

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
CABINET**

TUESDAY, 9 APRIL 2024

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

PRESENT:

Councillors N Clarke (Chair), A Brennan (Vice-Chair), R Inglis, R Upton, D Virdi
and J Wheeler

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors R Bird, T Birch, E Georgiou, N Regan, J Walker, L Way, T Wells
and G Williams

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

D Banks	Director of Neighbourhoods
G Dennis	Monitoring Officer
P Linfield	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
K Marriott	Chief Executive
H Tambini	Democratic Services Manager

59 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

60 Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 March 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 12 March 2024 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

61 Citizens' Questions

Question from Isabel Shouler to Councillor Inglis.

“Do you not agree that 1 hour free parking will be detrimental to the businesses of Bingham?”

Councillor Inglis responded by thanking Ms Shouler and advised that the Council had been assessing a range of tariffs for both Needham and Newgate Street cars parks, which as part of a total package of measures would aim to improve parking to better support town centre economic vibrancy. This work would be discussed in more detail this evening as part of Agenda Item 7, which would include full consideration of both 1 and 2 hour free parking in Newgate and Needham Street, and the charging structure for additional hours.

62 **Opposition Group Leaders' Questions**

Question from Councillor Birch to Councillor Inglis

“The basis for the recommendations in the 'Bingham Car Parking Project Update' report is the data accrued by traffic data collection company, ITP. The methodology they used to obtain their data consisted solely of 'in person' surveys of car park users.

Do you not agree that this methodology shows blatant sampling bias, where those residents who are actively avoiding the car parks, because of years of being unable to find spaces, are not represented in the data, and therefore the results do not reflect the true nature of Bingham's parking crisis?”

Councillor Inglis stated that he did not agree, as the report clearly stated that in addition to commissioning on-site surveys the Council had conducted an online survey, which had been well publicised on social media and via press releases including coverage by the BBC . As a result of this promotional work, the survey had received over 1,500 responses and this information was used to help inform the package of measures presented in the report this evening.

Councillor Birch asked a supplementary question to Councillor Inglis.

“With regards to the charging options that have been presented tonight, option 5 has caused public outrage and has been opposed by all local representatives. Given the potential for option 5 to detrimentally affect local businesses, and impose further financial burdens on residents, might Cabinet be inclined to reassess and go for option 4, thereby prioritising the well being of local residents and the local business community over short term financial gain?”

Councillor Inglis reiterated that details would be explained when Item 7 was considered later in the meeting.

Question from Councillor J Walker to the Leader, Councillor Clarke.

“Despite a generally favourable report from our Peer Challenge colleagues, it feels like the responses/actions are a done deal. Almost like the theme in the report of the Borough talking 'to' its residents rather than in collaboration with, has still not been taken and runs quite deep, as is evident even in response to the suggestions, with no mention of any wider engagement.

Will all Councillors and residents get the opportunity to offer suggestions on how we can all make the changes suggested in this report and proactively engage in the process of improvement?”

The Leader thanked Councillor Walker and advised that the responses and actions were designed to highlight work that was underway, which the Peer Team were unable to see, as well as future improvements that the Council could work on. The feedback had been welcomed and there was a proposal to include an engagement section in the next Communications Strategy, and any Councillors or residents that wanted to submit comments were very welcome to

do so. The Leader stated that the Council did have a programme of engagement on a wide range of policy items, as well as its biennial residents survey. The next survey would be delivered to every household in the Borough in the June edition of Rushcliffe Reports and the Council would be delighted to receive more feedback from residents. Whilst developing the new Economic Growth Strategy, comments would also be welcomed, and the Leader reminded everyone that the Bingham Car Parking survey had also encouraged engagement.

Councillor Walker asked a supplementary question to the Leader.

“Would the Communications Strategy come to scrutiny to provide another opportunity for engagement?”

The Leader advised that initially the Strategy would be reviewed and it was likely that it would be renamed the Engagement and Communications Strategy, to reflect that. Following its adoption, it would then be available for scrutiny.

Question from Councillor Way, on behalf of the Leake Independent Group to the Leader, Councillor Clarke.

“With reference to Appendix B, Key Recommendations, page 4, Governance/Performance/Culture, Item 7 states ‘RBC should consider undertaking a comprehensive review of its scrutiny function, the role and number of overview and scrutiny groups, processes and procedures, aligned with progressing RBC’s Corporate Strategy, with Councillor engagement at its core’.

The subsequent response states that a review was carried out in 2018. As this is six years ago, and predates the last two elections, where new Councillors have joined, and bearing in mind that this must have been a topic raised many times to warrant this recommendation, and is covered at some length on pages 16 to 17 of the report, is it not time a new review takes place and the scrutiny process is itself scrutinised?”

The Leader thanked Councillor Way and advised that a review was undertaken between September 2018 and February 2019 by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), which was now the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, and that had been reported to Council in March 2019. The independent review included desk research, observations of meetings, a Councillor survey, and many interviews. The Leader stated that the CfPS had recommended a single scrutiny overview group, with task and finish groups to investigate specific topics. This model of scrutiny was widely used in larger councils and very different to what had been operating well at Rushcliffe for many years, which was recognised by the review team. Therefore, a transitional arrangement was approved by Council, which had a smaller Overview and Scrutiny Group that reviewed corporate items on a cyclical basis, managed requests for scrutiny and work programmes of the three themed scrutiny groups. An internal review of this arrangement was scheduled for 12-18 months time. The Leader confirmed that the transitional arrangements were reviewed and reported to Corporate Overview Group in September 2020, when it was concluded that the transitional arrangements were a significant

improvement on the previous model and that they should be maintained. Views of both Councillors and officers were sought as part of this review and were detailed in the report. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny ran a Scrutiny Improvement Review programme and it had also published a self-evaluation toolkit, which could be used if it was felt a review was needed. Further training for Chairs and Vice-chairs was planned for this year to focus on quality of debate and questioning as well as managing the meeting and that would hopefully result in more effective meetings.

Councillor Way asked a supplementary question to the Leader.

“The question about scrutiny had strong links to paragraph 2 on page 16 of the Feedback Report and quoted “Officers for example can take Councillors’ questions as criticism, when Councillors often just want to know how or why the Council responds to various situations. This can lead to Councillors asking fewer questions for fear of offending officers, hindering their understanding of how Council operates and relations with officers” and that this was quite noticeable sometimes in scrutiny meetings. What steps could be taken to address this issue to promote better working relationships and understanding between officers and Councillors.

The Leader hoped that continued training for scrutiny would encourage constructive questioning, with constructive criticism and assistance in suggesting new ideas, and it was important that all Councillors agreed to have those conversations to ensure continued benefits for residents.

63 LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

The Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide Leadership, Councillor Clarke presented the report of the Chief Executive, outlining the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report and the Council’s initial response to those recommendations, together with the resulting action plan.

The Leader stated that the Peer Challenge process should be valued by councils, as it shared experiences from its peers, to identify, where necessary, any possible improvements that could be made. The Leader advised that many interviews had taken place, and that had led to the production of a very supportive and complimentary Feedback Report, which in particular had complimented the effective management of the Council’s finances.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Brennan welcomed this positive report, and stated that it was interesting to note the suggested areas for development and improvement. It was also particularly satisfying that the collective efforts of both Councillors and officers in creating a Council that could deliver on its priorities and strategies had been recognised. Councillor Brennan thought that the process had been very helpful in providing opportunities to explore in depth how the Council delivered its priorities and how it could improve going forward. She was particularly keen on the team recognising the Council’s strategic and place leadership in respect of working and influencing partners, as even with relatively small resources, Rushcliffe had a credibility to bring partners along and to help shape their policies for the

benefit of the Borough. The Peer team had also acknowledged new innovations, such as the Economic Development Strategy, and how that could bring investment into the Borough. Councillor Brennan stated that the process had highlighted that Rushcliffe was a well performing Council and had given it plenty of things to think about going forward.

Councillor J Wheeler welcomed this positive report, stated that the Peer Challenge team had been invited by the Council, and referred to the importance of having external reviews. The report highlighted all the good work being done by officers and Councillors, and although it was known that Rushcliffe was a very well run Council, having being shortlisted last year for Council of the Year, it was always good to look at ways to improve. Councillor Wheeler welcomed the action plan and referred specifically to the importance of training and advised that this would continue to be a priority.

Councillor Upton welcomed this excellent report, which the Council should be proud of.

It was RESOLVED that:

- a) the LGA's feedback report as detailed in Appendix A to the report be accepted; and
- b) the Council's action plan and response to the recommendations as detailed in Appendix B to the report be accepted.

64 Bingham Car Parking Project Update

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environment and Safety, Councillor Inglis presented the report of the Director – Neighbourhoods, which provided an update on the work of the Bingham Car Parking Strategy Group over the last six months.

Councillor Inglis advised that the published report was a recommendation, and that he had listened to all the feedback, from Bingham Town Councillors, the public and business owners, and read the comments on Bingham Social media sites. He referred to a revised recommendation, altering the recommendation in D and stated that the table at paragraph 4.9, which was also referenced in recommendations B,C and D had a revised tariff.

Councillor Inglis agreed that parking in Bingham had been an issue for several years. The Bingham Car Parking Strategy Group was established in September 2023, to better understand the current situation, specifically in Bingham, to explore short to medium term solutions to improve parking, by changing the length of stay and charges to existing car parks, to prompt behaviour change, freeing up capacity for short stay parking. The Group, investigated not only Rushcliffe car parks, it looked at a complete strategy for all of Bingham, working in partnership with representatives from Bingham Town Council and the County Council, and that challenging work was continuing. Councillor Inglis thanked everyone on the Group for their hard work and dedication, and in particular Rushcliffe's Corporate and Commercial Projects Officer.

Cabinet was advised that a three day survey was commissioned to ITP, an independent sustainable transport planning and research consultancy, to obtain the current data alongside a public consultation survey, which concluded that the high majority of car park users stayed for under two hours, the highest percentage under 1 hour and 50% of those under 30 minutes, with just a small percentage of long stay, and the main use was for shopping. The Group discussed all options for potential tariffs, with the general consensus leaning towards tariff 4, to be considered by officers. Subsequently to that meeting, and from within the Group, tariff 5 was proposed, based on the data for 1 hour to 2 hour users that had the potential of freeing up more spaces and this was discussed with Group members in taking it forward. It was noted that option 5 was deemed most appropriate to prompt the behaviour change for freeing up capacity for short stay parking that was recommended in the report for an increased churn. However, following publication of the report, some concerns had been expressed via social media and emails to the Council regarding the original report proposal to introduce a charge after 1 hour.

Councillor Inglis stated that he wanted the Group to achieve the right solution so that residents and visitors could park more easily and confirmed that he and fellow Cabinet members had carefully considered the recent feedback and he hoped that by altering and recommending option 4 rather than option 5, within the table at 4.9, it would now be more widely accepted and would be reviewed in 12 months.

Cabinet noted that the tariff would apply between 7am and 7pm, which in effect, offered free evening parking from 5pm. The revised free 30 minutes and times of operation in both Rushcliffe and County Council owned bays around the Marketplace should also generate a higher turn around for very quick trips. Councillor Inglis confirmed that long stay options for business owners was not being overlooked, with the opportunity to use 30 spaces at the Arena car park on a charged annual permit basis.

In conclusion, Councillor Inglis hoped that by reacting to the feedback, residents and businesses would accept that everyone wanted the best solution, to maintain and increase the vitality and viability of the Town Centre, together with a need to manage parking provision, to ensure that it encouraged short stay rather than all-day parking, alongside the need to recover the associated car park running and maintenance costs to the Council.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Upton stated that he personally used to regularly visit Bingham; however, over the last ten years he had found it increasingly difficult to find a car parking space, and sometimes had to park on residential streets and he hoped that the proposed changes in the report would improve the situation and free up car parking spaces.

Councillor Virdi reiterated that in choosing this option, the expected associated revenues were unlikely to cover both revenue and capital costs as highlighted in paragraphs 4.11 and 4.12 of the report. However, the Council remained committed to being both prudent and responsible in respect of its finances, and recovering costs remained good financial practice. Councillor Virdi stated that a review in 12 months would be helpful to see if positive changes had taken

place.

In supporting the revised recommendation, Councillor J Wheeler referred to the importance of listening to feedback and given the enthusiastic response from businesses regarding the permits at the Arena, it was hoped that this would give more churn capacity, as ultimately everyone wanted the same outcome. It was hoped that this would provide the right balance and ensure that Bingham continued to thrive.

The Leader echoed comments made and stated that Cabinet had listened to feedback, he had spoken with several business owners and those feelings and opinions were clear. The Leader reminded everyone that money was not the driver in this proposal, it was about freeing up car parking spaces to help businesses and he also reiterated that the Arena car park would be available for long term parking, with a chargeable permit. It was noted that the County Council would also be reviewing on-street parking, alongside this, in preparation for the proposed changes here, and he was confident that there would be a coordinated approach and hoped that this would be a good example of collaborative working. The Leader referred to the 12 month review and hoped that it would be successful.

It was RESOLVED that:

- a) the work carried out by the Bingham Car Parking Strategy Group be recognised;
- b) reducing the length of stay in the Council's parking bays in Bingham Marketplace to 30 minutes, as set out in the revised paragraph 4.9 of the report be approved;
- c) changing restrictions on market days to allow spaces to be made available to the public when they are not in use by market traders, as set out in the revised paragraph 4.9 of the report be approved;
- d) changes to Newgate and Needham Street Car Parks to introduce charging for parking after 2 hours, as set out in sections C and D in the revised paragraph 4.9 of the report be approved;
- e) establishing a permit scheme at Bingham Arena, creating circa 30 spaces for long stay, to be made available for a fee to town centre businesses, as set out in the revised paragraph 4.9 of the report be approved; and
- f) the proposal for Nottinghamshire County Council to reduce the length of stay in their parking bays in Bingham Marketplace to 30 minutes, as set out in the revised paragraph 4.9 of the report be supported.

Revised Sections C and D Paragraph 4.9

C. Newgate Street – Change to short stay	106 spaces – currently 12 hours free (no return within 3 hours)
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See Appendix A	Up to 2 hours = free 2-3 hours = £1 3-4 hours = £5 4-12 hours = £10
D. Needham Street – Change to longer stay	40 spaces – currently 2 hours free (£20 for up to 12 hours)
See Appendix A	Up to 2 hours = free 2-3 hours = £1 3-4 hours = £5 4-12 hours = £10

The meeting closed at 7.36 pm.

CHAIR