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Direct dial 0115 914 8320
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Our reference:
Your reference:
Date: Wednesday, 13 September 2023

To all Members of the Council

Dear Councillor

A Meeting of the Council will be held on Thursday, 21 September 2023 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>
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Yours sincerely



Gemma Dennis
Monitoring Officer

AGENDA

Moment of Reflection

1. Apologies for absence
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2023 (Pages 1 - 24)

To receive as a correct record the minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Thursday, 13 July 2023.

4. Mayor's Announcements
5. Leader's Announcements
6. Chief Executive's Announcements
7. Citizens' Questions

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

8. Petitions

9. Business from the last Council meeting

Questions from Councillors

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

- a) Councillor Birch
- b) Councillor J Walker
- c) Councillor Plant

10. Approval of the Scrutiny Annual Reports 2022/23 (Pages 25 - 62)

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

11. Notices of Motion

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

a) **Councillor Gowland**

This Council resolves to treat people with care experience as if they have a Protected Characteristic.

b) **Councillor Birch**

Rushcliffe Borough Council notes with concern that:

- a) Bingham does not have adequate parking provision.
- b) Despite the 2018 Bingham Masterplan identifying Bingham's poor parking as the town's primary issue, no adequate solutions have been delivered.
- c) Council agreed to build 1000 new homes in Bingham without putting any additional parking infrastructure in place.
- d) Council allocated £19.6 million to other capital projects in the Borough in 2022-23. Only £25,000 revenue has been allocated to Bingham's new car park project.
- e) The 'Update on Car Parking in Bingham' report does not go far enough to solve the parking problems.

Rushcliffe Borough Council therefore resolves to show leadership and ambition in solving Bingham's parking issues.

Council will:

- 1) Make a formal written offer to Bingham Town Council to take over the proposed car park project by purchasing the land off them (subject to a business case being approved and on the condition that the land will be solely used for a long-stay car park).
- 2) Seek to obtain funding to provide step-free access to the north platform of Bingham station.
- 3) Liaise with Nottinghamshire County Council to find holistic solutions to Bingham's parking problems, including dealing with the traffic chaos on Long Acre, improving parking in the Market Square and eliminating unwanted (and unsafe) parking on residential streets near the town centre through parking enforcement.
- 4) Make a pledge to Bingham's residents that Council will aim to break ground on the new car park before 2027.
- 5) Once the new car park is built, provide greater short-stay capacity in the existing town centre car parks.

Rushcliffe Borough Council also resolves to take the following actions:

- 1) Formally declare that the parking problems in Bingham is an urgent matter.
- 2) Formally write to Network Rail to request an explanation as to why, specifically, they oppose the new car park at Butt Field.
- 3) Formally write to East Midlands Railway and Network Rail to ask for a clear explanation as to why step-free access has not so far been provided for Bingham's disabled residents and to obtain assurances that they would support this project should grant funding be obtained.

c) **Councillor Combellack**

Water and flooding are becoming increasingly a concern for residents.

We have an extensive programme of housing and therefore need to be certain that any new development, large or small impacting water courses and infrastructure, does not alter water flow or inadvertently overload the drainage systems which, in many cases, are very old. Currently "wind fall" or minor sites are not commented upon by the water agencies as they are considered too small. However, several small sites can have considerable impact upon drainage.

Farming practice has become increasingly mechanised – whilst we need to support our farmers, the impact of modern practice is compounding flooding issues.

Removal of trees and hedges means fields are less well protected and there is less water uptake by established trees. The loss of tree cover means dry friable soil is blown away leaving, often, barren soil which cannot absorb water in heavy rainfall. Heavy machinery compacts the soil and breaks the underlying field drains. The practice of no plough seed drilling means the soil is no longer broken up to absorb excess rainfall. Existing dew ponds in fields have been filled in removing the natural attenuation. Machinery now flays hedgerows leaving the arisings to block ditches. Heavy machinery on verges destroys the grips carrying water from the road to the ditches.

This Council resolves to

- 1) Strengthen consultation with appointed 'water agencies' – The Local Lead Flood Authority, Severn Trent, Trent Valley Drainage Board and the Environment Agency – by requesting the Secretary of State ensures they are all Statutory Consultees and formally asks, that full and informative comments on every application impacting water supply and drainage, are provided to the Planning Authority, addressing all potential consequences.
- 2) Lobby DEFRA to produce more informed guidance on water attenuation and dispersal and farming practices. Current practice no longer allows for aeration and soil percolation and leads to destruction of field ponds, hedges and trees, consequently adding to flooding.

Both requests to be copied to the Local MPs.

12. Questions from Councillors

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

Membership

Chair: Councillor D Mason

Vice-Chair: Councillor A Brown

Councillors: M Barney, J Billin, T Birch, R Bird, A Brennan, R Butler, S Calvert, J Chaplain, K Chewings, N Clarke, T Combellack, J Cottee, S Dellar, A Edyvean, S Ellis, G Fletcher, M Gaunt, E Georgiou, P Gowland, C Grocock, R Inglis, R Mallender, S Mallender, P Matthews, H Om, H Parekh, A Phillips, L Plant, D Polenta, N Regan, D Simms, D Soloman, C Thomas, R Upton, D Virdi, J Walker, R Walker, L Way, T Wells, G Wheeler, J Wheeler and G Williams

Meeting Room Guidance

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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.

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 13 JULY 2023

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

PRESENT:

Councillors D Mason (Chair), A Brown (Vice-Chair), M Barney, J Billin, T Birch, R Bird, A Brennan, R Butler, S Calvert, J Chaplain, K Chewings, N Clarke, T Combellack, J Cottee, S Dellar, A Edyvean, S Ellis, G Fletcher, M Gaunt, E Georgiou, P Gowland, C Grocock, R Inglis, R Mallender, S Mallender, P Matthews, H Om, H Parekh, A Phillips, L Plant, D Polenta, N Regan, D Simms, D Soloman, C Thomas, R Upton, D Viridi, J Walker, R Walker, L Way, T Wells, G Wheeler, J Wheeler and G Williams

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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

13 Declarations of Interest

The Mayor invited declarations of interest.

Two Councillors declared an interest in Item 10 Ratcliffe on Soar Local Development Order as follows:

Councillor R Walker stated that he was a director of the Strawberry Wood Gotham Community Interest Company, which was seeking to acquire an area of woodland for the benefit of the community. There was a possibility of sourcing funding for the purchase and/or future management of the woodland via biodiversity net gain obligations arising from the development and whilst that would not result in any financial gain to him personally, he would leave the room during the debate.

Councillor Barney stated that the company he worked for had expressed an interest in Freeports nationally, and although he could not see any direct relationship to this site, he would leave the room during the debate.

Councillor Parekh declared an interest in Item 13 a) Motion as she was the team manager at Nottinghamshire County Council in Children's Services and

believed that she would not have an open mind, as she had fixed notions about what should happen and had pre-conceived ideas and would leave the room during the debate.

Councillor Williams declared an interest in Item 9 Business from the last Council meeting – the Soil Motion, due to the company that he worked for and would leave the room during the debate.

14 Minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 25 May 2023, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

15 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor made the first announcements of her Civic year and informed Council that she had been very busy over the last few weeks. She specifically mentioned a 100th birthday party, a flag raising to honour the Armed Forces, the outstanding Proms in the Park concert that was particularly well attended this year, and a small ceremony to commemorate one hundred years since Bridgford Park was opened. The Mayor also recalled the thrilling Red Devils performing at the DMRC, a very windy morning at the Mercian War Memorial in Crich, and a damp, in weather but not in spirit, carnival in Radcliffe. The Mayor invited members of the Council to join her at her Civic Service on 15 October and promoted the Taste of Rushcliffe food festival in West Bridgford next weekend.

16 Leader's Announcements

The Leader referred to the national Municipal Journal Awards held in London a few weeks ago, with the Council shortlisted for the highest award, Council of the Year, competing against five unitary authorities. Whilst the Council had not been successful, it was the only district council to be shortlisted and, therefore, he felt it was perfectly justified for the Council to claim Rushcliffe was District Council of the Year. This accolade was testament to the hard work of officers in delivering Councillors' ambitions and making the Borough a great place to live.

Secondly, the Leader mentioned that Saville's, the estate agent, recently announced West Bridgford as the 13th best town to live in, which was also the only place in the East Midlands in the top 50.

17 Chief Executive's Announcements

The Chief Executive made no announcements.

18 Citizens' Questions

The Mayor invited Ms Jejna to read her Citizen's Question as submitted:

"Why has Rushcliffe Borough Council signed up for 20 minute neighbourhoods in the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan, without fully informing constituents what they are, how they will work and how it will affect and impact on day to

day life?”

Councillor Upton thanked Ms Jejna for her question and clarified that the Council had not signed up to a 20-minute neighbourhood concept and it might not do so. The Greater Nottinghamshire Strategic Plan was a joint document across four local authorities and although reference was made to 20-minute neighbourhoods in the draft, further consideration would be given as to whether it should be retained in the Plan, especially in light of the predominately rural nature of the Borough. The 20-minute neighbourhood was a concept that might achieve more sustainable development, but it needed a lot more debate, and a final draft of the Greater Nottinghamshire Strategic Plan was expected to be ready for further consultation in early 2024.

19 **Petitions**

No petitions had been submitted.

20 **Business from the last Council meeting**

Councillor Williams left the room for consideration of the item.

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor C Thomas and was seconded by Councillor S Mallender.

“Council recognises the importance of soil health in food production, combatting climate change, storing carbon, regulating water flow and quality, and as the basis for biodiversity. However, soil in Rushcliffe as elsewhere is under multiple threats including the ever-expanding built environment, flooding, contamination, industrial farming methods, and climate change.

Council will:

- Seek to strengthen policies that protect soil in the next round of the Local Plan, (in line with current National Planning Policy) including measures to minimise impermeable surfaces in development. Council will also call on the government to strengthen protection for soil in future planning policy and legislation.
- Review Rushcliffe’s own operations with determination to further improve soil health on the Council’s own land and land it manages in line with our Environmental Policy and planning policies and guidance.
- Where possible include soil health improvement as one of the criteria used to evaluate bids when distributing relevant external grants to Rushcliffe’s businesses and community groups.
- Within resource constraints, e.g. using social media and Rushcliffe Reports, engage and educate residents to promote small scale improvements in soil health in residential gardens e.g. using organic and permaculture techniques. Council will include nitrogen fixing plants in future free plant schemes.”

In moving the motion, Councillor Thomas stated that soil was the very stuff of life, a mixture of physical, chemical, and biological elements including minerals from rocks, organic matter from dead plants and animals, living organisms, air, and water. Councillor Thomas advised that soil held three times as much

carbon as the atmosphere, it reduced the risk of flooding by absorbing water and it delivered 95% of global food supplies; however, it was a limited resource under pressure from many factors.

Councillor Thomas referred to a 2019 report by the Environment Agency, which had highlighted that soil currently stored about ten billion tonnes of carbon, which was approximately equal to eighty years of annual UK greenhouse gas emissions. Councillor Thomas stated that intensive agriculture had caused arable soils to lose about 40% to 60% of their organic carbon, and in England and Wales almost four million hectares of soil was at risk of compaction, over two million hectares of soil was at risk of erosion and the spread of some materials could give rise to 300,000 hectares being contaminated in the UK.

Councillor Thomas outlined the four actions set out in the motion and confirmed that the motion asked the Council to collectively recognise the importance of soil, the threat that it was under and to identify actions that could be taken.

Councillor Inglis stated that the Council had a strong record of promoting the protection of soil health and this motion helped to ensure, where possible and within Council resources, that practices were embedded within the relevant Council policies and operational activities, whilst also promoting soil health to local residents and land owners in the Borough.

Councillor Inglis recognised the collaboration between Councillors Thomas and S Mallender in bringing forward this motion, which served the interests of the Borough and was deliverable. Councillor Inglis advised that the Conservative Group supported the motion, and he recommended that Councillors read the information available through the links listed on the agenda.

In seconding the motion, Councillor S Mallender advised that looking after soil involved also looking after worms, as worm casts could contain five times more nitrogen, seven times more phosphorus and 1000 times more beneficial bacteria than soil without worms. Councillor Mallender stated that worms loosened, mixed and oxygenated soil, they improved the structure and water drainage capacity and helped to clean up contaminated land. Councillor S Mallender stated that worms were very important in combatting climate change, as soil with worms was 90% more efficient than soil without.

Councillor Mallender confirmed that a quarter of the earth's species lived in soil and one gram of soil contained ten billion organisms. Unfortunately, every minute, the equivalent of thirty football pitches of fertile soil was lost and she hoped that the Council would do something to prevent that happening and would support this motion.

The substantive motion was carried.

Councillor Williams returned to his seat.

Question for Councillor S Mallender to Councillor Inglis

"In the spring I received my "Rushcliffe Gardener" magazine and although

there are some messages about climate change and the free tree scheme etc., I was disappointed to see suggestions to residents in the seasonal jobs section which are not supportive of the Council's environmental policies, such as using weedkiller, artificial fertiliser, and frequent mowing, instead of no mow. Why were these suggestions allowed to be printed?"

Councillor Inglis responded by stating that the Council strived to set the standard and provide residents with the information they needed to change their behaviours and habits if they choose to. That was in line with striking a balance, being pragmatic and proportionate to what realistically they could achieve with their own garden and for smaller plots for example, it might be impractical to leave a grassed area of a typical home, fully un-mowed for a whole year or remove weeds without assistance. Smaller scale residential gardening might mean some residents understandably struggled to match the greener, more environmentally friendly methods the Council adopted for its larger publicly owned sites. The magazine was written internally and with all good intentions and the Council would continue to endeavour to influence residents with updates to make a greener choices, including practical tips as gardening habits evolved.

Supplementary Question

Councillor S Mallender asked if future editions of the Rushcliffe Gardener would cover practical information for residents about ways of improving soil health within their own gardens.

Councillor Inglis responded that would not be a problem.

21 **Ratcliffe on Soar Local Development Order**

Councillors Barney and R Walker left the meeting for consideration of the item.

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, Councillor Upton presented the report of the Director – Development and Economic Growth, which outlined the Ratcliffe on Soar Local Development Order (LDO) and sought Council's approval to adopt the LDO.

Councillor Upton advised that this major decision would affect future generations and asked Councillors to make an open and objective decision, with no pre-determinations. Councillors were thanked for their engagement with this very detailed report and officers for their hard work in preparing it.

Councillor Upton reminded Council that Ratcliffe on Soar Power Station would be closing in September 2024 and so far going forward, the only approved use would be for the Emerge Waste to Energy Project. This was a unique, strategic site of national importance, with excellent transport links, excellent connectivity to the National Grid and was a highly visible gateway to Rushcliffe and Nottingham. The site was close to the urban conurbations of Nottingham, Derby, Leicester, and Loughborough, with their associated universities and high tech industries, with most of the site being within the East Midlands Freeport boundary, which came into operation in March 2023. Councillor Upton stated that the Government clearly expected this site to be rapidly

developed, as part of its levelling up agenda, and hopefully attracting international investment into the region. Council noted that the Freeport Business Case focused upon advanced manufacturing, decarbonised technology and renewable and low carbon energy generation and there was an urgency to get new businesses established by September 2026, being the final date to qualify for full Freeport benefits. Councillor Upton stated that any investors required clarity and certainty, and the current lack of any planning approval was a major issue, which the LDO would resolve. Council was reminded that the Freeport would generate significant income from retained Business Rates to invest into local projects.

Councillor Upton referred to the Cabinet decision in 2021 to prepare an LDO and to work collaboratively with Uniper, and since then detailed work had been ongoing to prepare this final draft. Council was advised that extensive consultation had taken place as detailed in the Statement of Community Involvement, it had been scrutinised numerous times by the cross party Local Development Forum (LDF) Group, and at its meeting in June, it had recommended adoption of the LDO. Councillor Upton stated that an LDO was an efficient planning application process, whereby proposals could be assessed against a specific set of criteria, giving the Council planning control over the redevelopment of the whole site. The use of LDOs was recommended in the National Planning Policy Guidance for simplifying and streamlining the planning process for large sites. The LDO would be valid for 25 years and could create certainty for investors, reduce risk and speed up the planning process, which Council was reminded would be needed to meet the tight three year deadline of September 2026.

Councillor Upton stated that there was a risk that without the LDO, and its Development Masterplan for the entire site, there would be piecemeal, speculative development through separate planning applications, which could be difficult to resist. Uniper was also not contractually required to demolish the cooling towers, and given the cost of their demolition, they could be left derelict, leading to a significant detrimental visual impact. It was likely that if adopted, some minor changes could be made to the LDO, given its flexibility, with review points at years three and five, and every five years thereafter, and Council was reminded that it could be modified or revoked at any time. The report gave significant information on key issues, most of the site was Brownfield land, with some areas used for agriculture and woodland and the site was in the Greenbelt; however, the conclusion was that very special circumstances did exist to justify the proposed development.

Councillor Upton referred to the Transport Assessment, which stated that Phase One could go ahead with some minor mitigation works, particularly to local roads, as the traffic flows should not be greater than from the existing power station, with a wider assessment required later on for Phases Two and Three. Council was advised that various conditions had been included, with further targeted highways investment required and Traffic Flow Caps would be monitored as the development progressed. Traffic modelling had shown that 96% of trips generated by the proposed development in peak hours would use the dual A453 and transport mitigation would need to be delivered, where and when required.

In respect of biodiversity, Councillor Upton stated that there was a mechanism for securing a minimum gain of 10%, with careful consideration given to the balance of achieving significant economic and employment benefits, and the environmental impact of development. On the southern site, particular areas of woodland would be retained, and new areas of landscaping and tree planting provided.

In conclusion, Councillor Upton advised that the approval of the Freeport development for the majority of this site had been confirmed and development would take place, and the decision taken tonight would affect how it was managed, by whom and when.

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

Councillor J Walker stated that the Labour Group supported sustainable, well paid jobs in easily accessible locations, using public transport, and it was in favour of investment in the "Green" economy and was excited about the redevelopment opportunities of this site in a way that met future needs sustainably. However, Councillor Walker stated that the Labour Group was also in favour of democratic oversight, which saw local government and the public sector working in partnership, with other groups and local businesses, and would allow the Council to control the sustainable development of this land. Unfortunately the Labour Group was deeply concerned that this democratic oversight was being substantially reduced by this LDO. Councillor Walker considered that what was being presented tonight showed laudable intent; however, there was insufficient detail on how highly paid, green jobs would be secured, as the LDO was currently only a skeleton proposal. Council was being asked to approve the LDO as a way of making it easier for large businesses to develop the site for profit and the benefit of corporate interest, and in the process that democratic oversight would be reduced. Councillor Walker stated that the costs were high and the returns hypothetical, with promised jobs in exchange for control. Of greater concern was the imposition of the September 2026 deadline, which resulted in Council being advised that this LDO must be passed to avoid missing that deadline, and if approved it would not have a proper Traffic Feasibility Study in place, more ancient trees and Greenbelt would be lost. The LDO did not allow for specifics, and a valuable site would be given away as democratic control would be lost when it could be developed more positively for the benefit of local residents. Councillor Walker concluded by stating that there was no detail of what environmental or social improvement gains there would be, so despite being in favour of some stated terms, the Labour Group was unable to support the recommendation, due to the lack of concrete expectations around sustainability and to the reduction of the Council's democratic control of this strategic site.

Councillor Thomas requested that a recorded vote be taken on the proposed amendment she was about to make, any other amendments and the final vote, and confirmed that on Wednesday she had circulated to all Councillors the proposed amendment as follows:

It is RECOMMENDED that Council:

- a) notes the consultation representations received on the draft Local Development Order;
- b) notes the environmental information and the conclusions reached on the significant effects of the proposed development on the environment as required by Regulation 26(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended);
- c) empowers the Director Development and Economic Growth to amend the Local Development Order Documents etc to:
 1. protect trees on the Southern site unless the applicant can demonstrate an absolute need for a contiguous building of a size that would require trees to be removed;
 2. bring forward the traffic study for local roads, decoupling this from the national highways traffic issues at J24 etc, so that no certificate of compliance may be issued until this study is complete, with any mitigation measures identified and costed.
- d) otherwise endorses the Ratcliffe on Soar Local Development Order Documents and Supporting Documents; and
- e) adopts the Ratcliffe on Soar Local Development Order (with amendment as above) in accordance with Schedule 4A(3) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

Councillor Thomas stated that there was deep unease in Leake ward about the LDO. Council was advised that whilst there was support for redeveloping the northern site, once the power station had ceased operation, the southern site was very different, as it was an enormous Greenfield site, in the Greenbelt and development would cause a huge visual impact and loss of trees and habitat. Questions had been raised as to whether there had been sufficient detailed consideration, including other sites and it appeared that there was a huge rush to approve this due to the deadline for Freeport incentives. However, Councillor Thomas stated that the Government was likely to extend the deadline for the tax benefits and that it was more important that the right decision was made rather than making it quickly.

Councillor Thomas stated that ideally approval for the southern site should be deferred so that issues could be addressed; however, to be pragmatic she had suggested two amendments that would at least partly address two of the main issues, with officers being given delegated authority to make those changes, to avoid any long delay in approving the LDO.

The first amendment c) 1. would put weight behind officers' comments that trees would not be removed unless there was very strong justification, for example a giga-factory, which actually required a single huge building.

The second amendment c) 2. related to local roads. Councillor Thomas advised that unless there was a plan to deter traffic from using country roads,

village life would be impacted, with road safety compromised and that would include roads through West and East Leake and spreading much wider. Council was advised that bracketing this problem with the wider issue of congestion at J24 at peak times was not helpful and that due to the location of the site, country roads would be used whether or not the main roads were congested. Currently, the work to study this further, identify mitigation options, and obtain developer contributions would be left far too late and should be brought forward, given that with 7000 jobs expected those trips would materialise and would have an adverse impact at any time of day.

In conclusion, Councillor Thomas asked for support for the two amendments, and suggested that if some members wished to support one but not the other she would be happy for them to be voted on separately.

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

Councillor Upton advised that the Conservative Group would not be supporting the amendment and stated that whilst in theory amendments could be made to the LDO this evening, this was not the time or place to agree policy changes. Considerable time had been taken, many LDF Group meetings held, where significant revisions had been made, and Council was reminded that the LDO could be revised, and any suggestions made this evening should be taken to another meeting of the LDF Group following its approval this evening.

Councillor Clarke stated that the proposed amendment was laudable and agreed with the spirit and sentiment and stated that he was sure that everyone here wanted to protect the environment, trees, and limit traffic impact on local communities; however, as the original LDO had already gone out to public consultation, if the amendments were accepted, it would have to go out to consultation again. Councillor Clarke agreed that it would be more appropriate to submit the suggestions to the LDF Group for consideration and reminded Council that the LDO would be subject to regular reviews. The LDO in essence was an outline planning permission, with further detailed applications for each building coming forward, and at that stage those issues could be addressed, and Councillor Clarke hoped that everything that could be done to protect the environment would be.

Councillor R Mallender, in stating that the Green Group would be supporting the amendment felt that this was the forum to consider suggestions and decide what worked best for local residents, and in this case, given the impact of the site, the wider area, and if this required additional work, then this item should be brought to a future meeting.

In supporting the amendment, Councillor Way referred to the Transport Assessment and considered that it would not be a big issue to bring that forward given the major safety concerns and stated that the main local concerns related to the minor roads in the southern part of the Borough. Councillor Way questioned the comment made by Councillor Upton regarding the extensive consultation and stated that villages in the southern part of the Borough had been systematically ignored, with only one meeting in September 2022, and since then there had been no communication, and although there

was an existing Forum, the southern villages had never been part of that.

Councillor Birch supported the amendment, which he considered both reasonable and sensible, and stated that he agreed with the Freeport and that the LDO was the best way forward to create jobs and welcome innovation; however, not at any cost. There had been a great deal of information to digest since the agenda had been published and this process felt rushed. Councillor Birch was concerned about the significant impact on local villages and stated that it would be better to get it right first before approving it.

Councillor Billin referred to the Arboriculture Report, which detailed several areas of trees through the spine of the southern part of the site that were classified as A1, which meant that they were of value and a potential for habitat and carbon capture, and those would be removed. In respect of traffic, local roads were already used as rat runs, traffic would increase, with mitigation required, and waiting for a traffic study until later was unacceptable. Councillor Billin reiterated that new Councillors had not had the time to digest so much information, the process was being rushed and local residents deserved better.

Councillor Thomas thanked Councillors for their generally supportive comments and stated that although she understood the points raised about taking comments back to the LDF Group, which would be too late, and she had been raising the issue of local roads for the past two years at Group meetings. She advised that the traffic study was already referred to; however, it would not happen until after the first development phase, it would take years, and would be too late, with villages such as West Leake wrecked by the increased traffic. Councillor Thomas disagreed with the figures detailing the percentage of traffic that would use the A453 and stressed the need for an earlier traffic study to take place. In respect of trees on the southern site, although officers had advised that there was no intention to fell those trees unless they had to, it stated in the Arboriculture Report that those trees would be felled. Councillor Thomas confirmed that the Leake Independent Group had no wish to delay the LDO, and the two suggested small amendments would not delay that process.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a recorded vote was taken for this item as follows:

FOR: Councillors J Billin, T Birch, R Bird, S Calvert, J Chaplain, K Chewings, S Dellar, G Fletcher, M Gaunt, E Georgiou, P Gowland, C Grocock, R Mallender, S Mallender, L Plant, D Polenta, C Thomas, J Walker, and L Way

AGAINST: Councillors A Brennan, A Brown, R Butler, N Clarke, T Combellack, J Cottee, A Edyvean, S Ellis, R Inglis, D Mason, P Matthews, H Om, H Parekh, A Phillips, N Regan, D Simms, D Soloman, R Upton, D Viridi, T Wells, G Wheeler, J Wheeler, and G Williams

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

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

Councillor Brown advised that the Gotham ward had taken a keen interest in

the redevelopment of the site and carefully considered the proposals. Five parish councils had worked collaboratively, with stated objectives that any development should ensure high quality jobs, be minimised to the south of the A453, should consider the Greenbelt, and the cumulative impact on communities. Councillor Brown stated that the LDO provided a framework that met the Council's vision and had allowed community input, both directly and through its elected representatives, and it was noted that this had led to a number of improvements to the LDO. Councillor Brown referred to the pressure from strategic distribution sites both locally and nationally and the potential attractiveness of the site for that use, and whilst the LDO did allocate such development on the northern site, Council was reminded that this could be much higher, if development came via other means. Residents in Gotham were more aware than anyone of the differing land characteristics between the northern and southern sites, together with the importance of the Greenbelt, and the increasing feeling of creeping industrialisation. Councillor Brown stated that it was crucial to his support that the acceptable land use characteristics for development on the southern site would be restricted to advanced manufacturing, decarbonised technology, and renewable and low carbon energy generation. Development on that southern site would be robustly scrutinised through the Certificate of Compliance process and Council was reminded that the LDO had been further improved to ensure that elected members would be involved in this process rather than just officers. In respect of traffic, Councillor Brown acknowledged the impact on local roads, and continued to advocate for further transport impact work to be undertaken and had received reassurance that that would be done.

Councillor Gaunt stated that yet again the Labour Group felt that they were being asked to vote for a proposal, which currently had very limited scope, with future promises being made, and a very quick deadline to make the decision. Councillor Gaunt referred to a previous Council meeting in October 2019, when the Local Plan Part 2 had been considered. At that meeting assurances had been given that all the concerns raised regarding transport and education associated with the hundreds of new houses would be addressed; however, that was not the case, with local villages now suffering the consequences of that decision, which Councillors were told had to be rushed through quickly. Councillor Gaunt expressed concern that Councillors were yet again being asked to vote for something, which made future promises, which he did not believe would be delivered.

Councillor Chewings stated that he was in support of the LDO, but not at any cost, and it was inappropriate to rush through an important policy decision because of the Freeport deadline, as that decision should be taken in a proper, balanced way. Significant concerns had been raised in the consultation regarding the loss of trees and habitat, and traffic impact, with Leicestershire County Council's Highway Authority still objecting and the National Highway Authority only recently removing its objection, based on future plans. Councillor Chewings stated that he disagreed with previous comments that further consultation would be required if the amendments were accepted, as this had not been required previously.

Councillor R Mallender advised that the closure of the power station was a necessary step in moving towards a low carbon future and it was for

Councillors to ensure that the next steps taken were the right ones. Although there was much to commend in the LDO, Councillor Mallender stated that significant areas of concern remained, which required further work, as already highlighted. In respect of biodiversity net gain, Councillor Mallender referred to the report being considered by the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group, which established a clear hierarchy for dealing with this, and as it currently stood, he considered that there was too little emphasis in the LDO on the avoidance of destruction of habitat and the retention of existing biodiversity. Councillor Mallender welcomed the redevelopment of the northern part of the site, including attempts to maintain the rail use; however, further work was required to improve both the access to and within the site. Councillor Mallender stated that he was concerned about the potential governance changes and the potential loss of influence for Rushcliffe going forward, towards a wider combined authority.

Councillor Grocock reiterated that as a new Councillor he also felt that the process had been rushed, and on reviewing the LDO, there appeared to be nothing in the proposal to prevent this site going the same way as many other post-industrial sites. The LDO was passive as it would rely on the market to take advantage of the site's acknowledged strategic advantages and Councillor Grocock considered that the Council had not gone far enough to mandate the appropriate types of usage. In respect of the Freeport deadline, Councillor Grocock questioned if a different, future government would have an alternative approach, and rather than taking this passive approach, the Council should work with all partners and parties to develop a clear and detailed masterplan.

Councillor Combellack stated that the LDO would ensure that the Council retained control of the planning process, it just simplified it, and once the LDO was approved, amendments could still be made to it. Having seen the site, Councillor Combellack felt that considerable thought had been taken regarding the preservation of trees and to the development of additional landscape habitats on the southern site, which she commended. The Council was reminded that the proposal would bring wonderful opportunities for Rushcliffe, and with the window of opportunity currently open, a decision had to be made. As the Chair of Corporate Overview Group, Councillor Combellack confirmed that she would ensure that scrutiny remained active in this area.

Councillor Gowland expressed concern that there was no guarantee of the site having low carbon, high tech, green jobs, and the implications if that happened. She questioned why there were plans to develop the southern site, which did not need to be developed, when there appeared to be empty units on the very large business park at Fairham and stated that it would be more appropriate to spread such development across the Borough, to reduce commuting by car to work.

Councillor Butler stated that difficult decisions had to be made, which at least gave the Council some control, and the LDF Group had been working on this for over 18 months. It was hoped that the significant details in the report would give Council the assurance that appropriate consideration had been given to all of the understandable concerns and to keep delaying things would put both the Council and local communities in a weaker position. In respect of employment, Councillor Butler felt that it was far better to have the LDO in place, rather than

to have no control. Nobody liked to see trees and vegetation lost; however, Councillor Butler stated that he felt assured through the report and meetings he had attended, that any losses would be handled very carefully. In acknowledging concerns raised over transport and traffic issues, Councillor Butler stated that the LDO once passed would still provide flexibility.

Councillor Brennan stated that in her own professional experience, historically the East Midlands had always missed out on large scale government and international investment for varying reasons and continued to do so. Regional Development Agencies had been set up to try and address those issues, unfortunately that hard work and vision had been undermined, most frequently due to local rivalries and parochial interests. Rushcliffe now had the opportunity to help redress that under investment, as the LDO was within the Council's gift to deliver high quality investment and skilled jobs on a site of regional, national, even international significance. Councillor Brennan talked of the opportunity to raise the bar on the type of development and employment that could be attracted to the Borough, and the importance of retaining graduates from the many local universities, together with the substantial Business Rates that could be generated and then reinvested. Talks were already underway with major investors, who required assurance of a clear route to achieve their corporate ambitions, and without that assurance they would invest elsewhere. If the LDO was not approved tonight, what was the future for such an important site, the gateway to the Borough? No Councillor wished to see woodland removed unnecessarily or neighbouring villages blighted by traffic and Councillor Brennan stated that she believed that those objectives could be achieved, whilst also approving the LDO this evening.

Councillor Simms stated that the process had not been rushed, he had attended LDF Group meetings and seen that checks and balances were in place and deadlines must be acknowledged. Everyone at the meeting wanted the best for Rushcliffe and it was important not to let ideology stop the Council from moving forward or think that making a profit was bad. Councillor Simms stated that the LDO needed to be agreed to stop the area missing out on investment, which was going elsewhere.

Councillor Thomas stated that there were many other issues that she could have raised and proposed more changes to the LDO, and all through the process she had made suggestions, which had helped to improve the document, and she would carry on doing that. Councillor Thomas stated that she was disappointed as she believed that her amendments would have given her a way to support the LDO, and that had not happened.

Councillor Parekh stated that the site benefitted from a number of unique characteristics and was distinctively well placed to meet government aspirations to progress the levelling up agenda and to address climate change. Following the planned closure in September 2024, the demolition and clearance of the site would potentially be a very lengthy process, so by accepting the development on the more open areas of the site, not only would the Freeport objectives be met, but an economically active environment would be retained. Council was reminded of other former power station sites around the country, now abandoned and derelict, and Councillor Parekh hoped that by bringing this LDO forward any chance of that happening would be minimised.

Councillor Polenta stated that a priority of local government was not only to implement good policy, it was also to allow Councillors the opportunity to debate, and that was meaningless if a decision had been pre-empted, and this was the place to discuss the amendment. Reference had been made to not voting based on ideology; however, Councillor Polenta felt that this was the case for many this evening and reiterated the importance of making decisions via the democratic process.

Councillor Birch agreed with Councillor Simms that making a profit was good and agreed with Councillor Gaunt's comments about developers not keeping promises and was concerned that this would happen again with the LDO. Councillor Birch stated that whilst being in support of the LDO in principle, and all the benefits it would bring, he could not support the LDO as it stood, not for ideological reasons, or because he was against investment in the region, rather it was because he wanted it to be done properly, with provisions in place to address the concerns raised.

Councillor Clarke referred to the huge investment, the generation of large numbers of highly skilled jobs and stated that the tax free status of the Freeport was important, and should not be put at risk, as that was how investment would come into the area. He reiterated the comments made by Councillor Brennan and reinforced the importance of working together to agree a way forward to attract investment and stated that this was a major opportunity to do that, in conjunction with all parties involved with the Freeport. Council was reminded that it was vital that Rushcliffe had control through the LDO, as without it, investment for high tech development could be lost, and the area would be left with logistics instead. Rushcliffe had an excellent reputation, and that would encourage investment, which would bring profit, and in turn wealth and better standards of living. Councillor Clarke reiterated that work on the LDO had been ongoing for over two years, and whilst ensuring that communities were protected, and all factors were considered, a decision needed to be made.

Councillor Upton reiterated the importance of the report and decision to be taken and noted comments made, including a reference to the consultation undertaken and referred to Appendix 7, the Statement of Community Involvement, which detailed the extensive consultation undertaken and listed the many comments received. Councillor Upton confirmed that the site owners, Uniper had worked collaboratively with the Council and through this LDO the Council would have control, for example to prohibit logistics on the southern site. Council was reminded that the Freeport had been signed off and would go ahead, including the redevelopment of the power station, and Councillor Upton stated that it was far better for the Council to be able to control what was built on the site. Concerns had been raised about a lack of democratic control; however, the process for dealing with Certificates of Compliance had been revised and enhanced, with final decisions being made by the Planning Committee. Councillor Upton questioned comments made regarding insufficient detail, and referred to the 400 plus pages of appendices, which he considered more than adequate and questioned the notion that the government might extend the deadline for Freeport benefits from September 2026, as there was no indication of that. Council was reminded that the reference to the giga-factory was simply an artist's impression of what would be

a worst case scenario, with actual detailed applications considered by officers and Councillors in the future. Councillor Upton reiterated that in respect of traffic, Phase 1 was all that was being immediately considered, and as the power station decommissioned and lost employment, the number of vehicle movements overall would not increase, and he agreed that he would not wish to see major development affecting local roads.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a recorded vote was taken for this item as follows:

FOR: Councillors R Bird, A Brennan, A Brown, R Butler, N Clarke, T Combellack, J Cottee, A Edyvean, S Ellis, E Georgiou, R Inglis, D Mason, P Matthews, H Om, H Parekh, A Phillips, N Regan, D Simms, D Soloman, R Upton, D Viridi, T Wells, G Wheeler, J Wheeler, and G Williams

AGAINST: Councillors T Birch, S Calvert, J Chaplain, K Chewings, S Dellar, G Fletcher, M Gaunt, P Gowland, C Grocock, R Mallender, S Mallender, L Plant, D Polenta, C Thomas, and J Walker

ABSTENTIONS: Councillors J Billin and L Way

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried, and it was **RESOLVED** that

- a) the consultation representations received on the draft Local Development Order be noted;
- b) the environmental information and the conclusions reached on the significant effects of the proposed development on the environment as required by Regulation 26(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended) be noted;
- c) the Ratcliffe on Soar Local Development Order documents and supporting documents be endorsed; and
- d) the Ratcliffe on Soar Local Development Order be adopted in accordance with Schedule 4A(3) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

Councillors Barney and R Walker returned to their seats.

Councillor Gowland referred to Item 13 Motion a) and advised that as she had been made aware that an amendment would be submitted to amend key words in the motion, she would withdraw the motion, and bring a motion back in September, hopefully following negotiations with the administration.

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

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

Councillor Clarke explained that this was an administrative item proposing updates relating to changes within the Council following the May 2023 elections, staffing changes and other procedural amendments, which had been proposed to further clarify the Council's operating procedures. The Leader highlighted that the Constitution was a living document that was reviewed annually by Governance Scrutiny Group and changes were constantly being made to reflect changes in legislation, operation procedures and best practice.

Council noted that this year's changes had been considered by the Governance Scrutiny Group at its meeting on 29 June 2023, and Councillor Clarke thanked the Group for their deliberations. Whilst many of the proposed changes had been discussed and agreed, it was clear from the meeting that more time was required to consider detailed changes to the way Planning Committee operated, particularly the rules around the closure of that meeting. Therefore, a further opportunity would be taken to review those changes in more detail at the September Governance Scrutiny Group meeting before an additional report was brought back to Council.

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

Councillor J Walker thanked officers for the work they had undertaken on updating this complex document and welcomed the return of Planning Committee to the evening as this made it easier for both Councillors and members of the public to attend. Councillor Walker also welcomed the use of more modern, inclusive language giving Councillors the choice of Chair or Chairman when undertaking this role.

Councillor Calvert brought Council's attention to paragraph 3.3 of the report, which highlighted the intention to take changes proposed to the way Planning Committee operated back to the next Governance Scrutiny Group in September. He asked if an additional matter could be considered by the Group relating to the circumstances under which an application was considered by the Planning Committee. Councillor Calvert went on to appraise Council of an application in Keyworth recently approved under delegated powers in which the community had put forward significant objections but, as Ward Councillors had agreed with the planning officer recommendation, the opportunity for members of the public to outline their concerns to the Committee had been removed. Councillor Calvert called this a democratic deficit and a fundamental flaw in the arrangements for Planning Committee, which gave the impression that the application had not been considered openly or transparently.

Councillor Butler outlined, for the benefit of new Councillors, the reasons behind moving Planning Committee to its current afternoon slot but said that he was very supportive of a move back to 6pm. He also commented on the change of language in the Constitution and, whilst he was happy to be called Chairman, he appreciated that people now had a choice of language to use.

Councillor R Mallender thanked officers for putting forward such an extensive set of proposals and sought clarification on the requirement to submit comments on planning applications in writing, as he presumed this also meant by email.

Councillor Thomas appreciated that the proposals relating to Planning Committee were expected to return to Governance Scrutiny Group for further discussion but wished to point out that having no closure time for Planning Committee would separate it from every other committee the Council had and a cut off time was required.

Councillor Edyvean reassured Council that the finish time of Planning Committee had been considered by Governance Scrutiny Group, which had concluded that it would be for the Chairman of Planning Committee to manage the agenda appropriately.

Councillor S Mallender thanked officers for bringing the report forward and members of the Governance Scrutiny Group for reviewing the changes. She was pleased to see the change from Chairman to Chair throughout the document and welcomed the change in time for the Planning Committee, which would make it much easier for Councillors and members of the public to attend the Committee.

Councillor Way asked that Governance Scrutiny Group consider including neighbouring Ward Councillors when consulting on the Certificates of Compliance for the Local Development Order, as there might be times when a neighbouring ward was equally, or more, impacted on than the ward in which the development was taking place.

In summing up, Councillor Brennan reiterated that the Constitution was a living document, and it would continue to be updated to keep it relevant and ensure it maintained efficient and effective governance arrangements for the Council.

Councillor Clarke took the opportunity to address a number of points made by Councillors during the debate and encouraged those who had additional ideas to bring them forward to Governance Scrutiny Group for debate.

It was **RESOLVED** that the proposed revisions to the Constitution be adopted.

23 **LGA Debate Not Hate Campaign**

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Transformation, Leisure, and Wellbeing, Councillor J Wheeler, presented the report of the Monitoring Officer outlining the importance of the LGA Debate Not Hate campaign.

He went on to call upon Council to support the campaign, highlighting the unfortunate reality that too many Councillors received abuse whilst simply doing their job and acknowledged that everyone was entitled to their own views but recognised that those could be shared respectfully. He reminded Council about what happened if hate went unchecked and referred to the tragic deaths of MPs Jo Cox and Sir David Amess.

Councillor Inglis seconded the recommendation and informed Council that hate included everything from murder to snide comments in person or on social media. Derogatory comments could have a significant impact on an individual's mental well-being and the LGA campaign was an excellent step

forward in addressing unacceptable behaviour. Councillor Inglis called upon Councillors to take care when carrying out their duties especially if they were doing so alone.

Councillor Chaplain noted that Rushcliffe residents were predominately well mannered and respectful, but that this did not mean that the campaign was any less important here. She recognised that the debate in the Chamber this evening had covered very wide ranging views, but everyone had participated respectfully, and she encouraged her fellow Councillors to report any abuse experienced and get support.

Councillor S Mallender thanked the Monitoring Officer for bringing the campaign to Council's attention and hoped that all Councillors would support the recommendation to show that the abuse seen elsewhere had no place in Rushcliffe.

Councillor J Wheeler thanked Councillors for their support and reiterated that Councillors should be able to speak in the Chamber without fear and concluded by stressing that the Council was signing up to the campaign in support of Councillors here and across the country to show that hate would not be tolerated.

Councillor Brennan requested that a recorded vote be taken.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a recorded vote was taken for this item as follows:

FOR: Councillors M Barney, J Billin, T Birch, R Bird, A Brennan, A Brown, R Butler, S Calvert, J Chaplain, K Chewings, N Clarke, T Combellack, J Cottee, S Dellar, A Edyvean, S Ellis, G Fletcher, M Gaunt, E Georgiou, P Gowland, C Grocock, R Inglis, R Mallender, S Mallender, D Mason, P Matthews, H Om, H Parekh, A Phillips, L Plant, D Polenta, N Regan, D Simms, D Soloman, C Thomas, R Upton, D Viridi, J Walker, R Walker, L Way, T Wells, G Wheeler, J Wheeler, and G Williams

It was **RESOLVED** that the LGA campaign be endorsed and supported by signing the online Debate not Hate public statement.

24 Notices of Motion

The Mayor announced that unless the meeting was extended, there would not be enough time for the motion, and she suggested that the meeting moved to Item 14 Questions from Councillors.

Councillor Gaunt proposed that a vote to be taken to decide if the meeting should be extended and that was seconded by Councillor J Walker.

It was **RESOLVED** that the meeting be extended and would finish no later than 10.30pm.

The Mayor advised that in the interest of trying to complete this item, she

considered it appropriate to reduce the time for speeches from 10 minutes to five minutes for the mover of the motion, and three minutes for all other speeches.

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Chewings and seconded by Councillor Birch.

“We propose that Rushcliffe Borough Council commits to implementing a comprehensive feasibility study into kerbside glass collection program for the residents of Rushcliffe Borough. This motion aims to promote environmental sustainability, reduce landfill waste, and encourage responsible waste management practices.

Rushcliffe Borough Council resolves to:

Evaluate the practical needs, expenses, and potential effects of introducing kerbside glass collection in Rushcliffe. This will be undertaken by a feasibility study overseen by the relevant Scrutiny group. The feasibility study has a target to present its findings to Cabinet by December 2023 for a decision to be made in time for the 2024/2025 budget.

The feasibility study in its entirety will be shared with the full council on being completed.”

In moving the motion, Councillor Chewings informed Council that this was an important issue, integral to the welfare of the Borough and society’s environmental future, as it embraced a more sustainable approach to life, and until now the urgent issue of introducing kerbside glass collection was waiting for Rushcliffe to address. Councillor Chewings called for change and demanded transparency moving forward, with glass often treated as a disposable entity, which was unacceptable. He stated that the current system, which merged glass waste and general household refuse was not just wasteful but an unfulfilled opportunity and questioned how burying or incinerating such a precious resource could be allowed, when that squandered natural resources and placed an undue strain on waste facilities. Councillor Chewings referred to the benefits of kerbside collection, including; promoting environmental sustainability, reducing the amount of waste sent to landfills, allowing glass to be effectively recycled into new products, the further growth of the recycling industry, together with potential long term financial savings with the reduction of waste management costs, and finally encouraging community engagement and empowering individuals to contribute to a more sustainable future.

Councillor Chewings referred to comments made by the previous Leader of the Council at the Council meeting in March committing Rushcliffe to remaining the number one authority for recycling in the county and questioned how this authority could claim to be the best when it was failing to collect and recycle such a common material, and that it was time to act and make a difference.

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

Councillor Inglis stated that all Councils shared the same frustrations over the time taken by the government to determine the details of the Environment Act,

and assured Council that work was already well underway to research the potential implications of what this motion proposed, and Councillor Inglis proposed an amendment to the motion to reflect that situation as follows:

“Rushcliffe Borough Council resolves to:

Work in partnership with the Nottinghamshire Joint Waste Management Committee (JWMC) to continue the study, which commenced in 2022 to evaluate the practical needs, expenses, and potential effects of introducing kerbside glass collection in Rushcliffe, subject to the implications and requirements of the Environment Act.

Any proposals from the JWMC study will be taken through the Council’s normal decision making and budget setting process before any implementations.”

Councillor Inglis confirmed that Rushcliffe already operated a very successful glass recycling scheme, which had drawn recent praise from the Joint Waste Management Committee (JWMC). The bring site scheme collected nearly 2,500 tons of colour separated glass each year, which was comparable to many other locally operated kerbside schemes, and that glass was recycled into new glass. The Council received an income from it, which helped to support the service in the form of recycling credits from the County Council of £200k and £30k for the sale of the glass. In respect of a Feasibility Study, Councillor Inglis confirmed that work was already underway with the JWMC, in conjunction with other Nottinghamshire councils, to prepare for the requirements of the Environment Act. Council noted that it was vital that this work was done through this forum to ensure a consistent approach, and if the Council was to move to kerbside collection, in advance of the Environment Act, a number of significant, negative impacts would arise, including substantial additional vehicle and staffing costs, no further government funding and loss of its current income. It was therefore important that officers continued to work with colleagues across the county to plan for the major changes proposed by the Act and residents were encouraged to continue using the excellent bring site network across the Borough.

Councillor Thomas raised a Point of Order and questioned if this was an acceptable amendment, as it completely changed the motion.

Councillor J Wheeler seconding the amendment to the motion and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Chewings stated that he did not accept the amendment.

Councillor Clarke sought clarification regarding the Point of Order raised by Councillor Thomas and asked for confirmation that the amendment had been accepted by the Monitoring Officer. The Mayor confirmed that it had been accepted.

Councillor Chewings informed Council that he would be speaking against the amendment, as his motion wanted to change things that so far Rushcliffe had failed to do, and he went on to refer to numerous local councils in the county that ran successful kerbside glass collection. Council was reminded that this

issue had been previously discussed at Cabinet in December 2021, when Councillor Inglis had stated that he hoped for national clarity in the New Year, and yet it was now 2023, and Councillor Chewings asked if the Council had the vision to put society first and protect the environment. He concluded by stating that his motion simply asked for a business case to present options and could not understand why this was not acceptable.

Councillor Ellis advised that in his experience kerbside collection would be a retrograde step, with more material going to landfill compared to the current excellent scheme in Rushcliffe.

Councillor Simms stated that it was his understanding that glass recycling was not beneficial to the environment, as it was better to reuse rather than recycle, as happened in Germany. Council was reminded that kerbside collection was not new, and it was more expensive, Rushcliffe spent money carefully, and that was why it had the lowest Council Tax in the county. Councillor Simms felt that the bring site scheme also encouraged people to walk and keep fit and he did not think kerbside collection was forward thinking.

Councillor Grocock stated that both the original and amended motions talked about investigations and sought assurance that the scrutiny and level of investigation that the original motion was proposing would be assured through the amended motion.

Councillor Gowland confirmed that it was more efficient to recycle glass than throw it away, although it would be far better to reuse it.

Councillor S Mallender stated that she agreed with the original motion, whilst acknowledging that collecting glass as part of a single bin was not good, as it increased landfill, as the glass was not recycled, rather it was made into road surfacing. She agreed that reusing glass was far better and recycling glass into glass was to be encouraged, as it could continually be recycled and helped to cut water and air pollution. Councillor Mallender stated that she was concerned about the reference to budget setting and that it would be too expensive, and she agreed that there should be a Feasibility Study and called for glass to be sorted on the doorstep.

Councillor Birch advised that recycling glass consumed 40% less energy than producing new glass and stated that it was often difficult for the elderly and disabled to get to the recycling centres and considered that kerbside collection would improve the quality of life for many residents. He also questioned the assumption that most glass went into landfill. Councillor Birch stated that the motion was sensible, better for residents and did not commit to anything, whilst the amendment would mean that the Council would lose control and given the Council's record of failure with bringing this forward, he considered that it was time for kerbside collection to be implemented, as most other councils already offered this service.

Councillor Combellack expressed concern regarding anti-social behaviour (ASB) and the potential for glass to be used as a weapon if it was collected at the kerbside.

Councillor R Walker stated that he was in favour of glass recycling; however, not at any cost, the process should not be rushed, more time was required, and the amendment proposed that.

Councillor Clarke stated that kerbside collection was very expensive and hence the amendment talked about the implications and requirements of the Environment Act because it would be important to know what costs the Council would be committed to. It was noted that the councils previously referred to had various collection schemes, which resulted in glass being treated in different ways, which was why the Council had a bottle bank system, with separated glass, which could be sold. In answer to Councillor Grocock's question regarding assurance, Councillor Clarke confirmed that benefits and costs could be considered by the Communities Scrutiny Group. Concerns had been raised about ASB and safety issues with broken glass on pavements, and all that had to be considered, and Councillor Clarke stated that principally the cost had to be considered, as councils with kerbside collection did have much higher Council Tax.

Councillor Butler agreed that there were many bottle banks in the Borough, which were split to collect different coloured glass and they were well used. He assured Councillors that the amended motion would take the situation seriously and that Rushcliffe had a very good reputation in respect of recycling.

Councillor Chewings requested a recorded vote on the amendment.

Councillor J Wheeler felt that everyone agreed that there should be more recycling and that the key issue was how that was done, and the reasoning behind the amendment was that work had already started with the JWMC, and if Rushcliffe was to move to kerbside collection, then the County Council would be responsible for glass disposal. It was therefore vital that Rushcliffe worked with its partners, including the County Council to ensure that all options were considered, and any proposals would then go through the Council's scrutiny and decision making process and Council was reminded that although other councils did have kerbside collections, their recycling rates were lower than Rushcliffe.

Councillor Inglis reiterated that everyone was waiting for the Environment Act and the huge impact that would have on recycling with associated implications and stated that Rushcliffe had to work with its partners. Councillor Inglis hoped that a decision would come soon, potentially post September and advised that he was pushing to achieve this and once that decision had been made, Rushcliffe and its partners would be ready. It was not sensible for a prudent Council like Rushcliffe to start spending money on a different scheme before the government decision was made, and the Feasibility Study was already in place.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a recorded vote was taken for this item as follows:

FOR: Councillors M Barney, J Billin, R Bird, A Brennan, A Brown, R Butler, N Clarke, T Combellack, J Cottee, S Dellar, A Edyvean, S Ellis, E Georgiou, R

Inglis, D Mason, P Matthews, H Om, H Parekh, A Phillips, N Regan, D Simms, D Soloman, R Upton, D Viridi, R Walker, L Way, T Wells, G Wheeler, J Wheeler, and G Williams

AGAINST: Councillors T Birch, S Calvert, J Chaplain, K Chewings, G Fletcher, M Gaunt, P Gowland, C Grocock, R Mallender, S Mallender, L Plant, D Polenta, C Thomas, and J Walker.

The amended motion was carried and became the substantive motion.

Councillor R Mallender spoke on the substantive motion and stated that the Green Group would be supporting this, as it did want something taken forward, with residents wanting to see improvements to glass recycling and reference was made to the many times this issue had been raised. Councillor Mallender referred to the importance of separating glass, as mixed glass was crushed and used for road surfacing, which did not help with carbon reduction, or improve overall recycling rates. Council was reminded that as yet no regulations had been put in place for the Environment Act; however, it was important that the Council made a statement of intent that it wanted to see proper kerbside glass collection to allow it to be recycled. Councillor Mallender agreed that re-use was better and referred to the opportunities to do that, which should be supported.

Councillor Inglis concluded by reiterating that Rushcliffe wanted to be the best at recycling and that was the aim, and by working through the JWMC that would be achieved going forward.

No further Councillors wished to speak so the substantive motion was put to the vote and carried.

25 **Adjournment**

The Mayor announced that as it was nearly 10.30pm, the meeting would conclude, and the remaining item would be carried forward to the next meeting of Council in September 2023. She thanked Councillors for their attention through such a long evening.

It was **RESOLVED** that in accordance with the Council's Constitution, the Mayor closed the meeting at 10.27pm and the remaining item was adjourned to the next Council meeting in September 2023.

The meeting closed at 10.27 pm.

CHAIR

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Council

Thursday, 21 September 2023

Approval of the Scrutiny Annual Reports 2022/23

Report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services

**Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide Leadership,
Councillor N Clarke**

1. Purpose of report

The Scrutiny Annual Report, attached as an Appendix, provides a review of the work undertaken by the Council's four Scrutiny Groups during 2022/23.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Council endorses the work undertaken by the four Scrutiny Groups during 2022/23.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

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

4. Supporting Information

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

Corporate Overview Group

- Feedback from Scrutiny Chairmen
- Consideration of Scrutiny Work Programmes
- Finance and Performance Management
- Health and Safety Annual Report
- Scrutiny Witness Guide
- Customer Feedback Annual Report
- Review of 2019-23 Strategic Tasks.

Governance Scrutiny Group

- Internal Audit Progress Report
- Annual Audit Completion Report
- Internal Audit Strategy

- Risk Management and Progress Report
- Draft Risk Management Strategy
- Going Concern
- Capital and Investment Strategy Outturn 2021/22
- Capital and Investment Strategy Q1 and Q3 2022/23
- Capital and Investment Strategy – Mid Year Review 2022/23
- Capital and Investment Strategy 2023/24
- Approval of the Statement of Accounts
- Streetwise Annual Report
- Annual Fraud Report 2021/22
- Annual Audit Letter
- External Audit Annual Plan 2021/22
- Annual Governance Statement 2021/22
- Revision of the Council’s Constitution.

Communities Scrutiny Group

- Access Agreement – Canal and River Trust
- Sports Development in Rushcliffe
- Council’s External Communications Strategy
- Customer Access Strategy
- Establishment of Youth Council
- Corporate Enforcement
- Carbon Management Plan
- Environment Policy.

Growth and Development Group

- Conservation Areas – Part 2
- Sewerage Infrastructure and Discharge within Rushcliffe
- Covid-19 Business Recovery Update
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- Hedges and Hedgerows within the Borough
- Update on Fairham Development.

5. Risks and Uncertainties

None.

6. Implications

6.1. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

6.2. Legal Implications

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

6.3. Equalities Implications

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

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

There are no Section 17 implications.

6.5 Biodiversity Net Gain

There are no Biodiversity Net Gain implications.

7. Link to Corporate Priorities

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

8. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Council endorses the work undertaken by the four Scrutiny Groups during 2022/23.

For more information contact:	Peter Linfield Director – Finance and Corporate Services 0115 9148439 plinfield@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	
List of appendices:	
	Appendix – Annual Scrutiny Reports 2022/23

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Annual Scrutiny Report 2022/23



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Corporate Overview Group

Chair's Foreword

This annual report summarises the main work undertaken by the Corporate Overview Group 2022/23 focusing on the impact of scrutiny. The Corporate Overview Group oversees the Council's other scrutiny group work programmes based on concerns highlighted by quarterly financial and performance monitoring reports, as well as items on the Cabinet Forward Plan and priorities within the Corporate Strategy.

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

Councillor Jonathan Wheeler Chair



What we are responsible for?

The Corporate Overview Group responsibilities include:

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

Our work this year

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

- Consideration of Scrutiny Work Programmes at each meeting
- Finance and Performance Management at each meeting
- Health and Safety Annual Report
- Scrutiny Witness Guide
- Customer Feedback Annual Report
- Review of 2019-2023 Strategic Tasks.

Consideration of Scrutiny Work Programmes

In line with the Terms of Reference, at every meeting the Group's members considered topics for scrutiny that had been put forward by Councillors and Officers. Following discussion, the following items were added to the work programmes of scrutiny groups for the year 2022/23:

- Customer access strategy
- Protection of hedges and hedgerows (in response to a motion at Council)
- Fairham development update
- Rushcliffe oaks crematorium
- Empty homes policy including Council Tax implications
- Biodiversity net gain
- How the Borough works with partners to plan for the infrastructure required to support growth
- Sewerage infrastructure and discharge within Rushcliffe.

The Group accepted that a briefing note would be a more appropriate method of gaining a better understanding of 'policies relating to alternative energy sources'.

The development and improvement of scrutiny continues with those submitting a scrutiny matrix now being invited to attend the Corporate Overview Group meeting to present their proposed topic to the Group in person.

Quarterly Finance and Performance Management

A report focusing on the Council's finances and performance was delivered at each meeting by officers. Officers provided a summary of the key points in the meeting and the Group was able to discuss any concerns. Over the course of this year, the following issues have been discussed:

- increasing energy and fuel costs and how much were officers able to predict these increases on the Council's finances
- what tolerances are acceptable in terms of investment balances and underspends in the Capital Programme and prolonged negative variances
- the positive results in relation to the number of fly-tipping cases and dog fouling
- the delays on the Bingham Hub and Crematorium
- S106 and CIL funding from developer contributions and plans for spending this in the Council budget
- whether Bridgford Field could be used for football parking to provide an income stream
- the methods used to educate residents about how they can contact the Council
- the usage of sports pitches and the increased marketing
- staffing in the Planning Team and the use of agency staff to fill vacancies and meet specific project demands
- monies allocated to provide affordable housing or contribute S106 funding to create affordable housing stock.

Health and Safety Annual Report

The Strategic HR Manager delivered a presentation that summarised the Council's occupational health and safety performance during 2021/22. She provided data on staff training, a slight increase in the number of accidents to employees and the results of a Health and Safety audit by BDO the Council's internal auditors.

The Group asked specific questions relating to:

- the take up of fire safety e-learning and what HR officers had in place to improve staff uptake and achieve targets,
- the rational of the Health and Safety Service Level Agreement with Bolsover District Council
- the audit recommendation for Health and Safety Risk Assessments to be kept in a central location.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Endorse the proposed health and safety objectives for 2022/23 as set out in the report.	Completed the review and update of the Violence at Work policy. Health and Safety Audit of Streetwise was completed prior to its return to the Council to ensure adequate compliance was in place. All health and safety e-learning, with the exception of the Display Screen Equipment module, have

	been moved onto the certifications which auto enrolls staff. All risk assessments are held in our performance management system and managers are reminded to review. Workplace Health Champions delivered a comprehensive programme of activities throughout the year.
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Scrutiny Witness Guide

The Service Manager – Corporate Services brought forward a draft Scrutiny Witness Guide for the group to consider. The Guide had been developed to draw attention to the provisions outlined in the Council’s Constitution in relation to expert witnesses and Councillors contributing to scrutiny. It also set out the standard for involving witnesses in scrutiny in terms of the information presented, and the balance between information provision and debate.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Approve the Scrutiny Witness Guide provided in Appendix One to the report.	The Scrutiny Witness Guide has been circulated to Lead Officers and is used to brief those asked to attend scrutiny in the capacity of an external witness whether they are internal officers or experts from other organisations.

Customer Feedback Annual Report

The Service Manager – Corporate Services summarised the customer feedback relating to both complaints and compliments made by residents during 2021/22. The Group were informed that the Council received 57 complaints at stage 1 of the complaints process, which was a slight increase compared to recent years and considered to be caused by additional pressures on Council services caused by the pandemic. The percentage of complaints escalated to stage 2 was 12 from the 57. The Group were advised that the Council received 127 compliments about its services in 2021/22.

A question was raised in respect of compensation payments and how would they be justified. The Service Manager – Corporate Services explained that compensation would be considered if it was felt that the claimant had been disadvantaged or were ‘out of pocket’. The Group were advised that the Council had not received any compensation claims during this year.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Accept the report as a true record of customer feedback in 2021/22.	No action was necessary as a result of this report.

Review of the 2019-2023 Strategic Tasks

The Service Manager – Corporate Services explained that the Corporate Strategy was due to expire in September 2023 and it was therefore timely to review what had been delivered over the last four years and to look at what the Council would wish to include in the Strategy going forward. The Group were provided with a comprehensive summary of what had been delivered against each task over the last four years including the recorded impact on the community. She noted that the Strategy had been delivered against a backdrop of the Covid-19 global pandemic, the cost of living crisis and the ongoing war in Ukraine.

The Group discussed the merits of more detailed, regular feedback on progress towards the delivery of strategic tasks. They also asked about the process and decision making for adding additional tasks to the Strategy and how criteria were applied, and resources allocated. The Group asked whether it would be possible to colour code where tasks were completed or ongoing.

In terms of potential projects moving forward into the next Corporate Strategy, the group discussed:

- the delivery the Borough’s housing requirement
- the importance of making sure that infrastructure was in place to provide the supporting community facilities on new developments
- the Council’s commitment to climate change and to be carbon neutral by 2030
- the need to review the impact of the Council’s Growth Boards.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Make suggestions about future actions that could be included in the 2023-2027 Corporate Strategy.	The development of the new Corporate Strategy is underway. Members of the Corporate Overview Group have been involved in shaping the direction of travel and assessing the individual Strategic Tasks proposed.

Member Panels

The Group did not establish any Member Panels this year.

Call-ins

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

Looking forward to the year ahead

Following a busy year for the Council’s scrutiny functions, all members of Corporate Overview Group are looking forward to developing comprehensive work programmes for the scrutiny groups in 2023/24.

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Governance Scrutiny Group

Chair's Foreword

This annual report summarises the main work undertaken by the Governance Scrutiny Group 2022/23 focusing on the impact of scrutiny. The Governance Scrutiny Group scrutinises and approves the Council's finances, approach to risk, as well as other corporate issues. I am pleased to report that despite another challenging year, the Governance Scrutiny Group have proceeded as planned and all items programmed for 2022/23 were considered.

The Group has explored the Council's responsibilities in lined with the Council's priorities within the Corporate Strategy, which include:

- Reviewing the outcomes of both internal and external audit investigations to ensure the Council is compliant with legislation and best practice;
- Monitoring the Annual Governance Statement to ensure compliance with the Council's Code of Corporate Governance
- Scrutinising and approving the Statement of Accounts
- Reports on the Council as a 'Going Concern'
- Considering the Council's Risk Management Framework annually to ensure current risks are being monitored, and effective controls and mitigating actions are in place
- Considering regular reports on Asset and Investment Management to ensure prudent use of Council resources is being made to fulfil the objectives of the Investment Strategy and Annual Capital Programme
- Monitoring the operation of the Council's constitution to ensure that it is being upheld and to recommend to Council any necessary fundamental changes.

Councillor Davinder Virdi
Chair Governance Scrutiny Group



Councillor Davinder Virdi
Chair



Councillor Penny Gowland
Vice-Chair

What we are responsible for?

The Governance Scrutiny Group's responsibilities include:

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

Our work this year

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

- Internal Audit, including quarterly Progress Reports, Annual Report, and Strategy
- Risk Management
- Going Concern Assessment
- Capital and Investment Strategy
- Approval of the Statement of Accounts
- Streetwise Annual Report
- Capital and Investment Strategy Outturn 2021/22
- Capital and Investment quarterly updates
- Draft Risk Management Strategy 2023-26
- Annual Fraud Report
- Annual Audit Letter
- Annual Audit Completion Report
- External Audit Annual Plan 2021/22
- Annual Governance Statement 2021/22
- Revision of the Council's Constitution.

Internal Audit, including quarterly Progress Reports, Annual Report, and Strategy

The Governance Scrutiny Group considered the Council’s internal audit executed by BDO the Council’s Internal Auditors. Mr Dulay from BDO attended each meeting to present the quarterly Progress Report and at the meeting in June 2022 he presented the Internal Audit Annual report for 2021/22.

Across all four meetings the Group debated:

June 2022

- Section 106 developer contributions and issues around collecting monies
- The KPI target of householder planning applications completed within the statutory time scales
- The Audit for homelessness and temporary accommodation and how the Council collects information and the impact this has on the homeless person and how quickly it takes the Council to house somebody
- Councillors register of interest reviews and processes

1 November 2022

- Risk Management summary of the audits progress
- Project Management including the Council’s Project Management Framework 2012 and the methodology for reporting through scrutiny and Cabinet
- Environment Audit

24 November 2022

- IT Asset Management and the Council’s process for reviewing software licenses requiring a more proactive approach to alert where more or fewer licenses were required.
- Health and Wellbeing including the main causes for staff sickness and absence and HR support and services in managing absenteeism.

23 February 2023

- The main financial systems which concluded that any recommendations raised by the auditor had been actioned and controls put in place

At the meeting in February Mr Dulay from BDO the Council’s Internal auditors presented the Internal Audit Strategy 2023-2026 which focused on the planned audits due to take place in year one of the new cycle of audits.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Approve the quarterly Internal Audit Progress reports	Management take audit findings and recommendations onboard as a scope for improvements within the Council’s systems and processes. Follow up on agreed management actions take place throughout the year.
Approve the Internal Audit Strategy and Plan for 2023-2026 and the Internal Audit Charter contained within the Internal Audit Strategy Plan	

Risk Management

The Governance Scrutiny Group considered the Council's Risk Register in November 2022 and February 2023. The Service Manager – Corporate Services updated the Group about the Council's risk management activities as well as changes to risks in the Council's risk register. The Group debated:

- New risks and those for which the risk rating had been reduced
- Risks relating to travellers and business rates
- Taxi Licensing Fees and the disparity with other authorities
- Loss of income in relation to Planning Income.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Considered and made recommendations on the risks that had a red alert status	Feedback from the Group has been relayed to the Council's Risk Management Group

Going Concern Assessment

At its meeting in November 2022, the Director – Finance and Corporate Services presented the Council's Going Concern status. The Group were advised that as a requirement of the Code of Practise on Local Authority Accounting the Statement of Accounts are prepared with the assumption that the Council will continue to operate within the current and anticipated resources available. The main factors that underpin the going concern assessment were discussed as follows:

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

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Approve the outcome of the assessment made of Rushcliffe Borough Council's status as a 'Going Concern' for the purpose of the Statement of Accounts	The Council's position is monitored throughout the year with the 2023/23 assessment due to be seen by the Group in September 2023

Capital and Investment Strategy Quarterly Updates

The quarterly updates are presented by the Service Manager – Finance and provide the Governance Scrutiny Group a summary of the Council's capital and investment activities during the year and in line with the Council's Capital and Investment Strategy 2022/23. The Group were asked to consider the Council's commercial investment activity as it embraces the new CIPFA Code ensuring there is both transparency and scrutiny in terms of treasury and investment decision making.

At its meeting on 1 November 2022, the Group commented on the economic forecast in respect of high inflation and a potential recession and the impact on the Council's cash balances and interest rates on long term investments.

At its meeting on 24 November 2022, the Group discussed CIL and Section106 monies and the policies and procedures in place as to what they could be spent on and whether it is released in a timely manner to deliver projects in the community. The Group also discussed the Council's rental income and the underspend on registered housing providers.

At its meeting on 3 February 2023, the Finance Business Partner presented the Capital and Investment Strategy Q3 report. The Group commented on the inflationary pressures and rising interests and were encouraged to see the council was in a positive position. The Group discussed ethical investments as a preferred choice but accepted that Officers were guided by Link the Council's Treasury Advisors in relation to investments.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Note the Capital and Investment Strategy quarterly updates provided at each of its meetings during 2022/23	Capital and Investment training was provided in January 2022 and in June 2023 as part of the Councillor induction programme

Capital and Investment Strategy 2023-2024 to 2027-2028

At the meeting in February 2023 the Finance and Business Partner presented the Group with the Council's Capital and Investment Strategy 2023/24 to 2027/28 which focused on traditional treasury activity and the Council's commercial property investments in light of CIPFA's updated Prudential and Treasury Management Codes. The Group discussed the Treasury Training and members expressed their greater understanding of the Council's Capital and Investment Strategy.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Note and approve the Council's Capital and Investment Strategy for 2023/24 to 2027/28 including the Capital Prudential Indicators and limits, the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement, the Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Indicators and the Commercial Investment Indicators and limits for 2023/24 to 2027/28	Capital and Investment training was provided in January 2022 and in June 2023 as part of the Councillor induction programme. Further training to be delivered by the Treasury Advisors is planned for Autumn 2023

Capital and Investment Strategy Outturn 2021/22

In June 2022 the Group were presented the Capital and Investment Strategy Outturn which summarised transactions undertaken during the 2-21/22 financial year reporting against the Council's Capital and Investment Strategy 2021/22-2025/26.

The Group discussed inflation and the Council's solutions for encouraging economic growth and noted the Bingham Hub and Crematorium developments supporting this. The Group were also encouraged by the Freeport proposals and its potential of creating jobs and improved infrastructure.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Approve the Capital and Investment Strategy Outturn position 2021/22 and agreed to more regular reporting of treasury management activities and increased in-depth training for officers and Councillors	Quarterly Capital and Investment Strategy updates are reported at each Governance Scrutiny Group meeting. Capital and Investment training was delivered in January 2022 and June 2023 as part of the Councillor Induction Programme

Approval of the Statement of Accounts

At its meeting in February 2023 the Director – Finance and Corporate Services presented the Council's statutory Statement of Accounts for the financial year 2021/22, which had been delayed due to issues out of the Council's and Auditors control. It was noted that a more detailed Budget report would be presented at Full council in March 2023.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Approve the Statement of Accounts for 2021/22, including the Annual Governance Statement	At the Governance Scrutiny Group Meeting in July 2023 the Group were advised that there would be a delay in reporting the Statement of Accounts for 2022/23. This is expected to be reported to the Group in November 2023.

Streetwise Annual Report

In November 2022 Mr Emmerson, Company Secretary, Streetwise Environmental presented the annual reports for Streetwise Environmental Ltd and Streetwise Trading Ltd, wholly owned companies of Rushcliffe Enterprises Ltd 2021/22. The Group discussed the future of Streetwise in reflection of the loss of the Managing Director and the impact of the Covid-19. The Group also discussed the original business plan and how this reflects the council's Corporate Priorities including, social impact, environment impact and carbon management.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Approve the Streetwise Annual Report and provided comments to Cabinet for future scrutiny reviews	Streetwise has successfully transferred back within the Council’s control and would form part of the Transformation Programme going forward and would therefore be looked at through the Council’s budget and performance reports at Corporate Overview Group. Streetwise has been added to the Corporate Risk Register as an opportunity risk.

Draft Risk Management Strategy 2023-26

In February 2023, the Group reviewed a draft Risk Management Strategy for 2023 to 2026. This Strategy would replace the existing one which was due to expire in April 2023. The new draft took account of the outcome of the recent Risk Management Audit and training from the Council’s Insurance Provider Zurich.

The Group discussed the changes had been made to the Strategy including:

- More comprehensive introduction and explanation of the RBC Risk Management process
- Reference to the recent training from Zurich Insurance and BDO audit
- Reference to Pentana, the Council’s performance monitoring system which includes a risk management module
- Information about the monitoring and review process of both risks and the Risk Management Strategy
- Alterations to the roles and responsibilities section to reflect the internal management restructure of 2021.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Approved the Risk Management Strategy for 2023-2026	The Risk Management Strategy is published and operational. The Governance Scrutiny Group will receive reports against the new Strategy in 2023/24.

Annual Fraud Report

In June 2022, Mr Dulay from BDO the Council’s Internal Auditor presented the Council’s Annual Fraud report, which summarised the incidence of fraud and fraud prevention activities undertaken by the Council during 2021/22. The Group were provided an overview of fraud related issues that had arisen at the Council during 2021/22. These included:

- Preventing and Detecting Fraud
- Whistleblowing Policy

- National Fraud Initiative (NFI)
- Council Tax Single Person Discount
- Internal investigations
- Internal Audit – Covid -19 Grant Assurance
- Fraud Awareness Training and Counter Fraud Staff Survey.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Approve the Annual Fraud Report for 2021/22, including the approval for further fraud awareness training in 2022/23	The Annual Fraud Report 2022/23 (29 June 2023) recommended a Fraud Risk Assessment, this is planned for this financial year.

Annual Audit Letter

In June 2022, Mr Hoose from Mazars the Council’s External Auditors presented the Annual Audit Letter including the Council’s Value for Money arrangements. The Group scrutinised the significant increase in audit fees and the benefit of the additional work as a result of the Code of Audit Practise and Value for Money reporting.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Approve the Annual Audit Letter and Value for Money arrangements	The deadline for signing off the 2022/23 Statement of Accounts has reverted back to 30 September, although this may yet be extended. Due to audit resources and national backlog the audit is unlikely to be concluded by this deadline.

Annual Audit Completion Report

In February 2023 Mr Hoose from Mazars the Council’s external auditors presented the Audit Completion Report and Management Representation Letter which provided the key conclusions in the audit process for 2021/22. The Group discussed some of the key risks that were highlighted including:

- Pension Scheme valuation
- Minor disclosure amendments and misstatements where management controls had been put in place
- Delays in signing off the Statement of Accounts due to gaining assurance from the Pension Fund Adjustment
- A PPA which was required in relation to a deferred capital receipt in the 2020/21 accounts.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Note and approve the Audit Completion report and approve the Management Representation Letter	There remain national issues with Pension Fund variations and audit resources which could delay the signing off of the accounts.
Receive a follow up letter from Mazars in relation to the significant matters that are outstanding	The Annual Audit Letter was taken to the Group on 29 June 2023

External Audit Annual Plan 2021/22

In June 2022 Mr Hoose from Mazars the Council's External Auditors presented the External Audit Plan which summarised the Council's approach to external audit activity in relation to the financial year 2021/22. In the debate that followed the Group questioned the level of officer expertise when valuing property and whether the reporting cycle to Governance Scrutiny Group was adequate.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Approve the External Audit Plan	Nothing to update

Annual Governance Statement 2021/22

At its meeting in June 2022 the Group were presented the Council's Annual Governance Statement which reflects the requirements of the updated CIPFA/SOLACE principles within the Local Government Code. The Group asked specific questions relating to; Employee National Living Wage and the impact on Council costs, compliance in respect of current significant governance issues effecting Council performance and the Council's leisure provision and the delays experienced with the Bingham Arena on the Council's revenue.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Approve the annual Governance Statement 2021/22 and any actions for the forthcoming year	Nothing to update

Revision of the Council's Constitution

At its meeting in June 2022 the Group were asked to consider and recommend for adoption by Council revisions to the Council's Constitution, including amendments to responsibilities for scrutiny, amendments to the remuneration of the Chief Executive and additional Terms of Reference for Governance Scrutiny to include a Review of 'Going Concern'.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Approve the recommendations for adoption by Council, including the additional amendments in Part 3 of the Constitution as proposed by the Group	The revisions and amendments in Part 3 of the constitution were approved by Full council at its meeting on 7 July 2022.

Member Panels

The Group did not establish any Member Panels this year.

Call-ins

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

Looking forward to the year ahead

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

Communities Scrutiny Group

Chair's Foreword

This annual report summarises the main work undertaken by the Communities Scrutiny Group 2022/23 focusing on the impact of scrutiny. This Group specifically focuses upon the Council's community partnerships, areas of community concern and the Council's responsibility to be environmentally sustainable.

The Group has explored the Council's Communities responsibilities in line with the Council's priorities within the Corporate Strategy, which include:

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

Councillor Gareth Williams
Chair Communities Scrutiny Group



Councillor Gareth Williams
Chair



Councillor Jenny Murray
Vice-Chair

What are we responsible for?

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

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

Our work this year:

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

- Access Agreement – Canals and Rivers Trust
- Sports Development in Rushcliffe
- External Communications Strategy
- Customer Access Strategy
- Establishment of a Youth Council
- Corporate Enforcement
- Carbon Management Plan
- Environment Policy.

Access Agreement – Canals and River Trust

The Group received a presentation from the Canal and Rivers Trust which highlighted the extent of the waterways within the Borough, the funding streams available to the Trust and the rolling programme of towpath works carried out by the Trust, including vegetation management, tree works and clearance, aquatic weed and invasive plant removal. The Group learned about the health and wellbeing benefits that canals provide to their communities.

The Communities Manager provided an update to the Group about the Council's Access Agreement with the Trust for the Grantham Canal which was due to expire in March 2024.

The Group asked about loss of water and thought it important for work to be carried out to address leaks and blocked culverts to maintain the flow of water and suggested that the Trust look to increase its profile and encourage voluntary support.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Approve the work undertaken by the partnership with the Canal and River Trust and the work undertaken by the current access agreement	The Canal and rivers trust continue to deliver the service level agreement and has worked with the authority to deliver a weed clearance project using UKSPF funding

Comment on future arrangements for when the current agreement expires in 2024	The Canal and rivers Trust has developed a menu of options to be considered and commented on at the scrutiny on October so further recommendations of future SLA can be made to Cabinet and factored into the budget setting process for future years
Requested that a further report be brought to Communities Scrutiny Group before the current agreement expires in 2024	The proposal on future arrangements will be brought back to Communities Scrutiny on the 05/10/2023 and is included on the forward plan

Sports Development in Rushcliffe

The Group received a presentation from the Communities Manager about the Council's delivery of its Sports and Development programme which was underpinned by both the Rushcliffe Leisure Strategy and the Rushcliffe Playing Pitch Strategy. The Group noted that Rushcliffe has higher than average activity levels compared to Nottinghamshire and England and learned about barriers to residents taking part in sport and physical activities and how the Council sought to target these through the Reach Rushcliffe Fund and working with local partners and sports clubs.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Receive a presentation about work undertaken by officers in delivering the Sport Development function and discuss future activity in promoting sport and wellbeing to our residents	<p>Since presenting at Scrutiny in June 2022, the following programmes, initiatives, and achievements have been implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36 international athletes supported by the Rushcliffe Elite Sports Grant • 77 National standard athletes are on the Rushcliffe FANS membership (free access to gym and swim at Council owned leisure facilities) • 27 coaches supported financially to complete a coaching qualification through the Coach Scholarship Scheme • Worked with Rushcliffe Athletics Club to see the return of the Rushcliffe 10k after a 3-year absence • Mid-Point Review of the Playing Pitch Strategy • Mid-Point Review of the Leisure Strategy • Worked with British Cycling to train 5 Guided Ride Leaders who will deliver a programme of guided rides across Rushcliffe

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered a free cycling event at Rushcliffe Country Park • Developed a new 2-year SLA with Nottingham Rugby Club • Safe Hearts in Sport project – funding from UKSPF to provide defibrillators and external units at sports venues across the borough. The project will also provide training for venue staff, coaches and volunteers at sports clubs and improved signage at venues (in progress)
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External Communication Strategy

The Group received a presentation about the Council’s External Communications Strategy, including the important role external communication play in strengthening the Council’s relationship with residents and in communicating the Council’s priorities and activities designed to meet the needs of the community. The Group also received an update about the Council’s internal communications strategy which focussed on internal stakeholders such as Councillors and staff.

Group discussion included resident’s survey findings, the use of social media, email subscriptions, the use of local government acronyms and ‘speak’ and providing a range of different types of communications targeted to the demographic and needs of the community.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Review the action plan for the External and Internal Communications Strategy 2022-2025	The Group reviewed the action plan and provided feedback. Plans are now in place to tailor content and reach out to the younger audience with the possible launch of a TikTok social media channel being explored. Information is ever more inclusive in line with the launch of the Council’s new website www.rushcliffe.gov.uk in April 2023 and audio versions of its Rushcliffe Reports magazine continue to be available. Residents’ comments are ever more listened to in helping shape communications content and further balanced output focuses on where the Council can improve its services, as well as celebrate its successes.

Customer Access Strategy

The Group received a presentation about the Council's Customer Access Strategy which highlighted the key themes of:

- Building on and exploring innovation
- Embedding further self-service
- Reviewing and building on partnerships
- Listening and responding.

The Group were informed that the Council's aim was to deliver contemporary, efficient and easy to use contact channels to enable customers to access the Council's services where and when they needed them. As part of that, the Strategy sought to identify and explore innovative digital options and to ensure that it was adapting to new technologies, whilst balancing this with traditional face to face and over the phone services.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Review the action plan for the Customer Access Strategy 2022-2025	The Group's review has seen a call waiting number for calls to Customer Services now available when waiting for a query to be answered. All face to face services including at three contact points have been retained to maximise convenience to the customer, whilst plans to improve self-service could see the introduction of a chat option on the website during late 2023 or early 2024.

Establishment of a Youth Council

In January 2023, the Communities Scrutiny Group considered whether to establish a Youth Council in Rushcliffe, a topic that was triggered by a motion and debate at Council in December 2021. The Service Manager – Corporate Services presented the findings of the investigation and introduced the Group to Amy Beckworth from Nottinghamshire County Council. The Group were informed that Rushcliffe has a Youth Forum which is supported by Amy. It is in a fledgling state and would benefit from additional support from the Borough Council. The Group discussed:

- The current membership of the Youth Forum and involvement of the Youth Member of Parliament
- The disappointing lack of engagement from schools within the Borough and the potential to raise awareness through a Head Teacher's meeting if such a thing exists
- The support the Borough Council could offer and how this might help the Youth Forum grow its membership
- The hosting of a Youth Summit to raise the profile of the Youth Forum and highlight those topics of most concern to young people in the Borough.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
<p>Recommend to Cabinet that the Borough Council support the existing Rushcliffe Youth Forum for the next two years to help expand membership, increase awareness and increase opportunities for collaboration.</p>	<p>In March 2023, Cabinet agreed to support the existing Rushcliffe Youth Forum for a two year period. Unfortunately, the Youth Member of Parliament came to the end of their term around the same time leading to a slight delay in engagement. Work has now commenced internally to host a Youth Summit in 2024 and the Chair of the Youth Forum and Nottinghamshire County Council Youth Services Officer are both involved in the planning of this event.</p>

Enforcement Policy

The Monitoring Officer updated the Group about the Council’s Corporate Enforcement Policy, including about information that had been added to clarify the stages of enforcement undertaken by the Council and the types of factors that would be taken into account when assessing non-compliance. The Group noted that further information was contained within the policies themselves which sat below this policy and that enforcement was very much a collaborative process between teams working together across the Council.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
<p>Review the Corporate Enforcement Policy and put forward any further suggestions, including adding wording to paragraph 3.7 that the Council ‘consider the impact on the character and way of life of an area’.</p>	<p>The Group discussed whether subsections of the policies could give an indication of the levels of seriousness, perhaps with a RAG rating. As agreed by the Group, wording was included in paragraph 3.7 to say that the Council ‘would also consider the impact on the character and way of life of an area’</p>

Carbon Management Plan

The Communities Manager updated the Group about the Council’s Carbon Management Action and Carbon Management Plan 2022, which highlighted the eight main themes of:

- Property Assets
- Fleet and Transport
- Contracts and Procurement
- Policy and Regulation
- Waste and Recycling
- Operational Activities

- Community and Business
- Offsetting.

The Group received a presentation about projects recently completed by the Council, including, Rushcliffe Country Park Net 0 Visitor Centre and Conference Suite, Bingham Arena and Bingham Enterprise Centre. The Group were informed that Cabinet ad agreed a target to become carbon neutral by 2030 and future areas of work being considered included:

- A Borough wide energy, fuel, water and transport data mapping
- Develop and retrofit decarbonisation for Rushcliffe Arena
- Work with social housing providers to maximise national grant schemes under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF)
- Identify devolution opportunities and work with regional partners
- Continue to enhance biodiversity and ecology.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Considered and endorsed the progress to date of the adopted carbon management action plan	Mapping of carbon has been completed across estate and HDP for all non leisure stock underway for shelf ready grant bids to decarbonisation schemes. Live carbon management plan under review in order to make it relevant to date and easy to amend by Service Leads
Provided comment and contribution towards the emerging carbon management actions for 2023/24	SALIX decarbonisation project underway at Cotgrave with £47,000 of the £1.2M already drawn down. Fleet review has been drafted and findings being deliberated. Rushcliffe Arena is undertaking CHP efficiency works to ensure it is running to optimum standard and PV modelling in order to greatly reduce running costs.

Environment Policy

The Group received an update on the Council's Environment Policy for the period 2023-2028 from the Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer. The Group were informed that the Environment was one of the Council's strategic priorities to ensure that its activities did not harm and positively enhanced the environment, including a commitment to increase hedgerows across the Borough by 40%.

The Group noted the Council's commitments, as being:

- Environmental Improvement
- Legislation
- Energy and Water
- Waste Management and Recycling
- Environment Protection
- Use of Materials

- Planning and Transportation
- Natural Environment
- Climate Change.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Review the updated draft Environment Policy	The Environment Policy was updated with the recommendations of the Community Scrutiny Group and has been published on the Council’s website at: https://www.rushcliffe.gov.uk/about-us/about-the-council/policies-strategies-and-other-documents/accessible-documents/environment-policy-2023/ as an adopted policy. The Policy will need to be reviewed and amended in order to recognise Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) to meet the biodiversity enhancement and carbon sequestration outcomes.
Make suggestions about where the draft Policy does not yet meet the needs of the Council	
Recommend that Council adopt the updated Environment Policy	

Member Panels

The Group did not establish any Member Panels this year.

Call-ins

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

Looking forward to the year ahead

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

Growth and Development Scrutiny Group

Chair's Foreword

This annual report summarises the main work undertaken by this scrutiny group during 2022/23 focusing on the impact of scrutiny. I am very pleased to note that despite another challenging year, the business of scrutiny has proceeded as planned and all topics programmed for 2022/23 were considered.

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

- Overseeing significant projects contributing towards growth in the Borough to ensure deliverables are met and growth-related outcomes achieved
- Scrutinising infrastructure development which acts as a catalyst for growth in the Borough to ensure such developments progress in a timely fashion and any obstructive barriers are removed or negotiated
- Reviewing the growth in demand for Council services ensuring all residents can access the services they need in a timely and cost-efficient manner
- Considering projects and initiatives to promote economic vibrancy, local democracy and community leadership within local towns and villages contributing towards the overall Council goal of creating Great Place and Great Lifestyle
- Reviewing the Council's policies and strategies as appropriate prior to adoption.

Councillor Neil Clarke
Chair Growth and Development Scrutiny



Councillor Neil Clarke
Chair



Councillor Richard Butler
Vice-Chair

What are we responsible for?

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

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

Our work this year

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

- Conservation Areas – part two
- Sewerage Infrastructure and Discharge within Rushcliffe
- Covid-19 Business Recovery Update
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- Hedges and Hedgerows within the Borough
- Update on the Fairham Development.

Conservation Areas – part two

June 2022, saw a follow-up on previous scrutiny on Conservation Areas in April 2021 which left three items outstanding for discussion. A presentation was received from the Principal Planning Officer and the Project Officer - Conservation Area Review and the Group had a substantial debate covering:

- officer proposals for undertaking a Borough wide review of Conservation Areas
- non-designated heritage assets
- training for Councillors members in respect of conservation areas
- the creation of Conservation Area Advisory Committees or a Conservation/Heritage Planning Sub-Committee.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Identify and make known to the Council local groups who might be interested in leading the review process or to confirm that no such groups exist so that the Council may establish how many reviews it must lead.	Limited success - parishes approached directly and programme adjusted to allow works to progress
Develop a crowd sourced approach to the development of a local list of non-designated heritage sites.	Predicated on not being undertaken until we had an online accessible map that we could display the list on. Commissioning of this resource has taken longer than anticipated delaying progress
Support the officer developed mechanism for the addition of assets to a local list.	See above

Keep under review the need for a Conservation Area Advisory Committee or Heritage Planning Sub-Committee.	Remains under review
Incorporate material on the impact of planning proposals within a Conservation Area to all future planning training.	Conservation areas were included in the most recent planning training for ward members delivered in May 2023 following the Borough Council Election.

Sewerage Infrastructure and Discharge within Rushcliffe

A scrutiny matrix was submitted to the Corporate Overview Group specifying that Councillors wanted to understand the situation in Rushcliffe regarding the sewerage infrastructure and any unlawful discharges. At its meeting in September 2022 presentations were received from Richard Cooper - Environment Agency covering outlining planning and wastewater from the perspective of the Environment agency and a presentation from Chris Bramley - Severn Trent Water which provided an overview of how Severn Trent identifies and understands the risks associated with development and what is being done to accommodate growth within Rushcliffe.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Ask relevant questions of the expert speakers in line with the enquiry provided in the scrutiny Matrix	These were answered at the scrutiny group meeting and no further action was required
Keep sewerage infrastructure and discharge within Rushcliffe under review and requested that this item be brought back to Growth and Development Scrutiny Group at a later date in the Work Programme	This item will return to Growth and Development Scrutiny Group for discussion at its meeting on 3 January 2024

Covid-19 Business Recovery Update

At its meeting on 21 September 2023 the Group were presented with an update on the Council's Covid 19 Business Recovery. A presentation was received from the Service Manager – Economic Growth and Property and the Economic Growth Officer which covered the work by officers to support businesses to recover from the impact of the Covid pandemic. After the substantial debate the Group were informed of five key areas of focus over the coming months to ensure ongoing support is provided for local businesses:

- UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)
- Rushcliffe Business Partnership
- Business Support (Bingham Enterprise Centre)
- High Street Support
- Growth Boards.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
<p>Support the officers proposed future activities identified incorporating support for the local economy</p>	<p>Further reports have been provided and future ones planned on the UKSPF which is now in year 2 of a 3 year programme of grant funding.</p> <p>The Economic Growth Team continue to support the Rushcliffe Business Partnership with fortnightly networking a quarterly business events focussed on different topics.</p> <p>The Bingham Enterprise Centre is now fully let and the businesses located there have had the opportunity to access free one to one business advice.</p> <p>The team have worked on a number of initiatives to support high street businesses including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a grant pot for shop front/premises improvements, energy efficiency measures, new equipment and digital projects • Digital High street support provided by a dedicated business support advisor – one to one support and series of webinars • Supporting with the establishment of retail forums/groups in a number of town centres • West Bridgford Way – website, social media and business networking to promote and encourage collaboration amongst businesses in West Bridgford. <p>A report to the October Growth and Development Scrutiny group will focus on a review of the Growth Boards which is currently being undertaken.</p>
<p>Recognise and acknowledge the efforts of those officers supporting local businesses and asked to be kept informed of projects for delivering support</p>	<p>Further reports have been provided to the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group on the UKSPF and associated business support projects. To be completed by CE</p>

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

In September 2022 the Government confirmed the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) funding. At the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group meeting on 4 January 2023 the Economic Growth Officer and Corporate and Commercial Projects Officer delivered a presentation to advise the Group of the three overarching investment priorities:

- Community and Place
- Business Support
- People and Skills.

The Economic Growth Manager outlined a range of projects that had been approved for the first year of funding and that work was being undertaken by Officers to explore opportunities for the second year including, joint commissioning across Nottinghamshire for business support activity, other project options for the Borough town centres and decarbonisation and cost of living support.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Support officer’s proposals and made suggestions for additional priorities and projects to support	The proposals for year 2 UKSPF funding were supported and so far a number of projects have been delivered. In addition, a grant pot has supported 11 community projects and 15 businesses.
Support the stakeholder engagement plan and identified additional groups for officers to engage with or alternative ways to engage with stakeholders	The Economic Growth team continue to engage with a wide variety of stakeholders as set out in the plan to inform development of plans for year 2 and now also year 3 (2024/25) of UKSPF and REPF.

Hedges and Hedgerows within the Borough

The Council had passed a motion to protect and enhance hedgerows in the Borough and had requested that a review of the legal and policy framework be conducted. At the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group meeting on 4 January 2023 the Ecology and Sustainability Officer and the Principal Policy Planner presented the group with an update on hedges and hedgerows in the Borough and the legal and policy framework that was in the control of the Council, namely the Rushcliffe Local Plan, as part of the Core Strategy and the Local Plan Part 2, and the Hedgerow Regulations, which identified hedgerows of importance to which the council could apply notice that they are to be retained or require an application to remove. The Group discussion covered:

- The success of the Local Plan Policy and monitoring indicators that met the requirements of planning legislation and enforcement
- Green belt and tree preservation

- Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) – New legislation.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Keep Hedges and Hedgerows under review and requested that a future item be presented to the Group with details of the requirements for the methodology for monitoring, enforcement and reporting for the purpose of new legislation with regards to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	In relation to Biodiversity Net Gain and Hedgerow requirements within that; the Growth and Development Group discussed BNG arrangements at its meeting in July 2023 and approved the biodiversity net gain arrangements to be used by RBC, Cabinet is expected to consider this further on 10 October 2023. Biodiversity net gain is expected under current policies, and a 10% gain (in length or condition) is expected (although not mandatory), for hedgerows as part of this. From November 2023 (exact date not yet announced) it is expected that legally mandated BNG will be required, and this will mandate a 10% gain (in length or condition) of any hedgerows on the site, prior to all works for new development applications from that date.
The Council's approach to the management and maintenance of hedges and hedgerows and proposed some additional opportunities and external groups that the Council could engage for support and suggested the website be reviewed to ensure hedgerow protection information was up to date	The works on the Council's approach to the management and maintenance of hedges and hedgerows and additional opportunities and external groups that the Council could engage for support and the website review to ensure hedgerow protection information was up to date, is still to be undertaken

Update on the Fairham Development

At its meeting on 8 March 2023 the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group were presented with an update on the Fairham development. Mr Hepwood, Mr Malick, Mr Richards and Mr Todhunter from Clownes Developments and Ms Hull and Mr Young from Homes England attended the meeting to assist with consideration of this item. The Group had a substantial debate covering:

- Management companies and the management of open spaces once the housing development is occupied
- Sustainable urban drainage systems and in particular foul sewer drainage across the entire development
- Highways infrastructure including bus services, tram extension, cycleways and pedestrian links
- Infrastructure including a new school and health centre.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
The progress on the site was in line with the original aspirations for the site	<p>Councillors were very happy with the update on the Fairham site.</p> <p>The Fairham Growth Board continue to meet quarterly with engagement from ward members, County Council and local town/parish councils.</p>
The Governance arrangements that were in place to support delivery of the development	Councillors were happy with the role and remit of the Fairham Growth Board.

Member Panels

The Group did not establish any Member Panels this year.

Call-ins

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

Looking forward to the year ahead

Growth and Development Scrutiny are looking forward to a comprehensive programme of scrutiny topics in 2023/24 that will deliver economic growth and ensure sustainable, prosperous and thriving communities.

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