

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL**

THURSDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2022

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

PRESENT:

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

L Ashmore	Director of Development and Economic Growth
D Banks	Director of Neighbourhoods
C Caven-Atack	Service Manager - Corporate Services
G Dennis	Monitoring Officer
P Linfield	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
K Marriott	Chief Executive
E Richardson	Democratic Services Officer
H Tambini	Democratic Services Manager

APOLOGIES:

Councillors K Beardsall, N Begum, B Buschman, A Edyvean, L Howitt and D Simms

25 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Moore declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 10 Upper Saxondale Community Governance Review.

26 Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 July 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 7 July 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

27 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor informed Council that she had attended many ceremonial duties resulting from the recent sad death of Queen Elizabeth II and had been particularly moved to open the book of condolence and lay the first floral tribute to the late Queen. The Mayor reported that she had been invited to hear the

High Sherriff reading the first local proclamation of the accession of King Charles III before opening her own scroll to read the proclamation in the centre of West Bridgford. The Mayor had been honoured to represent the residents of Rushcliffe at the ceremony at Southwell Minster and her local Act of Remembrance both on the day before the late Queen's funeral.

Aside from those very moving events, the Mayor reported that she had raised the flag on Nottinghamshire Day, had also presided over many local events such as the Radcliffe Carnival, Proms in the Park, Hickling Scarecrow Festival, Lark in the Park, and lowered the start flag on the fifth day of the Tour of Britain.

The Mayor also informed Council about the successful Civic Dinner, which had showcased green living, climate change, environmental awareness, sustainability, and conservation and had also allowed invited guests to find out more about the Mayoral charities for this year. The Mayor invited her fellow Councillors to look up the guest speaker, Professor Lucelia Rodrigues, a passionate advocate of sustainable living who had delivered a really informative and enlightening after dinner speech.

Finally, the Mayor asked Councillors to help her on Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday by laying wreaths of handmade poppies on her behalf across the Borough.

28 Leader's Announcements

The Leader invited Councillors to attend the launch of new environmentally sustainable facilities at Rushcliffe County Park on Wednesday, 12 October 2022.

The Leader provided Council with an update on the Borough's participation in the Homes for Ukraine scheme with so far, 167 sponsors having offered support to 213 people. The concern was that up to 40% of initial sponsors had decided not to continue their support past the initial six-month period and that this would have a detrimental effect upon those Ukrainian families in need, as well as suitable housing, and support services, in the Borough.

The Leader asked Councillors to encourage their local town and parish councils to attend the Town and Parish Council Forum on Wednesday, 5 October 2022. He also reminded Councillors about the Budget Workshops scheduled for 5 and 6 December 2022.

The Leader referred to the Rushcliffe Community Awards and called upon Councillors to nominate local community groups and outstanding individuals for the ceremony, which would be held at the end of November.

Finally, the Leader informed Council that Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club had been promoted to the first division today and placed on record his congratulations to the Club for this fantastic achievement.

29 **Chief Executive's Announcements**

The Chief Executive informed Council that the opening of the new leisure centre in Bingham had been further delayed following an extremely challenging period within the building industry. She advised that the Council was working closely with the building contractors to overcome problems with supply chains and available labour to complete the build before Christmas. The Chief Executive reassured Council that despite the delays the project was still on budget.

30 **Citizens' Questions**

No citizens' questions were received for this meeting.

31 **Business from the last Council meeting**

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Jones and seconded by Councillor S Mallender

“UNICEF’s Child friendly status is relevant to Communities and Cities alike. It emphasises that consultation is vital to developing our communities, including where children and young people can:

- Have a say about decisions that affect them
- Express their views freely and are encouraged and supported to do that
- Access good health, education, transport, and other services
- Feel safe, prioritised, and protected from discrimination and harm
- Enjoy public spaces and meet other children and young people freely.

This Council resolves to investigate UNICEF’s Child Friendly City programme to allow Rushcliffe to become a recognised Child Friendly Community and to show that Rushcliffe is a place where children feel safe, are heard, cared-for, and able to flourish.”

Councillor Jones informed Council, in moving the motion, that he was asking for a policy commitment to investigate the UNICEF Child Friendly Community programme with the aim of ensuring that all children were able to thrive, play and learn in a safe environment, where their voices were heard and could make a difference. Establishing a youth council for Rushcliffe, which was already under investigation, would be one key step in supporting this wider programme.

Councillor Jones stated that UNICEF worked with councils in cities across the UK to help incorporate children’s rights in their decision making. The charity offered training to councils to raise awareness of how decisions made by councils could impact upon children and how to ensure those impacts were positive and reflective of children’s voices. Councillor Jones recognised that it might be determined that after investigation this programme was too demanding but asked for that to be an informed decision following investigation rather than a presumption. He concluded by stating that children had the right to dignity, to be heard, and that they should be able to access the services and support they needed without fear of discrimination and called upon the Council to support the motion.

In seconding the motion, Councillor S Mallender stated that UNICEF would support any local authority that committed to this programme, providing support over a three-to-five-year programme not just to the Council but to its partners. Councillor Mallender informed Council that some aspects of the programme were more suitable for a county council or unitary authority but that did not mean that the Borough Council could not make a difference to young people in the Borough. She considered that the voices, needs, priorities and rights of the child should be an integral part of the policies and decisions of the authority and the Council's involvement in this programme would ensure children of the Borough were represented and able to influence the decisions that affected them. Council noted that the UNICEF Child Friendly City programme was an international programme and so some aspects including access to shelter and food would thankfully not be relevant to this Borough. However, the Borough could work towards the elimination of discrimination, work in the best interests of children, and ensure that the views of children were respected, listened to and taken into account in decisions that affected them.

Councillor Brennan informed Council that the Conservative Group had reviewed the publicly available information on the UNICEF Child Friendly City programme and had concluded that very few people would take issue with the main purpose of this motion. However, Councillor Brennan argued, that many of those things were already available to the young people of Rushcliffe, with a wide range of open spaces and parks, support for both the Young and Positive Futures programmes, and the Council was currently looking into establishing a youth council for Rushcliffe. Councillor Brennan advised that this programme operated in over 3,000 cities internationally and was designed to operate in complex urban environments providing children with opportunities that they might not otherwise have. It was not immediately clear how Rushcliffe could engage in this programme and whether this additional burden in terms of funding and administration would add much to what the Council already offered young people in the Borough. Councillor Brennan informed Council that she felt it was right to ask officers to look into the detail of the programme and to talk to others who have been involved, to establish the benefit to Rushcliffe's young people. In order to provide officers with the scope to recommend not getting involved, if after investigation, it was considered that it was not appropriate to the Borough, Councillor Brennan proposed a small amendment to the motion:

“This Council resolves to investigate UNICEF's Child Friendly City programme to consider if Rushcliffe should apply to become a recognised Child Friendly Community and to show that Rushcliffe is a place where children feel safe, are heard, cared-for, and able to flourish.”

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

Councillor Jones thanked Councillor Brennan for her support and accepted the amendment.

There was no further debate on the amended motion and on being put to the vote the motion was carried.

32 East Midlands Devolution Deal

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide Leadership, Councillor Robinson, presented the report of the Chief Executive, outlining the East Midlands Devolution Deal.

The Leader referred to the Government's Levelling Up Bill released in February 2020, which contained a commitment to devolution in all areas by 2030 and noted that the Bill also contained a sub list of priority places, one of which was Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. Consequently, the four Upper Tier local authorities of Nottingham City, Nottinghamshire County Council, Derby City and Derbyshire County Council had expressed their interest. The Leader explained that the devolution framework offered three levels of devolution, with the top level, level three, being a Combined Authority with a Mayor. The Leader confirmed that this was the level that the four Upper Tier authorities had chosen to pursue and that subsequently, both he and the Chief Executive, had been working with them and the Nottinghamshire district local authorities to discuss shaping a deal, which would work for the D2N2 region. Council was informed that discussions included looking at transport, adult skills, budgets and referred to the offer of £1.14bn of Government funding over a thirty year span, equating to £38m per year. The Leader added that this funding would be seed capital, which could be borrowed against, and attract external investment. The Leader stated that the Government had also offered introduction funding of £18m to be spent by April 2023 and advised that it had been decided to accelerate the Devolution Deal, with the four Upper Tier authorities signing an in principle agreement in August 2022. The Leader confirmed that it was important for Councillors to have time to reflect on the proposals, noting that the proposal presented was an in principle deal rather than a final deal. Council was advised that districts and boroughs were not signatories to the deal, which had been signed by the four Upper Tiers. In terms of the roadmap going forward, the Leader stated that work would continue to shape the agreement, and the deal would then be taken to Full Council meetings of the Upper Tier authorities before going out for consultation to businesses and residents across the D2N2 region. Subject to the consultation, the deal would then go to Parliament for primary and secondary legislation, an interim shadow Board would be set up in May 2023, with a target for Mayoral elections to be held in May 2024.

The Leader drew Council's attention to section 4.7 of the report which set out the potential powers and also to the brochure in Appendix 1.

In conclusion, the Leader explained that the deal offered potential delivery of projects such as a fourth Trent Bridge crossing, HS2 connectivity and devolved rail powers. The Leader confirmed that the deal was an in principle agreement and that this was purely a discussion, as reflected in the recommendations, and that any potential deal would be brought back to Full Council.

Councillor Brennan seconded the recommendation and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Gowland thanked the Leader for bringing the report before Full Council and stated that the Labour Group believed in localism and devolution,

and in principle favoured the ideas, whilst also having many issues and questions regarding the proposal. Councillor Gowland referred to the combination of councils and stated that it was not clear geographically why it would be those two counties, and thought that this, amongst other things, would confuse electors. Councillor Gowland considered that an additional layer of bureaucracy would make matters worse, and that when people did not know who was responsible for things it limited democracy, as they did not know who was accountable. Councillor Gowland stated that the name of the deal was inappropriate, as it was not an East Midlands deal, rather a Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire deal, and there was also confusion with other entities such as the Enterprise Zone and Freeport. In relation to the £1.14bn over thirty years, Council was advised that although it was difficult to know how many people were in the zone, this was likely to equate to about £15 per head and Councillor Gowland questioned whether there was any evidence that the pump priming would work.

In conclusion, Councillor Gowland questioned where the money would come from, whether there was any guarantee that it would come, and questioned why the deal had been pushed through in August. Councillor Gowland asked about the costs and time taken by officers working on the deal, referred to the lack of public consultation and stated that a face to face meeting to discuss the deal would be welcomed.

Councillor Jones appreciated the report being brought before Full Council and stated that everyone could see the attractions of coordinated travel, better skills training and improving life in areas of poverty. Councillor Jones stated that the Liberal Democratic Group was fully behind localisation and that in principle functions moving out of Central Government was welcomed. Councillor Jones advised that he did not consider that a Mayor was needed in order for powers to be devolved, as local authorities could be required to work together and operate the same Cabinet system as envisaged in this deal. Councillor Jones stated that the cost of elections for Mayors and the tendency for them to require a coterie around them would waste money and advising the public as to who was responsible for what services would become vaguer. Councillor Jones referred to the East Midlands area being wider than Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire and so presumed that the arrangements in the report could be extended at some point and asked, if so, how much money would come with that. He stated that the £38m per year for thirty years sounded too appealing and that without knowing the precise responsibility and powers, which would fall to the new body it was meaningless. Councillor Jones said that, whilst accepting that it was not Rushcliffe Borough Council's responsibility, the report lacked substance and that retrofitting and reducing areas of poverty could easily use that money across all of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

In conclusion, Councillor Jones stated that the report was full of nice aspirations but lacked precision and asked that it be recorded that the Liberal Democrat Group did not endorse the report.

Councillor R Mallender noted the interesting ideas in the document and considered that having a bigger voice for D2N2 would be good but asked what opportunities there would be for other parts of the East Midlands to join in the future should they so wish, and what would happen to other projects such as

the Freeport and East Midlands Development Corporation should Leicestershire or Leicester city wish to join. Councillor Mallender also referred to Bristol, where people had recently voted to no longer have a City Council Mayor, whilst retaining their Combined Authority Executive Mayor, and asked whether there would be an opportunity to expand that in the future. Reference was also made to Northamptonshire, suggesting that there were potential aspects for future consideration. Councillor Mallender agreed with the idea of devolving power to the area, which aligned with the Green Group principles, and considered that decisions should be taken at the most appropriate level. Councillor Mallender thought that some of the ideas in the proposal, such as levelling up the housing stock and training, were very good, but questioned whether there would be any added value from the Combined Authority or whether the money could be spent more effectively through existing local authorities. He asked why devolved powers could not be given to local authorities who were closer to local residents and questioned how residents would react to decisions being taken by an elected Mayor, who would be responsible for such a large geographical area.

In conclusion, Councillor Mallender stated that it was important to continue to be involved but suggested that this should not be taken as a done deal, adding that there were plenty of other options available and other ways to represent the people of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

Councillor Thomas advised that she would prefer to see Central Government support Local Government through a sustained funding formula and questioned whether it was devolution in any real sense or an extra layer of governance, which took decisions further away from local people. Councillor Thomas considered that Rushcliffe did not have a real seat at the table for the proposals and the costs, whether funded by the precept or revenue funded by Government, was all extra money to be found. Councillor Thomas stated that there was also the extra complexity involved and thought that enough time was already spent signposting requests to the existing two layers of Local Government and asked whether a fourth layer was required. Councillor Thomas also questioned why it was to be called the East Midlands Mayoral Authority and advised that parts of Rushcliffe looked to Leicestershire and Lincolnshire as much as to Nottinghamshire and thought that it needed a different name. Councillor Thomas stated that Rushcliffe would need to fight hard to benefit from any funding from the new authority and that it would not be a level playing field, alongside the larger Upper Tier authorities. Councillor Thomas suggested that Rushcliffe had to be prepared and very clear about its strategic priorities, requiring fully costed, oven ready projects for when opportunities arrived, and stated that officers were very good at this and needed to support Councillors to come up with ideas when business cases needing to be prepared. Working on issues including insulating homes, taking forward Rushcliffe's Net Zero Action Plan, getting brown field sites ready to benefit from affordable housing schemes, and working out what Rushcliffe's priorities were in terms of transport needs would be required, so that they could be easily articulated into specific terms.

In conclusion, Councillor Thomas stated that she could not personally endorse the plans for a Mayoral Combined Authority and noted that the motion did not ask Councillors to do that, although perhaps it should. Councillor Thomas

stated that she did support the recommendation for the Leader and Chief Executive to continue to engage with the process and advised that she would abstain from voting.

Councillor S Mallender referred to suggested benefits including a better connected future, combined transport plans, developing smarter ticketing systems and concessionary fare schemes and noted that the first thing mentioned by the Leader had been a controversial road scheme.

The Leader clarified that he had referred to a bridge, not a road scheme.

Councillor Mallender advised that a rail bridge would be a very good idea; and went on to say that she was very worried that a greener future with new low carbon homes and retrofitting had been heard before; however, nothing had happened. Council was advised that local authorities were still working with a planning system coming from Central Government, which resulted in the Council being unable to say what kind of developments it wanted in environmental standards terms. Councillor Mallender stated that the Council would not really have any say in obtaining any of those benefits and was concerned about future Government policy and a lack of investment in local public transport.

In conclusion, Councillor Mallender stated that although she hoped to be proved wrong, she had grave doubts about the promises being made and could not endorse the idea but thought it very important that Rushcliffe remained in discussions.

Councillor Barney acknowledged that there was much uncertainty regarding the detail and how it would unfold, but that he drew much encouragement from the process getting to this point. In a world of very challenging politics Councillor Barney was pleased that councils were working together to look at what could be done to get more money into the East Midlands. Councillor Barney said that whilst it was possible to be cynical, the reality as it stood was that this promised to bring much needed money to the area, which he applauded and encouraged to continue.

In conclusion, Councillor Barney referred also to the benefits of an Elected Mayor and advised that the East Midlands lagged behind other areas in terms of attracting investments, as businesses and organisations looked for areas where they could have a face to face conversation with an individual, and an Elected Mayor would fulfil that role, as witnessed in other areas of the country. Councillor Barney hoped for a great outcome from devolution for the region and hoped that it would include Leicester.

Councillor J Walker echoed the gratitude already expressed in bringing this report to Full Council and thought that it had been useful, although she questioned what kind of authority would be granted to local authorities as part of the devolution deal. Councillor Walker referred to the proposed new Mayor and asked whether the new Mayor would be able to authorise core development, or could the new Mayor authorise things such as fracking. Councillor Walker stated that more detail was required about what kind of authority would be granted.

Councillor Way stated that there were a lot of positives from the proposal, such as integrated transport, which was needed as the area had connectivity problems, but thought that there were also areas of concern, for example the Prosperity Fund would become part of the responsibilities of the new organisation rather than how it was currently controlled locally. Councillor Way stated that in the Government paper a huge amount of autonomy would be given to the Mayor and whilst she noted that there would also be a Cabinet system, it would be a small Cabinet by her understanding, and she was concerned that Councils such as Rushcliffe would not have much say.

In conclusion, Councillor Way stated that although she had many concerns about the proposal and thought that it required a lot more discussion, she supported the proposal that it should come back to Full Council for more discussion, or discussion outside of Council, and it was important that Rushcliffe had a seat at the table to convey the Borough's point of view.

Councillor Brennan thought that the proposal was interesting and whilst people might have different perspectives and want different resolutions, she considered that many would share the same questions and concerns and agreed that there were questions still to be answered. Councillor Brennan stated that the East Midlands in its broader sense had historically been underfunded and as a former Deputy Chief Executive of the Regional Development Agency, she was aware that one of the main reasons that the area did not receive funding was because it could not work in partnership. Councillor Brennan explained that the Chairman of the Regional Development Agency also did not have the statutory powers that local authorities had, and the local authorities had been unable to work together for a range of reasons. Councillor Brennan stated that if it was possible to create a means by which local authorities were able and willing to share their sovereignty to deliver those types of objectives that could only be a good thing, as the East Midlands continued to remain underfunded and without a voice in Westminster or in Europe. Whilst being in favour of the deal, Councillor Brennan shared the concerns raised regarding costs, how it would work, where power would reside and how it would be funded. In respect of the geography of the area, Councillor Brennan confirmed that considerable time had been spent looking at this and stated that there was an economic sense to the D2N2 area and whilst it was not perfect, this did not mean that it should not go ahead.

In conclusion, Councillor Brennan recognised the need to protect the interests of local residents and the need to have a voice in discussions, and on that basis, seconded the recommendations that the Borough Council continued in discussions to argue vociferously for the needs of the Borough in the overall ambition.

The Leader thanked Councillors for their constructive comments, which would be useful to himself and the Chief Executive to take back and he suggested that there should be a workshop to discuss ideas further. The Leader assured Councillors that districts were shaping proposals and were being listened to, with the Upper Tier authorities making it clear that districts needed to be involved, with seats on the Cabinet and having a direct say and voting rights as to how the Combined Authority would be run. In respect of the geographical

area, the Leader considered that it was a starting point and Government had agreed that other areas could join, for example Leicestershire. The Leader confirmed that the D2N2 area incorporated 2.2m people so was a large area in itself. The Leader referred to funding, which had a guarantee against it, for thirty years of £38m per year and to other existing Combined Authorities, which had generated significant borrowings and private investment, which had delivered successful projects, such as the Manchester tram system. The Leader stated that businesses needed someone to talk to, someone who they could approach if they wanted to bring their business to the region and questioned who that would currently be. With a Combined Authority it would be clear that it was the Mayor who would hold accountability and be able to open up those opportunities. The Leader noted that roads and railways could not be built just for Rushcliffe, that the boroughs were interconnected, and he referred to the suggested bridge and explained that it could be a tram or a train bridge and that a Combined Authority would allow the local area to have control and budget for the best option. The Leader noted comments about the infighting and lack of coordination currently, which detracted from investment. The Leader referred to comments about the various bodies in the region, all of which had their own administrations and all of which could be brought together under the one umbrella of the Combined Authority. In particular, the Leader highlighted that the D2N2 LEP, which was a great delivery body, and could become more efficient under the Combined Authority as part of one local voice for business. The Leader referred to accountability and explained that the Mayor had a Cabinet and could not make decisions without going through that Cabinet, which would provide checks and balances. The Leader confirmed that planning powers would remain with the boroughs, whilst still being subject to the national planning framework which was a separate matter.

The Leader summarised that he appreciated the support and comments this evening which he and the Chief Executive would take forward and affirmed his commitment to holding a workshop.

It was **RESOLVED**

- a) that progress to date on the devolution and joint working programme, including the announcement of a deal offer from Government on 30 August 2022 be noted;
- b) that Council agreed that the Leader and Chief Executive should continue to engage with the process in order to ensure that Rushcliffe Borough Council can be represented as far as possible in ongoing discussions; and
- c) that a further update to be brought to Full Council on the completion of negotiations.

33 Upper Saxondale Community Governance Review

Having declared an interest, Councillor Moore did not participate in the debate or vote for this item.

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough Wide Leadership,

Councillor Robinson, presented the report of the Chief Executive, outlining the Upper Saxondale Community Governance Review.

The Leader explained that in December 2021, the Council had received a petition for it to hold a governance review for the area of Upper Saxondale. A cross party Task and Finish Group had then been established, and the Leader referred to documentation circulated with the report which set out the Terms of Reference for the Group, which included the proposed boundary and Councillor set up. The Leader confirmed that Nottinghamshire County Council had considered and accepted the proposals. The Leader explained that several referendums had been held which had received a few negative comments, including from the Chairman of Saxondale Parish and from Cropwell Butler Parish Council, which had been considered by the Group. The Leader confirmed that the Group had recommended bringing a proposal to Full Council to create a separate parish for the area of Upper Saxondale as defined by the map in Appendix Three of the report. The Leader referred to the report, which had concluded that the proposals represented the best model for effective governance for this community and considered that this comment reflected the ultimate in devolution to the local community. The Leader commented that the community of Upper Saxondale had been engaged and involved in looking after their locality.

In conclusion, the Leader explained that, if agreed at Full Council, the proposal would then go the Secretary of State, with a target for elections in May 2023, with any logistical matters being supported by Rushcliffe Borough Council.

Councillor Inglis confirmed that he had Chaired the cross party Task and Finish Group, which had voted unanimously in support of the proposal and confirmed that appropriate steps had been taken to ensure that objectives and legalities for Rushcliffe Borough Council were met in the appropriate areas. Councillor Inglis explained that the proposal was what residents had asked for as demonstrated by the 95.2% of respondents who were in favour, and on that basis, Councillor Inglis stated that he was happy to support the decision of the Task and Finish Group and seconded the recommendation.

Councillor J Walker said that the Labour Group supported the recommendation and the creation of the new parish.

Councillor Jones advised that at the second meeting of the Task and Finish Group he had raised questions about the likely increased cost of the new parish council and whilst, unfortunately, he had not been able to attend the third meeting, he saw from the notes of that meeting that this issue had not been addressed. Councillor Jones stated that for such a defined community the response rate had been low; however, his colleagues in the Working Group supported the recommendation and so, reluctantly, he would support it also.

Councillor S Mallender confirmed that the Green Group supported the recommendation and asked in future if meetings could start later than 5pm, to allow Councillors who worked the opportunity to attend them.

Councillor Shaw confirmed that the Leake Independent Group was very happy to support the recommendation and congratulated the residents on their

initiative, and hoped that more would be formed, including perhaps in West Bridgford.

Councillor Butler agreed that this was a positive story, referred to the establishment and work of the Task and Finish Group, and that hopefully the residents would achieve their goal. Councillor Butler stated that this was a good example of democracy in action and the differing roles that councils had to play, he welcomed the recommendations and congratulated the residents, and all involved in the quick processing of the proposal.

Councillor Gowland explained that she had been a member of the Task and Finish Group and agreed that it had been very well run and had reached the right decision. Councillor Gowland reiterated that it was a good example of democracy in action and provided an effective model of governance for this community, who were engaged, loved their area, and looked after it. Councillor Gowland added that West Bridgford was similar, and residents would enjoy having this too.

Councillor Upton stated that on behalf of his fellow Board Members at Radcliffe on Trent Parish Council, he supported the recommendation, as Upper Saxondale was very much a separate community geographically and in many other ways and this was a good proposal.

The Leader thanked Councillors for their support, congratulated local residents and stated that the Borough Council looked forward to them becoming a parish and working with them in the future.

It was **RESOLVED**

- a) that a separate parish for the area defined by the map in Appendix Three be created and that:
 - this area be named Upper Saxondale
 - this area have a parish council
 - this council be called Upper Saxondale Parish Council
 - Upper Saxondale Parish Council has seven members; and
- b) that delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive to undertake the necessary steps to formalise the creation of a separate parish for Upper Saxondale.

34 **Approval of the Scrutiny Annual Reports 2021/22**

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide Leadership, Councillor Robinson presented the report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services providing a review of the work undertaken by the Council's four Scrutiny Groups during 2021/22. The Leader invited each of the Scrutiny Group Chairmen to deliver a brief summary of the work of each Group over the year.

Councillor Combellack, former Chairman of the Corporate Overview Group, reminded Council that on becoming Mayor, she had stood down as Chairman

of this Group. Councillor Combellack stated that she had found the position very rewarding and welcomed the more proactive, inclusive scrutiny regime, which was now successfully in place. Council noted that the Group had scrutinised the impact of Covid-19, both on the Council's staff, ways of working, delivery of services and residents, and she thanked officers for their hard work during such challenging times. Councillor Combellack in particular thanked officers responsible for producing the Covid reports, which had been so extensive, that it had required two reports, to look at both internal and external factors. The Council's resilience throughout the pandemic was highlighted, and the Group had scrutinised the positive and negative aspects of the Council's working practices throughout that period, with that analysis added to the Council's Response Programme, should a similar event occur again. Councillor Combellack advised that she had continued to meet with other councillors and councils via the virtual East Midlands Council meetings to exchange views and ideas. It was hoped that through training and improved communication, Councillors would have a better understanding of the value and process of scrutiny in policy making, including a simpler scrutiny matrix, which it was hoped all Councillors were using.

Councillor Combellack concluded by thanking all Scrutiny Group Chairmen and Vice-chairmen for their valued assistance throughout the year and wished them all the best in their roles.

Councillor Viridi, Chairman of the Governance Scrutiny Group referred to the importance of scrutiny in challenging and influencing how Council made its decisions, to ensure the continued delivery of high quality services. Council was reminded that the Group had a broad spectrum of responsibilities to scrutinise, and actions taken to ensure the probity and soundness of the Council's decision making. Councillor Viridi stated that over the past year the Group had judiciously and robustly scrutinised the Council's finances, approach to risk as well as other corporate issues, including the Statement of Accounts, Annual Governance Statement, Capital Investment Strategy, Annual Fraud Report, and Internal Audit and Risk Management reports. Councillor Viridi highlighted key points in the report, which included the positive comments from the Internal Auditors that the Council had a substantial system of internal control in the highest rating, which was a significant achievement. A positive Going Concern Assessment had been achieved; the Council had healthy returns based on its Capital Investment Strategy, the Annual Audit letter had provided reasonable assurance that the Council's financial statements were free from material error, together with a positive performance on the Council's commercial property portfolio. Councillor Viridi advised that members of the Group had requested additional information to help improve Risk Management and any mitigating actions, to allow members to see how officers were making internal risk decisions.

Councillor Viridi concluded by stating that this had been another challenging year for the Group and the Council; however, he advised that due to the dedication of staff and Councillors, and careful management in previous years, the Council had managed exceptionally well, despite the exceedingly difficult circumstances. Council noted that there were still uncertain times ahead, where the Council's financial resilience would be tested, and it was encouraging to note that the appropriate governance measures were in place.

Councillor Virdi thanked his Vice-chairman, Councillor Gray for his support throughout the year, together with other members of the Group and officers for their hard work.

Councillor J Wheeler, former Chairman of the Communities Scrutiny Group stated that the Group had considered a variety of topics including WISE: Environmental Crime Enforcement, the Carbon Management Plan and Police performance and resources in Rushcliffe. The outbreak of Covid-19 had undoubtedly led to challenges for local communities; however, Councillor Wheeler advised that the Group had continued to monitor on-going projects undertaken by the Council. Councillor Wheeler thanked officers who had supported the Group, all members of the Group for their active involvement and the Vice-chairman Councillor Bansal.

Councillor Clarke, Chairman of the Growth and Development Group advised that the Group had scrutinised many interesting topics, including the River Trent Footbridge crossing, which had involved liaison with the City Council, cycling networks, which had involved cycling groups and the County Council, and Community Infrastructure Levy updates. In respect of Covid-19, Councillor Clarke referred to the considerable work undertaken by officers in administering the Government business recovery grants, and the plaudits the Council had received for that. Councillor Clarke stated that tree conservation had been considered and emphasised what an important issue this was. The Group had also discussed planning communications, which could be a contentious topic for those directly involved, and it was therefore important to scrutinise it.

In conclusion, Councillor Clarke thanked the Service Manger – Economic Growth and her team, other officers who had attended meetings, the former Vice-chairman Councillor Butler and other members of the Group.

Councillor Brennan added her thanks to all members of the scrutiny groups, noted the extensive work undertaken by them and seconded the recommendation.

Councillor J Walker, Councillor Jones, Councillor R Mallender and Councillor Shaw all added their thanks and endorsed the report.

The Leader, on behalf of Cabinet thanked Councillors for the committed and professional work undertaken by the scrutiny groups, and thanked officers for the considerable help and support given to those groups. The Leader reiterated the fundamental importance of scrutiny to the Council, which was appreciated by all.

It was **RESOLVED** that the work undertaken by the four Scrutiny Groups during 2021/22 be endorsed.

35 **Exclusion of Public**

It was resolved that under Regulation 21(1)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on

the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

36 Update on former Officers' Mess RAF Syerston, Flintham

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, Councillor Upton presented the report of Director – Development and Economic Growth providing an update on the former Officers' Mess RAF Syerston, Flintham.

It was RESOLVED that Council endorsed the proposed actions set out within the report and granted delegated authority to the Director for Development and Economic Growth and the s151 Officer, in discussion with the Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Finance and Planning and Housing, to progress an application for a Compulsory Purchase Order of the former Officers' Mess at RAF Syerston, Flintham, up to the value as set out in the report. Where there is an increase in the value of the Compulsory Purchase Order, a further report will be taken to Cabinet.

37 Notices of Motion

- a. The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor J Walker and seconded by Councillor Gaunt.

“Improving the energy efficiency of homes is vital to help the residents of Rushcliffe who are in the middle of an economic crisis. We call on central government to facilitate a simpler, less chaotic, and less bureaucratic system of aiding local government to deliver home energy improvement schemes to those most in need:

1. End the bidding system for all relevant schemes that takes up valuable officer time and resources when it could be better spent making the changes needed to ease the economic disparity and suffering, we are seeing.
2. Stop funding schemes on an annual basis and move to much longer time frames which will encourage local business and much needed skills to develop in this sector whilst also facilitating larger scale delivery of projects.”

Councillor J Walker informed Council, in moving the motion that she had felt compelled to try and do something, although since writing the motion, the situation had become worse. She acknowledged that everyone could take simple steps to save money; however, there was no one in the Chamber who could deny the fear and worry coming from local communities, regarding their financial uncertainty. Councillor Walker advised that she had been approached by village leaders in Ruddington to set up warm spaces for residents to access during the winter, which was a dreadful prospect to consider. The situation had been horribly juxtaposed by the recent removal of the top rate 45% of Income Tax, an action, which was callous and unhuman, and at best irresponsible, and Councillor Walker urged Councillors to support the motion, to ensure that the Council could start to improve on its workings and processes before the winter. Councillor Walker stated that this would be a start of some cross-party action,

as doing nothing was not an option.

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

Councillor Brennan advised that the Government was taking action and had recently announced £64 billion to help with household energy costs. Councillor Brennan stated that she would not address the other issues raised by Councillor Walker, as they had no bearing on the motion. In respect of insulating homes, it was noted that the Council had a strong track record in this area, with substantial funding secured from LAD 2 and 3, together with funding for off-grid homes to retro fit and provide up to date insulation and improvements in energy efficiency. Council noted that those practical schemes had been delivered and had benefitted many residents. Reference had been made to Government schemes being chaotic; however, Councillor Brennan stated that no examples had been provided of that, and whilst it was acknowledged that schemes could be bureaucratic, appropriate checks were required. In respect of the use of officer time and the completion for resources, Councillor Brennan did agree that it took up officer time; however, competitive bidding could be extremely useful in focusing resources and ensuring that the most innovative and value for money projects coming forward. Councillor Brennan did acknowledge that if funding was not awarded, it could be argued that there were more equitable ways of distributing that funding. Councillor Brennan agreed that in respect of longer term funding, it would be helpful to have longer timeframes to bring plans forward. It was very welcome that in the Devolution Deal the importance of energy efficiency was recognised, and Council noted that significant funding would be made available for the retro fitting of housing and devolved to the boroughs to enable works on a more strategic level. Councillor Brennan stated that everyone would agree that having a strategic approach to resources, which would help with planning and efficient delivery would be beneficial. Given that the Devolution Deal should be approved, and the funding delivered, the issue for this motion was timing, and Councillor Brennan advised that the Conservative Group would not be supporting the motion. However, Council was advised that if the Devolution Deal did not address this and did not provide for more strategic funding at a borough level, that it would be appropriate to bring the motion back, at the beginning of the next financial year.

Councillor Jones, confirmed that the Liberal Democrat Group would be supporting the motion as local authorities and more importantly residents, needed more certainty and a steady process by which Government supported energy improvement schemes. Councillor Jones considered that the current 'trickle-down' Government should understand that a regular trickle over a longer timescale was far better and a more efficient use of staff time, than the on-off annual gambling bidding processes.

Councillor S Mallender confirmed that the Green Group would be supporting the motion, acknowledged the very difficult time everyone was facing with the enormous increase in energy prices and stated that it was vital that people most in need had improvements to their homes, to reduce their energy bills. Councillor Mallender also stated that rather than mentioning all the time that more energy was needed, the most important point was that too much energy was being used in the first place, and if energy could be saved, less would

need to be produced, better insulation and micro-generation would help that.

Councillor Thomas noted the comments made by Councillor Brennan regarding the Devolution Deal; however, she considered that action needed to be taken before then and advised that the Leake Independent Group would be supporting the motion. Councillor Thomas stated that reducing energy consumption and costs to households was so important in this current crisis and the grant funding schemes certainly seemed chaotic. It was noted that officers were doing a great job working alongside other agencies to deliver benefits despite this, and Councillor Thomas advised that last year she had been privileged to accompany officers around part of her ward identified for support, and despite the advance publicity, they had been met with some suspicion. Councillor Thomas referred to the many scam and bogus organisations taking advantage of the confusion and stated that what was needed was a clearly badged public scheme, delivered via local government, with a well ordered application process and clear eligibility criteria so that the public could have confidence in it. Council noted that steady progress would not be achieved by this patchwork of stop-start “initiatives” and more could be done by Rushcliffe and Nottinghamshire County Council, for instance by developing a group buying scheme for solar panels.

The Leader stated that in the Devolution Deal, £18m would be available to support housing, with £9m of that for retro-fitting, which was exactly what the motion was about, and in respect of timescales, this money had to be spent by April 2023. The importance of the issue had been recognised and was a major part of the Devolution Deal, with funding allocated to Rushcliffe and the Leader reiterated that this motion was not currently relevant.

Councillor Gowland stated that yesterday the Government had given £1.5 billion to cover 130,000 houses, and she considered that £9m would not cover many houses, billions of pounds would be required. Training people to undertake the work would also be key, and it was hoped the Deal would cover that.

Councillor Gaunt, having reserved his right to speak, felt that everything that Councillor Walker had said had been relevant, given what was happening nationally, and stated that as the Devolution Deal had yet to be agreed, the current motion was timely to indicate how Rushcliffe wanted to move forward. Councillor Gaunt referred to the difficult choices people were having to make every day, and he considered that this motion would help residents to get the home energy improvements they needed. Councillor Gaunt advised that in 2006, the previous Government had a law in place to say that all homes would be net zero by 2016, and that had been changed in 2011, and this motion was asking for some changes to be made to mitigate the decision in 2011.

Councillor Walker disagreed that the Devolution Deal would help people this winter, whilst this motion would provide immediate, practical help and she could not understand why it could not be supported.

On being put to the vote the motion was lost.

b. The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Way and

seconded by Councillor Gowland.

Prior to presenting her motion Councillor Way informed the Mayor that she 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 Way proceeded to move the motion.

“Recognising that hedges have a positive effect for both wildlife and the amenity of residents, and play a vital role in carbon reduction, this Council adopts a strategic aim to protect hedges within the Borough and to increase our hedgerow network by 40% by 2050 as recommended by the Climate Change Committee*.

To further this strategic aim, Council will:

1. Ask scrutiny to oversee, by March 2023, a review of the legal and policy framework for the protection and enhancement of hedges including use of planning conditions *and consider a methodology for recording new and lost hedges*
2. Ask the Local Development Framework group to look at strengthening policies to protect hedges and create new hedges in the next version of the local plan
3. Develop an action plan to establish a baseline and set out an ambitious route to achieve the target of 40% increase in the hedgerow network as soon as possible
4. Further promote best practice advice for the management and maintenance of hedgerows in our own operations and with the public, partners, and landowners, including promoting National Hedgerow Week in October 2022.”

*The Climate Change Committee is an independent, statutory body established under the Climate Change Act 2008.

Councillor Way informed Council, in moving the altered motion, that hedges and hedgerows had a positive effect on wildlife and residents playing a vital role in carbon reduction; however, due to large scale development they were being lost at an alarming rate. New hedges took years to establish, and they never achieved the level of biodiversity that established hedges had benefitted from. Following the Council’s recent promotion of the Hedgehog Highway, it’s No Mow Policy and a reduction in the use of pesticides, the protection and extension of hedge and hedgerows felt like the next natural step.

Councillor Way advised that the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England stated that hedgerows were essential to soak up carbon, protect against flooding and aid nature’s recovery. Council was informed that some hedges were protected under government legislation but as was often the case, this was very complex and left many hedgerows unprotected. The Climate Change Committee and CPRE recommended increasing the hedgerow network by 40% by 2050; and Councillor Way hoped that the Council could be more ambitious than that. She went on to say that evidence suggested that the country had lost 50% of its hedgerows since the end of the second world war, with hedgerows that remained often subject to overcutting, which reduced

biodiversity and mechanical cutting that sometimes damaged hedges beyond survival. Fortunately, this situation could be improved with proper management as demonstrated in her ward.

In conclusion, Councillor Way stated that Rushcliffe was a mainly rural Borough, and this motion called upon the Council to do more to protect existing hedges and hedgerows within the Borough as well as actively increasing the number of hedges and hedgerows and raising awareness about the importance of hedges with residents and developers.

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

In supporting the motion, Councillor Upton recognised that hedgerows were a valuable part of the Borough and that the Council had limited powers to protect hedgerows. However, he did see hedgerow protection legislation being used where possible despite its complexity and Council was informed that under certain circumstances the Borough Council could enforce replacement planting. Councillor Upton advised Council that the Conservative Group would be supporting this motion to protect as much hedging as it could and work towards increasing the Borough's network of hedgerows as part of its work on Biodiversity Net Gain.

Councillor Price informed Council that the Liberal Democrat Group fully supported the motion and reported that she had recently attended a meeting of the Sharphill Stakeholder Group and had heard that many hedges that had been removed by the developer would now be replaced after Council intervention.

Councillor R Mallender stated that the Green Party would also be supporting the motion and suggested that perhaps the Council could run a free hedges scheme following the success of its free trees scheme to increase hedge planting for the benefit of the environment as well as wildlife in the area. He stated that he would be keen to see town and parish councils get involved to increase the number of hedges over the 40% set.

Councillor Barney congratulated Councillor Way on bringing this motion to the attention of Council and described Councillor Way as a 'woman of action' having seen her making a real difference on the ground in East Leake recently.

Councillor Gowland, having reserved her right to speak, thanked the Council for this support and stressed the importance of hedges and hedgerows to carbon capture and the biodiversity of wildlife in the Borough. She asked Council if they knew the old meaning of 'Rushcliffe' and quoted from Wikipedia that Rushcliffe was the "cliff where brushwood grows" with brushwood being an old term for small trees and shrubs, in effect hedges. She called for Rushcliffe to be true to its roots and become known for its hedges once again.

Councillor Way thanked Councillors for all of the supportive comments and was pleased that the motion appeared to be supported by all parties.

On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

38 Questions from Councillors

a. Question from Councillor J Walker to Councillor Brennan

“Residents would like more secure bike storage at the arena and throughout the borough. Could RBC look to include bike storage, like that located in the Bridgford Road car park and the around Nottingham City, for other locations in and around Rushcliffe?”

Councillor Brennan responded by stating that it was a significant challenge to provide a completely secure storage facility, which also had public access. For example, the unit in central West Bridgford was linked to a City card scheme and the Council did explore if it could create something similar to work with the Parkwood membership card but this would require significant investment including electrical supply. However, the Council recognised that there had been problems with cycle thefts at the Arena, so in addition to the various CCTV cameras that have been installed, an additional cycle rack next to the entrance doors had been installed, right in front of the temporary desks allowing good oversight by Parkwood customers and staff. Additionally, if customers used an appropriate D style lock, then this should afford a very good level of protection. Councillor Brennan advised that since the Council had taken this action the situation with bike thefts had much improved. Furthermore, as part of the Council’s emerging Walking and Cycling Strategy, the Council would continue to explore opportunities such as at the new Bingham Arena to create more cycle parking and secure storage at appropriate locations and within its resources.

b. Question from Councillor Gowland to Councillor Inglis

“Given the proposed reduction in the Fire Service in West Bridgford, will Rushcliffe undertake a public information campaign on fire safety (in the same way as it supports the police in security campaigns)?”

Councillor Inglis responded by stating that any such decision would be made by the Fire Authority. The Fire Service was a part of the South Notts Community Safety Partnership, which was a statutory body under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, which had the aim of bringing agencies and communities together to tackle crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in the local community. As a result, the Council already regularly shared comm’s messages including allied ‘community risks’ such as fire safety. Therefore if the Fire Service made this change and created an information campaign as part of their mitigation, the Council would always seek to support and promote that. The cuts had yet to be made, there would be a consultation period, and Councillor Gowland and her Labour colleagues were urged to petition to stop the cuts.

c. Question from Councillor Thomas to Councillor Brennan

“What progress has been made in implementing the council motions adopted on Quieter Fireworks (March 20), Protection of Hedgehogs (July 21) and

Reducing use of Pesticides (March 2022)?”

Councillor Brennan responded by stating that a briefing note had been prepared, which would be sent to all Councillors next week on the actions taken as a result of all supported Council motions and questions in 2021/22. However, in the meantime and in respect of fireworks, she confirmed that the Council had issued a number of press releases including an article in Rushcliffe Reports, which encouraged the public use of low noise fireworks. In terms of its own operations, the Council only used fireworks at the Christmas Light switch in West Bridgford and last year low noise types were used and were well received by the public in attendance. In relation to the protection of hedgehogs, the Council had carried out a range of communication initiatives to promote the protection of hedgehogs including social media updates, articles in Rushcliffe Reports etc. The Council’s estates, facilities and parks team had been made aware of the motion and were ensuring that hedgehog protection was integrated into current working practices. The topic of hedgehog preservation had also been raised in operational working group meetings with key agencies such as Via. Whilst the Development Management team was requesting hedgehog highways (appropriately sized hole in fences to link gardens and areas of open space) to be included on all appropriate new developments and requesting developers to provide guidance/advice notes on biodiversity net gain to all new occupiers explaining what measures were in place on their plots, which included bat and bird boxes they find on their properties. In relation to pesticides and herbicides the Council had adopted a revised, and significantly reduced, spraying regime implemented by Streetwise on all Council land with particularly sensitive sites being clearly identified. Written procedures were in place for responsible pesticide use by the Council’s Pest Control Service to minimise impact on wildlife and pets. An article on the topic was included in the summer edition of Rushcliffe Reports and further work would be included in the next version of the Council’s Environment Policy due in late 2022/23.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Thomas asked if there were any further plans to use the quiet fireworks during the current season?

Councillor Brennan advised that she was not aware, but she would ask that that would take place.

The meeting closed at 9.50 pm.

CHAIRMAN