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Our reference:
Your reference:
Date: 18 October 2010

To all Members of the Council

Dear Councillor

A meeting of the COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP will be held on Monday 26 October 2010 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Pavilion Road, West Bridgford to consider the following items of business.

Yours sincerely

Head of Corporate Services

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Notes of the Meeting held on Monday 26 July 2010.
4. Cabinet Member Questions
5. Affordable Housing in Rural Areas
The report of the Head of Community Shaping.
6. Small Environmental Improvements Programme
The report of the Head of Planning and Place Shaping.
7. Work Programme
The report of the Deputy Chief Executive (PR).

Membership

Chairman: Councillor Mrs J A Smith
Vice-Chairman: Councillor M G Hemsley
Councillors S J Boote, T Combellack, J E Cottee, T W Holt, G R Mallender,
J A Stockwood and B Tansley

Meeting Room Guidance

Fire Alarm - Evacuation - in the event of an alarm sounding you should evacuate the building using the nearest fire exit, normally through the Council Chamber. You should assemble in the Nottingham Forest car park adjacent to the main gates.

Toilets - Facilities, including those for the disabled, are located opposite Committee Room 2.

Mobile Phones – For the benefit of other users please ensure that your mobile phone is switched off whilst you are in the meeting.

Microphones - When you are invited to speak please press the button on your microphone, a red light will appear on the stem. Please ensure that you switch this off after you have spoken.

**NOTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP
MONDAY 26 JULY 2010**



Held at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Pavilion Road, West
Bridgford

PRESENT:

Councillors Mrs J A Smith (Chairman), S J Boote, M G Hemsley, T W Holt, G R Mallender, P W Smith (substitute for Councillor T Combellack), J A Stockwood and Mrs M Stockwood (substitute for Councillor B Tansley)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

R Crowder	Chief Executive, Rural Community Action Network
T Jarrow	Chairman, Cropwell Bishop Parish Plan Group
A Wilson	Chairman, Cropwell Bishop Parish Council

OFFICERS PRESENT:

P Barker	Support Services Manager
D Burch	Waste and Fleet Manager
C Jones	Senior Rural Officer
V Nightingale	Senior Member Support Officer
P Randle	Deputy Chief Executive (PR)
C Taylor	Cultural Services Manager

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Councillors T Combellack, J E Cottee and B Tansley

1. Declarations of Interest

There were none declared.

2. Notes of the Previous Meeting

The notes of the meeting held on Monday 19 April 2010 were accepted as a true record.

With regard to the Action Plan Members noted that the Draft Customer Access Strategy had been approved by Cabinet and that the Deputy Chief Executive (PR) would provide Members with the information requested regarding the Choice Based Lettings Scheme and Draft Housing Allocations Policy.

3. Community Led Planning

Mr Crowder and Mr Jarrow gave a presentation to the Group. Mr Crowder explained how the Rural Community Action Network (RCAN) supported the rural communities on a wide range of initiatives including parish planning. He explained that the organisation was a charity and a voluntary organisation. However, it did fund rural officers who could assist groups in the rural areas to build on local knowledge and progress local projects. He explained that over £800,000 had been brought into the Rushcliffe area through obtaining external

funding. The Network had helped with the development of the Sustainable Community Strategy and several parish plans.

With regard to the parish plans he informed Members that these had been used to identify the need for play equipment in the rural areas and to justify the allocation of the Playbuilder Fund money. Also WREN had cited the parish plan as one of the reasons it had funding a project for new community facilities. Other areas where plans had been influential were:

- Identifying where local transport was required
- Community shops in small villages
- Affordable rural housing
- And environmental improvements

Mr Jarrow then explained to Members how the Plan had been developed in Cropwell Bishop. He informed Members that it had been started in 2007 and 20 people had attended the first meeting. Over the next few years public meetings had been held to identify what was needed to help build a strong and viable community. The actual Plan was launched after 2 years. Members were informed that there had been several clubs identified and the Plan had helped draw this altogether. It had been identified that there was not a youth club in the village and the young people were surveyed to identify what they wanted. Teenagers requested a skate park and this was finally achieved in November 2009. Another area of need that was addressed was the lack of allotments.

During the development stage the County Council had stated that they wished to sell off the old school which had not been used for approximately 20 years. This building had been used as a community facility and the villagers agreed to raise their parish precept to enable the community to buy, and refurbish, the building. It was now considered to be a focal point for the community and was used by many of the new clubs.

It was noted that over 200 people were now actively involved in the various clubs and that the village had an active social life, which was facilitated by a website. The IT was seen as a vital part of the growth of the Plan and also the good working relationship, and mutual support, of the parish council and the parish plan group. It was also recognised that with the number of people now involved the village was past the critical stage and that the groups were not dependent on individuals to survive. Villagers had expressed their support of the work involved in the Plan and felt that it had inspired the area.

Following questions it was acknowledged that the population of Cropwell Bishop had been very good and was workable. It was noted that larger villages could encounter problems due to their size but it was felt to be vital that the steering group should be focussed on what was required by, and for, the village. It was also felt that the larger villages could possibly feel sceptical and that they had all the necessary amenities however without asking the villagers this could not be clarified, it was also felt that the process of producing a plan helped to unite the community and truly identify the residents requirements.

Members were informed that each of the groups had their own steering committee and that they were all totally separate from each other, although it was recognised that some people did belong to more than one group. Everything was brought together in one website that could be added to by more than one individual.

With regard to urban area plans Mr Crowder explained that this was something that could be considered if required.

Mr Crowder explained to the Group that RCAN supported and revisited plans every 5 years.

It was AGREED that the work done by the rural officer and local communities in developing community led plans be commended.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Group, thanked Mr Crowder, Mr Jarrow and Mr Wilson for attending the meeting and for answering questions.

4. Glass Recycling – Final Update

The Support Services Manager explained to Members how the service had worked with parish councils and the County Council to develop new glass bring sites in the Borough. He stated that out of the 7 sites considered there had been 3 new sites introduced. The service would continue to work with developers on any new projects and would review any available areas of land in order to increase the number of sites in the Borough. It was felt that the glass recycling project had now concluded and had been incorporated into the service's work.

Councillor Mallender expressed disappointment that the Council had not implemented a kerbside collection of glass and he felt that this should be kept under review. It was noted that the Council had decided that kerbside collection was not financially viable before the recent economic crisis.

Following a question officers explained that if residents identified a suitable site the recycling officer would work with the local group to see if it was feasible and economically viable and if the site could be secured.

Members queried if there had been any complaints about the new sites and the new 'noise reduced' banks. Officers stated that there had been some complaints from Bingham and East Bridgford however the Ombudsman had found in the Council's favour.

With regard to Members' concerns over glass being put into the 'grey' bins officers stated that a waste analysis had been carried out and that very little glass was found in the residual waste, most was recycled at either the bring sites or the household waste sites.

Councillor Boote asked about the recycling of tetrapak containers. Officers explained that this had been hard to recycle, however collections were becoming more reliable and as this improved the Council would introduce more sites. It was noted that this would only increase the Council's recycling by approximately 7 tonnes per year.

With regard to the sites at Sutton Bonington it was agreed that officers would inform Members of the collection days as there were concerns expressed about glass being collected on a Sunday.

Members were informed that most of the Borough was effectively served by bring sites with just a few of the remote smaller villagers having no provision.

It was AGREED that the completion of the project be noted; and that the successful work achieved to date in delivering three new glass bring sites across the Borough be acknowledged.

5. Children and Young People

The Group considered the report of the Head of Community Shaping regarding the Council's Strategic Task 12 to *"work with partners to develop opportunities for children and young people to help them discover and achieve their potential over the next four years."* The Group were informed that there were approximately 25,000 young people between the ages of 0 -19 in the Borough and that 75% were of school age, this equated to 24% of the Borough's population.

The Cultural Services Manager explained that the Nottinghamshire Children's Trust, which was a partnership between the district and County councils, the police, NHS and voluntary organisations, had produced a countywide plan for 2009-11 following extensive consultation. This Plan outlined the work that would be undertaken to achieve the 5 outcomes of the 2004 Children's Act. He explained that each priority had between 3 and 6 performance indicators.

He also there was currently no specific Council Plan for Children and Young People, however the Local Strategic Partnership's Theme Group had produced an action plan. Officers explained that the Borough Council was the lead organisation on a variety of activities that contributed towards the targets of this Plan. Officers felt that a Rushcliffe Borough Council 'Children and Young People's Action Plan' should be developed in 2011 to identify all the work undertaken by the Borough Council and to show the challenges that could impact on that work, such as

- the possible withdrawal of external funding
- the national review of the Playbuilder scheme
- the uncertainty of national priorities
- the new county wide plan by the Nottinghamshire Children's Trust.

Members were concerned about the domestic violence performances at the Bridgfest teenage music event and were assured by officers that the young people would be made aware that what had taken place was a staged performance and that this would facilitate discussions on abusive relationships and support available.

Members raised the issue of the lack of parish playschemes. The Cultural Services Manager explained that the County Council playworker had offered to help with playdays or training for volunteers but the majority of schemes were

dependent on volunteers. Members felt that the difficulties associated with CRB¹ checks could deter people, however, they supported playschemes in principle.

Following questions the Cultural Services Manager informed Members that equal emphasis was placed on sports and arts for young people and highlighted some of the arts projects that had been held. He stated that, to avoid duplication, the extended schools service was considered and officers then identified any gaps. He also explained that the Sports Development Officer had a good working relationship with schools and clubs.

With regard to monitoring the Rushcliffe Children and Young People action plan, and Rushcliffe's performance, Members were informed that the information was available via the Local Strategic Partnership. With regard to the district profile for Rushcliffe the only underperforming area was the number of young people voting in school elections. The performance was also compared against the country's average. Councillor J Stockwood explained that there was only the current year shown and felt that it would be beneficial to be able to compare past years to show improvements. The Cultural Services Manager agreed that this would be a valuable piece of work but was reliant on external data.

The Deputy Chief Executive (PR) explained that a new Action Plan would be developed based on the Council's Corporate Strategy and the County Council's strategies. It was felt that the Council's Action Plan was dependant on the Nottinghamshire Children's Trust's next Strategy and that the Group should reconsider this issue in early 2011.

It was AGREED that the Community Development Group

- a. endorsed the work undertaken towards the achievement of Strategic Task 12, and
- b. supported the proposal to develop a Rushcliffe Borough Council 'Children and Young People's Action Plan' during 2011 following further clarity on future national and county priorities

6. **Climate Change Action Plan**

The Group was presented with the revised Climate Change Action Plan. Officers informed Members that, following the Group's recommendation, the Action Plan had been prioritised by the Heads of Service and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder.

Members were concerned that there were a large number of actions delegated to the Community Energy Officer and wondered if this was realistic. The Deputy Chief Executive (PR) assured Members that this formed the basis of her work. Members queried how residents could be kept up to date on any grants/offers that might be available for insulation. The Deputy Chief Executive (PR) explained that these were mostly administered by the energy

¹ Criminal Records Bureau

companies and that residents could use the Council's website or contact the Customer Services Centre for this information.

With regard to Action 2.3 'Investigate business recycling services' Members would receive further information either as an agenda item or as part of the budget consultation.

Members were interested in the Marches Energy Agency funding for supporting community buildings to become sustainable. Officers agreed to provide further information.

Councillor P W Smith felt that meetings should start at 6.00 pm as this would not only help reduce energy use but could be an opportunity to save money. However, he was informed that this did not have overwhelming support.

Following a question regard the climate change adaptation plan officers explained that there had been no progress made as there was some uncertainty regarding National Indicator 188.

Regarding Action 3.17 'Work in partnership with the Local Strategic Partnership to ensure fuel poverty is tackled' it was felt that this should be changed to high priority as the Performance Management Board had been informed that incidents of winter deaths was high in Rushcliffe. It was also felt that people were not aware of schemes to assist people and that the Council should be more proactive. The Deputy Chief Executive (PR) stated that the Council did a lot of work to improve the standard of housing in the Borough including reports in Rushcliffe Reports, promotion at Council events and through the work of the Community Energy Officer and the Environmental Health section.

Members discussed Action Point 4.15 'Investigate option to produce and use bio-fuels produced from waste for the council fleet'. It was felt that further investigation was required as the fuel could be expensive to produce. It was noted that there was a business in the Borough that used bio-fuels. Officers explained that this had been deemed a low priority due to the Council's resources, however the County Council might wish to lead on a countywide project.

It was AGREED that

- a) Members endorsed the attached revised action plan which would be a working document and regularly updated by officers. It would be available on the council's website.
- b) The Climate Change Action Plan is monitored from now by the Performance Management Board on an annual basis using exception reporting.

7. **Work Programme – July 2010**

The Group considered their work programme and agreed the changes made by the Scrutiny Chairmen/Vice Chairmen's Group. It was noted that the date had changed for the October meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm.

Action Sheet

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP - MONDAY 26 JULY 2010

Minute Number	Actions	Officer Responsible
3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting	Choice Based Lettings Scheme and Draft Housing Allocations - officers to clarify the number of bedrooms people would be offered.	Deputy Chief Executive (PR)
6. Climate Change Action Plan	Officers to provide further information on Marches Energy Agency funding for supporting community buildings to become sustainable.	Deputy Chief Executive (PR)



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

26 OCTOBER 2010

AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN RURAL AREAS

5

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY SHAPING

The purpose of the report is to allow Members to scrutinise the processes undertaken to deliver affordable housing in rural areas, the progress made to date and to consider the future of the programme. A brief slide presentation will highlight some of the recent completed developments under the programme. Several questions will be put to the Group for consideration at the meeting.

Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that

- i) the Group recognise the work that has been undertaken by the Trent Valley Partnership and consider whether the programme has been successful and offers value for money.
- ii) Consider whether the programme should be supported in its present form in the future.

Background

1. Many people living in rural areas will be aware of the acute lack of affordable housing. Local people find themselves priced out of the market and unable to live in the area where they were born and bred. This can disrupt the balance and sustainability of the community with serious consequences. Families may be separated, local schools may close and local workers may choose to leave and seek jobs in more affordable areas.
2. The Borough Council has long supported the principle of helping to ensure that affordable housing is provided in Rushcliffe. Since 2003, the Council has been part of the Trent Valley Partnership. The Trent Valley Partnership is a specialist partnership whose aim is to deliver affordable housing projects within the rural parishes of the Borough. Members of the Partnership include Rushcliffe Borough Council, Waterloo Housing Group, (WHG) a registered provider and Midlands Rural Housing. Midlands Rural Housing is an independent body that specifically assists in the provision of small scale affordable housing projects in small villages. WHGs involvement as a Registered Provider is as a result of a competitive tendering process. The Partnership currently meets on a regular basis.
3. The wider Trent Valley Partnership extends across a number of other authorities and Registered Providers within the East and West Midlands. The wider Partnership meets on an annual basis to review performance and share best practice.

Process

4. The provision of affordable housing in rural areas is supported through National planning policy, which states that Local Planning Authorities should consider using a Rural Exception Site policy. Such a policy enables small sites to be used, specifically for affordable housing in small rural communities, that would not normally be used for housing, because they are subject to policies of restraint. For clarification purposes, designations such as Green Belt or Open Countryside are examples of policies of restraint. It is important to stress that exception site development does not mean that the principles of the Green Belt or countryside policies are compromised as any such developments are an 'exception' to the rule.
5. Whilst there are opportunities to deliver affordable housing in our larger settlements through the planning system through the development on garage sites and S106 agreements, these opportunities do not generally arise within our smaller settlements.
6. The Borough Council's Non-Statutory Replacement Local Plan, was adopted by the Council for Development Control purposes in December 2006. This plan contains a policy which allows for Rural Exception development within the Borough where certain criteria are met. In theory, a Registered Social Landlord could operate the policy without the support of either the Parish Council or the Borough Council where there is detailed evidence of affordable housing need within a particular settlement.
7. The Trent Valley Partnership ensures that there is a degree of control over the process when delivering rural exception development. The Partnership only supports the provision of affordable housing in rural areas where certain criteria are met.
 - Firstly, there has to be support from the relevant parish council when investigating such proposals.
 - Secondly, there has to be robust evidence of a need for affordable housing in the parish. In order to prove need, a comprehensive housing needs survey has to be carried out throughout the parish.
 - Thirdly, a viable site has to be found to accommodate development of affordable housing to meet needs that have been identified which is acceptable in planning terms. If a site is part of a field in agricultural use for example, then the landowner must be willing to sell the site at agricultural value to the registered provider.
8. The Borough Council has developed an exception site procedure that it follows when considering the development of affordable housing in a particular parish. This procedure is attached in appendix 1. The procedure has been refined over time in consultation with key stakeholders as schemes have progressed. It is important to note that the Borough Council only supports bids for funding from the Homes and Communities Agency or grant funding from its own capital funding programme where exception site development has come forward through this procedure.
9. Two guides have also been produced for residents and for Parish Councils. The guides have been designed to provide comprehensive information in

relation to the provision of affordable housing in rural communities. The guides are available on the Council's website at <http://www.rushcliffe.gov.uk/doc.asp?cat=10591> or in paper format.

10. A number of affordable housing needs surveys have been undertaken across the Borough with those parishes that have agreed to participate. The Parishes that have been asked to participate in these surveys are those that are considered to be the most sustainable. To date, 16 surveys have been undertaken in total, with Orston and Willoughby on the Wolds being the most recent.
11. Several parishes have had affordable housing schemes successfully developed within or adjacent to their settlement as a result of a completed housing needs survey. A number of parishes have decided not to progress an affordable housing scheme for particular reasons, e.g. where a suitable site cannot be found. In some cases there is 'in principle' support from the parish Council to undertake housing needs surveys; however there may be problems during the site identification stage. It is at the site identification stage when local opposition can occur in some cases.
12. To date, there have been schemes successfully completed in Aslockton, Cropwell Bishop, East Bridgford, and Tollerton. Both Cropwell Bishop and Tollerton have been completed in the last year. In addition a scheme has just commenced in Kinoulton. Further investigations are being carried out to find potentially suitable sites with willing landowners in Bunny, Costock, Langar cum Barnstone and Sutton Bonington. Both Orston and Whatton-in-the-Vale have indicated that they are willing to look for a joint scheme if a potentially suitable site can be identified.
13. The total number of schemes that have been delivered or are in the process of being delivered within Rushcliffe is significantly higher in comparison with other Local Authorities within the wider Trent Valley Partnership. Appendix 3 contains a table comparing performance details within Rushcliffe when compared to other Local Authorities within the wider Trent Valley Partnership.
14. To date, housing needs surveys have been completed for 14 Parishes within Rushcliffe. Out of these 14 Parishes, 12 have agreed for the Partnership to try and identify a site that could potentially deliver affordable housing. Out of these 12 Parishes, there are only 2 where no potentially suitable site has been identified. The remaining 10 parishes have either had schemes delivered or have potentially suitable rural exception sites identified. The potential scheme delivery success rate could be as high as 83% if all of the schemes are delivered.

Question 1 - Do members of the Group consider that the process set out in Appendix 1 to support the Rural Affordable Housing is appropriate? Could it be altered or strengthened in any way?

Financial Support

15. Since its inception in 2005 (following a competitive tendering process) the Partnership has provided 19 rented and 14 shared ownership affordable homes in rural villages attracting over £1m of funding from the Homes and

Communities Agency (HCA). In addition Rushcliffe Borough Council has provided £447,061 in Capital Grant.

16. Rushcliffe Borough Council only provides grants towards renewable energy measures (eg photo voltaic panels) on the rural exception sites. The provision of grants towards energy efficiency measures ensures that energy bills for such developments are considerably lower than in the existing housing stock within the Borough. This significantly reduces the risk of occupants suffering from fuel poverty, especially in rural exception housing that has been developed for vulnerable groups such as the elderly.
17. In East Bridgford and in Aslockton grants from Rushcliffe Borough Council's Capital Programme have supported the provision of photovoltaic cells and solar thermal panels for the provision of electricity and the heating of water, measures to recycle rainwater, heat recovery ventilation system and timber framed insulated construction. The table below outlines the breakdown in Grant subsidy provided for rural exception developments.

Completed Affordable Units Grant Funded by RBC through the Trent Valley Partnership (exception sites)

Scheme	Units	HCA Grant (£)	RBC Grant (£)	RCGF¹ Grant (£)	Average RBC Grant per unit (£)*
Aslockton	6	284,253	87,910		14,651
East Bridgford	10	166,000	172,372		17,237
Tollerton	5	152,000	63,115		12,623
Cropwell Bishop	12	436,000	123,664	137,787	10,305
Total	33	1,038,2530	447,061		13,303

Question 2 - Do Members of the Group consider that the programme has been successful and offers value for money?

Future Work

18. The Trent Valley Partnership has completed its programme of housing needs surveys across the Borough. It is proposed that the Partnership embark on a renewal of housing needs surveys for parishes where surveys are over 5 years old, on two conditions. These conditions are where there is likely to be additional affordable housing need, and where there are indications that a parish council would support looking for a potential site to provide for rural exception development.
19. So far, East Bridgford Parish Council has been resurveyed with an additional need being uncovered. Discussions are ongoing between the Parish and the Trent Valley Partnership as to whether a further scheme should be developed. In addition, Cropwell Bishop Parish Council are in the process of considering whether their housing needs survey should be updated.

¹ RCGF = Recycled Capital Grant Fund

Question 3 - Do Members consider that the Council should continue to provide support the provision of affordable housing in rural areas on the current basis?

Possible Changes in Affordable Housing Policy for Rural Areas

- 20. The coalition Government has indicated possible reforms to the planning system. There are no firm details available as yet, but various speeches given by Ministers and the Conservatives Planning Green Paper have given an indication of possible changes.

- 21. The Government proposes that local communities will be able to bring forward small scale proposals for housing development on a limited basis outside of the planning process through the creation of Local Housing Trusts. Early indications were that such trusts would only be allowed to undertake such building proposals where there was a 90% support for them through a local referendum, however it has been indicated that this percentage is likely to be lowered to 75%.

Financial Comments

The Council has a capital programme of £1.2 million remaining for future investment in affordable housing. This programme includes delivery of affordable housing in rural areas.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act

There are no Section 17 impacts identified

Diversity

The Trent Valley Partnership is committed to the equality and diversity agenda and consider this in all aspects of its work

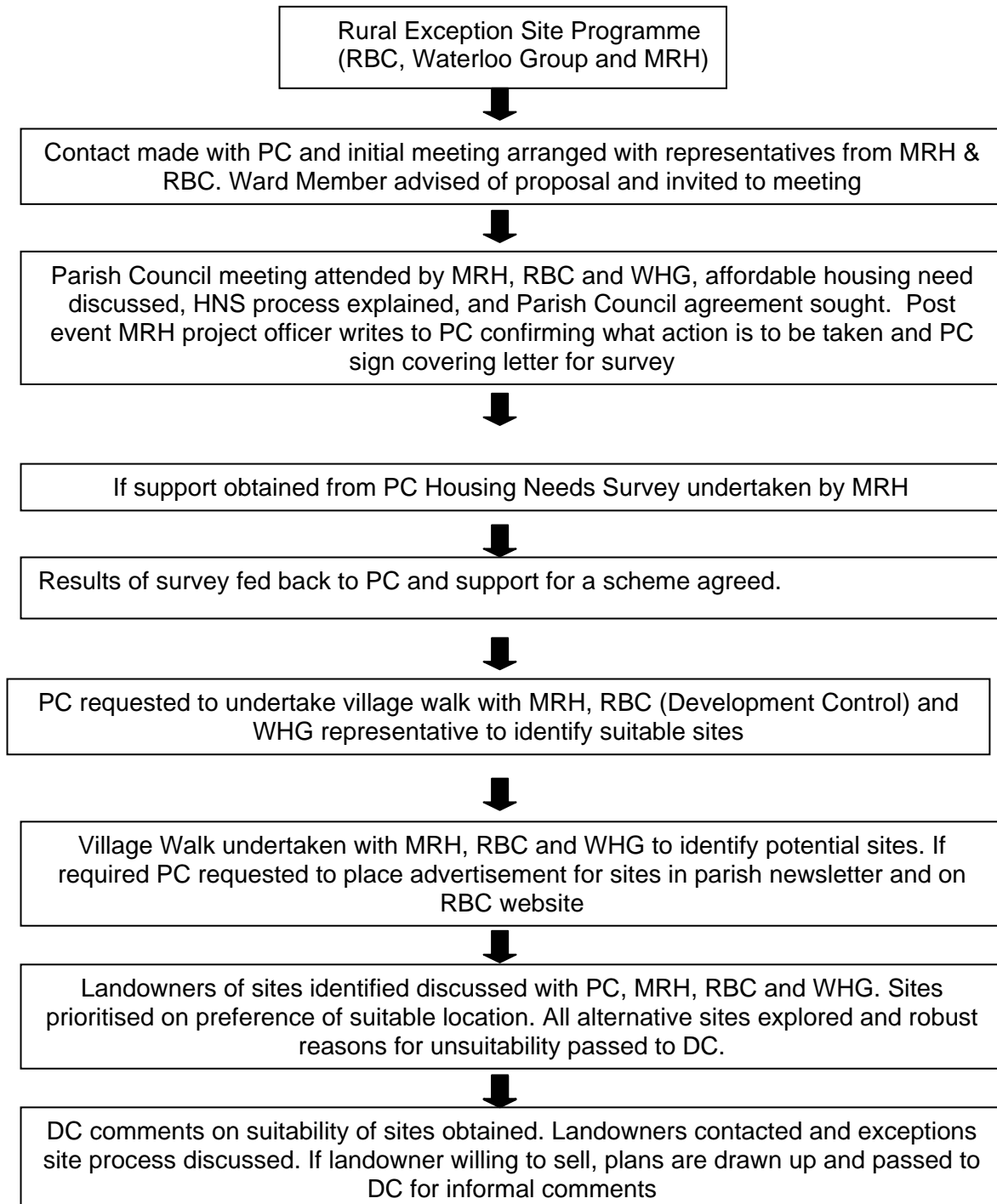
Background Papers Available for Inspection:

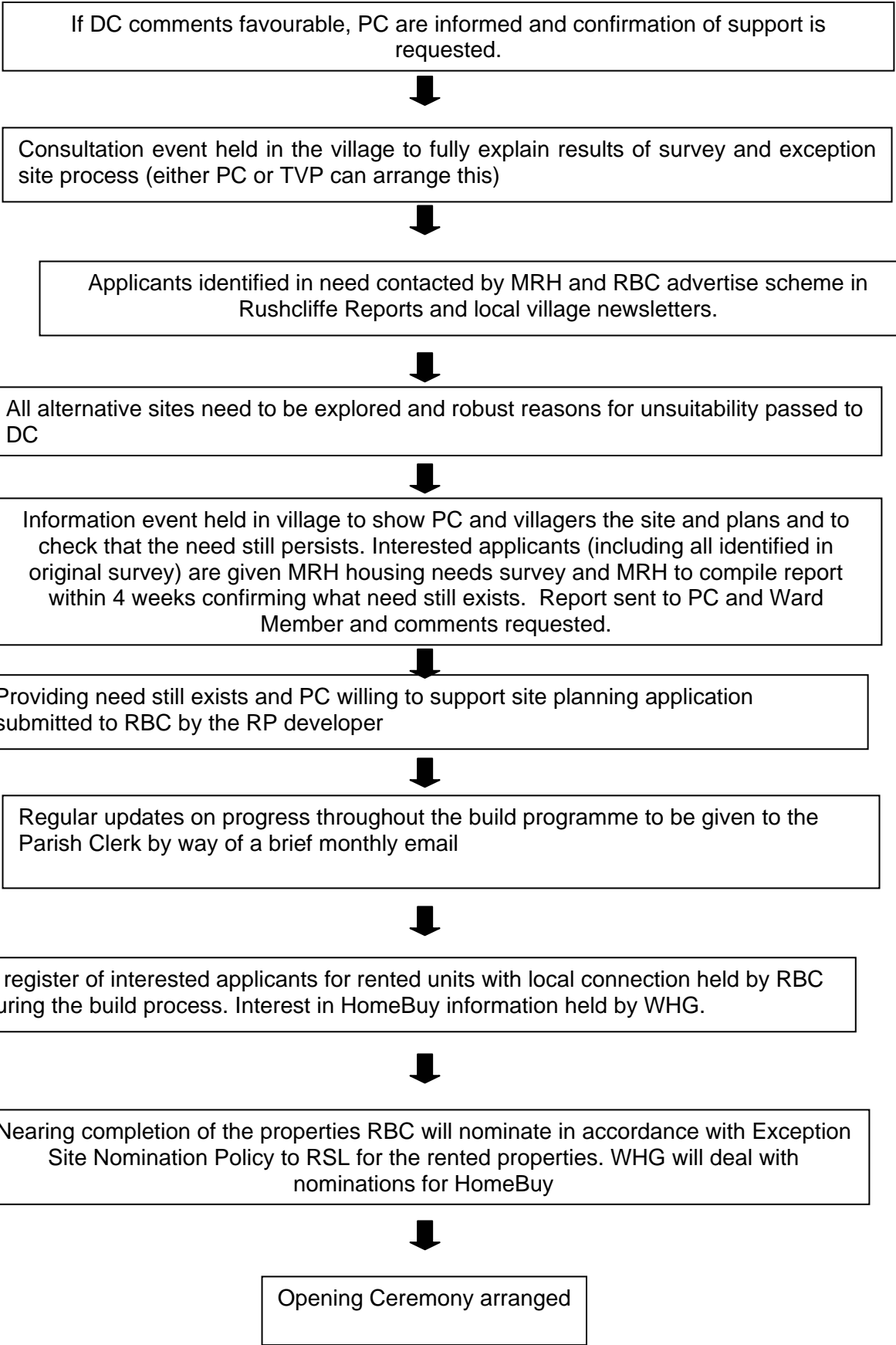
- Affordable Housing in Rural Communities A guide for Parish Councils (2009). Rushcliffe Borough Council.

- Affordable Housing in Rural Communities A guide for Parish Councils (2009). Rushcliffe Borough Council.

Copies are available for inspection in the Members' Room

RBC Exception Site Process





Schemes completed to Date in Rushcliffe at October 2010**EAST BRIDGFORD**

5 properties for rent:

2	2 Beds 3 person bungalows designed with wheelchair accessibility measures
1	2 Beds 3 person bungalow
2	3 Beds 5 person house

5 properties for Homebuy:

1	2 Beds 3 person bungalows designed with wheelchair accessibility measures
2	2 Beds 3 person bungalow
2	3 Beds 5 person house

ASLOCKTON

4 properties for rent:

2	2 Beds 4 person houses
1	2 Beds 3 person bungalow
1	3 Beds 5 person house

2 properties for Homebuy:

1	2 Beds 3 person bungalows designed with wheelchair accessibility measures
1	2 Beds 3 person bungalow

CROPWELL BISHOP

7 properties for rent:

3	2 Bed house
1	2 Bed bungalow
2	3 Bed house
1	4 Bed house

5 properties for Homebuy:

3	2 Beds house
2	3 Beds house

TOLLERTON

3 properties for rent:

2	2 Beds Bungalow
1	2 Beds Dormer Bungalow

2 properties for Homebuy:

1	2 Beds Dormer Bungalow
1	2 Beds Bungalow

Schemes Under Construction in Rushcliffe at October 2010

KINOULTON

3 properties for rent:

1	2 Beds House
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2 properties for Homebuy:

4	2 Beds House
1	2 Beds Bungalow

Summary of Results at End of September 2010

	Year	South Derbys	Newark & Sherwood	Rushcliffe	East Staffs	Erewash	Totals
Housing Need Surveys Completed	2005/06	7	0	3	0	0	10
	2006/07	12	7	4	0	0	23
	2007/08	12	2	0	2	0	16
	2008/09	0	6	4	4	0	14
	2009/10	0	1	2	4	6	14
	2010/11	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Surveys		31	16	14	10	6	77
Total Schemes		18	13	12	10	3	56
Potential Units	HomeBuy	59	36	43	5	13	156
	Rent	114	79	39	31	31	294
Total		173	115	82	36	44	450
Schemes Completed	Exception Sites	1	0	4	0	0	5
	Sect. 106 Developments	2	1	1	0	0	4
Schemes Confirmed	Exception Sites Under Construction	1	0	1	0	0	2
	Planned Sect 106 Developments	2	1	0	0	0	3
Exception Sites Identified	With willing Landowners	3	4	4	6	2	18
Total Potential Schemes		9	6	10	6	2	32

Potential Success Rate as at 30/09/2010 **50%** **46%** **83%** **60%** **66%**

Source: Midlands Rural Housing



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

26 OCTOBER 2010

SMALL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME

6

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND PLACE SHAPING

Summary

This report provides information on the schemes delivered by the Small Environmental Improvements Programme for the Scrutiny Group to consider the way forward. A brief slide presentation will highlight some of the recent projects under the programme.

Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that

- i) the Group recognise the work that has been undertaken as part of the Small Environmental Improvements Programme and consider whether the programme has been successful and offers value for money.
- ii) Consider whether the programme should be supported in its present form in the future.

Details

Background, aim and objectives

1. The Small Environmental Improvements Programme was introduced in 1993, with the aim of funding community initiated schemes to enhance the public realm. This continues to be the overarching aim of the scheme.

Scope of projects

2. Projects implemented under the scheme vary widely, ranging from the installation of seating to improvements to forecourts of shopping parades.
3. The annual Parish Planting Scheme also falls within the Small Environmental Improvements Programme remit. The maximum funding for any one proposal under this scheme is £500 per parish per annum towards buying seeds, bulbs, plants, trees, chippings and other materials for community planting schemes.
4. The following projects were implemented in 2009/10:
 - Flintham Cemetery: creation of 'pocket park', felling of decayed tree, refurbishment of railings and wall, resurfacing of entrance to cemetery. (Capital outlay **£11,000**)

- East Bridgford Bridleway: Clearing out of paddock, and laying of new hedges to facilitate the Parish turning it into a wildflower meadow. (Capital outlay **£10,000**)
- Granby and Sutton Bonington: Installation of seating (Capital outlay **£1,500**)
- Earlswood Drive: Business forecourt improvement, including disabled access to all units. (Capital outlay: **£50,000** carried forward into 2010/2011. Total cost of scheme will be **£65,000**).
- **£5,200** was contributed to the annual Parish Planting Scheme
- **Total capital outlay: £92,700**

5. The following projects are being implemented or planned for 2010/11:

- New access path linking Country/Business Park with Ruddington along the Elms Park Recreation Ground (Capital outlay **£40,000**)
- Landscape improvements to open space on junction of Main Street and Salisbury Avenue, East Leake (Capital outlay **£20,000**)
- Cropwell Bishop entrance signs and pinfold information board (Capital outlay **£10,000**)
- Fencing and landscaping to Costock play area (Capital outlay **£5,000**)
- Improvements to Straw Lanes shrub beds, East Bridgford, (Capital outlay, **£5,000**)
- Bunny village green improvements, refurbishment of wall, and associated planting (Capital outlay **£5,000**)
- Parish planting scheme (Capital outlay **£5,000**)
- **Total capital outlay: £90,000**

West Bridgford Town Centre

6. As an additional one-off project, the Council agreed in 2003 to invest up to £851,200 in the West Bridgford Town Centre Environmental Improvement Scheme. The aim of the scheme is to improve the West Bridgford Town Centre and has included a large number of works such as the enhancement of Gordon Square, improvement of forecourts, pedestrian footpaths and road surfaces, and the installation of new street furniture. This scheme is being delivered by the County Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council has provided funding by way of contributions payable to Nottinghamshire County Council. Two tranches of this scheme have been completed to date and the sum of £585,780 paid out. The Capital Programme contains £5,420 in the current year for capital fees associated with the project. The final tranche of the contribution, £260,000 has been included in the 2011/12 Capital Programme. However, in the event of the project being finished before then, this money will be brought forward to this year's budget. The investment in this scheme is treated as a General Expense.

Links with Sustainable Communities Strategy priorities

7. Rushcliffe's Sustainable Community Strategy was developed in 2005 as part of the Local Strategic Partnership. The themes and priorities of the strategy were updated in January 2010 and are as follows:
- Protecting and improving our environment
 - Supporting the local economy

- Building strong communities
 - Making communities safer
 - Helping people to live healthy lives
 - Supporting children and young people
8. The Small Environmental Improvements Scheme potentially addresses each of these priorities. All qualifying schemes improve the environment visually; enhancements to shop forecourts help support the local economy, which in turn helps build strong communities. Making areas more attractive can improve passive surveillance, which helps reduce crime and disorder. Stronger communities result from improving equality and diversity by, for example, the installation of disabled access and improved pedestrian facilities. Improvements to the play area at Willoughby on the Wolds are an example of an enhancement that supports younger people. However, there is no formal procedure to assess proposals in terms of their fulfillment of these priorities.
 9. There is no formal procedure for assessing value for money, although large projects are put out to tender in accordance with Council regulations.
 10. There may be potential for projects under the Small Environmental Improvements Programme to more closely support other relevant objectives and priorities. For example, linking the scheme more closely to specific corporate and community objectives and priorities, such as those of Village Plans, Conservation Area Management Plans, and the Climate Change Action Plan, and widening participation to include other community groups, such as schools

Budget

11. Historically the Council has included an annual provision of £105,000 for investment in the Small Environmental Improvements Programme. The Capital Programme for 2010/11 contains £166,860 which is made up of the annual provision of £105,000 for new schemes together with £61,860 which was brought forward from 2009/10 to complete planned schemes and support new schemes. The Council's future Capital Programme contains provisional sums of £105,000 per annum to continue the availability of the scheme.
12. In association with this capital investment, the Council also incurs officer time spent in the assessment, consultation and delivery of schemes approved to be done under the Programme. For the past 3 years this time equates to approximately £28,000 per annum. This arises from time spent on the Small Environmental Improvements Programme by Conservation Officers, the Design and Landscape Officer, an Engineer and Clerk of Works. It should be noted that a proportion of the £28,000 fees incurred each year relates to officer support for the one-off West Bridgford Town Centre improvement scheme mentioned previously in paragraph 6.
13. A review was undertaken in 2009/10 to scrutinise the cost of fees. It was determined that from 2010/11 it would be appropriate to capitalise an element of the fees that have historically been charged to revenue on the basis that a proportion of the time spent does result in the creation of a fixed asset. It is estimated that the sum of £10,000 could be charged to the capital provision each year. This would reduce the revenue cost of fees down to £18,000 per

annum. The scheme is periodically audited internally and is subject to general review annually as part of the external audit of Capital expenditure.

Procedure for inviting proposals

14. A letter seeking proposals is sent every two or three years to each Ward Member, Parish Council, Parish Meeting, Town Council, and the Lady Bay and West Bridgford Community Associations. There is no additional advertising of the scheme and no other groups are approached. There may be scope to approach other community groups such as schools and local interest groups.
15. A separate letter is sent out annually inviting proposals for the annual Parish Planting Scheme, which comes under the Environmental Improvements Programme remit.

Criteria for eligibility

16. The pool of suggested projects for the Small Environmental Improvements Programme is assessed for eligibility. Proposals that do not fulfil the scheme criteria are rejected. To be eligible, a proposal must offer a visual improvement. Proposals that consist mainly of general maintenance or repair are unlikely to be accepted. A proposal must also be on publicly accessible land that is not wholly or mainly in the ownership of Rushcliffe Borough Council or Nottinghamshire County Council. Proposals for works that are more appropriate to other Council budgets are likely to be rejected.

Categorisation and selection of eligible schemes:

17. Eligible proposals are grouped into categories according to the level of complexity of the proposal. Proposed schemes that require minimal officer involvement and have no ownership issues are considered to be simple, whereas a proposal that is more complex may require design involvement from Council officers, consultation, and input from other bodies, and possibly multiple owners. Each year, projects from a range of these categories are undertaken.
18. Historically, the consultation and approval process was complex and required input from a number of officers and Members. The process was simplified when it became evident that the cost in staff resources was greater than the financial value of the awards. The simplification involved implementing a 5-year programme and delegation of approval to the Head of Planning and Place Shaping.

Match funding

19. There is currently no requirement for the relevant town or parish council to contribute towards the cost of a proposed scheme, although in the case of shop forecourt enhancements the business owner is required to make a contribution. The maximum £500 awarded under the Parish Planting Scheme is in some cases used towards larger schemes funded by the parish.

Links with other grant schemes

20. The scheme operates on a stand-alone basis that allows the Borough Council full independence in selecting and delivering schemes. It is possible that more effective use of funds could be made by linking in with other schemes, for example Nottinghamshire County Council's Local Improvement Scheme. Currently, there is no mechanism for using funding from the Small Environmental Improvements Scheme to lever in larger funds from other bodies.

Geographical Distribution of Projects

21. The geographical spread of Small Environmental Improvement Programme projects over the past five years is fairly even across the Borough, and this is represented on the map in **Appendix 1** of this report. **Appendix 2** shows a map representing the geographical spread of Parish Planting Scheme projects over the past four years. Again, projects have been spread fairly evenly across the Borough.

Maintenance and Repairs

22. Responsibility for maintenance and repairs for works implemented under the scheme belongs wholly to the relevant town or parish council and/or the business owner in the case of forecourts. Many of the schemes are designed to keep maintenance requirements to a minimum. There is currently no routine post-completion monitoring of maintenance to works implemented and there is no budget allowance for it. Funding from the Small Environmental Improvements Programme is not conditional upon a formal commitment to undertake maintenance and repair.
23. A recent condition survey of 31 projects completed over the past 5 years made the following assessment:

Better than average maintenance	3
Average maintenance	13
Below average maintenance	3
Maintenance free or negligible maintenance required	12

Post-completion satisfaction monitoring

24. Satisfaction surveys are sent out with the letters seeking suggestions for new schemes. The survey focuses on satisfaction with the process. The rate of completion and return of these surveys tends to be low. Informal verbal and/or written feedback may be given by recipients of funding after completion of a project. This is usually given to the Design and Landscape Officer. There is no routine procedure for surveying and assessing customer satisfaction. However, the level of participation may be seen as an indicator of the Programme's popularity.

Participation

25. Generally, public participation in the scheme is high, especially for the annual Parish Planting Scheme, which in some years is over-subscribed. This year the Council has received a letter from one parish objecting to the use of

Council money for the parish planting scheme in the current economic climate. In general, however, the uptake this year has been good with 19 parishes awarded a total of £5,189 for the 2010/11 Parish Planting Scheme.

SWOT analysis

26. An initial SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis was carried out at officer level, and the findings are presented in **Appendix 3** of this report. The analysis shows that there is potential for improvement in three main areas: value for money; widening participation; focussing on specific corporate objectives and priorities.

Financial Comments

Financial commentary covering the capital budget provision and associated revenue costs arising from officer time is contained within the body of the report.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act

The programme includes schemes that result in increased activity and natural surveillance in public areas.

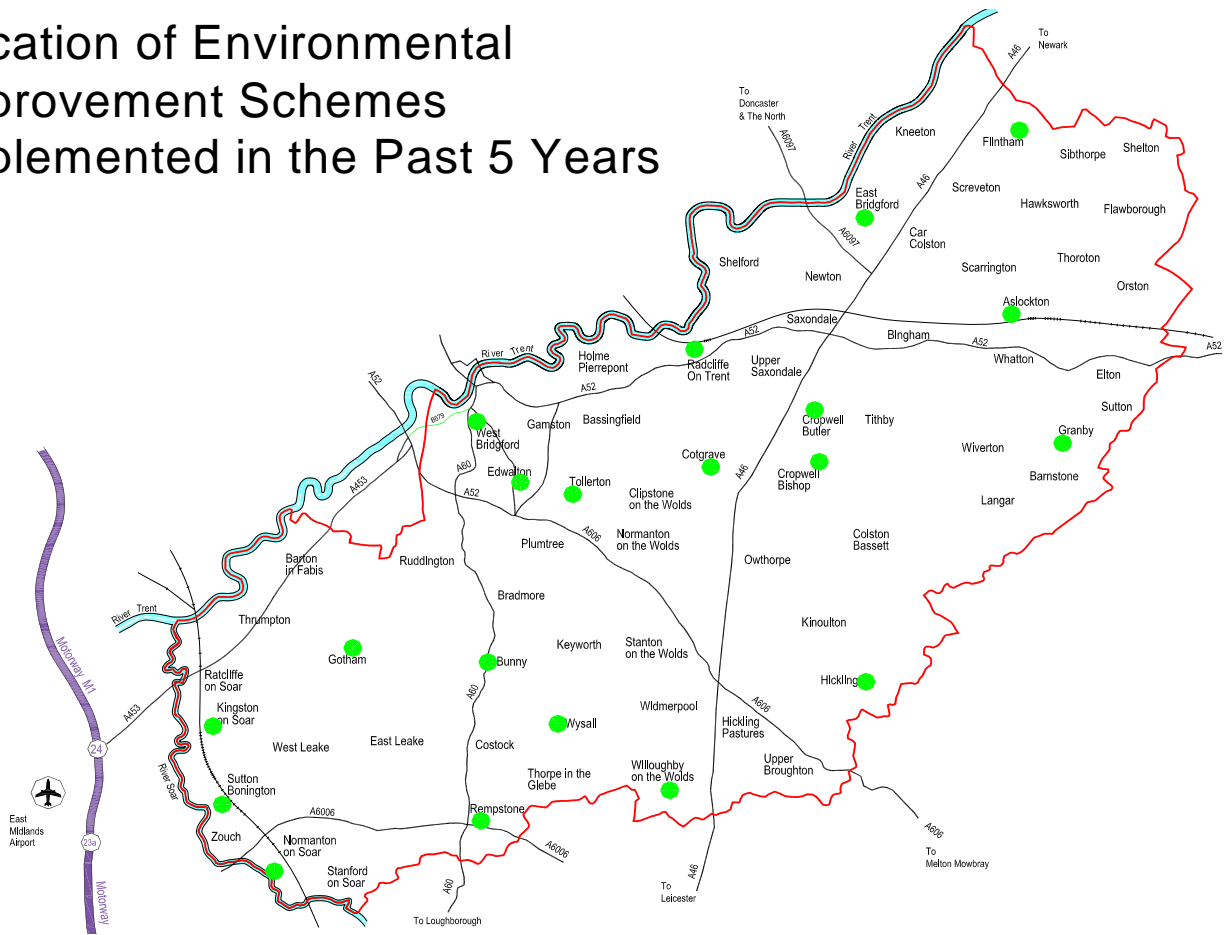
Diversity

Installation of disabled access is included in schemes involving shop forecourts.

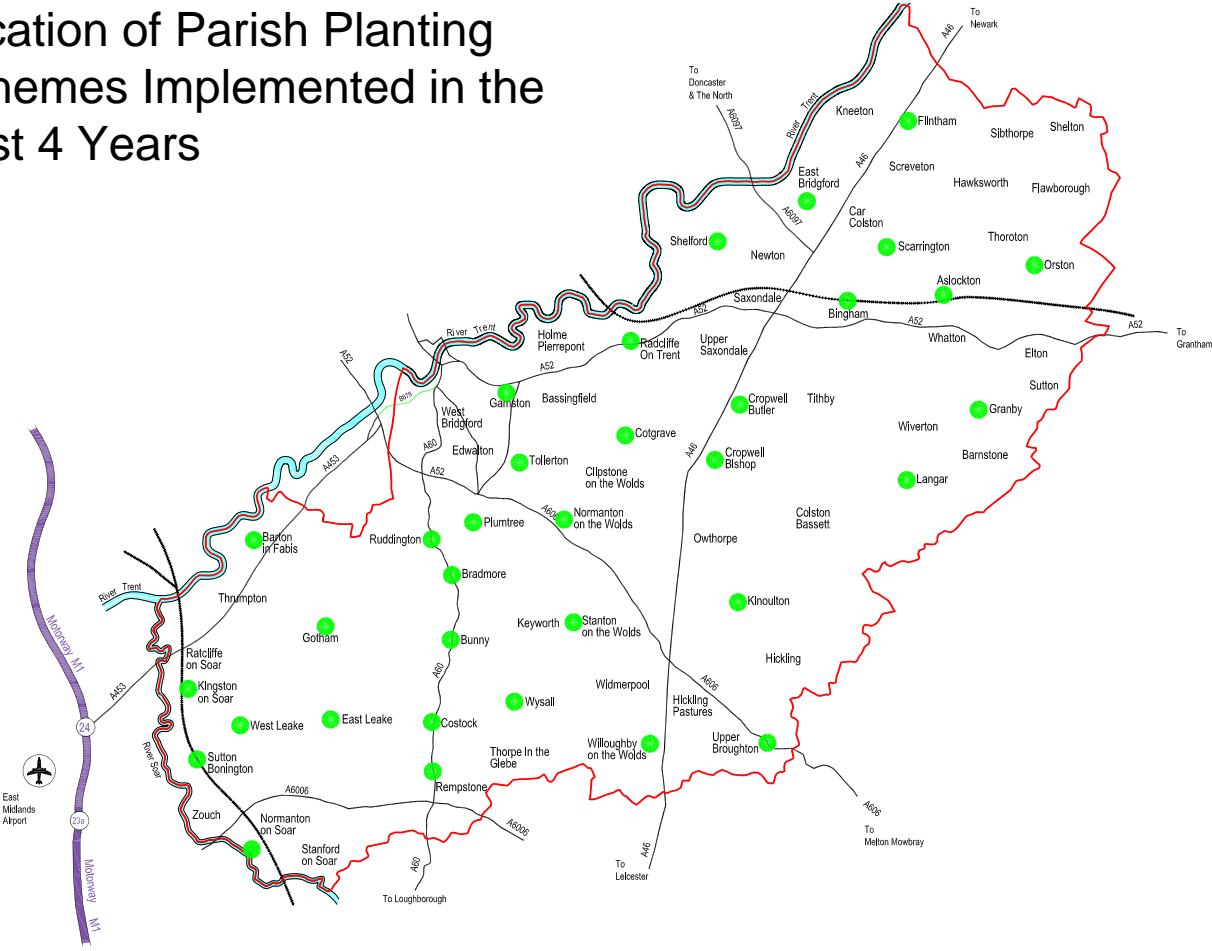
Background Papers Available for Inspection:

Internal files refs. Environmental Improvements 645.30 – 645.16

Location of Environmental Improvement Schemes Implemented in the Past 5 Years



Location of Parish Planting Schemes Implemented in the Past 4 Years



Small Environmental Improvement Programme 'SWOT' analysis

Strengths

- Borough Council administers the scheme independently
- Projects are initiated by local communities
- A significant majority of trees and hedgerows planted by Rushcliffe Borough Council are done so under the programme. (In 2008/09 Rushcliffe planted 1,537 trees (including trees for hedgerows) under the Small Environmental Improvements Programme. In the same year only 34 trees were planted by the Borough Council under other budgets. In 2009/10 1,796 trees were planted under the programme and 167 trees under other budgets.)
- Most projects address one or more Sustainable Community Strategy priorities
- Visual enhancements provide widespread benefits

Weaknesses

- No formal procedure for assessing value for money
- No formal procedure for assessing contribution to relevant corporate, partnership and community aims and objectives, such as the Sustainable Communities Strategy, the Climate Change Action Plan etc.
- Participation restricted to parishes and ward members

Opportunities

- Scope for formal assessment of value for money
- Scope to link scheme more closely with other corporate objectives and priorities
- Scope to widen the scheme to include other community groups
- Survey/assess the level of support for the scheme within the community and among Members.

Threats

- Current economic climate
- Uncertainty of level of support from Members and communities

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP****18 OCTOBER 2010****WORK PROGRAMME****7****REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE (PR)****Summary**

The work programme for the Community Development Group is developed around the corporate priorities that fall within its remit and takes into account the timing of the Group's business in the previous municipal year and any emerging issues and key policy developments that may arise throughout the year.

Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that the Group considers and agrees the proposed work programme for 2009/10.

Date of Meeting	Item
18 October 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Environmental Improvements• Affordable Housing in Rural Areas• Work Programme
24 January 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Homelessness – Strategy and Action Plan• South Notts Home Improvement Agency• Work Programme• 2nd Interim Report of the Leisure Facilities Member Panel
18 April 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nature Conservation Strategy• Work Programme

Financial Comments

No direct financial implications arise from the proposed work programme

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act

In the delivery of its work programme the Group supports delivery of the Council's Section 17 responsibilities.

Diversity

The policy development role of the Group ensures that its proposed work programme supports delivery of Council's Corporate priority 6 'Meeting the Diverse needs of the Community'.

Background Papers Available for Inspection: Nil