

Nottingham City Council Commissioners

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Rt. Hon. Steven Reed OBE MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

5 December 2025
Ref: Report 4

Dear Secretary of State,

The Commissioner-led intervention at Nottingham City Council is due to conclude in February 2026, at which point it will have been in place for two years. This short intervention period reflects the fact that for three years prior to this, improvement was sought by way of an Improvement and Assurance Board.

The extent of the Commissioners remit was set widely. This report provides a summary of the Commissioner team's assessment of the progress that has been made during the time that the team has worked with the Council, measured against the seven specific areas identified for intervention in the Directions that were set in February 2024. It reports on areas where the Council has demonstrated strong evidence of improvement, as well as on those upon which further work is required.

In our previously issued letters in August 2024, March 2025, and August 2025, we reported on the good progress we observed being made across the Authority. We consistently noted a positive and proactive attitude towards improvement and commended the Council's sustained efforts to maintain this direction. While it is pleasing to report that further progress has been made since we last wrote and that we remain encouraged, we believe that work remains to be undertaken in order to embed the changes made and to give you the degree of confidence that you would wish to have so as to be able to remove all forms of improvement support and the mechanisms for assurance that accompany them. Specifically, the continued successful implementation of a suite of reforms that are in train for delivery over the coming year will be critical in demonstrating progress and giving confidence in continued improvement.

Direction 1

Actions taken to address systemic weaknesses in the Authority's governance function, to secure improvements in transparency and formal decision making.

The Council, while initially formally opposed to the arrival of Commissioners, nonetheless committed to work with us in a cooperative manner and to address the challenges set out in the Directions and those subsequently identified by us.

New political leadership was put in place in May 2024, and it and the Council's officers worked constructively with us to produce an Improvement Plan which acknowledged

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the need for ‘whole Council change’ and set out against identified shortcomings the methods by which this change would be brought about.

This Plan communicated the Council’s purpose and intent for the following 4 years, setting objectives and identifying constraints. The Executive made clear their commitment to drive change and with their senior management team committed to delivery of the Plan. In it, the Council accepted that in the future it will be smaller, and that it will deliver less, but that it will concentrate on delivering well, and will look to different delivery methods as may be necessary – a departure from the historic assumption that the Council will be the default deliverer of services. Three broad aims were set out for the Authority as it sought to become: -

1. A Council that delivers for Nottingham with clear direction and purpose:
2. A Council that is financially sustainable: and
3. A Council that is well-run with effective people, processes, and systems.

Given the evident and acknowledged governance weaknesses at the Council, these were ambitious aims. Moreover, over many years previously, relationships between officers and Members had become strained – indeed noticeably distant, and this dislocation – at times distrust - had embedded itself in the Council working practices and the operating culture of the organisation. These relationships needed to be reset, and expectations for their interaction made explicit. The weak and fragmented accountability that had developed needed to be addressed and systematically overhauled. The formal structures and governance arrangements of the organisation, the informal arrangements which were in place to supplement them, and the mechanisms for the implementation of decisions all required re-construction. In particular, the Council’s Chief Officer Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) had not for some time operated as a leadership cohort possessed of a common vision and had not delivered as a consequence.

In changing direction and revising expectations for new working arrangements it was expected that some tensions would arise and this proved to be so. The improved and shared understanding that was being built and demonstrated to the rest of the organisation proved sufficiently durable to survive these immaturities, and as it continues to do so, the structures and processes for interaction between Members and officers continue to develop and mature.

The relationships built upon these foundations continue to be tested and the learning that arises needs to be absorbed. In our last letter we referred to the continuing need to build consistent collegiate behaviours. This is recognised and accepted, and it is evident that some effort is being made to do so, with more noticeable restraint being shown where previously impatience would have been to the fore when things went wrong, but it remains a work in progress. This key matter – the handling of things well when they don’t work as they should, is important not only in respect of early identification, appropriate escalation, transparency of consideration, clarity in decision-making and

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effectiveness in response, but of exercising the necessary patience while doing so, and not reverting to a blame culture. This approach, while improving, is still fragile.

We were able in March 2025 to record that purposeful progress was being made towards all three of the Council's aims. Of particular importance in this respect was the growth of understanding amongst the Council's staff, and its partner agencies, in that the latest developments were not only the right ones, but that they would endure.

There remain aspects of governance that are still sub-optimal. The discipline of consistently producing information for decision making by members that is timely, accurate and sufficient for the purpose is improved, but it is not yet second nature. There remains in too many instances an excess of caution by officers in proposing and implementing solutions, and this hesitancy can lead to significant delays in moving forward. We would encourage the Council to consider the importance of timeliness in making an impact on an issue.

Arrangements for introducing webcasting is an example of the tangled operational procedures that marked the Council's work, and while these have been streamlined after prompting by commissioners, the Council still lacks a proper and comprehensive service such that would enable citizens of the city to witness the deliberations of the Council with the ease with which citizens elsewhere can do so. We are aware that the Council has contracted with a provider to implement a permanent solution and so we expect that this situation will be resolved in the coming months.

Direction 2

Actions to deliver financial sustainability, including by closing any short- or long-term budget gaps.

We arrived at the Council in February 2024, some 3 months after a s114 report had been issued due to the stated lack of financial stability and sustainability. This was based on an MTFS which showed a deficit of £172m over 4 years, of which £69m related to 2024/25.

This improvement has been significant in such a short timeframe, indeed almost unimaginable. There are 3 main reasons for this:

- The 2023 MTFS was reviewed in some detail in November 2024 by the new s151 Officer, and the basis for the estimates reassessed. This included reconsideration of inflation rates, growth items and reserves.
- This updated position also took into account the additional local government funding which was announced as part of the November 2024 budget.
- Identification of savings and efficiencies were included in the 2025/26 budget which were over and above those already included in the MTFS.

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The draft budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2026/27 reported in October 2025 indicates a small surplus for the next 3 years and significantly, the Authority is anticipating being able to set a balanced budget for 2026/27 without the need for any EFS (although this position cannot be confirmed until the final settlement figures are released in December 2025).

Whilst this is an estimated position, in-year financial reporting, which has improved over the last two years, is also indicating a much improved position.

The 2024/25 budget had assumed an EFS requirement of £41m, but the provisional outturn position (subject to external audit) indicates an actual need of £7.7m. The current year position reflects a similarly positive direction, with the budget including an EFS requirement of £20.8m, but with the latest forecast report indicating an underspend of £14.5m (or an overspend of £6.3m without EFS).

It is however worth noting that this positive position includes an under-delivery of savings in the current year - £27.6m expected to be delivered in-year out of £39.1m, with £12.5m not expected to be delivered. The overall underspend therefore relies on mitigations, including over £10m of staffing vacancies. It should be noted however that savings delivered in this way are not permanent unless the actual post is removed from the structure. The Authority will therefore need to deliver on the original intent albeit at a later date or find alternatives.

All of this points to a stabilised financial position, and it has been backed up by improved financial processes delivered as part of the Financial Improvement Plan. This has included redesign of the Finance function, simpler processes to support the production of the financial management reports (leading to more regular reporting) and a mandatory budget holder training programme. This latter element is underway now and it is important that this is monitored carefully to ensure there is full take up of the training and that financial management skills are appropriately improved and maintained on an ongoing basis across the organisation. The organisational benefits from this will take some time to emerge in full.

Key to the financial health of the organisation is the budget process, which provides the financial plan for the delivery of key outcomes included in the Council Plan. For the 2026/27 budget, the process was started early, and at the suggestion of Commissioners was built around star chambers which included benchmarking and performance information. Whilst the use of this type of information to inform decisions is in its infancy, it is nevertheless an important step forward and a considerable improvement on that which was in place previously.

A key driver in the budget process was the determination to find savings to enable a balanced budget to be set without the need for EFS support – this has been achieved with the proposed budget for next year.

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When an authority is under financial pressure, there is inevitably a need to find savings and efficiencies to balance the budget. This 'burning platform' brings focus and a sense of urgency. There is a risk that the improved financial environment within the Authority lessens the rigour in applying this priority. Looking ahead, it is important that the context for future budgets is set within a determination to deliver service improvement and value for money – the ongoing continuous improvement programme that the Council has committed to will need to emphasise this.

Overall, the process for 2026/27 has delivered a draft budget in a well-managed way, providing ample time for engagement and consultation with members, partners and residents. The Authority should be congratulated for the prioritisation and smooth running of this process.

Direction 3

Actions to ensure compliance with all relevant rules and guidelines relating to the financial management of the Authority.

At the beginning of this intervention, there was a significant backlog of work relating to the production and publication of annual accounts. The last approved and audited accounts were from 2018/19. This is an issue that has applied to many authorities and given this, government introduced a specific process to address circumstances where accounts were signed off without a full audit process and given a 'disclaimed' rating. For Nottingham City Council the accounts for 2019/20 - 2023/24 have been disclaimed. The accounts for 2024/25 are currently being audited and it is known that they too will be disclaimed (as opening balances will not have been audited). The 2024/25 audit is proving challenging due to the scale of work being undertaken and it has been agreed that the auditors will concentrate on the balance sheet given the scale of the balances. This is an unfortunate situation, and one that is testing the resilience of the finance team given the volume of work involved. The team are however taking the opportunity to learn from this experience and identify improvements to be made to the closure process in the future.

The 2024/25 external audit Best Value review report is currently in early draft and is expected to be ready early in the New Year.

When the s114 was announced, the Council requested EFS to make up what was perceived as a budget shortfall. At this point, the Authority determined to fund EFS through an asset disposal programme to avoid the need to borrow, and it has been successful with this strategy, aided by the reduced requirement for EFS. The Authority has not been confined by the need to sell assets to fund EFS and now has taken the opportunity to review its wider portfolio of property. The outcome of this is an Asset Management Strategy which was not in existence before. This includes condition surveys which can be used to determine maintenance budgets in the future, which should assist with delivering value for money in this area.

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The Authority owns or has substantial shareholdings in several companies and commercial operations. Following previously expressed concerns, the Authority has now firmed up its governance arrangements with proper annual oversight. The establishment of a Shareholder Unit and provision of additional resource has brought increased attention to this area. As part of this work the Authority is in the process of closing some companies that no longer provide appropriate services. Work in this area needs to continue to ensure overall governance remains appropriate.

Direction 4

Action to agree as necessary any changes needed to the Authority's operating model and redesign of Council services to achieve value for money and financial sustainability.

As set out in our first letter of 22nd August 2024 the scale of change and transformation necessary is significant, and the Council started by creating future Council operating principles and identifying more effective ways of working. These were later aligned to the Council Plan and its missions which sets out what the Council wants to achieve and how it will do so over the coming years.

To develop its target operating model the Council set out the expected tiers of management, spans of control, management responsibilities and the corporate capacity (centres of expertise) required to operate effectively. In addition, there was to be a mechanism to evaluate service redesigns and restructures against the future Council operating principles, but this is yet to be fully implemented.

Progress on the implementation of a new target operating model and corporate capacity has taken longer than originally programmed. It took some time to begin the implementation of the target operating model with some resistance to the proposals being experienced. A period of time was then allocated to undertake 'workforce discovery' with the results of this activity to be reported back to Corporate Directors in December 2025.

Whilst the overall implementation programme has been delayed, there are examples of positive progress such as the recruitment to the Corporate Leadership Team, the in-sourcing of the housing service, the creation of a corporate landlord model, and with tiers and spans implementation in some parts of the organisation - but not others.

The creation of the corporate centres of excellence has also been subject to much delay. There is learning from the delay, with the Council acknowledging that more attention in the initial stages to identifying the outcomes and activities would have helped move this forward at pace. Commissioners have worked with the Corporate Leadership Team to re-focus attention on the strategic intent for corporate capacity.

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Workforce savings for 2025/26 were £10m with a further £8m expected next year. This year £2.4m of this £10m has been found permanently. Temporary workforce savings are being made through the holding of vacancies and more effective HR practices in areas such as agency usage and sickness absence. The achievement of workforce savings on a temporary basis is only possible however because the setting of workforce budgets does not apply the degree of rigour found in other councils. The Finance service has been tasked to resolve issues in this regard, and it is important that the work on the target operating model, service redesigns and corporate capacity is brought to completion as soon as practicable.

Adult Social Care and Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) have both committed to new target operating models to ensure they have the appropriate practices, pathways and services. Within CYPS a new corporate director was appointed in February 2025 who since her appointment has made positive progress towards the implementation of a new target operating model, progressing a number of service redesigns. Most of the permanent senior leadership team for CYPS will be in place by early December and this will help accelerate the delivery of key changes to practice.

Adult Social Care's target operating model is in development with a concentration on creating ambitions and outcomes in order to provide a framework for the model. Whilst this is later than planned with a current implementation date of April 2026, the considered approach being taken with staff, communities and service users should aid swift implementation.

Data and insight is an area for continued emphasis. There has been work undertaken to cleanse the HR data, and then to connect HR and financial data to support budget holders in better planning and managing their services. This work needs to continue with specific consideration to improving the links between the finance system and those of Adults Social Care and Children's and Young People's Services so as to enable better forecasting of their budgets. These activities are critical to the design, development and delivery of Council services and therefore remain priorities to be addressed. The Council is aware that there is much data but little insight and plans are being developed to address this as part of the development of the corporate centres of expertise.

In pursuit of efforts to achieve value for money and financial sustainability, a transformation plan was developed for 2025/26. This first transformation plan aimed to create the foundations for large scale change and to build the skills and capacity for continuous improvement. This focus on developing the right foundations was supported by the Commissioners, particularly given the previous non-delivery of change and associated savings.

For the 2025/26 budget, currently 70% of savings are anticipated to be achieved with the main area of under-delivery being within Adult Social Care, and cross-cutting workforce savings. Key projects that have been challenging such as those around leisure centres and libraries are now coming to fruition and it will be important that the

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Council sticks to the strategic intent of their original decisions as these changes are implemented.

Plans for the delivery of savings contained within the proposed budget for 2026/27 are expected by 18th December. These plans are important as they should enable the Authority to have a reasonable level of confidence in the delivery of the savings. The quality of the plans for 2025/26 were not as robust as would have been expected and given this learning we are expectant that the 2026/27 plans will be an improvement.

Commissioners have been clear in their expectations that future transformation plans need to have a golden thread from the Council Plan and the Medium-Term Financial Plan which enable the description of the strategic intent and longer-term outcomes for citizens, communities, partners and stakeholders. They need to set out the key changes, workstreams and the delivery milestones within the near term (1-2 years) and take account of local government re-organisation. Commissioners have been encouraging the Council to consider how they will develop the plan and the capacity required since our last letter in August. The Council is currently setting out the themes and key proposals for this plan with the aim that this will be completed by 1st February 2026. Commissioners are keen to see this developed with a clear focus on outcomes and a robust delivery plan. The Corporate Leadership Team have been considering the capacity and skills required to drive improvement activity and we would urge swift conclusion to these considerations so that capacity can be secured.

Some of the foundations for transformation and change have been laid and the Council acknowledges that an ambitious programme is still required to drive and sustain improvement. The Commissioners' confidence remains constrained by the embryonic nature of the transformation and change across the organisation and we have yet to see consistent evidence of the achievement of savings from such programmes.

In the last quarter we have moved away from chairing a number of programme boards, with the Executive now taking on these responsibilities. Constructive discussions have been held with the Executive and the Chief Executive on how the Council can continue to drive improvement and gain assurance in the future. We are pleased that these discussions are taking place and that the Council has submitted proposals to the Department.

As part of the governance arrangements for improvement, corporate improvement boards have been developed for adults and children's services so as to create a one-Council approach, which is commendable. The boards are fairly recent developments and are at a developmental stage. It would be beneficial for the Council to think further about how it can access greater skills and experience to develop these boards, and how it can embed external oversight, support and challenge into its way of operating to accelerate improvement.

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Commissioners required that a review of the fitness for purpose of the Council's IT software and architecture take place. A significant review of IT was undertaken by industry experts which resulted in a considerable number of recommendations for implementation. There is evidence of a step change in the IT infrastructure since this review with 92% of recommendations so far implemented. The remaining items are longer term, and the Council is confident they will be complete by 31st March 2026. The IT Infrastructure is now stable and there is a clear IT strategy orientated towards supporting services to be effective and efficient.

Direction 5

Actions to implement an improved officer structure and performance management framework for the Authority which provides sufficient resources to deliver the Authority's functions in an effective way.

The Council set up its senior officer operating structure, known as the Corporate Leadership Team, in 2024. Recruitment has taken some time which was perhaps inevitable. All positions have now been appointed to, with the last post holder very recently joining the Council (November 2025). The Corporate Leadership Team is developing well under the leadership of the Chief Executive (who was appointed in 2024 after the start of the intervention) and showing early signs of being able to mature into an effective senior leadership team.

There has been a step change in recruitment activity, and this is resulting in more candidates with the relevant skills and experience applying for roles. There is stability across senior management posts with limited churn over the last year. Many posts previously considered hard to recruit to have been filled with notable examples being senior roles in CYPS, Housing and Finance. Work continues to populate new operating models with Finance being a specific area of continued activity.

A strategic workforce plan has been developed which is currently subject to approval and implementation from January 2026. We would urge the Council to move to swift implementation and build on the successes it has seen in the last year in aspects of its HR functions.

We have seen the Executive and senior officers prioritise staff engagement with regular 'Walk-about Wednesdays' in place where they meet with different staff teams to hear their experiences and learn about their successes and challenges. In addition to the 'Walk-about Wednesdays', the Chief Executive holds a regular 'Tea with' session where she meets a cross-sectional group of staff to hear their thoughts and views.

There are also currently a number of positive initiatives such as the organisational wide 'go make a difference' training and specific training in Children's Services and as stated in our last letter of 22nd August 2025, there is an opportunity to consider further how

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these initiatives come together in a cohesive way across the organisation and connect to the vision and values.

The Council has outlined its intent to build on the actions taken so far to develop a performance management framework with Divisional Plans being developed by the end of March 2026. There is a focus on identifying the golden thread from the Council Plan and a strong performance management regime still needs to be embedded throughout the organisation to ensure alignment of all plans and strategies and to have clear outcome and impact data linking workforce plans with individual performance reviews.

The approach to individual performance reviews has been updated and there is a system in place. Activity is underway to address the results from the first round of performance reviews as, when compared against the Council's performance, it is clear that there is a disconnect.

There is a need for the Council to regularly consider the capacity and capability it needs. This is particularly true with regards to areas of improvement where different or additional resource may be needed for a limited time and also in recognition of new requirements such as Local Government Re-organisation. The Council is aware of this and now taking steps to address it.

The Council has reviewed and updated the hybrid working policy to support the creation of a strong organisational culture, high performance standards and a focus on wellbeing. The updated policy was approved in October and is now live along with toolkits and guidance for its operation. It is proposed that quarterly monitoring is undertaken to assess the compliance with and the effectiveness of the policy. We would encourage the Council to consider this assessment from the perspective of behaviours, performance and engagement.

With regards to performance management, the Council Plan was adopted on 3rd March 2025, outlining the Council's ambitions up to 2029 and there are now elements of a performance management framework in place. Progress on the Council Plan is reported quarterly to Executive Board with a proposal for performance metrics to be included within the report with data reported from quarter three this year. After the adoption of the Council Plan, plans on a page have been developed to provide a high-level overview of actions by Directorates.

Performance dashboards have been developed and are provided to senior management on a regular basis. The dashboards currently track key hygiene measures such as sickness absence, performance development reviews and agency usage as well as some service outcome indicators. There are plans to develop these further with more service specific measures. In the future we would encourage the Council to consider further how it is using performance information to determine actions to improve outcomes for residents.

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The development of the corporate policy and performance function will aid the development and implementation of a robust performance management framework, so it is important this progresses in a timely way.

There has been significant work undertaken to review and update the Constitution, drawing upon good practice. The Councillor - Officer Protocol was approved at Council on 10th December 2025, and the next phase of work will include review of the Officer Employment Procedure Rules and associated Governance Framework Document M (Disciplinary Procedure against Statutory Governance Officers), the Council's Petitions Scheme and Financial Regulations.

Maintaining, enhancing and embedding the Constitution are matters to be incorporated into business-as-usual work and to be subject to regular reviews. This progress is positive, and we would want to see evidence that the approach is being sustained to be confident it is being embedded.

Direction 6

Actions to ensure that a strategic and systematic approach to risk management, with appropriate scrutiny and governance of the decision-making processes and procedures, is adopted and embedded across the Authority.

At the start of this intervention, risk management was in its infancy and not given appropriate attention. This meant that the organisation was taking decisions in the absence of a proper understanding of the risks involved and without consideration of actions it should take to reduce its risk profile. Considerable work has taken place to improve risk management since then. Risk registers are maintained at Corporate and Directorate level and reviewed monthly. A Risk Management Strategy is now in place and a risk appetite better developed. Projects have risk assessments, and all report templates have a risk section which must be completed. Further work is needed to identify and track mitigations to allow the Authority to take on more complex programmes and projects for delivery of its ambitions in an appropriately managed way.

Overall, the identification of risk is improved. Risk management will be most effective when it is seen as a management tool to aid service redesign in a way that reduces risk and to inform the internal audit programme. These are areas for further development.

Work is ongoing in relation to the operation and effect of the internal audit function. At the start of the intervention, it was clear that the internal audit function was effectively hidden from view and did not seem to play any part in the day to day running of the organisation. Reports were produced with services not being aware an audit was underway, and recommendations were made without any dialogue with the relevant service. Perhaps not surprisingly, the recommendations were often completely ignored.

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When this was initially reviewed, there were over 100 recommendations overdue – some several years old, and no concern over this state of affairs being expressed.

Since then, all of the aged recommendations have either been implemented or there has been agreement to cancel them as appropriate. The status of audit recommendations is now reviewed monthly at CLT level and the overall audit ratings are presented to the leadership on a monthly basis. After some months of having interim Head of Service arrangements, it is pleasing to comment that a permanent head of the assurance areas of Internal Audit, Risk Management, Insurance and Fraud has been appointed and will lead in further development of these areas. It is important that further consideration is given as to how these functions can be embedded into the normal day to day running of the Council to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the services.

At the heart of a good organisation is the provision of timely and accurate information in a way that enables decision takers to take decisions appropriately. Given the complexity of services at the Council, this does mean that there will need to be multiple professions involved in the production of reports. This includes Risk Management, Legal, HR, Finance and Procurement input as well as the relevant professional service area advice. Overall, whilst this works as a process, the quality of reports is variable, with issues over missing information, confusing or misleading narrative, or overly complicated analysis being included. This does not aid quality decision making. To ensure a consistent high standard of reports, further training sessions are being arranged for report authors.

Direction 7

Actions to address the serious failings and ensure conformity with the best value duty, thereby delivering improvements in services and outcomes for the people of Nottingham.

The Council is becoming increasingly outward looking and displaying curiosity about other organisations and different practices. There are a number of examples particularly within the Executive and the Corporate Leadership Team where they are developing trusted relationships with other councils such as Liverpool, Sheffield and Barnsley to share learning and accelerate improvement. Sector led support is being well used with the Local Government Association helpfully facilitating sessions, providing mentors for Executive Members and through the use of the peer review programme. The sector led support from the Department of Education Slip programme is used to good effect and is very much valued.

It is clear that the Council has not yet reached the tipping point where there is depth of knowledge, experience and agreement on what 'good' looks like and which can create constructive challenge to those managers and officers who can see that improvements are required. Resistance to change has manifested itself in some areas and intransigence experienced in others. This is known to the Council and consideration is

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being given on how to address this as part of the development of the continuous service improvement plan, which is in the rudimentary planning stage.

The Council has made good progress on engaging with citizens and stakeholders in the development of priorities and plans. This is evidenced by the improved stakeholder engagement during the development of the Council Plan with a greater focus on outreach through resident forums, and a bespoke exercise to capture the views of hard-to-reach residents. There have also been local engagement events across the City as part of the last two Budget Consultation exercises. Additionally, work has commenced on a stakeholder and business relationship management strategy, though this remains at an early stage and requires further development. A stronger connection between political engagement and the Council's business engagement is essential to establish a shared vision for Nottingham—one that extends beyond the Council itself. This is an area where the Council can take a greater leadership role as convenor of place which is recognised with proposed investment in capacity in the 2025/26 budget.

We would wish to acknowledge the professional and collaborative approach the Council has adopted with its partners during the development of the LGR bid. This serves as a positive example of a mature approach to relationship management with sector stakeholders and conveys a clear impression of growing confidence. We would encourage the Council to continue to develop these relationships across all stakeholders and recognise their importance to the success of the city, particularly in the context of LGR.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Council has made much progress over the last two years to address what were significant challenges. Given the short time period of the intervention, many of the changes made have not yet had time to mature or embed and some actions are still a work in progress. We would therefore identify the following areas where the Council should continue to focus its efforts.

1. Continuous Improvement and Service Delivery
 - The development of a continuous service improvement plan (with robust delivery plans) supported by appropriate capacity and regular transparent reporting of actions and impact.
 - The direction of attention to accelerating improvements within Adults and Social Care, Children and Young People and Housing Services.
 - The understanding of the need for change being fully embedded in the organisation.

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- The full implementation of the target operating model and the creation of corporate capacity based upon the Future Council Operating Principles.
- The permanent achievement of workforce savings along with the application of sector best practice for workforce budgeting.

2. Use of Resources

- The completion and embedding of a performance management framework
- The improvement in the quality and availability of data and insight and its proactive use.
- The swift implementation of the strategic workforce plan from January 2026.
- The further development of risk management and internal audit to ensure improvements are embedded across the Council.
- The delivery of service improvement and value for money as integral, factors in the setting of future budgets.

3. Culture

- The further development of a culture of learning and continuous improvement
- The building upon actions taken so far, to create a culture of co-operation, respect and trust between all members and officers.

4. Governance

- Work to ensure that decision making is consistently based on timely and reliable performance management information.
- A programme to ensure all Company Governance is brought into line with best practice.
- Attention to ensure that, on receipt of the final 2024/25 Value for Money External Audit Report, all recommendations are implemented appropriately.

5. Partnerships and Community Engagement

- The continued investment in building relationships with key strategic partners.
- The continuation of constructive work with all partners in order to deliver

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LGR as successfully as possible for the benefit of all Nottingham citizens.

Recommendations

We recommend that:

1. Commissioners should conclude their work on 22nd February 2026 and decision-making powers return to the Council on that date.
2. Appropriate experts are appointed by the Secretary of State with skills and experience that can assist the Council to accelerate the achievement of improvements, this to be reviewed after a period of 12 months.
3. A requirement is laid upon those experts to provide regular reports to the Secretary of State

In putting these recommendations forward, we would anticipate that the amount of time required from the appointed experts' will be less than that currently provided by the Commissioners and that it will be important to ensure continuity of ways of working that have proven to be effective.

Yours Sincerely

Sharon Kemp
Margaret Lee
Tony McArdle

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