

These minutes are subject to
ratification at the next Council Meeting



**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL
THURSDAY 6 MARCH 2014**

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

PRESENT:

Councillor B Buschman – Mayor
Councillor R Hetherington – Deputy Mayor

Councillors L J Abbey, R A Adair, Mrs S P Bailey, J R Bannister, D G Bell, Mrs D M Boote, S J Boote, N K Boughton-Smith, N A Brown, R L Butler, H A Chewings, J N Clarke, L B Cooper, J A Cranswick, G Davidson, A M Dickinson, J E Fearon, J E Greenwood, R M Jones, K A Khan, I I Korn, N C Lawrence, E J Lungley, A MacInnes, Mrs M M Males, G R Mallender, S E Mallender, Mrs J M Marshall, D J Mason, F J Mason, G S Moore, B A Nicholls, E A Plant, F A Purdue-Horan, S J Robinson, Mrs J A Smith, P Smith, J A Stockwood, Mrs M Stockwood, J E Thurman, H Tipton, D G Wheeler

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

8 Members of the public

OFFICERS PRESENT:

A Graham	Chief Executive
K Marriott	Executive Manager - Transformation
D Mitchell	Executive Manager - Communities
V Nightingale	Senior Member Support Officer
P Steed	Executive Manager – Finance and Commercial
D Swaine	Executive Manager - Operations and Corporate Governance

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Councillors T Combellack, J E Cottee, D V Smith, B Tansley and T Vennett-Smith

OPENING PRAYER

The Meeting was led in prayer by the Mayor's Chaplain

45. Declarations of Interest

There were none declared.

46. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 12 December 2013 were received as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

47. **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor informed Council that he had attended 37 functions since the last Council meeting. He had opened the Totally Local pop up shop, which had enabled 50 local businesses to obtain five weeks of training; it was estimated that this would boost business income by £30,000. He had hosted his Civic Dinner which had been a successful evening and had brought many local businesses together.

In March he had attended the YouNG market in Bingham, a very well organised event enabling young entrepreneurs to display their talents and this year's 10k race and fun run. He informed Members that 850 athletes and over 120 children had taken part in the event. He specifically thanked the officers and volunteers involved in this event, Lark in the Park and the Christmas Lights Switch On as these were seen as showcase events for the Borough. Councillor Buschman reminded Members of the Commonwealth Flag Raising event that was taking place on Monday 10 March.

Finally, the Mayor congratulated Councillor Clarke on being awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE).

Councillor Cranswick, on behalf of all Members, congratulated the Leader and acknowledged Councillor Clarke's dedication and hard work on behalf of local councils. Councillors Davidson, MacInnes and S Mallender supported these comments.

The Mayor then invited Members and guests to observe a minute's silence in memory of Councillor Mike Hemsley who had recently died.

48. **Leader's Announcements**

The Leader had no announcements.

49. **Chief Executive's Announcements**

The Chief Executive had no announcements.

50. **Petitions**

Ms R Jones presented a petition to the Council on behalf of the Save Radcliffe Pool group. The petition related to the planned closure of the community swimming pool at Radcliffe on Trent by South Nottinghamshire Academy. She stated that following the publication of the decision on 20 December 2013 the group had collected 948 signatures, mainly from Radcliffe on Trent but 16% of the signatures were from outside of the village as the pool was seen as a community asset by other residents of the Borough.

She outlined the group's objectives to the closure

- to demonstrate the support in the community
- to encourage South Nottinghamshire Academy to reconsider the closure of the pool, and

- to search for funding and seek alternatives to the current management of a pool in Radcliffe

Ms Jones informed Members of the community's involvement with the pool, how it had originally raised funds for the building over 40 years ago and its continued support as volunteer lifeguards, assistants and trainers. She stated that there would be a negative impact on the health and well-being of the residents and on those who used the facility to keep fit or to learn to swim.

The group were asking the Council for its support during the planning process and to ask the Education Funding Agency, the Department for Education and the South Nottinghamshire Academy to

- leave the pool in place and to reconsider the funding for the temporary classrooms or by considering alternative designs
- to continue allowing community access to the pool whilst ensuring the safeguarding of the pupils
- allow residents sufficient time to search for funding and to seek alternative management of the facility.

Ms Jones clarified the group's request by asking Rushcliffe Borough Council to consider annual grant funding towards the on-going running costs incurred by ROTSPA, which was a charitable organisation that had managed the pool for many years. The group's investigations had shown that approximately £100,000 would be needed initially with an estimated £50,000 per annum. The group believed that these running costs represented a small amount of the future leisure costs for the Borough and much smaller than the costs associated with other pools in the area. It was also felt that this investment would redress the imbalance in funding for leisure facilities provided for Radcliffe on Trent residents in comparison to people living in Bingham, East Leake, Keyworth, Cotgrave and especially West Bridgford.

In conclusion Ms Jones stated that following the Radcliffe Community Plan questionnaire residents were asking for more leisure facilities not less and the group felt that this was an opportunity for the Council to show its commitment to the area. The group also asked Rushcliffe Borough Council to consider funding the costs of the temporary classrooms, equating to approximately £500,000, which would negate the reasons given by the South Nottinghamshire Academy as to why it needed to close the pool.

The petition was received without discussion and referred to the Chief Executive.

51. **2014/15 Budget and Financial Strategy**

Councillor Clarke presented the report of the Executive Manager – Finance and Commercial regarding the Council's Budget and Financial Strategy and made the following statement:

“Like all of the Members in this Chamber I am very proud of Rushcliffe as an area, and this Council's continued aspiration for it to remain amongst the very

best areas in the Country for people to live and work. The budget outlines how I believe we can continue to play our full part in achieving this.

Many Councils around the country are having to resort to severe cuts, with declining service standards, and a disengagement from many of the individuals who rely upon us for support. I am, as you would expect in Rushcliffe, presenting a measured programme of transformation and innovation which will, over the next five years, not only deliver a balanced and sustainable budget, but will also provide opportunities for us to both support growth for business and develop increasingly efficient and joined up ways of delivering the services that our communities will rely upon to support our great way of life. I am not claiming this journey will be easy.

Since we last sat in this Chamber to consider the budget, our grant funding from central Government has reduced by nearly a quarter from £3.13 million to £2.37m and, by 2018/19, we forecast that this funding will be below £1 m - just 30% of what we currently receive. When combined with the other funding pressures that we continue to face, this means that, over the next year, the Council will need to save at least £624k, followed by just over another £1 million between the financial years 2015/16 and 2018/19.

These are staggering sums for a District Council and a massive challenge. Other councils, big and small, have had to take hard and uncomfortable decisions to balance their books. I am proud of how Rushcliffe has met this challenge.

For the last three years the Council has worked with a programme of reviews; the 4 Year Plan, which has applied the principles of Income Generation and Maximisation; Service Redesign and Business Cost Reduction to maintain high quality services whilst addressing budget reductions.

This approach has now been enhanced and extended into a new Transformation Strategy which is provided at Appendix Three of the budget report. This excellent document not only details the ways in which the Council will meet its challenges but also exemplifies our principles for the future and how we will apply them. I would suggest this should be essential reading for all Members of this Council.

If I may, I would like to mention our Members. Budget setting is always a difficult time in the political process. Often good decisions are challenged for the expediency of party politics and, at a time like this, when there are real pressures on our resources, the temptation to do so is at its highest. I would therefore like to pay tribute to all of my fellow Councillors across the Party divide for all the contributions made whether as the ruling group or opposition groups.

As outlined at page 51 of the report, the Transformation Strategy that is before us tonight has been developed through the participation of members of all parties who came together in a series of workshops to discuss the issues facing the Council and how these can be best addressed in a measured manner. This is very much the Rushcliffe way and is, I firmly believe, an approach that is the envy of many other councils across the country, and again, I want to thank the opposition groups for their contribution.

And now, to the budget itself. As in previous years our officers have continually challenged and questioned the level of resources needed for the delivery of services. However, this year this has been enhanced by a “fresh eyes” approach which has included a base budget review undertaken by each of the Executive Managers. As reported at page 47 of the Report this work already identified a potential £1 million of savings, approx 40% of what we needed to save over the next five years.

A year ago this Council approved a senior management restructure and this outcome has provided an immediate return on this decision. I mentioned Members of the Council earlier. Now, I would like to congratulate all the members of the Executive Management Team for their diligence and all the staff that have worked so hard to contribute to finding efficiencies and working on the budget.

However, despite this excellent contribution there remains a significant funding gap. How we will address the remaining funding gap is detailed in the Transformation Strategy at page 59 of your papers. This shows how the Council will continue to apply the core principles that have served us so well for the last three years (i.e. Income Generation and Maximisation, Service Redesign and Business Cost Reduction) to meet the challenges of the future.

I am delighted to report that neither this budget, nor the five year medium term financial strategy that supports it, includes any requirement for the New Homes Bonus to be utilised in support of our services.

This budget, and the transformation strategy, maintains the longstanding policy of this administration that the New Homes Bonus should be utilised for investment purposes; a policy which I will be looking to maintain as the Council moves forward so that we can take steps to attract business and jobs to the Borough and develop homes in our communities.

This is not an inconsequential decision, indeed over the next five years this means that this Council will have over £10 million available to it for such purposes - £10 million for investment in jobs, in homes, in communities and in making Rushcliffe an even better place to live. This is surely a position which Members from every party in this chamber would endorse.

Mr Mayor, I am proud to be the leader of a Council that continually looks to support its communities and some of the most vulnerable people within them. Our approach can be shown through the decisions taken at December’s Council meeting where, despite a reduction in funding, we resolved not to maintain the Council Tax Reduction Scheme at the level agreed in January 2013 and to continue to help Parish Councils in dealing with the financial impacts of this decision. This budget reiterates those decisions and once again emphasises the importance that Rushcliffe places on helping the vulnerable and supporting vibrant communities.

Finally, I would like to talk about the two principles upon which this budget is based: innovation and transformation. At the start of this speech I mentioned my ambition for the future of this Council to be centred on new and exciting

ways of delivering the services upon which our communities rely. This budget provides the framework for many of these including:

- The development of collaborative arrangements with Gedling, and Newark and Sherwood Councils.
- The development of the Streetwise franchise,
- A partnership with South Kesteven for the delivery of Building Control,
- A partnership with Nottingham City Council for the provision of garage services,
- The proposals for the future of the Arena site including the potential relocation of services from the Civic Centre releasing this valuable asset for other uses.

This is an agenda of transformation of which any Council would be proud. Once again, it places Rushcliffe at the forefront of change, securing our status amongst the best councils in this country.

So Mr Mayor we come to the Council Tax. Whilst we appear to be seeing the green shoots of recovery, many in our communities continue to face difficult times and I am delighted that Rushcliffe at least is in a position to help. Mr Mayor, the budget that I am proposing in this report will enable the Authority to use its track record of delivering savings, additional grant offered by the government, and a large growth in the council tax base (delivered in no small part due to the changes we made to empty property discounts last year) to freeze the Council Tax at its current level of £117.99 for a Band D property. This maintains our proud position as a high quality but low tax Borough.

Mr Mayor, even in difficult times, Rushcliffe can build on the good work undertaken over many many years. This report details how through transformation, innovation, investment and the application of our principles we can maintain the excellent services that our communities expect and deserve. As such I would like to move the recommendations outlined at page 14 of this report.”

Councillor Clarke requested a recorded vote.

Councillor Davidson supported Councillor Clarke’s comments regarding the work undertaken by officers and Members to provide more efficient services. He welcomed the fact that the Council was proposing a standstill budget, which he had wanted last year. He felt that it was important, in the current economic climate, that people received as much assistance as possible. He was pleased to note that the Borough Council was retaining its frontline services as many local authorities were having to cut these services, some of which would have an impact on residents of the Borough. In particular he referred to the £60,000 expenditure on Bingham Market Square, which was timely as Bingham had received its Charter 700 years ago.

Councillor MacInnes congratulated staff on the production of a very detailed, but readable, report. Although the budget was cautious it was also optimistic, manageable but more importantly realistic. He was pleased to see that the Council was proposing a Council Tax freeze for this year and 2015/16; with only modest increases up to 2018/19. He felt that this was unique across the country. He welcomed the fact that the Authority would be financially assisting parish councils which would be affected by the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. He stated that the Capital Programme was very ambitious with a proposed expenditure of £23,000,000 over the next five years, including affordable homes, Cotgrave MasterPlan, leisure and office accommodation, new depot, etc. He believed this would provide jobs and support for many local businesses.

Councillor G R Mallender also congratulated officers on the work undertaken to produce the report. He was pleased to see that Rushcliffe had risen to the challenge and was able to provide decent services for its residents. He noted the innovative ways of working that were being proposed, especially collaboration with other local authorities. However, he was not enthusiastic about removing StreetWise from the Council to a social enterprise. He welcomed the fact that the highest paid employee did not receive ten times the amount of the lowest paid, whilst urging the Council to consider the introduction of the living wage. In respect of flooding he noted that the Council was increasing the amount it gave to internal drainage boards. He highlighted many of the projects that were to be undertaken including the regeneration of Cotgrave, Bridgford Hall, vehicles with lower emission replacing older vehicles, play areas and leisure provision and the funds that had been allocated for affordable homes.

Councillor Plant supported the comments regarding the introduction of the living wage. She noted that the Council paid above the minimum wage but queried what the actual difference was.

Councillor Cranswick replied that the Chief Executive as Head of Paid Services, monitored the amount that staff were paid and that he would investigate this further. He was pleased to hear that Members were supportive of the proposals. However, he urged Members to be cautious with regards to future increases as there was no guarantee what future allocations would be from Central Government. In respect of the parish councils he informed Members that Rushcliffe was in a better position as not all districts were able to pass on funds. The 2% increase for the internal drainage boards would keep their spending ability at its current level, he believed that more Government funding was necessary. Finally he congratulated the Executive Manager – Finance and Commercial and Service Manager – Finance and Commercial for the preparation of a robust budget and for the work undertaken within the service area.

In conclusion Councillor Clarke stated that he had lobbied Government ministers and informed them that councils needed to be able to plan for the future, he had said that longer term settlements would allow for more stable budgeting by local authorities. He informed Members that he had recently been in Somerset and had seen the problems that people were facing due to flooding and how their Council Tax would have to increase. He too supported

the comments regarding the work undertaken by officers. Finally he congratulated Bingham on its success as a market town for 700 years.

On being put to the vote the Recommendation was won.

For

Councillors L J Abbey, R A Adair, Mrs S P Bailey, J R Bannister, D G Bell, Mrs D M Boote, S J Boote, N K Boughton-Smith, N A Brown, B Buschman, R L Butler, H A Chewings, J N Clarke, L B Cooper, J A Cranswick, G Davidson, A M Dickinson, J E Fearon, J E Greenwood, R Hetherington, R M Jones, K A Khan, I I Korn, N C Lawrence, E J Lungley, A MacInnes, Mrs M M Males, G R Mallender, S E Mallender, Mrs J M Marshall, D J Mason, F J Mason, G S Moore, B A Nicholls, E A Plant, F A Purdue-Horan, S J Robinson, Mrs J A Smith, P Smith, J A Stockwood, Mrs M Stockwood, J E Thurman, H Tipton, D G Wheeler (44)

Against

Nil

Abstain

Nil

RESOLVED that Council:

- a. Notes the report of the Council's Responsible Financial Officer (as detailed at **Annex A**);
- b. Agrees the budget setting report and associated financial strategies 2014/15 to 2018/19 (**Annex B**) including a Transformation Strategy to deliver efficiencies over the five year period (**Appendix 3**).
- c. Adopts the Capital Programme as set out in **Annex B, Appendix 4**.
- d. Determines that Rushcliffe's 2014/15 Council Tax for a Band D property remains at its 2013/14 level of £117.99 (**Annex B, Section 3.4** refers) and that
- e. the following Band D Council Tax levels be set for the Special Expense Areas:
 - i) West Bridgford £54.41 (£54.68 in 2013/14)
 - ii) Keyworth £1.46 (£1.47 in 2013/14)
 - iii) Ruddington £3.55 (£2.21 in 2013/14)
- f. Adopts the Treasury Management Strategy 2014/15-2018/19 and associated prudential borrowing indicators (**Annex B, Appendix 5**)
- g. Adopts the 2014/15 Pay Policy as detailed at **Annex B, Appendix 7**

52. Council Tax 2014/15

Councillor Clarke presented the report of the Executive Manager - Finance which set out the Council Tax Resolution for 2014/15. This consolidated the precepts of Nottinghamshire County Council, Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Nottinghamshire Fire Authority, the Borough Council and individual Town and Parish Councils.

Councillor Clarke stated that, following approval of the previous item, this was a technical calculation.

RESOLVED that Council approve the Council Tax Resolution for 2014/15 as detailed at Appendix A of the report.

53. Community Governance Review Edwalton Recommendation of Cabinet

Councillor Cranswick presented the report of the Executive Manager - Operations and Corporate Governance in respect of the Community Governance Review for Edwalton. He reminded Members that a petition asking the Council to establish a parish council at Edwalton, had been presented to Council in September 2012. As a result of that petition a community governance review was undertaken in accordance with the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 – Schedule 1.

He stated that consultation had been undertaken with the residents of Edwalton Village Ward to establish their views. The Council received responses from 320 households, producing 397 responses, which equated to 12.6% of the electorate. Of these responses 265 indicated that they would like to see a parish council established. When considering this issue the Member Group not only had to look at the level of demand but, crucially, whether such a council would provide more effective and convenient local government for the area. Following analysis of the comments made it was recognised that many of the functions required could not be addressed by a parish council. Taking this into account, the existing governance arrangements and the very low demand the Member Group determined that it did not believe that a parish council should be established.

Councillor Cranswick informed Members that, following confirmation of the Member Group's recommendation by Cabinet, a second consultation was undertaken to ask if residents agreed with that decision. From the 1,800 households consulted only 399 responses were received, 297 of those agreed with the decision not to establish a parish council, this equated to 74.4%. The Member Group met to consider these findings and having taken into account that only 13% of the electorate had responded to the consultation and that 74.4% of those responses agreed that a parish council should not be set up the Group recommended this approach to Cabinet. On 11 February 2014 Cabinet met and confirmed this view and forwarded the decision to Council for consideration and approval tonight.

Councillor P Smith supported these comments.

Councillor Jones stated that he had been a member of the Member Group but he had not supported the recommendation. He felt that the people of Edwalton had been let down and that the process had been flawed. Firstly the leaflet sent by the Council did not reflect that this situation was different to other areas that already had an understanding of what a parish council did; also the explanation of the functions of a parish council was weak and the advantages were non-existent. Secondly the information regarding costs being additional to the existing Council Tax did not explain that the West Bridgford Special Expense that was already included would be affected.

Councillor Jones stated that there were very similar numbers who voted for the proposal not to have a parish council to those who originally voted for the establishment of a parish council. He expounded that if these results had been applied to a local election the Council would have been obliged to accept it. He said that this Borough had a high number of parish councils and a good level of involvement in many localities. He informed Members that, for these reasons, he and the Liberal Democrat Group would be abstaining from the vote.

Cllr Bannister supported Councillor Jones' comments about the information given to the public, the leaflet had not made it clear that the Council Tax could have been reduced. Although due to the disappointingly poor response rate he agreed with the Member Group's recommendation. He believed that there was a value to a third layer of governance, which was lacking in West Bridgford.

Councillor S Mallender also felt that there could have been more information given to the residents. However, she felt that the recommendation did reflect the will of the people. It had been a small group that had raised the petition who had not continued to gain support. Also there had been a lot of confusion regarding the boundaries. She believed that one solution was to create a Town Council for West Bridgford within the old Urban District Council boundaries.

Councillor S Boote stated that he would not support the recommendation. He believed that the data was flawed and that the costs had not been fully explained. He believed that parish councils were a definite part of localism and that they worked well in many areas, they gave people a direct say about a local expenses. He felt that this question would be raised again.

In conclusion, Councillor Cranswick stated that if a large number of people had voted for a parish council it would have happened. However, on the evidence placed before Members it was a logical decision to accept the recommendation.

RESOLVED that Council

approve Cabinet's recommendation not to establish a parish council giving regard to the results of Stage 2 of the consultation and the issues set out in the report.

54. To Answer Questions under Standing Order 11 (2)

Question from Councillor S J Boote to Councillor J N Clarke

Given the level of use of the swimming pool at Rushcliffe Leisure Centre, which is not in the Council's long-term plans, what is being done to ensure the provision of a substantial leisure area next to the proposed pool at the Arena?

Councillor Clarke replied that, as Members were aware, Cabinet would be considering these issues at its meeting on 11 March and that it was proposing to set up a cross party Member Group to consider the proposals and people's views.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Boote welcomed the proposal. He stated that Rushcliffe Leisure Centre had the highest usage figures of all the Borough's leisure centres. He requested that the Council considered the need for a family friendly learner area at the Arena.

Councillor Clarke replied that the Member Group would consider these aspects. He reminded Members that the Council had an approved Leisure Strategy and that it was important that the Council provided affordable facilities that met the needs of the customer within its constrained budget.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm.

MAYOR