



**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL**

THURSDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2017

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

PRESENT:

Councillor Barrie Cooper - Mayor
Councillor Mrs Maureen Stockwood - Deputy Mayor

Councillors R A Adair, S P Bailey, K P Beardsall, N A Brown, M Buckle, B Buschman, R L Butler, H A Chewings, J N Clarke, T Combellack, L B Cooper, 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, G R Mallender, S E Mallender, D J Mason, S C Matthews, G S Moore, E A Plant, F A Purdue-Horan, S J Robinson, Mrs J A Smith, J A Stockwood, Mrs M Stockwood, J E Thurman, R G Upton, D G Wheeler, J G A Wheeler

OFFICERS PRESENT:

C Caven-Atack	Performance, Reputation and Constitutional Services Manager
M Elliott	Constitutional Services Team Leader
P Linfield	Executive Manager – Finance and Corporate Services
K Marriott	Executive Manager – Operations and Transformation
D Mitchell	Executive Manager – Communities
G O'Connell	Monitoring Officer

One member of the public.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Councillors J E Cottee, A M Dickinson, E J Lungley, Mrs M M Males, A Phillips

OPENING PRAYER

The Meeting was led in prayer by Reverend Hodder, the Mayor's Chaplain.

21. Declarations of Interest

There were none declared.

22. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 29 June 2017 were received as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

23. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor began his announcements by asking for a minute's silence for former Councillor Nigel Boughton-Smith who passed away recently after a short illness. Councillor Boughton-Smith had represented the Ruddington ward from 2011 to 2015.

The Mayor presented a brief summary of his engagements since the last Council meeting including his Civic Service, a 100th birthday celebration, and a toilet-twining event. He thanked Councillors for supporting his charity quiz evening in July and reminded those present that his charity concert, featuring 'The Opera Dudes', was taking place in November.

24. Leader's Announcements

Councillor Robinson congratulated a number of officers for recently completing a Masters of Public Administration at Birmingham University. Rushcliffe has a long tradition of investing in staff development and Councillor Robinson commended the commitment shown by officers in studying for their qualifications on top of demanding full-time positions. Councillor Robinson also congratulated the Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club on winning both the One Day Cup and the TwentyTwenty Cup this season. He claimed this was a fantastic achievement for the Club that also benefited the Borough through record crowds of supporters making use of our local facilities and businesses. There would be a more formal event to mark the achievement in due course.

25. Chief Executive's Announcements

The Deputy Chief Executive was pleased to announce that the Council had recently been awarded the Silver Workplace Health Award demonstrating its on-going commitment to supporting a healthy workforce and remaining an employer of choice.

26. Statement of Accounts 2016/17

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the report of the Executive Manager – Finance and Corporate Services seeking approval for the Statement of Accounts for 2016/17 and also for the Management Representation letter which confirmed that the external auditors were satisfied with the validity of the financial statements provided by the Council.

The report noted that the accounts for Local Authorities were required to be prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17 ('the Code') and that the Annual Governance Statement must comply with the guidance issued by CIPFA/SOLACE ('Delivering Good Governance in Local Government') published in April 2016. The Statement of Accounts for 2016/17 was included as an appendix to the officer's report and included the Council's Annual Governance Statement which, in line with best practice, had been agreed with the Leader and Chief Executive.

The Statement of Accounts, and the draft Management Representation letter, had been considered by the Corporate Governance Group at its meeting on 13

September, 2017 where it had been resolved that they are supported and referred to full Council for approval.

Councillor Moore commended the hard work of officers to produce the Statement and receive an unqualified judgement from the auditors within the tighter timescales for this year. Councillor Robinson drew Councillors' attention to the significant achievements highlighted within the performance section of the Statement including the number of affordable homes delivered, occupation rates in industrial units and the increased letting income achieved by the Council. Officers were commended for their achievements in spite of the continuing financial challenges faced by the authority. Councillor MacInnes was heartened to see that the Council was in a very strong financial position and well placed to support the aspirations of the Council in the next few years.

It was RESOLVED that:

- a) the Statement of Accounts for 2016/17 at Appendix A of the officer's report be approved.
- b) the Management Representation letter at Appendix B of the officer's report be approved.

27. Asset Investment Strategy

Councillor Robinson presented the report of the Executive Manager – Finance and Corporate Services seeking approval for the revised Asset Investment Strategy, 2017-22. The Asset Investment Strategy was introduced to help support the Council's transition from financial dependency on Government grants to an increasing sustained and programmed revenue income from investments. It also provided a framework in relation to investment limits, types of investments and assessment processes. The strategy had also been designed to facilitate a mixed utilisation of the fund to maximise both economic and social benefits, whilst also enabling future growth across the Borough and mitigating investment risk. It was noted that it had become necessary to propose a change to the strategy to allow investments to be made outside of the Borough. This was necessary to provide more investment opportunities and, as a consequence, access to better rates of return which were appropriate to the risk of the investment.

Councillor Robinson reminded Councillors of the commitment he made to bridge the £1million budget gap without cutting services or jobs. He reiterated that the Asset Investment Strategy would help the Council to become financially independent from central government before the withdrawal of the Revenue Support Grant in 2019/20.

Whilst Councillor MacInnes commended the efforts of the Council to reduce the impact of the withdrawal of central government funding on local services and the community, he questioned whether the Council had the necessary skills or experience to deliver the Strategy and asked if there were plans in place to address this deficit. Councillor Robinson appreciated the support of other Councillors and assured them that the Council had a good track record in terms of asset investment to date. He also stated that some staff had recently

undertaken a commercialism course and that external experts were contracted where the Council felt it did not have the necessary skills in place to deliver.

It was RESOLVED that:

- a) the revised Asset Investment Strategy 2017- 22 be noted
- b) an Asset Investment Committee, as described at paragraph 5.2 of Appendix 1 of the officer's report, replaces the Asset Investment Strategy Group.
- c) the principle of investing beyond the Borough Council boundaries for a commercial return be approved.
- d) a further £5m be allocated to the Capital Programme, increasing the Asset Investment Strategy fund to £15.5m.

28. Approval of the Scrutiny Annual Reports

Councillor Robinson presented the report of the Executive Manager – Finance and Corporate Services which provided a review of the work undertaken by the Council's four scrutiny groups during 2016/17 and invited the four scrutiny group chairmen to deliver a brief summary of the work of their group over the last twelve months.

Councillor Combellack stated that the high points for the Community Development Group in 2016/17 included scrutinising the delivery of leisure strategy, the installation of rural broadband and an overview of reputation management.

Councillor Moore reported on the work of the Corporate Governance Group in what had been a very busy year. He commended officers for the speed and clarity of their reporting which made the job of scrutinising much easier.

In terms of the Partnership Delivery Group, Councillor Mrs Smith informed Council about the very interesting presentations by Positive Futures and Metropolitan Housing.

Councillors Wheeler and Chewings reported on the very successful scrutiny by Performance Management Board of Edwalton Golf Course and the excellent work done by the group in challenging the Council's partners to improve performance.

It was RESOLVED that:

- a) the work undertaken by the four scrutiny groups during 2016/17 be endorsed.

29. Notice of Motions

a) The following Motion was proposed by Councillor R Mallender and seconded by Councillor S Hull

"This council will ensure that all Minutes of member groups, including local growth boards, should be publically available on the Rushcliffe Borough Council website, as are minutes of committees and council meetings."

Councillor Mallender felt that the minutes of all meetings should be made publically available so that the public could see what was being discussed in a transparent manner. Councillor Plant added that in some cases certain parts of a discussion may need to be redacted (for example to protect sensitive information) but that other areas of the debate should be available for the public to view. She was particularly keen for the minutes of growth boards to be made available as there was considerable interest in these from local residents.

Councillor Robinson highlighted his disappointment that this motion had been brought before the Council as it was very similar to a motion which was lost less than a year ago. He explained that the Council has a different approach to Councillor Working Groups as these are non-decision making bodies whose purpose is to consider all of the options, and debate different ideas and solutions, before making a recommendation. That recommendation, and any necessary supporting evidence, would naturally be brought to a decision-making body, all of which are open and accessible to members of the public and minuted. He felt that it was important that members of a Working Group were able to talk freely before making a recommendation to a public group. Councillor Lawrence felt that residents tended to see information published by the Council as facts and decisions whether they reflect approved policy or not. Councillor Clarke considered that making the minutes of Working Groups publically available would restrict ideas and discussion, and inhibit creative thinking.

On being put to the vote the Motion was lost.

b) The following Motion was proposed by Councillor R Jones and seconded by Councillor G Davidson

"This Council resolves that in future large residential developments it is an absolute condition that an adequate area of play space is provided within the site including for ball games"

Councillor Jones advised the Council he wished to alter the Motion. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that, with the consent of the meeting, this was allowable under the terms of the Constitution and the proposed alteration to the Motion was circulated. Its effect would have been to add the following words to the end of the Motion: '*... and that a draft supplementary planning document be prepared and presented very soon*'.

On being put to the vote, Councillors did not consent to the Motion being altered in the manner proposed.

Councillor Jones, therefore, proposed the original Motion explaining that as the Borough prided itself on being a good place to live with good facilities it must not lose sight of the importance of play facilities for children on new developments.

He said that there were far fewer opportunities for children and young people to play outside in the fresh air than when he was a child; that free play outside was essential to tackling childhood obesity; and that it was the Borough Council's responsibility to provide safe places for children to play and meet. He highlighted that whilst extensive consultation was carried out on the Local Plan and individual planning applications, this was targeted at, and responded to, by adults – the voices of children and young people were not sought or heard. He claimed that new supplementary planning guidance was required to ensure that adequate play facilities were provided within all new developments.

Councillor Davidson seconded the Motion but reserved his right to speak.

Councillor Robinson stated that he found it very hard to disagree with the principles behind the Motion and made it clear he felt there was a very strong need for safe places to play. However, he considered the Motion to be ineffective and unworkable, and an ill reflection of the eloquent verbal comments presented to the meeting. He felt that the Motion, as submitted, was subjective, open to interpretation and undefined. He invited Councillor Upton to propose an amendment to the Motion.

Councillor Upton proposed an amendment to the Motion which, if agreed, would result in the amended Motion reading as follows:

“In line with Council and national planning policy this Council resolves to ensure that all future residential developments, where it is practicable to do so, will provide public play spaces for all age groups including space for informal ball games”

Councillor Upton added that the amended Motion supported the spirit of play spaces in new residential developments and that these should be for all age groups. A number of Councillors raised concern about the use of the words 'where practicable' and highlighted that they felt this gave developers a loop hole to exploit. Councillor Mason, in seconding the amendment and by way of explaining the use of the phrase 'where practicable', said that some sites may not need additional play spaces if they are considered to be very small or are clearly near an existing facility.

On being put to the vote the amendment to the Motion was accepted and the amended Motion became the substantive Motion.

On being put to the vote the substantive Motion was carried. The Council, therefore, agreed that: *“In line with Council and national planning policy this Council resolves to ensure that all future residential developments, where it is practicable to do so, will provide public play spaces for all age groups including space for informal ball games”*.

c) The following Motion was proposed by Councillor S Mallender and seconded by Councillor R Mallender

"This council will put in place guidelines for the demolition of buildings, to apply across the Borough, not just in conservation areas and in the vicinity of listed

buildings, to ensure that all conditions are met and that measures to make sure public and employee health and safety are in place."

Councillor S Mallender provided some background information to Council about a recent demolition in her ward and her experience of trying to take action on behalf of her residents. She felt that her experience, and therefore those of Rushcliffe residents in similar circumstances, could have been made easier and more effective if the Council had guidelines for the demolition of buildings on its website.

Councillor Upton believed that there was already sufficient national statutory guidance in this area and that there was no need for the Council to provide further guidance. He felt that introducing more local guidelines would be unnecessary complex and overly bureaucratic. Site safety under these circumstances was the responsibility of the Health and Safety Executive and that this Council should not seek to replicate the powers of others.

On being put to the vote the Motion was lost.

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

a) Question from Councillor Plant to Councillor Upton

"Could the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning tell me how many homeless households are at present in temporary accommodation, including B+B accommodation, and whether the number of homeless households has increased significantly in comparison to previous years?"

Councillor Upton responded that there are currently ten families or individuals in temporary accommodation – two in bed and breakfast, two in refuge accommodation and six in Hound Lodge hostel. He continued to state that in the year to date, the Council had received 29 homeless applications, which was 12 more than the same period last year. This upward trend reflects the national position and the Council's success in rehousing people demonstrates how seriously the Council takes this issue.

Supplementary question

Councillor Plant asked Councillor Upton what the 'significant number' of people rehoused was?

Councillor Upton replied that 19 families or individuals out of 29 applications had been rehoused.

b) Question from Councillor MacInnes to Councillor Moore

"What arrangements have been planned for consultation with Members on the 2018/19 Budget and Financial Strategy?"

Councillor Moore responded that Councillors will be fully involved in the budget process as in previous years. Initial workshop sessions, an afternoon and evening session, are being planned for early December to take into account the implications of the Autumn Statement. The outcome of these workshops, and

the information in the budget settlement due in December, will determine whether a further workshop is required in January 2018.

c) Question from Councillor MacInnes to Councillor Mason

“What progress has been made in identifying an alternative site for the Rushcliffe Borough Council and Nottinghamshire County Council services currently located at the Abbey Road Depot site in West Bridgford?”

Councillor Mason responded that the Council is continuing to work on various options to identify a preferred site in line with the recommendations agreed by Cabinet in September 2016. Officers are working on a business case due to be considered in March 2018. She assured Councillors that the Council was still on track to relocate the depot by March 2020.

Supplementary question

Councillor MacInnes stated that he had hoped for more details about the work to date including where options had already been discounted.

Councillor Mason responded that she was unable to give any further information at present as much of the work was commercially sensitive. However, she assured Councillors that information would be disseminated as soon as it was available and at a point where it would not put the project at risk.

d) Question from Councillor Edwards to Councillor Edyvean

“What progress has been made in exploring the setting-up of a property development company and revisiting the Social Housing allocation since the setting of this year's Council Budget in early March?”

Councillor Edyvean responded that officers have been exploring the best options for the Council's involvement in property companies and property development, and these options will be presented to Cabinet later this year in time to make suitable provision in the 2018/19 budget allocation. £909k from the 2017/18 budget has been allocated for working in partnership with Registered Housing Providers on new affordable housing and there is currently a further £450k in the budget for the next three years.

Supplementary question

Councillor Edwards asked if the property development company under consideration would take the lead in the Borough Council building more social housing directly.

Councillor Edyvean stated that he would report back to Councillors within the next seven days after consulting with officers.

e) Question from Councillor Edwards to Councillor Mason

“What progress has been made in bringing a recommendation made in August 2016 from the Community Development Group to Cabinet to invest the proceeds

of the sale of the Borough Art Collection in a feature sculpture/piece of art at our new Arena?"

Councillor Mason responded that the Council had now been at the Arena for nine months and that it was felt important to establish how the public space at was used before progressing with this project. It is clear that an opportunity exists to install an eye-catching outdoor public seating area on the paved area to the front of the building. The income from the art collection sale, £15k, has been supplemented with a budget for soft landscaping at the Arena, providing a total budget of £25k. Soft landscaping outside the building and the interior exhibition space are both being considered alongside the exterior paved area. Aesthetics are being balanced with usability and cost to find the best solution overall.

Supplementary question

Councillor Edwards reported that he was glad that progress was being made but felt that the Community Development Group recommendation was being diluted. Councillor Edwards asked that Cabinet make the project a priority for the coming months.

Councillor Mason reported that officers were already looking at how best to maximise the £25k that is available.

The meeting closed at 9.43pm.

MAYOR