

These minutes are subject to
ratification at the next Council Meeting

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL
THURSDAY 5 MARCH 2015**

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

PRESENT:

Councillor R Hetherington - Mayor
Councillor F A Purdue-Horan – Deputy Mayor

Councillors L J Abbey, 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, T Combellack, L B Cooper, J E Cottee, 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, S J Robinson, Mrs J A Smith, P Smith, J A Stockwood, Mrs M Stockwood, B Tansley, J E Thurman, H Tipton, T Vennett-Smith, D G Wheeler, J G A Wheeler

OFFICERS PRESENT:

A Graham	Chief Executive
P Linfield	Service Manager – Finance and Commercial
K Marriott	Executive Manager - Communities
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:

Councillor R A Adair

OPENING PRAYER

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

37. Declarations of Interest

There were none declared.

38. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 22 December 2014 were received as a correct record and signed by the Mayor following an amendment. Councillor S Boote stated that in Minute 35 Adoption of the Rushcliffe Local

Plan Part 1: Core Strategy he had referred to 30% affordable housing and not 15%.

39. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor stated that he had attended 113 events to date and that this would increase to 130 by the end of his term of office. He reminded Members of the two forthcoming events that were being held to raise money for his Charity, he believed that there would be a substantial donation for The Friary.

40. Leader's Announcements

The Leader reminded Members that due to a change in legislation there was a requirement for the vote on the Council's budget to be recorded.

41. Chief Executive's Announcements

There were no announcements.

42. 2015/16 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:

"In acknowledging difficult times, I am delighted to propose this budget to Council. This is an excellent and affordable budget that provides us with the framework for continuing to deliver effective services for many years to come, in an area rated in the Top Ten places in the country to live. It is the result of much hard work by Members and officers and, importantly, it will enable us to maintain the excellent services that our communities deserve, whilst freezing our Council Tax at its current levels. As Members, I think it is important that we recognise that this has only been made possible by the excellent work done by the Chief Executive and his team of officers, to transform and innovate, maintaining services, whilst driving down costs. As an example, I point Members to the newly established enterprise, Streetwise, which, just a few months after being established, is rapidly transforming itself into an effective commercial business, winning new customers, whilst continuing to deliver excellent services to the Rushcliffe community.

Mr Mayor, we should not underplay the value of this decision to the residents of Rushcliffe. As a direct result of our decision to freeze the Council Tax, local residents will be able to keep more of the money they earn, choosing it to spend as they wish.

In these difficult times I'm proud to be the Leader of a Council that can help people in this way. I can only sadly reflect that it's a shame for our residents that our colleagues across the road haven't been able to do the same as, whilst the Council Tax for Rushcliffe remains unchanged, our residents will face increased bills, placing additional pressure on hard pressed family finances, as a result of increases made by the County, Fire and Police Authorities.

However, the emphasis this evening must be on what Rushcliffe can, and has achieved. In the past I have spoken about my pride in being the Leader of an Authority where Members of all parties work together to set the right budget for residents and I'm pleased to say, that this is, once again, the case with the proposals that are in front of us tonight; the result, of a series of cross party budget workshops, feeding into the budget process.

This approach to budget development has enabled Rushcliffe to deliver effective long term solutions to our financial challenges, building on the success of its four year plan, and being able to put in place a Transformation Strategy which provides a measured approach to the financial challenges facing the Council. We are now one year into this plan and I am delighted to report that officers have exceeded the challenge we put in front of them last year. This is a great achievement, especially as it provides an excellent foundation for the Council to meet the challenges ahead.

Mr Mayor, regardless of these good foundations it is important that we do not underestimate the scale of these challenges. In order to deal with the effects, nationally, of years of past fiscal mismanagement, I realise this present Government has had to take hard decisions to fix the public finances. However, as a public body we also have to recognise that we must play our part in meeting these national challenges and must also recognise that, regardless of whichever Government takes power in May, the Council will face a continued year on year reduction in funding. This, itself, leaves us ever more, with the prospect of becoming self-financing, in the face of Government funding potentially ceasing in the future.

Against such a background we have a choice. We can blame and complain, we can cut services and deliver less – or, - we can knuckle down and take the Rushcliffe Way, be proactive, and work on solutions to move forward. I have drawn comfort that as the budget has been developed, Members have consistently expressed their desire that Rushcliffe continues to maintain itself as a Borough of opportunity, with vibrant and prosperous communities and businesses. It is therefore in this context that I would now like to turn to the future.

This budget is amongst the most radical that this Council has ever set, and proposes major changes for how this Borough intends to finance its future. This is a budget built on investment; investment in facilities; investment in communities – our residents; and investment in our local economy – supporting our businesses. Indeed, this is not only a budget that outlines how Rushcliffe will maintain services over the next five years it also outlines how, over the next five years in addition to our normal spending, we will invest over £23 million in Rushcliffe. Yes, Mr Mayor let me repeat that: this budget outlines how Rushcliffe will maintain services, as well as investing over £23m in addition to our normal spending, over the next 5 years.

Let me be clear, this is not financial sleight of hand, nor does it refer to the normal business of the Council; instead this is £23 million more spent on facilities, infrastructure, people and communities, delivering prosperity, employment, health and fitness. So what does it comprise? It includes:

- A further £12.2 million to put in place the £14.2 million required to deliver not only new sporting facilities located within West Bridgford, but also a new administrative and Civic heart for the Borough, one that will be amongst the most energy efficient of any Council headquarters in the country, one that has had cross-party input into the development. This move will also enable us to find a new long term future for this building we are in now. That decision has yet to be taken; a choice between achieving a capital receipt and /or a long term income stream for the Council.
- £10 million for investment in new opportunities that deliver additional income for the Council whilst contributing additional economic and social benefits for the Borough. We have shown with our acquisition of The Point that such opportunities exist and, over the next five years, we will be working hard to identify more, and exploit them.
- £1.6 million to restore Bridgford Hall from being a tired unused shell to a fully renovated facility that once again provides a first rate wedding venue in the heart of West Bridgford and additional accommodation for visitors to the Borough.

In total that's £23 million that will be invested into Rushcliffe over the next five years, creating employment, opportunities and prosperity for this Borough for many years to come. Bear in mind, however, my earlier comments Mr Mayor – We must secure future self-financing income and the best possible value for money for our Council tax payers. Incidentally, remember the IPSOS/MORI survey that rated us No.1 in the country for Value for Money and for overall customer satisfaction?

However, it is important to remember that this is neither the start nor the end of our ambition. Instead it builds upon decisions and announcements already made such as:

- the award of £6.25 million of Growth Deal funding that will help make developments happen in Bingham, Newton and Cotgrave;
- the acquisition of the Point, producing a valuable income return;
- the opening of RTEC in vacant Civic Centre offices in the floors above us;
- and the £500,000 that has been made available to Rushcliffe companies who need investment to develop and grow, via the Funding Circle. This is therefore the next stage of a sustained investment in the future of Rushcliffe. It is rightly an ambitious agenda but, whilst it is challenging, it represents a golden chance to help Rushcliffe grow and maintain its status as one of the best places in the country to live, visit and do business. Rushcliffe – Great Lifestyle, Great Sport, Great Business, Great Place.

And so Mr Mayor I would like to finally move and propose that the Council accepts the budget proposed in this report, by moving the recommendations as set out on pages 10 and 11, items a, b, c, d, e, f and g, enabling us to freeze Council Tax and support investment to help us all maintain the prosperous and vibrant Rushcliffe of which we are all so rightly proud.”

Councillor Davidson thanked all the officers and Members for their hard work. He reminded Members that when he was first elected the budget debate had always been confrontational. However, due to the work undertaken by both Members and officers as part of the budget workshops everyone was now able to have an input into its development. He acknowledged that, in these times of constraint, the scheme that was being presented was the best possible option.

Councillor MacInnes supported the previous comments and agreed that the clarity of the report was a testament to the work of officers. He stated that the residents would welcome the Council Tax freeze, although the impact would be lost due to the increases by other precepting bodies. He was pleased to note that the poorest people in society were protected with the Council Tax Reduction scheme meaning that benefit amounted to 91.5% of the bill. He informed Members that only 43 out of 346 local authorities offered this amount of support. He was disappointed with the amount of money being set aside for affordable homes over the next five years. He pointed out that 180 new affordable homes were required every year and that other local authorities were looking at innovative ways to fund growth in this area. The Council's partner, Metropolitan Housing Trust, had a strong financial background and credit rating and could access funding from the Homes and Community Agency. The Council had a very important asset at Abbey Road which could be developed. He felt that, following the election, a Cabinet Member Working Group should be constituted to look at this important issue.

Councillor S Mallender supported Members' comments regarding the report and the work undertaken by Members and officers. She also supported Councillor MacInnes' comments regarding the Council Tax support and affordable housing. She stated that Gedling Borough Council was presently building social housing. She welcomed the fact that the highest paid employee's earnings did not exceed ten times the lowest paid person; and she noted that the Council did pay above the national minimum wage. However, she was disappointed that it did not pay the living wage.

Councillor S Boote, in support of the proposal to freeze the Borough's precept, stated that if the Council had raised the maximum permitted tax it would have cost an individual 4½p a week more. The report stated that the Council Tax would continue to be the lowest in Nottinghamshire, however he felt that it would be more accurate if it stated that the Council's Band D precept was the lowest. He explained that other districts in Nottinghamshire were not heavily parished, in fact Ashfield had two and Mansfield only one. In fact most of the parishes raise a precept to carry out the services that in other areas local authorities performed. Secondly, Rushcliffe had high property values which resulted in high Council Tax bandings. He referred to the fact that the average valued property in Rushcliffe was just below a Band D whereas it was in Band A in Ashfield and Mansfield. Therefore, those areas only received approximately two thirds of the Band D precept. He pointed out that the parish plus the Borough's tax for the average dwelling was a better comparison. He had equated this as Ashfield £102, Mansfield £107, Gedling £116, Bassetlaw £117, Broxtowe £123, Rushcliffe £151 and Newark & Sherwood £161, thus making Rushcliffe the second most expensive district in the County.

Councillor Vennett-Smith stated that the Borough Council had always been astute with its finances. He reminded Members that Rushcliffe had been voted the 8th best place to live in the Country and that this was evidenced by the proposed plans contained within the document, especially in respect of leisure. He supported Councillor MacInnes' comments regarding affordable housing, especially in relation to young people.

Councillor Plant queried the pay policy. She was pleased to note that the Council paid above the minimum wage. She asked how many staff were paid below the living wage and what the cost would be to increase their pay. She stated that the East Midlands had the largest proportion of employers, 24.7% who had signed up to pay the living wage.

Councillor Robinson stated that this had been his first budget as the Cabinet portfolio holder for Finance. He acknowledged the work undertaken by officers in these challenging times. He said that he was proud to represent Rushcliffe. With regards to leisure provision he was sure the residents would be happy with the new facilities. In respect of affordable housing he noted that this was a national issue and that Rushcliffe was working hard to address this although it was made more challenging as Rushcliffe was a good place to live.

In conclusion, Councillor Clarke thanked Members for their comments, especially in respect of the hard work undertaken by officers. He outlined the financial commitment the Council had made to address affordable housing and how each development site was examined as they came forward. He informed Councillor Plant that the Chief Executive had been considering the pay policy and had identified 18 employees that were paid less than the living wage and that the cost would be approximately £18,000.

Finally he stated that Rushcliffe had been rated as the 8th best place to live but actually it was the 1st outside of the South East. He felt that even in these difficult times the Council was still able to achieve a great deal and produce a good budget.

On being put to the vote the Recommendation was carried.

For

Councillors L J Abbey, 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, T Combellack, L B Cooper, J E Cottee, 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, B Tansley, J E Thurman, H Tipton, T Vennett-Smith, D G Wheeler, J G A Wheeler

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 2015/16 to 2019/20 (Annex B) including the Transformation Programme to deliver efficiencies over the five year period (Appendix 3).
- c. Adopts the Capital Programme with a supporting Capital Strategy as set out in Annex B, Appendices 4 and 5.
- d. Determines that Rushcliffe's 2015/16 Council Tax for a Band D property remains at its 2014/15 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 (Annex B, Section 3.5),
 - i. West Bridgford £52.44 (£54.41 in 2014/15)
 - ii. Keyworth £1.76 (£1.46 in 2014/15)
 - iii. Ruddington £3.57 (£3.55 in 2014/15)
 - iv. Shelford £71.25(parish precept of £41.66 in 2014/15)
 - v. Newton £40.74(parish precept of £41.66 in 2014/15)
- f. Adopts the Treasury Management Strategy 2015/16 – 2019/20 and associated prudential borrowing indicators (Annex B, Appendix 6)
- g. Adopts the 2015/16 Pay Policy as detailed at Annex B, Appendix 8.

43. Council Tax 2015/16

Councillor Clarke presented the report of the Executive Manager - Finance which set out the Council Tax Resolution for 2015/16. This consolidated the precepts of Nottinghamshire County Council, Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Nottinghamshire Fire Authority, the Borough Council, Special Expenses and individual Town and Parish Councils.

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

RESOLVED that Council approved the Council Tax Resolution for 2015/16 as detailed at Appendix A of the report.

44. Proposals for a Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Combined Authority

Councillor Clarke presented the report of the Chief Executive regarding the proposal for the establishment of a Combined Authority across Nottinghamshire. He stated that Cabinet had considered, and endorsed, the

proposal as they felt it was imperative that Rushcliffe was involved. It was important that this was not seen as an additionally tier of local government. He explained that the nine authorities already had an informal collaboration and also met as part of the Joint Economic Prosperity Committee, although this did not have the same status that a Combined Authority could have. He pointed out that a Combined Authority would enable the constituent authorities to lever in more funding to support growth over the next few years than would be possible on their own. It was important that the Council could support its rural communities in areas of employment, economic growth and infrastructure. Cabinet had recognised that it was important that the Council did not lose any sovereignty through the arrangements. He stated that following consultation the proposal had been sent to the Secretary of State for approval.

Following a statement from Councillor Davidson, Councillor Clarke stated that it was not seen as a 'talking shop' and would offer a wide range of support and be able to actively lobby for the area.

Councillor MacInnes supported Councillor Clarke's comments and felt that it was not practical for the Borough not to be involved. He felt that this was a one off opportunity. He stated that following this course of action the area would benefit from the Government's decentralisation plans. He questioned the ability of the Combined Authority to levy constituent authorities for transport purposes and stated that he would support the use of trams rather than having a parking levy. With a Combined Authority there would be a common understanding, with clear leadership and representatives that would consider matters in a wider context. He believed that the public should be better informed of the proposal and that there should be greater transparency. Also he stated that the new Authority should be subject to scrutiny. He felt that the potential risks were outweighed by the proposed benefits.

Councillor R Mallender said that this was an interesting proposal that had been discussed at the recent Rushcliffe Strategic Growth Board. He felt that this proposal could be problematic as there were two Local Enterprise Partnerships that covered the Nottinghamshire area. He queried the situation regarding a fourth Trent crossing where not all the local authorities were in agreement. In relation to the Transport Levy he explained that this was not related to the Parking Levy. In relation to transport he questioned how powers would be held concurrently with the City and the County. He was concerned that the Government could use this model as a prelude to a unitary authority for the County which could be seen as a money saving scheme for the future. However, personally he supported the proposal.

Councillor Jones supported the proposal but asked for clarification on the use of surplus funds to lever in additional finance. Councillor Clarke said that this had been part of recent discussions by the Nottinghamshire Leaders' Group regarding a surplus in the Business Rates pool. The Chief Executive explained that all Nottinghamshire districts had combined in a non-domestic rates pool to maximise its growth, which at present had a surplus. If all the constituent authorities agreed this money could be used by the Combined Authority for the benefit of the area.

In conclusion, Councillor Clarke explained that those areas that had adopted a Combined Authority were receiving 50% more funding than other authorities. Following a comment regarding the two Local Enterprise Partnerships he stated that Bassetlaw was an associate member of the Sheffield Partnership. He pointed out that the Partnerships were not elected bodies and were unaccountable. He felt that a Combined Authority would give elected members greater power as it would be one council one vote. By agreeing to this proposal Nottinghamshire would be able to attract more funding earlier. He said that Central Government had given greater credibility to areas that had combined authorities and had devolved more services to the local area. He also said that the proposal by Nottinghamshire was the first in the country from a 'two tier' government arrangement.

RESOLVED that Council endorsed Cabinet's decision on the proposals for a Combined Authority across Nottinghamshire.

45. **Independent Review of Members Allowances**

Councillor Clarke presented the report of the Chief Executive regarding the independent review of Members' allowances. He stated that the Council had requested that an independent remuneration panel should consider the allowances scheme and make a recommendation. Members were now being asked to consider and endorse their recommendation. He emphasised the fact that due to the Council reorganisation from May 2015 the overall cost of the scheme would not be increasing, and that it was likely there would be a reduction in Members' travel expenses. He felt that there should be one change made to the Panel's recommendation which related to the Special Responsibility Allowance for chairing Council meetings. He said that past Mayors had incurred more expenses than they had received as an allowance. He proposed that the Special Responsibility Allowance for chairing Council meetings should be transferred to the Mayor's Allowance and that this Allowance should be reviewed in the forthcoming year.

Councillor Davidson, in support of the proposal, stated that it was difficult for Councillors to recommend a change to their own payments. However, there had been some small rises in pay for staff and these should be reflected for Member, furthermore the report had been undertaken by an independent panel, demonstrating a transparent approach.

Councillor Bannister welcomed the recommendation that Council consider the Panel's report but felt that Members should not accept the increase. He said that the 1% rise for Council staff had not been matched by other employers and that in real terms wages had decreased by 30% over the last five years. He agreed that there were efficiencies due to the boundary changes and that there could be an increase of workload of up to 10%. If Members agreed to not increase their allowances this equated to a £22,000 saving. He did not object to the increases in the Mayor's or the Special Responsibility Allowances. However he could not support the increase proposed.

Councillor S Mallender agreed with Councillor Bannister. She was concerned how an 8.6% increase proposed would be perceived by all public sector staff, who had only received 1% and had for many years seen their earnings reduce in real terms. She believed that all rail travel should be second class, and that

this should be the case every time. She stated that the Green Party could not support the proposed raise of 8.6%.

Councillor Vennett-Smith stated that he had never been in favour of Councillors being paid large amounts, however with the boundary changes there would be an increase in the workload. He felt that there should be a fair pay for a fair job. He stated that people felt that Councillors were overpaid and underworked until it was explained how much money they received and how much time and effort they put into the community. He felt that the independent panel had recommended a fair scheme. He highlighted the fact that Members were voting on an increase for people who were elected on 7 May 2015 and referred to the County Council's recent increase in allowances which would be implemented mid term.

Councillor Clarke referred to the report and stated that Councillors could have put forward their views to the Panel. He agreed with Councillor Vennett-Smith that the public believed they were paid a large salary and that they were amazed when they saw the amount of their allowance. He had equated the extra workload to be 13.6% and felt that an 8.6% increase in allowance was acceptable. With regard to efficiency drives he stated that there would be a saving in operational costs.

As this was the final meeting of all Councillors before the election he thanked everyone for their input and hard work, especially those Members who were not standing for re-election. He said that all Councillors, despite their political views, had worked for the best interest of the Borough.

RESOLVED that Council

- a) endorsed the Panel's recommendations, and
- b) agreed to transfer the Special Responsibility Allowance for chairing Council meetings to the Mayor's Allowances, which would be reviewed during 2015/16.

46. **Notice of Motions**

- a) The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor R M Jones and seconded by Councillor S J Boote:

"Council supports the retention and development of post offices throughout the urban and rural communities and especially where there is no other access to financial services. Council resolves that the Leader should inform Post Office Ltd. of this support and to work with Post Office Ltd. to ensure that all Rushcliffe residents have reasonable access to at least the present level of post office provision."

In support of his motion Councillor Jones explained that he had two concerns, firstly the changes being made by the Post Office, as part of their strategy, and the closure of the last bank in some areas of the Borough. He stated that the Post Office was committed to a nationwide network of 11,500 outlets, which was 100 less than now; there was the Government's criteria for accessibility that had to be met; and there was

a recognition that many branches would be the only shop left in some communities which would provide key services and act as a lifeline for vulnerable customers. He emphasised that the Post Office was committed to support the 3,400 community and outreach branches and had allocated £20,000,000 for this programme.

He stated that, in March 2014, there were 3,400 post offices run on an agency basis, equally split between urban and rural areas. However, the local services specified in the strategy might not always reflect local interests. He said that the strategy was to only have two types of outlets, main branches which would offer a full range of products, services and banking, and local branches which were usually housed within a shop. As part of the strategy the company would, when a contract expired or a sub-postmaster retired, transform 8,000 branches to local branches. This action which would affect many post offices that did not fall within these two categories. Sub-postmasters were being offered a leavers' payment if the branch could be relocated to a nearby, suitable retail outlet.

Councillor Jones stated that the main style post offices were defined as a modern environment with a dedicated Post Office counter offering services during standard hours, and in many cases these services would be provided from a retail position during extended shop hours. Local Post Office branches would provide a range of services from a retail till when the shop was open. In fact from the company's published list many of these were in supermarkets or Spar shops.

He informed Members that the selling point was the potential for longer opening hours. However, the down sides were not made clear and these included loss of dedicated advice, passport checks, travel money, licenses, business services, some parcel functions and there were doubts about giro payments. He said that there were important post offices in the main towns and villages in the Borough serving the local communities, many of which could be classed as intermediate post offices and they would not meet the criteria to be a main branch.

Councillor Jones stated that concerns had been raised at the last Council meeting regarding bank closures in Radcliffe on Trent and Keyworth and how the post offices would be vital to the communities. He said it was important that the Council considered any reductions to the services offered.

He was therefore asking the Leader to use his position, both here and in the East Midlands, to actively engage with the Post Office to obtain the best results for both rural and urban communities.

Councillor Clarke stated that he was happy to support this motion. He said that two thirds of Rushcliffe was rural and that the number of post offices had reduced throughout the whole area. It was vital to keep post offices due to the loss of banking facilities to ensure that communities stayed vibrant. He stated that the Strategic Growth Board's sub groups could consider the local economy as part of their deliberations. He

would use his best endeavours to lobby this commercial enterprise and do the best for the local communities.

Councillor Vennett-Smith agreed that post offices, local shops and doctors were important services for communities. He felt that it was important that the Council supported the rural areas. He referred to the post office in Gotham and how the Post Office was finding it difficult to relocate to new premises.

Councillor Moore highlighted the recent changes at Cropwell Bishop and how the local post office had closed and relocated within the Co-op store. He said that following a public meeting people's perceptions had been changed. The Co-op was pleased with the increased footfall and people were happy due to the increased hours.

Councillor S Boote thanked Councillor Clarke and Members for their support of the motion. He said that the Post Office was often communities last connection with the commercial and financial world. It was recognised that most things could now be completed online, however, it was not what everyone wanted, or could, do. He believed that people like to interact with other people.

He outlined the situation in Radcliffe on Trent and Keyworth where the last bank would close on 11 March 2015, despite petitions, demonstrations and meetings with the bank and the Member of Parliament. The bank's response is that banking can be done at the post office, even though it is felt that the current post office is too small, doesn't have an ATM and there have been post office closures. He stated that communities would be reliant on their post offices and that it was right that this Council, in the person of its Leader, should take the lead to keep communities connected, not just online but also in person.

Councillor Jones thanked Councillor Clarke for his support and agreed that not all situations were the same and that relocating could have advantages. However, he felt that there were a number of factors that Members should be aware of and that the widest possible range of services should be available to people.

When put to the vote the motion was carried.

- b) The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor S E Mallender and seconded by Councillor R M Jones

"Council recognises the importance of trees and woodland in helping counteract climate change, alleviating flooding and providing benefits for recreation and mental health. Council asks Cabinet to investigate, in consultation with the relevant Scrutiny Committee, the possibility of a trees and woodlands policy."

Councillor S Mallender stated that the planting and managing of trees and woodland was an important issue. It was beneficial to the environment, good for wildlife including homes for birds and bees, which helped pollinate 84% of crops. It was recognised that gardens

were useful, however there needed to be green spaces with trees planted together. She explained how these would have a beneficial effect on people's mental health and well being as well as reducing pollution and negating people's carbon footprints. Property values increased by 18% through having access to trees and woodlands and crime She informed Members that only 10% of children played in woodlands whereas it had been 40% in their parent's generation. She stated that the United Kingdom had the lowest amount of Green Belt in Europe. She believed that there should be a Council policy to encourage more woodlands, community orchards, etc, that local people should be encouraged to become tree wardens and manage the trees better as was the case at Bridgford Park. She recognised that the Local Development Framework Group considered open spaces as part of developments but she felt that this issue and the development of a policy should be considered more widely by the Community Development Group.

Councillor Clarke stated that he supported the motion and that the Community Development Group was the right scrutiny group to consider the issue primarily and then it should be passed to the Local Development Framework Group to consider incorporating it into the Planning Policies of the Council, although he recognised that other policies did address trees.

Councillor Jones stated that trees provided a visual benefit, supported wildlife, absorbed moisture and CO² and trapped pollutants. They prevented soil erosion produced fuel and had a positive impact on asthma sufferers. Studies had shown that tree lined streets, green spaces and woodlands led to increased walking and exercise and that people living near these areas displayed fewer signs of depression or anxiety.

He stated that woodlands only covered 1.04% of the Borough, whereas Nottinghamshire had 6-9% and England had approximately 8.4%. It was recognised that woodlands needed managing but they were had a great amenity value and he believed that the Council should promote new woodland planting particularly where isolated areas could be linked. He referred to surveys that had been carried out in the Borough that had identified areas such as Fairham Brook where there were opportunities to promote biodiversity. He highlighted the Government's Forestry and Woodlands Policy and the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' guidance and grants relevant to woodlands and grazed woodlands. He pointed out that the Woodlands Trust operate a Woodland Carbon Scheme where organisations and companies could help reduce their carbon footprint by planting trees. He felt that the Council could help promote this scheme.

He informed Members that Broxtowe Borough Council had an ambitious tree planting target of 100,000 trees by the end of 2016 and that so far they had planted 68,000. This was an objective in their Corporate Plan under the theme "The environment in Broxtowe will be protected and enhanced for future generations".

He believed that the Council should promote tree planting schemes, promote biodiversity, public green spaces, tree lined road and woodlands. He too felt that this was a matter for the Community Development Group rather than a Local Development Framework issue that could be passed to developers. He urged all Members to support this motion.

When put to the vote the motion was carried.

47. To answer questions under Standing Order 11 (2)

Question from Councillor L J Abbey to Councillor N C Lawrence

Can Councillor Lawrence inform us what volume of recycling has occurred each year since 2010 and what the Council's position is in comparison with other local authorities?

Councillor Lawrence replied that in the last three years the Council had recycled 51% of the material presented in the three bins. He stated that the Council was the best recycler in Nottinghamshire with the next Council recycling 41%. In 2013/14 the Council had been rated 63rd out of the 354 councils that reported annual figures. He pointed out that since the figures had been compiled Rushcliffe had always been 1st in the County and in the top quartile nationally.

Question from Councillor L J Abbey to Councillor N C Lawrence

Can Councillor Lawrence inform us what volume of domestic batteries have been recycled each year since the Rushcliffe scheme commenced and therefore the weight of precious metals no longer incinerated?

Councillor Lawrence stated that there were no precious metals in batteries. He stated that the recycling rates were:

- 2009/10 8.4 tonnes
- 2010/11 9.9 tonnes
- 2011/12 12.1 tonnes
- 2012/13 8.6 tonnes
- 2013/14 7.6 tonnes
- 2014/15(to January 2014) 6.7 tonnes

Question from Councillor R M Jones to Councillor D J Mason

Can Councillor D Mason inform us whether the average pollution levels for 2014 are less or greater than 2013 given that last year NO2 pollution and particulate levels, around the Nottingham Knight Island and the area around Trent Bridge and Stragglethorpe junctions were above acceptable levels and identified as such by the local press which described Nottingham as the second worst place for air pollution in England.

Councillor Mason replied that Nottingham had been described as the second worst place, however this was Rushcliffe. The three areas referred to by

Councillor Jones are the Council's three hotspots and have all been designated as Air Quality Management Areas and this was mainly due to vehicle emissions. She stated that the Council's website gave detailed, real time information. The average levels for Trent Bridge and Stragglethorpe were slightly higher than the national standard however at the Nottingham Knight, the level taken at the nearest residential receptor is within acceptable levels. She stated that as part of the Air Quality Management Plan key partners were influenced to develop transport infrastructure improvements to reduce the effects.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Jones asked Councillor Mason for the NO² levels.

Councillor Mason replied that the Nottingham Knight average was 47.4 µg/m³ in 2013 and 46.5 µg/m³ in 2014, and 33 µg/m³ for the nearest residential property. Trent Bridge levels at Trent House Flats were 38.8 µg/m³ in 2013 and 41.9 µg/m³ in 2014, and officers were working closely with Nottinghamshire County Council transport planners as this was mainly due to the slow movement of traffic. Stragglethorpe was the Council's latest declared Air Quality Management area. In 2013 average levels were 49.3 µg/m³ and in 2014, 50.7 µg/m³. She said that the Council was working with the Highways Agency to look at ways of reducing this figure e.g. junction improvements however this was another reason why an overall improvement on the A52 was needed.

Question from Councillor K A Khan to Councillor R L Butler

How would you ensure that previous mistakes as occurred by allowing selective vehicles through the Nuthall Bus gate can be avoided for the next stage in Council's plan for the Musters Road bus and emergency vehicle access to the dwellings on Sharphill?

Councillor Butler said that it was not for this Council to comment on a scheme in another area. He said that the Musters Road access was raised in detail at the recent Core Strategy examination and was referred to, in some detail, in the Inspector's report. The adopted Core Strategy details this in Policy 20 within the transportation section, point 7 confirms that primary vehicle access should be provided off the A606 Melton Road. The draft Melton Road Edwalton masterplan was currently subject to consultation accords with this agreed policy. Further consideration would be undertaken at the more detailed planning stages of this development.

Question from Councillor S J Boote to Councillor S J Robinson

How many housing benefit claimants are there in the borough, how many are affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy (sometimes called the "bedroom tax"), and, of those, what percentage had what level of reductions?

Councillor Robinson stated that he was aware that the Chief Executive had responded to Councillor Jones regarding this issue. He also stated that he did not recognise the term 'bedroom tax' as this had been created by the Labour Party.

He then stated that at 28 February 2015 there were 4,024 housing benefit claimants in the Borough of which 505 were affected by the spare room subsidy, which equated to 12.5%. Of these 505 451 had a 14% reduction for a single additional bedroom and 54 had a 25% reduction, which occurred for multiple additional bedrooms.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Boote then asked that given there was no significant reduction in these figures from last year, would Cabinet reconsider the proposal made last year for a discretionary fund for people who had no reasonable offer of an alternative near to where they live?

Councillor Robinson said that this would be considered in due course if it was deemed appropriate to do so.

48. Closing Remarks

As this was the final meeting of the Council before the election the Mayor wished those Members who would be standing for re-election good luck and thanked the Members who would be retiring after this term of office for their hard work.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm.

MAYOR