

**MINUTES  
OF THE MEETING OF THE  
COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY GROUP  
THURSDAY, 25 JULY 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 G Williams (Chair), L Plant (Vice-Chair), M Barney, J Billin, S Ellis,  
G Fletcher, R Mallender, H Parekh and A Phillips

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

Councillors

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

D Burch

T Coop

Service Manager - Neighbourhoods  
Democratic Services Officer

**APOLOGIES:**

Councillor M Barney arrived at 7.29pm

**1 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 March 2024**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2024 were approved as a true record and were signed by the Chair.

The Service Manager – Neighbourhoods reminded the Group of the Actions from the previous meeting and informed them of the officers responses.

**3 Use of Community Facilities and Managed Spaces**

The Group were provided with additional handouts for context in relation to the marketing approach for the Council's community facilities and open spaces.

The Community Development Manager delivered a presentation to provide the Group with an update on current facilities operated by the Council, including management arrangements, their present occupancy and income generated.

For the purpose of reporting to this Group, the community facilities were split into two distinctive service areas:

- Community Venues
- Playing Fields, Parks and Open Spaces

**Community Venues**

The Community Development Manager advise the Group that the Council's venues at; Rushcliffe Arena, Sir Julian Cahn Pavilion, West Park Sports Pavilion, Gamston Community Hall and Rushcliffe Country Park Education Centre and Conference Room are all managed using a Switch Digital Management Booking System, a bespoke booking system provided by a local business in Ruddington since 2022. The Community Development Manager explained the system uses data intelligence to triage the user to the best venue that fits the need of their enquiry and provides data and performance information providing the Council with a better understanding of how the system is being used.

The Community Development Manager referred to Table 1 in the report which showed the income targets for each community venue from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and the comparison targets for 2024/25. The table highlighted the venues that had not achieved their income targets and the Community development Manager explained this was due to challenges around Covid recovery and refurbishment of some of the venues to improve their carbon emissions and AV technology provision.

### **Playing Fields, Parks and Open Spaces**

The Community Development Manager informed the Group that pitch bookings at Gresham, Alford Road and West Park could be booked online using a pitch booking system separate from the switch system used for booking venues. The Pitch booking system allows users to book and pay online in advance of their booking. The Group were advised of the major booking organisations including West Bridgford Colts.

The Community Development Manager referred to table 2 in the report and explained that there had been some challenges with pitch flooding at Alford Road resulting in the pitches not meeting their target. This was also the case with Rushcliffe Country Park not meeting its target due to technological issues with the conferencing system, staff training and marketing.

The Group noted that in respect of parks and open spaces these areas include the Croquet Lawn, Bridgfield and Bridgford Park which were all bookable via a telephone/email enquiry to the Community and Development team.

The Community Development Officer advised the Group of some of the service activities including the Touch Rugby World Cup, a Police knife crime weekend at Gresham Sports Park and a planning consent to improve the cricket net facility at West Park. The Group were also informed of the Council's capital improvement programme for the Community venues at Gamston (new green technology heating), Sir Julian Cahn (complete internal refurbishment) and the planning consent for a new Community building as part of the housing development at Edwalton.

The Group were also informed of some of the Capital improvements the Council has invested in at the Country Park including green technologies, the refurbishment of the playground and a new accessible Changing Places facility.

In concluding, the Group were presented with some of the promotional and marketing videos prepared by the media team for the Council's website and social media platforms.

The Group thanked officers for a comprehensive review of the Council's community venues, playing fields, parks and open spaces and were impressed with the Council's extensive offer of community venues and playing fields for hire. In addition, the Group all thought the Switch Booking system was an excellent addition and would hopefully enhance and improve bookings going forward.

Members of the Group asked specific questions relating to concession rates for some users and what the criteria was for offering a concession rate and at what percentage rate were concessions applied, they also asked if the Council was comparable with other similar local authorities. The Community Development Manager explained that since installing the new booking system the Council have implemented and updated all its fees and charges within a robust policy and confirmed there were very few users on a concession rate. With regards to calculating concessions the Service Manager – Neighbourhoods advised that concessions were usually around 5% or 10% and rarely above 20%. Members asked for further information on the Council's fees and charges and the comparable of other local authorities. The Group also suggested that they are published on the Council's website.

Councillor Phillips commented on Gresham and highlighting how use here had exceeded its target and asked if there was any spare capacity to offer more. The Community Development Manager advised that the facility and pitches were fully booked in the evening between 5-10pm, at weekends and during the school holidays, however, there was capacity during weekdays between 8-4pm and that officers were actively looking for a suitable user that might fill the gap.

Councillor Phillips also raised concerns regarding parking around Gresham and asked if there was anything the Council can actively do to alleviate the problem such as sharing pedestrian and cycle paths with users and also suggested approaching the nearby school for help with parking. The Community Development Manager explained that parking remains a challenge and it is being monitored with traffic wardens regularly patrolling the area. With regards to the school, it was noted that they have been approached for support, however, the school is regularly used by Nottingham Forest for match day parking and that they too hire out their own school halls.

The Chairman asked, when were the pinch points in respect of traffic and parking and was there anything that could be done to stagger kick off times. The Community Development Manager explained that during football league tournaments the grass pitches are completely booked out and parking becomes increasingly more challenging, as the matches are influenced by football league standards unfortunately requesting a staggered start time would not be an option. However, it was noted that there is extra police presence during busier match days.

Councillor Mallender suggested adding an 'about' section/tab on the booking system and Council website to inform users how to get to each venue, by

public transport or cycle and pedestrian routes to promote sustainable travel.

Councillor Fletcher asked whether the Borough would consider working more closely with Parish Council's to assist with local sports clubs needing a suitable venue, giving padel tennis and indoor cricket as examples. The Community Development Manager explained that there had been an increased demand for indoor facilities and stated that should the demand be there it may be possible to adapt some existing facilities. The Community Development Manager informed the Group that the Playing Pitch Strategy is reviewed annually following guidance from National Governing Bodies within sport.

Councillor Plant stated that overall West Bridgford was served well with good community facilities and suggested that the social value of a facility was just as important to a community as well as the sport offering and was pleased to see that Sir Julian Cahn pavilion was having an upgrade.

Councillor Plant also commented on the pitch provision at Alford Road and the flooding that occurred there earlier in the year and was pleased to see improvements were being considered in the Council's Capital Programme. The Community Development Manager explained that there had been some challenges engaging with Severn Trent Water (STW), but there had been a recent change in the local representative for STW and they have been carrying out some exploratory groundwork to investigate the issue with flooding.

Councillor Parekh asked a number of questions relating to individual venues. Firstly, regarding the upgrades at Gamson Hall has there been any consideration in providing a bar to enhance its use as a party/wedding venue. Secondly in relation to the development of new Community Hall at Edwalton, is there likely to be scope for community engagement and involvement in the development of the hall. Finally, Councillor Parekh asked for additional information in relation to Lutterell Hall and the agreed arrangement that the Rock Church have in managing the hall. The Community Development Manager explained that a bar used to be a fixture at Gamston, however, over the years community groups have not wanted it and therefore it was taken away. In response to the new Community Hall at Edwalton, the Community Development Manager advised that its main function is a village hall for small community groups such as toddler groups or fitness classes, adding that the hall would not be built as a sports venue. The Community Development Manager advised the group that he did not have the information to hand with regards to Lutterell Hall and this would be circulated to members after the meeting.

The regards to venue hire the Community Development Manager informed the group that there had been an increase in enquiries for meeting spaces that provide additional technology, such as Wifi and AV systems, which the Council aims to provide across all its bookable venues.

Councillor Parekh asked a specific question in relation to hiring some of the Council's open spaces and whether it would be feasible to offer Bridgford Park or Rushcliffe Country Park as a festival venue for Diwali or Eid and how would such groups approach the Council to make an enquiry. The Community Development Manager explained that such requests would be managed by the

Community Events Team and would be subject to some kind of tolerance or impact testing by way of how such an event might affect the local community, light pollution and noise and the ecology of an open space.

Councillor Parekh asked about spaces exclusively for women and girls sport and whether the Council had seen an increase in demand. The Community Development Manager advised the Group there had been a residents survey done recently which had showed an increased interest in exclusivity sports and spaces for teenagers.

Councillor Barney praised officers for their support with the recent International Touch Rugby event held at Nottingham University which Rushcliffe had a hand in supporting and attracting the New Zealand team to the Borough and providing training pitches at Gresham. Councillor Barney then asked whether smaller organisations or clubs within village communities could reach out to the Council for support. The Community Development Manager advised that the Sports Development Officers do support many clubs if the demand is there, especially with government and sport associated funding and S106 and CIL funding.

The Group asked about the marketing and promotional approach the Council is doing to increase its bookings where there are shortfalls and the Chairman suggested open days to showcase what the Council has to offer by way of bookable venues and spaces, and this was particularly relevant to the Sir Julian Cahn pavilion once the refurbishment is complete. The Group also suggested offering concession rates for local community groups and not for profit organisations.

The Community Development Manager informed the Group that the facilities function had changed considerably from a traditional caretaking role and the team have had to up-skill to support and compliment what the Council has to offer to local community groups and businesses and the growing demand for meeting spaces. With regards to concessions this might be something to explore particularly during times when bookings are low.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Communities Scrutiny Group considered the report and presentation and provided comments on the provision of community facilities operated by the Council.

#### 4 Work Programme

The Chair advised the Group that there had been little change to the Work Programme since the last meeting in March.

He reminded the Group that the next meeting on the 17 October would be a joint Scrutiny meeting with Growth and Development Scrutiny Group which will cover the topic of Accessible Housing.

The Group were reminded to submit items for future scrutiny discussion.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Communities Scrutiny Group approved the Work Programme as set out below:

17 October 2024

- Accessible Housing Briefing
- Work Programme

23 January 2025

- Carbon Management Plan (TBC)
- Work Programme

3 April 2025

- Work Programme

#### Actions from the Meeting

| Minute No | Action  | Officer Responsible           |
|-----------|---|-------------------------------|
| 3         | Members of the scrutiny group requested further information on the fees and charges for booking venues and pitches and how these compare with other similar authorities | Community Development Manager |
| 3         | Cllr Parekh requested further information on the management of Lutterell Hall and how much the Rock Church was being charged for the venue                              | Community Development Manager |
| 3         | Members asked for detail on concession rates and what clubs/groups were offered a discounted rate and why   | Community Development Manager |

The meeting closed at 8.53 pm.

CHAIR