COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 2 MARCH 2026

Present:

Councillor Lee Hartshorne (Chair) (in the Chair)
Councillor Graham Baxter MBE (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Frank Adlington-Stringer
Councillor Nigel Barker
Councillor Richard Beech
Councillor David Cheetham
Councillor Stephen Clough
Councillor Suzy Cornwell
Councillor Alex Dale
Councillor Christine Gare
Councillor David Hancock
Councillor Pam Jones
Councillor Pat Kerry
Councillor Tony Lacey
Councillor Fran Petersen
Councillor Stephen Reed
Councillor Michael Roe
Councillor Ross Shipman
Councillor Caroline Smith
Councillor Mick Smith
Councillor Lee Stone
Councillor Pam Windley
Councillor Neil Baker
Councillor Jayne Barry
Councillor Joseph Birkin
Councillor Kathy Clegg
Councillor Andrew Cooper
Councillor Charlotte Cupit
Councillor Michael Durrant
Councillor Kevin Gillott
Councillor Daniel Higgon
Councillor William Jones
Councillor Carol Lacey
Councillor Heather Liggett
Councillor Stephen Pickering
Councillor Carolyn Renwick
Councillor Kathy Rouse
Councillor Derrick Skinner
Councillor Christine Smith
Councillor Jessica Stokes
Councillor Richard Welton

Also Present:

L Hickin	Chief Executive Officer and Head of Paid Service
M Broughton	Director of Growth and Assets
J Dethick	Director of Finance and Resources (Section 151 Officer)
S Sternberg	Assistant Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer)
A Bryan	Governance Manager

At the commencement of the meeting, the Chair announced with regret the death of Harry Barnes, who had served as Member of Parliament for North East Derbyshire from 1987 to 2005. The Council observed a minute's silence.

COU/86/25-26 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Pat Antcliff, Stuart Fawcett, Mark Foster, Kevin Tait and Helen Wetherall.

COU/87/25-26 **Declarations of Interest**

In respect of Item 12, Motion A, Councillor J Stokes declared an interest as an employee of EMCCA. Councillor Stokes stated that she would leave the room and take no part in the consideration or determination of the item.

COU /88/25-26 **Minutes of Last Meeting**

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 26 January 2026 were approved as a true and correct record.

COU /89/25-26 **Chairman of the Council's Announcements**

The Chair of the Council, Councillor L Hartshorne, reported that since the last meeting he had attended Dronfield Active to participate in a cycle fundraiser, a Rykneld Homes event in Grassmoor, and had visited Clay Cross Food Bank. He also reported that he was due to visit Eckington Food Pantry and the Clay Cross Food Bank warehouse in the next week.

Councillor Hartshorne also noted that Sunday was Covid Reflection Day.

COU /90/25-26 **Leader of the Council's Announcements**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor N Barker, provided an update to Council. He started by reflecting on the impact of the Covid-19 period and expressed thanks to members and officers for maintaining services during that time.

The Leader provided an update on the Clay Cross Town Centre regeneration scheme, noting that following a protracted period of limited progress the Council had received notice from the contractor. The Leader advised that the Council must balance protecting its legal position with keeping residents and businesses informed, and that further information would be provided in due course.

The Leader also provided an update on Local Government Reorganisation, highlighting that the Government consultation on the proposals was open until 26 March 2026 and outlined the indicative stages of the process.

The Leader also:

- reported on the results of the recent residents' survey, noting an improvement in perceptions of how the Council ran things
- reported that leisure centres had been well-used and had supported families during the half-term period.
- highlighted ongoing work with PCSOs and partners in relation to fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour.
- noted ongoing improvements to play areas.
- provided an update on the national 'Simpler Recycling' initiative, noting that the changes were Government-led rather than a local decision and were being implemented across the county. The Leader advised that the Council was progressing well compared with some other authorities, acknowledged public concern, and outlined that food waste would be collected and treated separately from garden waste, with food waste used for energy generation and green waste processed for composting.

COU/91/25-26 **Public Participation**

No questions from the public had been received.

COU/92/25-26 **Level of Council Tax 2026/27**

Councillor P Kerry, Deputy Leader of the Council, introduced the report which set out the requirements of the Localism Act 2011, which required the billing authority to calculate a Council Tax requirement for the year. The approved demand on the Collection Fund in respect of this Council was one of £7,558,732. In order to calculate the Council Tax requirement for the area at the relevant bands, the demands of the County Council, Police Authority, Fire Authority, and parish councils also needed to be taken into account, and the relevant precept demands had all now been received.

Councillor P Kerry and Councillor N Barker moved and seconded the recommendations in the report.

The Motion was put to the vote and agreed.

For: 27
Councillors N Barker, J Barry, G Baxter, R Beech, J Birkin, D Cheetham, K Clegg, A Cooper, S Cornwell, M Durrant, C Gare, K Gillott, D Hancock, L Hartshorne, D Higgon, P Kerry, C Lacey, T Lacey, F Petersen, S Pickering, K Rouse, D Skinner, Caroline Smith, Christine Smith, M Smith, L Stone, P Windley

Against: 3
Councillors M Roe, R Shipman, J Stokes

Abstain: 11
Councillors F Adlington-Stringer, N Baker, S Clough, C Cupit, A Dale, P Jones, W Jones, H Liggett, S Reed, C Renwick, R Welton

RESOLVED – That Council:-

(1) Formally approves the Council Tax for the Financial Year 2026/27 as set out in the report.

(2) Delegates authority to the Director of Finance & Resources (S151 Officer) to amend the tables at 2.4 and 2.5 in respect of the precept amounts for the Fire and Rescue Service, should they change following the outcome of the Fire and Rescue Authority Meeting on 24 February 2026.

COU/93/25-26 **NEDDC Annual Pay Policy Statement 2026/27**

The Managing Director and Head of Paid Service presented the Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2026/27. The pay policy statement set out the Council's policy on pay for senior managers and employees and was in accordance with the requirements of Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 and Supplementary Guidance 2013. The Annual Pay Policy Statement 2026/27 was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

Councillor N Barker and Councillor P Kerry proposed and seconded the report recommendations to approve the pay policy statement.

RESOLVED – That Council supports the Annual Pay Policy Statement 2026/27.

COU/94/25-26 **Proportionality of the Council**

The Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer presented a report on the proportionality of the Council and Appointments to Committees.

The political balance for the Council as a whole and the specific bodies covered by the political balance requirements were set out in the report.

Councillor A Dale reported that Councillor W Jones would be coming off Business Scrutiny Committee, and Councillor N Baker would take up a place on Planning Committee and Councillor P Jones would take up a place on both the General Licensing Committee and Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee.

Councillor A Cooper reported that Councillor F Adlington-Stringer would take up their Groups place on Business Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor R Shipman highlighted that his Group did not have a place on all scrutiny committees and asked this was considered as part of the review before Annual Council.

RESOLVED –

(1) That the changes to the political make-up of the Council be noted and the proportional allocation of Committee places be agreed.

(2) That the appointments to Committees, as updated at the meeting, be agreed.

COU/95/25-26 **Community Governance Review**

The Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer presented a report which informed Council that a valid petition had been received for a Community Governance Review by the District to determine whether a number of properties should be placed under Clay Cross Parish Council from Pilsley Parish Council.

The report explained that the Council was required to draw up Terms of Reference and a timetable and to publish these once agreed. The proposed Terms of Reference were set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

Councillors K Gillott and K Rouse proposed and seconded the recommendations.

RESOLVED –

(1) That Members acknowledge receipt of the valid Petition for a Community Governance Review.

(2) That Members consider and approve the Terms of Reference and

timetable for the Review in Appendix 2 to the report.

(3) That the Assistant Director of Governance & Monitoring Officer be given delegated authority to amend and republish the Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Review.

COU /96/25-26 **<u>To answer any questions from Members asked under Procedure Rule No 9.2</u>**

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No 9.2 to allow Members to ask questions about Council activities. The replies to any such questions will be given by the Chair of the Council or relevant Committee or the appropriate Cabinet Members. Questions must be received in writing or by email to the Monitoring Officer by 12 noon twelve clear working days before the meeting.

The following questions had been submitted.

<u>Question A – Proposed by Councillor N Baker to Councillor L Hartshorne, Chair of Planning Committee</u>

In the Council meeting in July 2025 I asked the following question:-

"Given the long period which has now elapsed since Covid restrictions were lifted, is it not now time that Planning Committee site visits are carried out in person, instead of continuing them virtually, in order to allow Committee Members to acquaint themselves, more fully, with the nuances and details of each site they are being asked to consider?"

The answer given by Councillor Pickering was "Yes."

However, the vast majority of the Planning Committee site visits still appear to be being held online. When is it proposed to fully reinstate Planning Committee site visits?

Councillor L Hartshorne advised that Councillor S Pickering had responded to the matter in July. An email had been issued to all substantive members of the Planning Committee seeking feedback on reinstating in-person site visits for major applications. The feedback received supported retaining virtual site visits for non-major applications. Councillor Hartshorne also stated that Members of the Planning Committee may visit any site at any time prior to the meeting, provided the site could be viewed from public areas and/or footpaths. Councillor Hartshorne noted that attendance at virtual site visits was inconsistent and since becoming Chair of Planning Committee he had requested that Members submit apologies if they were unable to attend. Attendance at the two in-person site visits held so far had also been low. Councillor Hartshorne concluded that if any Member considered an in-person site visit necessary then he would be happy to consider this in consultation with officers.

<u>Question B – Proposed by Councillor C Cupit to Councillor N Barker, Leader of the Council</u>

Further to the joint letter to DCC just before Christmas, could you provide an update on the relocation of the Clay Cross library planned as part of the Clay

Cross Town Deal?

Councillor N Barker advised that he did not have any further information. He stated that he had received a holding response and the matter had been raised at Derbyshire County Council's Cabinet meeting, and Members would be updated as soon as further information became available.

Councillor C Cupit asked if this was having an impact on the Town Deal, financial planning and wider issues with the project and contractor. Councillor N Barker confirmed the relocation of the library did have an impact on the project and the sooner a decision was made the better.

COU/97/25-26 **To consider any Motions from Members under Procedure Rule No 10**

The Chair confirmed that one Motion had been submitted.

Motion A – Submitted by Councillor R Shipman

Motion: Opposition to the Proposed Tourist Tax by the East Midlands Mayor

This Council notes with concern the proposal by the East Midlands Mayor to introduce a regional tourist tax on overnight stays.

While this Council recognises the importance of sustainable funding for public services and regional infrastructure, it believes a tourist tax would be counter-productive for our district and the wider East Midlands economy.

Tourism plays a vital role in supporting local business, including hotels, guest houses, pubs, restaurants, attractions and event venues. Many of these businesses are small or family-run and are already facing significant pressures from rising energy costs, staffing shortages and increased operating expenses. A tourist tax risks discouraging visitors, particularly families and short-stay domestic tourists, at a time when the sector is still recovering.

The East Midlands is not a mass-tourism destination comparable to major international cities. Applying an additional charge risks making our region less competitive than neighbouring areas that do not impose such a levy, diverting visitors elsewhere and reducing footfall in our town centres.

This Council is also concerned that the proposal lacks clear detail on how funds would be collected, administered and ring-fenced, and whether revenues would genuinely be reinvested into the communities most affected.

This Council therefore resolves to:-

1. Formally oppose the introduction of a tourist tax in the East Midlands.
2. Call on the East Midlands Mayor to abandon the proposal.
3. Request meaningful consultation with district councils, tourism bodies and local businesses before any similar measures are considered.
4. Write to the Mayor outlining this Council's objectives.

Councillor R Shipman moved the Motion. Councillor Shipman spoke in opposition to the introduction of a tourism tax, stating that the District was an incredible tourist destination and that an additional levy would risk reducing visitor numbers and harming local businesses. It was suggested that visitors could choose alternative destinations outside Derbyshire, with potential impacts on the local economy and residents. Councillor Shipman urged the Council to take a stand and support the Motion.

Councillor D Hancock seconded the Motion. Councillor Hancock expressed concern that reduced footfall could adversely affect local businesses.

Councillor Dale indicated support for the Motion, stating that tourism was central to Derbyshire's economy. Reference was made to similar representations previously made to Derbyshire County Council and to correspondence sent to the Mayor of the East Midlands expressing concern. Councillor Dale cited the scale of the visitor economy (including an estimated value of £3.58bn per annum and reported growth in overnight stays) and argued that the sector should be supported rather than subject to additional taxation. Councillor Dale also raised concerns regarding the precedent such a levy could set, the likelihood of taxes increasing over time, and the competitiveness of the area in relation to neighbouring counties. Further concerns were raised about existing cost pressures on businesses (including National Insurance and wage increases), potential impacts on town centres and employment, and the absence of detail regarding how any levy would be administered and how the proceeds would be allocated or reinvested.

Councillor R Welton spoke in support of the Motion and commented on the cumulative effect of taxation during challenging economic conditions.

Councillor S Reed spoke in support of the Motion and raised concerns regarding the potential impact on local businesses and that there was no clarity on how revenue would be reinvested.

Councillor C Cupit also spoke in support of the Motion and stated that clarification was needed on how any levy would be collected and how the proceeds would be spent, noting the District's role as a gateway to the Peak District and potential issues around where benefits would accrue. Councillor Cupit proposed an amendment to include a 5^{th} point in the resolved to read 'Ask Cabinet or the relevant Scrutiny Committee to carry out informal consultation with businesses in the District to feed back to the Mayor of the East Midlands'.

Councillor R Shipman confirmed he was happy to accept the proposed amendment.

Councillor N Barker stated that consideration of the matter was premature, as the Mayor had not yet made a decision or presented detailed proposals. It was noted that a consultation on the proposal had recently closed on 18 February 2026, and that the outcomes were not yet known. Councillor Barker commented that the consultation had been about a levy, not a tax and the views of local stakeholders were not yet known. Councillor Barker emphasised the importance of evidence-based decision-making and suggested that, if any charge were to be used to improve the visitor offer, it could potentially lead to an increase in visitors. Reference was also made to the importance of the visitor economy and the

Mayor's stated ambition to develop the East Midlands as a major tourism destination.

Councillor F Adlington-Stringer commented on regional funding pressures and expressed concern about the impact on small, struggling businesses.

Councillor K Gillott supported the Leader's comments and stated that there was insufficient information available regarding the likely consequences of a levy. It was suggested that not all Members were aware or had reviewed the consultation document, and it was noted that any decision would rest with the EMCCA Board. Councillor Gillott referred to the scale of the visitor economy and cited previous work and reports relating to tourism in the Peak District and Derbyshire, including scrutiny work to establish a baseline. Issues identified in earlier reviews were summarised, including relative underperformance and poor local transport connectivity. Councillor Gillott stated that there was no evidence that a levy would reduce tourism and suggested that the area would benefit from increased overnight stays.

Councillor M Durrant supported previous comments that it was too early to reach a conclusion while consultation was ongoing. It was stated that the tourism sector represented a significant growth opportunity and that a modest overnight levy would be unlikely to deter visitors, given prevailing accommodation costs. Councillor Durrant asked Members to vote against the Motion to allow the consultation to conclude and further details to emerge.

Councillor J Birkin stated that it was expected that the Mayor would undertake appropriate work and research before any implementation. Reference was made to broader principles of taxation and the need to identify funding sources for infrastructure to support visitors.

Councillor S Cornwell, as Chair of Business Scrutiny Committee, stated that she would welcome further discussion and suggested inviting EMCCA representatives to attend Scrutiny to address the matter. Reference was made to previous scrutiny work on tourism growth and to past marketing activity that had been funded.

Councillor C Renwick referred to previous growth scrutiny work and commented on the importance of the night-time economy, including potential impacts on local cafés, bars and restaurants.

Councillor L Hartshorne advised that, in his capacity as a member of the Peak District National Park Authority, the Authority was broadly supportive of the proposal in principle, subject to caveats, and was preparing a response to the consultation.

In his right of reply, Councillor R Shipman reiterated support for taking a position on this in principle. Councillor Shipman expressed concern that imposing additional charges on the visitor economy would not support growth and stated that any proposed levy would be intended for infrastructure rather than growth initiatives.

The Motion was put to the vote and lost.

COU /98/2 5-26 **Chair's Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.