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Our reference:
Your reference:
Date: Wednesday, 21 September 2022

To all Members of the Council

Dear Councillor

A Meeting of the Council will be held on Thursday, 29 September 2022 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road, West Bridgford to consider the following items of business.

This meeting will be accessible and open to the public via the live stream on YouTube and viewed via the link: <https://www.youtube.com/user/RushcliffeBC>
Please be aware that until the meeting starts the live stream video will not be showing on the home page. For this reason, please keep refreshing the home page until you see the video appear.

As this meeting includes an item subject to Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (Item 13 - Update on former Officers' Mess RAF Syerston, Flintham), members of the public in attendance at the meeting will be asked to leave but can re-join the meeting after the debate on Item 13 has concluded. For viewers of the Council's You Tube channel, the livestream will be stopped for the discussion of Item 13. The remainder of the meeting will be livestreamed after the debate on Item 13 has concluded.

Yours sincerely



Gemma Dennis
Monitoring Officer

AGENDA

Moment of Reflection

1. Apologies for absence
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 July 2022 (Pages 1 - 18)

To receive as a correct record the minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Thursday, 7 July 2022.

4. Mayor's Announcements

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Opening hours:
Monday, Tuesday and Thursday
8.30am - 5pm
Wednesday
9.30am - 5pm
Friday
8.30am - 4.30pm

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Rushcliffe Arena
Rugby Road
West Bridgford
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5. Leader's Announcements

6. Chief Executive's Announcements

7. Citizens' Questions

To answer questions submitted by Citizens on the Council or its services.

8. Business from the last Council meeting

To receive Notice of Motion submitted under Standing Order No.12

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 R Jones

9. East Midlands Devolution Deal (Pages 19 - 36)

The report of the Chief Executive is attached.

10. Upper Saxondale Community Governance Review (Pages 37 - 60)

The report of the Chief Executive is attached.

11. Approval of the Scrutiny Annual Reports 2021/22 (Pages 61 - 102)

The report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services is attached.

12. Exclusion of Public

To move "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 to the Local Government Act 1972”.

13. Update on former Officers' Mess RAF Syerston, Flintham (Pages 103 - 114)

The report of the Director – Development and Economic Growth is attached.

14. Notices of Motion

To receive Notices of Motion submitted under Standing Order No.12

- a) 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

- b) 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
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 hedge rows 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 L Way

15. Questions from Councillors

To answer questions submitted by Councillors under Standing Order No. 11(2)

Membership

Chairman: Councillor T Combellack

Vice-Chairman: Councillor D Mason

Councillors: R Adair, S Bailey, B Bansal, M Barney, K Beardsall, N Begum, A Brennan, B Buschman, R Butler, N Clarke, J Cottee, G Dickman, A Edyvean, M Gaunt, P Gowland, B Gray, L Healy, L Howitt, 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, D Simms, J Stockwood, Mrs M Stockwood, C Thomas, R Upton, D Viridi, J Walker, R Walker, L Way, G Wheeler, J Wheeler and G Williams

Meeting Room Guidance

Fire Alarm Evacuation: In the event of an alarm sounding please evacuate the building using the nearest fire exit, normally through the Council Chamber. You should assemble at the far side of the plaza outside the main entrance to the building.

Toilets: Are located to the rear of the building near the lift and stairs to the first floor.

Mobile Phones: For the benefit of others please ensure that your mobile phone is switched off whilst you are in the meeting.

Microphones: When you are invited to speak, please press the button on your microphone, a red light will appear on the stem. Please ensure that you switch this off after you have spoken.

Recording at Meetings

The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 allows filming and recording by anyone attending a meeting. This is not within the Council's control.

Rushcliffe Borough Council is committed to being open and transparent in its decision making. As such, the Council will undertake audio recording of meetings which are open to the public, except where it is resolved that the public be excluded, as the information being discussed is confidential or otherwise exempt



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 7 JULY 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, M Barney, K Beardsall, N Begum, A Brennan, B Buschman, R Butler, N Clarke, J Cottee, G Dickman, A Edyvean, M Gaunt, P Gowland, B Gray, L Healy, L Howitt, 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, D Simms, C Thomas, R Upton, D Viridi, J Walker, R Walker, L Way, G Wheeler and J Wheeler

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

L Ashmore	Director of Development and Economic Growth
D Banks	Director of Neighbourhoods
C Caven-Atack	Service Manager - Corporate Services
K Marriott	Chief Executive
G Pearce	Solicitor
E Richardson	Democratic Services Officer
H Tambini	Democratic Services Manager
S Whittaker	Service Manager - Finance

APOLOGIES:

Councillors B Bansal, J Stockwood, Mrs M Stockwood and G Williams

14 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Purdue-Horan declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 10 Bingham Improvement Board report and would not take part in the debate.

Councillor Combellack declared an interest in Item 11 Motion A and would not take part in the debate.

15 Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 May 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 26 May 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

16 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor reported that her Civic year had certainly got off to a flying start,

welcoming the Nottingham Forest Football team back to the Borough following their historic win at Wembley. The event at the Council House in the city centre was very exciting, with her holding up the trophy to the 40,000 fans gathered in the Market Square, and enjoying the red and white smoke, collective sing-along, and tickertape parade.

The Jubilee celebrations later the same week had been just as exciting, with the Mayor attending a number of wonderful street parties, beacon lightings, church services and judging a number of Jubilee themed competition including dogs in fancy dress! Since then, the magnificent Proms in the Park event to celebrate Armed Forces Day had been topped with a stunning performance from a Queen tribute band.

The Mayor referred to a number of civic services for other district councils that she had attended, including lunch at the Bishop's Palace, a Jubilee service at Southwell Minster, the beating of the retreat at the DMRC, and the annual pilgrimage to Crich, which had been spectacular, with a glorious Lancaster Bomber flypast.

17 Leader's Announcements

The Leader referred to the upcoming move of Anthony May, currently Chief Executive of Nottinghamshire County Council, to his new post at the Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust and stated that Mr May had provided the county with excellent leadership throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and working towards devolution for the East Midlands. The Leader also welcomed Nora Senior, a Rushcliffe resident, to her new post as Chairman of the Freeport, and wished her well in this important role.

The Leader went on to update Council about two significant projects. Firstly, the Borough's support of families displaced by the war in Ukraine. The Borough had put forward 126 sponsor families to date and 134 individuals had already been placed in sponsor homes, with a further 184 individuals going through the resettlement process. The Leader thanked sponsor families, Council officers and charity workers who had put so much effort into creating safe spaces for displaced Ukrainian families.

Finally, the Leader reported that the Council had paid out 100% of the energy rebates funded by the Government to help residents with the cost-of-living crisis to 36,770 properties in the Borough. This has been achieved well in advance of the September deadline set by the Government. The Leader thanked the Council's Finance team for their excellent efforts supporting residents during such difficult times.

18 Chief Executive's Announcements

The Chief Executive reminded Council about the two events organised for prospective candidates thinking of standing in next year's Borough and Town and Parish Council elections. The first would be held on Thursday, 14 July, at 6pm at the Arena and then on Wednesday, 20 July, at 5pm via Teams. The events would focus upon what was involved in standing for election and answer any questions from prospective candidates.

The Chief Executive went on to thank those who had already been involved by providing quotes for the Guide or films for the social media campaigns and she invited members of the Council to come along to the events and informally share their experiences with potential candidates.

19 **Citizens' Questions**

No citizens' questions were received for this meeting.

20 **Revisions to the Council's Constitution**

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough Wide Leadership, Councillor Robinson, presented the report of the Monitoring Officer, outlining proposed revisions to the Council's Constitution.

In presenting the item, the Leader proposed that following the meeting of Governance Scrutiny Group, two additional changes had been recommended, which he asked the Monitoring Officer to make:

- Part 2 Committee Structure – to include an additional bullet point for the Governance Scrutiny Group to cover the Review of the Council as a “Going Concern.”
- Part 3 A process for the remuneration of the Chief Executive to clarify that the pay scale is set by Council, it is movement along the scale that is determined by the Leader, Deputy Leader and Leader of the Opposition, who are advised by an agreed external professional and the Strategic Human Resources Manager.

The Leader advised that it had further been requested that the reference to the Director of Development and Economic Growth be removed from the changes proposed on pages 32 and 92, and that this was agreed.

The Leader explained that this was an administrative item proposing constitutional changes to procedures relating to the paid structures for the Chief Executive, GDPR, and to Planning Committee and referred to the summarised changes, details of which were set out in Appendix One of the report. The Leader confirmed that this item had been considered and approved by the Governance Scrutiny Group at its meeting on 30 June 2022.

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

Councillor Gowland advised that the Labour Group was generally in support of the report, apart from the changes to Planning Committee, as by moving Planning Committee to the afternoon, the Council would be effectively excluding a wide number of people in the population from becoming Councillors, because that if they worked, they could not become a Councillor and attend Planning Committee.

Councillor Jones welcomed the majority of the changes, and particularly the removal of the reference to the Director Development and Economic Growth

referred to above. However, Councillor Jones stated that he was also concerned about moving Planning Committee to the afternoon and including that in the Constitution. The Council wanted a variety of candidates to come forward to stand for election, and young people in work would find afternoon meetings difficult to attend. Councillor Jones understood that it was beneficial to developers and officers but said that it had an impact on the availability of Councillors.

Councillor R Mallender thanked officers for their work on this report and was pleased to see the updates and amendments coming through from Standards Committee. Councillor Mallender shared the concerns expressed by other Councillors regarding the start time of Planning Committee meetings and questioned why this was being included in the Constitution and stated that it should be a matter that was dealt with by the Planning Committee itself. Councillor Mallender felt that writing it into the Constitution would fetter the discretion of the Chair and members of that Committee as to how they might best serve their community.

Councillor Thomas also welcomed the removal of the reference to the Director of Development and Economic Growth; however, she could not support permanently moving Planning Committee to the afternoon. Councillor Thomas stated that this reduced democratic representation, making it more difficult for Councillors and members of the public who worked during the day to be involved, and left smaller groups within the Council more disproportionately affected.

Councillor Edyvean advised that many people either worked in the evenings, or had commitments, including Councillors, and Council was reminded that whatever time a meeting was held, some parts of the population would be excluded.

Councillor R Mallender asked for clarification as to why it was necessary for the Planning Committee start time to be included in the Constitution.

Councillor Upton agreed that there was never going to be a perfect time to hold the meeting, that working patterns had changed dramatically and the nine to five working day had disappeared. Councillor Upton referred to evening meetings where members of the public had attended to hear their application debated, only to be told that the Committee had run out of time, and they would have to wait until the next meeting. Councillor Upton reminded Council that a six month pilot had taken place, with a significant consultation process, involving members of the public, applicants, developers, and Councillors, with the majority support being for Planning Committee to be held in the afternoon.

Councillor Butler agreed with Councillor Upton that sometimes when applications were very complex and detailed, there were occasions where the Committee would run out of time, which was not helpful to anyone, including members of the public attending the meeting. Councillor Butler referred to Councillor R Mallender's concerns about fettering the decisions of the Chair and stated that he did not understand why that would be the case. Councillor Butler added that Planning Committee was quasi-judicial, that it was important that procedures were followed, and that by 10pm at night there was danger of

losing attention to detail and members did not want to make mistakes on important decisions. Councillor Butler stated that it was unusual for other similar decision making bodies to have meetings starting after 7pm.

Councillor Gaunt acknowledged that the time had been changed as it was felt that the earlier start time worked better, although he himself could now not attend any meetings to represent his community, but echoed Councillor R Mallender's question as to why this was to be included in the Constitution.

Councillor Simms stated that as a working person he was confused as to why this was to be included as part of the Constitution and considered that the earlier start time worked for Councillors who were retired; however, he and many other working people would not be able to attend. Councillor Simms questioned why it was being mandated in the Constitution and advised that if meetings were too long, then it was for officers to plan the meetings so that they ran appropriately, in the same way that the courts planned their cases. Councillor Simms stated that he could not support the proposal and asked why the possibility of holding a daytime and an evening meeting on alternate months had not been considered.

The Leader advised that the report related to revisions to the Constitution and was not a debate about Planning Committee, given that there had previously been many hours of debate already on that subject, a six month pilot, feedback surveys completed, the process had been transparent, and approved by Council. The Leader explained that all meetings, including Full Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny meetings were included in the Constitution and that this formed part of how a well-run Council governed itself. Council was advised that whilst those changes were being included in the Constitution, the Planning Committee Chairman could amend the time of the meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that the revisions to the Constitution be approved.

21 **Public Space Protection Order - Dog Control**

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Safety, Councillor Inglis, presented the Report of the Director – Neighbourhoods, outlining the proposed Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for Dog Control in Rushcliffe.

Councillor Inglis explained that the process for this report had commenced in January 2021, when the Communities Scrutiny Group had considered that the current Council resources to undertake dog fouling issues were very limited. Two public consultations were undertaken, with parish councils and the public, both were overwhelmingly supporting of the proposal, with the details of those responses outlined in Appendix Three of the report. Approval from Cabinet had also been gained to take this forward in supplementing the dog fouling order, which was already in place. Councillor Inglis explained that current measures fell short for new building and residential areas and their open spaces, as they were not included. The Council had responsibility to ensure the safety of its residents and visitors for all of its open spaces and Councillor Inglis considered that this PSPO was the right tool to deliver that. Council was advised that this was a safeguarding tool, it would protect children, minimise risk, and effectively deal with irresponsible dog owners and dog walkers.

Councillor Inglis stressed that prosecution was not the aim of the PSPO, nor was income generation, rather it would be used to target areas and those who took no responsibility for their dogs. This Order would also help protect all open spaces where the public had access, and to play parks that were fenced or enclosed by exclusion, and having dogs on leads in signed areas, to ensure owners had the means to remove any excrement.

Councillor Inglis appreciated that the majority of dog owners were totally responsible; however, dogs could be unpredictable, as history had shown with unprovoked dog attacks, especially in parks and recreational areas. Councillor Inglis referred to the unpleasant smell and associated health and hygiene risks of dog poo, and the problem of dog poo bags being hung in trees. Council was reminded that conscientious owners would have nothing to fear nor have need to change their habits, and Councillor Inglis stated that this PSPO clearly set out the standard for everyone to understand and to follow in helping to keep Rushcliffe safe.

Councillor Inglis advised that the local Police Commander and the Police and Crime Commissioner were both supporting of the PSPO. The PSPO would allow for an extended investigation capacity, using contracted enforcement officers, currently Wise, on a cost neutral basis, to increase the Council's capacity in dealing with complaints. Council was reminded that the four Es, Engage, Explain and Encourage would be considered before an Enforcement was made and any action would be monitored by officers to ensure that it was proportionate and in the public interest.

In conclusion, Councillor Inglis stated that it was disappointing that despite extensive consultation, Tollerton Parish Council had continually requested that their open spaces be excluded from this order, which it had been, but the rest of Rushcliffe had been incorporated. The reasons for Tollerton's exclusion were outlined in Appendix Two of the report.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Dickman advised that as a conscientious dog owner, he had no concerns or issues regarding this PSPO, and stated that the Order was looking to influence all dog owners to take responsibility for their dogs. It was pleasing to note the overwhelming public support in the consultation and Councillor Dickman considered that the PSPO requirements were basic and in place for people who had no consideration of others.

Councillor Dickman stated that everyone wanted to enjoy their communities and the PSPO would help to alleviate the concerns of residents who were wary of dogs. It was important that this PSPO was not seen or reported as a means of fining people, but that its intention was to provide greater safety and enjoyment for all, and he considered that this PSPO would be a welcome and pre-emptive initiative.

Councillor J Walker stated that the Labour Group supported the recommendation and welcomed anything that made this issue more enforceable.

Councillor Price stated that the Liberal Democrat Group supported the

initiative. Dog fouling could render public spaces unsafe and unusable, and Councillor Price referred to an ongoing issue in a park in Musters' ward where the action of a small number of irresponsible dog owners was making the space unusable for local children. Councillor Price welcomed any additional powers that made enforcement more likely to be successful.

Councillor R Mallender stated that there was no such thing as the 'dog poo fairy' and considered this issue to be a problem for all Councillors to a greater or lesser extent. Within Lady Bay there was a wonderful open area, the Hook, and whilst most dog owners were very conscientious, many poo bags were still found in bushes and hanging in trees. Councillor Mallender advised that whilst he had not been a fan of PSPOs when they were first introduced, he thought that this was an excellent use and supported the recommendation.

Councillor Thomas stated that the Leake Independent Group supported this measure to deal with this issue, which was of such concern to many residents. The requirement to carry poo bags was much more enforceable and also gave opportunities for education. Councillor Thomas welcomed the fact that the public open space on new estates would now be subject to enforcement and hoped that a strong communication campaign would follow the adoption of the PSPO, and that it would be refined in the future to increase its scope.

Councillor Butler agreed that most dog owners were responsible, and it was a shame that the PSPO was required because of a relatively small minority of anti-social people. Councillor Butler questioned the habit of hanging poo bags in trees and hedges, particularly when this was often very close to a bin. Councillor Butler reiterated that it was a shame that this measure was required; however, if it got the message across to people who were anti-social with their dogs, then it was welcomed.

Councillor Simms stated that as a dog owner, it was irritating to see dog poo and referred to a measure adopted by Newton Parish Council, which had worked well in providing poo bag dispensers. Councillors Simms said that sometime people could run out of bags and suggested that providing bags would act as an incentive in addition to fining people.

Councillor S Mallender referred to the Council's policy of being plastic free and requested that if the Council did provide bags that they be biodegradable. Council was advised that unfortunately the smell of poo bags if left on the ground was attractive to deer and horses to eat, and as those animals were unable to be sick, eating the plastic could sometimes lead to their death. Councillor Mallender advised that leaving the dog poo on the ground was preferable to leaving it in a plastic bag on the ground or in a tree, as at least it would rot.

It was **RESOLVED** that the proposed PSPO for the control of dog related anti-social behaviour as set out in Appendix One be approved.

22 **Bingham Improvement Board Report**

Having declared an interest, Councillor Purdue-Horan left his seat but remained in the Council Chamber and did not part in the debate or vote for this

item.

The Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough Wide Leadership, Councillor Robinson presented the report of the Chief Executive outlining the Bingham Improvement Board report.

The Leader recalled that at its meeting on 30 September 2021, Council had accepted a petition from The Bingham Deserves Better group, following several years of complaints regarding the running of Bingham Town Council. Legally the Council could not action the requests in that petition; however, it was recognised that there were significant concerns, and the Leader reminded Council that he had proposed a change to the officer's recommendations in the report, to establish this Improvement Board. The Leader was pleased that this recommendation had been fully supported, and following on from that decision, he, together with the Chief Executive, the Mayor and the clerk from Bingham Town Council had agreed the terms of reference for the Board, which had also been approved by Bingham Town Council. The Board, which was made up of three independent members, and two Bingham Town Councillors had completed its report, and that had been considered and agreed by Bingham Town Council at its meeting on 24 May 2022. The report had also been considered by Cabinet on 14 June 2022, before coming before Council this evening.

The Leader summarised the four main objectives of the Board, details of which were listed in the Board's report. Council was advised that the Board had spoken with over 25 different stakeholders, to canvass views, read numerous reports and attended Bingham Town Council meetings, and the Board was commended for the thorough and excellent work it had achieved.

The Leader stated that some of the findings in the report made for disappointing reading, in particular the lack of respect, poor behaviour and lack of openness, together with a disregard for the Code of Conduct. However, the Leader considered that there were two main issues of most concern: one being the lack of focus on delivering services for the community, in particular the car park, as all focus had been on internal issues; and secondly the significant and disgraceful financial costs incurred from this entire process, at a time when every Council was trying to save money.

In conclusion, Council was advised that moving forward, the report listed very clear and tangible recommendations, underpinned by the Nolan Principles, and the Leader referred to a statement in the report, which looked to future cooperation and the potential for change being in the hands of members, and supported that sentiment.

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

Councillor J Walker confirmed that the Labour Group would be supporting the recommendation and stated that it was good to see democracy returning to the residents of Bingham, along with decency and integrity in how politics was run.

Councillor Jones advised that the Liberal Democrat Group would be supporting

the recommendation and referred to the impact that this situation had had on residents and their perception of the Town Council, as was. Councillor Jones stated that the report was excellent, and the review in six months' time was welcomed; however, the only disappointing thing, was the lack of an apology to the Town Clerk, but it was hoped that things would move forward now.

Councillor R Mallender advised that the Green Group would be supporting the recommendation, and praised the excellent report, which would help the residents of Bingham, who expected and deserved better. It was noted that with the proposed new housing, Bingham would grow significantly, and it was important that those residents received the help and support they needed from the Town Council.

Councillor Thomas confirmed that the Leake Independent Group supported the recommendation.

Councillor Clarke fully endorsed the comments made by the Leader in respect of the car park, which was a major project, and it was vital that this project was now driven forwards, given the proposed major development that would be taking place, additional car parking provision was urgently needed.

Councillor Edyvean referred to the recent appointment of Councillor Gareth Williams as Mayor of Bingham and wished him good fortune in implementing the recommendations of the Board.

The Leader thanked Council for its support and agreed that everyone seemed to share the same feelings regarding this matter and reminded Council that it would receive an update in six months' time.

It was **RESOLVED**

- a) that Council noted that report of the Bingham Improvement Board had been accepted by Bingham Town Council, at its meeting of 24 May 2022, and that the report had been endorsed y Cabinet at its meeting on 14 June 2022; and
- b) that an update on progress against the Action Plan be received by Council in six months' time.

23 **Notices of Motion**

Having declared an interest, the Mayor left her seat but remained in the Council Chamber and did not take part in the debate or vote for this item and the Deputy Mayor took the Chair.

- a. The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Clarke and seconded by Councillor R Mallender

Council resolves to pledge its support to the maintenance and health of the Grantham Canal in the Borough of Rushcliffe as an integral wildlife and wellbeing corridor, and asks Communities Scrutiny Group to oversee the following actions:

- To raise awareness of the importance of the Grantham Canal with the wider community, the County Council, and other relevant agencies to ensure water is retained in the watered section of the Canal within Rushcliffe, to benefit the environment, Mental Health, Wellbeing and Sport.
- To raise awareness amongst the adjoining authorities through which the Grantham Canal passes.
- To review the Service Level Agreement with the Canal and Rivers Trust to include specific reference to water retention (it is due for renewal in 2024 and is being considered by Communities Scrutiny Group on 21 July 2022).
- To write to DEFRA requesting that it reclassify remainder waterways in order that they may benefit from Government funding in light of the health benefits of the canal environment which have been proven during Covid and the consequent lock down.

Councillor Clarke informed Council, in moving the motion that this related to the leisure corridor of the Grantham Canal and advised that the canal was leaking and losing water, and in turn losing important flora and fauna. Councillor Clarke referred to the importance of leisure and relaxation, particularly when associated with water in promoting health and wellbeing and stated that this had become even more important in the last few years due to Covid. The Council needed to ensure that the Government understood the value of waterways, such as the Grantham Canal, and the benefits that it brought, and reiterated that the motion was calling on DEFRA to reclassify the Grantham Canal and other remainder waterways, to ensure that it could receive funding for those vital repairs. Councillor Clarke referred to the process of 'Blue Prescribing' used by doctors, and the importance of such waterways in combating mental health issue and stated that it was vital that this valuable resource be protected. This motion was about conserving this valuable resource, and Councillor Clarke referred to the four main actions required, which were listed in the motion and asked that the motion be supported.

In seconding the motion, Councillor R Mallender stated that the Grantham Canal ran close by to a number of Rushcliffe's towns and villages, it was an asset to the Borough and provided a haven for wildlife, with a variety of habitats and a safe environment that people could enjoy. The canal was part of the Borough's shared history, as it had originally been built to transport various products between Grantham and Nottingham. The canal was a benefit to the environment and helped improve peoples' mental health, wellbeing, and sporting activities, especially during Covid lockdown. Councillor Mallender reminded Council that since 1968 the canal had been classified as a remainder waterway, which meant that maintenance would only take place if it was considered to be a health and safety issue. However, since that time canal use had evolved, with more leisure and social use, and that had coincided with the formation of various community groups, which helped to preserve, protect, and restore the canal, including the Grantham Canal Society, which undertook a great deal of restoration work. At Hickling, community works kept the Basin in water and in use, and at Lady Bay, the Friends of Lady Bay Canal worked to keep the canal as a wildlife corridor. In supporting all elements of the motion, Councillor Mallender stated that the most critical was to review the Service

Level Agreement with the Canal and Rivers Trust, to include specific reference to water retention, and it was pleasing to note that this would be considered by the Communities Scrutiny Group. Council was advised that much of the canal no longer contained any water, with other areas now critically low, and given that it was a haven for wildlife, it was important that it was saved.

In supporting the motion, Councillor J Walker stated how much she enjoyed visiting the Grantham Canal and had been shocked and saddened to see areas that she had recently cycled by where completely dry.

Councillor Price, speaking on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group confirmed that the Group would be supporting the motion, acknowledged the significant impact that this waterway had, particularly in urban areas, as both a leisure facility and a wildlife corridor, and hoped that this motion would lead to tangible action.

Councillor Thomas advised that whilst supporting the preservation and maintenance of the Grantham Canal, she questioned the motion's inclusion on the Council agenda, given that the issue would be considered by the Communities Scrutiny Group.

Councillor Butler reiterated previous comments and commended the volunteers who had worked to preserve and restore the canal and anything that could be done to raise the profile of the canal would be welcomed to safeguard it for the future.

Councillor S Mallender clarified that the original use of the canal had been to take night soil from the city of Nottingham, to be spread on the fields in Lincolnshire.

Councillor Moore stated that this issue was not new, as he had been aware of the problems since moving to the area in 1984. It was pleasing that this motion had been brought forward, as this was a big issue, which would require significant funding and support to move forward. If this motion was agreed, it would be very positive if the Borough Council could put pressure on DEFRA, as this frustrating situation had gone on for too long.

Councillor Upton raised concerns that if action was not taken soon then the whole canal would become dry within the next 18 months, and without water, it would lose most of the environmental and wellbeing benefits that it currently had. The canal was very well used by many during Covid, and although in the future it was unlikely that the whole canal would be restored, now was the time for significant investment, to save as much of the waterway as possible.

Councillor Clarke referred to the comment made by Councillor S Mallender regarding the night soil and confirmed that this had helped to improve agriculture in many areas around the canal basin. Councillor Clarke thanked Council for its support and reiterated that this motion was hopefully just the start of bringing this issue to the forefront and increasing awareness. In conclusion, Councillor Clarke stated that he hoped when the Communities Scrutiny Group considered the issue, that representatives of the Canal and Rivers Trust had been invited to the meeting.

On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

- b. The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Robinson and seconded by Councillor Brennan.

From June 2022, over 40,000 railway workers, mainly represented by the RMT and ASLEF trades unions, are taking strike action, paralysing much of the UK's train network. This has and will impact on the residents of Rushcliffe and our local businesses with:

1. Worry and stress for hospital patients as appointments are delayed, cancelled, or rearranged
2. Some schools' exams being potentially disrupted
3. Many more cars on the roads causing congestion, delays, and a huge spike in pollution
4. Many workers unable to get to work
5. Holiday plans disrupted or cancelled
6. Uncertainty, inconvenience and increased costs for business and leisure travel

Other public sector Trades Unions are also threatening a summer of industrial action across a range of essential services at time when the economy is just beginning to recover from the devastating impacts of the pandemic and many residents are facing a cost of living crisis.

As a Council, we call on the Unions calling these strikes and causing so much misery and inconvenience to our residents, to cease this industrial action immediately and get back to the negotiating table to seek an agreement.

The Leader informed Council, in moving the motion, that he supported the right of railway workers to withdraw their labour and strike. Council was reminded of the importance of the rail network and infrastructure that was used by many residents in Rushcliffe. The Leader informed Council that he had been contacted by many residents whose travel plans, and engagements had been impacted by the rail strikes and that he had been touched by their personal stories of frustration and, in some cases, despair. Council was reminded that difficulties in rail travel had also led to increased car usage resulting in more congestion on the roads and, longer term, more pollution. The Leader referred to the significant cost of the recent rail strike and highlighted the increased levels of stress and hardship for individuals and businesses during the post-Covid recovery period.

The Leader informed Council that the rail industry required modernisation and to adapt to the post-Covid era, to meet the needs of users, many of whom were Rushcliffe residents. The current strikes organised by the main rail unions were in protest to those changes; however, they were impacting on the very people that this Council was elected to represent, and this motion encouraged the rail unions to return to the negotiating table.

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

Councillor J Walker stated that this motion was an attack on rail workers who were struggling to survive after years of austerity and stressed that the Labour Group would like to take the opportunity to show public solidarity for the rail workers and focus on building bridges rather than pointing the finger of blame. She proposed an amendment to the motion:

“As a Council, we call on the Government, Rail companies and the Unions, to cease this industrial action immediately and get back to the negotiating table to seek an agreement and end the misery that is being caused to some of our residents”.

In seconding the amendment to the motion, Councillor Gaunt advised that by calling upon the Government and rail companies to join the unions around the negotiating table, it recognised that a joint effort was required to resolve issues. Councillor Gaunt stated that the unions had been discussing those changes for the last two years and had been unable to reach agreement. Council was reminded that the rail network in this country was dependent on many different bodies and organisations working together and this did not work unless everybody was willing to do that. Councillor Gaunt questioned why this motion had been brought forward and challenged the scale of the impact of the rail strike on Rushcliffe’s residents. Council was also reminded that post-Covid many residents worked from home, or at least had the option to do so, negating the need for such frequent rail travel. Councillor Gaunt agreed that any delays to hospital appointments and treatment were unfortunate; however, he also considered that there had been delays due to the pandemic, and the disruption to foreign holidays was mainly caused by the chaos at the country’s airports recently. He also touched upon the cost-of-living crisis and stated that there were bigger problems impacting upon this Borough’s residents than a few days without trains.

The Mayor asked the Leader if he was willing to accept the amendment to the motion and the Leader advised that he would not, as he considered that the Government was not and should not be involved in negotiations of this kind.

Councillor Thomas stated that the rail unions faced very difficult decisions, and the Government was understandably very busy but there was little Rushcliffe could do to influence this situation. She asked that the debate be halted, and the discussion moved to the next item of business. This procedural motion was seconded by Councillor Way.

The Mayor exercised her discretion on receiving this procedural motion to allow those who had already indicated a desire to speak to do so.

Councillor R Mallender stated that he was supportive of the amendment, which would encourage the Government and rail companies to come together in an effort to resolve the dispute and considered it imperative that the Secretary of State should also be involved as disruption to the rail network had nationwide ramifications.

Councillor Jones expressed regret that the original motion had been brought forward to Council and pointed to proposed strikes in other areas that would

equally impact upon Rushcliffe residents but were, in many cases, being used as a last resort. Councillor Jones felt that the amendment to the motion put forward by Councillor J Walker added much needed balance and highlighted the part the Government needed to take in the negotiations.

The Chief Executive explained that a vote would now be taken on the procedural motion put forward by Councillor Thomas.

On being put to the vote, the motion was lost and the debate on the amendment was resumed.

Councillor Gowland informed the Council that striking rail workers were not paid and added that the RMT had been trying to negotiate for two years but now felt that it had no choice but to strike to get the attention of Government. Council was informed that there needed to be compromise on both sides, additional Government funding could help to restore services, but it was not forthcoming and continued cuts had a massive impact on service standards, maintenance and safety.

Councillor S Mallender reiterated that people on strike did not get paid, though there were schemes to support those in dire circumstances. Council was advised that many rail workers were only earning minimum wage and did not take the decision to strike lightly. The consequences of the Government and the rail operators not working with the unions to resolve the issues was also impacting on the lowest paid rail staff.

Councillor Brennan reminded Council that rail operators were private companies and that this industrial action was likely to speed up the improvements that unions were against as rail operators struggled to deliver vital services. The pandemic had sped up the pace of change for workers and the rail companies needed to evolve and adapt too. Councillor Brennan agreed that workers had every right to strike; however, to add the Government and rail operators into this motion did not make sense as they were not on strike and could therefore not return to work. Councillor Brennan suggested taking the word 'Government' out of the motion but leaving rail companies in.

Councillor J Walker, in summing up, reminded Council that rail workers were striking over the right to fair pay and a safe working environment, and quoted from correspondence with a rail worker confirming that the unions were still negotiating, they had never stopped, but that other parties were required to take their place at the table for those negotiations to be effective.

Councillor Robinson advised that the Conservative Group would accept the motion if the word 'Government' was removed.

The Mayor asked Councillor J Walker if she was prepared to remove the word 'Government' from the amendment to the motion. Councillor Walker declined and the Mayor called a five-minute recess.

On resuming the meeting, Councillor J Walker asked for a recorded vote on the amendment to the motion. Councillors cast their votes as follows:

FOR: Councillors Begum, Gaunt, Gowland, Gray, R Mallender, S Mallender, Murray, Purdue-Horan, Shaw, Thomas, J Walker.

AGAINST: Councillors Adair, Bailey, Barney, Brennan, Buschman, Butler, Clarke, Cottee, Dickman, Edyvean, Healy, Inglis, Jeffreys, Mason, Moore, Phillips, Robinson, Upton, Viridi, R Walker, G Wheeler.

ABSTENTION: Councillors Beardsall, Combellack, Simms and Way.

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

The Mayor asked if any Councillor wished to speak to the original motion.

Councillor Jones expressed his opposition to the motion and reiterated that the motion failed to recognise that strikes were also being proposed in other areas. In addition, the motion proposed that the unions started negotiations when in reality those had been ongoing over the last two years and continued to take place. He reminded Council that the primary factor behind the strikes was Government enforced efficiencies, which would effectively lead to reduced safety measures affecting both rail staff and passengers.

Councillor R Mallender informed Council that he would not be supporting the motion as he believed that the Government had an important role to play in resolving the issues that had left rail workers with no option but to strike.

Councillor Thomas reiterated that she felt the motion had nothing to do with the Council and that debating it at all had been inappropriate.

Councillor Gray asked Council to reflect on the previous item, which had covered the findings of the Bingham Town Council Improvement Board and asked whether this issue would really be at the forefront of residents' minds. He suspected that the current cost of living crisis was what residents really cared about and suggested that Council's time would be better spent discussing how it could alleviate financial concerns more locally.

Councillor Edyvean expressed his disappointment in the Chamber and reiterated that the intention behind the motion was to end a situation where everybody lost, and negotiations continued until a resolution could be mapped out.

Councillor Brennan expressed the desire to move on with the motion and proposed an amendment which was seconded by Councillor Simms.

The amendment to the motion read:

“As a Council, we call on the train operators, and the Unions calling these strikes and causing so much misery and inconvenience to our residents, to cease this industrial action immediately and get back to the negotiating table to seek an agreement.”

On being put to the vote, the amendment to the motion was accepted.

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

The Mayor announced that given the time, it would not be possible to conclude all of the remaining business on the agenda and proposed that the meeting should move on to Item 12 Questions and that Motion c) be considered at the next meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that the meeting move on to Item 12 Questions and that Motion c) be moved to the next ordinary Council meeting in September 2022.

24 Questions from Councillors

a. Question from Councillor Jones to Councillor Brennan

“The Climate Change Strategy says it will support residents but only in applying for grants - so will this Council, as other Councils have, urgently establish and promote a local, cost reducing scheme with a company installing solar panels to encourage residents to pay to have them installed on their homes?”

In response, Councillor Brennan confirmed that the Council already worked closely with a range of key public sector organisations to monitor the potential for such schemes, and historically the Council had supported a similar bulk buying scheme for energy suppliers run by Nottingham Energy Partnership, so the Council had some experience of this type of initiative. One of the issues was that the installation of such solar panels was usually fully paid for by residents, and the Council did not actually have to be involved. As a result, they were usually of most benefit to those who had the means to install panels anyway, so they did not address fuel poverty or perhaps those most in need, unlike schemes including LAD 2 and 3, where the Council had been focusing on properties with very poor thermal efficiency in the East Leake area.

Councillor Brennan advised that the Council would commit to continuing to investigate such opportunities, and she was aware that officers had already been in touch with the Midlands Energy Hub and Nottingham Energy Partnership, to explore if any companies were working in the Borough and wished to progress such a scheme that the Council could link into following the normal due diligence checks.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Jones stated that several other Councils such as those in Kent, Swindon, Cambridge, and Suffolk have made arrangements with assessed companies interested in local volume services, to provide reduced cost installations to paying residents and would this Council get on with promoting roof top micro-generation?

Councillor Brennan reiterated that the Council continued to monitor the situation and if an appropriate project was identified, which would provide value for money and due diligence, then it would be considered.

b. Question from Councillor Sue Mallender to Councillor Inglis.

“Why, when it's the Council policy to minimise use of weedkiller, has the Council been spraying glyphosates in Bridgford Park and on the Hook resulting in strips of dead grasses and other wild plants up to two feet wide alongside paths, fencing and adjacent children's play areas?”

In response, Councillor Inglis confirmed that sadly, this had been a case of human error, when a member of the grounds maintenance team, who was new to managing those spaces, had unfortunately operated from outdated information. This had now been rectified and all staff were aware of the new approaches and commitment to managing those sites in an environmentally sensitive manner.

In light of a previous Council Motion, Councillor Inglis advised that the Council over the last year, had significantly reduced the use of weed killer, from spraying eight times over the summer season to twice, and only at a small number of very specific sites, which required localised weed management. In addition to this, Streetwise had invested in the use of a mechanical path edge cutter to reduce the need for weed spraying along paths and edges in parks and footpaths. In preparation for Streetwise returning in-house on 1 September, the Council was designing site management plans for all of its parks and nature sites. Those were being developed with input from services across the Council and with the expertise of the horticulturalists in the ground's maintenance division. This would result in even further gains in the development and sustainability of the Council's environmental management practice.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Mallender asked why no public apology had been made for this mistake?

Councillor Inglis advised that he was unaware that an apology had not been made and stated that he was happy to give an apology now.

The meeting closed at 9.47 pm.

CHAIRMAN

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Council

Thursday, 29 September 2022

East Midlands Devolution Deal

Report of the Chief Executive

**Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide Leadership,
Councillor S J Robinson**

1. Purpose of report

To update Council on the progress of the East Midlands/ D2N2 Devolution Deal and allow opportunity for Council to debate the progress and content of the Deal so far.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Council:

- a) notes progress to date on the devolution and joint working programme, including the announcement of a deal offer from Government on 30 August 2022
- b) agrees 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) receives a further update to be brought to Full Council on the completion of negotiations.

3. Reasons for recommendation

It is important that all councillors are sighted on the progress of the East Midlands/ D2N2 Devolution Deal and what it means for the region.

4. Supporting information

- 4.1. As part of the Levelling Up White Paper that was published in February 2022, the Government committed to agree a devolution deal by 2030 with every part of England that wanted one.
- 4.2. Nine county areas were specifically named in the White Paper as places that the Government wished to begin advanced negotiations with, including Nottingham and Nottinghamshire and Derby and Derbyshire.

- 4.3. The four authorities had expressed an interest the previous year in working together to progress a devolution agreement and began working towards an Autumn 2022 target date set by the Government to agree a deal.
- 4.4. As things turned out, the so-named East Midlands Deal was put on an accelerated timetable which led to a flurry of activity over July and August and resulted in the Leaders of Derby City Council, Derbyshire County Council, Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council signing up to a deal in principle at a launch event with Greg Clarke MP, the then Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, on 30 August 2022.
- 4.5. The devolution deal for Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham, and Nottinghamshire includes a range of powers and over £1.14bn investment over the next thirty years.
- 4.6. The deal will include the first of a new type of combined authority, designed for two-tier areas, which will be established through new legislation by central government. The legislation would enable the formation of an East Midlands Mayoral Combined County Authority (EMMCCA). The devolution deal is a 'level 3 deal', which offers the most local powers and funding. It would mean a new elected mayor, with elections currently expected to take place in Spring 2024.
- 4.7. The offer of a devolution deal marks a historic moment for the region and if approved, will bring in much needed investment, funding and powers with more major decisions being made locally and a bigger voice for the region. The deal offer includes:
- A new guaranteed funding stream of £1.14 billion, or £38 million a year over the next 30 years, as well as an extra £16.8 million for new homes on brownfield land
 - £18m capital in this spending round period (prior to April 2023) to support local housing and net zero priorities (subject to business case approval). Half of this is likely to go towards retrofitting work on residential properties and Rushcliffe will directly benefit from an allocation
 - Control over a range of budgets at a local level to ensure they are better tailored to the needs of people in our communities. This includes the Adult Education Budget
 - Opportunities to deliver more and better jobs through investment in our area
 - New powers to improve and better integrate local transport and an integrated transport settlement starting in 2024/25
 - A commitment from Government to work jointly with the EMMCCA and other relevant partners to tackle homelessness, domestic abuse, community safety, social mobility and to support young people through their journey to adulthood.
- 4.8. A summary of the opportunities and additional investment the deal offers is included as Appendix 1. The full deal text can be viewed here: [East Midlands devolution deal - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114444/east-midlands-devolution-deal-2022.pdf). The deal marks the culmination of an intensive period of negotiation between local partners, including District and Borough Councils, the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership and the city and

county councils. The city and county councils are referred to as “upper tier” authorities and are the signatories to the deal as will be required by the legislation. However, in the county areas, the County Council clearly does not deliver all services and districts and boroughs deliver key services too. The County Council is not for example, the Local Planning Authority. The powers and duties that rest with district and borough councils will stay with district and borough councils.

- 4.9. This offer of a devolution deal is not the end of the devolution journey. There will be opportunities to build and enhance the deal over time, as has happened in other areas. Local partners have secured a number of commitments to explore further devolution in the future as set out in the deal text. The Government has confirmed funding for the establishment of a new combined authority over the coming 2 years, and further funding would be considered as part of future national government spending reviews.
- 4.10. There is now a significant amount of work required to realise the aspiration to hold the first elections for a mayor for Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire in May 2024. The devolution deal proposals will be subject to public consultation and ratification by Nottingham City, Nottinghamshire County, Derby City and Derbyshire County councils and are dependent on the passage through parliament of primary and secondary legislation to enable the EMMCCA to be established. Whilst district and borough councils are not signatories to the deal, it is expected that they will play a key part in the governance of the East Midlands Mayoral County Combined Authority and have been requested to take the proposals through their councils with a view to providing endorsement.
- 4.11. It is critical that residents, businesses and other organisations can also have their say. Derby City Council, Derbyshire County Council, Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council and partners are now working together to prepare a detailed proposal for public consultation later this year. Each of these councils is expected to seek approval to consult at a council meeting later this year (expected in November). Subject to that approval, public consultation would take place over Winter 2022. The four councils are also jointly planning engagement activity between now and the launch of formal consultation to ensure that residents, elected members and key partners are kept up to date.
- 4.12. Extensive discussions have been held with borough and district colleagues as the deal has progressed. Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire district and borough councils will remain critical partners as the deal moves into the next phase of the programme. The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive have been involved in discussions. The Economic Prosperity Committee for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire is a public meeting which meets every two months to discuss progress and there have been joint leaders’ meetings for all the D2N2 leaders in order for them to be updated on discussions with government.

- 4.13. While the accelerated timetable which led to the signing of the “in principle” deal in August had the advantage of cutting out some of the bureaucracy that might otherwise have taken place, it limited the opportunity for engagement with borough and district councils that had originally been planned. Frustratingly, Government policy also restricted the sharing of the deal document beyond the upper tiers until the day of the formal launch.
- 4.14. In spite of these constraints, regular briefings were held with borough and district leaders and a number of officers represented boroughs and districts in deal negotiations with Government officials and through various working groups. As a result, and in the words of the deal document itself, “the deal respects the importance of the continued role of the eight Derbyshire and seven Nottinghamshire District and Borough Councils.” This extends to the proposed governance of the Combined Authority which includes borough / district representation. It is worth drawing attention to paragraph 22 of the deal in particular, which provides reassurance that “no local authority functions are being removed from any local authority in the area, excluding transport functions as agreed with the Constituent Councils.”

5. Alternative options considered and reasons for rejection

Do nothing. There is no requirement for borough and district councils to endorse the devolution deal – the agreement is between Government and the four upper tier authorities. Nevertheless, we have contributed to the content of the deal and will have a relationship with the new Mayor and Combined Authority. The deal document respects and recognises the distinct responsibilities of boroughs and districts and our endorsement is considered to be an appropriate expression of support for the principle of devolution and the specific content of the East Midlands deal. It is recommended that the final deal is brought back to Council for endorsement.

6. Implications

6.1. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report, though the Council and its communities may well benefit in due course from some of the additional investment referred to above. The EMMCCA would have the ability to charge a precept. However the mayor would have to get agreement from his or her cabinet to do so. The Cabinet would include the upper tier councils and representatives from borough and district councils.

6.2. Legal Implications

The deal needs to go through parliament in order for an EMMCCA to be set up.

6.3. Equalities Implications

There are no equalities implications from this report.

6.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

There are no S17 implications from this report.

7. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Council:

- a) notes progress to date on the devolution and joint working programme, including the announcement of a deal offer from Government on 30 August 2022;
- b) agrees 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) receives a further update to be brought to Full Council on the completion of negotiations.

For more information contact:	Katherine Marriott Chief Executive 0115 914 8291 kmarriott@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	N/A
List of appendices:	EMMCCA Brochure

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DEVOLUTION:

A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR
THE EAST MIDLANDS



£1.14 BILLION deal for Derbyshire,
Nottinghamshire, Derby and Nottingham

- 
- MORE INVESTMENT IN OUR AREA
 - ECONOMIC GROWTH
 - MORE AND BETTER JOBS
 - BETTER TRANSPORT, SKILLS TRAINING, HOUSING
 - AN ENHANCED GREENER ENVIRONMENT
 - MORE POWER IN LOCAL HANDS

#EASTMIDLANDSDEVOLUTION
#EASTMIDSCOMBINED

**MORE FUNDING,
MORE CONTROL,
A BRIGHTER FUTURE**

A DEVOLUTION DEAL FOR THE EAST MIDLANDS: ONE OF THE BIGGEST IN THE COUNTRY

Derbyshire County Council, Nottinghamshire County Council, Derby City Council and Nottingham City Council have been offered a **£1.14 billion devolution deal** by Greg Clarke MP, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

The deal with the government would see an extra **£38 million a year** coming to the East Midlands from 2024, addressing years of historically low investment in our area.

It would mean funding and powers move from a national level to a regional level to help the 2.2 million people who live here.



Barry Lewis
Derbyshire
County Council



Ben Bradley MP
Nottinghamshire
County Council



Christopher Poulter
Derby City Council



David Mellen
Nottingham
City Council



We want to make the most of every penny so this can be used to make a real difference to people's lives.

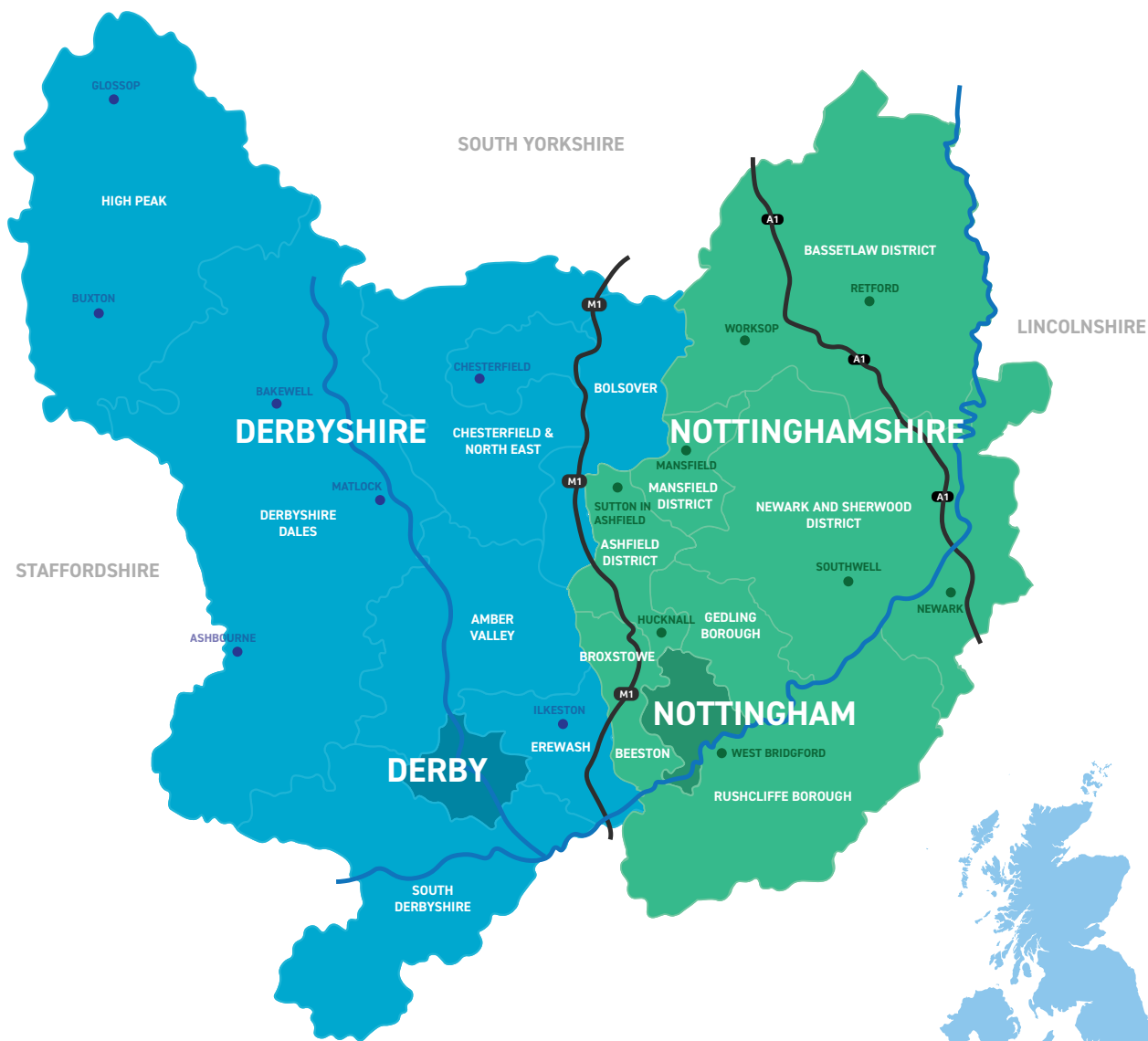
As Leaders, we have all fought for a fairer share for our cities and counties, and a bigger voice for our area, to give us the clout and the influence we deserve, and to help us live up to our full potential. This deal would help make that a reality.

More and better jobs through greater investment in our area, economic growth, better transport, housing, skills training, and an enhanced greener environment, as we move towards being carbon neutral, are what we all want to see. We will work together for the common good of the East Midlands.

We haven't always had the same level of funding or influence as other areas, which has held us back. This is a golden opportunity to change that and put the power to do so in our own hands.

There is a lot still to be agreed, and this is the beginning of the journey, not the end. We're determined to build on this deal over time, as other areas have done.





£1.14 BILLION OF FUNDING

The deal would mean a new guaranteed funding stream of **£1.14 billion**, or **£38 million** a year over the next 30 years to help level up the East Midlands, as well as an extra £16.8 million for new homes on brownfield land and control over a range of budgets like the Adult Education Budget.

The deal offers the joint largest Investment Fund in the country, matching the amount offered to West Yorkshire, with other similar deals attracting lower Investment Fund figures.

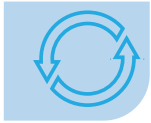
Other areas with devolution deals have been able to make their funding go even further by offering loans to businesses so they can invest and grow, with devolved areas making money from the interest – so the true financial benefit is likely to be greater still.

Building on our regional strengths...

- Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Derby and Nottingham have a combined population of 2.2 million people and contribute **£50.5 billion** to the UK economy in terms of GVA (Gross Value Added).
- The area has more than **88,000 businesses** providing over **930,000 jobs** in sectors with potential for growth, including advanced manufacturing, engineering, clean energy, logistics, creative and digital, education, health, pharmaceuticals, and wholesale and retail trade.
- The region is home to Toyota UK, Rolls Royce, Alstom, and Boots, as well as the University of Derby, Nottingham Trent University, and the University of Nottingham, which provide centres of research excellence with expertise in aerospace, rail, life sciences, and strong transport links.
- The area is home to major tourist attractions including the Peak District National Park, the National Forest, Nottingham Castle, Derby's Silk Mill and Sherwood Forest.
- There are major strategic opportunities presented through the East Midlands Freeport, the East Midlands Development Corporation, and the announcements in the Integrated Rail Plan on HS2.
- The two cities and counties are geographically close and already work closely together on many collaborative large-scale initiatives.

...and helping us to overcome the challenges we face.

- Productivity in the East Midlands is behind the UK average - we need an increase of **14.6%** to close the gap.
- Public spending per person has historically been below the UK average.
- There are areas within our region with high levels of poverty and poor social mobility.
- More local powers will help us tackle these challenges and harness the true economic potential of our area, for the benefit of everyone who lives here, and which would also benefit the whole country.
- Devolution for the East Midlands would give us more control and flexibility to respond to local needs including transport, skills training, regenerating our villages, towns, and cities, and more.



WHAT WOULD DEVOLUTION MEAN?

Devolution would create a new legal entity known formally as a Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA). This would include Derbyshire County Council, Nottinghamshire County Council, Derby City Council and Nottingham City Council and cover the areas of both cities and both counties.

The four authorities would still exist as individual councils and would work together on a formal and legal basis to improve the region for our communities and businesses.

It would mean we can work more effectively across council boundaries. People move across these boundaries every day to get to their homes, for work, for leisure, and to visit friends and family, and so it makes sense that we all work together to improve things on a regional level.

Councils in our counties and cities already work in partnership in many different ways. Devolution would mean we can do this more efficiently and do more than is currently possible.

Rather than a brand-new tier of government, this devolution deal would move existing funding and powers from London, directly to us in the East Midlands, which means that local voices would play a greater role in decision making.

The new MCCA would include representatives from existing county, city, borough, and district councils. It would be led by a new regional mayor, and there would also be opportunities for private, public, and voluntary sector organisations to contribute and have their voices heard.

Devolution is a major opportunity to bring decisions closer to where they have an impact, and to get a fairer share to help to close the gap in public investment in the East Midlands, so we can see more economic growth and new and better jobs. Devolved funding is allocated for specific purposes. For example, the adult skills budget must be used on training.

The deal would give us much more control over our own area. Rather than many major decisions being made for us in London, as happens now, local people would have a say in the region's priorities, and devolution would give us a national platform and greater representation in London.

Devolution has seen real improvements in other parts of the country where it has been successfully adopted.



A MORE PROSPEROUS FUTURE

Devolution is a great chance for us to improve our economy and prepare for the industries of the future. It would mean we could develop new commercial spaces to maximise jobs and business opportunities.

We can build on our region's existing knowledge and expertise, for example in transport and green technology, promoting the growth of a future low carbon economy by investing in related skills training at colleges and other training facilities.

By playing to our strengths and tailoring our approach to the needs of our area, we can encourage economic growth and make sure local people benefit.

Devolution also means we can take advantage of economies of scale by using combined and devolved budgets to deliver more value for taxpayers and more cost-efficient services.





A FUTURE WITH MORE OPPORTUNITIES

Devolution means we'd get more say locally, and get to make decisions about our area, in our area. For example, we'd have a fully devolved adult skills budget, which means we'd no longer be constrained by rules set nationally on what we can use adult education funding for – only on specific age groups, for instance – and could instead tailor this to the needs of people in our communities.

We could help this funding be available to the people who need it, so they can fulfil their potential and help them get the jobs they want. We'd also help employers hire people with the skills they need by addressing the skills gap, by removing barriers to better paid work.

We can play to our strengths in research and industry, including aerospace, life sciences, advanced manufacturing, and energy, as well as make the most of opportunities in the future associated with the East Midlands Freeport, HS2 and rail, and the East Midlands Development Corporation,



A BETTER-CONNECTED FUTURE

Devolution would give us the opportunity to:

- combine local transport plans together, so we have a single integrated plan, rather than four
- develop new smart integrated ticketing on public transport
- create new concessionary fare schemes

It would also mean we could set up and coordinate a Key Route Network, which would be made up of some of the busiest and most important roads in our area, so we could better manage our highways.





A GREENER FUTURE

Devolution means we can work more effectively on a larger scale so we can all benefit from cleaner air, lower heating costs, and so we can move towards being carbon neutral, with:

- new low carbon homes
- retrofitting existing homes with external wall insulation
- promoting the use of renewable energy
- protecting and enhancing our green spaces.

It would make £18 million available to support housing and drive Net Zero ambitions in the East Midlands.



BETTER HOUSING FOR US AND FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

With devolution, we could work at a regional level with Homes England to build more affordable homes, using new powers to buy land and housing, with the consent of district and borough councils.

It could mean new and better standards for homes, low carbon measures, and improvements to existing housing.

It would mean £16.8 million a year would be available for building new homes on brownfield land, subject to suitable areas being identified.





AND MORE...

Devolution also means we could work with national government at a regional level on new initiatives to support young people and to tackle:

- Homelessness
- Domestic abuse
- Community safety
- Social mobility



OUR FIRST REGIONAL MAYOR

A new regional mayor would give us a bigger voice, more influence, and a higher profile across the country. It would create a single point of contact for businesses and other organisations looking to move into our region or expand.

A regional mayor would help us speak with one voice and help us make a strong case to the Government for more investment in the East Midlands.

The mayor would be directly elected by residents in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Derby and Nottingham, giving them more influence over issues which affect them.

The first election for a regional mayor would be in spring 2024.

WHAT'S NEXT?

All four city and county council leaders in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Derby and Nottingham have signed up to work on this devolution deal with the government.

We want to hear your views. Each council will look at the details of the deal in the autumn to approve the deal for a consultation later this year, so that residents, businesses, and other organisations can have their say. The deal also needs new legislation from central government.

A devolution deal is the beginning of the journey, not the end. There would be opportunities to build and enhance on it over time, as has happened in other areas. A new combined authority would be considered at future national government spending reviews.

There is still a lot to do and details to work out for devolution to become a reality in 2024. We will have to work hard to make devolution work for us, and to ensure it results in the improvements we want to see. But we're convinced it's the right move and would be a massive step forward for the East Midlands.

Our region has so much potential, but we've not always had the investment or control over our own future to make a difference. A devolution deal is our chance to create a better future.





WHO'S BACKING DEVOLUTION?

Those supporting devolution include local leaders across the political spectrum, the Chamber of Commerce, the East Midlands D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), the University of Derby, Nottingham Trent University, and the University of Nottingham.

It is supported by a wide range of different organisations and local leaders because they see the great potential it offers for improving our area, our communities, and the lives of people who live, work, and visit our region.



#EASTMIDLANDSDEVOLUTION
#EASTMIDSCOMBINED



Council

Thursday, 29 September 2022

Upper Saxondale Community Governance Review

Report of the Chief Executive

**Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide Leadership,
Councillor S J Robinson**

1. Purpose of report

This report has been compiled by the Upper Saxondale Community Governance Review Task and Finish Group as set up by Council in March 2022. It outlines the Community Governance Review that has taken place in accordance with Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, to establish whether a separate parish should be created for Upper Saxondale.

2. Recommendation

The Upper Saxondale Community Governance Review Member Task and Finish Group recommends that Council resolves to:

- a) create a separate parish for the area defined by the map in Appendix Three 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) delegate authority to undertake the necessary steps to formalise the creation of a separate parish for Upper Saxondale to the Chief Executive.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

A petition was brought forward by the community of Upper Saxondale, which triggered a Community Governance Review in accordance with Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The Task and Finish Group set up by Council has undertaken the Community Governance Review and presents its findings below. Council must now decide if there is sufficient evidence to support the recommendation of the Task and Finish Group, which is to create a separate parish for Upper Saxondale.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1. In December 2021, Council received a petition from residents of Upper Saxondale requesting the establishment of a new Upper Saxondale Parish Council, separate to the existing parish councils in the area. The petition was validated by the Borough Council's Electoral Services team with 233 valid signatories.
- 4.2. In March 2022, Council approved the setting up of a cross party Task and Finish Group to conduct the Community Governance Review. The Terms of Reference of the Group were as follows:
- Consider the views of the Upper Saxondale community as put forward by the lead petitioner from the Upper Saxondale Residents' Association.
 - Consider officer advice in drawing up the stage one consultation materials for the Upper Saxondale Community Governance Review consultation.
 - Consider the submissions received in response to the stage one consultation for the Review.
 - Develop a recommended way forward which will form the basis of the second stage of consultation with the Upper Saxondale community.
 - Consider the responses of the second round of consultation for the Community Governance Review of Upper Saxondale.
 - Make final recommendations to Council in September 2022.

First meeting of the Upper Saxondale Community Governance Review Task and Finish Group

- 4.3. The Upper Saxondale Community Governance Review Task and Finish Group held its initial meeting on 16 March 2022. They heard from Mr Ian Storey, Chairman of the Upper Saxondale Residents' Association, who outlined why the community had set up the petition to trigger the Community Governance Review and why they felt a separate parish for Upper Saxondale would result in convenient and effective local governance.
- 4.4. In addition, officers informed the Group about the legislation and process surrounding a Community Governance Review before presenting draft materials which would form the basis of the first consultation with residents in the area defined by the petition submitted by the Residents' Association.
- 4.5. Following the meeting the first consultation period started. A leaflet (Appendix One) was hand delivered to every household and business in the area on 21 March 2022 with a deadline for submissions of 13 May 2022. This was supported with a media release and social media posts throughout the consultation period. Letters were also sent to affected parish councils and Nottinghamshire County Council. The Upper Saxondale Residents' Association also undertook their own awareness raising campaign locally in support of the consultation.

Second meeting of the Upper Saxondale Community Governance Review Task and Finish Group

- 4.6. The second meeting of the Task and Finish Group was held on 6 June 2022. The Group considered the results of the first consultation to which the Council had received 166 responses (26.6% of the electorate). Of those that were consulted:
- 25.5% of residents said 'yes' they would like to see a new parish set up for Upper Saxondale
 - 1.1% of residents said 'no' they would not like to see the creation of a new parish
 - 73.4% of residents did not respond to the consultation.

Of those responding to the stage one consultation, 95.2%% were in favour of setting up a new parish for Upper Saxondale.

- 4.7. The Task and Finish Group debated the results of the consultation as well as additional material put forward by officers such as alternatives to the boundaries defined by the petition map and comparisons with other similarly sized parishes within the Borough in terms of numbers of councillors. The Group also discussed several issues connected to the creation of a parish council to ascertain if the Borough Council's assistance was required in the period between September 2022 and May 2023. The conclusion of this discussion was that the Council's ongoing role would be one of guidance on request.
- 4.8. The decision was made to proceed to the second stage of consultation with a slightly altered map (which followed the boundaries for the local wards as defined by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in their recent review) and a recommendation that seven councillors would be in keeping with other local parishes and provide effective governance.
- 4.9. The second stage of consultation started on 27 June 2022 (with a closing date of 19 August 2022) with a second leaflet (Appendix Two) being hand delivered to all residential and business premises in the area. A personal letter was also sent to the residents of Saxtons Lings who were not included in the first stage of the consultation as their property fell outside the petition area (but the Task and Finish Group had opted to follow a slightly revised boundary line in this second stage of consultation, which now included Saxtons Lings in the proposed Upper Saxondale parish). The County Council was invited to respond to the consultation as were the parishes of Radcliffe on Trent and Cropwell Butler as in the first consultation. In addition, the parish of Saxondale received an invitation to participate on request of the Chairman of the Saxondale Parish Meeting. As with the first stage of consultation, this was supported with a media release and social media posts throughout the consultation period. The Upper Saxondale Residents' Association also undertook their own awareness raising campaign locally in support of the consultation.

Third meeting of the Upper Saxondale Community Governance Review Task and Finish Group

4.10. The third meeting of the Task and Finish Group was held on 31 August 2022. The Group considered the results of the second consultation to which the Council had received 163 responses (25.7% of the electorate). Of those that were consulted:

- 24.4% of residents agreed with the Council's recommendation to create a separate parish for Upper Saxondale
- 24.4% of residents agreed with the new parish being named Upper Saxondale
- 24.0% of residents agreed with the number of councillors being seven (three respondents felt that five councillors would be sufficient)
- 24.4% of residents agreed with the proposed boundaries for the new parish.

Of those responding to the stage two consultation, 95.1%% were in favour of setting up a new parish for Upper Saxondale.

4.11. The following comments of support were made:

- I believe that having our own parish council will provide better and more targeted services for local residents. Also, it will provide better communication lines and clarity in responsibilities giving local residents more say over local issues.
- Since the proposed boundary also includes the village of Saxondale it would seem appropriate for the name to reflect that. Maybe Upper Saxondale and Saxondale? Or perhaps that is a bit long – maybe 'The Saxondales'?
- Brilliant idea – fully support it.
- Having a new parish for Upper Saxondale makes perfect sense.
- Upper Saxondale is a distinct community and should be represented by its own council.
- I fully support the proposals set out to create an Upper Saxondale Parish Council.
- Happy with everything.
- This is a positive step for Upper Saxondale, and we fully support it.
- As before we feel that we are a large enough community to require our own parish council to deal with matters unique / pertinent to our community.
- As a resident of Upper Saxondale, I believe this to be in the best interests of our community and that it would provide convenient and effective local governance
- Believe this proposal will ensure the heritage of the Upper Saxondale area will be protected and maintained
- Boundary to include surrounding fields to Upper Saxondale – as they may be at risk of housing / sold – also a key part of Upper Saxondale uniqueness. If not fields, the woodland area which gives residents access to the outer edges of Upper Saxondale. This is the only issue I see with an independence from ROT Parish Council

- I trust it doesn't jeopardise the maintenance of the area including the Victorian pergolas?
- 4.12. 1.25% of residents (8) responding to the consultation did not agree with the Council's recommendation to create a separate parish for Upper Saxondale. No explanatory comments were provided.
- 4.13. Other comments (neither in support or against the proposal) included:
- Do not need seven councillors for this area – five is more than sufficient.
 - Why doesn't the NE edge of the boundary follow the line of the new A52 road? At the moment it's following the original line of the A52 before it was upgraded and moved, which means that a single property (the flat roofed home previously a telephone exchange) in the village/parish of Saxondale be moved to the new parish of Upper Saxondale, separating it from its current community and adjacent neighbours. That doesn't make sense to us or seem fair to the homeowner who may then feel isolated from Saxondale and very remote from Upper Saxondale.
 - The Shell fuel station on Saxondale roundabout falls into the new parish of Upper Saxondale. Will their council tax precept be paid to Upper Saxondale parish and if so, what would be the commitment from the parish to this business?
- 4.14. 74.3% of residents consulted did not respond to the consultation.
- 4.15. Radcliffe on Trent Parish Council sent the following feedback in response to the consultation:
- 'Radcliffe on Trent Parish Council support Upper Saxondale in their creation of a separate parish. The Parish Council would like to ensure an equitable division of assets and precept.'
- 4.16. Cropwell Butler Parish Council sent the following feedback in response to the consultation:
- 'This should have been extended to a more comprehensive review of parish boundaries in the area, including an assessment of whether it would be advantageous to Tythby to be incorporated into Cropwell Butler parish. In addition, we don't appear to have been given any information on what the impact will be on our parish population or council tax base, and therefore possible increase to average precept for the remaining parish.'
- 4.17. The Chairman of Saxondale Parish Meeting sent the following feedback in response to the consultation:
- 'We have no objection in principle to the formation of a Parish Council for the Upper Saxondale (St James Park) community, subject to the points raised below:

1. Whilst we have questioned the boundary adjoining Saxondale used for this purpose, that is not the fault of the applicants, but it does call into question several issues. However, I need to investigate these further and I may come back on these points. As proposed, it does mean that there will be one NG13 property within the proposed site which is an NG12 area. This is plainly daft.
2. We do not see the necessity of taking the amount of land that has been requested which goes well beyond the population area of the community in question. In short, this appears to be an unnecessary land grab which serves little purpose, (unless of course further development is proposed for the area and the proposers are looking to future CIL monies). We feel it would be appropriate for the current land proposal to be restricted to what is actually necessary.
3. The name of the proposed Council is a little too close to our own and could lead to confusion. We would like to see this changed. Saxondale village has been around before 675 AD and is well recorded in historical records. Upper Saxondale was formed following a vote in 1999.
4. As proposed, only about 30% of the land shown on the plan (the built-up area) is Upper Saxondale with the remainder falling mainly into Cropwell Butler. The main population in the area is currently within the Radcliffe Community and only partly within Cropwell Butler. Accordingly, a name reflecting this association may be more appropriate, for example RoT North or Cropwell Park, or similar which allow a more independent identity.
5. The request for seven parish councillors appears extreme and out of context with other local parishes (e.g. there is only double this number on BTC). This number, should the scheme go ahead, should be reduced.
6. Whilst the percentages shown in respect of those voting show 25% in favour of the stated proposal, notably 74.5% either do not agree or have not responded. It is also notable that the percentage voting is about 10% less than signed the original petition, so clearly some people have reconsidered their views. It does not seem that the return figures provide a sufficient enough mandate to proceed.
7. There lies an underlying question as to whether a separate parish is appropriate in this area, particularly given the existence of RoTPC and Cropwell Butler PC. Whilst not negating what I have stated in my third paragraph above, I cannot see how governance would be improved and it is difficult to envisage what the true benefits would be. If the main benefit is seen as a local voice – and the petition does state “ensure that Upper Saxondale electors are effectively represented at parish level” - then adding Upper Saxondale as a third ward to RoT may provide a more effective solution as this would provide a voice on RoTPC. Similarly, if the desire is as the petition states “ensure that the parish precept is spent for the benefit of the Upper Saxondale community” then a formal voice(s) on RoTPC may be more appropriate way forward.

8. Dividing RoTPC into smaller sections detracts from infrastructure proposals and loses financial economies of scale which is not good for the local community and detracts from good governance. If this proposal is agreed, then other areas where similar circumstances prevail may look to take a similar view. Whilst the breaking up of larger parishes may be of benefit to the Borough authority, it is not good for the local community as a whole and a strategic overview of the application should be considered.

For the above reasons, we feel that the proposal, in its current form, has not demonstrated benefit to the local community nor to the wider strategic environment and does not appear to be sufficiently supported within the community'.

- 4.18. Nottinghamshire County Council will consider the proposals at their Governance and Ethics Committee on 28 September 2022 (rearranged from 13 September, due to the national period of mourning). The recommendations are expected to be supported by members of the Committee, some of whom are also Borough Councillors (and memebcs of the Task and Finish Group), so can provide up to date feedback at the meeting, if required.

Task and Finish Group recommendations

- 4.19. On taking the views of the local community and neighbouring parishes, as well as the County Council, into account the Upper Saxondale Community Governance Review Task and Finish Group is recommending the creation of a separate parish for Upper Saxondale, with a parish council named Upper Saxondale Parish Council comprised of seven parish councillors in line with the boundaries outlined on the map in Appendix Three. The Group feels that this represents the best model of effective governance for this community.
- 4.20. Should Council decide to accept the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group, a Reorganisation Order will be sent to the Secretary of State, the Rushcliffe Electoral Register will be amended before publication in December 2023 and officers will ensure a suitable Polling Place is identified in advance of the first parish council elections for Upper Saxondale which will be held in May 2023.
- 4.21. Certain administrative tasks will need to be undertaken in preparation for the first meeting of Upper Saxondale Parish Council. These include drafting a constitution, hiring a clerk, and transferring assets from the Upper Saxondale Resident's Association to the new parish council. The Council will offer support where required with these activities and also set the first precept for the Council to create an operational budget for the financial year 2023/24.

5. Alternative options considered and reasons for rejection

The Council could decide that the governance arrangements already in place for Upper Saxondale are effective and that no change is necessary. This,

however, would be against the views expressed by local residents as part of the Community Governance Review process.

6. Risks and Uncertainties

There are risks involved in setting up a separate Parish Council for Upper Saxondale with regard to getting candidates to stand for election, effective operation, and the transfer of assets. The Task and Finish Group is satisfied that effective plans are in place to mitigate these risks.

7. Implications

7.1. Financial Implications

7.1.1. There are some costs in setting-up the new parish (such as changes to the Council Tax system), and these will be recovered from the new parish council when it is properly constituted.

7.1.2. Rushcliffe Borough Council will set the initial precept in its Council Tax setting report at Full Council (March 2023). The precept, net of any initial costs, will be transferred to the new parish after the May local elections and it's first constituted meeting.

7.2. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications connected to the recommendations contained in this report other than those mentioned elsewhere in the report.

7.3. Equalities Implications

There are no equalities implications connected to the recommendations contained in this report.

7.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

There are no crime and disorder implications to the recommendations in this report.

8. Link to Corporate Priorities

Quality of Life	It is important that residents feel that their community is governed at an appropriate level and is representative of their identify as a community – this contributes towards their quality of life.
Efficient Services	It is important that local governance is appropriate to the community and operates effectively.
Sustainable Growth	
The Environment	

9. Recommendation

The Upper Saxondale Community Governance Review Member Task and Finish Group recommends that Council resolves to:

- a) create a separate parish for the area defined by the map in Appendix Three 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 have seven members; and
- b) delegate authority to undertake the necessary steps to formalise the creation of a separate parish for Upper Saxondale to the Chief Executive.

For more information contact:	Charlotte Caven-Atack Service Manager – Corporate Services 0115 914 8278 ccaven-atack@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	Council – 3 March 2022
List of appendices:	Appendix One – Stage One Consultation Materials Appendix Two – Stage Two Consultation Materials Appendix Three – Map of the proposed parish

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21 March 2022

To all Households in Upper Saxondale

Dear Resident

Have your say on how Upper Saxondale will be governed in the future...

Rushcliffe Borough Council has received a petition from residents asking for Upper Saxondale to have its own parish council. Currently, the majority of Upper Saxondale falls within Radcliffe-on-Trent parish, whilst the remainder falls within Cropwell Butler parish.

The petition had 233 valid signatures from residents who live in the area which would be covered by the proposed new parish, which is around 35.4% of all voters living within the proposed area.

The petitioners put forward that:

“This petition recommends the creation of the parish of Upper Saxondale in the borough of Rushcliffe, Nottinghamshire. This will:

- ensure that Upper Saxondale electors are effectively represented at parish level*
- ensure that the parish precept is spent for the benefit of the Upper Saxondale community*
- ensure a sustainable future for the maintenance and protection of the environment and facilities at Upper Saxondale”.*

Rushcliffe Borough Council must now act upon this petition by conducting what is known as a Community Governance Review.

This information sheet is intended to explain:

- What the review is
- How it will be carried out
- How you can have your say about the proposal.

There is also a questionnaire which you can complete and return to the freepost address below.

Yours sincerely



Charlotte Caven-Atack
Service Manager – Corporate Services

Have Your Say...

Do you want a new parish council for Upper Saxondale?

What is a Community Governance Review?

The Council has received a petition from some residents living in Upper Saxondale who want to create a new parish. Because of this Rushcliffe Borough Council (by law) has to carry out what is known as a Community Governance Review. As part of this review, the Council has to find out how much support there is in Upper Saxondale for a new parish from residents and other interested local organisations. We also need to establish whether it would be a good way to run local politics and matters affecting the village. The boundary of the proposed parish, as identified by the petitioners, is shown on the map on the back page of this leaflet.

How do I have my say?

By emailing the Council at consultation@rushcliffe.gov.uk. In order for your response to be counted you must ensure you include your name and address. You can also complete the enclosed form and returning it to the freepost address below.

Please note that the CLOSING DATE for comments is 13 May 2022. Any comments received after that date may not be considered.

The findings of the consultation on whether to set up a new parish for Upper Saxondale will be considered by Rushcliffe Borough Council. They will make a recommendation which you will be able to comment on in the summer of 2022. A final decision on this will be taken by Council in September 2022.

What is a parish council?

Parish councils are the most local level of elected local government which represent the interests of their community and are funded through an additional charge added to council tax bills, which is called a 'precept'.

Many town and parish councils are involved in local matters such as planning, licensing, managing town and village centres and providing community halls.

Will it cost me anymore than I pay now?

The amount of charge is something that each parish council has to decide for itself and it depends on what services and facilities it provides. Parish councils can also apply for grants and loans.

The following table provides examples of comparable parish precepts within the Rushcliffe Borough Council area and also gives the size of the electorate. The charge shown is for the annual charge for Band D properties and is in addition to the Council Tax.

Currently Radcliffe-on-Trent residents currently pay a parish precept of £96.64 per annum, and Cropwell Butler £36.72 in addition to their Council Tax. For comparison purposes, Upper Saxondale has 651 electors in the area defined by the petition.

Parish	Parish size (Electorate)	Annual Precept	Weekly Precept
Costock	508	£62.92	£1.21
Bunny	533	£80.08	£1.54
Newton	604	£59.80	£1.15
Whatton-in-the-Vale	729	£54.60	£1.05
Langar-cum-Barnstone	764	£116.48	£2.24

What is the process and who will have a say?

- The Council has now published a detailed terms of reference document which sets out how the review will be undertaken.
- This document can be accessed by visiting www.rushcliffe.gov.uk/uppertsaxondale
- We are now in the first consultation stage. Every household in the petitioned area will receive a copy of this information sheet and questionnaire. **Even if you signed the original petition you should still respond to this consultation.** Please send the completed questionnaire to:

FREEPOST RTJY-BGGZ-EKZK
 Rushcliffe Borough Council
 Rushcliffe Arena
 Rugby Road
 West Bridgford
 Nottingham
 NG2 7YG

- Local businesses and community groups will also receive a copy of the information sheet and questionnaire.

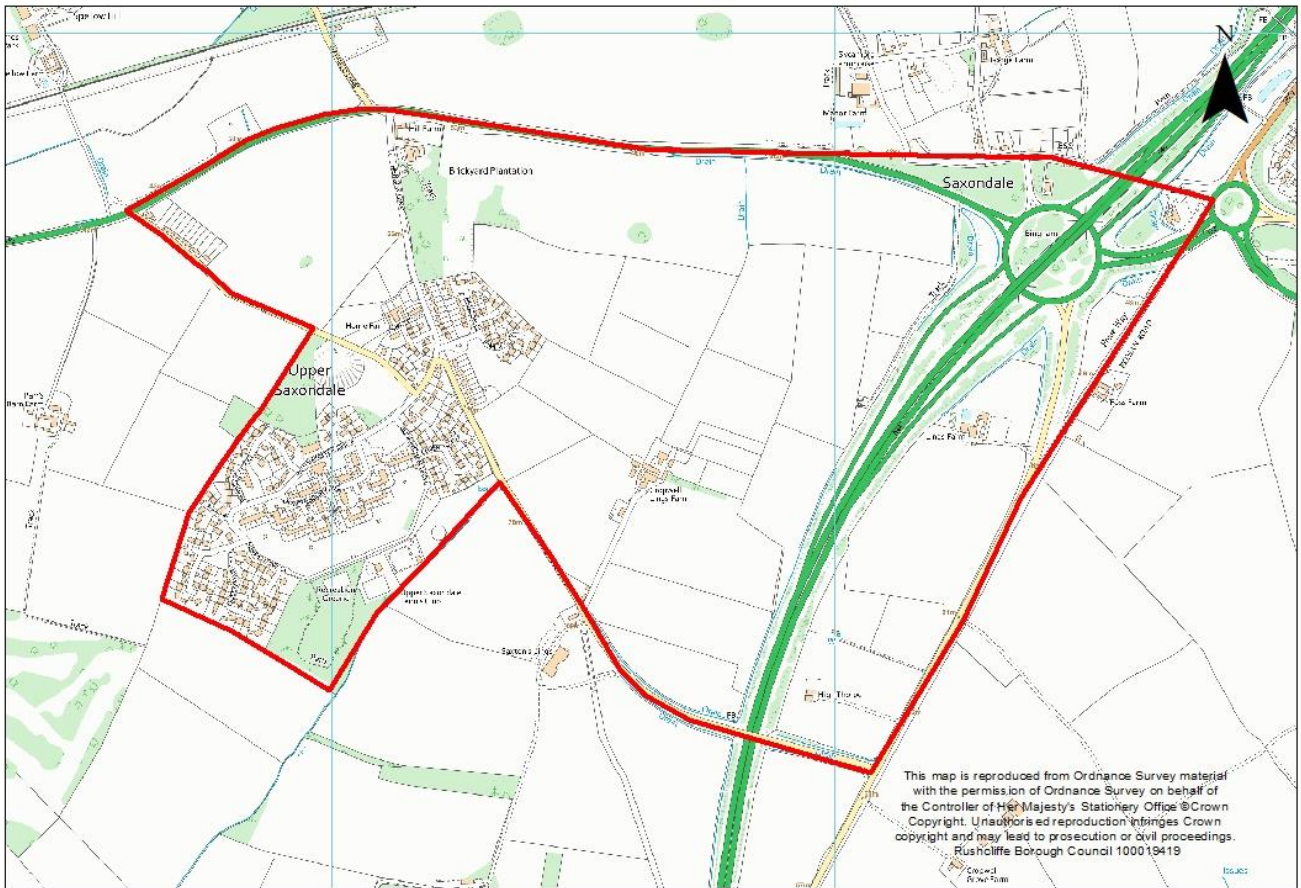
Alternatively you can...

- Send an email response to consultation@rushcliffe.gov.uk

What happens next?

All comments must be received by 13 May 2022 so they can be included. The comments will be considered and draft proposals will be developed. You can have your say on the draft proposals which will be published in June 2022. There will be a second stage to this consultation in the summer. It is vital that you respond to both stages.

Proposed Upper Saxondale Parish



No.	
Date	
Initials	

office use only

Have Your Say...

As we can only consider the views of people who are affected by this proposal, please include your name, address and postcode in any response.

Full Name _____
Address _____ _____
Postcode _____

Would you like to see a new parish set up for Upper Saxondale?

Yes No

Please provide any comments on this proposal, or any alternative suggestions you would like to be considered by Rushcliffe Borough Council about setting up a new parish for Upper Saxondale.

Please feel free to enclose additional responses from other members of your household on a separate sheet of paper and return in the same envelope to the address below.

FREEPOST RTJY-BGGZ-EKZK, Rushcliffe Borough Council, Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 7YG

Please ensure names and addresses are included. All responses MUST be received by the Council by no later than 13 May 2022. Any comments received after that date may not be considered.

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What is a parish council?

Parish councils are the most local level of elected local government which represent the interests of their community. They are funded through an additional charge added to council tax bills called a 'precept'. Town and parish councils are consulted on planning and licensing matters, manage their town and village centres, provide community halls, playgrounds, bins and benches, and look after playing fields and parks. They may also be involved in creating "neighbourhood plans" for their areas,.

You are currently paying for these services as part of Radcliffe-on-Trent parish or Cropwell Butler parish depending on where you live. You may also be paying a voluntary contribution to the Upper Saxondale Residents' Association. Under this proposal you will be paying a charge for a new Upper Saxondale parish council instead of to Radcliffe-on-Trent or Cropwell Butler parishes.

Will it cost me anymore than I pay now?

The amount of charge is something that each parish council has to decide for itself and it depends on what services and facilities it provides. Parish councils can also apply for grants and loans.

The following table provides examples of comparable parish precepts within the Rushcliffe Borough Council area and also gives the size of the electorate. The charge shown is for the annual charge for Band D properties and is in addition to the Council Tax.

Radcliffe-on-Trent residents currently pay a parish precept of £96.64 per annum, and Cropwell Butler £36.72 (for a Band D property) in addition to their Council Tax. For comparison purposes, Upper Saxondale has 640 electors in the area defined by the enclosed map.

Parish	Parish size (Electorate)	Annual Precept	Weekly Precept
Costock	508	£62.92	£1.21
Bunny	533	£80.08	£1.54
Newton	604	£59.80	£1.15
Whatton-in-the-Vale	729	£54.60	£1.05

27 June 2022

To all households in Upper Saxondale

Dear Resident

Proposal for how Upper Saxondale will be governed in the future...

In March 2022 we wrote to tell you that Rushcliffe Borough Council had received a petition from residents asking for the creation of a separate parish council for Upper Saxondale. By law Rushcliffe Borough Council has to carry out a review of how decisions are made in the area by doing what is called a 'Community Governance Review'.

The first part of this process was to ask local residents whether they would like to see a new parish council set up in Upper Saxondale. The consultation closed on 13 May 2022.

I am now writing to let you know:

- What you told us
- What the Borough Council is doing with the results
- How you can have your say on the next stage in the process.

We need you to tell us whether you agree with our recommendation to create a separate parish for Upper Saxondale. Even if you signed the petition and / or responded to the first consultation, it is important that you tell us what you think now.

More details about the review and the consultation are available on the Council's website: www.rushcliffe.gov.uk/uppertsaxondale .

Yours sincerely



Charlotte Caven-Atack
Service Manager – Corporate Services

What's the current situation in Upper Saxondale?

At the moment, if you live in Upper Saxondale you pay Council Tax to Rushcliffe Borough Council (which is then distributed to Nottinghamshire County Council, and Police and Fire authorities) including a parish precept which is distributed to either Radcliffe-on-Trent or Cropwell Butler parish councils-

In December 2021, the Borough Council received a petition from residents in Upper Saxondale asking for a separate parish council for Upper Saxondale to be created. This triggered a process called a Community Governance Review. As part of this review, the Council has to find out how much support there is in Upper Saxondale for a separate parish council from residents and local businesses. We also need to find out if a separate parish council would be a good way to govern and make decisions that affect Upper Saxondale.

To find out what the community thinks about the proposal, the Council asked residents and businesses in Upper Saxondale to get in touch. This leaflet presents the results of the initial consultation, outlines the recommendation of the Borough Council and asks you what you think about that recommendation.

What you told us

Residents were asked if they would like to see a separate parish created for Upper Saxondale. Leaflets were delivered to all households and businesses in the area. Information was also on the Council's website.

- 26.6% of the electorate responded to the consultation
- 25.5% of the electorate said 'yes' they would like to see a new parish set up for Upper Saxondale (that's 96% of those that responded)
- 1.1% of residents said 'no' they would not like to see the creation of a new parish
- 73.4% of residents did not respond to the consultation.

What is Rushcliffe Borough Council doing with the results?

The Council has considered all of the responses and comments. The Council's view is that the large majority of the electorate who responded

(166 out of 173) would like to see the creation of a separate parish for Upper Saxondale. A response to the consultation of 26.6% demonstrates support for this. Therefore, it is recommending that **a separate parish should be set up**. We are also recommending that:

- The new parish should be named **Upper Saxondale**
- Upper Saxondale Parish Council should have **7** councillors
- The **boundaries** of the parish should match the ward boundaries as shown on the enclosed map.

What happens now ...

The next part of the review is to ask if you agree with the Borough Council's recommendations regarding the creation of a separate parish council for Upper Saxondale.

To move forward with this recommendation, the Borough Council needs to be satisfied that a separate parish is in the best interests of the Upper Saxondale community and that it would provide convenient and effective local governance. It is important that you get in touch and tell us what you think.

How do I have my say?

By completing the accompanying form and returning it to FREEPOST RTJY-BGGZ-EKZK, Rushcliffe Borough Council, Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 7YG. Every person over 18 can have a view. Please use additional sheets if you need to.

Alternatively, you can send an email response to consultation@rushcliffe.gov.uk. Even if you signed the petition and/or replied to the first round of consultation it is important that you tell us what you think now.

Please note that the closing date for stage two of this Community Governance Review is 19 August 2022. Any comments received after that date may not be considered.

The responses to the consultation will be considered by the Council and a final decision will be made on 29 September 2022.

No.	
Date	
Initials	

office use only

Have Your Say...

As we can only consider the views of people who are affected by this proposal, please include your name, address and postcode in any response.

Full Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Rushcliffe Borough Council is recommending that a separate parish be created for Upper Saxondale.

Do you agree with this recommendation?

Yes If yes, please answer the rest of the consultation questions on this page

No If no, please return this form to the address in the leaflet

Do you agree with the new parish being named Upper Saxondale?

Yes No

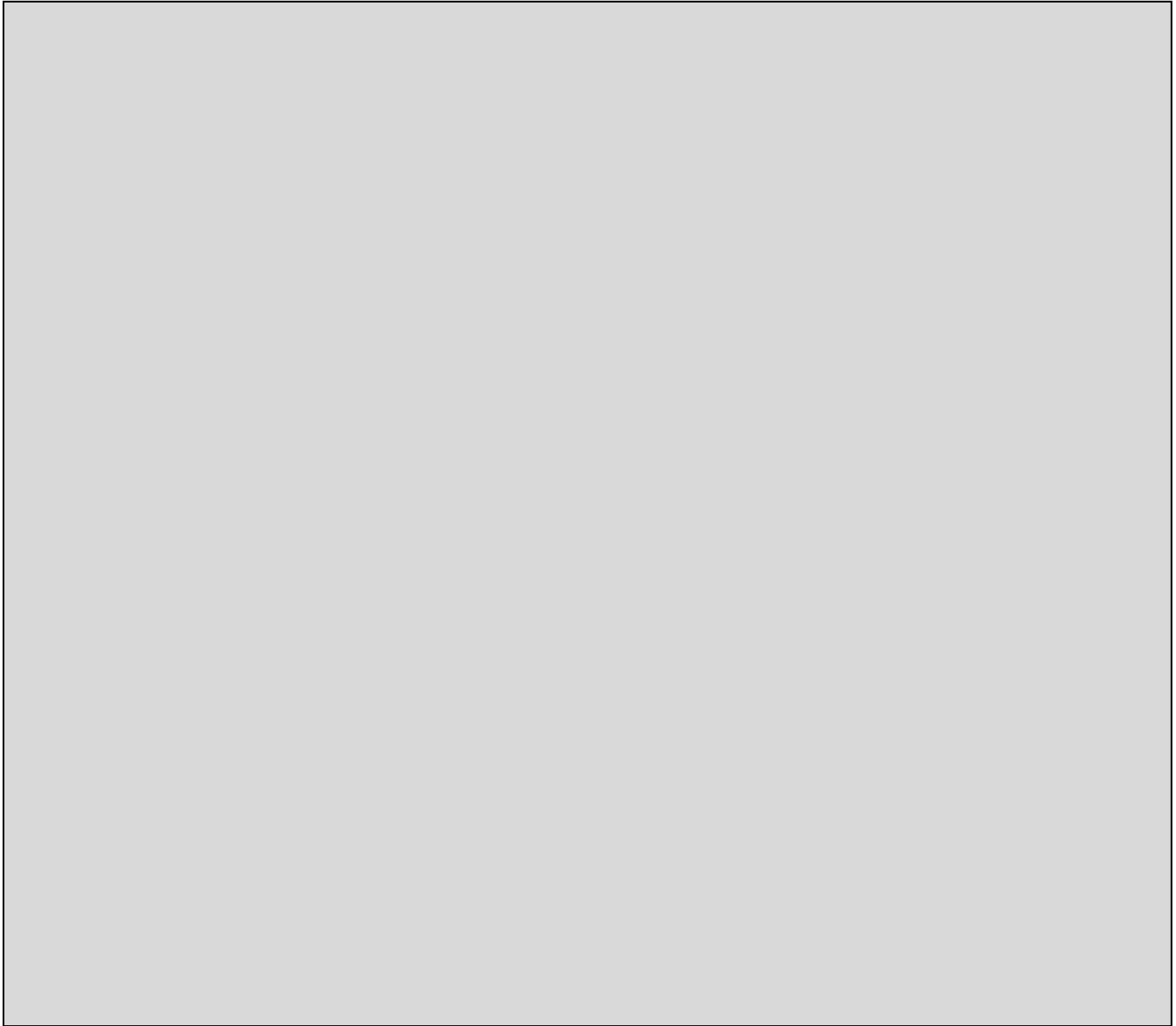
Do you agree with the number of parish councillors being seven?

Yes No

Do you agree with the proposed boundaries (see map)?

Yes No

Please provide any comments on this proposal, any alternative parish name or boundary you would like to be considered by Rushcliffe Borough Council in the space below, then **return this sheet to Rushcliffe Borough Council at the address provided.**



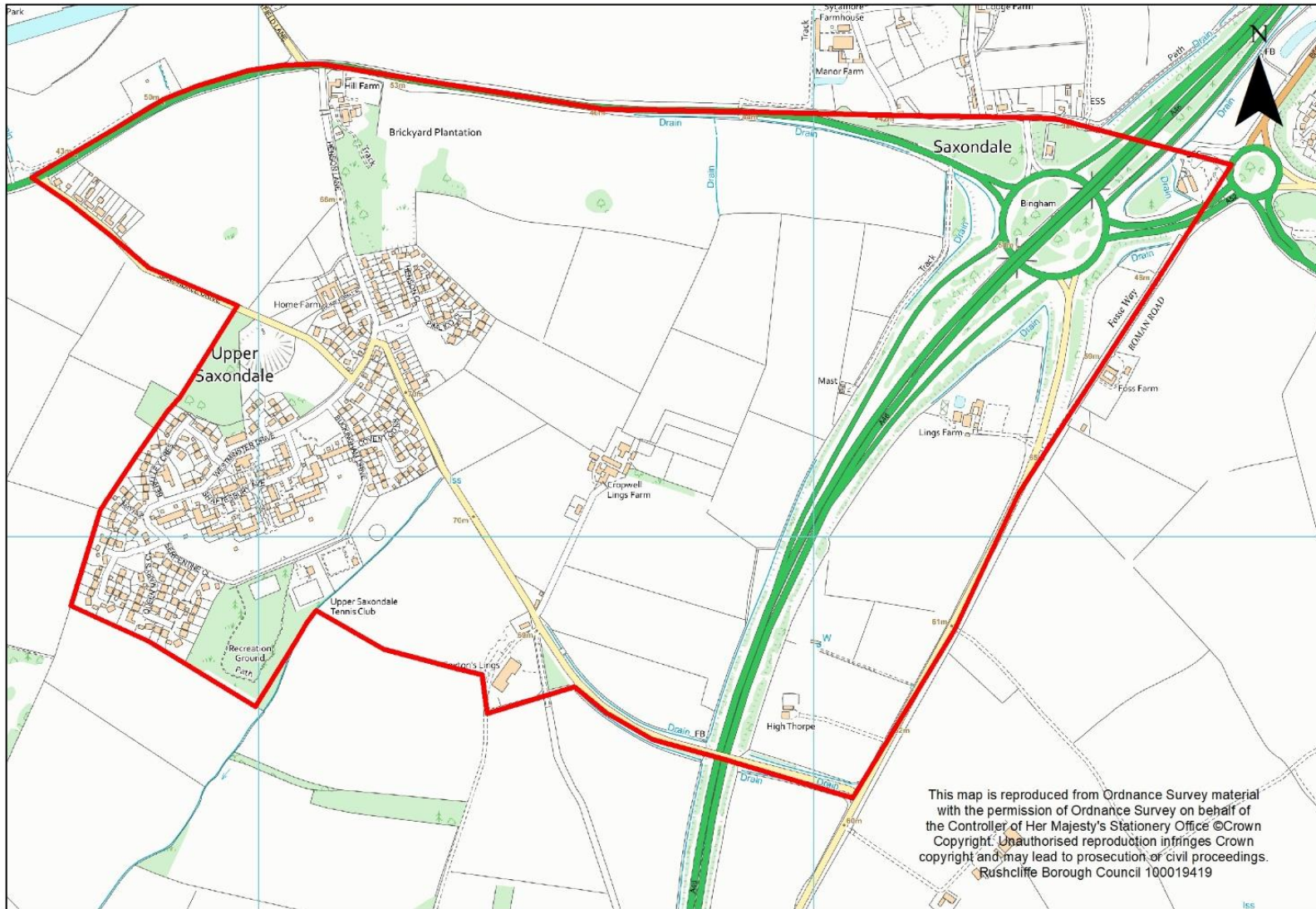
Please include additional responses from other members of your household on a separate sheet of paper and return in the same envelope. Please ensure their names and addresses are included.

All responses must be received by the Council by 19 August 2022. Any comments received after that date may not be considered.

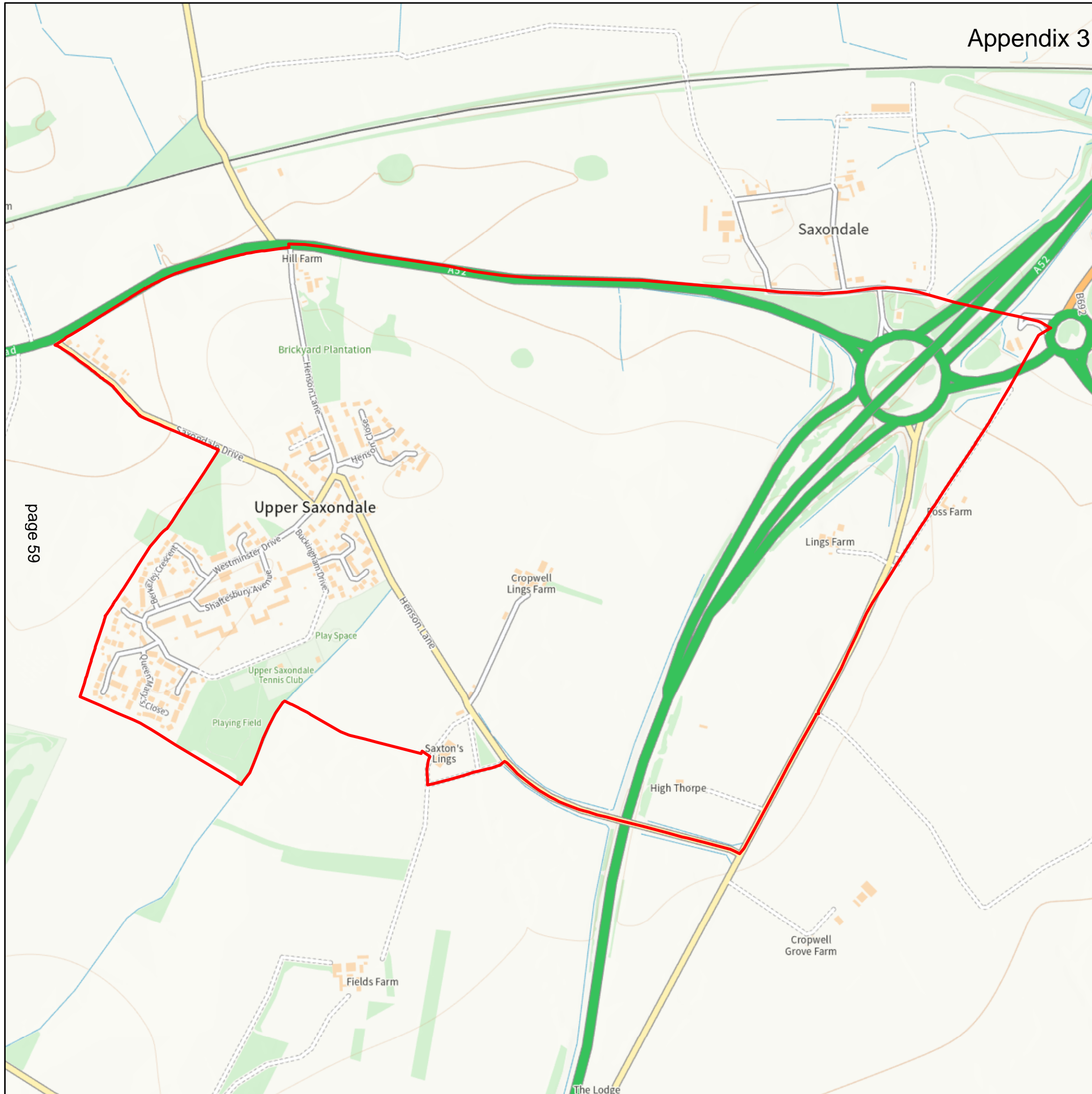
No.	
Date	
Initials	

office use only

Proposed Upper Saxondale Parish



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Rushcliffe Borough Council 100019419



Rushcliffe
Borough Council

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Council

Thursday, 29 September 2022

Approval of the Scrutiny Annual Reports 2021/22

Report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services

**Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide Leadership,
Councillor S Robinson**

1. Purpose of report

The Scrutiny Annual Report, attached as an Appendix, provides a review of the work undertaken by the Council's four Scrutiny Groups during 2021/22.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Council endorse the work undertaken by the four Scrutiny Groups during 2021/22.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

To enable Council oversight of the work and operation of its statutory Overview and Scrutiny function, the function's effectiveness and contribution to the work of the Council.

4. Supporting Information

During the year, the following subjects have been scrutinised and monitored:

Corporate Overview Group

- Feedback from Scrutiny Chairmen
- Consideration of Scrutiny Work Programmes
- Finance and Performance Management
- Health and Safety Annual Report
- Customer Feedback Annual Report
- The Impact of Covid-19 on Rushcliffe Borough Council – Internal Focus
- The Impact of Covid-19 on Rushcliffe Borough Council – External Focus
- Diversity Annual Report.

Governance Scrutiny Group

- Internal Audit, including Progress Reports 2021/22, Annual Report 2021/22, and Strategy 2020 – 2023

- Risk Management
- Going concern Assessment Linked to Covid-19
- Capital and Investment Strategy
- Approval of the Statement of Accounts
- Streetwise Annual Report
- Capital and Investment (mid-year review)
- Review of Investment Assets
- Risk Management
- Annual Fraud Report
- Annual Audit Letter
- External Audit Annual Plan 2021/22
- Annual Governance Statement
- Revision of the Council's Constitution

Communities Scrutiny Group

- WISE: Environmental Crime Enforcement
- Safeguarding Adults and Children Strategy
- Police Performance and Resources in Rushcliffe
- YouNG and Positive Futures
- Housing Delivery Plan
- Feedback on Residents' Survey 2021
- Carbon Management Plan

Growth and Development Group

- River Trent Footbridge Crossing
- Cycling Networks in the Borough
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Update
- Covid-19 Business Recovery Update
- Tree Conservation
- Planning Communications.

5. Risks and Uncertainties

None.

6. Implications

6.1. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

6.2. Legal Implications

The Council is required by the Local Government Act 2000 to have scrutiny arrangements in place. This report demonstrates the Council's compliance with these requirements.

6.3. Equalities Implications

The role of the relevant scrutiny groups includes monitoring the Equality and Diversity impact of the Councils policies and strategies.

6.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

There are no Section 17 implications.

7. Link to Corporate Priorities

Quality of Life	Effective scrutiny is an essential element of the delivery of the Corporate Strategy and Corporate Priorities.
Efficient Services	
Sustainable Growth	
The Environment	

8. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Council endorse the work undertaken by the four Scrutiny Groups during 2021/22.

For more information contact:	Peter Linfield Director – Finance and Corporate Services 0115 9148439 plinfield@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	
List of appendices:	Appendix – Annual Scrutiny Reports 2021/22

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Annual Scrutiny Report 2021/22



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Corporate Overview Group

Chairman's Foreword

This annual report summarises the main work undertaken by the Corporate Overview Group 2021/22. The Corporate Overview Group oversees the Council's other scrutiny group work programmes based on concerns highlighted by quarterly financial and performance monitoring reports, as well as items on the Cabinet Forward Plan and priorities within the Corporate Strategy.

The Corporate Overview Group have ensured that the executive be held to account by approving topics to be discussed at scrutiny groups. Additionally, the Group have scrutinised financial and performance management reports on a quarterly basis to ensure the smooth running of the Council.

The Covid Pandemic and the economic downturn has continued to present challenges to the running of the Council's business and the Group will continue to evaluate the Council's performance over the next twelve months. On behalf of the rest of the Corporate Overview Group, I would like to thank the Council's resilient officers who have ensured that services continue, and our communities and residents are supported during this difficult time.

Councillor Tina Combellack
Chairman Corporate Overview Group



Councillor Tina Combellack
Chairman

What we are responsible for?

The Corporate Overview Group responsibilities include:

- Implementing identified improvements to scrutiny including training of scrutiny members, construction of new work programmes and reporting methods.
- Creating and receiving feedback on work programmes for the Growth and Development, Communities and Governance Scrutiny Groups based on the Cabinet Forward Plan, Corporate Strategy, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Investment Strategy and Transformation Plan.
- Scrutinising financial and performance management reports on a quarterly basis to ensure the smooth running of the Council and delegate any necessary investigations into concerning elements of these reports to the most appropriate scrutiny group via their work programme.
- Reviewing reports in respect of health and safety, diversity, and customer feedback to ensure the Council is meeting its statutory duties.

Our work this year

During this year, the Group considered many service areas and issues within its scrutiny role, particularly:

- Feedback from Scrutiny Chairmen
- Consideration of Scrutiny Work Programmes
- Finance and Performance Management
- Health and Safety Annual Report
- Customer Feedback Annual Report
- The Impact of Covid-19 on Rushcliffe Borough Council – Internal Focus
- The Impact of Covid-19 on Rushcliffe Borough Council – External Focus
- Diversity Annual Report

Feedback from Scrutiny Chairmen and Consideration of Scrutiny Work Programmes

At each meeting, each Chairman was invited to provide a brief summary of their previous meetings and the Group discussed suggestions of topics for scrutiny which were submitted either by Councillors or officers via the Scrutiny Matrix.

Feedback from Scrutiny Group Chairmen also led to a change to Chairman's Briefings which would now be held before the agenda was published to discuss the reports for the meeting and ensure that the key lines of enquiry detailed in the scrutiny matrix were addressed.

Additional Scrutiny Training was delivered by the Service Manager – Corporate Services covering listening and questioning skills and techniques, and a practical guide to completing the Scrutiny Matrix.

Chairmen also discussed the need for those submitting Scrutiny Matrices to discuss these in advance with officers as there had been a number of instances in the last year where matters were either not appropriate for scrutiny or could be addressed directly by officers or through a briefing note.

The Group also developed a Scrutiny Witness Guide during the year following an interesting session with the East Midlands Councils Scrutiny Network which was attended by the Chairman of Corporate Overview Group and the Service Manager – Corporate Services. The document outlines what witnesses should expect at a scrutiny meeting, and also make clear the provisions contained within the Council's constitution with regard to how witnesses could address the meeting and the limitations placed on their ongoing involvement in discussion.

Finance and Performance Management

The Group scrutinised financial and performance management reports on a quarterly basis to ensure the smooth running of the Council.

At the meeting in July 2021, the Group was informed that the year-end Capital Programme provision totalled £16.130m and that actual expenditure in relation to this provision totalled £9.306m (71% of the budget), giving rise to a variance of £6.824. A recommendation was made to carry forward £6.682m of this.

The Group were informed that projects in the Capital programme had commenced, and the majority of the work is expected to be completed in 2021/22. It was noted that the Capital Programme will be further updated with the revised budget position at September Full Council.

The Group were asked to comment on the monitored tasks which were outlined in the Corporate Strategy and the performance measures within the Corporate Scorecard and were pleased to note that there were no exceptions to report for strategic tasks and only six performance indicators falling below target in the corporate basket. It was noted that there were five performance exceptions on the operational scorecard:

- LINS06 Cumulative number of fly tipping cases (against cumulative monthly comparison for last year)
- LINS25 Number of households living in temporary accommodation
- LICO41 Percentage of householder planning applications processed within target times
- LIFCS56 Percentage of visitors satisfied by their website visit
- LINS19a Number of household waste collection (residual, dry and garden) missed twice or more in a 3-month period

The Group noted there had been 1,400 fly tipping incidents in which WISE had issued 72 fix penalty notices with prosecutions pending. The number of residents needing accommodation and the number of residential planning applications had both increased. The increase in the number of bin collections missed was due to an increase of agency staff not being familiar with assisted bin collections.

There were four additional tasks added to the Corporate Strategy:

- Implementation of proposals from the Resources and Waste Strategy for England
- Coordinate Rushcliffe's involvement in the Development Corporation and Freeport to support the redevelopment of the Ratcliffe on Soar site
- Support the recovery of local businesses and communities from the impacts of COVID

At its meeting on 2 November 2021, the Group were asked to consider the Quarter 1 position in terms of financial and performance monitoring for 2021/22.

The Group were informed of income losses related to the Covid pandemic; however, it was noted that for this financial year, the overall budget variance including Covid related pressures was expected to result in an overall efficiency on the Council's budgets. The Group were also informed of additional pressures on the Council's reserves that had been identified, including a financial contribution to Nottinghamshire County Council towards a feasibility study to pedestrianise Central Avenue and a £1000 one off retention payment to the refuse HGV drivers due to the unusual demand for HGV drivers nationally.

The Group noted that budgets within special expenses had been impacted by the Covid pandemic, particularly with loss of income from venue hire at Gamston Village Hall, which had been used as a vaccination centre. The Group were advised that the governments Sales, Fees and Charges Reimbursement Scheme had been extended to cover the first quarter of the year and this would be allocated to the West Bridgford Special Expenses fund to support the loss of income from closed facilities within West Bridgford.

The Group noted that the Council's projected financial position was stable, however risks remain present over the winter period with uncertainties in respect of Government funding and policies.

The Group were asked to comment on the monitored tasks outlined in the Corporate Strategy and the performance measures within the Corporate Scorecard. The Group noted that four strategic performance indicators had fallen below target, these were:

- LINS18 Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling, and composting
- LINS23 Residual waste collected per household, in kilos
- LICO64 Number of pavilion, community hall and playing field users
- LICO66 Percentage usage of community facilities

It was also noted that there were four operational performance exceptions:

- LIDEG01 Percentage of householder planning applications processed within target times
- LIDEG17 Percentage of planning enforcement inspections carried out in target time
- LIFCS61 Percentage of calls answered in 40 seconds
- LINS38 Robberies per 1,000 population

Detailed explanations were provided for all performance exceptions which the Group noted.

The Group approved the Council's Capital and Revenue Budgets and the expected outturn position and noted the comments for the performance exceptions, the performance of strategic tasks.

At its meeting on 1 February 2022, the Group were presented the quarter two position in terms of financial and performance monitoring for 2021/22.

The Group noted the variations in revenue efficiencies and Covid related pressures. It was noted that in respect of business rates, the Council expected a surplus, however, a significant proportion would need to be appropriated to the Collection Fund Reserves to cover the anticipated deficit expected to arise next year and in to 2023/24.

The Group welcomed the continued marketing of Edwalton Golf Course and other Council facilities following the Covid pandemic and this was fed back to the relevant officers involved.

The Group were asked to consider the performance measures within the Corporate Scorecard which reported that there were fourteen strategic performance indicators that had fallen below target, a summary of these were provided and noted by the Group.

The Group were advised that the Covid pandemic had affected residents' feelings of satisfaction in relation to Council services, which had been replicated nationally. It was noted that the Council would continue to engage with residents and were advised of its forthcoming Customer Service and Communications strategies expected in spring 2022.

The Group also noted that the lifting of Covid restrictions had seen an increase in venue usage and that a new booking system due to be launched in spring 2022 would assist the Community Facilities Teams to market the facilities and increase their usage further.

The Group noted the financial revenue and capital budgets and the comments in respect of performance.

At its meeting on 3 May 2022, the Group were presented the quarter three position in terms of financial and performance monitoring for 2021/22.

The Group were advised that budgets for quarter one had been set prudently in anticipation of an adverse impact on them due to the Covid pandemic. However, it was noted that the recovery had been quicker than expected due to revenue collected from car parks, leisure, planning and community facilities.

The Group were provided with the summary position for Quarter 3, including lost income and costs due to the Covid pandemic. It was noted that there was a Business Rate surplus which would be transferred to the Council's reserves to cover the anticipated deficit likely to arise next year and in 2023/24.

The Group were advised that there was a forecasted underspend in the Capital Programme in relation to the Bingham Hub, Crematorium and LAD funding for green energy grants and due to current projections, it was unlikely that there would be a need to borrow.

The Group noted a positive projected position. However, uncertainties over funding, increased costs of goods and services along with Government policy reviews, means that a healthy reserves position is vital to ensure the Council remains financially resilient.

The Group were asked to comment on the monitored tasks outlined in the Corporate Strategy and the performance measures within the Corporate Scorecard. The Group noted that two strategic tasks were still at 0% due to delays new legislation in respect of Planning and Waste services.

The Group were advised of one Performance Indicator exception in respect of:

- LINS32 Average waiting time of applicants rehoused by Choice Based Lettings

It was noted that this was due to delays relating to the Covid pandemic caused by a backlog of residents waiting to be rehoused by Metropolitan Housing.

The Group noted the financial revenue and capital budgets and the progress to date on the Strategic Tasks in respect of performance and whether additional scrutiny was required.

Health and Safety Annual Report

At its meeting on 20 July 2021, the Health and Safety Advisor presented the Health and Safety Annual Report which summarised the Council's operational health and safety performance during the period 1 April 2020 to the end of March 2021, including health and safety policies, procedures and activities which had taken place, training programmes delivered, statistical data and the proposed health and safety objectives for 2021/22.

The Health and Safety Advisor informed the Group that at the height of the Covid Pandemic when the majority of staff were working from home the Business Support Unit staff were provided with first aid training as they had a greater presence at the Arena.

The Group raised concerns regarding the percentage of staff who had not completed the fire safety e-learning course and the display screen assessments. It was noted that the e-learning system had recently been upgraded allowing managers to monitor staff with electronic reminders if courses had not been completed.

The Group were informed that members of staff had been provided with the opportunity to attend Red Umbrella webinars during the Covid pandemic, which covered topics such as anxiety, working from home and working collaboratively as a team. The Group acknowledged that the Council was in a strong position at the outbreak of the Covid pandemic, with most staff already working remotely.

The Group requested information regarding the impact the Covid pandemic had on the working environments for staff at home and in the office and it was agreed that this would be incorporated in the Council's response to Covid-19 to be scrutinised at a later meeting of the Corporate Overview Group.

The Group noted the Health and Safety Annual report and endorsed the health and safety objectives.

Customer Feedback Annual Report

The Service Manager – Finance and Corporate Services summarised the complaints which the Council received during 2020/21 with a comparison to previous performance. It was noted that:

- 49 complaints were received by the Council at Stage 1 of its complaints process – this is comparable with recent years despite the service pressures and hardships to residents caused by the pandemic
- The percentage of complaints escalated past Stage 1 has increased slightly from 20.0% in 2019/20 to 22.4% (11 from 49)
- Consistency in handling complaints has stayed at a high level, as has the number of complaints that are responded to within target time – 48 out of 49 – this is despite the additional work pressures of the last eighteen months
- Analysis of the 49 complaints received in 2020/21 showed that 61.2% were unjustified
- Seven complaints were directly related to the pandemic
- Fourteen complaints were referred by complainants to the Local Government Ombudsman – none of these complaints were upheld
- The Council received 155 compliments about its services in 2020/21 – 23 more than the previous year

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

At its meeting on 1 February 2022, the Group received a report which focused on the impact of Covid-19 on the Council internally, outlining how Rushcliffe Borough Council had responded and reacted to the Covid pandemic, and how the Council had activated its emergency plan. The report also detailed the effect of the Covid pandemic on staff, Council services and projects.

The Group questioned issues in relation to broadband connectivity and indicated that it wasn't only staff who were affected but some residents in the Borough were still without broadband. The Group were advised that despite broadband vouchers being available from Nottinghamshire County Council there were still issues and both the supplier and Nottinghamshire County Council should be encouraged to ensure no one is without broadband or mobile connectivity.

The Group noted that the Council had remained connected with its employees by encouraging staff to return to the Arena or contact centre once or twice a week. It was also acknowledged that staff were able to remain connected with events such as Red Umbrella sessions and virtual coffee mornings. It was noted that there had been some remuneration adjustments for those who had taken on extra roles and

responsibilities during the pandemic but that it was not always possible to recognise staff financially and that other reward systems were in place. It was noted an agreed that staff well-being should continue to be monitored.

The Group were informed of the 'Everybody In' grant which enabled the Council to offer bed and breakfast accommodation to those in need and after the initial lockdown these people were provided with alternative types of accommodation and support.

The Group raised concerns regarding the increase in fly-tipping and littering in the Borough during the Covid pandemic and were encouraged by the introduction of WISE for enforcement which had already seen positive outcomes with a drop in fly-tipping incidents in the last year. It was noted that the increase in littering was due to the Covid restrictions being lifted and when parks and green spaces had been heavily used.

The Group resolved that a copy of the report be circulated to all Councillors for consideration and comment and that employees be thanked in the next edition of Staff Matters.

The Impact of Covid-19 on Rushcliffe Borough Council - External Focus

At its meeting on 3 May 2022, the Group received a report concerning specific work undertaken by the Council to support communities and businesses during the Covid pandemic, focusing on the delivery of Council services.

The Group acknowledged that this included redeployment of staff to the Community Support Hub, hosted by Nottinghamshire County Council to support residents. Support was provided to:

- Those who could not work as they were self-isolating or were on low incomes with payments of £500 provided from Government funding with 531 payments made, amounting to £265,500
- Community groups, voluntary organisations, and charities for applying for Social Recovery Funding and Community Food funding
- Sports clubs with the allocation of Sport England's Emergency Fund and by providing Covid documentation, guidance, and risk assessments when re-opening
- The business community through a dedicated Covid-19 business support webpage which had received 41,000 views, and the allocation of £212,000 of Welcome Back Funding from the European Regional Development Fund to support the safe re-opening of town centres
- The offer of rent holidays to tenants in Council-owned commercial property
- Support to Leisure Centres to ensure safe re-opening
- support to businesses by the Environmental Health Team with complying with the Government's Covid guidance

It was noted that between May 2020 and August 2021, Rushcliffe Councillors had spent around £9,000 through the Community Support Grants Scheme, on projects to support local communities with managing the impact of the pandemic.

The Group was pleased that community facilities throughout Rushcliffe had been used as vaccination and testing sites and commended the amazing uprising from

communities across the Borough and the support from Parish Councils which had enabled the rapid provision of support to communities during the pandemic.

Diversity Annual Report

In May 2022, the Service Manager – Corporate Services gave a presentation to support the report of the Chief Executive which provided the Group with an update on delivery of the action plan for the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Scheme and included the annual diversity report update.

The Group noted that the data included in the report was from the Census 2011 as the data from the Census 2021 would not be available until October 2022 and was pleased to note that the data provided was not significantly different to that included in the previous report received - the demographic of the Council's workforce was higher (94%) than that for the Borough, and that the figure for the Borough was higher than that for the East Midlands (89%) and nationally (85%).

The Service Manager Corporate Services noted that Rushcliffe had a larger proportion of residents over 60 years of age (25%) than the East Midlands (23.5%) and nationally (22%), with a larger proportion of residents aged 45-59 and fewer younger residents aged 18-24 when compared to the rates for the East Midlands and Nationally. The Group was pleased that the Council continued to support employees who wished to continue working, keeping knowledge within the organisation as well as working towards ensuring effective succession planning by improving the age diversity of the workforce.

The Group was informed that the number of employees who declared they had a disability was the same as the previous year (5%) and, as a Disability Confident Employer, the Council continued to support them in their employment.

The Service Manager – Corporate Services informed the Group that the gender pay gap had narrowed from 8.9% (in 2017) to now a difference of less than 1%, which was due to an improved gender balance in senior positions.

The Group was pleased to hear that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion actions were embedded in Service Plans and that a range of actions had been taken including: the Council's website complied with Accessibility Regulations, an event had been held for 30 Year 10 students from Toothill School to engage them in democracy and that training in British Sign Language was being explored for customer services staff.

Member Panels

The Group did not establish any Member Panels this year.

Call-ins

The Group did not discuss any call-ins this year.

Looking forward to the year ahead

Following a busy year for the Council's scrutiny functions, all members of Corporate Overview Group are looking forward to developing comprehensive work programmes for the scrutiny groups in 2022/23.

Governance Scrutiny Group

Chairman's Foreword

This brief foreword looks back on what has been another challenging year for the Governance Scrutiny Group. It has been a difficult time over the past few months, with the national economy slowly recovering from the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, which has had a severe impact on the national economy and the Council's finances. Before the pandemic, the Council steered a prudent course during a long period of national financial austerity and the uncertainties it presented. However, I am pleased to report that due to the dedication of both the staff and Councillors, and because of careful financial management over many years, the Council has managed exceptionally well to deal with this crisis. Although it should be noted that there are still difficult, uncertain times ahead and the Council's financial resilience going forward will be severely tested, it is encouraging to know that the Council has the appropriate governance arrangements in place to support this task.

The scrutiny process is vital to challenge and influence how the Council makes decisions to ensure a high service quality. This report demonstrates the variety of areas, which the Governance Scrutiny Group has scrutinised over the past year, and the actions taken to ensure the probity and soundness of the Council's decision making. Over the past year, the Group has judiciously and robustly scrutinised the Council's finances, approach to risk, as well as other corporate issues.

I wish to thank my Vice Chairman Councillor Ben Gray and the members of the Governance Scrutiny Group for their support and contributions. In these challenging times, when there is still so much uncertainty ahead, the work of this Scrutiny Group will remain vital and extremely important to the governance of Rushcliffe Borough Council.

Councillor Davinder Viridi
Chairman Governance Scrutiny Group



Councillor Davinder Viridi
Chairman



Councillor Ben Gray
Vice Chairman

What we are responsible for?

The Governance Scrutiny Group's responsibilities include:

- **Statement of Accounts** To examine the outturn and statement of accounts resulting in its approval
- **Annual Governance Statement** To consider the annual report on applying the Council's system of internal control. This statement ultimately comprises a key element of the Council's Statement of Accounts
- **Capital and Investment Management** To consider the annual and interim reports on capital and investment management activity. Ensuring that practice has complied with the approved Asset Management Strategy, making recommendations to Cabinet or Full Council as appropriate. Including changes to the Treasury and Capital Codes of Practice, which includes how we account for Commercial Investments and reporting on the position concerning both treasury and commercial investments
- **Protecting against fraud** To consider the annual report on fraud and irregularities in order to make an informed judgement on the corporate governance and internal control statements, making recommendations to Cabinet on improvements. To consider any matters arising as a result of irregularity referred to it by Cabinet
- **Internal Audit** To consider periodic reports on the more significant findings of internal audit in order to make an informed judgement on corporate governance and internal control statements, making recommendations to Cabinet on improvements
- **Risk Management** To consider periodic reports on controls over key risk areas as identified in the risk register in support of making an informed judgement on the corporate governance and internal control statements, making recommendations to Cabinet on improvements

Our work this year

During this year, the Group considered many service areas and issues within its scrutiny role, particularly:

- Internal Audit, including Progress Reports 2021/22, Annual Report 2021/22, and Strategy 2021 – 2023
- Risk Management
- Going concern Assessment Linked to Covid-19
- Capital and investment Strategy
- Approval of the Statement of Accounts
- Streetwise Annual Report
- Capital and Investment (mid-year review)
- Review of Investment Assets
- Risk Management

- Annual Fraud Report
- Annual Audit Letter
- External Audit Annual Plan 2021/22
- Annual Governance Statement
- Revision of the Council's Constitution

Internal Audit

Internal Audit Progress Reports 2021/22

The Group received and noted three progress reports throughout the year, prepared by the Council's internal Auditors, BDO. Mr Gurpreet Dulay, Senior Manager at BDO attended the meetings to update the Group.

At its meeting on 25 November 2021, the Group were provided a summary of the Internal Audit Progress Report reflecting the progress made against the Annual Internal Audit programme along with significant recommendations in respect of the audits completed during this period.

Mr Duly highlighted the emerging issues relevant to Local authorities and in particular a predicted budget shortfall that a number of Council's could face and how continued budget pressures and the mitigation of challenges does affect the audit planning process. The Group were advised that the Audit Plan for the next year would be reported at the next Governance Scrutiny Group meeting in February 2022.

At its meeting on 2 February 2022, the Group noted the completion of three audits; Housing Benefits, Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery. The Auditors reported a moderate opinion due to 4 out of 7 forms for the Business Impact Assessments having not been completed accurately. It was noted that the management team had disagreed with this rating of operational effectiveness.

Internal Audit Annual Report 2021/22

Mr Dulay from BDO, the Council's internal auditors, attended the meeting on 30 June 2022, and presented the Council's Internal Audit Annual Report 2021/22 for noting by the Group. This was the last report for the financial year and BDO concluded that the Council had a substantial system of internal control, substantial being the highest rating and that it should be noted that this was a significant achievement as this level of assurance is difficult to achieve and in particular against the backdrop of the Covid pandemic.

The Group noted that of the ten audits, four had received substantial assurance on both design and effectiveness, one received substantial assurance on design only, four received a moderate assurance on both design and effectiveness and one (Annual Fraud Report) was not classified in the same way.

Internal Audit Strategy 2021-23

Mr Dulay, Senior Manager at BDO, the Council's internal auditors attended the meeting on 3 February 2022, and presented the planned audits due to take place in Year 3 of the Internal Audit Strategy, 2022/23 and highlighted a small number of

changes in response to evolving situations and ongoing risks. The Group noted that the plan is set within the context of a multi-year approach, such that areas of key risk would aim to be looked at over a three year audit cycle.

The Group were asked to review the Internal Audit Charter, which defines the internal audits mission, purpose, authority, and responsibilities. The charter establishes the internal audit's position within the Council and defines the scope of internal audit activities and is a requirement of Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).

Risk Management

At its meeting on 23 September 2021, the Group were presented the Council's Risk Management Report which summarised the risks that had changed since last reported, including the risks identified by the Covid-19 pandemic. Members were advised that the Council's Risk Management Strategy is reviewed on a 3 year cycle by Zurich the Council's external risk advisors, it was noted that a risk health check had been completed by Zurich last year and that Risk Management is reported to Governance Scrutiny Group on a 6 monthly cycle.

Members noted the report in relation to existing risks and the progress of the risks identified in response to the global Covid-19 pandemic and the recommendations provided for risks that had a red alert status.

In respect of the Risk Management Report members requested to observe a full comprehensive register at its meeting in February 2022.

At its meeting on 3 February 2022, the Group were presented the Risk Management Progress report which provided an update on the Council's risk activity, including a summary of risks in the Council's Risk Registers that had changed.

The Group were advised that there were currently 45 corporate risks and 33 operational risks and 2 additional opportunity risks which had been identified. The Group noted that risks within the register will fluctuate throughout the year as active risk management is undertaken.

The Group noted that the Council's Risk Management Group meet twice yearly, and that risk is monitored day by day by officers and reported to their Service Managers monthly with any immediate issues highlighted and reported where necessary.

Going Concern Assessment Linked to Covid-19

The Council's External Auditors requested additional assurances in the assessment of Going Concern, these were:

- The Council's current financial position
- The Council's projected financial position
- The Councils' governance arrangements
- The regulatory and control environment applicable to the Council as a local authority

It was reported that as a local authority the Council has to operate within highly legislated and controlled environments. Adding that as well as the legal framework and central government control, there are other factors including the role undertaken by External Audit as well as statutory requirements for compliance with best practice and guidance published by CIPFA and other relevant bodies.

The Group noted the positive outcome of the assessment of the Council's going concern status for the purpose of the statement of accounts 2020/21.

Capital and Investment Strategy

At its meeting on the 23 September 2021, the Group were asked to consider the Council's Capital and Investment Strategy Outturn report, which summarised the transactions undertaken during the financial years 2020/21. The report also provided information on the Council's commercial investments and highlighted issues linked to the legacy of Covid-19, which had impacted on the Council's year end investment position and overall budget in 2020/21.

Members agreed the Capital and Investment Strategy Outturn report and requested more consideration be given to greener investments. It was noted however that the Council must consider security as a priority and that 'Green Investments' are still relatively new to the market and do not always have sufficient performance data.

At its meeting on 3 February 2022, the Group were asked to consider and approve for Council on 3 March 2022, the Capital and Investment Strategy for 2022/23 to 2026/27, focusing on traditional treasury activity and the Council's commercial property investments in light of CIPFA's updated Prudential and Treasury Management Codes.

The Group noted that the council holds usable reserves and working capital and that the council's current strategy is to use these resources, by way of internal borrowing on projects such as the Crematorium and Bingham Hub, to avoid commitment to external debt.

The Group also noted that that whilst the council was committed to being self-sustainable it had taken the decision to no longer invest in property for commercial gain and due to changes in the Prudential Code, local authorities will no longer be allowed to borrow to fund non-financial assets solely to generate a profit.

The Group were advised of an update to the Treasury Management Code which requires Local authorities to document a formal and comprehensive knowledge and skills schedule to ensure both members and officers dealing with treasury management are trained and kept up to date.

Annual Audit Report

At its meeting on 25 November 2021 the Council's external auditors presented the Audit Completion Report and Management Representation Letter and reports to those charged with Governance for the audit process 2021/2022.

Members were advised that the auditors were yet to complete work in respect of the Council's arrangements and Value for Money for the year ended 31 March 2021, but at the time of preparing this report the auditors had not identified any significant weakness in the Council's arrangements.

Annual Audit Letter

At its meeting on 30 June 2022, members of the Group received and noted the Annual Audit Letter including the Council's Value for Money arrangements. The report provided reasonable assurance that the council's financial statements are free from material error in line with the financial reporting framework applicable to the Council and that they give a true and fair view of the Council's financial position as at 31 March 2021.

Members noted that there had been a significant increase in the audit fees due to some additional testing requirements as a result of a change to the Code of Audit Practice and Value for Money reporting.

Approval of the Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement

At its meeting on 25 November 2021, the Statement of Accounts for 2020/21, including the Annual Governance Statement were submitted to the Group for approval. It was noted that the closure of the accounts process had been complex for a second year due to the impact of Covid 19 and that the deadline for the certification of the accounts had been extended.

At its meeting on 30 June 2022, the Group were presented and asked to approve and certify the Annual Governance Statement which is published alongside the Council's Statement of Accounts and were reminded that significant Governance Issues will evolve over time as new risks and opportunities arise, including the impact on governance from the Covid pandemic and the financial Management Code which was introduced last year.

Streetwise Annual Report

At its meeting on 25 November 2021 the Managing Director – Streetwise Environmental Ltd presented the annual report for Streetwise Enterprises Ltd and Streetwise Enterprises Trading Ltd. The Group were asked to consider the companies' performance based on its key performance indicators, its ability to win contracts, its ability to delivered against contracts awarded, the companies financial standing, environmental credentials, appropriate governance measures and its response to Covid-19.

The Group noted that the contract with Metropolitan Housing had ended in August 2021, but its loss had not affected the companies' ability to compete for other contracts and had been awarded a 5 year contract to manage and maintain a housing development at Bingham. It was also reported that the company had been successful in gaining a number of nationally recognised accreditations.

The Group were encouraged by the companies' carbon initiatives and felt this needed to be highlighted when bidding for future contracts.

Capital and Investment

At its meeting on 25 November 2021, the Group were provided with a summary of the Council's capital and investment activities for the period 1 April to 30 September 2021 and were advised that the economy is slowly recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic. The Group were advised that in August 2021 the consumer price inflation rate in the UK jumped to 3.2% and with rising cost pressures and the reversal of temporary tax cuts will cause inflation to rise further.

In respect of Investment Income and in order to maintain returns and mitigate risks the Council had continued to diversify its investment mix with a view to maximising its rates of return.

In terms of borrowing the Group were advised that the Council had established a range of Prudential Indicators to monitor both Treasury and Capital and details of their performance were provided. The Group noted that a revised Prudential Code was expected to be published in December 2021.

The Group were advised that Treasury Management continues to be fraught with difficulty as the UK economy recovers, interest rates remain low affecting the returns on investments and changes in the accounting codes will restrict what local authorities can do.

It was noted that as a local authority Rushcliffe was unusual in that it does not have some of the pressures that other authorities have and has not had the need to borrow.

Review of Investment Assets

At its meeting on 25 November 2021 the Group were presented with a review of the Council's Investment Assets which provided an update on the performance of the commercial property estate, assessing the Council's commercial property portfolio and how individual properties are performing and what the expectations are for the next 5 to 10 years.

The Group were advised that the property sector is a fluid environment which carries some significant risk and were reassured that the Council's assets were under constant review and any issues or suggestions for disposal of an asset would be reported to Cabinet. The Group noted that occupancy rates were high and that the Council's assets had coped very well during the Covid pandemic.

Capital and Investment Strategy

At its meeting on 2 February 2021, the Group were presented with the Council's Capital and Investment Strategy report for 2021/22 to 2025/26, which focused on both traditional treasury activity and the Council's commercial property investments.

The Group were advised of the Capital Prudential Indicators that highlighted the Council's projected capital expenditure plans and funding, the Council's borrowing

need and the ongoing impact of the capital programme on the investment balance. The Group noted the Council's overall position with regard to borrowing, which showed an increase in the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) reflecting the Council's capital commitment in respect of the Crematorium and Bingham Leisure Hub.

The Group were informed of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy and were advised of the UK's economic recovery which is likely to be gradual in wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was also identified that the Council may need to borrow externally which will result in borrowing costs.

The Group noted that the Council aims to minimise its exposure to risk by spreading its commercial investments across sectors to avoid single large-scale investments. This includes the Council's commitment to economic regeneration (not purely financial return) has meant that many of its investments have been in industrial units, which have been very successful.

At its meeting on 30 June 2022, the Group were presented the Capital and Investment Strategy Outturn report which summarised the transactions undertaken during 2021/22, reporting against the Council's Capital and Investment Strategy 2021/22 – 2025/26.

The Group were advised that the ratio of financing costs to the net revenue streams are lower than originally estimated as a result of income investments exceeding expectations and larger investments balances due to additional S106 money and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which had reduced the Council's need to borrow.

The Group noted that the Council were holding unusually large cash balances when interest rates remain low and were advised that the Council needs to ensure adequate liquidity for the revenue and capital activities, security for investments and to manage risks within all Treasury Management activities.

The Group noted that there would be more regular reporting of treasury management activities and supported the requirement of the updated Treasury Management Code for local authorities to ensure both officers and Councillors dealing with treasury management are trained and kept up to date.

The Group approved the Capital and Investment Strategy and the position of the Outturn 2021/22.

Risk Management Progress Report

The Group were presented with the Risk Management Progress Report which provided an update on the Council's risk activity. This report summarised risks in the Council's Risk Register that have been changed, including the risks identified as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Members were advised that there are currently 44 corporate risks and 32 operational risks and that the number of risks within the Risk Register would fluctuate throughout the year as active risk management is undertaken.

The Group were asked to note ten changes to risk, three increases to risk ratings and seven reductions to risk ratings which were summarised in the Risk Management Progress Report. One risk had been removed in respect of the Borough's Leisure facilities and their ability to recover following the initial lockdown in March to June 2020 and that this risk had been replaced by two new risks as follows:

- CRR_NS17a Impact on the Borough's leisure facilities if closed due to Covid-19
- CRR_NS17b Impact on the Borough's leisure facilities failure to recover after Covid-19

Additional information at the Group's request had been provided to help improve reporting including additional information in respect of red risks and mitigation of risks so that members can see clearly how Officers manage risks internally.

External Audit Annual Plan 2021/22

At the meeting on 30 June 2022, Mr David Hoose from Mazars, the Council's external auditors, presented the External Audit Annual Plan for 2021/22. The report highlighted three significant risks concerning management override controls, net defined benefit liability valuation, valuation of property, plant, and equipment.

An Audit Strategy Memorandum was provided that explained the audit scope, approach and timeline and explained that the regulatory expectations were challenging as additional information is required. Mr Hoose did not anticipate any issues with the 3 year reporting and confirmed there were no significant risks and was confident the plan would be delivered on time.

Members of the Group accepted the External Audit Annual Plan for 2021/22.

Annual Fraud Report

At its meeting on 24 June 2022, Mr Dulay from BDO, the Council's internal auditors, presented the Annual Fraud Report, which summarised the incidence of fraud and fraud prevention activities undertaken by the Council during 2021/22.

Mr Dulay highlighted a data matching exercise in respect of single person discount and the results revealed that the number of cases investigated, and additional council tax billed had reduced significantly compared to previous years. The Group noted this was due to other work pressures and resource constraints during the Covid pandemic and it was recorded as not reporting but not fraudulent. The Council had started a review in respect of single person discount in December 2021.

Mr Duly also highlighted the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and the lack of specific staff awareness campaigns and had made a management recommendation in relation to staff awareness and training.

Mr Duly confirmed that the Council operates a zero tolerance and looks at fraud on a case by case which demonstrates good practice.

Members noted the Annual Fraud Report 2021/22 and approved the requirement for further fraud awareness training.

Constitution Review

At its meeting on 24 June 2022, the Governance Scrutiny Group considered proposed revisions to the Constitution and recommended them for adoption to Council.

Member Panels

The Group did not establish any member Panels this year.

Call-ins

The Group did not discuss any call-ins this year.

Looking forward to the year ahead

The Governance Scrutiny Group will continue to help review and shape policy; ensuring improvements are implemented by developing a challenging work programme.

Communities Scrutiny Group

Chairman's Foreword

This annual report summarises the main work undertaken by the Communities Scrutiny Group 2021/22. Following a review of the Council's scrutiny functions in 2018, it was recommended that a scrutiny group be created to oversee the Council's community partnerships, areas of community concern and the Council's responsibility to be environmentally sustainable.

The Communities Scrutiny Group have scrutinised topics such as the Council's Safeguarding Adults and Children Strategy and Police Performance and Resources in Rushcliffe.

The outbreak of Covid-19 undoubtedly presented challenges to the communities of Rushcliffe, however, the Group continued to monitor on-going projects and government policies over the next twelve months including the Council's Housing Delivery Plan.

I would like to thank all members of the Group for their very active involvement, support, and topic suggestions and particularly my Vice Chairman, Councillor Bal Bansal.

Councillor Jonathan Wheeler
Chairman Communities Scrutiny Group



Councillor Jonathan Wheeler
Chairman



Councillor Bal Bansal
Vice Chairman

What we are responsible for?

The Communities Scrutiny Group responsibilities include:

- Reviewing the Council's partnerships to ensure that community needs are being met and the partnership is providing good value for money.
- Identifying areas of community concern, exploring how this can be met and making recommendations to that effect.
- Considering concerns specific to the local area in terms of health and wellbeing and making recommendations to improve the health and wellbeing of local residents.
- Considering projects and initiatives to further the Council's efforts to protect the environment of the Borough and promote environmental sustainability to our residents.

Our work this year

During this year, the Group considered many service areas and issues within its scrutiny role, particularly:

- WISE: Environmental Crime Enforcement
- Safeguarding Adults and Children Strategy
- Police Performance and Resources in Rushcliffe
- YouNG and Positive Futures
- Housing Delivery Plan
- Feedback on Residents' Survey 2021
- Carbon Management Plan

WISE: Environmental Crime Enforcement

The Group received a presentation reviewing the Council's partnership with WISE, and how WISE operated.

Members of the Group noted the positive outcomes and behaviour change that had resulted from this trial and looked forward to the trial being extended for a further twelve months.

Members of the Group noted that the pilot was focussed on complaints relating to fly tipping, dog fouling and littering. The Group was informed that once a complaint was received, WISE officers had 24 hours to investigate and whilst in an area officers would also undertake proactive patrolling. During the six month trial WISE had initially been given a 'hot spot' list from Environmental Health and that had been expanded.

The Group was informed that for enforcement action against littering to take place, a person had to be seen by an officer in the act of littering, and in such cases the standard operating procedures would be followed for issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN).

The Group noted that WISE would investigate all instances of fly tipping, and if evidence could be found, an FPN would be issued; however, there was an exemption in the legislation for a landowner to be able to deposit waste on their property or give permission to someone else to do so. With respect to cleansing, the Group was advised that if it was public land, WISE would investigate and contact Streetwise to remove it; however, if it was private land, it would be referred to Environmental Health for further investigation. Cases of waste storage on private land would also be referred to the County Council for investigation, as potentially those sites may require planning permission.

The Group was advised that in the first instance the Police were responsible for dealing with ASB. WISE could also work outside normal hours to deal with ASB and littering.

Safeguarding Adults and Children Strategy

The Group received a report from the Director, Neighbourhoods updating on the Council's approach to safeguarding and were advised that the Council worked closely with key partners as a team, to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults in the Borough. The Group was reminded of the key role that Councillors played whilst undertaking their duties.

The Group received a presentation relating to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. The Group asked about the possibility of having all Councillors signed up to the Nottinghamshire safeguarding website.

The Group was informed that Lex Leisure were fully involved in safeguarding and that the Council's Sports Development Officer worked with voluntary and community based clubs, ensuring that they had appropriate safeguarding policies in place and knew how to share information if they had any concerns. The Group noted that there was an expectation that each club would have a Safeguarding Officer and that they would know how to make any referrals. If any concerns were raised, they would be fed through the channels in a similar way, and officers were trained on how to make any safeguarding referrals to the MASH.

The Group noted that during the past year, there had been an increase in enquiries from families and neighbours, as more time was spent at home, and there had been a rise in concerns raised about domestic abuse and mental health.

The Group noted that during the pandemic an increased risk of domestic abuse had been identified, and Rushcliffe had worked closely with the County Council via the Local Resilience Forum. Two additional temporary domestic refuges had been set up in the County, which had proved to be very effective in providing a safe haven to those who needed it.

The Group noted the great example of partnership working with the County Council, who had responded positively to support the existing housing provision that Rushcliffe had, given that occupancy rates had been reduced because of social distancing.

The Group noted initiatives were taking place as a result of the new Domestic Abuse Act, with local authorities having a duty to provide local women's refuges. The Group

noted that the County Council and district and borough councils had received some funding from Central Government and a Domestic Abuse Partnership Board was being established. Refuges were commissioned by the County Council through the Public Health Service and through the new Partnership Board.

Police Performance and Resources in Rushcliffe

The Group received a presentation from the Neighbourhood Policing Inspector for Rushcliffe regarding South Nottinghamshire Community Safety Partnership (SNCSP). The Group noted that the Partnership covered the administrative areas of Rushcliffe, Broxtowe, and Gedling.

The Group was informed that the Safer Nottinghamshire Board aimed to bring together key agencies involved in community safety and had a strategy and action plan to help tackle crime against the vulnerable, as cybercrime had increased by over 340% in the last 12 months. The Group was also informed that a local action plan for community safety work in the borough was funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner, split between Gedling, Broxtowe, and Rushcliffe and that much of the proactive work of this plan was delivered in partnership with Rushcliffe's Community Safety officer.

The Group noted that the Police and Crime Commissioner funded JUNO Women's Aid across the county and also Equation which was an organisation providing support for men experiencing domestic abuse.

The Group noted that if crime was reported, it was more likely to be added to the neighbourhood policing teams' list of priorities.

The Group welcomed discussions with the local education authority about methods to educate boys about violence against women.

YouNG and Positive Futures

The Group received a presentation which detailed the Borough's activities for children and young people. The Group noted that the Council's largest project supporting children and young people was the Trent Bridge Community Trust (TBCT) who facilitated delivery of the Positive Futures and YouNG programmes in Rushcliffe.

The Group noted that a young person could be referred by teachers, the police, parents and even by the young person themselves. The majority of young people that the TBCT were working with on a one-to-one basis were suffering from mental health related illnesses and TBCT supported them in undertaking activities such as walking, going to the gym, and making jewellery. The TBCT also facilitated a transition programme for year 6 pupils in the lead up to starting secondary school.

The Group were pleased to learn that YouNG markets were due to take place across the Borough at the Christmas light switch on events in West Bridgford and Cotgrave.

The Group suggested that the TBCT could benefit from funding from the Council's Community Support Scheme and Nottinghamshire County Council's divisional fund which could help fund additional markets in Rushcliffe.

The Group endorsed the work of the TBCT and in particular praised the activities which had taken place in Cotgrave in the summer, which were attended by over 400 young people.

Housing Delivery Plan

The Group received a presentation from the Strategic Housing Manager and noted that the Housing Delivery Plan would be an overarching document which set out priorities for housing and the actions being taken to secure improvements. The proposed plan aimed to link the housing service more closely with corporate priorities, for example the Carbon Management Plan and the South Nottinghamshire Homelessness Strategy.

The Group was informed that it was more challenging to deliver bungalows due to the increased land take and associated costs which may impact on site viability, however, the provision of bungalows was important to support downsizing for older tenants who may be under-occupying family housing. Through successful affordable housing negotiations, a mix of affordable accommodation types, including bungalows were planned on the Council's strategic sites.

The Group noted that there was a higher need for social rented accommodation rather than affordable housing for sale, such as shared ownership, and therefore any opportunities to bring forward additional affordable housing would seek to prioritise social rented housing.

The Group noted in relation to empty homes that whilst enforcement action and Empty Development Management Orders were options that the Council could consider, in the first instance Officers would support owners to bring the properties back into use as a preferred approach.

The Group raised their concerns about homelessness within the Borough and were informed that the annual Rough Sleepers Count in 2021 had identified four rough sleepers in Rushcliffe who were 'bedded down' and met the evidence-based criteria. The Group were informed that the Council had a number of landlord incentives to house homeless people in private rented accommodation, including rent deposit guarantees, rent in advance, and Golden Hello' payments, which resulted in a six-month assured shorthold tenancy.

The Group also noted that two successful bids to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities as part of the Next Steps Accommodation Programme and the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme had provided thirteen units of supported accommodation for rough sleepers across south Nottinghamshire. In addition, a fourth successful countywide bid for Rough Sleeper Initiatives funding had provided homeless people with access to floating support services, health and wound care, a Community Psychiatric Nurse, substance and misuse services and landlord liaison officers to facilitate access to private rented accommodation.

The Group were pleased to note that veterans were not disadvantaged in accessing the housing register due to local connection criteria and if they qualified for housing, they were given additional preference.

Feedback on Residents' Survey 2021

The Group received the report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services which outlined the results of the residents' survey that took place in summer 2021. The survey was conducted every three years and asked for feedback from residents on key Council services and suggestions for making the Borough an even better place to live and work.

The Group was informed that there was a small downward trend in the levels of satisfaction indicated by residents in a number of areas, which had been anticipated given the impact of the COVID-19 over the last 18-months on Rushcliffe communities. The Group noted that the Local Government Association had reported that councils who carried out surveys this year were seeing a drop of 4-6% on previous results.

The Group was pleased to note that the percentage of people having overall satisfaction in the local area as a place to live remained very high at 84% and had slightly increased since the previous survey.

The Group noted that the largest proportion of less positive comments related to services run by the County Council and that a large number related to potholes, road, and pavement maintenance. In addition, 68 comments were made in regards to services provided by the Police including anti-social behaviour. The Group concluded that the fact that so many residents left feedback that related to other organisations suggested that there was still a lack of understanding about which organisation did what, and so feedback that related to levels of satisfaction may also be influenced positively or negatively by residents' perceptions of services that the Borough Council did not provide.

The Group noted the suggestion that a focus group be formed so that the Council could target its response to the survey feedback in areas where it believed it could make a measurable difference. The Group noted that residents involved in the focus group would more than likely be those who already engaged with the Council and suggested that the Council reach out to community groups to improve engagement.

The Group proposed that the next residents survey in 2024 should ask for residents to submit their postcode so that issues raised could be narrowed down by area. The Group also recommended that the survey take place at a different time of year rather than the summer to see if different concerns were raised. The Group suggested that the survey should be promoted on social media including local Facebook groups and at parish council meetings.

Carbon Management Plan

The Group received a presentation from the Service Manager – Neighbourhoods updating on progress of delivery of the Carbon Management Plan for the year 2021/22 and proposed actions for 2022/23, in order to become carbon neutral by 2030.

The Group recognised that the target to be carbon neutral by 2030 was ambitious as only 7% of emissions were generated by the public sector; and that 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.

The Group was informed that 'Carbon Clever' branding was included on all Council communications as a means of promoting the work being carried out.

The Group welcomed updates on the Council's emissions, noting that 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.

The Group noted that the Council had undertaken a waste vehicle biofuel trial which had been successful and resulted in a carbon saving reduction of over 12000 tonnes of CO₂. The Council was exploring the roll-out of the product across the waste collection fleet. The Group also noted the planned purchase of electric vehicles at Rushcliffe Country Park with the aim of the Country Park becoming net zero in its operation.

The Group was informed that 1,361 trees had been supplied to Rushcliffe groups and residents, which would remove two tonnes of CO₂ per year from the atmosphere. Small areas around the Borough would also be left to grow as part of the 'No Mow' scheme to support pollinators.

The Group learned that there were seven electric vehicle charging sites across the Borough and 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 Group noted that The Big Business Carbon Club worked with local businesses to share best practice and ideas and also that the Council had been instrumental in setting up a Green Rewards platform for residents to record their green activity in exchange for points, with the points being attached to incentives such as discounts in local shops and restaurants.

The Group noted that 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. 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 relation to Carbon Literacy training, the Group suggested that this be focused on developers so as to have a greater impact and noted the suggestion to include such training within the Council's staff induction processes. Additionally, the Group were informed that rolling-out the training to town and parish councils would be explored to encourage them to set their own targets.

Regarding energy audits of Council-owned property, the Group was informed that the Leisure Strategy would be reviewed next year, with a mid-point review of the Leisure

Strategy 2017-27 undertaken later this year, with findings to be reported back to the Group.

In relation to planting of trees and wildflowers to aid carbon management by offsetting emissions, the Group was informed that this 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.

The Group 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. The Group was informed that although innovation was welcomed the Council needed to balance costs and the return on investment with the need to meet carbon reduction targets.

The Group recognised the volume of activity being undertaken to achieve the carbon reduction targets 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.

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 carried out communication campaigns to inform residents of items that should be recycled. Officers agreed to explore the distribution of leaflets through Estate Agencies.

The Group was informed that Rushcliffe continued to have the highest recycling rate in Nottinghamshire.

Member Panels

The Group did not establish any Member Panels this year.

Call-ins

The Group did not discuss any call-ins this year.

Looking forward to the year ahead

The Communities Scrutiny Group is looking forward to developing a comprehensive work programme for the year ahead.

Growth and Development Scrutiny Group

Chairman's Foreword

This annual report summarises the main work undertaken by this scrutiny group during 2021/22. I am very pleased to note that despite another challenging year, the business of scrutiny has proceeded as planned and all topics programmed for 2021/22 were considered.

Local communities, businesses, and employers have all been affected in some way by the ongoing effects of the Covid 19 pandemic. However, I am pleased to report that due to the resilience of local communities and the dedication of officers and Councillors, in supporting residents and the local economy we are beginning to see some emerging successes.

The Group has explored the Council's Growth and Development in line with the Council's priorities within the Corporate Strategy, which are:

- Quality of Life – Our resident' quality of life is our priority
- Efficient Services – As an organisation it is always our intention to deliver the best services to our residents in the most efficient way possible
- Sustainable Growth – Rushcliffe is determined to play its part in shaping the future of the Borough, ensuring the needs and aspirations of Rushcliffe residents are met in all future developments
- The Environment – We are fully committed to playing our part in protecting the environment today and enhancing it for future generations

I am confident that our work over the last year has improved residents' quality of life. There have been many areas of strength, balanced against areas where improvement and development are needed.

Going forward we look forward to building on the work of the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group and I wish to thank my colleagues, especially my Vice Chairman, Councillor Richard Butler, for their engagement and support.

Councillor Neil Clarke
Chairman Growth and Development Scrutiny Group



Cllr Neil Clarke
Chairman



Cllr Richard Butler
Vice Chairman

What are we responsible for?

The Growth and Development Scrutiny Group's remit is to consider relevant topics, in line with the Council's priorities, taking into account the Corporate Strategy and those of officers and councillors for inclusion in a work programme agreed by the Corporate Overview Group.

Both Councillors and officers are required to complete a scrutiny matrix to outline a topic they would like to be considered for scrutiny. The matrix summarises the issue of concern as well as the key lines of enquiry for review.

Our work this year

During the year, the Group considered many service areas and issues within its scrutiny role, particularly:

- River Trent Footbridge Crossing
- Cycling Networks in the Borough
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Update
- Covid-19 Business Recovery Update
- Tree Conservation
- Planning Communications

River Trent Footbridge Crossing

At its meeting on 14 July 2021, a presentation was delivered by Nottingham City Council advising the Group of the Transforming Cities Funding Programme totalling £161m shared with Derby City Council, of which £40m is to be spent on enhancing the walking and cycling network in Nottingham, including £9m allocated for a new foot/cycling bridge across the River Trent. The Group were advised of Collaborative work being undertaken across the D2N2 area to create a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), which would focus on areas the bridge will enhance, including connections to Derby, Nottingham, and local urban connections.

Information was provided on the existing bridges across the River Trent currently used by pedestrians and cyclists at Clifton, Wilford, Trent Bridge and Lady Bay and the proposed new bridge location at Waterside Nottingham. Waterside Nottingham being a regeneration site located in the Trent Basin, connecting to Trent Fields, West Bridgford on the Rushcliffe side and providing commuting and leisure routes through the Waterside site and onto the City Centre and Gedling to the east.

The Group noted that the City Council would continue to engage with stakeholders ahead of formal consultation and public engagement and that the project would require joint working across the City Council, County Council, and the Borough. An estimated timeline and project work programme was provided, including a public exhibition and consultation expected to begin in September/October 2021, followed by a planning application in December 2021/January 2022, with construction expecting to start in autumn 2022 and completion by spring 2023.

The Group were in support of a new pedestrian and cycle bridge over the River Trent and provided comments on the proposal to be included in the response to the consultation exercise.

Cycling Networks

A presentation from Nottinghamshire County Council was delivered to the Group on Cycling in Nottinghamshire, which provided an overview of the County Council's strategic background, funding for cycling, how potential infrastructure improvements are assessed and prioritised and coordinated behaviour change programmes.

The Group were advised that the County Council were reviewing its Strategy Plan for the period 2021-2025, including its Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 and Fourth Implementation Plan 2022/23 which includes the Cycling Strategy Delivery Plan 2016 covering cycling strategic priorities, a Cycling Action Plan and cycling infrastructure priorities.

The Group noted the Boroughs role as a stakeholder consultee to review and coordinate the role of cycling networks within the County Councils Strategy that were within the Boroughs responsibilities, including the role of Rushcliffe when considering cycling infrastructure in town centre improvements and when securing/releasing funding from developer contributions.

The Group were advised of the DfT requirements in respect of infrastructure assessments, which highlighted the D2N2 local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), an evidence based assessment which demonstrates the need for improvements, whilst sharing the D2N2 strategic objectives for supporting economic growth, tourism, and the visitor economy, addressing transport congestion, climate change, air quality and health deprivation. The Group noted that there is to be a planned public consultation on a draft D2N2 wide infrastructure priority assessment providing the Borough with the potential to influence by acting as a priority consultee.

Further presentations were delivered from Pedals.org and Sustrans, a UK charity for promoting active travel, both highlighting the rapid growth in cycling and bike sales since the Covid pandemic, and why now more than ever it is increasingly more important to improve the cycling network across the Borough and Countywide including the health benefits for greener communities where local authorities actively encourage cycling and walking as a means of moving around.

The Group highlighted that Rushcliffe was a rural Borough and that cycling, for many, as a commute was unrealistic, however the Group were keen to see improvements to cycle connectivity for trains and bus services and noted the increase in the uptake of cycling for leisure purposes and the impact of this on rural roads, where improvements could be made.

At its meeting in January 2022 the Group were presented with an update of emerging issues relating to cycling and were asked to consider the inclusion of walking in making recommendations for future action.

The Group noted that the Borough Council would work in partnership with the County Council as the transport authority to support with any bids for government funding.

Members were encouraged to see the Borough taking an active role in enhancing residents transport choices and the options for a healthier and more sustainable approach to transport connectivity and accessibility.

The Group supported the inclusion of both walking and cycling in any future action.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – Update

A presentation was delivered to the Group which updated members on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which was adopted by Council on 7 October 2019. Members were reminded that the levy is a charge applied to certain types of development to help fund infrastructure across the Borough.

Members noted that the levy is intended to address the cumulative effect of development across the Borough and is a fixed rate charge based on floor space and is charged on retail and residential developments at rates set out in the published Charging Schedule. The adoption of CIL was supported by infrastructure evidence, financial viability evidence alongside the Local Plan Part 2.

The Group were advised of the Neighbourhood proportions of CIL funds under the CIL regulation 59A, whereby the Borough Council has to pass a proportion of levy receipts to the Town and Parish Council's at 15% capped, or 25% where covered by a Neighbourhood Plan. The Group were also advised that subject to cabinet approval an additional proportion of the CIL would be made available to areas with no Neighbourhood Plan, to provide a consistent level of funding across the Borough.

Members noted that the Neighbourhood proportion is not limited to items within the infrastructure list and can be spent on a wider range of projects, provided they address the demands that a new development places in that area. It was also noted that West Bridgford is covered by a different element of CIL which would be controlled by the Borough Council with consideration by members through the /special Expenses Group.

The Group were informed of the charging structure for collecting CIL funds and were advised that a viability exercise was completed which looked at the local plan infrastructure delivery plan and standard assumptions using local information, such as affordable housing, legal fees, house sales and land values, these were then examined by an independent examiner before being adopted by Council in 2019.

The Group noted that CIL funding would be difficult to predict and cannot be guaranteed until developments have commenced and that CIL would be used as a top up where there are funding gaps.

The Group endorsed the referral of the CIL allocation and spend process to Cabinet which included the additional amount of Strategic CIL available to areas without a Neighbourhood Plan. In addition, the Group recommended, that due to the complexity of the Framework document and in particular regarding Parish Council's and Parish Meetings the Group suggested a guidance document be produced to assist Parish Council's and Parish Meetings to understand the CIL procedure.

Covid-19 Business Recovery

The Group were presented with an update on the Covid 19 Business Recovery, which provided data across the D2N2 authorities, including furlough and self-employment claims, unemployment claims, job vacancies and business closures, as reported in June 2021.

The Group were provided with information relating to the health of the Boroughs high streets, including Bingham, Cotgrave, East Leake, Keyworth, Radcliffe on Trent, Ruddington and West Bridgford. Measurements were reported that included vacant premises, businesses being developed or being for sale and footfall during January, April, and August 2021.

Members noted that footfall had increased since the lockdown restrictions were lifted in early 2021, and then again between April and August 2021.

The Group were informed of the progress and ongoing work being carried out by the Economic Growth team and the collaborative work with Rushcliffe Business Partnership, including virtual networking sessions. In addition, the Group were reminded that a dedicated Covid-19 business support webpage had been created which had attracted around 40,000 views, providing assistance with business rate grants totalling over £35.3m.

The Group were advised of a number of initiatives officers had delivered using Reopening High Streets Safely Funding (RHSSF), these included the Government led initiative 'Eat Out to Help Out' and communication campaigns targeting local businesses such as 'We Are Open' and 'Shop Local Shop Safe'. In addition, two consultants funded by the RHSSF were employed to provide expert advice and business support. The Council also appointed High Street Ambassadors to support the reopening of the Borough's high streets providing a visible presence to reassure the public and during November and December 2020 the Council developed a Rushcliffe gift voucher for residents to spend in participating businesses across the Borough, temporary free parking and free parking after 3pm in Council owned car parks and a digital grant for up to £1000 to provide high street businesses with financial support to develop their online presence.

The Group were also informed that an enhanced events programme in West Bridgford had been very successful, with the return of Taste of Rushcliffe, Proms in the Park, outdoor theatre and cinema and family fun days.

Members noted that footfall was measured using guidance supplied by the Welcome Back Funding (WBF) formally called Reopening High Streets Safely Funding (RHSSF). It was also noted that leisure centre activity had seen some increase and that the Council's leisure centre provider had reported that around 70% of users had returned to the centre.

The Group welcomed the work carried out by officers to support businesses in responding to the impacts of Covid-19 and endorsed the proposed future activities and

suggested that officer explore alternative opportunities to support businesses in Rushcliffe.

Tree Conservation

At its meeting in January 2022 the Group were presented a report highlighting the Council's management of trees, tree protection in the Borough through conservation and tree protection orders (TPO's) and controls on development sites.

The Group were advised that the Government guidelines state that TPO's should be used to protect selected trees and woodlands if their removal would have significant negative impact on the local environment and its enjoyment by the public.

The Group commended the Council for its extensive tree planting of over 2500 trees having been planted across the Borough. The Group also noted the noticeable loss of trees due to disease, particularly amongst Ash trees and asked the Council to consider widening its diversity of trees to prevent the spread of disease thus allowing biodiversity to adapt to climate and environmental changes.

The Group supported the drafting of a tree protection policy and tree management policy which would set out the Council's role, function, and priorities, including appraisal of planning applications and the investigation to strengthening protection and enforcement.

The Group also supported the investigation into a feasibility of an online mapping system which could be used to show protected trees within the Borough.

The Group requested that a letter be sent from the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Communities and Climate Change to the Secretary of State for levelling up, Housing and Communities for improved legislation to take into account climate change, biodiversity and to include the protection of hedgerows.

Planning Communications

A presentation was delivered to the Group to address the concerns in respect of the planning service standards and in particular the response to the increased workload being experienced recently and the various concerns regarding procedural issues in terms of communication and consultation on planning applications.

The Group were informed that the Service Standards had been developed to bring about improvements in service delivery and to provide a more structured approach for communications with applicants, agents, and councillors. It was noted that these Service Standards aim to bring greater transparency to the process and to ensure that applications were processed efficiently and within Government expected timescales.

The Group were advised that the Council had strengthened its approach to the issue of enforcement notices and that planning officers work alongside other neighbourhood services to address issues with developments that cause a nuisance and were assured that officers would take action where appropriate to do so.

The Group were advised that since the new Service Standards were introduced in November 2021 a number of agency staff had been employed at short notice in periods of high demand to provide sufficient resources to handle the volume of planning applications and to clear any back log. It was noted that positive feedback had been received on working conditions offered and the range and variety of planning applications handled. It was noted that the process would be reviewed and streamlined once the team was fully staffed.

The Group had questioned whether the resource and recruitment issues had affected the issue of enforcement notices and were pleased to note that rapid engagement with the developer concerned avoided the need to issue an enforcement notice and that enforcement cases were inspected within one day of notification and were prioritised, with cases in conservation areas receiving a higher priority.

The Group discussed the ongoing role of the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group in overseeing their arrangements for planning communications. The Chairman asked that Members of the Group feed their comments through him and the Vice Chairman so that they could be raised with senior officers.

The Group supported the updated Service Standards and the continuation of the current practices for the publicity of and consultations on planning applications, and in considering the issue of ongoing monitoring, the Group agreed that the Service Standards be reviewed in line with feedback received and in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair as well as other Members.

Member Panels

The Group did not establish any Member Panels this year.

Call-ins

The Group did not discuss any call-ins this year.

Looking forward to the year ahead

Following the review of the Council's scrutiny functions in 2021/22 all members of Growth and Development Scrutiny are looking forward to a comprehensive programme of scrutiny topics that will deliver economic growth and ensure sustainable, prosperous, and thriving communities.

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