

Public Document Pack

When telephoning, please ask for: Emma Richardson
Direct dial 0115 914 8511
Email democraticservices@rushcliffe.gov.uk



Our reference:
Your reference:
Date: 28 September 2022

To all Members of the Communities Scrutiny Group

Dear Councillor

A Meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Group will be held on Thursday, 6 October 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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gemma Dennis'.

Gemma Dennis
Monitoring Officer

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2022 (Pages 1 - 8)
4. Council's External Communications Strategy (Pages 9 - 30)
Report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services
5. Customer Access Strategy (Pages 31 - 50)
Report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services
6. Work Programme (Pages 51 - 52)
Report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services

Rushcliffe Borough
Council Customer
Service Centre

Fountain Court
Gordon Road
West Bridgford
Nottingham
NG2 5LN

Email:
customerservices
@rushcliffe.gov.uk

Telephone:
0115 981 9911

www.rushcliffe.gov.uk

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

Postal address
Rushcliffe Borough
Council
Rushcliffe Arena
Rugby Road
West Bridgford
Nottingham
NG2 7YG



Membership

Chairman: Councillor G Williams

Vice-Chairman: Councillor J Murray

Councillors: G Dickman, L Healy, Mrs C Jeffreys, R Jones, R Mallender, F Purdue-Horan and R Walker

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 COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY GROUP THURSDAY, 21 JULY 2022

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

PRESENT:

Councillors G Williams (Chairman), J Murray (Vice-Chairman), G Dickman,
L Healy, Mrs C Jeffreys, R Jones, R Mallender, F Purdue-Horan and R Walker

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

R Erwin Jones – Strategic Programmes Manager - Canal and River Trust
R Bennett – Heritage and Environment Manager - Canal and River Trust
L Beaumont – Partnerships Manager – Canal and River Trust
Councillor T Combellack
3 Members of the public

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

D Burch	Service Manager - Neighbourhoods
D Hayden	Communities Manager
E Elworthy	Sport Development Officer
T Coop	Democratic Services Officer

21 **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies.

22 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest reported.

23 **Minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2022**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2022 were approved as a true record and were signed by the Chairman.

The Service Manager – Neighbourhoods provided a verbal update on the actions from the previous meeting.

24 **Access Agreement - Canal and River Trust**

Councillor Combellack, (Ward Councillor for Neville and Langar) addressed the Group, expressing her support for the Council renewing its Access Agreement. Councillor Combellack explained her concerns regarding the loss of water along some stretches of the Grantham Canal and the urgent need for appropriate repairs, dredging and maintenance that is required to prevent further water loss. Councillor Combellack advised how waterways have evolved particularly during the recent Covid Pandemic as a provision for

relaxation and wellbeing and why waterways are important for blue prescribing as they provide a valuable aid for mental health and wellbeing, including the biodiversity of wildlife the canal attracts.

The Communities Manager explained how the Council has worked with the Canal and River Trust over the years, with particular focus on the Access Agreement between the Borough Council and the Canal and River Trust for the Grantham Canal, which was set up on 1 April 2003 for 21 years, thus expiring on 31 March 2024.

Mr R Erwin-Jones, Strategic Programmes Manager for the Canal and River Trust delivered a presentation that emphasised the extent of the waterways across the whole of the East Midlands and highlighted the Rushcliffe District – Trust Navigations including the River Trent, Upper Trent, River Soar and Grantham Canal.

Mr Erwin-Jones provided information on the national income that the Trust receives, which is in the region of £215.4m from various sources including; Defra, investment and property, Boat licence and mooring fees, utilities and water development and third party income from charitable investments and donations. In addition, Mr Erwin-Jones provided a detailed breakdown of the annual investment on the Grantham Canal totalling £195,448.60, of which the Borough Council provides £40,000 from the Access Agreement.

Mr R Bennett, Heritage and Environment Manager for the Canal and River Trust continued, providing information on the annual costs for vegetation management, including; towpath cutting, hedgerow maintenance, tree works and clearance, aquatic weed and invasive plant removal, which he advised was in excess of £34,100 annually through specialist contractors.

The Group were advised that towpaths are subject to a rolling programme of repairs including reactive works such as wind damage and fallen trees, removal of fly-tipped items and occasional fencing. Vegetation is generally cut between the months of April to August allowing for a front and rear fringe along the bound surface path to create a natural habitat along the towpath, and extra cuts made around benches, signs and bridge approaches and locks. Hedgerows are also maintained and trimmed annually to allow the safe access width along the towpath, including hedge-laying which provides long term biodiversity improvements and skills and volunteer/community engagement.

In respect of leaks and water management Mr Bennett explained that unfortunately leaks do occur and that water resources are limited, Kinoulton being particularly affected in recent years. In addition, Mr Bennett advised that some sections had long been dry and had created terrestrial habitats at Cropwell Bishop. Concluding that Leaks are repaired, but unfortunately new ones will appear.

Ms L Beaumont, Partnerships Manager for the Canal and River Trust presented information on the Rushcliffe voluntary groups involved highlighting the importance these groups and individuals provide in supporting the Canal and River Trust's programme of improvements. Ms Beaumont also advised that the aim of the trust is to encourage more people to use the waterways by

educating users of the benefits of waterways on health and wellbeing including safety awareness. The Group were provided information in respect of wellbeing activities and the funding streams accessed so far, including the Thriving Community Fund and GreenSpace, adding that the programme is looking to sustain delivery into 2023/24, with further improvements at Gamston, Cotgrave and Cropwell Bishop as well as Holme Pierrepont and Hazleford Lock.

Ms Beaumont advised the Group of the Trusts slogan 'Making life better by water' and highlighted some of the health and skills benefits the canal provides within the communities it serves, giving examples as follows:

- Improved mental and physical health
- Improved nature connectedness
- Reduced social isolation and loneliness
- Improved social cohesion and civic mindedness
- Acquisition of knowledge and skills
- Increased confidence
- Pathways into volunteering and employment

The Group noted the Canal and River Trust is in its infancy, celebrating just 10 years as a charity.

Members expressed the concerns of residents and the anger that's felt about the loss of water and that the Access Agreement should not be used entirely on maintaining the towpaths, but that the Trust needs to address the leaks and blocked culverts to maintain the flow of water. Members added that they are aware of the lack of funding and that there was a need for the Council to examine the Access Agreement and to consider a detailed programme of where the money should be spent.

In response, Mr Erwin-Jones stated that he recognised Member's frustrations, but advised that the canal's classification as a remainder waterway means that large scale funding is not an option, and the Trust is only able to make small patch repairs with the limited resources it receives. Mr Erwin-Jones added that the Trust is exploring options to generate income at the north end where the canal meets the River Trent. Ms Beaumont added that vegetation works are essential to make the towpaths safe for public access, adding that there had been a noticeable increase in footfall during the Covid pandemic which has continued.

Members advised that the Trust raised its profile within the local communities, and suggested they contact community groups to explore if there is any voluntary support or funding available or for the Trust to consider fundraising for specific projects to raise the profile of the charity.

Mr Erwin-Jones explained that the process for improvements is complicated and that the Trust were willing to work with the Council to find solutions to some of the Members concerns, adding that low levels of water are being reported across the whole canal network and with the rising temperatures experienced recently the situation can only get worse.

It was noted that in respect of volunteers and fundraising the Trust confirmed it would look to increase voluntary support and promote the charity.

Ms Beaumont added that the canal is a beautiful asset even without water and needs to be protected for future generations.

Members asked what was being asked of by the Council in providing the Access Agreement and whether officers could explore alternative arrangements between now and when the agreement expires in 2024. Members suggested a further report to update the Group on the arrangements for the new access agreement be added to the scrutiny Group Work Programme before the od agreement expires.

The Communities Manager explained that the current agreement covers the towpath maintenance and improvements and emphasised the importance of green and blue infrastructure on communities, highlighting the benefits of health and wellbeing activities the waterways provide.

In concluding the Trust board members expressed their appreciation for inviting them to the meeting to present what the charity had been working on under the current Access Agreement and thanked the Council for their continued support. The Trust also acknowledged the comments and suggestions made by the Group.

It was **RESOLVED** that the communities Scrutiny Group:

- a) Noted the presentation and the work undertaken by the partnership with the Canal and River Trust and the work undertaken by the current access agreement
- b) Made comment on future arrangements for when the current agreement expires in 2024
- c) Requested that a further report be brought to Communities Scrutiny Group before the current agreement expires in 2024

25 **Sports Development in Rushcliffe**

The Communities Manager delivered a presentation to inform members how the Council delivers its Sports Development function, including funding, club support and promotion of major events and competitions such as Cricket World Cup and the Tour of Britain.

The Communities Manager explained that the Council tracks sport and physical activity using Sport England's annual Active Lives Survey, which consists of an adult survey (16+) and a separate survey targeting children and young people (u16's). The Communities Manager advised that the surveys provide data at a local, county and national level, on types of activity and activity levels.

It was noted that Rushcliffe has higher than average activity levels compared to Nottinghamshire and England and these are monitored through the Active

Rushcliffe Health Partnership, made up of representatives from sport and health partners within Rushcliffe. The key priorities being 'increase participation in sport and physical activity with a focus on the inactive'.

The Communities Manager advised the Group that from data, experience and new ways of working there are many barriers to residents taking part in sport and physical activities which can be defined as follows:

Personal – insufficient time, motivation, lack of social support, fear of injury or feeling self-conscious

Environmental – access to safe and convenient sports facilities, green/blue spaces, walking and cycling networks

Socio-economic – access to disposable income, with many residents having to prioritise paying bills and feeding families, particularly in the current cost of living climate.

In overcoming some of these barriers the Communities Manager advised the Group that since its implementation in 2020, the Reach Rushcliffe Fund has supported 7 physical activity projects, the Holiday Activities and Food Fund (HAF) has supported 591 children and young people by providing access to school holiday programmes that provide physical activity, nutritional activities and a meal.

The Communities Manager advised the Group that in line with sports England and Active Notts strategies the Council uses data to help understand and target where support is needed most and tackling underrepresented groups, in particular women and girls, residents with disabilities and residents on low incomes. The Group were advised that the Council works with partners to facilitate programmes and activity targeted at these groups.

The Communities Manager explained that the Council facilitates community sport and physical activity through working with a range of partners and that Rushcliffe is fortunate to have three professional sports clubs to work with to deliver the Council's priorities, including Trent Bridge Trust, Nottingham Rugby and Positive Futures . In addition, the Council introduced Rushcliffe parkrun at Rushcliffe Country Park and due to its success and demand a second parkrun is due to start at Cotgrave Country Park later this year. Local sports clubs and athletes are supported through various sports grants, for example Coach Scholarship Scheme, the Elite Sports Grant and Rushcliffe FANS (Free Access for National Sportspeople).

In concluding, the Group were informed that the Council community sport and physical activity work programme is underpinned by both the Rushcliffe Leisure Strategy and the Rushcliffe Playing Pitch Strategy. The Sports Development Officer is responsible for reviewing the Playing Pitch Strategy action plan every 2-3 years due to the changing nature of supply and demand for pitches, which ensures that priority sites are supported for investment and improvements.

Members asked officers what was being done to overcome the barriers seen from other cultures and what was being done to keep costs down and target

activities and support to those families affected by social economic barriers. The Communities Manager explained that there is work going on in the background and funding streams to assist families, providing examples at Trent Bridge with specific programmes aimed at African-Caribbean and other ethnic minorities and the Active Food Fund. The Sports Development Officer added that last year, (summer 2021) 600 children who qualified for free school meals were provided access to activities during the summer, Christmas and Easter and that Nottinghamshire County Council have a programme of similar events for this summer.

Members asked specific questions in relation to the retention of sports coaches and whether there were funding streams to train new coaches. The Sports Development Officer explained that it had been difficult to get some experienced coaches back after the Covid pandemic and that a number of activities do rely on voluntary coaches, adding that Notts Active are delivering a programme of first aid and safeguarding courses to support the recruitment of volunteers. The Council offer a Coach Scholarship Scheme which provides funding to support new and existing coaches to complete coaching qualifications.

Members commented on the data provided on the types of activity and activity levels measured for 2020-2021 in respect of children and young people and what were the Council's expectations for improvement. The Sports Development Officer explained that these figures were based on the Active Lives survey allowing officers to target specific areas where inactivity was more noticeable. The Sports Development Officer added that a pilot scheme was introduced in Keyworth involving the children and Young People's Centre, Keyworth Primary School and Keyworth Football Club to support with the delivery of activities. An example of the Council's intervention during Covid was to provide activity packs to families living in social housing who may not have had access to a garden or open space during this time. In addition, the Communities Manager explained that this was not a quick fix and officers were exploring longer term interventions that could possibly be rolled out across the Borough.

Members asked if there were other opportunities to deliver activities in the Boroughs green outdoor spaces other than park run that could be supported by the Council's partners and clubs. The Sports Development Officer advised that there are other activities such as community gardens at Keyworth and Cotgrave and that officers across the County were developing a walking and cycling action plan which was reported to the Council's Growth and Developments Scrutiny Group in July 2021.

Members asked specific questions regarding inter-school competitive sport and how might the Council support such activities. The Group were advised that the Council has a good relationship with the School Sports Partnership who is responsible for school sport in the Borough. However, school sports at a competitive level is down to the individual schools to provide, and with Covid and cuts to school budgets the return of such activities has been slow.

Members congratulated officers on a detailed and positive report and expressed their thanks to the Sports Development Officer on the work she had

done and her commitment in supporting families across the Borough to improve their activity.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Communities Scrutiny Group received a presentation of the work undertaken by officers in delivering the Sport Development function and that they discussed future activity in promoting sport and wellbeing to our residents.

26 **Work Programme**

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

Councillor Jones requested that the establishment of a Youth Council scheduled for 19 January 2023, is not to put back to a future meeting.

Members requested that a further report in respect of the Access Agreement for the Canal and River Trust be brought back to a future meeting of Communities Scrutiny Group in the new year.

The Chairman informed the Group that the work programme detailed below was subject to approval by the Corporate Overview Group on 6 September 2022.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Work Programme below be approved:

6 October 2022

- Council's External Communications Strategy
- Customer Access Strategy
- Work Programme

19 January 2023

- Establishment of a Youth Council
- Corporate Enforcement Policy
- Work Programme

16 March 2023

- Carbon Management Plan
- Environment Policy
- Work Programme

The meeting closed at 9.48 pm.

CHAIRMAN

This page is intentionally left blank



Communities Scrutiny Group

Thursday, 6 October 2022

Council's External Communications Strategy

Report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services

Cabinet Portfolio Holder Finance and Customer Access, Councillor G Moore

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. A new External and Internal Communications Strategy was published in June 2022.
- 1.2. This Strategy builds on the External Communications Strategy 2017-2021 with a new internal element highlighting the increasing importance placed on communication to and from the Council's internal stakeholders including councillors and staff.
- 1.3. This Strategy is included at **Appendix One** for information and the Communities Scrutiny Group is asked to consider a number of points outlined in paragraph 4.11 of this report in relation to the action plan contained within the Strategy.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that the Communities Scrutiny Group review the action plan contained within the External and Internal Communications Strategy 2022-2025 and make any further suggestions to officers they feel appropriate.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. The External and Internal Communications Strategy has been created to continue to oversee the information residents need about Council services, what's going on in the Borough, who to contact and what the Council is doing. The development and production of quality communications over the next three years, highlighting the strategic development work of the Council as well as the delivery of direct, frontline services and updates, is an essential factor in continuing to make Rushcliffe a great place to live and work.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1. Between 2017 and 2021, the Council built upon its previous reputation of being a good communicator with the introduction of a weekly electronic subscription newsletter, more diverse and accessible web content and electronic transactional services, and more video footage to suit the

preferences of younger residents and in particular social media. These new additions complement our longstanding and well-regarded thrice-yearly Rushcliffe Reports, social media standing, website and positive relationships with local media outlets.

- 4.2. The COVID-19 pandemic saw the Council's communications team working at an extremely high-level over a prolonged period of time to ensure both external consumers of Council information, our residents, businesses and partners, and internal users such as councillors and staff, were kept up to date with ever changing information related to the pandemic. New skills were developed, effective short-cuts established and the Council is keen to capitalise on these developments over the next three years.
- 4.3. The Council is also committed to timely and engaging, clear and accurate, inclusive and informative communications to ensure as many residents as possible are informed about its services. This can strengthen relationships and engagement with residents and the communities they live in and support delivery of the Council's vision for the Borough, priorities and activities.
- 4.4. Equally, keeping internal stakeholders fully engaged with a comprehensive range of channels is increasingly more important in an era when the COVID-19 pandemic has further changed the manner of where and how people perform their roles and communicate.
- 4.5. Acknowledging the increasing need to keep councillors, staff and other internal parties up to date consistently and effectively is key to ensure an integrated and connected Council that can meet its internal objectives and further influence its external priorities and communications.
- 4.6. Ipsos MORI, and others, have carried out research which confirms that the more informed residents are, the more satisfied they are with their council. If residents aren't informed, there is more reluctance to engage positively with Council services, activities, plans and proposals.
- 4.7. There is also some information to suggest that residents are more likely to engage with a council where it is clear that residents' views are taken into account and where they feel they can influence decisions. This means that the production of quality communications highlighting the strategic development work of the Council as well as the delivery of direct, frontline services is an essential factor in continuing to make Rushcliffe a great place to live and work.
- 4.8. Therefore, the Council's External and Internal Communications Strategy 2022-2025 addresses priorities for the Council's engagement across its channels. It will aim to ensure all stakeholders continue to receive information and updates in an accessible way in conjunction with listening, reacting and continually assessing the channels to ensure they act as convenient ways to contact and engage with the authority.
- 4.9. For external audiences, over the life of this Strategy, the Council will:

- Create short instructional videos/guides for key council services such as recycling, benefits, council tax and environmental issues
- Continue social media 'advocacy' featuring front line colleagues and business owners in the Borough - 'A day in the life of' – waste, customer services, revenues and benefits and internal teams
- Increase promotion of residents' email subscription topics and include replacement of Rushcliffe Gardener magazine to regular garden updates
- Develop further social media campaigns, including sharing residents' photos of the Borough, developing Instagram/ Facebook story use during event and appropriate infographics for key council decisions such as council tax, budget setting and major projects
- Consider the skills held within the team and use training and specific project work to address any gaps. Specifically, it will include review of the Performance and Reputation team's capacity to address increasing accessibility and website demands
- Introduce an annual Local Government Association advised 'who reads what' survey to further inform content of communications to different stakeholders
- Further develop annual communications planner to assist resourcing and focus of activity
- Include behavioural change campaigns in line with possible Environmental Bill key themes in 2023 and beyond
- Assist with the development of a new council website and communicate the Council's priorities more prominently whilst signposting further digital access to Customer Service functions across all Council channels
- Make more direct links between corporate and communications priorities
- Identify closer links with schools, YouNG, Positive Futures and other groups to connect further with new generations of Council service users.

4.10. For internal audiences, over the life of this Strategy, the Council will:

- Build on the 2021 staff survey key findings to further guide content in internal updates
- Further staff newsletter and video features on staff from across the organisation such as 'A Day in the life' video 'behind the scenes' and 'Why RBC is for me' and their connection with the Executive Management Team
- Continue to identify ways of engaging staff and councillors to news and updates
- Balance corporate messages with interactive updates that are relatable to staff and councillors in line with priorities and key strategies
- Review the Council's internal Brightsign and screensaver channels to relay relevant messages and use engaging digital content
- Review internal poster sites to further influence Councillors and staff on key messages
- Assess video usage of staff newsletter and email such as with a round-up of compliments every quarter reflecting and recognising achievement and effort
- Further animation in newsletter updates for staff, councillors and town and parish updates to freshen accompanying static content

- Annual staff newsletter poll via updates and email to gauge how content can continue to engage and influence
- Work with the Employee Liaison Group and Workplace Health Champions on identifying staff to drive internal campaigns and goals
- Produce and evaluate content that focuses and engages on themes from the Council's Smarter Ways of Working policy
- Introduce reference to corporate values in line with HR updates in induction process
- Assess, identify and evaluate annual internal communication projects as another barometer to influence content.

4.11. The Communities Scrutiny Group is asked to consider the following points:

- Firstly, considering communication with the Council's external stakeholders:
 - Do the eleven tasks in the action plan build upon the existing and established core external communication channels the Council's residents expect?
 - Do the eleven tasks reflect the Council's corporate priorities and approach to communications?
 - Will the eleven tasks increase resident understanding of the Council's activities and services enhancing the Council's reputation within the community?
 - Can the Group identify any concerns related to external communications that will not be resolved by tasks outlined in the Action Plan?
- Secondly, considering communication with the Council's internal stakeholders:
 - Do the thirteen tasks in the action plan build upon the existing and established core internal communication channels the Council's councillors and staff expect?
 - Do the thirteen tasks reflect the Council's corporate priorities and approach to communications?
 - Will the thirteen tasks increase councillors' and staff understanding of the Council's activities and services enhancing the Council's reputation amongst internal stakeholders?
 - Can the Group identify any concerns related to internal communications that will not be resolved by tasks outlined in the Action Plan?

5. Risks and Uncertainties

5.1. There are no risks or uncertainties involved in bringing the External and Internal Communications Strategy Action Plan to Communities Scrutiny Group for discussion. However, there are significant risks to the Council in not developing services that meet resident needs and keep residents informed about Council services and development projects.

5.2. Equally, a risk exists if the Council does not review its communication strategies to ensure they are timely and engaging, clear and accurate,

inclusive and informative and utilising a variety of channels to ensure as many residents as possible are informed, designed to meet their needs and how they engage.

6. Implications

6.1. Financial Implications

The developments outlined in the External and Internal Communications Strategy will be contained within budgets.

6.2. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications contained within the recommendations of this report.

6.3. Equalities Implications

There are no equalities implications contained within the recommendations of this report.

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

There are no Section 17 implications contained within the recommendations of this report.

7. Link to Corporate Priorities

Quality of Life	There is evidence to suggest that feeling informed about Council services is a significant contributing factor in how satisfied residents feel with their quality of life and satisfaction with their community as a place to live.
Efficient Services	
Sustainable Growth	
The Environment	

8. Recommendations

It is RECOMMENDED that the Communities Scrutiny Group review the action plan contained within the External and Internal Communications Strategy 2022-2025 and make any further suggestions to officers they feel appropriate.

For more information contact:	Pete Linfield Director – Finance and Corporate Services 0115 914 8439 plinfield@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	
List of appendices:	Appendix One – External and Internal Communications Strategy



Rushcliffe
Borough Council

Rushcliffe Borough Council

External and internal communications strategy 2022- 2025



Information is one of the Council's most important 'frontline' services

Residents and all stakeholders need information about Council services, what's going on in the Borough, who to contact, what the Council is doing and more about services which contribute to their quality of life.

Residents pay Council Tax to Rushcliffe Borough Council; in return they expect a variety of services, delivered to a high quality, that meet their needs, in order to understand these needs the Council needs to engage with and listen to its residents.

The easier it is for them to access these services, or to find out information about what their Council Tax is being spent on, the more satisfied they are – and happy residents make for a happy Borough.

Ipsos MORI, and others, have carried out research which confirms that the more informed residents are, the more satisfied they are with their council.

And if residents aren't informed, there is a natural reluctance to engage positively with our services, our activities, our plans and our proposals, further deepening the rift between the Council and the community it serves.

There is also some information to suggest that residents are more likely to engage with a council where it is clear that residents' views are taken into account and where they feel they can influence decisions, in line with those made by councillors.

This means that the production of quality communications highlighting the strategic development work of the Council as well as the delivery of direct, frontline services is an essential factor in continuing to make Rushcliffe a great place to live and work.



To be effective, this information needs to be timely and engaging, clear and accurate, inclusive and informative as well as utilising a variety of channels and mediums to ensure as many residents as possible are informed.

Not only is this critical to strengthening our relationship our residents and the communities they live in but it is also crucial to ensuring we continue to deliver our vision for the Borough, our priorities and our activities which have all been designed to meet the needs and desires of our residents.

Equally, keeping internal stakeholders such as councillors and staff fully engaged with a comprehensive range of channels is ever more important in an era when the COVID-19 pandemic has further changed the manner of where and how people perform their roles in the organisation.

It means this strategy, underpinned by its respective action plans has now been extended from its 2018-2021 version to now include an internal communications strategy, acknowledging the increasing need to keep staff, councillors and other internal parties up to date consistently and effectively to maximise these audiences feeling ever more integrated and connected to the Council's internal objectives.

Information is one of the Council's most important 'frontline' services

Our latest research shows that 84% of Rushcliffe's residents feel satisfied with their local area as a place to live (2021). The 'Putting People First' survey carried out by the Local Government Association showed nationally the figure for district councils stands at 55%. In addition:

The research also showed:

- 64% of residents think the Council keeps them well informed
- 83% of Rushcliffe's residents are aware of our event's programme
- 59% of Rushcliffe's residents are satisfied with the ways they can contact the Council
- 55% of Rushcliffe's residents trust the Council

The figures are just one indicator of the value we place on communicating with our residents to ensure they continue to be satisfied and feel well informed, we must ensure we continue to think creatively and explore new, and ever more effective, methods of communication.

However, we appreciate that residents are not our only stakeholders and that others, such as partners, businesses, other councils and in some areas central government and its departments, also need to 'hear' what the Council is doing.

In order to meet these differing stakeholder needs and meet the personal preferences of our residents the Council will continue to communicate using as many different methods and channels as it can.

It is generally well received by residents and a key source of information about the Borough and services provided by the Council.

It also publishes leaflets and brochures about the specific services it offers, such as the Rushcliffe Gardener magazine to garden waste subscribers with target specific audiences within the Borough.

We also use social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram channels to publicise news and events in a topical and swift fashion – these sources of information are becoming more and more popular with our residents and new channels will be explored during the lifetime of this strategy.

All of our communications are written in clear English and designed with our residents in mind. The Council website www.rushcliffe.gov.uk is also a key source of information to our customers with over 50,000 visitors per month.

Our news stories are regularly featured in the local newspapers, on local radio and, less frequently, on TV – this is a vital part of getting our messages heard by residents who do not naturally engage with the Council directly.



Looking ahead

Our latest research shows that 87% of Council staff are proud to work for the organisation in a 2021 survey.

In addition:

- 96% of staff understand how their work contributes to the success of the organisation
- 93% understand the values of the organisation and how they are expected to do things
- 90% of staff think the organisation makes good use of their skills and abilities
- 85% of staff think Executive management are open and honest in their communications
- 84% of staff think the organisation manages change effectively

It saw a combined employee engagement score of 88.5%.

Over the life of this Strategy, we intend to increase the range of channels we use to communicate with residents to include Instagram and an electronic newsletter to reach even more residents.

We also intend to start using more engaging technologies such as videos and electronic polling on our social media channels, as well as continuing to develop strong, positive relationships with the local media outlets to ensure our communications reach a wide an audience as possible.

There are also a number of specific tasks to increase the transparency of our decision making processes and broaden the profile of our councillors within their local communities. We are also committed to engaging further with our residents through a large scale residents' survey and associated consultation activities to inform the future plans of the Council.

This strategy demonstrates our commitment to clear and consistent communications that meet the needs of all our stakeholders, assisted by an annual communications plan. It's vital that we talk to, listen to and respond to local people so that they feel informed and empowered, and are able to play an active part in local democracy.

Good external communications are vital if the Council is to enhance its already strong reputation. Effectively communicating with residents, engaging them in healthy debate, and meeting their needs as customers of the services we provide, are all important elements of delivering efficient external communications. To that end, we pledge to:

- keep our residents informed about the services they can access if needed and the development work the Council is doing to improve the Borough
- use the tools at our disposal to ensure residents' views are listened to and that Council priorities are clearly and regularly communicated to residents
- make our residents aware of the decisions being made by the Council and the ways in which those decisions can be influenced.
- engage further with Town and Parish Councils, health and other local partners effectively to signpost to their key services and updates digitally and in print to reach as many demographics as possible.

We pledge to:

- Maintain, refresh and introduce updates and channels that ensure key messages reach the audiences in the most timely and direct manner that inform or 'nudge' behaviour appropriately
- Ensure information links back to corporate priorities and where applicable assists the Council's policies
- Make the stakeholders aware of wider Council related news and information that assists them update their peer groups and communities accordingly.

Any external communication published in any format or on any channel will have due regard to the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity 2011 especially with regard to objectivity, even-handedness and political bias.

Monitoring the effectiveness of this Strategy

Delivery of the tasks contained in this Strategy are monitored through the Council's internal performance monitoring systems as well as through a six-weekly Executive Management Team briefing which focuses around the data contained on the Communications Dashboard. The following measures are monitored directly:

External

- percentage of residents who feel the Council keeps them informed (residents' survey)
- percentage of residents who feel satisfied with Rushcliffe as a place to live (residents' survey)
- percentage of residents speaking positively about the Council (residents' survey)
- percentage of residents feeling they can influence decisions that affect their local area (residents' survey)
- the number of media releases produced
- percentage of media releases which generate further coverage
- the number of unique users visiting the Council's website each month
- satisfaction with the Council's website
- the number of transactions being completed via the Council's website
- annual rating of the Council's website from the Society of Information Technology Management (Socitm)
- the Council's Gov Ranking (digital media presence)
- the number of people following the Council on its social media channels
- the engagement in Council news across all social media channels



Internal

- the volume of unique open clicks for internal update for staff and councillors
- the volume of engagement in staff campaigns and updates
- the volume of stakeholders who engage
- Anecdotal feed back from stakeholders month to month to tweak and shape updates

Alongside the development tasks listed in this Strategy, the team will deliver an Annual Communications Plan each year. Large scale campaigns will have individual communications plans containing specific behavioural change measures alongside measure of coverage and effectiveness.



External Communications Action Plan 2022-2025

<p>What are we going to do?</p>	<p>Create short instructional videos/guides for key council services such as recycling, benefits, council tax and environmental priorities.</p>	<p>Continue social media 'advocacy' featuring front line colleagues and business owners in the Borough. 'A day in the life of' – waste, customer services, revs and bins and internal teams.</p>	<p>Increase promotion of residents email subscription topics and include replacement of Rushcliffe Gardener magazine to regular garden updates.</p>
<p>Why?</p> <p>Page 22</p>	<p>To increase residents understanding of the Council's services, how to use them more effectively and aid their learning of why they are delivered in line with our policies and strategies</p>	<p>To ensure residents can relate to those who operate our services and gain insight into how they deliver value for money services.</p>	<p>Residents can access ever increasing digital updates direct to their inbox, educating and influencing further engagement with Council services.</p>
<p>How will we know when we have achieved it?</p>	<p>Evaluation of the campaign with social media reach statistics</p>	<p>Evaluation through social media reach statistics and the debate and subsequent common queries it creates.</p>	<p>Volume of increase in subscribers on the channel to the new topics.</p>
<p>Decision to be made by?</p>	<p>December 2022</p>	<p>December 2022</p>	<p>July 2023</p>

<p>What are we going to do?</p>	<p>Develop further social media campaigns, including sharing residents' photos of the Borough, developing Instagram/ Facebook story use during event and appropriate infographics for key council decisions such as council tax, budget setting and major projects.</p>	<p>Consider the skills held within the Media team and use training and specific project work to address any gaps. Specifically, it will include review of the Performance and Reputation team's capacity to address increasing accessibility and website demands.</p>	<p>Introduce an annual Local Government Association advised 'who reads what' survey to further inform content of communications to different stakeholders.</p>
<p>Why?</p>	<p>Drive engagement with residents on digital channels that are increasingly being utilised so they can relate to our services and democratic processes.</p>	<p>To audit and identify where the team's skills could be strengthened and where possible shared to increase learning and development of the team's wider communication attributes in line with industry trends.</p>	<p>To ensure communication updates to different stakeholders are fit for purpose and providing timely updates to inform and engage these audiences.</p>
<p>How will we know when we have achieved it?</p>	<p>Volume of engagement over each year of the strategy with at least 10 trial updates during the first year of the strategy.</p>	<p>Volume of training and projects undertaken and subsequent audit of new or shared skills acquired that have led to new communications themes or content being created.</p>	<p>Survey completion and subsequent report of results from stakeholders.</p>
<p>Decision to be made by?</p>	<p>July 2022</p>	<p>July 2023</p>	<p>December 2022</p>

What are we going to do?	Further develop annual communications planner to assist resourcing and focus of activity.	Include behavioural change campaigns in line with possible Environmental Bill key themes in 2023 and beyond.	Assist the development of new council website and communicate council's priorities more prominently whilst signposting further digital access to Customer Service functions across all Council channels.
Why?	Week to week and month to month communications activities can be assessed to identify and prioritise updates so content can be ever more timely and informative.	In line with the Council's environment strategic priority, inform and communicate any service delivery changes of the bill to waste services.	Ensure residents and stakeholders can relate to and access a contemporary easy to use site that will lie at the heart of the Council's communication and engagement.
How will we know when we have achieved it?	Week in week out reference to the planner in line with weekly team meetings.	Continual evaluation of communication updates across and the correct channels to to maximise reaching all residents on updates.	Delivery of new website including how the Council's priorities are communicated across the portal.
Decision to be made by?	January 2023	June 2024	May 2023

<p>What are we going to do?</p>	<p>Make more direct links between corporate and communications priorities.</p>	<p>Identify closer links with schools, YouNG, Positive Futures and other groups to connect further with new generations of Council service users.</p>	
<p>Why?</p>	<p>Residents need to see cohesion between the two sets of priorities so they can continually relate to and understand why the Council prioritises the themes.</p>	<p>Ensure new generations of stakeholders are aware and understand the Council's role and how it can play its part in linking its services with other public sector partners and the community.</p>	
<p>How will we know when we have achieved it?</p>	<p>Evaluation and monitoring of volume of references between the priorities.</p>	<p>Volume of projects undertaken and subsequent connections made with different groups.</p>	
<p>Decision to be made by?</p>	<p>May 2023 in line with launch of new Council website and priorities being ever more featured and aligned.</p>	<p>July 2023</p>	

Internal Communications Action Plan 2022-2025

<p>What are we going to do?</p>	<p>Build on 2021 staff survey key findings to further guide content in internal updates.</p>	<p>Further staff newsletter and video features on staff from across the organisation such as 'A Day in the life' video 'behind the scenes' and 'Why RBC is for me' and their connection with the Executive Management Team.</p>	<p>Continue to identify ways of engaging staff and councillors to news and updates.</p>	<p>Balancing corporate messages with interactive updates that are relatable to staff and councillors in line with priorities and key strategies.</p>
<p>Why?</p> <p>Page 26</p>	<p>Staff can see how their views in the survey equate into actions on approaches to themes and projects around the organisation and a 'you said we did' analysis.</p>	<p>So staff can relate to and find out more on each other's roles, contributing to the organisation's understanding and connections across its teams</p>	<p>Ensure these stakeholders are engaging with Council external news effectively and ever more aware of how residents are digesting and reacting to updates.</p>	<p>So staff can understand and connect with priorities and strategies in a way they understand with their day to day work at the Council.</p>
<p>How will we know when we have achieved it?</p>	<p>Ongoing timely features in updates referencing the internal survey and how key findings are being implemented.</p>	<p>Volume of internal update features for each year of the strategy.</p>	<p>Assessment of weekly and other updates to ensure links and content to the updates are relevant and engaging with the correct tone and style.</p>	<p>Volume of updates for each year of the strategy.</p>
<p>Decision to be made by?</p>	<p>July 2022 and ongoing.</p>	<p>July 2022 - content already being delivered on 'why RBC is for me' with video updates to be developed and delivered by July 2023.</p>	<p>July 2022.</p>	<p>July 2022 and ongoing.</p>

<p>What are we going to do?</p>	<p>Review the Council's internal Brightsign and screensaver channels to relay relevant messages and use engaging digital content.</p>	<p>Review internal poster sites to further influence staff on key messages.</p>	<p>Assess video usage of staff newsletter and email such as with a round-up of compliments every quarter reflecting and recognising achievement and effort.</p>	<p>Further animation in newsletter updates for staff, councillors and town and parish updates to freshen accompanying static content.</p>
<p>Why?</p> <p>Page 27</p>	<p>To inform and educate internal stakeholders on key messages in a prominent way at Council sites or their devices.</p>	<p>Ensure sites are prominent and regularly and timely updated to accompany digital communications on key internal events and updates.</p>	<p>To aid teams connection with the organisation and relate to when their work is being acknowledged. A follow-up opportunity to remind staff their work continues to be valued.</p>	<p>Make content ever more engaging so stakeholders can relate to topics and updates in a less formal way.</p>
<p>How will we know when we have achieved it?</p>	<p>Regular checks in line with communications planner outlined above with diarised updates.</p>	<p>Checks in line with communications planner outlined above with diarised updates.</p>	<p>Quarterly updates in line with communications planner</p>	<p>Regular checks in line with communications planner.</p>
<p>Decision to be made by?</p>	<p>Regular updates continuing following on from 2018-2021 strategy.</p>	<p>Ongoing throughout the period of the strategy</p>	<p>Ongoing throughout the period of the strategy.</p>	<p>Trial animations begun in line with seasonal introductions being upgraded to regular features from July 2022.</p>


<p>What are we going to do?</p>	<p>Annual staff newsletter poll via updates and email to gauge how content can continue to engage and influence.</p>	<p>Work with the Employee Liaison Group and Workplace Health Champions on identifying staff to drive internal campaigns and goals.</p>	<p>Produce and evaluate content that focuses and engages on themes from the Council's Smarter Ways of Working Policy for staff.</p>	<p>Introduce reference to corporate values in line with HR updates in induction process.</p>	<p>Assess, identify and evaluate annual internal communication projects as another barometer to influence content.</p>
<p>Why?</p> <p>Page 28</p>	<p>To assist teams being engaged on different topics through a channel that takes seconds rather than minutes to respond to, aiding response and insight.</p>	<p>For staff to have ever greater roles and influence on ways to improve their time at work and identify wider wellbeing opportunities to benefit each other.</p>	<p>So staff can continue to relate to the policy and how its flexible themes can aid the balance of working across Council sites and other locations.</p>	<p>Annual staff newsletter poll via updates and email to gauge how content can continue to engage and influence</p>	<p>So projects can be reviewed to ensure they are prompting sufficient, timely engagement and interaction with audiences and shape future work.</p>
<p>How will we know when we have achieved it?</p>	<p>Diarised polls agreed with Service Manager and in line with communications planner.</p>	<p>Volume of individuals identified to take projects forward.</p>	<p>A minimum of five internal updates during each year of the strategy.</p>	<p>Regular review with the HR team.</p>	<p>Annual review reports.</p>
<p>Decision to be made by?</p>	<p>Introduced periodically from July 2022.</p>	<p>Ongoing from July 2022 in line with ELG and WHC meetings and updates.</p>	<p>Ongoing from July 2022.</p>	<p>Already included in existing induction process but reviewed annually to ensure values are up to date.</p>	<p>July 2022 with reports diarised for 2023, 2024 and 2025.</p>




By telephone: Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm
T 0115 981 9911 | E customerservices@rushcliffe.gov.uk | W www.rushcliffe.gov.uk

 <https://twitter.com/rushcliffe>

 <https://www.facebook.com/rushcliffeborough>

 https://www.instagram.com/rushcliffe_bc/?hl=en

 <https://www.linkedin.com/company/rushcliffe-borough-council/mycompany/>

This page is intentionally left blank



Communities Scrutiny Group

Thursday, 6 October 2022

Customer Access Strategy

Report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services

Cabinet Portfolio Holder Finance and Customer Access, Councillor G Moore

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. The Council's last active Customer Access Strategy expired in 2017. At that time the Council's Customer Services offering, and the demand on that service, had been stable for a number of years.
- 1.2. Given the significant changes in resident behaviour brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, it was felt necessary to review where we are now, the direction in which to develop access to customer services in the coming years, and also how best to ensure that all customers that wish to access our services can do so at a time and in a way that suits them.
- 1.3. A Customer Access Strategy 2022-2025 has been drafted and put forward to Cabinet for approval on 11 October 2022. This Strategy is included at **Appendix One** for information and the Communities Scrutiny Group is asked to consider a number of points outlined in paragraph 4.6 of this report in relation to the action plan contained within the Strategy.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that the Communities Scrutiny Group review the action plan contained within the Customer Access Strategy 2022-2025 and make any further suggestions to officers they feel appropriate.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. The Council continues to look to improve its approach to Customer Access. In addition, the Council has seen significant changes in the ways in which customers are accessing Council services as a result of behaviours influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 3.2. The Customer Access Strategy 2022-2025 has been created to encapsulate the current position with regard to customer access and set out how the Council intends to develop Customer Services over the next three years in line with customer demand.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1. Rushcliffe Borough Council is committed to enabling residents who require help from the Council to access that help in a way that suits them and at a time that suits them. This means that our Customer Services offering extends past the call centre and front desk operations of past strategies and embraces the changes brought about by increased access to technology and ever improving acceptance of use of technology as an efficient way of contacting the Council.
- 4.2. When comparing pre-Covid data against more recent figures across all of our contact channels this shift can clearly be seen:

Channel	Pre-Covid monthly average	Current monthly average	Trend
Phone	9,094	7,381	↓
Face-to-face - WB	816	276	↓
Face-to-face – Contact Points	109	72	↓
Email	1,352	1,921	↑
Web	478	692	↑
E-forms	4,353	7,009	↑

- 4.3. Smartphone ownership amongst adults is as high as 84% nationally. Many customers are now seeking help electronically first and only contacting the Council in person when they have been unable to 'self-serve' ie fix the problem themselves. However, there remain customers who are unable or unwilling to contact the Council electronically. These are likely to be some of our most vulnerable customers and it is important that we continue to provide services that meet their needs also.
- 4.4. Therefore, the Council's draft Customer Access Strategy 2022-2025 does not cast aside its face-to-face or telephone access. It continues to offer these vital contact channels whilst focusing development in its growth area of self-service via electronic means. These contact channels are more cost effective and scalable enabling the Council to do more against a reduced budget.
- 4.5. Over the life of this Strategy, the Council will look to:
- Explore proactive text messaging as an information delivery tool (much in the same way your dentist may now send a reminder that you have an appointment tomorrow)
 - Investigate new contact channels such as automated chat-bots (as are used by energy companies and online banks to help customers find the answers they are looking for online or respond to simple requests such as 'when is my next bin collection')
 - Develop our self-serve offering at contact points to assist customers when we are not physically present (in the same way that you now order your items on a digital touch screen rather than with a piece of paper in Argos)

- Undertake the My Account phase two project to integrate back-office systems and provide greater access to information for individual customers through the website (from 'who's my Councillor' to 'when is my next bin collection' and 'when is my next benefit payment due')
- Launch a new corporate website for the Council which makes it easier for customers to find the information they need and transact the business they need to undertake
- Identify and develop new online services by using data to recognise common areas of contact through traditional means and creating additional online services where required – or increasing awareness of existing services
- Install free wifi at customer access points
- Monitor customer services standards across the organisation to ensure equitable access for all
- Review our existing service level agreements with partners to identify areas in which we could expand or enhance services to benefit our customers
- Continually seek customer feedback through mystery shopper and satisfaction surveys to improve the customer experience
- Review existing technological solutions to ensure usage and digital capability is maximised
- Work towards reducing the Council's reliance on print and postage as a means of contacting customers.

4.6. The Communities Scrutiny Group is asked to consider the following points:

- Do the four high level themes contained within the Action Plan accurately represent the areas of development the Group feel it is appropriate to explore?
- Do the fourteen tasks build upon the existing and established customer service offering?
- Do the fourteen tasks reflect the Council's corporate priorities and approach to customer service?
- Will the fourteen tasks make it easier for residents to access services in a way and at a time of their own choosing?
- Will the fourteen tasks build upon the channel shift (towards more efficient and less expensive customer contact options) and customer behavioural change seen through the Covid-19 pandemic?
- Can the Group identify any additional problems that their residents have accessing services at the Council that will not be resolved by tasks outlined in the Action Plan?

5. Risks and Uncertainties

5.1. There are no risks or uncertainties involved in bringing the Customer Access Strategy Action Plan to Communities Scrutiny Group for discussion. However, there are significant risks to the Council in not developing services that meet resident needs and that allow customers to access Council services in a variety of different ways to suit their personal needs and circumstances.

6. Implications

6.1. Financial Implications

The developments outlined in the draft Customer Access Strategy Action Plan will be contained within existing budgets.

6.2. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications contained within the recommendations of this report.

6.3. Equalities Implications

The Council is actively seeking to ensure all customers can access the services they require in a manner and at a time that suits them. This increases equality.

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

There are no Section 17 implications contained within the recommendations of this report.

7. Link to Corporate Priorities

Quality of Life	Customers should be able to access the services they need, when they need them and in a way that suits them. Satisfaction with the Council and the services it provides are substantial factors in contributing towards a good quality of life.
Efficient Services	Development of further access to Council services through electronic means will lead to improved processes and more efficient services.
Sustainable Growth	Customer access should meet the demands created by growth within the Borough
The Environment	Remote customer access reduces the need for travel.

8. Recommendations

It is RECOMMENDED that the Communities Scrutiny Group review the action plan contained within the Customer Access Strategy 2022-2025 and make any further suggestions to officers they feel appropriate.

For more information contact:	Peter Linfield Director – Finance and Corporate Services 0115 914 8439 plinfield@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	
List of appendices:	Appendix One – Customer Access Strategy 2022-2025

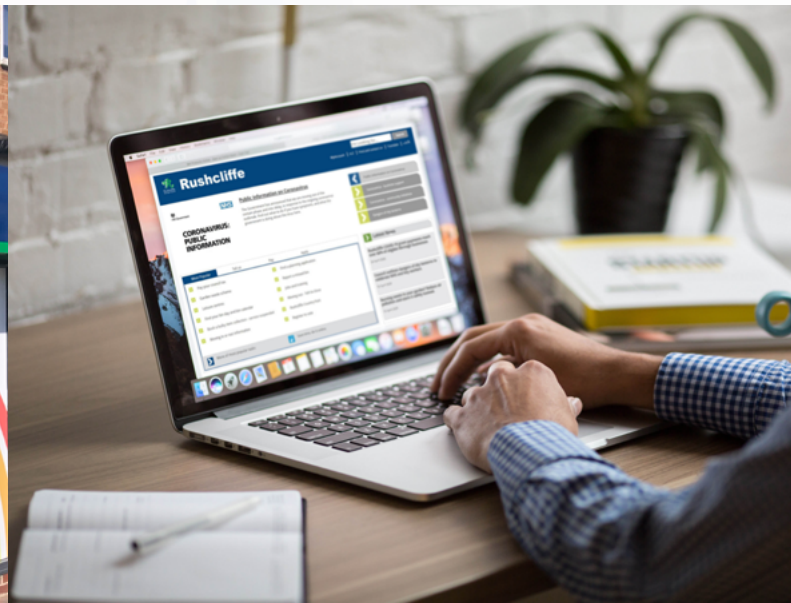
This page is intentionally left blank



Rushcliffe
Borough Council

Rushcliffe Borough Council

Customer Access Strategy 2022 - 2025



Foreward - Cllr Gordon Moore

Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Customer Access

"This strategy sets out Rushcliffe Borough Council's Customer Access Strategy for 2022-2025 to deliver contemporary, efficient and easy to use contact channels to enable our customers to access our services where and when they need them, enhanced by increasing digital access to services.

"It will respond to our customer's current and future needs and tailor services within existing budgets whilst identifying and exploring innovative digital options customers can understand and relate to.

"Our customers require services that are easy to access, simple to use, reliable and cost effective.

"Therefore we need to increasingly adapt to new technologies to help us deliver these services whilst understanding the expectation that existing traditional methods of communication face to face and over the phone remain.

"We also need to explore services in a post lockdown COVID environment with our partners and communities to assess if there is agreements and partnerships that can increasingly benefit our stakeholders.

"Increasing free available internet access and mobile technology across Rushcliffe mean that customers expect to access services and be able to communicate with us anytime and anywhere.

"They are also more willing to use self-service channels because of the greater convenience they offer and this channel shift needs to be explored further in the timeframe of this strategy.

"The shift to digital channels and self-service needs to continue to be addressed, building on research and best practice that it is driven by customer needs, delivering part of this strategy that highlights it is fit for purpose and timely and measurable to meet the changes in customers' demands.

"This Customer Access Strategy will support delivery of the Council's priority of efficient services whilst complementing its linked External and Internal Communications Strategy."



Our vision and commitment to our customers

To provide solutions that engage, empower and enable our customers to retain a great quality of life

Our Corporate objectives and customer focus

Our Cabinet, Executive Management Team, Councillors and staff are committed to customers accessing our services in methods that suit their needs. Whilst increasing digital services will continue as part of this strategy, focus will remain on the balance to engage with customers face to face at our sites and explore customer offer with partner organisations.



This Customer Access Strategy will support delivery of the Council's Corporate Strategy priorities in 2019-2023 that specifically include assisting with quality of life and efficient services through ensuring access is timely, convenient and easy to use whether digital, over the phone or in-person.



Context

Rushcliffe has over 119,000 residents with varying needs spread across urban centres of six large towns and villages matched with significant rural areas.

We continue to strive to be a well run council despite increasing customer demands on all digital channels in recent years matched with the same demand via phone and a slightly reduced demand for face to face services, compared to pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels.

Since re-opening all customer sites since June 2021 there has been a significant rise in the number of people contacting us via use email or websites to complete enquiries, interactions and processes.

At the same time, the number of people using mobile technology is increasing as are the volume of stakeholders now going online using different devices in any location. This change is also reflected in the way customers access our website.

Since 2019 there has been a shift from using PCs to access our website to using tablets and phones instead with 84% of adults now estimated to own a smartphone.

We need to respond to these changes in our customers' habits by ensuring that more of our services are designed to be delivered digitally, aided by review of the Council's existing website options.

This will provide quicker and more convenient access for those customers who choose to use digital services and allow for further identification where those who can't or choose to not access services digitally can be encouraged to do so.










Contemporary channels such as the website are well established and therefore there is clearly even further potential to encourage more customers to make the switch from face to face and phone exchanges to aid ever more efficient services for the customer.



Channel shift in light of COVID-19

COVID-19 made a significant impact on service delivery and created less emphasis on access on face to face enquiries from customers.

This strategy builds on this with an acceptance that there is a dichotomy between greater digital access and also protecting the more vulnerable. Importantly, since the pandemic began in 2020, customer satisfaction has not been adversely effected.

<p>Email:</p> <p>1,921 June 2021-March 2022 average per month.</p> <p></p> <p>1,352 Pre Covid average per month.</p>	<p>Web Enquiries:</p> <p>692 June 2021-March 2022 average per month.</p> <p></p> <p>478 Pre Covid average per month.</p>	<p>Phone:</p> <p>9,094 Pre Covid average per month.</p> <p></p> <p>7,381 June 2021-March 2022 average per month.</p>
<p>Face to face - West Bridgford:</p> <p>816 Pre Covid average per month.</p> <p></p> <p>276 June 2021-March 2022 average per month.</p>	 <p>Rushcliffe Borough Council</p>	<p>Face to face - Contact Points:</p> <p>109 Pre Covid average per month.</p> <p></p> <p>72 June 2021-March 2022 average per month.</p>
<p>Web form usage:</p> <p>7,009 June 2021-March 2022 average per month.</p> <p></p> <p>4,353 Pre Covid average per month.</p>	<p>Total interactions:</p> <p>18,154 June 2021-March 2022 average per month.</p> <p></p> <p>17,451 Pre Covid average per month.</p>	<p>Total postal enquiries:</p> <p>1,249 Pre Covid average per month.</p> <p></p> <p>803 June 2021-March 2022 average per month.</p>



As of Summer 2022, the majority of customers contact us via:

Phone - 8,115 calls a month*

Email - 2,166 a month*

Web enquiries to www.rushcliffe.gov.uk - 855 a month*

***Face to face with our advisors at four sites across the Borough:
Rushcliffe Customer Service Centre, West Bridgford - 480 visits a month****

Cotgrave Library, Cotgrave Hub - 46 visits a month*

East Leake Library - 24 visits a month*

Bingham Medical Centre - 62 visits a month*

****April-June 2022 average***



Developing understanding to help our customers even more

Developing increased better understanding of our customers forms a key part of this strategy.

As we move towards ever more accessible services and efficient communication, we will look to adapt this document to any of the changing requirements of our customers and communities and the ways in which local people want to interact with the Council.

Therefore we will continue to highlight, identify and be clear about who our customers are, the level of service they actually want, how customers currently access our services and how they might access those services in the future.

Therefore the strategy as created a rationale to have these overarching aims before identifying set objectives to ever increase this understanding of customers' needs to access services effectively.

Our rationale:

To improve services for our customers, we need to continue to have better understanding of who they are and how they expect services to be delivered.

Traditional methods of contact, such as face to face can be more expensive and time consuming.

Understanding why certain customers prefer these channels can help us to help them to move to quicker and more efficient channels.

Examining the customer journey and the cost of delivering each process can identify key areas for improvement as well as the areas customers consider to be less important and identify where we prioritise service resources.

Using customer insight, feedback and consulting with different customer groups and partner organisations will help us to understand the requirements of our customers and develop end to end digital transactions to encourage use and ease of access to online services allowing in person and telephone queries to be focused on vulnerable customers or those with complex needs or cases.

Identifying these customer groups for which digital services and self-service may not be the most suitable type of access, will enable us to develop our services to meet all of our customers' needs and ensure no one is excluded from accessing services.

Understanding our customers and our services during will enable us to make decisions based on real data and real customer feedback instead of making assumptions about what our customers want.

We will achieve these aims by...

- Continuing to develop more understanding of who our customers are through analysis of our ESB Customer Relationship Management and other systems' data on enquiries
- Understand further why services are used in the way they are by customers whether for convenience or if they are unaware of, for example, other digital routes to have their query resolved.
- Understand further and define the needs and expectations of customers across different communities. For example this could mean assessing if there are different needs of customers at our urban Customer Service Centre versus those at our Customer Contact Points located closer to our more rural communities
- Continue to capture accurate customer data to guide which services can be channelled more effectively digitally
- Understand further the cost of delivering our services and where we can identify partner organisations who can benefit from shared services or space at our sites.
- Develop our systems to collect and monitor customer feedback and satisfaction from all access channels
- Regularly review of Freedom of Information requests, complaints and compliments

Our Customer Access Strategy Key Themes



Customer Services Action Plan 2022-2025

	Theme: Building on and exploring innovation	Theme: Embedding further self-service	Theme: Building on and exploring innovation
What are we going to do?	Identify and explore new communication and contact channels such as chat bots, whats app , text and other channels stakeholders use frequently to improve the range of options of how to contact Customer Services in line with the Council's website development.	Further develop self-serve terminals at customer sites to further educate and inform customers they can interact with services ever quicker and easier to resolve their queries.	In line with My Account phase two and website projects, explore ways to showcase further digital solutions to queries at point of contact with residents at Customer Service sites.
Why? Page 45	So customers can utilise channels they are familiar with and can relate to, making communication contemporary and convenient in line with constantly evolving methods of engagement.	To ensure customers continue to have the option of how to access our services through digital means. Upskilling individuals at our sites means they can resolve queries themselves or be aware how to use the digital alternatives online.	Building on self-serve terminals campaigns, outline where common reporting tools being available online to aid channel shift as digital awareness of services is heightened.
How will we know when we have achieved it?	Summer 2024 and analysis of any newly introduced channels .	Volume of customers switched to using self-service terminals than relying on face to face queries. 1,000 customers a year prompted to try self-service option for their queries.	Lower volumes of calls and face to face queries year on year as more customers switch to more convenient digital ways to engage with services.
Decision to be made by?	Summer 2022 - exploring new channels work ongoing.	October 2022 - customers will be engaged to familiarise themselves with self-serve terminals in annual dedicated campaign.	October 2022 - customers to be engaged at point of contact at face to face sites

Customer Services Action Plan 2022-2025

	Theme: Building on and exploring innovation	Theme: Reviewing and building on partnerships	Theme: Building on and exploring innovation
What are we going to do?	Identify and explore where services can be increasingly channelled to a online option such as garden waste service and licensing in line with service proposals, systems and processes.	Review existing contact point locations to ensure customers can access face to face services easily and conveniently.	Introduce free wi-fi at our customer sites to increase visitor experience and aid speed and convenience to access online information and access.
Why? Page 46	To build on and maximise the channel shift and behaviour changes since 2020 that sees ever increasing customers use online options. Also to 'nudge' customers to use these more convenient options that can decrease administrative face to face time.	To ensure customers have sites that can be accessed more easily whether through nearby public transport stops or car parking.	To ensure customers can be supported in being informed on their own digital device of how to have their queries answered even more conveniently.
How will we know when we have achieved it?	Analysis of services that are partly or wholly switched to online service.	In line with existing leases and service level agreements with partners, review each site annually to assess its location meets customers' needs.	The volume of sites achieving free wi-fi status and communicated on site to customers
Decision to be made by?	Summer 2023 - agree which services will be signposted to partly or wholly online to aid their evolution,	October 2022	Summer 2024

Customer Services Action Plan 2022-2025

	Theme: Listening and responding and Reviewing and building on partnerships	Theme: Reviewing and building on partnerships	Theme: Listening and responding
What are we going to do?	Consult with Customer Service Advisors to further explore key themes and insights as to where the service could be ever more adaptable to customers' needs.	Signpost programmes to help customers develop digital skills, co-ordinated from our partners across Nottinghamshire.	Communicate clear Customer Service Standards across channels and sites so customers are aware of likely response times and keep these under continued review.
Why?	Ensure advisors' views are recorded to help shape the service, listening to where interactions and access to services can be improved to aid the customer experience with RBC.	So customers can receive access to new skills that can aid them accessing services more easily and increase their wider digital learning.	So customers feel the service is approachable and clear with standards and responds they can relate to and match their expectations.
How will we know when we have achieved it?	Ongoing channels to feedback views, culminating in annual check list of points, highlighting what changes have been made.	Volume of customers signposted to programmes. Target of 1,000 customers a year to receive information on local courses and information.	Standards communicated prominently at point of contact to service on phone, website or face to face query.
Decision to be made by?	Summer 2022	Summer 2022	December 2022 in line with Customer First project.

Customer Services Action Plan 2022-2025

	Theme: Reviewing and building on partnerships	Theme: Listening and responding	Theme: Building on and exploring innovation
What are we going to do?	Review service level agreements with partners to identify further areas where services can be shared or enhanced.	Build on ways to routinely monitor customer feedback and satisfaction such as mystery shopper project and skills audits.	Regularly evaluate Liberty Converse phone system, ESB Customer Relationship System and all related software for a modern, responsive service.
Why? Page 48	In order to ensure the agreements best suit the needs of the service and identify where existing resources and sites can be used to the benefit of the Council and partners.	Ensure customer service standards are consistently met through learning and further evaluation of existing skills.	Ensure the software is giving Customers Services advisors the best experience to ensure they can answer enquiries ever more effectively.
How will we know when we have achieved it?	December 2022 and ongoing. Partner list identified, contacted and consulted to ensure options are explored.	Annual mystery shopper project and annual team skills audit reviews.	In line with existing contracts, annual review of latest options of all software to ensure latest updates or upgrades are reviewed.
Decision to be made by?	Summer 2022 and ongoing.	Summer 2022 and ongoing.	Summer 2022 and ongoing.

Customer Services Action Plan 2022-2025

	Theme: Embedding further self-service	Theme: Embedding further self-service
What are we going to do?	Reshape postal communications as a key access channel. Signpost further how customers can access services and communicate with the Council digitally, in line with environmental approach on reducing print and postage.	Embedding a culture of self-service through automated processes, ease of access and ongoing staff and councillor training regarding systems.
Why?	In line with one of the four Corporate Priorities on the Environment, look to reduce paper usage and reduce carbon footprint. Highlight to customers they can join the Council on its aim to be carbon neutral by 2030.	To further educate key stakeholders in staff and councillors how they can champion the ease and convenience of self-service to customers. Their direct and indirect connections to customers can play a role in highlighting how to access digital options.
How will we know when we have achieved it?	Volume of post received reducing each year of the strategy.	Number of staff and councillors referring customers to digital options increasing each year of the strategy.
Decision to be made by?	Summer 2022 and ongoing.	Summer 2022 and ongoing.



By telephone: Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm
T 0115 981 9911 | E customerservices@rushcliffe.gov.uk | W www.rushcliffe.gov.uk

 @rushcliffe  @rushcliffe_bc  <https://www.facebook.com/rushcliffeborough>



Communities Scrutiny Group

Thursday, 6 October 2022

Work Programme

Report of the Director of Finance and Corporate Services

1. Summary

- 1.1. The work programmes for all Scrutiny Groups are created and managed by the Corporate Overview Group. This Group accepts and considers Scrutiny Matrices from both officers and councillors which propose items for scrutiny. If those items are accepted following discussion at the Corporate Overview Group, they are placed on the work programme for one of the Council's Scrutiny Groups.
- 1.2. The work programme is also a standing item for discussion at each meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Group. In determining the proposed work programme due regard has been given to matters usually reported to the Group and the timing of issues to ensure best fit within the Council's decision-making process.
- 1.3. The work programme is detailed in this report for information only so that the Group is aware of the proposed agenda for the next meeting. The work programme does not take into account any items that need to be considered by the Group as special items. These may occur, for example, through changes required to the Constitution or financial regulations, which have an impact on the internal controls of the Council.
- 1.4. The future work programme was updated and agreed at the meeting of the Corporate Overview Group on 6 September 2022, including any items raised via the scrutiny matrix.

Members are asked to propose future topics to be considered by the Group, in line with the Council's priorities which are:

- Quality of Life;
- Efficient Services;
- Sustainable Growth; and
- The Environment

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that the Group agrees the work programme as set out below:

19 January 2023

- Establishment of a Youth Council
- Corporate Enforcement Policy
- Work Programme

16 March 2023

- Carbon Management Plan
- Environment Policy
- Work Programme

3. Reason for Recommendation

To enable the Council's scrutiny arrangements to operate efficiently and effectively.

For more information contact:	Pete Linfield Director of Finance and Corporate Services 0115 914 8349 plinfield@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers Available for Inspection:	None.
List of appendices (if any):	None.