 Nottingham Road. It will relieve town centre congestion and facilitate major housing growth.

2.19 The RIS3 Announcement has confirmed ‘in principle’ funding for several major investments in the East Midlands and raised the prospect of further funding at a later date – although experience suggests that no scheme is ever ‘fully committed’ until it is built. However, RIS3 was silent on several key TfEM (and Midlands Connect) strategic priorities, in particular:

- **M1 Junction 24 Enhancement** – which is critical to delivering the time-limited economic benefits of the East Midlands Freeport and major housing growth in North West Leicestershire.
- **A5 Strategic Enhancement** – although development funding for junction improvements has been identified, any delivery is unlikely before the mid-2030’s and the rest of the route is likely to remain in its current condition.
- **A1 Safety & Reliability** - although there is the potential for a minor junction improvement at Stamford, no other funding has been identified to improve the condition of the route at this point.

Rail Service Enhancements

2.20 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.

2.21 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 Electrification⁴; and improved regional rail services⁵.

2.22 The RCA is currently funding a comprehensive refresh of regional transport and economic evidence as the basis for a revised ‘Rail Strategic Statement’ and a suite of supporting documents to inform the emerging Great British Railways (GBR).

⁴ [TheFuturesElectric.pdf](#)

⁵ [A-Platform-for-Growth.pdf](#)

- 2.23 The first public product focused on the case for sustaining and improving rail connectivity to Lincoln and was published on 25th November 2025 entitled Keeping Pace: Enhancing Lincoln City's rail connectivity) 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 is available at [Keeping Pace: Enhancing Lincoln City's Rail Connectivity](#).
- 2.24 At the beginning of 2026 four more technical products were published following feedback on earlier drafts from the TfEM Board and officer groups:
- **Routes to Prosperity:** An 'anchor' document analysing demographic, economic and connectivity data for the East Midlands and its sub-regions and articulating the relationship between transport connectivity and economic growth. <https://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Routes-to-Prosperity-Economic-Transport-Evidence-Base.pdf>
 - **Freight and Growth in the East Midlands:** Explains how freight currently operates across road, rail and air in the East Midlands and discusses options to make freight movements more efficient and less disruptive: <https://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Freight-Growth-in-the-East-Midlands-Systra.pdf>
 - **Station Growth Analysis:** A spreadsheet model that forecasts rail demand growth through to 2046. The analysis is based on standard DfT modelling (EDGE) with a variation that incorporates the Government's new Standard Method for identifying housing need. It covers every station in the East Midlands and Greater Lincolnshire: [Station-Growth-Analysis.xls.xlsx](#)
 - **Regional Service Categorisation:** A spreadsheet which categorises stations and routes into major, strategic and local rail markets. It Identifies locations with poor direct connectivity to key economic centres and highlights service frequency gaps, particularly evenings and Sundays. It covers every station in the East Midlands and Greater Lincolnshire: [Regional-Service-Categorisation.xlsx](#)
- 2.25 Further analysis on the economic benefits of improving inter-city connectivity and future regional rolling stock options will be published shortly.
- 2.26 On operational matters, EMR successfully implemented a major timetable uplift in December 2025, the core element of which was the doubling of Nottingham to Lincoln services from 1tph to 2tph Monday to Saturday, delivering over 2,000 extra seats per day along the route.

- 2.27 The following additional timetable changes were introduced in May 2026 by EMR:
- Six additional Sunday services on the Robin Hood Line to uplift to an hourly service.
 - Additional Beeston calls on Sundays on the 0927 and 1012 Nottingham – London St Pancras services.
 - Additional Edale call on a Sunday on the 0942 Nottingham – Liverpool Lime Street service.
 - Additional Netherfield call on weekdays and Saturdays on the 1003 Nottingham – Skegness service.
 - 8-car operation on EMR Connect Sunday services between Corby and London St Pancras, to mirror weekdays and Saturdays.
- 2.28 EMR are continuing the roll out the new Class 810 Aurora diesel electric bi-mode rolling stock. However, seat reservations on Midland Main Line intercity services remain suspended due to the difficulties of running a mixed Aurora/Meridian fleet during the roll-out period.
- 2.29 Refurbishment of Class 170 and Class 158 diesel trains is continuing. The first refurbished Class 360 electric train serving the Corby-London route was launched on the Friday 5th June at Kettering Station⁶ – with full roll out expected over the next year.
- 2.30 For the first time in several years, EMR is serving the Skegness summer market without having to procure supplementary bus services. However, the reliance on 40-year-old Class 158 rolling stock has already caused problems, as these trains do not appear to cope well with extreme heat⁷. Securing a long-term rolling stock solution for the Skegness route remains a priority.
- 2.31 Most recently, EMR intercity services have been very seriously impacted by the tragic accident near Bedford which took place on Friday 19th June involving a collision between a Class 360 Corby-Connect service and Class 810 Aurora, in which an EMR driver sadly died and many passengers were injured⁸. The Rail Accident Investigation Branch has published an interim report, with a full report with recommendations to follow once the investigation is complete⁹.

⁶ [EMR unveils first refurbished Class 360 in £30 million transformation, bringing modern interiors and new features to EMR Connect | East Midlands Railway News](#)

⁷ [East Midlands Railway apology over 'appalling' overcrowded trains to Skegness](#)

⁸ [Media statement: Bedford train crash – essential travel only as passengers warned to expect disruption for the majority of next week | East Midlands Railway News](#)

⁹ [Collision between two passenger trains near Elstow - GOV.UK](#)

- 2.32 Looking forward, the Government has now published the Railways Bill which will establish Great British Railways (GBR): [The Railways Bill: Explanatory Notes](#). GBR is expected to become operational during 2027 and will have its HQ in Derby. Two sites in Derby have been shortlisted as locations for GBR: Becketwell, a city centre brownfield site set for redevelopment, and Midland House, an existing railway building opposite Derby station. A decision on the preferred site is expected by the end of 2026: [Shortlist for new GBR HQ down to final two Derby locations](#)

TfEM Board

- 2.33 The TfEM Board continues to meet on a quarterly basis, and last met on 8th June 2026 to discuss the following agenda items:
- A presentation from Network Rail on emerging proposals for Midlands Rail Hub East.
 - The implications of the RIS3 announcement for the East Midlands
 - A progress update by the MD of East Midlands Railway.
 - 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.
 - Proposals to review the TfEM Shared Priorities document last updated in March 2024.
- 2.34 The next meeting of the TfEM Board will take place on 28th September 2026.

3. Midlands Connect

- 3.1 The Midlands Connect Strategic Board last met on the 24th June in Birmingham. The East Midlands is represented on the Strategic Board by Sir Peter Soulsby as Chair of TfEM, Mayor Clare Ward and Mayor Dame Andrea Jenkyns.
- 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 £5m budget for 2025/26 remained untouched, DfT has made only transitional funding available for 2026-7 at £2.1m.
- 3.3 The Strategic Board discussed potential options for sustaining pan-regional collaborative activity in the absence of DfT funding, based on an independent review undertaken by WMCA and EMCCA. Further discussions will take place in the autumn.

4. Planning Reform

- 4.1 The Government's revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published for consultation on the 16th December 2025¹⁰. The draft incorporates a major presentational change in that the text is ordered into a series of numbered policies similar to a development plan - although without the same statutory status. Taken together the draft NPPF appears to take a more permissive approach to new development than the extant version. In particular, the revised 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' (set out in policies S3, S4 and S5) appears to apply in all circumstances - not just when a local plan is absent or out of date. An EMC response to the consultation highlighting issues of strategic concern was made and is set out in Appendix 10(a).
- 4.2 The Planning & Infrastructure Bill received Royal Assent on 18th December 2025. 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 not¹¹.
- 4.3 The Government now intends to commence the legislation to establish SDSs in the Autumn of 2026. In preparation, Ministers published draft proposals for SDS geography for consultation in February 2026, In the East Midlands SDSs are proposed for:
- EMCCA area (Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham & Nottinghamshire)
 - GLCCA area (Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire & North East Lincolnshire)
 - Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland area
- 4.4 North and West Northamptonshire are in a group of 10 authorities where currently no SDS geography is proposed, with arrangements to be confirmed in due course.
- 4.5 Such is the pace of planning reform that the Government is still implementing key aspects of the Levelling Up & Regeneration Act (LURA) 2023. Regulations to implement a 30-month local plan review process were published in March 2026¹² In June 2026 the Planning Inspectorate published its procedure guide for local plan examinations under the new system¹³ These regulations and procedures will

¹⁰ [National Planning Policy Framework: draft text for consultation](#)

¹¹ [Factsheet: Strategic planning - GOV.UK](#)

¹² [New plan-making system: regulations and content roadmap - GOV.UK](#)

¹³ [Procedure guide for new local plan system published - GOV.UK](#)

apply to those Local Planning Authorities which fail to meet the December 2026 deadline for progressing local plans under the current system.

- 4.6 The impact of planning reform in the context of LGR will be discussed in more detail at an EMC Member/Officer seminar to be held on the 16th July 2026 in Leicester chaired by Cllr Richard Wright, Leader of North Kesteven District Council and Chair of the Local Councils Network. Further details at: [Planning Reform & Devolution – The Perfect Storm One Year On](#).

5. Flood Risk in the East Midlands

- 5.1 As Members have previously discussed, the East Midlands is highly vulnerable to flooding. In addition to large expansive areas of low-lying land on the Lincolnshire Coast, the river systems of the Trent, Derwent, Soar, Witham and Nene drain through the region's most heavily built-up areas, many of which were historically developed around river crossings.
- 5.2 The Environment Agency's 2024 National Assessment of Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk in England highlights that the East Midlands has the greatest share of properties at risk of flooding from rivers or the sea in England (18.4% - 127,500), and the highest proportion of properties at risk of any English Region (4.6%). This is the current risk only and does not include the impacts of surface water flooding. The condition of flood defences on the Lincolnshire coast is a particular concern.
- 5.3 Discussions at officer level have suggested that there may be merit in bringing together relevant elected members from each the Lead Local Flood Authorities in the East Midlands to discuss issues of common concern and potentially make collective representations to Government and the Environment Agency. It is therefore proposed to hold an exploratory meeting on this basis in the Autumn of 2026.

6. Regional Energy Strategic Planning (RESP)

- 6.1 The Government has established a new independent public corporation the National Energy Systems Operator (NESO) to ensure the nation has access to 'reliable, clean and affordable energy'. NESO is also charged with developing Regional Energy Strategic Plans (RESPs).
- 6.2 The RESP role has been set up to develop regional plans that span across electricity, gas, and hydrogen networks as part of one integrated energy system. They will provide the strategic basis against which electricity distribution network

operators will make their investment plans. The RESPs will also form part of NESO's wider strategic energy planning activities, ensuring a joined-up approach between national, regional and local levels.

- 6.3 The East Midlands is split between two RESP regions. Northamptonshire sits within a 'Central England' RESP Region, the rest of the East Midlands along with North and North East Lincolnshire fall within an 'East Midlands' RESP Region.
- 6.4 To provide a basis for preparation of business plans for the next energy price control period between 2028 to 2033, NESO published a series of 'transition' RESPs or t-RESPs in January 2026¹⁴. Work will start later this year to produce the first round of full RESPs, which are likely to be published in 2027/8. EMC made high level representations to both the t-RESP and RESP methodology consultations to complement submissions made by individual councils.
- 6.5 To help councils engage with this new and important process, EMC brought together a range of expert speakers at a seminar for councillors and senior officers held on the 19th of March 2026 in Leicester and chaired by Cllr Sean Matthews as Chair of EMC. A guide for elected members on energy matters was also published at: [Energy Guide](#).

7. Recommendations

Members of East Midlands Councils are invited to:

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

Andrew Pritchard
Director of Policy & Infrastructure
East Midlands Councils

¹⁴ [transitional Regional Energy Strategic Plan \(tRESP\) | National Energy System Operator](#)

6th March 2026

Matthew Pennycook MP
Minister of State for Housing & Planning
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Minister

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK CONSULTATION: RESPONSE FROM EAST MIDLANDS COUNCILS (EMC).

East Midlands Councils (EMC) is the representative body for all 39 unitary, county and district/borough councils in the East Midlands, plus the Peak District National Park Authority. EMC met on the 27th of February 2026 and resolved to make a strategic response to the NPPF consultation to amplify key themes highlighted by individual councils.

Accelerating housing delivery

Housing delivery in the East Midlands (as elsewhere) is essentially demand-led and heavily influenced by factors outside of the control of councils - such as the banking crisis or the covid pandemic. Leaving such disrupters aside, delivery in our region has tended to be at or around the Government's expectations. In fact, MHCLG data confirms that over the last 25 years, the East Midlands has delivered more housing (466,510 net) than the West Midlands (429,320 net)¹ - although the West Midlands is 20% bigger with a population of 6.2 million.

However, the Government's ambition to build 1.5 million new homes within this Parliament will not be delivered through further planning reform. If a house is to be built and occupied by mid-2029, it will very likely be in system now as an allocation, outline or full consent. Greater focus should therefore be given to innovative measures that can accelerate build-out rates, increase investment in social housing and turbo-charge the construction industry to deliver.

Minimising flood risk

The East Midlands is highly vulnerable to flooding. In addition to large expansive areas of low-lying land on the Lincolnshire Coast, the river systems of the Trent, Derwent, Soar, Witham and Nene drain through the region's most heavily built-up areas, many of which were historically developed around river crossings. The Environment Agency's 2024 National Assessment of Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk in England highlights that the East Midlands has the greatest share of properties at risk of flooding from rivers or the sea in England (18.4% - 127,500), and the

¹ [Live Table 118.ods](#)

highest proportion of properties at risk of any English Region (4.6%). This is the current risk only and does not include the impacts of surface water flooding. In 2024, the Public Accounts Committee highlighted concerns about the number of homes which continue to be built in flood-risk areas². The insurance company Aviva has just published an analysis suggesting that between 2022 and 2024, 44,000 new homes were built across England in areas of high or medium flood-risk³.

We are therefore concerned that amendments proposed in the NPPF appear to weaken protections for vulnerable areas by reducing the instances where application of the ‘sequential test’ is required and by using less restrictive language where development is proposed in flood risk areas.

Aligning infrastructure investment with planned development

Whilst planning permission is necessary for development to go ahead, it is not sufficient. New homes also require power, water, sewerage infrastructure and access to transport, which are all subject to separate funding and regulatory processes. These often do not align with the housing targets that councils are required to deliver. For example, the Newark Northern Bypass by National Highways is necessary to deliver planned large-scale housing and employment development across several local plan areas. Although funding has been confirmed in principle by Government, it seems likely that delivery will now be delayed into the 2030s. Similarly, lack of capacity at M1 Junction 24 is acting as key constraint to the delivery of the East Midlands Freeport⁴ and several major housing developments, with no timescale for an improvement identified.

There must be better alignment between the local plan regime and the decision-making and regulatory processes that determine the delivery of the key utilities necessary for development to proceed safely.

Improving housing quality and urban design

Planning is more than just delivery of housing numbers. Good design is key to the long-term success of places and to the health and well-being of the people who live them. The impact on human health of the built environment is now well understood⁵. In that context we note the recent decline in Healthy Life Expectancy, which in the East Midlands has fallen to 59.4 years for men and 59.3 years for women⁶. We are therefore concerned that the NPPF removes references to planning promoting good health and reducing health inequalities and focuses policy on providing health facilities rather than reducing the need for medical interventions through healthy placemaking. Similarly, we are concerned that whilst the Government’s recent strategy

² [Resilience to flooding](#)

³ [Proportion of new homes built in flood areas rises to one in nine - Aviva plc](#)

⁴ [Freeport Parliamentary Reception](#)

⁵ [Fair society, healthy lives: the Marmot Review](#)

⁶ [Healthy life expectancy, UK - Office for National Statistics](#)

to combat violence against women and girls⁷ highlights the importance of well-lit streets, accessible transport and thoughtful urban design in reducing risk, the NPPF appears to be silent on this important issue.

Local accountability and innovation

The NPPF includes a powerful new ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’ which will apply in all circumstances, not just when a local plan is silent or out of date. Whilst the impact of this has yet to be tested, concerns have been raised that the new presumption could significantly undermine the plan-led system and thus local accountability. The NPPF also restricts the ability of councils to set local standards for new development. Whilst the Government’s desire to secure national consistency is recognised, it risks stifling much needed innovation informed by local evidence and expertise.

We remain fully supportive of the Government’s growth objectives but feel that delivery would be strengthened if the final version of the NPPF can address the concerns we have highlighted. If you require further information at this stage, please do not hesitate to contact us.

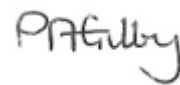
Yours sincerely,



Cllr Sean Matthews
Chair of EMC



Cllr Elly Cutkelvin
Vice Chair of EMC



Cllr Tricia Gilby
Vice Chair of EMC

Copied to: All East Midlands MPs

⁷ [Freedom from violence and abuse: a cross-government strategy to build a safer society for women and girls](#)