

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AND HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL

DATE	15/09/2026
REPORT OF	Carolina Borgstrom - Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure
SUBJECT	Carr Lane Allotments Water Supply
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The proposals support North East Lincolnshire Council's Council Plan ambition for stronger communities by taking a proportionate and sustainable approach to the unreliable water infrastructure at Carr Lane Allotments. Replacing ongoing reactive repairs with a controlled mains-fed water point, supported by rainwater harvesting, will reduce water loss and service disruption while helping to maintain allotment use, community participation, healthy lifestyles and wellbeing.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarises the issues relating to water provision at Carr Lane Allotments, the options considered and the measures being implemented to support the continued use and sustainability of the site.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

The Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider the information set out in this report and provide comments on whether the proposed approach is reasonable, proportionate and sufficiently addresses the concerns raised regarding water provision at Carr Lane Allotments. The Scrutiny Panel is not being asked to determine the operational water provision model, but is invited to review the approach taken, consider the mitigations in place and provide comments for officers to take into account as implementation and engagement continue.

- Review the rationale for decommissioning the historic mains water network, including the condition of the infrastructure, service disruption and the indicative cost of a like-for-like replacement.
- Consider the options explored to date, including those discounted, demonstrate that alternative solutions have been properly assessed.
- Consider the impact of the current proposed arrangements on tenants, including accessibility, affordability, practicality and any implications for continued use of the site.
- Provide views on the proposed way forward to improve water provision, support tenants through the transition, and safeguard the long-term sustainability of Carr Lane Allotments as a valued community asset.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

Carr Lane Allotments

- 1.1** Carr Lane Allotments is the largest of the seven allotment sites managed by North East Lincolnshire Council. Located in the Heneage ward, the site extends to approximately 52 acres and comprises 375 lettable plots, of which 235 are currently tenanted. Each standard plot is approximately 0.25 roods, equivalent to around 250 square metres. The site is a significant community asset, supporting local food growing, outdoor activity, social connection and wellbeing.

Rent and Occupancy 2026/27

2026/2027	Rent Fees	No of plots	Total annual rent based on current occupancy
Base Rent	£ 117.89	75	£ 8,841.75
*Concession Rent	£ 71.55	160	£ 11,448.00
		235	£ 20,289.75

*Concession criteria – Students, over 60yrs, unemployed for more than 12 months, registered as disabled or in receipt of personal independence payment (pip), in receipt of universal credit

Allotment Occupancy Levels August 2026

Site	plots	Tenanted	vacant including UO	% occupied
Carr Lane	374	235	139	63%
Littlecoates	164	158	6	96%
Peaksfield	166	162	4	98%
Saltings	141	137	4	97%
Springfield	49	47	2	96%
Weelsby	93	89	4	96%
Winchester	72	72	0	100%

01.08.26	Average %	92%
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Carr Lane Budget Position 2025/2026

Expenditure	23,222.49
Grounds Maintenance	3,290.00
Printing	7.40
Property Repairs, Maintenance & Alterations	3,287.40
Refuse Collection	1,566.64
Water Services	9,632.33
PAYE	5,438.72
Income	-23,525.77

Facilities Charges	-3,268.16
Rent Income	-20,257.61
Grand Total	-303.28

- 1.2** The site has historically been served by a distributed mains-fed water network made up of a mix of pipework types and ages, including pre-1980 black alkathene, post-1980 blue alkathene and original 1940 black cast iron mains. The network is extensive, predominantly underground and has deteriorated over time. There are no accurate plans or drawings, making it difficult to identify routes, isolate sections or target repairs. A significant proportion of the system, including the black cast iron main serving Beeley Road, was in particularly poor condition and has required multiple repairs in recent years. Its age, scale, unknown layout and limited isolation points have made leak detection, access and repair increasingly difficult, causing disruption to plot holders and requiring the water supply to be isolated during the growing season.
- 1.3** The mains supply is normally switched on from 1 April and isolated from 1 December each year to reduce the risk of freezing, frost damage and burst pipes during the winter period. The water supply to Carr Lane allotments is metered, and the associated charge is distributed among all tenanted plots on the site. The allotment is unable to recover any costs related to water leaks from the water company. The recorded disruption below shows that, in addition to the planned winter isolation, leaks and leak investigations have resulted in extended periods where all or parts of the site were without mains water during the growing season.

Mains Water Supply Isolated between 2024-2025

Period affected	Extent of isolation	Duration
10/04/24 – 28/06/24	Water supply isolated due to leak investigation and repair.	Approximately 12 weeks
10/10/24 - 30/11/24	Water supply isolated due to leak investigation and repair.	Approximately 7 weeks
03/04/25 - 30/11/25	Partial site Water supply isolated due to leak investigations and repair	Approximately 26 weeks
8/09/25 – 30/11/25	Water supply isolated due to leak investigation and repair before planned winter shut off.	Approximately 11 weeks

- 1.4** The disruption demonstrates that the ageing network was affecting both repair costs and reliable access to water during key growing periods. In 2024/25, approx. £10,128 was spent on mains water infrastructure repairs. Following the leak in September 2025, further leak detection work was estimated at around £7,000, excluding any associated repair costs. Leak detection and repair can take several weeks because the network is extensive, largely underground and difficult to isolate without affecting wider areas of the site.

Water Supply Options Considered

1.5 Option 1: like-for-like replacement of the historic mains network. The first option considered was replacing the existing distributed mains water network on a like-for-like basis. This would reinstate a similar mains-fed arrangement across the site.

1.5.1 A high-level, non-intrusive condition and cost review identified a provisional like-for-like replacement cost of approximately £2.7 million. This estimate reflects the scale and complexity of replacing an extensive underground network across an occupied allotment site, where pipe routes, ground conditions and the presence of other services are not fully known.

1.5.2 The assessment also considered the risks and legal responsibilities associated with excavation, including unknown ground conditions, potential contamination linked to historic infrastructure, sampling, testing, classification, safe removal and disposal of excavated material. Other considerations relating to the protection, diversion or reinstatement of utilities such as gas, electricity, water and sewerage. This option was therefore discounted because the capital investment, uncertainty and deliverability risk were considered unaffordable and disproportionate when assessed against site income and wider allotment budget pressures.

1.6 Option 2: overground blue alkathene system. The Council considered an above-ground alkathene water distribution system as a potential short to medium-term alternative to the former network. Whilst this option was recognised as being more cost-effective than a full like-for-like replacement, a detailed cost appraisal was not progressed. Officers could not be satisfied that the proposed above-ground management would comply with the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 and operational requirements. It was therefore not considered a viable or appropriate solution. As a result, the option was not considered a viable solution despite its potentially lower capital cost.

1.6.1 Safety, operational resilience and regulatory compliance were the primary considerations. The option was therefore discounted due to health and safety, operational and regulatory risks, including compliance with the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999, the potential for water stagnation, Legionella and backflow contamination, trip hazards, vandalism, leakage and weather-related deterioration.

1.6.2 The use of an above-ground alkathene water distribution system was reviewed with Anglian Water, who advised that overlanding cannot be approved as a permanent fixture and that the installation must be buried below ground within specific depths.

1.6.3 The Council could not be satisfied that an extensive overground system across occupied plots would provide a safe, durable, manageable or compliant solution.

1.7 Option 3: partial mains replacement with standpipes and hosepipe access. Plot holders have suggested a phased replacement of the existing underground pipework and the installation of standpipes at the entrance to the most heavily used lanes, with hosepipe runs to improve access to water.

1.7.1 While it has been suggested that this could be delivered within a similar budget to the March 2025 measures, the Council's assessment indicates that

even a phased scheme along the Claremont Road boundary (approx. 350 metres) would require significant excavation, maintenance and capital investment. Infrastructure alone is estimated at around £60,000, excluding soil sampling, reinstatement and any costs linked to unknown ground conditions or contaminated material, which could significantly increase overall cost and delivery risk.

1.7.2 Extended hosepipe runs and above-ground connections from standpipes would, in practice, create a semi-permanent water distribution network across an active allotment site, introducing safety, operational and regulatory risks such as trip hazards, leakage, stagnation, Legionella, freezing and uncontrolled backflow or contamination pathways.

1.7.3 The use of overground hosepipes was also reviewed with Anglian Water, who advised they should only be used temporarily when drawing water and disconnected after use due to backflow, water storage and trip hazard risks.

1.7.4 For the reasons listed above, the Council could not be satisfied that this option would provide a safe, durable, manageable or compliant solution.

1.8 Option 4: installation of an additional water mains supply at the Beeley Road entrance. An additional water connection at Beeley Road was also considered.

1.8.1 This would require an estimated 90 metres of excavation, including works within the Highway to reach the allotment site from the nearest mains water connection, together with associated works to install a single standpipe and reinstate the concrete road surface.

1.8.2 The estimated cost of a single standpipe installation was approx. £50,000, primarily due to excavation and road reinstatement within the Highway.

1.8.3 While this option would provide an additional mains-fed access point, the level of capital investment required for a single point of supply was considered disproportionate when assessed against site income, wider allotment budget pressures and the limited resilience and reach for plot holders.

1.9 Option undertaken in March 2025. Decommission the aged infrastructure, install 14 metres of new mains water pipe to feed four new concealed standpipes at Kelham Road, and move towards rainwater harvesting. The associated costs were £7,832 for the installation of the new supply and standpipes and £7,244 for the purchase of 244 water butts. These costs were able to be contained due to the close proximity of an existing mains water supply, which required only limited excavation works to establish the new water station.

1.9.1 When the water supply was reinstated in February 2026 in readiness for the growing season, and to assess for leaks, a further two leaks were identified on the aged distributed mains network. Leak detection and repair would have included additional cost and uncertain timescales, with no guarantee that the full supply could be reinstated for 1 April.

1.9.2 To ensure a mains water supply was available for the start of the growing season, the proposal to decommission the aged network, install a new

mains supplied water station, along with issuing water butts to all plot holders, went through the appropriate decision-making process and received Portfolio Holder approval.

- 1.9.3** Officers would work with the committee, site representative and allotment forum representative to engage with the allotment holders, identify opportunities to provide practical support to plot holders during the transition and identify funding opportunities for community-led improvements to increase rainwater capture and storage for the site.

Engagement and Communication

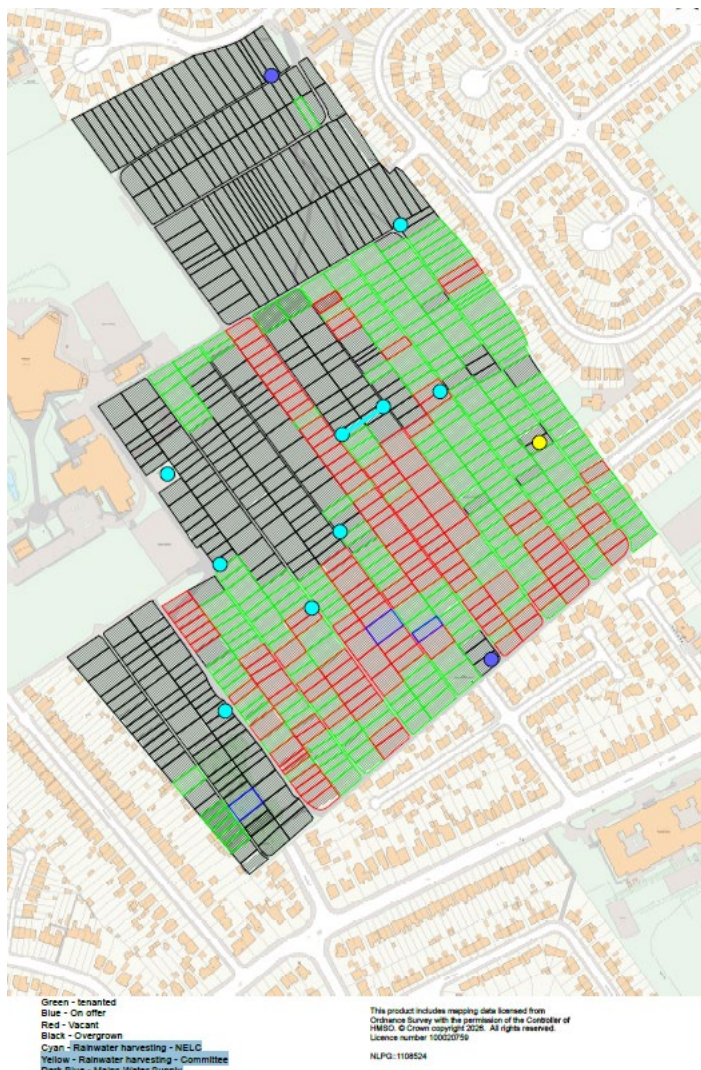
- 1.10** Prior to the implementation of the new measures the Property Services Manager held discussions and met with the Committee Chair and the Allotment Forum representative regarding the changes at Carr Lane. These discussions considered practical alternatives and how the committee, plot holders and wider allotment community could support each other during the transition. The committee has also been signposted to potential funding opportunities that could support future site improvements.
- 1.11** Plot holders and ward Councillors were advised at the beginning of March 2026 confirming the approved approach for water provision at Carr Lane, including isolation of the ageing mains infrastructure, installation of a new mains-fed water station and the provision of water butts to support on-plot storage. The letter acknowledged that the change represented a different way of accessing water and that some tenants may need time and practical support to adapt, particularly during dry periods.
- 1.12** A further update was issued in March 2026 confirming that the water butts had been delivered and advising tenants to contact the Allotments Team if further assistance was required. The communications set out the support available, including practical assistance from operatives and continued engagement with the committee and allotment representatives during the transition.
- 1.13** The Council received 16 formal complaints regarding the change in water provision, of which 8 were submitted in substantially similar terms. This represents approximately 8% of tenants. Each complaint has been considered through the Council's complaints process. Issues raised through the complaints and wider engagement have informed ongoing communications, practical support and the development of further mitigation measures.
- 1.14** A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document was prepared and issued to all Carr Lane plot holders to provide clear and consistent information about the changes to water provision, the reasons for the approach, support available to tenants and the next steps being taken. The document was also published on the North East Lincolnshire Council website and displayed on notice boards to ensure the information was accessible to plot holders, elected members and other interested parties, and to help address common queries in a transparent and consistent way.

Action taken to support the transition

- 1.15** To support tenants during the transition, Community Pay-back attended site twice to support in filling water butts ahead of the season and Council operatives have attended Carr Lane on a weekly basis to assist with filling water butts and provide practical help where required. The Allotment Office has received 15 requests for water

filling assistance, with 12 tenants continuing to receive regular weekly support.

- 1.16** Operatives also assist any tenant who requests help or is identified as needing support, although some tenants have declined assistance. While on site, they have also helped plot holders with practical arrangements to support rainwater harvesting, including setting up structures for water storage where required.
- 1.17** The Property team have also promoted the free and unlimited Plot Helper Scheme, which was already available to plot holders with mobility or health conditions who need support cultivating their plots. The scheme allows a family member, friend or other helper to assist with watering, cultivation and general plot maintenance.
- 1.18** The Council is developing proposals for rain capture stations along seven allotment lanes using Intermediate Bulk Containers (IBCs) with rain capture structures. The intention is to progress this work during the autumn to capture rainfall for communal use in the following growing season, improving resilience and reducing reliance on mains water. The associated cost for the rain harvesting stations is £42,000. Progression of this work will be subject to confirmation of available budget, procurement requirements and the Council's usual financial governance arrangements.



Future vision and use of the site.

- 1.19** Carr Lane Allotments is statutory allotment land and remains allocated and managed for allotment use. The Council's position is that the site should continue to support allotment gardening, food growing, community participation and wellbeing. The current work on water provision is an operational response to ageing and unreliable infrastructure and is intended to support the continued safe and sustainable use of the site as allotments.
- 1.20** Any disposal of statutory allotment land, or use of such land for a purpose other than allotments, is subject to specific statutory controls. Section 8 of the Allotments Act 1925 provides that where a local authority has purchased or appropriated land for use as allotments, it must not sell, appropriate, use or dispose of that land for any purpose other than allotments without the consent of the Secretary of State.
- 1.21** Government guidance on allotment disposal confirms that disposal includes sale, lease or an intended change of use, and that statutory and policy safeguards apply before consent may be granted. No disposal, appropriation or change of use of statutory allotment land is proposed; the measures described in this report are intended to support the continued use of Carr Lane as allotments.
- 1.22** There remains demand to retain and actively use the site as allotments. During 2026, the Allotment Office received 42 enquiries, facilitated 46 plot viewings and allocated 23 new tenancies. In August, an allotment open day was hosted to give interested residents the opportunity to view a selection of vacant allotment plots, find out more about becoming an allotment holder and speak directly with staff about the application process.
- 1.23** The Council will again be promoting the Plot Challenge Scheme to bring harder-to-let or overgrown plots back into productive use. A further open day is scheduled for September, to promote the scheme and support prospective tenants.
- 1.24** Officers will continue to explore an external funding and partnership opportunity for blue/green infrastructure projects in the area, including above-ground storage and rain harvesting measures. This work is at an early stage and would require engagement with partners and stakeholders, subject to eligibility, feasibility and scheme criteria.

Next Steps

- 1.25** Progress the agreed water provision approach, including procurement and autumn installation of communal IBC rain capture stations so rainfall can be stored for the next growing season.
- 1.26** Maintain practical support during dry periods, including water filling assistance, the Plot Helper Scheme and bowser replenishment of communal storage where operationally required.
- 1.27** Continue engagement with the allotment committee and site representatives to monitor issues, tenant feedback and support needs.
- 1.28** Actively promote Carr Lane Allotments through a communications and marketing plan to increase occupancy, advertise vacant plots, open days and the Plot Challenge Scheme.
- 1.29** Develop and promote clear user guidance on safe rainwater harvesting, including the

safe use and management of water butts, IBCs and communal rain capture receptacles, drawing on recognised allotment sector guidance.

- 1.30** Explore external funding and partnership opportunities for rainwater harvesting, blue/green infrastructure, biodiversity and wider site resilience improvements.
- 1.31** Work with Northern Lincolnshire Food Partnership and Public Health colleagues to explore how allotments can support the local food poverty plan, including opportunities for partnership schemes linked to growing, access to fresh produce and community wellbeing.
- 1.32** Keep progress under review, including occupancy levels, use of support arrangements and the effectiveness of the new water provision model.

2. RISKS, OPPORTUNITIES AND EQUALITY ISSUES

The main risks are insufficient harvested water during prolonged dry periods, potential impacts on tenants with mobility or health conditions, and health and safety risks from poorly managed water butts, IBCs or communal receptacles.

These will be mitigated through appropriately located IBC stations, protective UV covers, shelters and sturdy bases, safe-user guidance, inspection and maintenance arrangements, water filling assistance and bowser replenishment where operationally required during prolonged dry periods.

The approach provides opportunities to reduce reliance on a mains water supply, mains water loss and reactive repair costs, improve water resilience, support biodiversity and sustainable food growing, and pursue external funding or partnership opportunities for further site improvements.

Mitigation will include continued practical support, clear advisory information through digital and non-digital channels, access to communal storage, bowser refilling during prolonged dry periods and promotion of the existing Plot Helper Scheme for tenants who need assistance.

Officers will continue to monitor requests for assistance and tenant feedback to identify whether any further reasonable adjustments or practical support measures are required for tenants with mobility limitations, health conditions or other accessibility needs.

3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed approach has reputational implications for the Council in demonstrating a proportionate, sustainable and financially responsible response to ageing infrastructure, water loss and disruption at Carr Lane Allotments. While the short window to reinstate supply before the growing season limited the opportunity for earlier updates, plot holders were advised of the reason for the change, the operational arrangements being put in place and the support available.

The Council recognises that plot holders had historically been able to access water through the former distributed mains network and that the change represents a significant adjustment for some tenants. However, the condition of the infrastructure,

the identification of further leaks and the need to secure a safe and reliable water arrangement before the start of the growing season meant that officers had to act within a limited operational timescale. Continued engagement, practical support and proposed rainwater harvesting measures are intended to mitigate the impact of that change and support the ongoing use of the site.

A communications plan will be agreed with the Council's communications service to ensure information is coordinated, accessible and consistent across agreed channels. These will include quarterly newsletters, website updates, noticeboard information, direct communications to plot holders, FAQs and a plot holder guide.

Ongoing engagement and information sharing will continue with the allotment committee and site representative, using established committee pathways and meetings to support clear communication with plot holders and to raise practical issues, feedback and support needs.

Communications will cover dry-period support, the proposed IBC rain capture stations, safe use and maintenance of water storage, issue reporting and routes for assistance. This will include relevant good practice guidance, including National Allotment Society literature where appropriate.

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed approach provides a proportionate and financially sustainable response to the failure of the historic mains-fed water network at Carr Lane Allotments. A full like-for-like replacement would require significant capital investment and is considered unaffordable and disproportionate when assessed against site income, wider allotment budget pressures and the practical risks of extensive excavation across an occupied site.

The approved operational approach avoids substantial capital expenditure, reduces reliance on reactive leak detection and repairs, and supports a more manageable water provision arrangement. Current measures, including the mains-fed water station, water butts and planned communal rain capture stations, are being managed within available resources and normal financial governance arrangements.

Any future improvement works would need to be considered against available budgets, external funding opportunities and wider Council priorities. The approach supports value for money by avoiding expenditure that could not reasonably be recovered through plot rental without affecting tenant affordability, while targeting investment at practical measures that support continued use of the site.

5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

There are no identified direct adverse implications for children and young people arising from the proposed approach. Carr Lane Allotments can contribute positively to family activity, outdoor learning, healthy lifestyles, social connection and wellbeing. Maintaining a practical and sustainable water solution will help preserve these wider community benefits and support continued use of the site by families and younger visitors.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE, NATURE RECOVERY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The proposed approach has positive climate change and environmental implications. Moving away from an aged and leaking mains-fed network should reduce avoidable loss of treated water, lower the need for repeated leak investigations and repairs, and provide a more resilient water arrangement during periods of dry weather. The use of water butts and communal rain capture stations supports rainwater harvesting at the point of demand, reduces reliance on treated mains water and may help manage surface water run-off locally.

The proposal also supports nature recovery by helping to maintain Carr Lane Allotments as productive green space for food growing, habitat value, pollinators and wider community environmental activity. Future funding and partnership opportunities should continue to prioritise greener water management, biodiversity improvements and sustainable site management where this is practical and affordable.

7. PUBLIC HEALTH, HEALTH INEQUALITIES AND MARMOT IMPLICATIONS

The proposal has positive public health implications by supporting continued allotment gardening, physical activity, access to fresh produce, social connection and wellbeing. It also aligns with Marmot principles by supporting healthy and sustainable places, prevention, community participation and health equity.

The main health inequality risk is that reduced direct access to mains water may affect tenants with limited mobility or health conditions. This will be mitigated through on-plot storage, targeted water support during dry periods, continued engagement with tenant representatives and use of the free Plot Helper Scheme for assistance with watering and plot maintenance.

8. MONITORING COMMENTS

8.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The report sets out the rationale for adopting a proportionate and affordable approach to water provision following the failure of the historic distribution network. The estimated cost of a like-for-like replacement of the existing infrastructure would be disproportionate when considered against current site income. The measures implemented to date have been funded within approved budgets. Proposed future infrastructure costs should be subject to confirmation of available funding, procurement requirements and the Council's normal financial governance arrangements before any commitment is made. The proposed approach reduces exposure to ongoing reactive repair costs and supports a more financially sustainable operating model for the site.

8.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Carr Lane Allotments is statutory allotment land and remains allocated and managed for allotment use. The proposals concern operational water provision only and do not involve disposal, appropriation or change of use of the land. Consent under section 8 of the Allotments Act 1925 is therefore not required on the basis of the proposals set out in this report.

The Council should continue to act reasonably and proportionately, taking account of infrastructure condition, health and safety, regulatory compliance, cost, deliverability and tenant impact. The mitigation measures outlined in the report support this approach. Any future works or funding arrangements should comply with the Council's Constitution, procurement rules and financial regulations.

8.3 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

There are no HR implications for this report.

9. WARD IMPLICATIONS

Heneage ward is directly affected.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are no background papers to this report.

11. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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