



# **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL THURSDAY 2 MARCH 2017**

Held at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road, West Bridgford

## **PRESENT:**

Councillor G Davidson - Mayor  
Councillor L B Cooper - Deputy Mayor

Councillors R A Adair, K P Beardsall, N A Brown, M Buckle, B Buschman, R L Butler, H A Chewings, J N Clarke, T Combellack, J E Cottee, J Donoghue, M J Edwards, A J Edyvean, J E Greenwood, R Hetherington, S J Hull, R A Inglis, Mrs C E M Jeffreys, R M Jones, K A Khan, N C Lawrence, A MacInnes, Mrs M M Males, G R Mallender, S E Mallender, D J Mason, S C Matthews, G S Moore, A Phillips, E A Plant, F A Purdue-Horan, Mrs J A Smith, Mrs M Stockwood, J E Thurman, R G Upton, D G Wheeler, J G A Wheeler

## **ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

R Oldknow Mayor's Cadet  
3 members of the public

## **OFFICERS PRESENT:**

D Banks	Executive Manager - Neighbourhoods
N Carter	Service Manager – Finance and Corporate Services
A Graham	Chief Executive
P Linfield	Executive Manager - Finance and Corporate Services
K Marriott	Executive Manager - Operations and Transformation
D Mitchell	Executive Manager - Communities
V Nightingale	Constitutional Services Officer
G O'Connell	Monitoring Officer
A Poole	Constitutional Services Team Leader

## **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

Councillors A M Dickinson, E J Lungley, A L R A Pell, S J Robinson, J A Stockwood

## **OPENING PRAYER**

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

## **43. Declarations of Interest**

There were none declared.

**44. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 8 December 2016 were received as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

**45. Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the first full Council meeting in the new premises, in a purpose built Council Chamber. He drew Councillors' attention to the new microphone system that had been installed.

Councillor Davidson stated that he had attended 22 events since the last Council meeting, including the Nottinghamshire Scouts and Guides 2017 Gang Show yesterday. Over the Christmas period he had attended many carol concerts and a highlight had been serving Christmas Day lunch at The Friary with his two sons.

With regard to his charity he encouraged Councillors to attend the luncheon at Ashmores, Radcliffe on Trent that was being hosted by Mrs Avril Fearon on 30 April 2017. Also on 6 May he and the Stormy Weather Boys would be hosting an evening of sea shanties and songs in Aslockton. He thanked colleagues for attending his Christmas Party, Civic Carol Service and the Civic Dinner; from the raffle and auction £600 had been raised for his charity Maggies. Also he was pleased to announce that the Sutton Bonington Show Committee had donated £500 to the charity.

**46. Leader's Announcements**

Councillor Clarke supported the Mayor's comments about the new building and thanked all officers involved with the project for their hard work. He asked that, if any Councillors had concerns, these should be raised with himself or the Chief Executive as, with any new building, there were always some minor snagging items.

**47. Chief Executive's Announcements**

The Chief Executive, on behalf of all staff, thanked Councillors for their patience and understanding during the office move to the new building. He informed Councillors that he had sent an email regarding access to the building, especially in respect of visitors. Finally, he announced that Mrs Nightingale would be leaving the authority due to personal reasons, and wished her well. However, he announced that she would return to help with the election service.

On behalf of the Councillors, Councillor Clarke thanked Mrs Nightingale for the work she had undertaken.

**48. 2017/18 Budget and Financial Strategy**

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

"Mr Mayor, this is my first speech in our new state-of-the-art Council and Leisure facilities. I am very proud of all that has been achieved in the move and wish to pay tribute to all officers and members involved in the planning and implementation of a complex project. I am proud that as leader I have overseen, the largest capital expenditure in the history of this Council. After 12 years as Leader, this is the successful culmination of one of my personal ambitions to vacate a building which was no longer fit for purpose and very costly. We are now saving £330k per year in running costs.

I am pleased again to confirm the Council has a sound and secure financial position, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to balance the budget as we face both cost pressures and reduction in government funding. On a treadmill, we have to keep running every faster.

I am keen the Council continues to deliver its key priorities.

Mr Mayor I would like to pay tribute to the Chief Executive, the Executive Manager for Finance and all his team who ensure this Council maintains its sound financial plan. We all have a part to play. Living and working in tough times makes for difficult decisions, and I am proud of the way in which we work across the parties in a professional and collegiate way; the envy of many councils across the country. Again I want to put on record my thanks to the Members and Officers for their work in ensuring we have a sustainable, affordable and prudent budget.

This Council has had to find savings to bridge a loss of Government grant amounting to £3.25m over the last six years (from 2013/14 to 2019/20). I know we have found significant efficiencies, such as reducing employee costs with the number of employees falling from 338 to 268 over the last four years, maximise income streams and be increasingly innovative. At the same time, during my leadership, I have always insisted the Council continues its commitment to provide excellent high quality services to the people of Rushcliffe.

I believe it is right to increase Council Tax by £4.95 (just 9p per week) or 45p yet still, at £127.89 at Band D, have the lowest quartile of Councils in the country. I am also pleased to say we have ensured Special Expense Charges have reduced again.

One significant cost pressure out of our hands, is the impact of the pensions triennial review. The result of this is a £0.6m hit on the budget, due to historic pension contributions made against future pension liabilities. Significant financial risks remain and we should not lose sight of these.

Our Transformation Programme delivers savings as part of our Efficiency Statement under the 4 year deal, now in its second year. This has a tried and tested record of delivering substantial savings, £5m in the past 6 years, and projected to deliver a further £1m over the next 5 years. In the next 3 years we have to identify a further £1m of efficiencies. Strong financial management in the past, now and in the future will enable us to plan for substantial future challenges, but we cannot be complacent and difficult decisions will still need to be made.

I have always been adamant we take a more commercial outlook yet be risk aware in our finance dealings. This is against a backdrop of continued financial uncertainty and austerity that will remain at least in the medium term.

I have always been determined that Rushcliffe Borough Council encourages growth. This is embodied by my initiating the setting up of Growth Boards to work with partners and the community, to deliver growth in terms of both businesses and housing. I believe in actions not words; shown in a number of initiatives I was keen the Council embarked upon and now developing and maturing.

As an excellent authority, we were at the vanguard of self-sustainability, investing in The Point. This is a resounding success with both the asset increasing in value and the generation of a substantial income, a great ROI.

Bridgford Hall will be a lasting testimony to our ability to raise external funding to ensure maximum use of our assets and again generate an income stream and jobs in our borough.

Last but not least, this new building has allowed the disposal of the Civic Centre for £6.95m.

These are all things I wanted to achieve under my leadership.

Our capital programme amply demonstrates our further commitment to growth in terms of both housing and employment, which extends across the whole Borough and includes long term projects such as:

- Cotgrave TC Regeneration £8.5 overall – creating £200,000 income per year; and 15 additional employment units (50 jobs created)
- Land North of Bingham £5.6m overall to facilitate both 1000 new homes and 15.6 hectares of employment land; nad
- RAF Newton footbridge £1.7m – to help facilitate housing growth (550 new homes)

There also remains £5.3m in the Asset Investment fund to deliver growth and help the Council towards financial self-sufficiency. There is more to do, not least maximising the potential of a property development company and identifying the best way forward for both the Depot and Edwalton Golf course. I am committed to innovation, Mr Mayor, demonstrated by the success of both Steetwise Environmental and the Young project. Continual innovative and transformational thinking keeps this Council 'ahead of the game'.

We've made decisions which help both our residents financially and protect the excellent service they have become used to. Our Green Waste scheme generates around £1m of income, whilst some other Councils are only still just thinking of charging for this service.

I want Rushcliffe to remain a fantastic place to live and work – regularly named in the top 10 places to live – this is something to be proud of and hope will

continue. One reason I believe this to be the case is that we do listen to our community and work together with all of our stakeholders, exemplified by the proposed changes to car parking charges at Section 3.8. As recommended by Cabinet we have modified the charging structure for West Bridgford car parks to give greater flexibility to users and encourage greater 'turnover' in those car parks.

Business Rates remain our biggest risk both locally with the power station and nationally with repatriation of 100% business rates. The impact of this is not due until at the earliest 2020 and makes longer term financial planning particularly difficult. Furthermore the Government is effectively shrinking the New Homes Bonus funding pot and redirecting resources to Adult Social Care. For 2017/18 we estimate the changes in the scheme to adversely impact the Council by £450,000. In a prudent manner, I did not want to rely on New Homes Bonus to support our Revenue (unlike other Councils in the country). It presents a risk to capital funding of which we need to be mindful.

Mr Mayor, with risk there is a relationship with our reserves. We have been looking at growth in the Borough and consequently utilising both our reserves and capital receipts. Over the Medium Term in this Strategy the reserves will reduce from £7.5m to £6.2m. We are facing more risk with less resources; and strong organisational and financial management must be and will be maintained.

This budget is designed to protect our services, assist our residents and I am determined to ensure this Council is both operationally and financially 'fit for the future'. So, Mr Mayor I would like to move the recommendations at pages 16 and 17."

Councillor MacInnes stated that the Government funding statement provided difficulties for local government, especially the announcement that the New Homes Bonus would now be used to fund adult social care. He agreed that additional funding was required but that it should not be at the expense of district councils; he believed that there should be a national strategy. He noted that the Council's New Homes Bonus receipts had been reduced by £453,000 in 2017/18 and that this would be repeated in the following year. This equated to a loss of £3.9 million by the end of 2019. He said that this would create further instability and risk and reduce the incentive for growth. Local authorities would be affected by the reduction to the Revenue Settlement Grant which would cease to be in 2019/20.

He noted that the Transformation Programme aspired to produce £1 million of efficiencies by 2020/21 and that the Council's reserves would be decreasing. Although there were difficult years ahead he was confident that the Council was resilient to meet these challenges as officers were skilled and had the capacity to protect services by collaborating with partners and other local authorities. He was concerned about the future uncertainties including the negative support rate, the impact of Brexit, business valuation and business rate review especially in reference to the power station at Ratcliffe on Soar. He said that he had been watching the effect on other local authorities, including the closure of Rugeley power station, and had noted that the losses were significant.

Despite these uncertainties, Councillor MacInnes supported the Council's aspiration to be self-sufficient. He felt that, in the interest of local tax payers, it was necessary for the Council to raise the Council Tax by £4.95 in order to protect jobs and services.

Finally, he thanked the Executive Manager - Finance and Corporate Services and his team for producing a well written and understandable report.

Councillor Jones supported Councillor MacInnes' comments regarding the report and also the positive comments that had been made. He stated that he supported the graduated car parking charges that were to be introduced in West Bridgford and that it was good that the Council had eventually listened to residents. However, there were concerns and frustrations regarding the new machines and the delay they were causing.

In respect of the Council having a low charge in comparison to other districts in Nottinghamshire this was partly due to the actions of the Council but was also due to the high proportion of high property values in the Borough. Also the majority of the Borough had a third tier of government that also precepted. Nevertheless, he did agree with the proposed increase as, due to the Government's squeeze on local government, this was the only thing that could be done.

He supported the Chief Executive's and the Executive Manager - Finance and Corporate Services' expressions of dissatisfaction with the Government's reduction to the New Homes Bonus, he believed that if it was to be reduced it should have been injected into the provision of more social rented housing. He felt that the Government was just moving money between different tasks, whilst reducing the overall sum.

Councillor Jones was concerned about the identified risks and especially Brexit, as the full impact of this would not be known for two to three years. He believed leaving the EU, the single market deals and free trade agreements would have a detrimental economic and social impact on the Borough. He said that socially residents were already feeling the impact. He felt that the higher costs of imports and the move of capital investments into a wider market would have a negative impact on businesses and therefore a negative impact on taxes, which in turn would result in further risks to public services.

In respect of the transfer of business rates to the local authorities he was concerned that supermarkets were appealing against their charges. He recognised that the situation was complex but felt that small businesses could suffer. He noted that the point where business rates commenced had increased from £6,000 to £12,000 and he welcomed any measures that could balance the odds in favour of the small independent retailers which safeguarded the future of the shopping parades. He felt that on-line traders would not be affected as much as the local small shopkeeper.

In conclusion, Councillor Jones stated that he welcomed the Cabinet's intention to create a property development company and he hoped that this would be a social company similar to when the Council set up Streetwise Environmental Ltd. He felt that this could be supported if the aim was to produce an income stream for the Council and would provide more low cost,

rented housing. He was appalled that the Government's recent housing proposal defined that people in need of affordable incomes could have incomes of up to £80,000, and £90,000 in London.

Councillor S Mallender supported the previous comments regarding independent traders, Brexit and the loss of the New Homes Bonus. She acknowledged the fact that the public did not recognise the strains put on local authorities by Government, nor did they recognise the fact that the Borough Council collected money on behalf of the other precepting authorities.

She queried if the new building was in breach of the travel plan that had been included in the conditions of its planning application, especially in respect of sustainable transport. She welcomed the proposal for a footbridge at Newton, work on ICT, boilers and improvements to the Council's fleet to improve efficiencies. She pointed out that Nottingham City Council was investing in electric vehicles and the required infrastructure and asked officers to consider this form of transport. In respect of the proposed property company she hoped that it would invest in the Borough. With regard to the replacement of old wheeled bins she queried what was happening to these and asked if they could be replaced with 125 litre bins.

Councillor D Wheeler agreed with the comments made regarding car parking charges in West Bridgford. To avoid delays he queried why people still had to enter car details into the machine as now people could pay per half hour this would not result in people having the opportunity to pass on their ticket. He wanted to see that people were being encouraged to come to West Bridgford and use its facilities and not be discouraged as parking was a problem.

Councillor Khan, in support of the comments made regarding parking, felt that the first half hour should be free. He felt that the West Bridgford Growth Board should initiate a study on the parking charges and the effect on local independent traders. He agreed that there were many financial pressures on small retailers and welcomed any measures that could assist their viability.

Councillor Edwards reminded Councillors that they had discussed the national housing crisis at the Council meeting in December. He welcomed the development of a property company but queried the timeframe for the exploratory work and when Councillors would know the outcome. He also asked if it would be able to access the investment funding that had been set aside, although this had decreased over the past year.

Councillor Cottee stated that car parking fell under his portfolio remit and said that the charges had now been changed as it was acknowledged that it was not correct initially. He also said it was a balancing act to ensure that people could easily park to shop in West Bridgford and that people did not abuse the car parks and use them as a park and ride site for Nottingham. Also it had to be noted that the car parks did provide an income stream.

In conclusion, Councillor Clarke responded by thanking Councillors for their support. He could not respond on the impact of the Brexit decision. He stated that the revaluation of Business Rates would assist small businesses as the threshold had been increased to £12,000. He informed Council that he had been lobbying Government for greater transitional arrangements and he was

hopeful that there would be an announcement in the Government's Budget statement next week. With regard to the New Homes Bonus he had, together with colleagues from the Local Government Association, lobbied Government stating that this was a reward for communities accepting growth and that due to this the situation was not as bad as it could have been. The problem was that there would always be bigger issues, adult social care was a major issue however this money would not make a large difference and he felt that this needed to be addressed through funding from a different budget. He said that the New Homes Bonus had been top sliced from the Revenue Support Grant and that this had further been sliced two times. He was pleased to say that, unlike 30% of other local authorities, Rushcliffe had taken the decision not to prop up the Council Tax. He stated that these other authorities would now be facing financial difficulties in two to three years' time.

With regard to the investment funding he was pleased that it had been reducing as it showed that the Council was investing. He said that there was no guaranteed timeframe for the proposed property company as all options needed to be considered, including how companies had been set up by other authorities.

At the end of the discussion the Mayor asked for a recorded vote.

On being put to the vote the Recommendation was carried.

**For**

Councillors R A Adair, K P Beardsall, N A Brown, M Buckle, B Buschman, R L Butler, H A Chewings, J N Clarke, T Combellack, L B Cooper, J E Cottee, G Davidson, J Donoghue, M J Edwards, A J Edyvean, J E Greenwood, R Hetherington, S J Hull, R A Inglis, Mrs C E M Jeffreys, R M Jones, K A Khan, N C Lawrence, A MacInnes, Mrs M M Males, G R Mallender, S E Mallender, D J Mason, S C Matthews, G S Moore, A Phillips, E A Plant, F A Purdue-Horan, Mrs J A Smith, Mrs M Stockwood, J E Thurman, R G Upton, D G Wheeler, J G A Wheeler (39)

**Against**

Nil

**Abstain**

Nil

RESOLVED that Council:

- a) Accepts the report of the Council's Responsible Financial Officer on the robustness of the Council's budget and the adequacy of reserves (as detailed at Annex A)
- b) Adopts the budget setting report and associated financial strategies 2017/18 to 2021/22 (Annex B) including the Transformation Strategy and Programme to deliver efficiencies over the five year period (Annex B, Appendix 3)
- c) Adopts the Capital Programme as set out in Annex B, Appendix 4

- d) Sets Rushcliffe's 2016/17 Council Tax for a Band D property at £127.89
- e) Sets the Special Expenses for West Bridgford, Ruddington and Keyworth (Annex B, Appendix 1), resulting in the following Band D Council tax levels for the Special Expense Areas:
  - i) West Bridgford £52.35 (£52.92 in 2016/17)
  - ii) Keyworth £1.46 (£1.48 in 2016/17)
  - iii) Ruddington £3.46 (£3.53 in 2016/17)
- f) Adopts the Treasury Management Strategy 2017/18-2021/22 and associated prudential borrowing indicators (Annex B, Appendix 5).
- g) Adopts the 2017/18 Pay Policy as detailed at Annex B, Appendix 8.

**49. Council Tax Resolution 2017/18**

Councillor Clarke presented the report of the Executive Manager - Finance and Corporate Services which set out the Council Tax Resolution for 2017/18. 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 approve the Council Tax Resolution for 2017/18 as detailed at Appendix A.

**50. Review of Street Trading around Nottingham Forest Football Ground**

Councillor Mason presented the report of the Executive Manager - Neighbourhoods regarding the street trading around the Nottingham Forest Football Club and Trent Bridge. She stated that this had been considered by the Licensing Committee following consultation that had been undertaken in 2016. It was noted that there were unlicensed traders who were using areas that made it difficult for pedestrians and would hinder any potential evacuation. If accepted these changes would come into effect for the start of the 2017/18 football season and would affect an additional six traders. She thanked the Licensing Committee for their hard work and input into the policy and concluded that this would increase public safety and make the process more effective.

Councillors Plant and S Mallender supported the recommendation and acknowledged that this was a sensible approach for the area. However, concerns were raised regarding the enforcement of the policy and the litter which was generated and dropped in the Lady Bay area. Councillor Mason stated that the consultation had been very positive and that these had not

been raised as issues. Enforcement would be carried out by the Police, PCSO's and the Council's Licensing Officers. With regard to litter she said that Streetwise would be informed of the issue and that officers would investigate the possibility of siting more litter bins.

RESOLVED that the review is endorsed and the revised Street Trading areas approved.

**51. To Answer Questions Under Standing Order 11(2)**

**a) Question from Councillor S Mallender to Councillor R L Butler**

'In March 2015 at a full council meeting, Rushcliffe Borough Council unanimously accepted the provision of a Tree and Woodlands Policy; please could you inform me how that policy is being implemented by the Council?'

Councillor Butler replied that there was no dedicated Tree and Woodlands Policy, as it had been decided to develop this within the Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Strategy, which was approved by Cabinet in November 2015.

**Supplementary Question**

Councillor S Mallender then asked how the Tree and Woodland policy was used by planning officers at Rushcliffe Borough to advise applicants and in the advice to Councillors on the Development Control Committee through reports and recommendations?

Councillor Butler responded that the Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Strategy was not a planning policy but would be treated as a material planning consideration when determining planning applications. The relevant section of the strategy required that, "Where practicable developers would be required to provide at least an equal number of trees to those lost as a result of the development".

**b) Question from Councillor G R Mallender to Councillor R L Butler**

'Given the sessions provided for Parish and Town Councils about the Local Plan Part 2 in advance of the finalised consultation, on what grounds has there been no equivalent provision for community groups in West Bridgford?'

Councillor Butler replied that the proposals mainly focussed on the rural areas and not West Bridgford. He stated that all West Bridgford Community Groups had been consulted and were able to make comments as, indeed, anyone could.

**Supplementary Question**

Councillor R Mallender asked if a list of all groups consulted could be provided and when this occurred.

Councillor Butler agreed that a written list could be provided to Councillor Mallender and stated that a large majority of Rushcliffe had been consulted. He said that the Borough Council had put this consultation on their website and had produced leaflets

**c) Question from Councillor H Chewings to Councillor J N Clarke**

‘Could you please tell me when (if ever) the side row of shops on Cotgrave precinct that comprises the Opticians, Bike Shop, L R Mees, Fruit and Veg, Pharmacy and Hot Bread Shop will be improved to the same standards as the back row of shops, as it states that only the back row of shops are to be refurbished in the budget that we have been looking at this meeting, as it seems that Cotgrave is being short changed and only getting 1/2 a completed shopping centre.’

Councillor Clarke replied that he was surprised by this question as the plans for the town centre had been agreed at Cabinet in December 2015 and that as a Cotgrave Ward member she received regular updates on the project.

He said that there had always been an issue regarding the second row of shops which had some long-term tenancies, and was outside of the Council’s full control. He stated that it was difficult to put a timescale on when these could be developed but that it was still the Council’s aim to carry out this work as part of Phase 2.

**d) Question from Councillor R M Jones to Councillor J N Clarke**

‘Of the total number of Rushcliffe residents in receipt of benefits and currently affected by the benefit cap - what is the total monthly amount which they, in total, are losing in housing benefits?’

Councillor Clarke replied that there were currently 32 such claimants not receiving benefit as a result of the cap amounting to £6,864.61 per month.

**e) Question from Councillor R M Jones to Councillor R L Butler**

‘Can the Council be assured that planning conditions on large scale developments are monitored closely, not simply left to the conscientiousness of the developer and that any necessary enforcement action is taken?’

Councillor Butler replied that officers monitor development on the larger sites as it progresses often in association with the obligations contained in a Section 106 agreement

**Supplementary Question**

Councillor Jones asked if, given that planning conditions before occupation of the Arena, namely bus shelters and a pedestrian crossing, were neither met nor enforced; what confidence could the public have in enforcement in the Borough.

Councillor Butler replied that the public could be assured that enforcement was carried out and monitored. He stated that over 1,000 applications were determined per year and that this resulted in numerous conditions. He understood about the road improvements however the Council was reliant on a third party external supplier to carry out the works, namely Nottinghamshire County Council. He was confident that the Council did monitor the conditions, however, as Councillors they could report any infringements and stated that these would be followed up as soon as possible.

The meeting closed at 8.10 pm.

MAYOR