



**MINUTES  
OF THE MEETING OF THE  
COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY GROUP  
THURSDAY, 28 APRIL 2022**

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

**PRESENT:**

Councillors J Wheeler (Chairman), B Bansal (Vice-Chairman), G Dickman, R Jones, R Mallender, R Walker, G Williams, R Butler and J Stockwood

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Darryl Burch	Service Manager Neighbourhoods
Derek Hayden	Lead Specialist Communities
Laura Howlette	Environmental Team Manager
Anna Poole	Democratic Services Manager

**16 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor L. Healy and Councillor F. Purdue-Horan.

**17 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**18 Minutes of the Meeting 27 January 2022**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2022 were approved as a true record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

**19 Carbon Management Plan**

The Service Manager – Neighbourhoods presented the report of the Director – Neighbourhoods concerning progress made for the year 2021/22 with delivery of the Carbon Management Plan and proposed actions for 2022/23, in order to become carbon neutral by 2030. The presentation to the Group covered:

- The Climate Change Strategy
- The Carbon Management Plan progress
- Rushcliffe Borough Council – Rushcliffe Oaks, waste vehicle fuel trial, Rushcliffe Country Park development
- Conservation activity – biodiversity and offsetting
- Community focus – electric vehicle charging, Gamston Hub, supporting businesses, Green Rewards, supporting residents
- What next for 2022/23

The Environmental Team Manager highlighted that the achievements for the year 2021/22 were the result of the commitment from across the Council,

across all services, to achieve the Council's target of being carbon neutral by 2030 and net zero by 2050, which was in line with the Government's commitment at COP26. It was recognised that the target to be carbon neutral by 2030 was ambitious as only 7% of emissions were generated by the public sector; a large proportion of emissions came from public transport, people commuting to work, and domestic use in houses. The Carbon Management Plan addressed emissions generated by the Borough Council only. Members were informed that 'Carbon Clever' branding was included on all Council communications as a means of promoting the work being carried out.

The Environmental Team Manager added that the Climate Change Strategy covered: the Council Emissions, Conservation and Community and explained how each was being addressed:

(i) The Council Emissions:

- Rushcliffe Oaks was one of the first electrically powered cremators in the UK, which would reduce carbon emissions by up to 80% compared to a traditional gas cremator. Environmental issues had been considered within the build, for example retaining existing boundary planting to ensure ecological value was protected, and the project was a good example of how improvements in emissions could be achieved and the environment maintained.
- The Council had undertaken a waste vehicle biofuel trial. Some local authorities had changed to electric vehicles, although due to the size and rurality of Rushcliffe and the mileage range of electric vehicles, the Council had agreed to trial the use of hydrogenated vegetable oil as a fuel. This had been successful, with no issues experienced and resulted in a carbon saving reduction of over 12000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. The Council was exploring the roll-out of the product across the waste collection fleet.
- Rushcliffe Country Park was currently undergoing a re-development which included the refurbishment of the visitors' centre and the installation of a café. The purchase of electric vehicles as diesel powered ones needed replacement was also planned with the aim of the Country Park becoming net zero in its operation. The support of the Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park had been invaluable; they had supported the proposals by raising funds to purchase electric tools such as chainsaws.

The Environmental Team Manager informed the Group that the Rushcliffe Country Park had been awarded the Green Flag Award for the 15<sup>th</sup> year running, something which had been made possible by the Friends of the Country Park, the Rangers and volunteers.

(ii) Conservation:

- The Council was one of the few Councils to employ a dedicated ecologist who worked with local groups to develop conservation projects.
- 1,361 trees had been supplied to Rushcliffe groups and residents, which would remove two tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year from the atmosphere.

- Small areas around the Borough would be left to grow as part of the 'No Mow' scheme to support pollinators. The areas totalled 1.4ha in total and was expected to remove 5.15 Tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere each year.
- Five of the eight nature reserves in the Borough were owned and managed by the Council; the Council's land currently removed 1,724.27 Tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year.

(iii) Community:

The Environmental Team Manager highlighted that the Council could not achieve the net zero target by 2050 without the support of the local community. She informed Members that:

- There were seven electric vehicle charging sites across the Borough; the Council had received £750k from the Transforming Cities Funding Stream which would develop additional charging points. It was planned that 34 would be available by the end of 2022. The charging hub at Gamston Community Centre was powered by natural solar light.
- The Big Business Carbon Club worked with local businesses to share best practice and ideas.
- Green Rewards was a platform for residents to record their green activity in exchange for points which were attached to incentives such as discounts in local shops and restaurants.
- LAD2 funding was used last year to provide energy efficient measures, such as external wall or loft insulation, solar panels, etc to local homes. The Council had focused on East Leake due to the number of houses that were of steel construction. This had been well received by the community and 57 residents had received support. The Scheme was delivered in partnership with the Nottingham Energy Partnership.

Looking forward for 2022/23, the Environmental Team Manager explained to the Group that:

- £847k of LAD3 funding had been received and would be used to further support East Leake residents for a second year with carbon reduction measures, as part of the Council's planning to achieve net zero targets by 2050. Following two years in East Leake, the focus would move to another area, again for two years, where the most impact on fuel poverty, carbon emissions and the quality of life of residents could be achieved. For continuity, the same contractor would be used to ensure continued supply of materials and labour and also to reduce administrative burdens in seeking alternative suppliers.
- Officers had completed an energy audit of all Council assets, to understand the carbon footprint of each and to prioritise those that needed addressing urgently. This would enable the Council to respond to the availability of Government funding, which often had tight deadlines attached.
- Measures would be put in place to ensure that all staff across the Council were aware of carbon reduction, and training would be included in the staff induction programme. This would also be rolled-out to Parish Councils, to enable them to be carbon literate and so support the

- achievement of the net zero target.
- A walking and cycling plan would be developed to increase awareness and policy would be developed for handling planning applications to ensure that cycling routes were considered.
  - The Council's fleet would be reviewed with the potential for smaller vehicles switched to electric. Funding remaining in the Council's allocation from the Transforming Cities Fund would continue to install Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCPs) in the Borough. An electric vehicle showcase event would be held on the Croquet Lawn on Friday 3 and Saturday 4 June, arranged by a commercial operator.
  - Biodiversity net gain – a new requirement within the National Planning Policy Framework and the Environment Act 2021, which required developers to manage developed land for a minimum of 30 years, leaving it in a measurably better state than it was prior to development. Measures could include the planting of trees, installation of bee bricks and bird houses. Monitoring this duty would be an additional responsibility of the Council.
  - Biodiversity Duty was a requirement of all councils to look strategically at all policies and operations, and to report on findings, every five years to explore what further actions could be taken to improve biodiversity.

The Group commended officers for the quantity of activity being undertaken in order to achieve carbon neutral by 2030 and net zero by 2050.

In response to questions about Electric Vehicle Charging points (EVCPs) and how the location of these was decided, the Service Manager Neighbourhoods explained that there was strict criteria related to the allocation of the funding. Suitable sites for EVCPs were determined by the proximity to a strategic route and other EVCPs, the location of street furniture, fencing and the strength of the available power supply. He added that the installation of EVCPs had focused initially on Gamston, Cotgrave, Radcliffe and Keyworth as they met the criteria. However, the Council's application for funding for the installation of EVCPs in Bingham, East Leake and West Bridgford (Bridgford Road car park) had been refused due to an inadequate power supply, the general layout of the car park, and the location of street furniture and fencing. Officers reassured the Group that they would continue to explore installation in these areas and were working with Western Power to address the power supply issues. External funding had been sourced for the infrastructure at Rushcliffe Country Park which was fully funded; the Council's resources had not been used. The installation of EVCPs in residential properties in West Bridgford was a challenge as residents mainly did not have access to off-street parking. Officers would explore alternative funding sources, for example through the LEVI Fund, and would be guided by National Planning Policy Frameworks. The Council had received more than £750k in funding so far.

Councillors expressed concern about a potential funding gap in West Bridgford should funding not be available from the LEVI Fund and asked what contingency plans were in place to enable the installation of EVCPs in the town. The Lead Specialist Communities explained that the allocation of the carbon reserve was based on the business case and the return on investment in terms of carbon reduction. All projects were measured against the criteria,

with the final decisions being made by Councillors. The priority was determined by funding availability and achievement of quick wins. Officers would actively work on a solution and would report back to the Group. The Group suggest that the work of the Nottingham Energy Partnership be promoted to residents.

The Group asked how properties in East Leake had been selected for the energy performance measures delivered by the LAD2 funding project. The Environmental Team Manager explained that properties were chosen where they had an energy rating on the Energy Performance Certificate of 'E' or below and where there was a higher level of vulnerability due to the risk of fuel poverty, children, or the elderly. She explained that those properties chosen were the least efficient with the most vulnerable people and where the most impact could be gained. There was a cap on the allocation of funding for each household, and so the maximum most efficient measures that would have the most impact were chosen.

Councillors were concerned about the risk of damp as a result of the installation of wall insulation and were reassured that modern installation methods included ventilation. The Council relied on the expertise of the contractors, EON, who had a good reputation in the industry.

Regarding Carbon Literacy training, Councillors suggested that this be focused on developers so to have a greater impact. Officers acknowledged the point made and explained that it was also important to include such training within the Council's induction processes to ensure that new staff were aware that carbon reduction was part of everyday working practices at the Council. Additionally, rolling-out the training to town and parish councils would be explored to encourage them to set their own targets as this would support achievement of the Borough-wide targets as a whole.

Regarding energy audits of Council-owned property, Councillors asked what steps could be taken for Leisure Centres to support achievement of the carbon reduction targets and were informed that the Leisure Strategy would be reviewed next year. However, a mid-point review of the Leisure Strategy 2017-27 would be undertaken later this year and would include leisure centres in Cotgrave and Keyworth to explore how they could be improved as leisure centres, and how their carbon footprint could be reduced. Findings would be reported back to the Group.

Councillors questioned what the bulk buying of appropriate solutions meant (in paragraph 4.9 of the report) and were informed that the Strategy, which was a high-level plan, prioritised energy audits and improvements to transport and the estate initially. It detailed that such solutions would be bought in bulk, rather than on a case-by-case basis. However, further detail was required to develop the plans further.

Councillors expressed concern about the use of building materials, for example the steel posts used to build Rushcliffe Oaks which had been imported and the use of concrete which was not carbon neutral. They questioned whether engineered timber or limestone could have been explored as more environmentally friendly options. The Lead Specialist Communities explained that although innovation was welcomed the Council needed to balance costs

and the return on investment with the need to meet carbon reduction targets. He agreed to look into such options further and would report back to the Group.

Councillors recognised the volume of activity being undertaken to achieve the carbon reduction targets, especially at Rushcliffe Country Park, and suggested that more promotional activity should be undertaken to make residents aware of the Council's activity, the support in place to enable them to work towards being carbon neutral including more walking and cycling, inform them of the installation of EVCPs, what could be recycled at Recycling and Household Waste Sites and also to promote the work of the Nottingham Energy Partnership. The Lead Specialist Communities explained that a great deal of communications was planned once the work being undertaken at Rushcliffe Country Park was completed. Wider communications would be undertaken with residents through Rushcliffe Reports, the Council's website and social media channels.

Regarding the use of Electric Vehicles (EV) across the Council, the Group was informed that an audit of the Council's fleet would be conducted later this year and following this, EV options would be explored. However, it was unlikely that electric refuse vehicles could be used due to the rurality and size of the Borough, although smaller vans used by pest control, dog wardens, new bin delivery and Facilities Attendants to travel around the community venues could potentially be electric. The Council had a capital replacement programme for all vehicles, and this would determine the timing of the purchase of any new EV as the Council needed to ensure it was getting value for money from the vehicles already purchased. The potential use of EV pool cars by staff would be considered following a staff travel survey.

Regarding recycling and waste, the Group was informed that an ongoing campaign regarding recycling was undertaken across Nottinghamshire through the Joint Waste Officer Group and the Joint Waste Member Group. The Council also carried out waste audits and received monthly contamination reports to identify issues with the contents of recycling bins and where this was evident, increased communication campaigns were carried out in the area to inform residents of items that should be recycled. Officers agreed to explore the distribution of leaflets through Estate Agencies. The Government's Waste Strategy was awaited, and this would focus on bringing consistency in approach to waste collection and recycling across the country. The Group was informed that Rushcliffe continued to have the highest recycling rate in Nottinghamshire.

Regarding LAD funding, Councillors asked how the next area following East Leake would be chosen. The Group was informed that priority areas were determined by the level of vulnerability, deprivation, need and housing stock type; the Council adopted a "worst first approach". The area could be at ward or estate level.

The new duty to monitor the biodiversity net gain requirement on developers to maintain developed land for a minimum of 30 years, would bring a fundamental change to all councils. The Council would need to embed the new responsibilities within its operations, with relevant officers having a role similar to that of Environmental Health Officers. Such monitoring would be carried out

on a rolling basis.

In response to questions, the Group was informed that the Council was committed to exploring the large variety of technologies available related to carbon management. The Council's approach to carbon reduction was led by the Chief Executive who was on the Environment Strategy Group, and the portfolio was managed by the Deputy Chief Executive. Officers acknowledged that there was more to do, particularly around engaging with communities.

In terms of planting trees and wildflowers to aid carbon management by offsetting emissions, the Group was informed that this course of action was a delicate balance as many open spaces, for example Rushcliffe Country Park, were used as amenity space, so could not be planted fully with trees. An Offsetting Strategy would be developed to aid achievement of targets by 2030 as the Council could not operate in a completely carbon neutral way by that stage so remaining emissions would need to be offset. The Lead Specialist Communities added that the Council was reluctant at this stage to purchase land for offsetting as the Council's processes and assets needed to be examined for carbon reduction initially, and also due to the high cost of land within the Borough.

## 20 **Work Programme**

The Chairman presented the report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services, which detailed the proposed Communities Scrutiny Group Work Programme for 2022/23.

The Chairman informed the Group that the Work Programme detailed below was subject to approval by Corporate Overview Group on 3 May.

It was RESOLVED that the Work Programme below be approved:

### **21 July 2022** (provisional date)

- Sports Development in Rushcliffe
- Access Agreement – Canal and Rivers Trust
- Work Programme

### **6 October 2022** (provisional date)

- Establishment of a Youth Council
- Council's External Communications Strategy
- Work Programme

### **19 January 2023** (provisional date)

- Work Programme

### **16 March 2023** (provisional date)

- Work Programme

**ACTION SHEET**

<b>Minute Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Officer responsible</b>
4	To explore opportunities for promotion to residents of the work of the Nottingham Energy Partnership	Lead Specialist Communities
4	To explore the possibility of using environmentally friendly material in building projects	Lead Specialist Communities
4	To explore the distribution of leaflets on recycling in Rushcliffe through Estate Agencies	Service Manager - Neighbourhoods
4	To consider the building materials used to achieve the best carbon reduction, as part of the Capital Programme Business Case. Where possible going beyond building regulations standards (within the approved financial commitments).	Lead Specialist Communities in conjunction with the Lead Specialist Property Services

The meeting closed at 9.12 pm.

CHAIRMAN