

**NOTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP
TUESDAY 14 JULY 2015**

Held at 7 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Pavilion Road,
West Bridgford

PRESENT:

Councillors T Combellack (Chairman), B Buschman, L B Cooper, J Donoghue,
M J Edwards, R A Inglis, K A Khan, A L R A Pell and R G Upton

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

W Hawley PHD Student – The University of Nottingham

OFFICERS PRESENT:

D Banks	Executive Manager – Neighbourhoods
C Evans	Economic Growth Manager
A Goodman	Member Support Officer
D Mitchell	Executive Manager – Communities
P Phillips	Environmental Sustainability Officer
C Taylor	Community Development Manager

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

There were no apologies for absence

1. Declarations of Interest

There were none declared.

2. Notes of the Previous Meeting

The notes of the meeting held on Tuesday 17 March 2015 were accepted as a true record.

Young Update – the Group noted that all Actions had now been completed.

3. New Energy Initiatives

The Executive Manager – Communities reminded Members that at its meeting on the 18 March 2014 the Community Development Group agreed that new energy initiatives should be included in the work programme. Subsequently, in August 2014, Members attended a fact finding visit to the British Geological Survey in Keyworth to understand more about shale gas extraction. Following a presentation and responses to questions, a briefing note was produced and circulated to all Members. In January 2015, Mr Angus from the Nottingham Energy Partnership gave a presentation to the Group on Photovoltaics and a

briefing note on solar energy was produced. Finally the Group would receive a presentation on anaerobic digestion and issue a briefing note, concluding the programme of new energy initiatives.

Mr Hawley, a PHD student from the University of Nottingham gave a presentation to the Group on anaerobic digestion (AD). He informed Members that the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) defined anaerobic digestion as 'a natural process in which microorganisms break down organic matter in the absence of oxygen, into biogas (a mixture of carbon dioxide and methane) and digestate (a nitrogen-rich fertiliser).

In the UK over 90 million tonnes (Mt) of manure and slurries were generated annually. There were approximately 330 AD units in the UK, 150 within the water industry and about 100 agricultural based. He explained that there were three main steps to the process, pre-treatment, anaerobic digestion and post-treatment. The organic material used in anaerobic digestion could include farmyard manure, straw or silage and other grown crops, food waste or sewage. They produced a biogas that could be; used directly in engines for combined heat and power (CHP), burned to produce heat, or cleaned and used in the same way as natural gas or as a vehicle fuel, and a digestate that could be used as a renewable fertiliser or soil conditioner. He explained that there were different methods of anaerobic digestion, which included mesophilic, thermophilic, wet, dry and continuous flow/batch system. Most of the systems used on farms were mesophilic, wet, continuous flow digesters, as this was cheaper to run than thermophilic versions and was most effective for slurry and vegetable waste. Other factors for consideration when operating ADs included homogeneity of the feedstock, the overall pH, the nutrient content, toxic compounds, temperature and safety. A third of the AD units in the UK cost under £2 million and a further third between £2 million and £4 million. The benefits of included; pollution reduction, improved slurry handling, production of gas and digestate, displacement of fossil fuels, environmental awareness, sustainable farming and diversification. Potential barriers included; legislation, lack of access to capital grants and finance, competition and restrictions on feedstock, restrictions on the utilisation of digestate, reliability of technology and costs.

In response to questions Mr Hawley confirmed that any safe waste could be placed in an AD, including failed crops, weeds, milk waste products and cattle guts, without the need for a permit. In respect of safety, any methane leaks would be addressed immediately as the gas was the valuable end product that the operator was harvesting. It was not within the Council's authority to impose conditions on planning applications that specified the level of methane that should be produced or control the type of material that could be fed into the plant. Members expressed concern that the incorrect storage of materials could generate odours and attract vermin, and questioned whether larger units that brought in materials would be commercially viable without subsidies. The Group felt that the briefing note should contain information on the impact of feed in tariffs and government subsidies, as well as health and safety issues.

Action The Executive Manager – Communities to include sections on feed in tariffs, government subsidies and health and safety issues in the briefing note

Members enquired whether the Council had considered introducing separate weekly collections of food waste and felt that the figures contained in the briefing note were out of date. The Executive Manager – Neighbourhood explained that it was not currently viable for Rushcliffe to separate food waste.

Action The Executive Manager – Communities to update the figures on separate weekly collections of food waste contained in the briefing note

The Chairman thanked Mr Hawley for a very informative presentation and requested that Members email any questions to her.

It was AGREED that

- a) the Group endorse draft briefing note on anaerobic digestion, subject to the amendments, and
- b) no further investigatory works were necessary in relation to new energy initiatives.

4. **Economic Growth Update**

The Economic Growth Manager gave a presentation to the Group on the work done by the Economic Development Team, since the last update in May 2014, and the priorities for 2015/16. Members were informed that the priorities for 2014/15 were as follows:

- Strengthening links with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to maximise our opportunity to access funding
- Bringing forward development on our key strategic sites
- Making an application to the Local Infrastructure Fund
- Adopting the Local Plan
- Securing the future of Bridgford Hall – securing a new tenant
- The delivery of 100 new apprenticeships in Rushcliffe this year
- Rolling out Broadband in the identified areas in Rushcliffe
- Increasing the offer for the visitor economy e.g. Rushcliffe Food Fair

The Economic Growth Manager reported that in 2013 there were 4620 active businesses in Rushcliffe, which was an increase of 530 since 2004. In Rushcliffe there had been 595 business starts in 2013, the highest in the County, however there were 410 business deaths, also the highest in the County, but the lowest since 2007. The sectors with the most types of businesses in Nottinghamshire were Health, Manufacturing and Retail and the survival rate for businesses in Rushcliffe for five or more years was 46.4%. Unemployment in Rushcliffe was the lowest rate in the County with 640 people claiming benefits in April 2015. The number of residents educated to degree level or equivalent was 54%, which was much higher than the county average of 30%.

Members enquired whether the Apprenticeship Schemes had helped to reduce levels of unemployment and how Rushcliffe compared against the national average.

Action the Economic Growth Manager to provide the Group with national average figures for unemployment

The Council had recently established a Strategic Growth Board to enable it to work with the appropriate agencies and organisations, to help shape and develop future economic development and regeneration. The Board would provide a strategic overview in relation to business growth, employment/skills growth, housing growth and major infrastructure including roads, rail and broadband. Sitting underneath the Strategic Growth Board would be three Local Growth Boards that would focus upon key areas of the Borough, particularly West Bridgford, Radcliffe on Trent and Bingham and Cotgrave.

The Economic Growth Manager explained that £6.3 million of Growth Deal funding had been secured from the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for the A46 package that included Cotgrave Town Centre and employment land, land north of Bingham and the former RAF Newton site. There was also £1.6 million available across the three districts of Rushcliffe, Gedling and Ashfield from LEADER, a European fund aimed at economic growth in rural communities managed through DEFRA in England. A further £5.5 million was available as part of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) to deliver the Government's top priority of economic growth and £10.5 million had been allocated to Sustainable Urban Development Strategies (SUDs).within the D2N2 area.

In respect of the Council's assets, the Group was informed that the industrial units and the RTEC centre were fully let and The Point had only one vacant unit. Following the successful bid for lottery funding, planning permission had been granted for the refurbishment of Bridgford Hall and conversion to serviced apartments. The stage 2 application for Heritage Lottery Funding had been submitted and the outcome was expected in September 2015. In respect of the Arena and office development, Farrans had been appointed as the developer, with a move date of January 2017. As part of the contract, Farrans had provided an employment and skills plan, outlining the employment and training opportunities they would provide during the construction phase.

The Economic Growth Manager updated the Group on the current situation in relation to Broadband. She reported that Nottinghamshire County Council had secured the requisite full match funding of £2.63m, from the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership through its Local Growth Deal. This would enable them to fulfil the Government's target of 95% coverage of fibre-based broadband and Rushcliffe would receive 96% coverage by the time Contract 2 concluded in Spring 2018. Detailed survey work was currently being carried out to confirm which areas would benefit from the second Better Broadband for Nottinghamshire (BBfN) contract. Broadband upgrades were not made automatically and businesses and residents would need to make arrangements with an internet service provider to access the faster fibre service once available. Installation of the connection would cost over £100, however there were vouchers available to small and medium businesses to help with the cost.

Following the Council's adoption of the Construction Industry Training Boards Client Based Approach in July 2014, all developments over £3 million now had

employment and skills outputs attached to them. The Council was holding its fourth jobs fair on Thursday 30 July at Lutterell Hall and all benefit claimants within the Borough had been invited. Work Clubs had been established in Cotgrave and West Bridgford and funding was currently being sought for one in Bingham. The YouNG group had organised a successful YouNG market on Central Avenue in conjunction with the Food Fair to promote the Borough's food suppliers.

In concluding the presentation the Group was informed that the following priority areas of work had been identified for 2015/16:

- The establishment of Strategic and Local Growth Boards
- Submitting final business cases to secure Growth Deal money for 2016/17 and 2017/18 (for the A46 corridor schemes)
- Identifying projects that accord with the investment strategy and the associated funding available.
- Developing the business pages on the website
- Implementing the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) client based approach on all developments – this commits developers to providing skills and training opportunities on sites being developed
- Extending the remit of the Cotgrave Employment Partnership to develop the employment and skills offer across the Borough.

The Chairman thanked the Economic Growth Manager for the presentation and requested that Members email any questions to her.

It was AGREED that

- a) Members endorsed the actions and priorities proposed for the coming year; and
- b) Members recognised the work officers are doing to progress this strategic priority within the resources available.

5. **Draft Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Strategy 2016 – 2020**

The Community Development Manager reminded Members that at its meeting on 5 March 2015, Council resolved that Cabinet should investigate the possibility of a trees and woodlands policy in consultation with the Community Development Group. He explained that the Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Strategy was an existing partnership document produced by the Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Strategy Implementation Group (RNCSIG). The membership of RNCSIG consisted of statutory agencies and voluntary bodies, with the Borough Council and Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust playing leading roles. The strategy was first produced in 2003 and aimed to protect and enhance Rushcliffe's wildlife interest, whilst helping achieve the Nottinghamshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan objectives. The current Strategy ran to the end of 2015 and placed a particular emphasis on species-rich grassland and wetland habitats, typical of Rushcliffe but now much reduced in area. The updated Draft Strategy for 2016 – 2020 incorporated tree and woodland policies both in a dedicated section and as a recurring theme throughout the document.

The Community Development Manager and Environmental Sustainability Officer gave a presentation that outlined the key objectives of the Strategy. The Group was informed that Rushcliffe had a wealth of nature conservation sites including; 8 sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), 214 Local Wildlife Sites covering 2,000 hectares, 6 Local Nature Reserves, 40 sites managed as nature reserves covering 460 hectares and 7 Ancient Woodlands. The Community Development Manager outlined the key achievements of the 2011–15 as follows;

- Skylarks Nature Reserve – The site was purchased and opened, and is the largest nature reserve in Rushcliffe.
- 22 hectares of new woodland were created by planting 45,000 trees
- First Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Conference
- Increase in volunteering - 8,500 hours in 2014, a threefold increase over the last three years
- 48 projects were supported with small Council grants to assist with hedge laying and planting
- Biodiversity mapping of the whole Borough
- 'Nature in Rushcliffe' resource produced
- Barn Owl population growth, indicating good ecological health in the Borough

The Strategic Aim of the Strategy for 2016 – 2020 was “to protect and enhance Rushcliffe’s wildlife resources, thereby contributing towards local and national biodiversity targets, help mitigate the effects of climate change on wildlife and provide ready access to wildlife rich green spaces”. The Environmental Sustainability Officer explained that this would be achieved through the following objectives;

- Promote landscape scale conservation
- Promote maintenance & enhancement of nature reserves
- Promote sympathetic land management
- Support surveying & reporting of biodiversity
- Raise awareness of nature conservation
- Influence impact of development on wildlife

The Strategy contained a section on Principle Habitats that set out the importance of the main habitats found in Rushcliffe, including Woodland and Trees. It contained details of what partners should do to protect and enhance these habitats and included a commitment to:

- Promote appropriate new woodland planting, particularly where linked to existing woods
- Develop tree planting schemes, carbon offset schemes and community orchards
- Promote sympathetic woodland management
- Use tree preservation orders for threatened valuable amenity trees
- Promote tree wardens where appropriate
- Target of 10 hectares (20,000 trees) of new planting

The RNCSIG was consulting on the Draft Strategy and sought the comments of the Community Development Group, before commencing a wider public consultation. The final draft version of the strategy would be presented to the Community Development Group in October 2015 for endorsement and a commitment for Rushcliffe Borough Council to help deliver the objectives of the Strategy.

Members considered the Draft Strategy in detail and felt that many trees had been lost throughout the Borough, particularly in rural areas. Although it was widely acknowledged that trees needed to be planted, especially in the hedgerows alongside rural roads, the idea was not always favourably received by farmers and the Highways Authority. The Community Development Manager explained that one of the aims of the Strategy was to encourage tree planting and that Parish Councils, farmers and landowners could access European LEADER funding and Agri Environment grants to assist with costs. Members were informed that the schemes were promoted by the Wildlife Trust, Nottinghamshire Farming and Wildlife Group and by contacting farmers directly. The Group felt that a Members' Briefing Note would be beneficial so that they could inform their Wards about funding available for tree planting. Officers confirmed that these grants did not apply to landscaping conditions attached to planning applications, as it was the duty of the developer to fund the work.

Action The Community Development Manager to provide Members with a Briefing Note on the funding available for tree planting

In response to questions, Members were informed that it was a legal requirement that Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) could only be placed on trees that were under threat. However, if significant trees in villages were identified, other methods of protecting them could be explored. Members felt that it would be beneficial to receive information on the amount of TPOs in the Borough and to compare data in the future.

Action The Community Development Manager to provide Members with information on the amount of TPOs in the Borough

In respect of the funding of the Rushcliffe nature grants, Members were informed that the limit of £4,000 per annum had proved sufficient, as most applications were for less than £750. In addition to the landowner's contribution, a grant of £500 could provide 500 small trees or fund 100 metres of hedge laying. As the Woodland Trust Scheme only supplied mixed trees for planting, a Rushcliffe nature grant could be used purchase oak trees, as long as the project met the biodiversity criteria. In most incidences there was no reason why trees could not be planted in hedgerows. In respect of the Borough's ancient woodlands that contained trees over 400 years old, Members were informed that these were situated in rural areas and therefore were not currently at threat from development.

In reference to the Key Target Indicators contained in the Strategy Members queried the low base figures for objective two and three for managing local wildlife sites. The Environmental Sustainability Officer explained that the figures were externally measured and were not an indication that the sites

were not managed, more likely that they were not inspected or the data was not available. Members felt that the objectives should not be measured on targets that the Council had no control over and felt that these should be treated as background indicators for information only.

Action The Community Development Manager to amend the Strategy to highlight that the key target indicators 3 and 4 were background indicators for information only

In response to questions regarding the large scale planting of trees in North West Leicestershire, Members were informed that this was part of the National Forest and had been funded by regeneration schemes and private investment.

The Group enquired whether there was any legislation to prevent gardens being concreted over in order to reduce flooding. The Community Development Manager explained that although there were rules on paving and tarmacking of driveways this did not extend to rear gardens. The Council had produced a gardening leaflet to raise awareness of this issue which was available in libraries, the Community Contact Centre and on the Council's website. Members felt that the information should be made available to all households, possible by placing the leaflet on the green bins or including an article in the Council's newsletter Rushcliffe Reports.

Action The Community Development Manager to investigate ways to promote the gardening leaflet to all residents

It was AGREED that the Group supported the draft Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Strategy and endorsed the approach of incorporating a tree and woodlands policy into this strategy.

6. **Annual Report 2014/15**

The Chairman presented the Annual Report that provided a review of the work undertaken by the Community Development Group in 2014/15. Members were informed that reports from all four scrutiny groups would be presented to Council on 24 September 2015.

It was AGREED that the report be approved and forwarded to Council for its consideration.

7. **Work Programme**

The Group considered the report of the Executive Manager – Operations and Corporate Governance that set out details of the proposed work programme for the municipal year 2015/16.

The Group AGREED the Work Programme as set out below:

Date of Meeting	Item
20 October 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Delivery Plan • Rural Broadband Update • Work Programme
26 January 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputation Management • Work Programme
26 April 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Programme

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm.

Action Sheet

Community Development Group - Tuesday 14 July 2015

Minute Number	Actions	Officer Responsible
2 Notes of the Previous Meeting	None	
3 New Energy Initiatives	a) include sections on of feed in tariffs and government subsidies, and health and safety issues in the briefing note b) update the figures on separate weekly collections of food waste contained in the briefing note	Executive Manager – Communities
4 Economic Growth Update	Provide the Group with national average figures for unemployment	Economic Growth Manager
5 Draft Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Strategy 2016 – 2020	a) provide Members with a Briefing Note on the funding available for tree planting b) provide Members with information on the amount of TPOs in the Borough c) amend the Strategy to highlight that the key target indicators 3 and 4 were background indicators for information only d) investigate ways to promote the gardening leaflet to all residents	Community Development Manager
6 Annual Report 2014/15	None	
7 Work Programme	None	

Responses

Minute Number	Actions	Officer Responsible	Response
3 New Energy Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) include sections on of feed in tariffs and government subsidies, and health and safety issues in the briefing note d) update the figures on separate weekly collections of food waste contained in the briefing note 	Executive Manager – Communities	Included in the Briefing Note.
4 Economic Growth Update	Provide the Group with national average figures for unemployment	Economic Growth Manager	Briefing Note emailed to Members of the Group
5 Draft Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Strategy 2016 – 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e) provide Members with a Briefing Note on the funding available for tree planting f) provide Members with information on the amount of TPOs in the Borough g) amend the Strategy to highlight that the key target indicators 3 and 4 were background indicators for information only h) investigate ways to promote the gardening leaflet to all residents 	Community Development Manager	Responses emailed to Members of the Group