

**MINUTES  
OF THE MEETING OF THE  
COUNCIL**

**THURSDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 2021**

Held at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road, West  
Bridgford  
and live streamed on the Rushcliffe Borough Council YouTube channel

**PRESENT:**

Councillors S Mallender (Chairman), T Combellack (Vice-Chairman), R Adair, S Bailey, B Bansal, M Barney, N Begum, A Brennan, B Buschman, R Butler, N Clarke, G Dickman, A Edyvean, M Gaunt, P Gowland, B Gray, L Healy, R Inglis, Mrs C Jeffreys, R Jones, R Mallender, D Mason, G Moore, J Murray, A Phillips, F Purdue-Horan, S J Robinson, K Shaw, D Simms, J Stockwood, Mrs M Stockwood, C Thomas, R Upton, D Viridi, J Walker, R Walker, L Way, G Wheeler and G Williams

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

L Ashmore	Director of Development and Economic Growth
D Banks	Director of Neighbourhoods
T Coop	Democratic Services Officer
P Linfield	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
K Marriott	Chief Executive
S Sull	Service Manager - Legal Services
H Tambini	Democratic Services Manager
L Webb	Democratic Services Officer

**APOLOGIES:**

Councillors K Beardsall, J Cottee, L Howitt and J Wheeler

**22 Declarations of Interest**

The Mayor invited declarations of interest. A number of Councillors declared an interest in Item 9 – Petition: Community Governance Review (Bingham Town Council) as follows:

Councillor Purdue-Horan stated that he is a member of Bingham Town Council and would be leaving the room during the debate.

Councillor J Stockwood declared a non-pecuniary interest and stated that he would leave the room during the debate.

Councillor M Stockwood declared an interest and stated that she would not take part in the debate but intended to remain in the room.

Councillor Williams declared an interest as a member of Bingham Town Council and stated that he would leave the room during the debate.

Councillor R Walker declared an interest as Chairman of the Standards Committee, and the recent Hearings Committee, that heard complaints that could be considered to relate to matters in the petition. He went on to state that he had not considered the recommendations included in the report in either role. In addition, the report focuses on the community governance review provisions in the Local Government Involvement and Public Health Act and Councillor R Walker reported to Council that he did not feel this was a standards matter nor one that he could not approach with an open mind and without predetermination. Therefore, he did not intend to stand down from Council for the item.

Councillor Mason declared an interest as a member of the Standards Committee, and the recent Hearings Committee. She informed Council that the recommendations in the report, and the report content, related to matters that she had not considered in those roles and, therefore, she felt that she could approach the debate with an open mind and without predetermination, and did not intend to stand down from Council for the item.

Councillor Phillips declared an interest as a member of the Standards Committee, and the recent Hearings Committee, that heard complaints that could be considered to relate to matters in the petition. He went on to state that he had not considered the recommendations included in the report in either role. Therefore, he did not intend to stand down from Council for the item.

Councillor R Mallender declared an interest as a member of the Standards Committee, and the recent Hearings Committee, that heard complaints that could be considered to relate to matters in the petition. He went on to say that the recommendations included in the report, and the report content, relate to a community governance review and had not been considered by him in either role so he felt he could approach the debate with an open mind and without predetermination, and did not intend to stand down from Council for the item.

Councillor Simms declared an interest as his wife is a Bingham Town Councillor. He informed Council that he felt he could approach the debate with an open mind and in an unprejudiced manner, and therefore intended to take an active role in the debate.

Councillor Brennan declared an interest as a former member of the Standards Committee where complaints were heard that may be deemed to relate to the content of the report under consideration this evening. She stated that the complaints dealt with did not relate to the complaints outlined in the petition and therefore did not intend to stand down for the discussion of the item.

Councillor Clarke declared an interest as the County Councillor for Bingham West but informed Council that he had no direct involvement with Bingham Town Council. He also made Council aware that he was a former member of the Standards Committee but had not considered any items in either role that were relevant to the report or its recommendation so did not intend to stand down from Council for the item.

Councillor Combellack informed Council that she is a former member of the Standards Committee but had no interest to declare in relation to tonight's

matters.

Councillor Gray declared an interest as a member of the Standards Committee and informed Council that the recommendations in the report, and the report content, related to matters that he had not considered in that role and, therefore, he felt that he could approach the debate with an open mind and without predetermination, and did not intend to stand down from Council for the item.

Councillor Bailey declared an interest as the former Chairman of the Standards Committee where complaints which could be considered as relating to the petition were discussed. She assured Council that she had not considered the recommendations in the report, or the report content, in that role and therefore did not consider this to be prejudicial to the item under discussion this evening. Councillors Bailey informed Council that she would not be standing down from Council for the debate.

No other declarations of interest were made.

### **23 Minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2021**

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 1 July 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

### **24 Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor informed Council that she had attended 17 engagements since the last Council meeting. These events included the Taste of Rushcliffe event, the opening of Busy Bees nursery in Edwalton. The Mayor noted that she enjoyed attending the Kite Festival at Rushcliffe Country Park, the Hickling Scarecrow Festival and the Proms in the Park event at Bridgford Park. The Mayor was pleased to inform the Council that she had completed her 98 mile walk around the Borough to raise money for her chosen charities and had also made her 100th blood donation and encouraged residents and councillors to donate blood if they were able to do so.

### **25 Leader's Announcements**

The Leader was pleased to inform the Council that the Freeport outline business case had been submitted and hoped that the project would be up and running by March 2022. The Leader stated that Rushcliffe Country Park had been awarded green flag status for the 15th time and that the Council was investing in facilities at the country park including a café and were also applying for funding for a changing places facility which would improve accessibility to the park.

### **26 Chief Executive's Announcements**

There were no Chief Executive's announcements.

The Mayor informed Council that it was her intention to switch items 7 and 8 to allow the presentation of the Petition to be followed immediately by the report

relating to the petition.

## 27 **Citizens' Questions**

The Mayor invited Mr Tony Wallace to read his Citizen's Question as submitted:

**“Oppressive behaviour and harassment of employees is unlawful. It impacts negatively on the working environment and on the work that the organisation strives to deliver. Does Rushcliffe Borough Council agree that there's no place in the modern workplace for behaviours that could be described as harassment or oppressive in the treatment of any member of staff by an elected Councillor?”**

Councillor Moore thanked Mr Wallace for his question and stated that Rushcliffe Borough Council agree that there is no place in the modern workplace for this kind of behaviour.

## 28 **Petitions**

Under Standing Order 10, the Mayor invited Mr Fox to present the petition entitled 'Bingham Deserves Better':

Mr Fox introduced himself as a member of the 'Bingham Deserves Better' group formed of ex-town councillors and concerned residents seeking the Borough Council's intervention to bring about reform at Bingham Town Council.

Mr Fox explained that it was the view of the 'Bingham Deserves Better' group that some town councillors had repeatedly broken the Nolan Principles of ethical standards in public life and that this was indicative of widespread and longstanding concerns about the leadership of Bingham Town Council. Mr Fox highlighted that multiple complaints had been made to the Monitoring Officer over the last two years about concerning behaviour and dubious decision making at the town council. He referenced the recent Borough Council Standards Committee investigation into allegations of bullying and harassment of the town council Clerk by two town councillors and informed Council that as far as the residents of Bingham were concerned the findings of the Standards Committee, which had been widely publicised, had not been acted upon by those concerned.

Mr Fox went on to say that the petition, which was submitted in advance of the previously mentioned Standards Committee Hearing, met the requirements contained within the legislation to trigger a Community Governance Review despite being conducted during a national lockdown. The strength of feeling within the Bingham community should be clear to Councillors. The petition calls for Bingham Town Council to be temporarily dissolved pending new elections in order to create a collaborative and cohesive town council moving forward. Mr Fox suggested that a toxic environment at Bingham Town Council was damaging to the reputation and credibility of both councils and called upon Borough Councillors to take the robust action required to resolve the situation.

## 29 **Petition: Community Governance Review (Bingham Town Council)**

Councillors Purdue-Horan, J Stockwood and Williams stepped out of the chamber for the consideration of this item.

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough Wide Leadership, Councillor Robinson, commended Mr Fox, and his team, for their hard work and dedication in putting the petition together and thanked him for the passion with which he presented it.

Councillor Robinson stated that the Nolan Principles to which Mr Fox had referred were a fundamental part of all tiers of government and that he felt there was no valid excuse to not abide by these or to seek support when these principles were not adhered to. He mentioned the Local Government Association and the National Association of Local Councils, both of whom offered support and guidance when local authorities were faced with challenges and they did not feel equipped to deal with.

Councillor Robinson highlighted the two actions called for by the 'Bingham Deserves Better' petition: firstly, that the Borough Council dissolves Bingham Town Council and takes over its operation until new elections can be held; and secondly, that the Borough Council takes action to reset the culture and strengthen the procedures at Bingham Town Council. He reminded Councillors that the petition was not about the Standards Committee, not about the behaviour of two councillors, not about the budget and finances at the town council; it is about this Council considering the two calls for action contained within the petition.

The Leader referenced the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the specific guidance relating to Community Governance Reviews published in 2010. He informed Council that this was the legislative lens through which the petition had to be viewed. The petition is effectively asking the Borough Council to trigger new elections in Bingham; the Council's legal advisors, both internal and external, have advised that this is not something the Borough Council can do within the aforementioned legislation. Elections and the electoral cycle are pillars of local democracy.

Councillor Robinson drew Council's attention to the Chief Executive's report and the five recommendations that she had proposed. He outlined his intention to strengthen the final recommendation to ensure that robust and tangible action is taken to address the situation highlighted in the 'Bingham Deserves Better' petition. The revised recommendation offers to establish an improvement board to provide support and oversee changes at Bingham Town Council, and also calls upon the Council's Monitoring Officer to make changes to the Council's Constitution in order for this to happen.

The Leader outlined the key features of the proposed improvement board, such as an independent chairman, appropriate sector-focused support, and individuals committed to driving the improvements outlined as necessary by the petition to ensure Bingham Town Council is more efficient, effective, fit for purpose and serves the needs of the local community. Councillor Robinson also committed to write to the new Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities requesting that the Community Governance legislation is

updated to ensure it is also fit for purpose. In addition, he will write to both local Members of Parliament to outline the situation and seek their support in moving forward.

Councillor Robinson concluded the presentation of the Community Governance Review (Bingham Town Council) report by urging Bingham Town Council officers and councillors to listen to their residents and take on board the views expressed via the petition. He asked the town council work with the Borough Council and to take up the offer of an improvement board to address the concerns expressed by the community, to improve local democracy, and to resolve the governance issues perceived to be damaging the town council. He concluded by stating his desire to make Bingham a better place to live and work.

Councillor Edyvean seconded the recommendations contained within the report, including the revised recommendation e), and reserved the right to speak.

Under Standing Order 13, Councillor Gowland called for an adjournment to the debate. This was seconded by Councillor Gray and agreed by the Mayor.

The meeting was adjourned for 7 minutes.

On reconvening the meeting, the Mayor invited Councillor J Walker to speak. Councillor Walker thanked Council for the adjournment and asked Councillor Gaunt to speak on this item.

Councillor Gaunt shared his experience of sitting on Ruddington Parish Council where the meetings were polite, inclusive and focused on serving the needs of the local community. He recognised that this was very different from the situation that appeared to be present in Bingham as highlighted in the petition and in the local press. Councillor Gaunt welcomed the stronger final recommendation proposed by Councillor Robinson and asked for confirmation regarding who would be on the improvement board, and whether it would include anyone from Bingham, and if progress would be reported at the next Council meeting.

Councillor Jones informed Council that in his view Bingham Town Council requires a reset but recognised that the legal position in this matter limits the Borough Council to just a few actions. He stated that it is not within the gift of the Borough Council to dissolve Bingham Town Council as requested and drew Council's attention to paragraph 4.28 of the report which highlights that an offer of support was made over a year ago but was never taken up. He recognised the strength of feeling displayed by the local community through the petition and expressed his support for the Leader's revised recommendation.

Councillor R Mallender expressed sympathy to the residents of Bingham and disappointment in the town council. He recognised that Bingham is a growing community with significant levels of investment in both housing and infrastructure and that something clearly needed to be done to improve the governance of Bingham Town Council. He highlighted that it is difficult to disassociate the petition and the report under consideration from the

investigation and conclusion of the Standards Committee and expressed disappointment that the recommendations of that Committee had not been acted upon. He thanked Mr Fox and the 'Bingham Deserves Better' group for bringing the petition to the meeting and hoped that a better way forward could be found for all members of the community.

Councillor Thomas recognised that a Community Governance Review is not the correct method for dealing with the current situation in Bingham but wished to support what action could be taken to improve the situation. Therefore, she suggested a further change to the revised recommendation and asked for the inclusion of a commitment to bring terms of reference and the board's membership back to Council for approval.

Councillor Robinson apologised for not making his intentions clear. He stated that he was committed to bringing a report back to the next Council meeting, in December, detailing the membership and terms of reference of the improvement board which would broadly be based on the model adopted by Nottingham City Council recently. Councillor Thomas withdrew her amendment to the revised recommendation.

Councillor Clarke informed Council that in his view Councillor Robinson had clearly and succinctly set out the current situation and proposed a solution within the bounds of the legislation as it stands. The report outlines an extremely complex position and the addition of the offer of an improvement board strengthens the recommendations of the report. He urged Bingham Town Council to accept this offer of assistance. He hoped that the petition has acted as a catalyst for transformational change and improvement within Bingham Town Council. As a location, Bingham is a fantastic place to live and a significant amount of investment is being made by a number of partners to improve the town even more.

Councillor Butler expressed his concern for the people of Bingham and reminded Council that the town had been voted the best place to raise a family in a recent national survey. It was, therefore, even more distressing that the people of Bingham felt that their views were not being listened to by the councillors they elected to represent them. He welcomed the petition and the recommendations in the report designed to address the concerns raised by the petition and hoped that Bingham Town Council saw this as an opportunity to resolve the unfortunate situation.

Councillor Gowland supported the actions outlined in the recommendations to the report to avoid the situation in Bingham bringing local democracy into disrepute. Councillor Simms thanked those behind the petition for bringing the situation to the Council's attention and recognised that Bingham does indeed deserve better.

In reflecting on the debate, Councillor Edyvean highlighted that there wasn't anyone within the Council Chamber that did not recognise the hard work that had gone into bringing this petition forward or anyone that would disagree with the importance of good governance in local government. In conclusion, Councillor Robinson spoke directly to Mr Fox in the public gallery. He pointed out that the entire Council seemed to be in agreement that the situation needed

to be addressed and was committed to doing what it could within the bounds of the current legislation to resolve the situation. He stated that the Borough Council wants what is best for the residents of Bingham. He wished he could have come with a fully formed plan of action for the improvement board so that it could be set up immediately following the meeting; however, the situation is very fluid, and the recommendation had only been formed the previous day. Finally, Councillor Robinson implored Bingham Town Council to accept the offer of support in the form of the improvement board and commit to addressing residents' concerns as highlighted in the petition submitted by Mr Fox on behalf of the 'Bingham Deserves Better' group.

It was proposed by Councillor Robinson and seconded by Councillor Edyvean and **RESOLVED** that:

- a) the Council does not accept the Petition;
- b) the Council does not proceed to conduct a Community Governance Review of Bingham Town Council;
- c) the Council provides a written response to the Petition organisers, indicating its reasons for rejection of the Petition;
- d) the Chief Executive writes to Bingham Town Council and Nottinghamshire County Council sharing the contents of this report and setting out what is agreed by Council; and
- e) the Council supports a commitment to working collaboratively with Bingham Town Council and will write to offer to set up an improvement board to review governance and improvement issues at the Town Council and asks the Monitoring Officer to make any necessary changes to the constitution to allow Council to establish such a group.

Councillors Purdue-Horan, J Stockwood and Williams returned to their seats.

### 30 **Appointment of Independent Persons**

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough Wide Leadership, Councillor Robinson presented the report of the Monitoring Officer which recommended the appointment of Mr Christopher Richards and Ms Helen Richardson as the Council's Independent Persons for standards as required by the Localism Act 2011 (the Act). It was noted that on 11 July 2019, Council adopted the Best Practice Principals and recommendations of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL). Best Practice 7 states: "Local authorities should have access to at least two Independent Persons." Therefore, the Portfolio Holder asked the Council to support the recommendations in the report to meet its statutory obligations as prescribed by the Act and thanked Mr Baggaley for his work as the Council's independent person since 2013.

Councillor Moore seconded the recommendations of the report and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor J Walker supported the recommendations in the report and thanked



Mr Baggaley for his work as the Council's independent person since 2013.

Councillor Jones, Mallender and Thomas all supported the recommendations in the report.

It was proposed by Councillor Robinson and seconded by Councillor Moore and **RESOLVED** that the Council appoint Mr Christopher Richards and Ms Helen Richardson as its Independent Persons for standards under section 28(7) of the Act for a fixed period of two years.

### 31 **Devolution and "Levelling Up" in Nottinghamshire**

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough Wide Leadership, Councillor Robinson presented the report of the Chief Executive which recommended that Council support and endorse the Leader and Chief Executive's involvement in continued discussions about a "County Deal" in Nottinghamshire with any arrangements affecting Rushcliffe Borough Council to be brought back to Council for full discussion and approval prior to adoption. It was explained that the Prime Minister had set out a vision for new devolution deals across the country in his "Levelling Up" speech offering counties the ability to have devolved powers like some of the cities. On the same day, the Secretary State for Housing, Communities and Local Government wrote to Local Authority Leaders and Chief Executive setting out a commitment to "devolving power to local places and closer to citizens." It was hoped that the Council's involvement in the devolution and "Levelling Up" in Nottinghamshire would provide efficiency and effectiveness to local government authorities in Nottinghamshire.

It was expected that deals would include significant reform proposals, including ways to achieve greater financial efficiency, administrative streamlining and / or more joined up services in an area. It was explained that this would not mean that unitary status for the county of Nottinghamshire would be required but that it would include partnership working with Nottingham City Council. The Portfolio Holder was pleased to report that Nottinghamshire District Leaders and Chief Executives were invited to meet with the Leader and Chief Executive of Nottinghamshire County Council to discuss working closely together with the City Council to support a bid to be a "pathfinder" area for County Deals and that more details will be provided in the Government's Levelling Up white paper in the autumn.

It was proposed that the starting point for the governance for any devolution deal based on a County Deal is the Economic Prosperity Committee which was originally set up in 2015. The Council were informed that legal advice will be sought on any amendments that would need to be made and any sub groups/committees that would be set up.

The Leader assured the Council that any formal agreements that would impact on the Borough Council would be brought back to Council for full discussion and debate prior to an agreement and adoption.

Councillor Edyvean seconded the recommendations and was pleased to note that a "County Deal" was widely supported across political parties.

Councillor Gowland noted that the Labour group supported the recommendations outlined in the report. She suggested that a town council in West Bridgford be appointed to deal with planning applications, West Bridgford High Street and the schedules of grass cutting. Councillor Gowland stated that it was essential for powers to be devolved to local authorities in order to tackle austerity. It was noted that the number of employees of central government had increased by 23% whereas the number of employees of local government had decreased by 30%. Additionally, spending fell by 18% in the East Midlands compared to 13% nationally. Councillor Gowland suggested that the County Deal should focus on reducing inequality and tackling the climate crisis, economic development, and transport. It was welcomed that any formal decisions that would affect the Borough would be debated at Council before their implementation.

Councillor Jones was pleased that local authorities would receive more funding. Councillor Jones stated that he opposed Nottinghamshire becoming a unitary authority as he believed it was a waste of time and resources. He also noted that he understood the Leader's commitment to maintain local democracy.

Councillor R Mallender was pleased to see that local authorities would be working together in order to make improvements to Nottinghamshire's governance. Councillor Mallender stated that the East Midlands currently received low investment from central government to tackle issues such as the environment and therefore, expressed his support for the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Thomas suggested that the Councils currently willing to be involved in the levelling up agreement should do all they can to ensure that all Councils in Nottinghamshire be involved.

Councillor Upton was pleased with the implementation of a County Deal as he had always campaigned against a unitary authority for Nottinghamshire. Councillor Upton said that the levelling up of Nottinghamshire had the potential of economies of scale in areas such as waste and planning.

In response to the comments above, Councillor Robinson stated that the ambitions of the county deal would include levelling up in areas such as wealth inequality, health and social care and strategies for tackling the climate crisis. Councillor Robinson informed the Council that it had been discussed that one of the areas which could be levelled up would be the standard of houses built across the county.

It was proposed by Councillor Robinson and seconded by Councillor Edyvean and **RESOLVED** that the Council supports and endorses the Leader and Chief Executive's involvement in continued discussions about a "County Deal" in Nottinghamshire with any arrangements affecting Rushcliffe Borough Council to be brought back to Council for full discussion and approval prior to adoption.

- a) The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Jones and seconded by Councillor Begum.

Prior to presenting his motion Councillor Jones informed the Mayor that he wished to make a small alteration under Standing Order 14 (highlighted in italics below). After outlining the alteration, consent was given by Council and Councillor Jones proceeded to move the motion.

“This Council calls on the Government to provide funding over five years to local authorities accommodating vulnerable Afghan Refugees so that practical and social support can be provided and in the case of large families, considers deferring the application of benefit caps to families as they are comprised on arrival to avoid recreating poverty and homelessness.”

Councillor Jones informed Council, in moving the motion, that this was a call for the government to extend its current three-year funding model to five years in recognition of the long-term support and stability needed by refugee families. Evidence from the Syrian Resettlement Programme should be sufficient to demonstrate that longer term funding is needed for the following reasons: funding is required to set up homes including basic furniture and provisions, it is required to fund the refugee workers to support families to register with GPs, apply for jobs or benefits, set up a bank account or find a gas and electricity supplier; and this is before addressing the emotional distress caused by trauma, resettlement and building an entirely new life. Councillor Jones informed Council that resettlement takes time and requires stable funding which is why he has brought forward this motion to seek five-years' worth of funding instead of three as well as requesting the deferment of the application of the benefits cap for refugees from Afghanistan to avoid creating further hardship and homelessness.

Councillor Begum seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Brennan proposed an amendment to the motion. She stressed that no one can have failed to be shocked by how quickly the situation in Afghanistan deteriorated after the withdrawal of western troops or to fear deeply for the safety of the women and girls left behind. It was noted that simply the use of social media would not secure their freedoms and safety. The UK government has been at the forefront of humanitarian aid with relocation and resettlement schemes already operational such as “Operation Warm Welcome” and the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Scheme. It was explained that under these schemes that £200 million of government funding would enable the UK to welcome 20,000 Afghan citizens. Additionally, it was announced by the Home Office that that everyone arriving under these schemes would be given indefinite leave to remain. Granting Indefinite Leave to remain provides certainty and stability to those resettling in the UK. It provides the right to work and recourse to public funds, including social housing and homelessness assistance. Whilst this Council would like to offer as much support to displaced families as possible, it seems a little premature to suggest that longer term funding is required to schemes that are only weeks old. The Conservative Group cannot support the motion as it stands and proposes the following amended motion:

“This Council calls on the Government to provide funding over five years to local authorities accommodating vulnerable Afghan Refugees so that practical and social support can be provided and This Council welcomes the Government’s comprehensive plans to support the relocation of vulnerable Afghan refugees into the UK but calls on the Government to keep under review the decision to provide funding over three years to local authorities to support these plans, with a view to a possible extension if necessary and, in the case of large families, considers deferring, if necessary and for a limited period, the application of benefit caps to avoid recreating poverty and homelessness to further support their integration into local communities.”

Councillor Barney seconded the amendment and reserved the right to speak.

The Mayor asked Councillor Jones if he supported the amendment. He informed Council that he did not as he felt the amendment diluted the original motion.

Councillor J Walker informed Council that she felt sufficient evidence existed from the resettlement programme for Syrian refuge families to support an initial five years of funding and that the motion should not be amended, and Councillor Thomas agreed that the amendment changed both the meaning and sentiment of the original motion so she would not be supporting it. Councillor Begum reported to Council that she had experience of supporting Syrian refuge families and the current programme for Afghan refugees did not offer the right level of support as it stands.

Councillor Barney reminded Council of the Moment of Reflection at the beginning of the evening where the Tamil community stressed the value of doing things for others. He informed Council that he was personally very moved by the TV footage of the recent events in Afghanistan and would be seeking to do everything he could to help families that were resettled locally. He reported that he had been honoured to be involved in conversations at County Hall which started with the premise, ‘how can we help?’ Therefore, he felt it was important to get behind the scheme as it stands now to take practical action to help those families in need, and improve the scheme later, if it is required.

Councillor Brennan thanked Councillor Barney for his heartfelt comments and reminded Council that she felt that it was a distraction to focus on extending the scheme at this point when people had worked very hard to put it in place quickly, and that displaced families needed the Council to focus on the practical ways in which they could help not argue about what more could be done in the future with greater levels of funding.

On being put to the vote the amendment was carried. There was no further debate and the motion, as amended was carried.

- b) The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Thomas and seconded by Councillor Jones.

“This Council recognises that food waste contributes hugely to climate change and appreciates the carbon benefits that could be realised if Rushcliffe's household food waste was collected separately and

processed via Anaerobic Digestion or In-Vessel Composting. Council will seek to influence relevant partners and agencies to bring this forward as soon as is practically possible.”

Councillor Thomas informed Council, in moving the motion, that sending food waste to landfill produced methane gas and incinerating food waste produced carbon monoxide, both of which contributed significantly to global warming. If food waste is processed via Anaerobic Digestion or In-Vessel Composting to produce compost, biofuel and fertiliser then it makes a positive contribution to climate change. Councillor Thomas also informed Council that separating food waste at source increases resident awareness of food wastage, which may in itself help to reduce waste, and keeps bins cleaner. The Environment Bill is expected to require the separate collection of food waste from 2023/24, and whilst funding might be available later, Councillor Thomas informed Council that this was not a situation she felt the Council should be dragged into kicking and screaming but one they should choose to do as quickly as possible. Councillor Thomas informed Council that 37% of local authorities already provided a separate food waste collection service with an additional 11% collecting food waste with garden waste and 3% of local authorities provided both services. She felt that it was shameful that Rushcliffe fell into the category with 49% of local authorities providing no separate food waste collection service. Councillor Thomas recognised that the Borough Council was not the waste disposal authority but felt that more could be being done to influence the County Council.

Councillor Jones seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Inglis proposed an amendment to the motion informing Council that no one disagrees with the need for and environmental impact of separate food waste collection; however, he felt that the move was premature as the Environmental Bill had not yet reached Royal Assent and large areas of the Bill were still being worked upon. This authority did not have control over the end-to-end process and therefore has to work with a number of partners to ensure the environmental benefits can be realised. In addition, Councillor Inglis informed Council that the separate collection of food waste was just one part of the Environmental Bill and that it would not be prudent or pragmatic to focus on one area in advance of the whole picture being understood. In proposing the following amended motion, Councillor Inglis also made it clear that officers were already drawing up preliminary plans so that once the Bill had been agreed actions could be taken swiftly:

“This Council recognises that food waste contributes hugely to climate change and appreciates the carbon benefits that could be realised if Rushcliffe's household food waste was collected separately and processed via Anaerobic Digestion or In-Vessel Composting. Council will continue working with relevant partners and agencies to bring this forward as soon as is practically possible following any national guidelines set by Government in the forthcoming Environmental Bill.”

Councillor Clarke seconded the amendment and reserved the right to speak.

The Mayor asked Councillor Thomas if she supported the amendment.

Councillor Thomas was willing to accept the amendment if the second sentence of the motion was removed altogether. She believed that the Borough Council should be working on the draft of the Bill that has already been published so that swift action could be taken and that removing the second sentence of the motion indicates that intention. Councillor Gowland seconded the amendment to the amendment and Councillor Inglis agreed to accept the change. The amended motion now reads:

“This Council recognises that food waste contributes hugely to climate change and appreciates the carbon benefits that could be realised if Rushcliffe's household food waste was collected separately and processed via Anaerobic Digestion or In-Vessel Composting.”

Councillor Jones informed Council that the purpose of the motion was to encourage the Council to get a move on and not wait for legislation because the separate collection of food waste was clearly the right thing to do for the environment. Councillor R Mallender echoed that view and stressed that we should be reducing carbon emissions by any means possible to address the climate emergency.

Councillor Barney informed Council that the process of anaerobic digestion was getting much better and that he saw this as a very exciting time for the Council.

Councillor Gaunt asked whether this motion would in effect commit the Council to separate food waste collections regardless of whether the requirement remained in the final version of the Environment Bill.

Councillor Clarke informed Council that the County Council transport and environment committee were already in discussions about these matters including how it can be done, where the money will come from, how much of the Bill will be law and how much will be guidance. He stated that any change of this scale needs to be practically achievable and well thought through to avoid unintended and unpalatable consequences.

Councillor Thomas, in her right of reply, stated that the amendments had taken the teeth out of the motion but that it needed to happen because it's the right thing to do.

On being put to the vote, the amended motion was carried.

- c) The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor J Walker and seconded by Councillor Gowland.

“This Council calls on the government to halt the destructive programme of so called "planning reform" set out in the "Planning for the Future" White Paper, particularly the zoning proposals, and keep local councillors, communities and democracy at the heart of the planning process.”

Councillor J Walker informed Council, in moving the motion, that changes to planning legislation had repeatedly restricted the number of ways in which

local people can have a say in planning matters in their local area, the main one now being their involvement in the creation of a local plan. She recognised that change is definitely required, with the last significant policy review being the 1947 Town and County Planning Act. The Labour Group would like to see increased transparency, in particular the basis of assessment for housing need; improved and more effective engagement with existing residents; truly sustainable building; wildlife recovery and easy access to nature for residents; increased funds and resources to make it easier for residents to get involved in planning. Councillor J Walker summed up by explaining that the current planning reforms under consideration fall short of the five goals outlined above.

Councillor Gowland seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Upton informed Council that as Chairman of the Council's Planning Committee, a member of the County Council planning Committee and having worked with planning throughout his working life, it is clear that the planning system does need reforming. Put simply, some current planning rules are overly prescriptive, some are not strong enough and some are no longer relevant to the challenges communities face. However, it is vital that any reforms are carefully considered with input from all of those that participate in good and effective planning. This Council responded to all 24 proposals contained within the white paper and on the basis that it is vital that planning reform is grounded in local democracy, the Conservative Party will not be calling on the Government to halt local planning reform as requested in this motion. Councillor Upton did recognise that the reform paper was currently paused to ensure that all comments arising from the consultation exercise were taken into account and, whilst this was taking place, Rushcliffe would continue to build more houses because that is what the Borough needs.

Councillor Jones wondered if future consultation responses could be made available to Councillors as he felt that could have informed the debate. He went on to outline the many concerns he had with the white paper and in particular the plans to established zones that would, in effect, not require further planning permission. He stated that local residents and the council's that represent them should have more involvement and more local control not less.

Councillor R Mallender recognised that zoning is very popular and successful elsewhere but that it does not enhance local democracy and lead to a greater feeling of community control. He went on to note that some kind of planning reform is needed but that the current iteration of the white paper does not appear to hit the mark.

Councillor Thomas noted that the planning white paper would reduce democratic engagement and that there is considerable evidence to suggest that local residents care deeply about planning matters. Local knowledge is key to strategic development, but residents are not planners and this lack of knowledge and expertise often precludes their involvement. However, on a local level, planning consultation does work, direct mail and notices on lampposts, and it would seem detrimental to remove this stage of public consultation. She expressed concern about other changes already happening in advance of the publication of new legislation and called upon the Council to make its concerns heard.

Councillor R Walker outlined that many councillors had spoken about fundamental flaws in the planning process but were also calling for a halt to reforms designed to address many of those concerns. He recognised that no one wanted new houses built near them, but that they had to go somewhere and that the best way to be able to influence a process is to be part of the process – in this case ensuring that suitable infrastructure was in place to support the development for example.

Councillor Edyvean reminded Council that the opportunity to contribute to the consultation had passed and that reform was desperately needed; we might not agree with every detail, but the overall change is welcomed.

Councillor Gaunt reminded Council that the motion called for a halt to reform as outlined in white paper, not reform overall; there has to be a better way. Councillor Gowland supported this view and also stressed that local residents need to be able to participate in the planning process both strategic development and piecemeal changes such as home extensions.

Councillor J Walker expressed her disappointment with the debate which seemed to suggest the wholesale acceptance of the planning reforms outlined in the white paper including those which would decrease local democracy, and she called for a recorded vote.

FOR: Councillors B Bansal, N Begum, M Gaunt, P Gowland, B Gray, R Mallender, J Murray, K Shaw, C Thomas, J Walker and L Way

AGAINST: Councillors R Adair, S Bailey, M Barney, A Brennan, B Buschman, R Butler, N Clarke, T Combellack, G Dickman, A Edyvean, L Healy, R Inglis, C Jeffreys, R Jones, D Mason, G Moore, A Phillips, F Purdue-Horan, S Robinson, D Simms, J Stockwood, M Stockwood, R Upton, D Viridi, R Walker, D Wheeler, and G Williams

ABSTAIN: S Mallender

On being put to the vote, the motion was lost.

### 33 **Questions from Councillors**

a) Question from Councillor Jones to Councillor Inglis

“Precisely when will the Council get on top of the planning issues arising from the building on Sharphill and the several breaches of environmental requirements?”

Councillor Inglis responded that the Council acknowledges the environmental issues raised by Councillor Jones and takes the implementation and enforcement of the Supplementary Planning Framework very seriously. As such, the Council has recently restructured the Planning Service to create a new dedicated Planning Monitoring and Implementation role at Principal level in order to take a proactive lead on the Sharphill enforcement and others across the Borough.



Councillor Inglis also informed Council that the Planning Service Manager met with a Director from the housebuilder last week to raise the concerns about the potential environmental breaches and is expecting a response in the near future. In addition, a dedicated Officer in the Economic Growth team has been appointed to facilitate a resolution and liaise with the developer and local stakeholders.

Supplementary question

Councillor Jones asked:

“Given that the builders on Sharphill have not conformed to the Council’s Supplementary Planning Framework document, and that buildings have been and are being erected much closer to the Council’s nature reserve than that specified by this Council, what assurance can you give that the so-called developers will be made to apply them?”.

Councillor Inglis reported that the Council is investigating this issue and where breaches have occurred, the Council will seek to negotiate compliance with the developer. Although it is hoped it won’t be necessary, the Council can use appropriate enforcement powers where necessary.

b) Question from Councillor Gowland to Councillor Robinson

“Please can the Council tell me how much Voter ID will cost Rushcliffe Borough Council when running a General Election.”

Councillor Robinson notified Councillor Gowland that it is currently unclear exactly what will be involved and, therefore, he cannot answer the question at this time. However, most costs of delivering the general election can be reclaimed from the government. If there are extra duties that take up staff time and resources prior to the elections, then there may be a new burdens payment from Government.

Supplementary question

Councillor Gowland asked:

“How many cases of voter fraud were there in Rushcliffe at the last general election?”

Councillor Robinson informed Councillor Gowland that he did not have that information to hand but would ensure that it was circulated to Councillors within the next seven days.

The meeting closed at 9.45 pm.

CHAIRMAN