



**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE OVERVIEW GROUP
TUESDAY, 4 JUNE 2024**

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

PRESENT:

Councillors T Combellack (Chair), A Edyvean, P Matthews, L Plant, D Polenta,
L Way and G Williams

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

C Caven-Atack	Service Manager - Corporate Services
C Evans	Service Manager – Economic Development and Property
E Palmer	Communications and Customer Services Manager
K Brennan	Senior Finance Business Partner
E Richardson	Democratic Services Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2024 were agreed as a true record and were signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman noted that responses to the actions from the meeting on 20 February 2024 had been responded to in the actions table.

4 Financial and Performance Management

The Senior Finance Business Partner presented the Q4 position for the Council's financial and performance monitoring for 2023/24. She confirmed that the Council had published its Final Accounts on 31 May in line with statutory deadlines.

The Senior Finance Business Partner said that the revenue budget had an overall underspend of £1.663m and that the capital programme had an underspend of £5.710m. She said that the revenue efficiency would be mainly allocated towards risks for 2024/25 and that capital underspend would be carried forward for completion of existing projects

The Senior Finance Business Partner referred to Table 1 of the report which

provided an overview of the revenue outturn position and showed that £1.958m had been transferred to reserves. She said that the main risks for 2023/24 related to inflation and the staff pay award being higher than anticipated, although the Council had been able to absorb it.

The Senior Finance Business Partner said that the Council had a £0.315m underspend on net service expenditure and had received additional grants and business rates income which contributed towards the net increase of £1.663m.

The Senior Finance Business Partner referred to the capital value of treasury investments which showed an increase in value of £0.272m which though still a loss, was expected to increase. She said that the Council had been prudent in creating a reserve to cover this should it be required to.

In relation to Business Rates and Council Tax, the Senior Finance Business Partner said that the Council had ensured that applicable Business Rates reliefs were applied and that the Council had administered flood relief and grants to affected properties. She said that the Council had undertaken a review of Council Tax single person discounts which had generated additional Council tax revenue.

The Senior Finance Business Partner referred to paragraph 4.11 of the report which provided information about UKSPF and Rural England Prosperity Funding. She referred to the Council bringing Streetwise inhouse which although having some initial challenges, including in relation to costs regarding vehicle leasing which were now being managed through the vehicle replacement programme, the Council hoped to deliver the transformational savings over the long term.

In relation to Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium, the Senior Finance Business Partner said that whilst income had been down at the beginning of the year it was encouraging that it had reported a net surplus overall and that positive feedback had been received from industry colleagues and people who had attended services there.

In relation to Carbon Reduction, the Senior Finance Business Partner said that the Council had committed to achieving carbon neutral status by 2030 and as such some underspend monies would be allocated towards carbon offsetting and land acquisition potential.

The Senior Finance Business Partner informed the Group that reserves had increased to £20.947m and that the general fund balance was £2.604m.

In relation to the capital programme, the Senior Finance Business Partner said that there was an underspend of £5.710m, the majority of which was recommended to be carried forward.

The Senior Finance Business Partner said that underspend mostly related to Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium and Bingham Leisure Centre, both of which were now going through final accounts. She said that there was also underspend for registered housing providers and retrofit grants, with both recommended to be carried forward.

The Senior Finance Business Partner referred to Appendix D which detailed the special expenses budget which showed an £8k overspend.

Overall, the Senior Finance Business Partner noted that the Council had not had to draw on reserves nor borrow but was aware that there was much risk going forward.

Members of the Group referred to the Council awaiting the outcome of a review by the Valuation Office Agency as to whether it could claim for the full rent increase charged by a supported housing provider in the Borough and asked for more information on the process, whether there was any requirement for the Council to be consulted on the rent increase and whether the Council had to cover all or a percentage of the rent. The Senior Finance Business Partner said that she would report back to the Group.

The Vice Chair of Communities referred to the Disabled Facilities Grant and the Cabinet decision in July 2022 to suspend the discretionary part of that pending a national review of the formula and asked whether that review had taken place. The Senior Finance Business Partner said that she would report back to the Group.

The Communications and Customer Services Manager presented the Q4 Performance Scorecards, as found at Appendix G.

The Communications and Customer Services Manager referred to the value of savings achieved for the Transformation Strategy, noting that Rushcliffe Oaks had gone through a settling in period along and been impacted by a national trend of reduced cremations and that Streetwise had been impacted by a fleet review and purchase of their own vehicles.

The Communications and Customer Services Manager referred to household waste and noted that recycling and composting waste was below target which was in line with a national downward trend and said that tonnage collection from blue bins was slightly down on previous years. He said that garden waste was impacted by weather conditions and was currently higher for this quarter. He said the Council was reviewing a refreshed communications and engagement campaign, particularly in light of the Environment Bill.

The Communications and Customer Services Manager said that use of community facilities and income from bookings was lower, in part due to ongoing impacts from increased costs of living and with room bookings at the Arena being impacted by hybrid technology issues and the Council's internal meetings programme. He noted that the Council had implemented an internal improvement programme and that the Communities Scrutiny Group would be reviewing the use of community facilities at its next meeting.

In relation to Affordable Homes, the Communications and Customer Services Manager said that 283 of a target 300 had been delivered which was positive given the slow-down in delivery of housing developments.

In relation to the percentage of planning applications processed, the

Communications and Customer Services Manager said that validation delays were due to a new validation list and the team not being at full capacity and noted that a new technician was now in post which was expected to speed up validations and subsequent application completion rates.

The Communications and Customer Services Manager referred to the Customer Services call answering target performance being impacted by more complex and lengthier calls, particularly in relation to complex cost of living and Council Tax related enquiries.

The Communications and Customer Services Manager noted that reports of fly tipping were lower but that the Council was in a positive position in relation to neighbouring local councils.

The Chair of Governance asked whether the reduction in blue bin waste was impacted by companies reducing their packaging. The Communications and Customer Services Manager said that it reflected a national trend and the increasing importance of reducing waste and packaging, which would also be impacted by the Environment Bill and as such the Council would look at how to best communicate information with residents.

The Chair of Communities asked about grey bin wastage in case the reduction in recycling wastage was due to it being put in grey bins. The Communications and Customer Services Manager confirmed that grey bin wastage had decreased also and said that he could provide information about analysis of grey bin wastage.

Members of the Group referred to fly tipping and asked whether the reduction in reports reflected a reduction in incidents and the Communications and Customer Services Manager said that there were fewer cases than last year and that he would provide more information for the Group. He said that Wise continued to work for the Council and issue fixed penalty notices.

Members of the Group referred to the reduction in use of community facilities and the Communications and Customer Services Manager said that the Council was looking at reasons for this, including identifying any barriers, such as financial or a change in needs from meeting less frequently or using spaces differently. He said that some groups had not been able to restart post covid or had changed how they met and that the Council would look at what groups wanted from facilities in the present day and what could be done to encourage usage.

The Chairman said that community spaces in parishes were often well used and questioned how this reflected on use of larger venues. The Communications and Customer Services Manager said that Council facilities in West Bridgford may be impacted by their proximity to the City and a different resident demographic.

The Chair of Communities asked whether it would be possible to separate between community facility bookings and sports facility bookings and the Communications and Customer Services Manager said that future reporting could separate between them.

It was RESOLVED that the Corporate Overview Group considers:

- a) noted the 2023/24 revenue position and efficiencies identified in Table 1, the variances in Table 2 (and Appendix A);
- b) approved changes to the earmarked reserves as set out at Appendix B along with the carry forwards and appropriations to reserves in Appendix E;
- c) noted the re-profiled position on capital and approves the capital carry forwards outlined in Appendix C and summarised in Appendix F; and
- d) noted the update on the Special Expenses outturn at paragraph 4.20 and in Appendix D
- e) identified exceptions to judge whether further information is required.

5 Diversity Annual Report and update on the Equality and Diversity Strategy

The Service Manager for Economic Growth and Property presented the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Scheme update and Diversity Annual Report 2023 to 2024 to the Group.

The Service Manager for Economic Growth and Property confirmed that the report was brought to the Group annually and explained that the residents' data remained the same as last year as it was based on Census 2021 information. She noted that there was some consistency between the profile of Rushcliffe residents, Councillors and Council employees.

In relation to Gender Pay Gap reporting, the Service Manager for Economic Growth and Property explained that legislation required organisations with over 250 employees to publish this information every year and information contained in the report was up to the end of March 2023, with information up to March 2024 due to be published in July this year. She noted that there had been an increase in the percentage of women receiving higher pay than men.

In relation to applicants for jobs, the Service Manager for Economic Growth and Property said that the Council had received around 300 more applicants than last year, in some part due to a few roles receiving a high number of applications. She noted that that the majority of people applying for roles were aged 25-34 which was different to the average workforce age of 45-64, which was positive for future organisational resilience.

In relation to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Scheme (ED&I) Action Plan, the Service Manager for Economic Growth and Property explained that the scheme was adopted in May 2021 with four high level objectives; to make Rushcliffe a welcoming place for everyone, for its services to be easy to access for all, to treat people fairly and to meet individual needs, and to make Rushcliffe a place where everyone could achieve their potential.

The Service Manager for Economic Growth and Property said that the Council had established an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Scheme Steering Group which met quarterly and involved Officers from across the Council so that different service areas from across the Council contributed to the Action Plan activity.

The Service Manager for Economic Growth and Property explained that a review of the Equality Impact Assessment process had been carried out with the outcome that the process be split into two parts, implementing an initial assessment of key questions to identify whether a more in-depth review was required. She said that any assessments completed would go to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Scheme Steering Group for review. She said that the Council also received support from East Midlands Council.

The Service Manager for Economic Growth and Property said that a review of Equality and Diversity staff training had been carried out, which had led to additional aspects being included in the online training programme. She said that the Council was looking at providing British Sign Language training and Neurodiversity training, initially for frontline and line manager staff respectively.

The Service Manager for Economic Growth and Property said that the Council had implemented a new Supporting our Employees policy, including providing guidance on a range of matters, including domestic abuse and menopause. She said that the Council was also working with Nottinghamshire Carers Association to achieve a Carer Friendly Employer Quality award which had included offering training for staff to become carer champions and providing assistance for any staff who acted as carers. She said that the Council had also delivered Dementia Friends and Carer Awareness Training to staff, which was also available to local business, the public and community and volunteer groups.

In relation to externally focussed activity, the Service Manager for Economic Growth and Property said that Cotgrave Leisure Centre now had a Changing Places toilet. She said that the Council had recently held a Youth Summit where pupils had been asked to talk about issues that were important to them to identify key areas for the Youth Forum to take forward.

The Service Manager for Economic Growth and Property referred to UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) and noted that some funding had been used to support particular groups of the local community, such as the Moon Festival celebration event for Hong Kong residents and a lunar New Year event. She referred to the Green Doctor scheme delivered by Groundwork which helped residents identify ways of improving energy efficiency and reducing bills and the Transform Your Future programme delivered by Nottinghamshire Futures to support local residents not in work, education or training. She said that funding of up to £1,000 was available for residents to access training to up and re skill.

The Service Manager for Economic Growth and Property said that the Council was working with the dementia friendly community, partners and community and voluntary organisations to improve the support available to people living with dementia and their carers.

In relation to the Council's plans for the coming year, the Service Manager for Economic Growth and Property highlighted that the Council was adopting a new play strategy and was working with consultants to ensure that play equipment was inclusive and accessible, including creating safe spaces for women and girls. She said that improvements were planned for West Bridgford Park play area.

The Chairman asked whether there was any information on the number of people in the Borough with sight or hearing problems and suggested lobbying Notts TV to have someone to sign their programmes. The Service Manager for Economic Growth and Property said that she would check whether this data was available.

The Vice Chair of Communities Scrutiny Group said that the Borough was becoming more diverse with 11% of residents from ethnic groups and thought it important to ensure that those groups were communicated with and had the ability to contribute to making Rushcliffe a better place to live. The Service Manager for Economic Growth and Property explained that the aim of the Rushcliffe Community Cohesion Network had been to fulfil that need but that it hadn't attracted local residents as hoped and so the Council was looking at different ways of engaging with different groups in the local community.

The Vice Chair of Communities Scrutiny Group asked how outcomes from actions were monitored and the Service Manager for Economic Growth said that the Council carried out a resident's survey to gain feedback and engaged with local networks and groups to have conversations and hear feedback. She said that the Lunar New Year celebrations had attracted over 2000 people which demonstrated that there was local interest. The Communications and Customer Services Manager said that the Council would also be looking at increasing focus on engagement in its revised communications strategy.

The Chairman referred to making non-English speaking residents aware that they could translate Council information and communicate in their native language. The Communications and Customer Services Manager said that there were various ways in which information on the Council's website could be translated.

The Vice Chair of Governance Scrutiny Group referred to the Youth Summit and asked whether it would be possible to expand it into primary schools. The Service Manager for Economic Growth said that the aim of the event was to identify key issues for the Youth Forum to take forward and that the Council was setting up focus groups to talk to young people about play spaces. She said that the Council may struggle to engage primary schools and it may not fit with their curriculum but that engagement did take place through partners going in to talk about skills for the future.

The Chair of Communities Scrutiny Group asked whether British Sign Language (BSL) training would be held for the Council's partners, such as Lex Leisure and whether training would be offered in other signing languages. The Service Manager for Economic Growth said that the current intention was to train the Council's Customer Services staff and that BSL had been chosen as it

was the standard sign language but that the Council would review whether this was one that most suited residents' needs.

The Chair of Communities Scrutiny Group said that the Moon Celebration event in Bingham had had excellent attendance and asked about events to integrate new communities with the existing community. The Service Manager for Economic Growth said that another Moon Celebration event was planned for early 2025 using UKSPF funding and that the Council could contact Bingham Town Council about how to best promote the events programme to all areas of the community and could look at any best practice from other areas.

The Chair of Communities Scrutiny Group asked whether making play areas inclusive could be integrated into planning policy for new development play areas. The Service Manager for Economic Growth and Property said that an intention of the Play Strategy was to inform the Communities Team's responses to planning applications to set the standards for what it expected. She said that the Strategy would also help inform parish councils who wanted to improve their play areas.

The Chair of Governance referred to gender pay gap reporting and thought that the figures did not necessarily reflect whether men and women were getting paid the same amount for the same job and the Service Manager for Economic Growth and Property said that the Council was required to report these statistics but did also monitor pay levels across the organisation across similar posts.

The Chair of Governance noted that the number of employees not wanting to give their nationality had increased and even though related to Streetwise staff transferring to the Council it seemed a high number. The Service Manager for Economic Growth and Property said that she would check with HR to see if they had any more information.

The Vice Chair of Governance Scrutiny Group noted that the Council did not currently ask Councillors to declare their ethnicity and thought that as the Councillor group was becoming more diverse and wanted to attract more diversity, suggested that the Council consider asking for this information at the next Councillor intake after the next election.

The Vice Chair of Governance Scrutiny Group asked how UKSPF funding projects were communicated to the community and how take up was recorded. The Service Manager for Economic Growth and Property said that data and targets were recorded against all projects and that this had to be fed back to Government as part of the funding agreement. She referred to the English for Speakers for other Languages and said that courses had been oversubscribed and so further courses were being put on. She said that she could report back to the Group with information about the projects and could include project outcome information in next year's report, by which time UKSPF funding would have finished.

The Vice Chair of Governance asked whether the Council provided training on transexual awareness and LGBT safe spaces and the Service Manager for Economic Growth and Property said that the Council would look at this.

It was RESOLVED that the Corporate Overview Group:

- a) considered and endorse the information provided for the diversity annual report
- b) reviewed the action taken so far as a part of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Scheme action plan and make suggestions for future action or areas of focus.

6 Annual Update on Strategic Tasks

The Service Manager for Corporate Service presented the Annual Update on Strategic Tasks and explained that this was the first time that this report had been presented to the Group and that it sought to provide clarity about what each of the tasks was intending to achieve.

The Service Manager for Corporate Services said that when she brought a progress update report later in the year this report could be used as a comparator.

The Chairman said that it was interesting to see progress and was glad that work had commenced for all.

The Chair of Governance referred to the recent Peer Review commenting on the number of strategies that the Council had. The Service Manager for Corporate Services confirmed that the number of tasks was decided by Councillors and that it would be for them to decide if they wished to change how many there were.

Councillor Plant referred to the task pertaining to the Infrastructure Levy replacing CIL and the Service Manager for Corporate Services explained that this formed part of the Levelling Up Bill which was awaiting secondary legislation.

It was RESOLVED that the Corporate Overview Group:

- a) considered the strategic task appraisals included in Appendix A;
- b) requested that an update on progress against the delivery of the strategic tasks be reported back in summer 2025.

7 Feedback from Scrutiny Group Chairmen

The Chair of Growth and Development Scrutiny Group reported that the last meeting had received two items, on Sewerage Infrastructure and Discharge within Rushcliffe and on Connectivity and Communications. In relation to Connectivity and Communications he said that the Lead Officer for the County Council had attended to provide detail and reassurance about work taking place to ensure that residents did not get left without any form of communication. In relation to Sewerage Infrastructure and Discharge he said that Severn Trent had been invited to attend but had not been able to due to

the number of areas that they covered but they had been invited to attend a future meeting. The Environment Agency had attended and had provided an update on flood mitigation works within the Borough, including measures to ensure that new developments didn't contribute to flooding in other areas. He noted that they acted as oversight body for Severn Trent and so could provide a means of contact if necessitated.

As the Vice Chair of Governance had chaired the last meeting, she provided the update to the Group and reported that the Group had considered the Q4 Internal and External Audits. In relation to the Internal Audit, she said that the Group had discussed decarbonisation and fleet management due to it contributing 25% of carbon emissions and that Group had noted that substantial progress has been made, including the transition to using Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil. In relation to the External Audit, she reported that the Group had discussed the increase in Agency audit fees and had noted that the Council did not have authority to choose its auditors or negotiate their fees.

The Chair of Governance added that he had received confirmation that the Council's Statement of Accounts had been completed and would be reviewed at the next meeting.

The Chair of Communities Scrutiny Group reported that the last meeting had received two reports. The first report provided an update on the Carbon Management Plan which had included an update in relation to the Council achieving its net zero targets and its Scope 3 emissions. The second report provided an update on Streetwise including information on their transition coming back inhouse to the Council. He noted that holding a meeting in close proximity to a Full Council meeting created time pressure for preparation and review of information in reports and asked that this be considered as part of the timetabling of meetings.

8 **Work Programme**

The Chairman noted that an update on the Management of Open Spaces was scheduled to report to the Corporate Overview Group in September and said that she hoped that an outcome of that would be the establishment of a Working Group.

The Chair noted that the Communities Scrutiny Group and the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group were scheduled to have a joint meeting to review Accessible Housing on 17 October 2024.

It is RESOLVED that the Corporate Overview Group:

- a) reviewed the current work programme for each of the scrutiny groups.

Work Programme 2024/25 – Corporate Overview Group

4 June 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standing Items<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Feedback from Scrutiny Group Chairmen○ Feedback from Lead Officer
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consideration of Scrutiny Group Work Programmes ○ Financial and Performance Management ● Rolling Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Diversity Annual Report and update on the Equality and Diversity Strategy ○ Annual Update on Strategic Tasks
3 September 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Standing Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Feedback from Scrutiny Group Chairmen ○ Feedback from Lead Officer ○ Consideration of Scrutiny Group Work Programmes ○ Financial and Performance Management ● Rolling Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Health and Safety Annual Report ○ Business Continuity Report ○ Update on Management of Open Spaces
19 November 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Standing Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Feedback from Scrutiny Group Chairmen ○ Feedback from Lead Officer ○ Consideration of Scrutiny Group Work Programmes ○ Financial and Performance Management ● Rolling Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Customer Feedback Annual Report
25 February 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Standing Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Feedback from Scrutiny Group Chairmen ○ Feedback from Lead Officer ○ Consideration of Scrutiny Group Work Programmes ○ Financial and Performance Management ● Rolling Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○

Work Programme 2024/25 – Governance Scrutiny Group

30 May 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internal Audit Progress Report ● Internal Audit Annual Report ● Annual Fraud Report ● Annual Governance Statement (AGS) ● Capital and Investment Strategy Outturn ● Constitution Update ● Code of Conduct
19 September 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Risk Management Update ● Going Concern ● Capital and Investment Strategy Update ● Internal Audit Progress Report
28 November 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internal Audit Progress Report ● Annual Audit Completion Report 2023/24 ● Statement of Accounts ● Capital and Investment Strategy Update

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RIPA Review
20 February 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Audit Progress Report • Internal Audit Strategy • Risk Management – Update • Capital and Investment Strategy Update • External Annual Audit Plan • Asset Management Plan • Annual Audit Letter and Value for Money Conclusion • Capital and Investment Strategy 2024/25

Work Programme 2024/25 – Growth and Development Scrutiny Group

	Items / Reports
17 July 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the Crematorium • Infrastructure Delivery
23 October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moved to 17 October 2024
29 January 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
26 March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

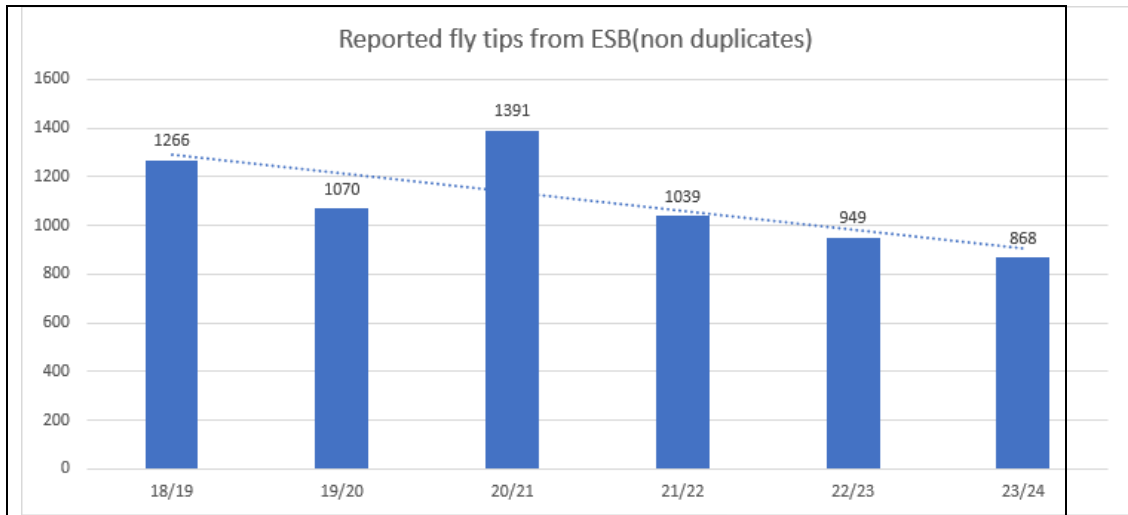
Work Programme 2024/25 – Communities Scrutiny Group

	Items / Reports
25 July 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of Community Facilities
17 October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible Housing Briefing (Joint Scrutiny Group)
23 January 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
3 April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Actions Table

Minute No.	Action	Officer Responsible/ Update
4	The Chair of Governance noted that the number of employees not wanting to give their nationality had increased and asked if there was any reason for this.	The information is usually captured when employees join the Council as part of their application information, although removed at the shortlisting stage. However, the transfer of Streetwise staff has required each individual to complete a form to update the records, and some individuals were hesitant to complete the form. HR complete a 3 year audit where all staff are asked to check their

		data and update any details, so there will be opportunity to request this information on an ongoing basis.
4.	The Vice Chair of Governance Scrutiny Group suggested that the Council request Councillor's ethnicity at the next election intake	This will be reviewed at the next Councillor election in 2027.
4.	The Vice Chair of Communities asked for more information on outputs from the UKSPF projects funding	This information will be provided as part of the next UKSPF update to the Group.
5.	The Group asked for information about the process for rent increases charged by supported housing providers and whether there was any requirement for them to consult the Council and whether the Council had to cover all of the rent or a percentage if not fully covered by the housing benefit subsidy	Senior Finance Business Partner
5.	The Vice Chair of Communities asked whether the Government review of the formula for the discretionary part of the Disabled Facilities Grant had taken place	Senior Finance Business Partner
5.	Members of the Group asked for more information about fly tipping	The cumulative number of fly-tipping cases below show the downward trend of cases in recent years. Subsequently, fines are also lower due to this, also impacted by whether there is sufficient evidence in each case to produce a fine to the right party



The meeting closed at 8.41 pm.

CHAIR

DRAFT