

MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE OVERVIEW GROUP
TUESDAY, 1 FEBRUARY 2022

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

PRESENT:

Councillors T Combellack (Chairman), B Bansal, R Butler, N Clarke, B Gray
and J Wheeler

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

D Banks	Director of Neighbourhoods
C Caven-Atack	Service Manager - Corporate Services
E Palmer	Communications and Customer Services Manager
L Webb	Democratic Services Officer
S Whittaker	Service Manager - Finance

APOLOGIES:

Councillor D Viridi

13 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

14 Minutes of the Meeting 2 November 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2021 were approved as a true
record of the meeting.

15 The Impact of Covid-19 on Rushcliffe Borough Council - Internal Focus

The Director – Neighbourhoods presented his report, which focused on the
impact of Covid-19 on the Council internally and explained that this topic had
been split into two parts to enable meaningful scrutiny, with the second report
discussing the external impact to follow in May 2022. The report outlined how
Rushcliffe Borough Council had responded and reacted to Covid-19, and how
the Council had activated its emergency plan to respond to the pandemic. The
report also outlined events which had occurred just prior to the pandemic,
including serious flooding in parts of the Borough, which had been dealt with.
The second part of this report detailed the effect of Covid-19 on the Council's
staff, services, and projects and it concluded with a reflection on some of the
lessons learnt with a view to improving similar responses in the future.

The Group questioned whether there would be any alterations to the Council's
emergency plan and the Director – Neighbourhoods explained that it was a

generic document, designed to be deployed when an emergency situation arose and no changes were anticipated for the current plan, as it was still fit for purpose.

The Group referred to paragraph 4.18 of the report and indicated that the whole of the Borough was affected by broadband and mobile connectivity issues, not just officers. The Director – Neighbourhoods indicated that the Council was in a good position with many officers already working from home prior to the pandemic. It was noted that there were 1.8% of houses within the Borough without broadband and that despite vouchers being made available from Nottinghamshire County Council, there were still issues and both the suppliers and the County Council should be encouraged to ensure that no one was without broadband or mobile phone connectivity.

The Director- Neighbourhoods reminded the Group of a recent Communities Scrutiny Group meeting, when the County Council had given an excellent presentation on the broadband roll out programme and future phases and suggested that if the topic was to be added as a scrutiny matrix, then the County Council should be involved.

The Director – Neighbourhoods explained how the Council had remained connected with its employees by encouraging staff to work from the Arena or the Contact Centre once or twice a week and it was hoped that this would help to attract and retain talent. Councillors recognised that officers were also able to remain connected with events such as the Red Umbrella sessions and virtual coffee mornings for home schooling parents. Based on the extreme hard work and adaptivity of the Council, Councillors asked questions about financial recognition and how it would be achieved. The Director – Neighbourhoods advised the Group that there had been some remuneration for those who have taken on extra roles, responsibilities, and duties during the pandemic but that it was not always possible to recognise staff financially. The Group was informed that there were different reward systems in place such as staff compliments in the Council's weekly newsletter, and that an area at Eastcroft Depot was set aside to share positive customer feedback with staff.

The Group raised questions regarding paragraph 4.44 in the report and queried what had happened next to those who had been re-homed during the pandemic. The Director – Neighbourhoods stated that support from the Government, with the 'Everybody In' grant, had enabled the Council to offer bed and breakfast accommodation to those in need. Afterwards, those people had been provided with different types of accommodation and supported by Framework and the Strategic Housing Team at the Council. It was also highlighted, that despite numbers of homeless people within the Borough being very low, it was still an ongoing challenge to ensure that they received the care and support they needed.

Thanks were given to ICT for helping Councillors with virtual meetings and the use of Microsoft Teams and Zoom.

Reference was made to paragraph 4.7 of the report regarding the flooding in February 2020, and the Group stated that it was pleased that this had been recognised.

The Group questioned whether it would be possible to monitor the well-being of staff with high workloads and the Director – Neighbourhoods agreed that staff well-being should continue to be monitored.

The Group asked questions about the levels of PPE during the pandemic and the Director – Neighbourhoods explained that the Council was in a fortunate position with regards to PPE during the pandemic, and that the Rushcliffe Borough Council did not require as much as other organisations.

The Group expressed its concerns that if employees worked from home too often, they might become isolated, and the Group was advised that office-based working was still important, and officers were now back working in their respective offices an average of two days per week.

The Group asked questions regarding how the pandemic had impacted on household waste and the shortage of drivers and the Director – Neighbourhoods explained that the Borough had seen a significant increase in waste tonnage, which had led to more frequent visits to disposal points, making working days longer. The additional pressures faced due to the national shortage of HGV drivers was also noted. The Director – Neighbourhoods informed the Group that the Council was providing financial incentives to the Council's HGV drivers and was currently training three loaders to gain their HGV licenses, which was being fully funded by the Council.

The Group referred to the issues of fly tipping and littering in the Borough during the pandemic and the Director – Neighbourhoods explained how the introduction of WISE for enforcement had had a positive outcome and that the Borough had seen a drop in fly tipping incidents in the last year. It was explained that communication campaigns had helped to reduce the statistic by providing residents with critical messages around how waste should be disposed of. The Group noted that the pandemic had caused an increase in littering during certain periods, including when restrictions had been reduced, and parks had been being heavily used and there had also been issues concerning the disposal of PPE by the public.

The Group asked questions regarding the hygiene regime at the Rushcliffe offices and the depot and asked if those measures would be maintained going forward to reduce the impact of colds and flu in general. The Director – Neighbourhoods agreed that this and other messages such as hand washing had a huge impact, and the regular cleaning of vehicles and touch points would be something the Council would continue with.

In conclusion, the Group gave its thanks to all staff for their work during the Covid-19 Pandemic and thanked officers for producing such a comprehensive reflective report. It was noted that this was an historic document, which people would look back on in years to come as a first-hand account of what had happened during the pandemic. The Councillors asked whether there had been a chance to share experiences from the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and the Director – Neighbourhoods advised that there had already been some discussions and it was agreed by the Group that Councillors would thank staff in the next issue of Staff Matters.

The Director – Neighbourhoods advised that the second report would focus on external factors such as residents, businesses, grants and the voluntary sector.

The Chairman suggested that given the significant issues covered in this report, it would be worthwhile to recirculate it to all Councillors, to allow them to comment and feedback to this Group.

It was RESOLVED that:

- a) a copy of the report be recirculated to all Councillors, for further consideration and comment; and
- b) the thanks expressed by Councillors be included in the next edition of Staff Matters.

16 **Finance and Performance Management Quarter 2**

The Service Manager – Finance presented the report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services, which detailed the quarter two position in terms of financial and performance monitoring for 2021/22. The report separately highlighted the Covid-19 variances.

The Service Manager – Finance referred to table 1 at paragraph 4.2 of the report, which summarised the position at Quarter 2. The table summarised the main variations from revenue efficiencies and Covid related pressures. It was noted that income lost related to Covid-19 totalled £0.129m, with in-year efficiency savings of £0.845m and non-ringfenced grant funding £0.036m. It was noted that, in regard to business rates, the Council was expecting a surplus of £3.113m but that a significant proportion would need to be appropriated into the Collection Fund Reserves (£1.765m) to cover the anticipated deficit that would arise next year and in 2023/24.

The Group suggested that sufficient attention had been given to continued marketing for the golf course and Rushcliffe Borough Council's other facilities following Covid-19. It was agreed that this feedback would be passed to the relevant team.

The Communications and Customer Services Manager referred to Appendix G of the report, which detailed the Strategic Scorecard summary table.

It was noted that there were fourteen strategic performance indicators that were falling below target, details of which were highlighted in the report.

It was explained that eight of the exceptions were covered in Quarter 1, with some of the measures impacted by lockdown or changes in resident behaviours, but they were no longer subject to the special reporting introduced in 2020/21 due to the easing of restrictions.

It was explained that the percentage of residents who believed that the Council provided value for money had been impacted by Covid. The pandemic had affected feelings of resident satisfaction across many areas, and this was replicated nationally. The Group was informed that the Council would continue

to educate residents about the role of the Council as the waste collection authority and would also explain how Council Tax was distributed among other key parts of the public sector. The Group was informed that the percentage of residents satisfied with the variety of ways they could contact the Council might have decreased due to Covid. For example, the closure of face-to-face services at the start of the pandemic. It was noted that this indicator had been addressed and there had been a wider discussion on how the Council could continue to engage with its residents through its forthcoming Customer Service and Communications strategies being finalised this spring.

The Communications and Customer Services Manager was pleased to note that the percentage of residents satisfied with the cleanliness of streets and appearance of parks and open spaces was positive and well within the targets set for performance within the contract.

The Communications and Customer Services Manager informed the Group about the percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting and the number of pavilions, community hall and playing field users. It was noted that there was no significant change from Quarter 1. He explained that more residents had been working from home due to plan B measures, and more waste had been created for home collection as a result of this.

It was noted that venue usage had been impacted by Covid-19, but the lifting of restriction had seen usage start to increase. The Communications and Customer Services Manager advised that Gamston Community Hall had seen favourable feedback since its refurbishment and plans were in place to roll out a new online booking system and to ensure consistent marketing.

The Communications and Customer Services Manager referred to the percentage of non-major application dealt with in eight weeks, or an agreed period and the percentage of householder planning applications processed within target time respectively. It was noted that as outlined in Quarter 1, the significant increase of over 40% of applications received continued to be managed proactively. He informed the Group that new recruitment had addressed the peak in workload, and this was having a positive impact on performance in the latest period. He added that a planning enforcement reporting system would be in place for Quarter 4.

The Communications and Customer Services Manager informed the Group that calls answered within 40 seconds would change to 60 seconds from April, in line with more up to date national benchmarking. He added that the previous months available data showed that 89% of Customer Service calls were answered within 60 seconds or less. He then addressed the number of household waste collections missed twice or more in a three-month period and explained that the reason for the negative change could be linked to staff changes or specific crews underperforming, and those issues were being addressed directly with the teams. It was noted that the Council understood that repeat failures could be frustrating and in-cab technology reminded and alerted crews of those issues. He informed the Group that of the 850,000 bins collected each quarter, 39 had been missed but the team would aim to decrease this going forward.

In respect of housing related indicators, the number of households living in temporary accommodation, connected to the withdrawal of Covid measures, to ensure that people were not evicted from their homes at the height of the pandemic was noted. The increase in the total number of households in temporary accommodation since Quarter 1 in 2021/22 was primarily due to the increased number of households in priority need who were served extended Section 21 Notice to Quit during the pandemic. He informed the Group that the length of time homeless households needed to remain in temporary accommodation was impacted by delays to properties being allocated for a number of weeks at Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing. The Group was advised that the company had assured the Council that this would be reduced once the issue was resolved. The Group was informed that the higher figure for the number of homeless applications made was a consequence of homelessness cases being correctly progressed through different statutory stages of a homelessness application. He noted that this trend was likely to continue and, therefore, the figure for future months was likely to continue to be out of target.

The Communications and Customer Services Manager explained that the percentage of applicants within bands one and two rehoused within 26 weeks was below target due to a revised formula for assessing additional waiting time priority. It was noted that this trend was likely to continue until the end of the financial year. He informed the Group that there were 33 reported robberies in the period and whilst this was above target, it only needed a small number to make a substantial impact. The Group noted that the robbery targets were set by the Council by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Group asked questions about the Planning Enforcement Policy and when new data would be published, and it was explained that the Quarter 3 data would still be out of target, but Quarter 4 should show the Council back on target.

The Group asked questions about the percentage of the usage of community facilities and the target which had been set and it was confirmed that the target for this performance indicator had been set before restrictions were eased after the pandemic. The Group was informed that the new booking system would help the community facilities team understand how much marketing was required to increase usage when it went live. The Group was informed that the new booking system was anticipated to launch in Spring 2022.

The Group referred to the resident survey indicators and noted that although disappointing, it was important not to dwell on those figures and it was mentioned that many residents might use the survey to complain. The Group suggested that the survey should be an opportunity to inform residents about what the Council had been doing and had achieved over the last two years. The Group questioned how often the surveys took place and were informed that they are run every three years.

The Group referred to the section on cleanliness of parks and open spaces and suggested that another campaign should take place to increase people's awareness of the need to reduce litter. The Group noted that PPE litter both

spread germs and viruses to animals as well as those removing the litter.

The Group referred to changes in systems, including issues related to Metropolitan Housing, which had caused problems to the Council's performance and asked how the performance of registered providers could be scrutinised. The Group was informed that contracts had their own performance indicators, which would be scrutinised internally rather than within the Group.

The Group noted that the wording of the recommendations needed altering and suggested that the words 'noted' or 'considered' needed to be changed to scrutinised and felt that what had been written was patronising. The Group all agreed that they were happy with the recommendations.

It is RESOLVED that the Corporate Overview Group noted:

- a) the expected revenue budget efficiency for the year of £0.673m incorporating the potential appropriation of £1m to a Vehicle Replacement Reserve (to be included in the MTFS report to Full Council in 2022);
- b) the use of £0.1m in budget efficiencies from 2021/22 to boost the Strategic Growth Board budget in 2022/23 to support the community recovery from Covid (paragraph 4.4);
- c) the capital underspend of £10.204m of which £8.420m is to be carried forward: £8.295m to 2022/23 Capital Programme and £0.125m to 2025/26 Capital Programme;
- d) the acceleration of £40k capital provision for Play Areas from 2022/23;
- e) to 2021/22 to meet commitments;
- f) the expected outturn position for Special Expenses of £10.2k deficit;
- g) the planned use of reserves at paragraph 4.2;
- h) the progress to date of Strategic Tasks– Appendix F;
- i) the comments for performance exceptions and considers whether additional scrutiny is required – Appendix G; and
- j) Feedback regarding the marketing of Edwalton Golf Course would be discussed with relevant officer.

17 **Feedback from Scrutiny Group Chairmen**

The Chairman of the Communities Scrutiny Group informed the Group that there had been two substantive items at the last meeting. The Housing Delivery Plan 2022-2027 had been discussed and it had been noted that the biggest challenge involved trying to get people off the streets, and the ongoing support that the Council would provide to support these people. The Chairman informed the Group that the Council would face challenges with people going

onto the housing register, which was hard to forecast. The second report had related to the resident survey, with over 84% of residents who had responded stating that they were satisfied with the Borough as a place to live. The Communities Scrutiny Group believed that people did not understand what the Council's roles and responsibilities were, for example discussions around removing the Council logo from Council Tax Bill might encourage people to change their minds about this being all the Council did. He explained that communications needed to be made clearer about what the Borough Council's role was. He explained that there were recommendations around a focus group being introduced to discuss the outcomes of the survey, which was heavily debated in the meeting but ultimately not agreed to.

The Vice Chairman of the Governance Scrutiny Group stated that at the last meeting the Group had focused on the Internal Audit Update report, Annual Audit report, Capital Investments, Statement of Accounts, and the Streetwise Annual report. He informed the Group that it was a comprehensive agenda with a number of technical and external reports.

The Chairman of the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group stated that the Group had considered two reports at its last meeting. The first report had considered tree conservation, and it was noted that the recommendations had been supported but additional recommendations had been agreed, to include a review of how appraisal was given to planning applications in relation to tree protection. The second additional recommendation related to how the Enforcement Policy could be strengthened and protected, together with a discussion about how that could be achieved. The Group had also agreed to write to the Government regarding legislation around Tree Preservation Orders, mainly about the aesthetics as opposed to the environmental benefits and biodiversity. It was noted that the Group had also wanted to include the protection of hedgerows as opposed to just trees. The second report the Group had considered had related to cycling and it was noted that this item had been a summary of the previous meeting alongside further discussion. The Group had agreed that walking and cycling would be included in future policies and a one-page walking and cycling plan was agreed. He advised that a shorter and more focussed presentation in relation to tree conservation had helped to promote more discussion and debate and he suggested that going forward presentations should be broken up or shortened to facilitate more interaction and debate.

The Chairman of the Corporate Overview Group advised that she had attended the Growth and Development Scrutiny meeting and had witnessed good, robust scrutiny and hoped that this meeting would be used within the Scrutiny Training as an example, and that going forward officers should assume the Councillors had read the report and therefore should keep presentations short to allow more time for questions to be answered.

18 Feedback from Lead Officer

The Service Manager – Corporate Services updated the Group on the East Midland Councils Scrutiny Network, which had been held in December. It was noted that the discussions that had taken place had related to the impact of Covid-19 on scrutiny meetings rather than the impact of Covid-19 on councils

and their communities in general, so the meeting had been less useful than anticipated. She informed the Group that there had been a verbal presentation by Ed Hammond from the Centre for Public Scrutiny and Governance and the main points covered were:

- Relationship between councils and the public is changing.
- Post pandemic there is greater engagement in democracy from both formally (meetings and decision making) and informally (with community-based action).
- Post pandemic scrutiny – how things have changed, are we still delivering the right services in the best way.
- Uncertain future- Levelling Up, Health and Care Bill, Environment Bill – lots of change coming.

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 11 March 2022.

The Service Manager – Corporate Services referred to the forthcoming scrutiny training on 23 February and confirmed that the training would cover listening and questioning skills and techniques, and there were plans to set up a mock scrutiny meeting with topics to make the training more interactive.

19 **Consideration of Scrutiny Group Work Programmes**

The Group considered the requests for scrutiny items submitted by either Councillors or officers using the scrutiny matrix. In respect of the ownership of public and open spaces, the Group raised concerns about ownership of the commercial sites and how the Council dealt with those. Councillors were also concerned about what protection there was for residents, as some sites (Sharphill) were already on their third management company. The Group questioned how this item would be scrutinised and noted that there needed to be an understanding of how legal planning legislation could protect the community space. It was noted that this item had already been scrutinised and it was agreed that the Group would be given a briefing note covering what the legislation was and what protection could be given to open spaces, to ensure that they were kept in public use.

The Group then discussed the scrutiny matrix related to the Tree Preservation Order Register being made public and online and noted that this had already been discussed and agreed at the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group.

It was noted that the recommendation for the establishment of a Youth Council, raised as a motion at Council in December, had already been agreed.

Discussions took place on alternative energy policies and emerging technologies and the Group was informed that external participation in the item would give Councillors a better understanding and allow them to make their views known. It was also noted that this work would be undertaken by the Local Development Framework Group. The Group discussed the possibility of splitting the cost between other councils and agreed that a session would be held at Scrutiny to allow Councillors to put forward their views.

The Group discussed the topic of sewage infrastructure and discharge within Rushcliffe and agreed that this item could be considered by either Communities or Growth and Development Scrutiny Group, if external partners were able to attend.

In respect of the scrutiny matrix regarding the Canal and River Trust, the Group stated that it would like a better understanding of what the plans were going forward and agreed that this item would go to Scrutiny.

It was RESOLVED that the work programmes outlined below be agreed.

3 May 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Feedback from Scrutiny Group Chairmen ○ Feedback from Lead Officer ○ Consideration of Scrutiny Group Work Programmes ○ Financial and Performance Management • Rolling Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Diversity Annual Report ○ The Impact of Covid-19 on Rushcliffe Borough Council – External Focus
7 June 2022 (provisional date)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of Scrutiny Group Work Programmes
6 September 2022 (provisional date)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Feedback from Scrutiny Group Chairmen ○ Feedback from Lead Officer ○ Consideration of Scrutiny Group Work Programmes ○ Financial and Performance Management • Rolling Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Health and Safety Annual Report
15 November 2022 (provisional date)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Feedback from Scrutiny Group Chairmen ○ Feedback from Lead Officer ○ Consideration of Scrutiny Group Work Programmes ○ Financial and Performance Management • Rolling Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Customer Feedback Annual Report
21 February 2023 (provisional date)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Feedback from Scrutiny Group Chairmen ○ Feedback from Lead Officer ○ Consideration of Scrutiny Group Work Programmes ○ Financial and Performance Management • Rolling Items

Draft Work Programme 2021-22 / 2022-23 – Governance Scrutiny Group

19 May 2022 (revised date to be 30 June, AGS to be agreed prior to draft accounts publication 31 July 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Audit Progress Report • Internal Audit Annual Report • Annual Governance Statement (AGS) • Treasury Management Update • Constitution Update • Code of Conduct • External Audit Annual Plan • Annual Audit Letter and Value for Money Conclusion
21 September 2022 (provisional date)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk Management • Going Concern • Asset and Investment Outturn 2021/22 • Treasury Management Update
24 November 2022 (provisional date)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Audit Progress Report • Annual Audit Report 2021/22 • Statement of Accounts • Streetwise Annual Report • Treasury and Asset Investments – 6 monthly update • Asset Management Plan
23 February 2023 (provisional date)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Audit Progress Report • Internal Audit Strategy • Risk Management – Update • Treasury and Asset Investments Strategy 2023/24

Work Programme 2021-22 / 2022-23 – Growth and Development Scrutiny Group

	Items / Reports
20 April 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Communications
27 July 2022 (provisional date)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Areas – Part Two • Policies relating to Alternative Energy Sources
21 September 2022 (provisional date)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid-19 Business Recovery Update • Sewage infrastructure and discharge within Rushcliffe
4 January 2023 (provisional date)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • •
8 March 2023 (provisional date)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • •

Work Programme 2021-22 / 2022-23 – Communities Scrutiny Group

	Items / Reports
28 April 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste Strategy • Carbon Management Plan
21 July 2022 (provisional date)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports Development in Rushcliffe • Access Agreement – Canals and Rivers Trust
6 October 2022 (provisional date)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of a Youth Council

19 January 2023 (provisional date)	• •
16 March 2023 (provisional date)	•

Item	Action	Responsible Officer
Covid 19-Internal Focus	Report to be circulated to all Councillors	Service Manager – Corporate Services
	A message of thanks from Councillors to staff to be included in the next issue of Staff Matters	Communications and Customer Service Manager
Finance and Performance Management	Feedback to be given to relevant officer in relation to marketing of Edwalton Golf Course	Communications and Customer Service Manager

The meeting closed at 9.33 pm.

CHAIRMAN