

When telephoning, please ask for: Democratic Services
Direct dial 0115 914 8320
Email democraticservices@rushcliffe.gov.uk

Our reference:
Your reference:
Date: Monday, 2 December 2024

To all Members of the Cabinet

Dear Councillor

A Meeting of the Cabinet will be held on Tuesday, 10 December 2024 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road, West Bridgford to consider the following items of business.

This meeting will be accessible and open to the public via the live stream on YouTube and viewed via the link: <https://www.youtube.com/user/RushcliffeBC>
Please be aware that until the meeting starts the live stream video will not be showing on the home page. For this reason, please keep refreshing the home page until you see the video appear.

Yours sincerely



Sara Pregon
Monitoring Officer

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest

[Link to further information in the Council's Constitution](#)

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 November 2024 (Pages 1 - 4)
4. Citizens' Questions

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

5. Opposition Group Leaders' Questions

To answer questions submitted by Opposition Group Leaders on items on the agenda.

Email:
customerservices
@rushcliffe.gov.uk

Telephone:
0115 981 9911

www.rushcliffe.gov.uk

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

NON-KEY DECISIONS

6. Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring 2024/25 - Financial Update Quarter 2 (Pages 5 - 26)

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

7. LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review (Pages 27 - 52)

The report of the Chief Executive is attached.

Membership

Chair: Councillor N Clarke

Vice-Chair: Councillor A Brennan

Councillors: R Inglis, R Upton, D Viridi and J Wheeler

Meeting Room Guidance

Fire Alarm Evacuation: In the event of an alarm sounding please evacuate the building using the nearest fire exit, normally through the Council Chamber. You should assemble at the far side of the plaza outside the main entrance to the building.

Toilets: Are located to the rear of the building near the lift and stairs to the first floor.

Mobile Phones: For the benefit of others please ensure that your mobile phone is switched off whilst you are in the meeting.

Microphones: When you are invited to speak please press the button on your microphone, a red light will appear on the stem. Please ensure that you switch this off after you have spoken.

Recording at Meetings

The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 allows filming and recording by anyone attending a meeting. This is not within the Council's control.

Rushcliffe Borough Council is committed to being open and transparent in its decision making. As such, the Council will undertake audio recording of meetings which are open to the public, except where it is resolved that the public be excluded, as the information being discussed is confidential or otherwise exempt



**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
CABINET
TUESDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2024**

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

PRESENT:

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors Birch, R Mallender, Thomas and J Walker

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

L Ashmore	Director of Development and Economic Growth
D Banks	Director of Neighbourhoods
R Clack	Deputy Monitoring Officer
P Linfield	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
K Marriott	Chief Executive
H Tambini	Democratic Services Manager

The Leader advised that three questions had been submitted by Opposition Group Leaders at Item 5. As the questions related to Item 8 – Rushcliffe Carbon Offsetting Framework – Land Acquisition, which was an Exempt Item, the questions would be considered during the Exempt session of the meeting.

20 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

21 Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 October 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 8 October 2024 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

22 Citizens' Questions

There were no citizens' questions.

23 Enforcement Policy Update

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, Councillor Upton presented the report of the Director – Development and Economic Growth outlining proposed amendments to the Planning Enforcement Policy.

Councillor Upton stated that since the adoption of the current Policy in 2021,

there had been relevant changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other legislation, and the proposed revisions took into account those changes. The NPPF recommended that local planning authorities should consider publishing a local enforcement policy, to effectively manage enforcement in a way appropriate to their area. Councillor Upton referred to the importance of enforcing planning control to protect the local environment, with a policy that clearly set out the Council's approach when investigating alleged breaches. Cabinet noted that a failure to deliver an effective service could negatively impact public confidence in the planning regime and the Council's reputation. The amended Planning Enforcement Policy, attached as Appendix A to the report ensured compliance with legislation and statutory guidance and promoted consistent enforcement decisions.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Inglis endorsed this important Policy and stated that it was important that the Council clearly stated how it would effectively deal with enforcement, as positive action would act as a deterrent.

It was RESOLVED that:

- a) the adoption of the updated Planning Enforcement Policy be approved; and
- b) the Director – Development and Economic Growth be granted delegated authority to make minor updates to the Policy as required.

24 Exclusion of the Public

It was resolved that under Regulation 20 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

25 Opposition Group Leaders' Questions

Questions to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Clarke MBE were submitted by Councillor Thomas, Councillor J Walker and Councillor Birch in relation to Exempt Item 8 on the agenda – Rushcliffe Carbon Offsetting Framework – Land Acquisition.

The Leader responded to each question.

Supplementary questions to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Clarke MBE were asked by Councillor Thomas, Councillor J Walker and Councillor Birch.

The Leader responded to each supplementary question.

26 Rushcliffe Carbon Offsetting Framework - Land Acquisition

The Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide

Leadership, Councillor Clarke presented the report of the Director – Neighbourhoods, which provided an update on land acquisition in respect of Rushcliffe’s Carbon Offsetting Framework.

The recommendation was proposed by the Leader and seconded by Councillor Brennan.

It was RESOLVED that:

- a) the acquisition of the land set out in Option 2 in the report be approved, with the Asset Investment Group being granted delegated authority to a maximum bid as set out within the Financial Implications Section 7.1 of the report, plus all costs associated with the acquisition;
- b) opportunities regarding the Council’s own landholdings, as set out at Section 4 and also Option 1 in the report be explored and delivered;
- c) the ring fencing of funds as set out in the Financial Implications Section 7.1 of the report for carbon offsetting for land acquisition and associated costs within the Climate Change Reserve be approved; and
- d) the Asset Investment Group be granted delegated authority regarding future land acquisitions for the purposes of carbon offsetting within the limit of the funds identified in the Financial Implications Section 7.1 of the report.

The meeting closed at 7.33 pm.

CHAIR

This page is intentionally left blank



Cabinet

Tuesday, 10 December 2024

Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring 2024/25 – Financial Update Quarter 2

Report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services

**Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance, Transformation and Governance,
Councillor D Viridi**

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. This report presents the budget position for revenue and capital as at 30 September 2024.
- 1.2. The financial climate is beginning to show signs of improvement; however, the effect of recent high inflation has impacted both residents' cost of living and created cost pressures for the Council's budget. It is imperative that the Council maintains due diligence with regards to its finances and ensures necessary action is taken to ensure a balanced budget is maintained.
- 1.3. At Quarter two 2024/25, there is a predicted net revenue efficiency of £1.786m. Significant variances are highlighted in Table 1. This represents a variance of 11.75% against budgeted Net Service Expenditure. This is proposed to be earmarked for additional cost pressures and financial challenges discussed below, in particular meeting challenges with regards to demand for ongoing homes for resettled Ukraine nationals, improving economic growth, providing for increased demand for Disabled Facilities Grants and modernising council technology infrastructure. The position may change as further variances are identified during the year.
- 1.4. There is a capital budget underspend projected of £3.598m, this includes rephasing of £1.525m to 2025/26 and the acceleration of £90k due to vehicle replacement for a new tanker from 2025/26, now required for 2024/25.
- 1.5. The report has been scrutinised by Corporate Overview Group on 19 November 2024, and no significant issues were raised.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet approves the attached report noting:

- a) the expected revenue budget efficiency for the year of £1.786m and proposals to earmark this for cost pressures given at paragraph 4.6 and Table 2;

- b) the projected capital budget efficiencies of £3.598m including the reprofiling of schemes totalling £1.435m (paragraph 4.9 and Table 3);
- c) the removal of £1m from the Capital Programme for travellers site acquisition and £1.5m to be added in relation to carbon offsetting land acquisitions for the 2024/25 programme going forward (paragraph 4.10); and
- d) the expected largely balanced outturn position for special expenses (paragraph 4.7).

3. Reasons for Recommendation

To demonstrate good governance in terms of scrutinising the Council's on-going financial position and compliance with Council Financial Regulations.

4. Supporting Information

Revenue Monitoring

- 4.1. For 2024/25, the overall budget variance is expected to be an efficiency of £1.786m with proposals to earmark the in-year efficiencies for specific reserves as detailed in **Appendix A**, should this direction of travel be maintained.
- 4.2. **Table 1** below summarises the main pressures and efficiencies with a full summary of all significant variances at **Appendix B**.

Table 1: Main Pressures and Efficiencies

Projected in year cost/(efficiency)	£000	Reason
Financial Services	(1,135)	Interest income £857k; and budget efficiencies on; insurance £25k, External Audit £31k, Contingency not allocated £252k, offset by £30k overspend on bank commission due to increased charges
Environmental Health	(148)	Homes for Ukraine funding not allocated
Economic Development	(82)	UKSPF management fee £65k and joint authority post, £17k contribution to salaries
Customer Services and Performance Management	(78)	Staff vacancies
Revenues	(55)	Increase in recovery of costs raised for Council Tax debtors
Strategic Housing	(54)	Additional homelessness grant £145k offsets £41k spend on Choice Based Lettings software upgrade and home alarms income reduction £50k
Communities	(54)	All weather pitch bookings performing better than budgeted

Environmental Health/Planning	(50)	Savings from IDOX not moving to cloud hosting.
Depot & Contracts	(77)	Leisure Management contract (£128k), Diesel/HVO (£100k) and Eastcroft Depot rent savings (£47k) offset by shortfall in sales of waste bins £40k, Toothill Electricity £50k and net expected loss of £101k at Edwalton Golf Course made up of £40k loss against expected profit of £61k due to extended course closure following a very wet winter and spring
Legal Services	(25)	Temporary staff vacancies and legal post currently not filled
Planning & Growth	167	Planning appeals and enforcement costs £167k
Benefits	170	Rent increase from supported housing provider not covered by HB subsidy
Streetwise	55	Sweeper maintenance not budgeted £30k, hire of vehicles to cover repairs £25k
Executive Management Team	25	Advertising and recruitment costs
Other minor variances	73	
Net Revenue cost/(efficiencies)	(1,268)	
Grant income	(141)	New burdens; Elections £38k, other new burdens £17k, Land charges compensation grant £30k, Audit grant £18k, Household Support Fund 5 admin £14k, Internal Drainage Board Grant £25k
Business Rates	(237)	
Business Rates Pool	(140)	
Total Net Projected Budget Variance	(1,786)	

- 4.3. The main adverse variances arise from planning appeals and enforcement, and the rent increase from supported housing providers, whilst there are specific reserves for this purpose, it is expected that this can be covered by in year efficiencies without need to draw on the reserve at this time.
- 4.4. There are additional cost incurred in relation to demolition at Flintham; however, a debtor will be raised to recover this cost and therefore it has a nil impact on the budget.
- 4.5. The main efficiencies arise from investment income and unallocated contingency, additional grant income, savings on leisure and depot contracts and the Business Rates.
- 4.6. The favourable projected budget position does enable the Council to utilise this for risks that materialise in what remains a challenging financial environment and carry forward balances or replenish reserves or create reserves for alternative opportunities or risks. These are highlighted in the table below.

Table 2: Use of Projected Underspend

Area for Use	Amount (£'000)	Comment
Homes for Ukraine (Q1 report)	148	Carried forward grant resources
Economic Growth (Q1 report)	70	To fund potential Economic Growth Strategy requirements e.g. Tourism, signs for the Borough
West Bridgford Town Centre Regeneration (Central Avenue) Q1 report	500	To put in a new 'WBTC reserve' towards pedestrianisation of WBTC
Disabled Facilities Grants additional support	200	See paragraph 4.10 below.
Council Chamber AV System	150	Modernise the system to improve functionality and reliability for both council and third-party meetings, optimising the use of council facilities (mainly capital and to amend the capital 2024/25 programme).
Land acquisition	698	For bio-diversity net gain, taking the overall allocation to £1.123m (£0.425 from 2023/24 outturn report).
Legal case management system upgrade implementation	20	Modernise the legal services case management system
Total	1,786	

4.7. **Appendix E** shows the Quarter 2 position on the Special expenses budget. The expenditure is expected to be £3.9k above budget, this is due to some electrical works required for the Christmas Lights and Performing Rights Society Licence.

Capital Monitoring

4.8. The updated summary of the Capital Programme monitoring statement and funding position as of 30 September 2024 is shown at **Appendix C**. **Appendix D** provides further details about the progress of the schemes.

4.9. The original Capital Programme for 2024/25 was £11.079m, with £3.405m carry forwards and other adjustments of £2.407m and slippage approved in Quarter 1 of £3.756, to give a current budget of £13.135m. The projected outturn at Quarter 2 is £9.537m, giving an underspend of £3.598m. It is requested that a further £1.525m is rephased to 2025/26 and that £90k is brought forward from 2025/26. This is summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3 - Rephasing of 2024/25 Schemes to/(from) 2025/26

Scheme	Amount £000
Highways Verges: Cotgrave/Bingham/Cropwell Bishop due to complicated process needing consultation with Highways England and possible SLA	140
West Park Julien Cahn Pavilion Special Expense-Detailed design and cost plan to be drawn up. Wider refurbishment work being scoped	385
Cotgrave & Keyworth Leisure Centre Enhancements -Project slightly behind schedule but still aiming for Sept/Oct start on site.	1000
Vehicle Replacement – from 25/26 budget. A need to accelerate the purchase of a Tanker identified following fleet review	-90
Total to re-phase	1,435

4.10. The remaining £2.163m underspend is due to the following main areas:

- £1m travellers site acquisition – no sites have been identified, this provision is proposed to be removed releasing £1m back into the New Homes Bonus (NHB) Reserve and of this £0.377m to be allocated towards carbon offsetting; thus allowing for £1.5m in reserves to fund potential land acquisition so the Council can meet its BNG targets (£0.425m from 2023/24 underspends, £0.698m Quarter 2 underspend, £0.377m from NHB above).
- £0.319m Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium – £0.550m was set budgeted for post opening enhancement works and potential VAT liability if partial exemption calculation is breached. Drainage and paving works have taken place but there are currently no further commitments. There is potential for an underspend to be released later in the year.
- £0.248m Bingham Arena – allowance to cover any post opening enhancements, no commitments made to date, potential for an underspend to be released later in the year.
- £0.330m contingency is currently unallocated If these underspends materialise a full year saving will be realised.
- 0.161m Disabled Facilities Grants, budgets are fully committed but timing of works may cause slippage, and this would require a carry forward. There are longer term pressures on this service, and we recognise the need to support some of the most vulnerable in our community. This follows on from discussions at the recent joint Communities and Growth Scrutiny Group meeting. It is proposed £0.2m is committed from in-year budget efficiencies to support this budget in the short term (to be carried forward for 2025/26). We retain the view that a prudent, affordable and sustainable longer term funding solution is required as both demand and costs rise.

4.11. The current projected overall variance means that any borrowing requirement can be met from internal resources with no recourse to borrow externally this financial year.

Pressures Update

4.12. The legacy of COVID and international conflict has had a significant impact on inflation in recent years which has increased costs specifically around pay, contracts and utilities and the associated increase in cost of living could have implications for collection rates and income from fees and charges.

4.13. Inflation peaked in October 2022 at 11.1%, this has steadily reduced to 1.7% as at September 2024, however the legacy increase means higher costs are 'baked-in' to the base budget. Long term, interest receipts will reduce in line with projected reductions in interest rates. The budget has been set to reflect expectations and should therefore be insulated against any fluctuations.

4.14. The position on collection rates (see Table 4 below) will continue to be monitored. Given the challenges on residents and businesses this represents a relatively positive position. Business rates collection is lower than at the same time last year, however this is skewed due to reliefs applied at the beginning of the year. The collection rate as at quarter 2 is still higher than the average of recent years figures.

Table 4 – Collection Rates - Quarter 2

Description	Q2 2024/25	Q2 2023/24	Increase/(Decrease)
Sundry Debtors	97.12%	95.96%	1.16%
Council Tax	57.33%	57.50%	(0.17%)
Business Rates	64.07%	67.20%	(3.13%)

4.15 The Council's Transformation and Efficiency Plan (TEP), or Productivity Plan, is designed to meet emerging financial challenges. In 2024/25 the three most significant savings targets are income from Green Bin Collection (£0.238m), income from car parks (£0.214m) both due to increases in fees and charges, which have been applied in 2024/25, and Leisure Management contract savings (£0.228m). At Quarter 2 a total of £0.339m of savings have been achieved against a year-to-date target of £0.366m (and is largely on target).

4.16 The value of the Council's Multi Asset investment or pooled funds is currently at £14.231m as at 30 September 2024, a £0.769m loss against original investment, this has improved since Quarter 1 by £0.256m. It should be noted that whilst the value of the assets does fluctuate, the returns from these investments are stable and represent a healthy proportion of the Council's overall return on investments (£0.614m in the past 12 months). When the capital appreciates in value the Council's revenue position will benefit. They are long term investments and form part of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy approved by Full Council as part of the (MTFS). It should also be noted that the statutory override currently in place has been extended to April 2025, it

is prudent to maintain a reserve whilst we retain such investments. The Council hold £1.173m in reserves to smooth the impact of movements in value and given the positive trajectory of the reducing loss in capital value we do not propose to increase further at this moment in time. This is a fluid position and if it was to worsen then further appropriations to this reserve may be required.

Conclusion

- 4.17 The revenue position remains relatively healthy largely due to interest rates remaining higher for longer and Business Rates growth, but the position can quickly change as per the pressures referred to in paragraph 4.13 and risks (section 6).
- 4.18 The position on capital is currently positive although in the long-term resources are diminishing and headroom in the budget will be required to ensure future capital commitments can be met. There will still be no need to externally borrow this financial year.
- 4.19 The Council has challenges such as meeting environmental objectives and responding to opportunities that arise in the Borough, including actively championing the Freeport and other economic growth objectives. As the economic background appears to be ever more volatile it is imperative that the Council continues to keep a tight control over its expenditure, identifies any impact from changing income streams, maintains progress against its Transformation Strategy and retains a healthy reserves position to help manage risk.

5. Alternative options considered and reasons for rejection

There are no other options proposed for consideration.

6. Risks and Uncertainties

- 6.1 Failure to comply with Financial Regulations in terms of reporting on both revenue and capital budgets could result in criticism from stakeholders, including both Councillors and the Council's external auditors.
- 6.2 Areas such as income can be volatile and are particularly influenced by public confidence and the general economic climate and Government legislation. The impact of this remains to be seen at this stage but is being closely monitored. Areas of risk include, but are not exclusive to, planning and the crematorium particularly dependent on changes in demand.
- 6.3 Any delay in anticipated capital receipts will mean that a higher level of temporary internal borrowing will be required. However, this can be accommodated due to the level of cash reserves. There will be an opportunity cost by way of lost interest on sums invested. There remains a risk in the event of the need to borrow externally that the cost to the Council would be significant due to the level of interest rates.

- 6.4 The Council needs to be properly insulated against potential risks hence the need to ensure it has a sufficient level of reserves, as well as having the ability to use reserves to support projects where there is ‘upside risk’ or there is a change in strategic direction. Sufficient reserve levels are critical in ensuring the Council can withstand the financial shocks and maintaining sufficient reserves to address significant risks remains a key objective of the Council’s MTFs and is good financial practice.
- 6.5 There remains much uncertainty as the new Government starts to legislate for, and implement, new policies. Areas of uncertainty, in particular concern planning and waste reform as we continue to be vigilant. The outcomes of the October budget and US Presidential election as well as current international conflict impacts economic confidence and can result in additional pressure on Council resources. Reserves are critical to meet these challenges.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial Implications

Financial implications are covered in the body of the report.

7.2 Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. It supports the delivery of a balanced budget.

7.3 Equalities Implications

The recommendation to repatriate the traveller site budget for BNG land acquisition could potentially result in delivering traveller sites later than planned. However, the required sites are being delivered in accordance with the local plan as part of the Councils strategic sites.

7.4 Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

None.

7.5 Biodiversity Net Gain Implications

Whilst there is not a direct implication as a result of the recommendations within this report, appropriation of additional funds to acquire a site for Biodiversity Net Gain will enable the Council to meet its carbon reduction targets.

8. Link to Corporate Priorities

The Environment	The budget resources the Corporate Strategy and therefore resources all Corporate Priorities.
Quality of Life	
Efficient Services	
Sustainable Growth	

9. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet approves the attached report noting:

- a) the expected revenue budget efficiency for the year of £1.786m and proposals to earmark this for cost pressures given at paragraph 4.6 and Table 2;
- b) the projected capital budget efficiencies of £3.598m including the reprofiling of schemes totalling £1.435m (paragraph 4.9 and Table 3);
- c) the removal of £1m from the Capital Programme for travellers site acquisition and £1.5m to be added in relation to carbon offsetting land acquisitions for 2024/25 programme going forward (paragraph 4.10); and
- d) the expected largely balanced outturn position for special expenses (paragraph 4.7).

For more information contact:	Peter Linfield Director – Finance & Corporate Services 0115 914 8439 p.linfield@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	Council 7 March 2024 – 2024/25 Budget and Financial Strategy Cabinet 9 July 2024 – Financial Outturn Report 2023/24 Cabinet 10 September 2024 – Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring 2024/25 Financial Update Quarter 1
List of appendices:	Appendix A – Revenue Outturn Position 2024/25 – September 2024 Appendix B – Revenue Variance Explanations – September 2024 Appendix C – Capital Programme 2024/25 – September 2024 Appendix D – Capital Variance Explanations September 2024 Appendix E – Special Expenses Monitoring September 2024

Projected Revenue Outturn Position 2024/25 – September 2024

	Original Budget £000	Revised Budget £000	Projected Outturn £000	Projected Variance £000
Chief Executive	1,524	1,539	1,569	30
Development & Economic Growth	482	530	522	(8)
Finance & Corporate	4,952	4,985	3,878	(1,107)
Neighbourhoods	7,824	8,149	7,966	(183)
Sub Total	14,782	15,203	13,935	(1,268)
Capital Accounting Reversals	(1,895)	(1,895)	(1,895)	0
Minimum Revenue Provision	1,178	1,178	1,178	0
Total Net Service Expenditure	14,065	14,486	13,218	(1,268)
Grant Income (Including New Homes Bonus)	(2,125)	(2,125)	(2,266)	(141)
Business rates (Including SBRR)	(5,763)	(5,763)	(6,140)	(377)
Council Tax	(8,347)	(8,347)	(8,347)	0
Collection Fund Deficit	(32)	(32)	(32)	0
Total Funding	(16,267)	(16,267)	(16,785)	(518)
Net Transfer to/(from) Reserves	(2,202)	(1,781)	(3,567)	1,786
West Bridgford town centre regeneration (Central Avenue) (Qtr 1 Report)				500
Homes for Ukraine ringfenced reserve (Qtr 1 report)				148
Economic Growth (Qtr 1 report)				70
Land Acquisition for carbon offsetting				698
Disabled Facilities Grants additional support				200
Council chamber AV system				150
Legal replacement case management system				20
Total Committed from underspend				1,786
Net Budget Deficit/(Surplus)				0

Revenue Variance Explanations

Adverse variances in excess of £25,000

Department	Reason	Projected Outturn Variance £000
Development & Economic Growth		
Planning & Growth	Cost of planning appeals and enforcement	167
Neighbourhoods		
Depot & Contracts	Edwalton Golf Course budgeted profit £61k against projected £47k loss due to extended course closure following a very wet winter and spring	108
Depot & Contracts	Sales of waste bins to developers	40
Depot & Contracts	Toothill electric	50
Strategic Housing	Lettings system upgrade and phasing of home alarms rollout	91
Streetwise	Vehicle maintenance and hire	55
Finance & Corporate Services		
Revenues & Benefits	Increased rent from Supported Housing providers	170
Finance	Increase in bank commission charges	30
Chief Executive		
Executive Management Team	Costs of advertising and recruitment	25
Total Adverse Variances		736

Favourable variances in excess of £25,000

Department	Reason	Projected Outturn Variance £000
Chief Executives		
Legal Services	Vacant post	(25)
Economic Growth & Development		
Economic Development	UKSPF management fee and joint authority contribution to post	(82)
Planning & Growth	IDOX cloud savings less allowance for post to cover these works	(25)
Finance & Corporate Services		
Financial Services	Investment income	(857)
Financial Services	Budget in excess of fee External audit £31k, insurance £25k	(56)
Financial Services	Contingency not expected to be allocated	(252)
Revenues & Benefits	Council tax costs recovered	(55)
Customer Services and Performance Management	Vacant posts	(78)
Neighbourhoods		
Environmental Health	IDOX cloud savings less allowance for post to cover these works	(25)
Environmental Health	Homes for Ukraine carry forward not fully committed	(148)
Strategic Housing	Additional homelessness funding	(145)
Depot & Contracts	Leisure Management contract	(128)
Depot & Contracts	Eastcroft Depot rent	(47)
Depot & Contracts	Diesel/HVO savings	(100)
Community Development	All weather pitch hire income exceeding budget	(54)
Total Favourable Variances		(2,077)
Other Minor variances		73
Total Variance		(1,268)

Capital Programme 2024/25 September 2024

Expenditure Summary	Original Budget £000	Current Budget £000	Projected Actual £000	Projected Variance £000	Comments
Development and Economic Growth	2,950	3,277	1,493	(1,784)	£1m for Acquisition of Traveller Site, not committed, proposed to be moved from the programme in year see paragraph 4.10; £567k for post-opening enhancements Bingham Arena and the Crematorium not committed; £140k requested to be reprofiled to 25/26.
Neighbourhoods	7,829	9,252	7,703	(1,549)	£1.403m requested to be reprofiled to 25/26 primarily for Cotgrave and Keyworth Leisure Centre Enhancement works. £90k requested to be accelerated from 25/26 for Vehicle Replacements. £161k variance due to timing of release of approved DFG grants.
Finance and Corporate Services	150	276	341	65	Capital Contingency request to be processed for Stage One AV Replacement in the Council Chamber.
Contingency	150	330	0	(330)	Capital contingency not yet allocated.
Total Expenditure	11,079	13,135	9,537	(3,598)	
Financing Analysis					
Capital Receipts	(2,989)	(4,333)	(2,204)	2,129	Capital Contingency balance not yet allocated to be part funded by Capital Receipts; provisions for post opening enhancements at Bingham Arena and the Crematorium not yet committed. Cotgrave and Keyworth Leisure Centre Enhancements £1m requested to be reprofiled to 25/26.
Government Grants	(2,745)	(4,450)	(4,387)	63	
Use of Reserves	(2,053)	(2,460)	(1,304)	1,156	Capital Contingency balance not yet allocated to be part funded by Reserves; £1m Traveller Site Acquisition to be funded from NHB not yet committed and can potentially be removed.
Grants/Contributions	0	(220)	(220)	0	
Section 106 Monies	(3,292)	(1,672)	(1,422)	250	Post opening enhancements at Bingham Hub not committed.
Borrowing	0	0	0	0	
Total Funding	(11,079)	(13,135)	(9,537)	3,598	
Net Expenditure	0	0	0	0	

Capital Variance Explanations 2024/25 September 2024

	Current Budget £000	Budget YTD £000	Actual YTD £000	Variance £000	Projected Actual £000	Variance £000	Comments
Development and Economic Growth							
Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) Capital Grants	520	260	183	(77)	522	2	Rural England Prosperity Fund wholly committed.
UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Capital Grants	153	72	86	14	153	0	£8k grant commitment brought forward plus 24/25 grant approvals £145k - wholly committed.
Manvers Business Park Enhancements	100	94	85	(9)	100	0	Roller shutters nearly complete. £200k Roof reprofiled to 25/26
Unit 10 Moorbridge Enhancements	140	0	0	0	149	9	£40k original estimate for Electric Vehicle Charging Points but revised cost £49k to be funded from UKSPF. Budget adjustment may be needed. Compliant Vehicle Wash to be commissioned up to £50k and works to the internal layout for health and safety reasons estimated £50k. £100k reprofiled to 25/26.
Bridgford Park Kiosk	0	0	0	0	0	0	Planning approval obtained to construct a dedicated staff toilet for the kiosk. Building regs application to be made and works to be tendered. Scheme reprofiled to 25-26
Colliers Business Park Enhancements	0	0	0	0	0	0	Installation of barriers and bollards for security to be assessed. Guttering and cladding under review. Not urgent, £16k reprofiled to 25/26.

	Current Budget £000	Budget YTD £000	Actual YTD £000	Variance £000	Projected Actual £000	Variance £000	Comments
Highways Verges: Cotgrave/Bingham/Cropwell Bishop	190	0	0	0	50	(140)	Officer investigation of sites continues to prioritise work plan. This is a complicated process but it is anticipated that Woodview will be done first as we own the land. Highways Authority will need to be consulted - possible use of SLA to enable NCC to lead and commission VIA. Request to reprofile £140k to 25-26.
Traveller Site Acquisition	1,000	0	0	0	0	(1,000)	No sites identified; no commitments. Provision to be removed (funding from NHB to be repatriated see paragraph 4.10)
Rushcliffe Customer Contact Centre Premises	35	18	10	(8)	23	(12)	IT infrastructure/furniture
Cotgrave Phase 2	38	34	19	(15)	38	0	Hard landscaping works have commenced; soft landscaping will be undertaken Oct/Nov time.
Bingham Arena	250	0	2	2	2	(248)	Residual £250k provision to meet any post opening enhancements for Bingham Arena and Enterprise Centre. Nothing committed yet but Clerk of Works fees paid.
Water Course Improvements	210	0	0	0	210	0	Order placed for feasibility work, need clearance from the Environment Agency. Provisional £150k UKSPF funding.
The Point	15	0	0	0	15	0	Ramp roller shutter to be done, £25k reprofiled to 25/26
Bingham Market Place Improvements	6	0	0	0	0	(6)	Not committed yet.
Devonshire Railway Bridge	0	0	0	0	0	0	VIA inspection identified some remedial work but not urgent. £100k scheme reprofiled to 25/26.

	Current Budget £000	Budget YTD £000	Actual YTD £000	Variance £000	Projected Actual £000	Variance £000	Comments
Walkers Yard 1a/b and 3	70	0	0	0	0	(70)	Works not committed and use of unit 3 under review. Some enhancement works may need to be undertaken in 24/25 but there are no commitments yet.
Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium	550	106	54	(52)	231	(319)	£150k of this provision may be required for VAT if the partial exemption calculation is breached. £400k to address any post opening enhancement works required. Drainage and paving works undertaken. £54k UKSPF funding to cover expenditure to date.
Keyworth Cemetery	0	0	0	0	0	0	Surveys undertaken. Works to be agreed with the Diocese. Quotes to be sourced. No commitments yet. £25k reprofiled to 25/26.
	3,277	584	439	(145)	1,493	(1,784)	
Neighbourhoods							
Vehicle Replacement	647	324	152	(172)	737	90	2 new electric buggies for the country park acquired and a mini sweeper for Streetwise. A review of the fleet has been carried out and there is a need to accelerate the purchase of a Tanker. £90k is requested to be accelerated from the 2025-26 Capital Programme to meet the revised, projected actual.
Support for Registered Housing Providers	60	0	0	0	60	0	£24k due in 24-25 for remaining 3 units practical completion on Garage Sites Ph 2 ; plus £36k for 1 affordable housing unit at Ruddington. Meetings taking place with Registered Providers/Developers and Homes England to explore opportunities to

	Current Budget £000	Budget YTD £000	Actual YTD £000	Variance £000	Projected Actual £000	Variance £000	Comments
							commit the provision. £2.440m reprofiled to 25/26 and 26/27."
Discretionary Top Ups	44	22	29	7	44	0	Due to spending pressures on Mandatory DFGs, Cabinet 12.07.22 approved amendment of the policy to temporarily suspend use of the Discretionary pot until a review of the national formula allocation is undertaken. This provision is to meet existing commitments. It is proposed that £200k from in year efficiencies is used to top up this budget (see table 2).
Disabled Facilities Grants	1,031	516	408	(108)	870	(161)	There is continued pressure on the Mandatory DFG provision. RBC has had to commit its own resources to support service delivery. It is hoped that additional grant will be awarded later in the year. The provision is wholly committed but timing may mean that some expenditure falls in 25-26
Hound Lodge Enhancements	0	0	0	0	0	0	£325k provision reprofiled into 25/26. a further £70k will need to be added to the 25/26 Capital Programme to meet costs of decarbonisation.
Arena Enhancements	65	0	0	0	65	0	Some work required to upgrade reception and corridor floors. Work required on fire dampers.

	Current Budget £000	Budget YTD £000	Actual YTD £000	Variance £000	Projected Actual £000	Variance £000	Comments
							Reconfiguration of Data Centre underway.
Car Park Resurfacing	79	72	52	(20)	61	(18)	Bridgford Road works complete. Final costs to be charged. Reprofile £18k to 25-26.
Cotgrave & Keyworth Leisure Centre Enhancements	4,056	1,441	182	(1,259)	3,056	1,000	Work in progress. Salix Grant Funding of £1.215m awarded which needs 12% match funding £146k from the Climate Change Reserve. £730k redirected to Cotgrave and Bingham Leisure Centres from Bingham Arena underspend; £780k Strategic CIL allocated; and £250k Lottery Grant for Solar Panels at Cotgrave Leisure Centre. Project slightly behind schedule but still aiming for Sept/Oct start on site. Could reallocate some additional UKSPF here. Reprofile £1m to 25-26
Edwalton Golf Club Enhancements	30	0	0	0	0	(30)	Sum not yet committed. Flooding issues need to be addressed first and are currently being assessed with a view to establishing a costed action plan for the proposed works.
Old Bingham Leisure Centre Improvements	100	0	0	0	100	0	Sum for improvements to Athletics Track subject to a pre-app with planning. Options to be assessed but are tied in with school redevelopment.
SAFE4HEARTS UKSPF	3	0	0	0	0	(3)	No further installations, sum to be returned to UKSPF Capital pot.

	Current Budget £000	Budget YTD £000	Actual YTD £000	Variance £000	Projected Actual £000	Variance £000	Comments
Gresham Sports Park Redevelopment	88	20	20	0	88	0	Moving shipping container nearly complete and CCTV improvements (following ASB/crime issues). Further work on swale and trees required. UKSPF allocation could be made. £20k expenditure on cricket wickets fully funded by English Cricket Board Grant.
RETROFIT Grants	583	117	43	(74)	583	0	New Government Initiative. Contract in place. Survey and works have commenced, invoices to be processed.
Gamston Community Centre Enhancements Special Expense	130	0	0	0	130	0	Sum for decarbonisation works. Successful Salix bid. Contract tendered but no bidders. Assessing option for direct contract award.
Lutterell Hall Enhancements Special Expense	0	0	0	0	0	0	Sum not required; £50k provision redirected to Teen Play Provision at West Park.
Home Upgrade Grants (HUG2) Green Energy Grants	890	0	0	0	890	0	New initiative, fully funded by Government Grant. Capital works have commenced but no invoices received yet.
Rushcliffe Country Park Play Area	97	97	99	99	99	2	Works complete, payments to be processed. Site opened June 24. Minor overspend.
External Door/Window Upgrades Various Sites	46	0	0	0	0	(46)	To be undertaken ad hoc, no commitments yet but Unit 10 Moorbridge is on the list.
Sharphill Paths Special Expense	7	0	0	0	7	0	Funded from UKSPF; works to be undertaken in autumn.
Bridge Field Access Imps Spec Exp	53	53	53	0	53	0	Works complete. £20k funded from UKSPF; £25k Neighbourhood CIL; and £8k from Special Expense Capital Reserve.

	Current Budget £000	Budget YTD £000	Actual YTD £000	Variance £000	Projected Actual £000	Variance £000	Comments
Alford Road Football Pitches	28	28	5	(23)	30	2	Order placed. £25k funding from Neighbourhood CIL; £3.4k Football Foundation Grant. Works nearing completion. Projected minor overspend.
Edwalton Community Facility Spec Exp	250	0	0	0	250	0	Detailed design and cost plan to be drawn up. Delivery of scheme to be agreed. Estimated total cost is £750k - looking at legal agreement for stage payments to ensure spend of UKSPF £250k before end of March 2025. £500k reprofiled to 25/26. This project is at risk due to complexity and timescales.
Greythorn Drive Play Area Spec Exp	106	106	85	(21)	106	0	Scheme to be funded from S106 Contribution. Practical completion of the Play Area element 05.07.24 invoice not yet processed; Mini MUGA still to be completed.
Bridgford Park and Bridge Field Play Areas Spec Exp	134	0	0	0	134	0	£75k UKSPF funding allocated; £57k S106; and balance from reserves. Anticipated tender specification autumn '24.
The Hook Works	6	0	0	0	6	0	Works required to the ditch at Hook Nature Reserve funded from UKSPF
West Park Julien Cahn Pavilion Special Expense	719	0	9	9	334	(385)	Planning fee and surveys in advance of works. Detailed design and cost plan to be drawn up. Part funded by UKSPF. £100k (may need to be reallocated if timescales slip) - GEP appointed to do design (also covering Gamston). Wider refurbishment work being scoped. £50k redirected from Lutterell Hall for Teen Play Areas at West Park. £164k Grant awarded from English

	Current Budget £000	Budget YTD £000	Actual YTD £000	Variance £000	Projected Actual £000	Variance £000	Comments
							Cricket Board for Cricket Wickets. Request to reprofile £385k to 25-26.
	9,252	2,796	1,137	(1,562)	7,703	(1,549)	
Finance and Corporate Services							
Information Systems Strategy	276	75	82	7	341	65	Rollout of the ICT Alignment Strategy to meet business needs and embrace changing technology. Cloud Based Solutions now being assessed. There may be a need to accelerate some of the 25-26 provision for EXSI Boxes and the San Replacement. This is currently being assessed. A capital contingency request is to be made for £65k to cover the costs of stage one AV Replacement in the Council Chamber.
	276	75	82	7	341	65	
Contingency	330	0	0	0	0	(330)	Budget movement: Original Budget £150k; £180k brought forward from 23-24; £65k contingency request to be processed for stage one AV Replacement in the Council Chamber.
	330	0	0	0	0	(330)	
Total Capital Programme	13,135	3,455	1,658	(1,700)	9,537	(3,598)	

Special Expenses Monitoring September 2024

	2024/25 Original Budget £	Projected Outturn £	Projected Variance £	Reason
West Bridgford				
Parks & Playing Fields	486,700	486,600	-100	
West Bridgford Town Centre	115,100	117,100	2,000	Electrical pillars for Christmas Lights
Community Halls	101,300	103,200	1,900	PRS Licences
Contribution to deficit	7,300	7,300	0	
Annuity Charges	98,000	98,000	0	
Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay	75,000	75,000	0	
Sinking fund (The Hook Skatepark)	20,000	20,000	0	
Total	903,400	907,200	3,800	
Keyworth				
Cemetery	9,600	9,600	0	
Annuity Charge	4,600	4,600	0	
Total	14,200	14,200	0	
Ruddington				
Cemetery	10,400	10,500	100	
Total	10,400	10,500	0	
Total Special Expenses	928,000	931,900	3,900	



Cabinet

Tuesday, 10 December 2024

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review

Report of the Chief Executive

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

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. The Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) is a part of the Local Government Association's (LGA) sector support programme. It involves senior councillors and officers from other authorities acting as peers to review the Council, providing supportive, but also critical challenge. It aims to highlight areas of good practice, as well as identify areas for improvement and ongoing support.
- 1.2. The Council invited the LGA to conduct a CPC, which took place 15-18 January 2024. The feedback report from this visit and resulting action plan was presented to Cabinet in April 2024.
- 1.3. Progress reviews are now a core component of all CPCs. Every council that has a CPC is required to have a progress review and publish its findings within 12 months of the original CPC. The Council's progress review took place on 6 November 2024.
- 1.4. This report provides an overview of the process, progress against the original CPC recommendations and the progress review feedback report, which is presented in its entirety in Appendix A.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet accepts the LGA's feedback report as presented in Appendix A.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

The Council is required to publish the feedback report within 12 months of the original CPC which was in January 2024.

4. Supporting Information

Overview of the Progress Review Process

- 4.1. The progress review took place on 6 November 2024. The review focused on each of the CPC's main recommendations. The Council shared an overview of progress made against each of the recommendations in advance of the visit, see Appendix B, which was explored in greater detail on the day.
- 4.2. The following members of the original CPC team participated in the progress review:
- Member Peer - Peter Fleming OBE, former Leader, Sevenoaks District Council
 - Chief Executive Peer – Scott Logan, former Chief Executive, Basildon Council
 - LGA Peer Challenge Manager – Vicki Goddard

Progress Against CPC Recommendations

- 4.3. The Council has completed or progressed all nine of the recommendations made by the CPC team in January 2024, which the team reported to be impressed by.
- 4.4. Progress against all nine recommendations is presented in Appendix A, with particular highlights including:
- A Corporate Projects Team has been established, which now acts as a central hub for project management within the authority. The rollout of a refreshed project management approach is planned for January 2025, which will provide a consistent approach for all officers delivering projects across the Council. Project management training is planned for the new year for a cohort of officers who are involved in project work. Not only does this new function provide consistency in terms of project management approach, but it also provides greater oversight for the Executive Management Team.
 - A new Capital Programme Officer Working Group has been established, which is linked to the newly adopted Economic Growth Strategy. The purpose of this Group is to ensure that the programme is being well managed in terms of its strategic outcomes, prioritisation and capacity to deliver. It also draws links to the Economic Growth Strategy and will assist with identifying possible additions to the programme.
 - The Council's values have been revised and reduced to five: commitment, collaboration, excellence, inclusivity and integrity. This process was led by the Council's Employee Liaison Group, with all colleagues involved in the consultation. The result is a more impactful and meaningful set of values, which colleagues relate to and can remember.

Feedback from the CPC Team

- 4.5. Feedback received on the day was extremely positive. The team recognised the amount of work done by the Council since their visit in January 2024, and the Council's commitment to responding positively and meaningfully to the recommendations made.
- 4.6. The team remarked on the day and in the feedback report, that they were impressed with the progress made in the context of such significant local and regional change since their visit, including the establishment of the East Midlands Combined County Authority, a new MP for Rushcliffe and the announcement of the departure of the Chief Executive.
- 4.7. The team reported that they were particularly impressed both by the Council's 'careful consideration of, and building on, these recommendations to best enhance Rushcliffe's agenda, rather than just actioning them at face value' and also the Council's 'recognition of how to progress each main recommendation further, to get the fullest value out of them'.
- 4.8. The feedback report which can be viewed in full in Appendix A, includes a great deal of positive feedback and observations, including:
 - Rushcliffe has undertaken significant work on this [*approach to project management*] since the CPC.
 - This [*regional partnership working*] is already enabling Rushcliffe to further build its relationships and trust with its partners, so that partners can take up Rushcliffe's offers, as well as its asks.
 - The Council's Housing Design codes, including those in the GNSP, currently include eco credentials and targets far higher than their current equivalents and building regulations. This is to meet Rushcliffe's ambitious climate change agenda for its communities. The codes notably build on the Council's successful Abbey Road housing development, whereby Rushcliffe and the developer have agreed many environmental features.
 - All Rushcliffe's services contribute to the [*carbon management*] plan through their aligned service area action plans. Notable examples include reducing Rushcliffe's refuse fleet's carbon emissions by 90% by replacing diesel with biofuel and securing external grant funding to improve carbon efficiency of the Cotgrave Leisure Centre and Gamston Community Hall. Through such work, Rushcliffe is making much progress towards its 2030 climate related targets, with more to come.
 - The Council has responded to this challenge [*engaging with diverse and interconnecting communities*] in many positive ways. It has, for example, developed various initiatives to identify and engage more with its younger stakeholders, potential service users and hard to reach groups. The peer team was particularly impressed with the Council's work with high schools, whereby students articulately present and discuss issues they want to address. Rushcliffe is continuing to engage with communities – and empowering local stakeholder representatives to lead on projects – in specific work areas such as the environment.

- 4.9. A small number of comments in the feedback report require some additional context or response, as follows:

CPC comment	RBC response
<p>Pg 5 - Rushcliffe has not been able to introduce its new performance management framework including staff appraisals... It has however scheduled the rollout for November 2025, alongside which the Council will align its programme and project management processes.</p>	<p><i>The Council has established a new Corporate Projects team and is working on strengthening the approach to corporate project management. However, the Council is confident in its current approach to performance management. There is a clear golden thread which aligns performance from the Corporate Strategy, through service plans, down to individual appraisals.</i></p> <p><i>The reference to a new performance management framework including staff appraisals appears to confuse two separate pieces of work, firstly the roll out of a new project management framework and secondly embedding our new values into our appraisal process. These are two distinct pieces of work, unrelated to performance management.</i></p>
<p>Pg 6 – All this [<i>improved training</i>] may be contributing to Councillors asking fewer questions.</p>	<p><i>The Council has no wish for Councillors to ask fewer question. It essential that Councillors do ask questions and that officers provide the right level of support to ensure Councillors understand their role and any issues they are considering or scrutinising.</i></p>
<p>Pg 7 - The Council recognised that its EMT needed greater oversight and alignment between its Economic Growth Strategy and five-year capital programme to ensure best use of resources and best outcomes.</p>	<p><i>EMT has always had robust oversight of the Capital Programme. This is not a concern. The added value of the new Capital Programme Working Group is to identify resource pressures and considering the pipeline of capital schemes to aid financial planning.</i></p>
<p>Pg 8 - Rushcliffe is also reviewing the health and progress of its high streets. These can be too small to implement effective business improvement districts but the Council is open to reconsidering the concept.</p>	<p><i>The Council has explored ‘business improvement districts’ a number of times in the past and currently does not feel they are a good fit for the Borough and will not be pursuing this further at present.</i></p>
<p>Pg 12 - The Council and the peer team also recognise that some of Rushcliffe’s current methodology for</p>	<p><i>The approach taken to resident surveys is fairly standard across local authorities of Rushcliffe’s size and the Council does not believe the findings to be without value.</i></p>

engaging/surveying its residents is not statistically valid.

However, the Council is willing to explore alternative approaches in future, depending on resources.

- 4.10. The Council is glad to see recognition of the positive progress made since January 2024. This recognition builds on many of the original observations of the CPC team in respect of the Council as an exceptional partner, with Councillors who have a strong role within their communities and exceptionally hard-working staff.
- 4.11. The CPC process has been a positive one and the Council would like to thank the Corporate Peer Team and the LGA for their time and commitment.

5. Alternative options considered and reasons for rejection

The Council could choose not to accept the feedback from the CPC progress review. However, it is important that the Council remains open to feedback and learning, particularly from experienced peers and the LGA. This is in the best interests of residents and the Borough.

6. Risks and Uncertainties

There are no known risks associated with this report.

7. Implications

7.1. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

7.2. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

7.3. Equalities Implications

There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

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

There are no crime and disorder implications associated with this report.

7.5. Biodiversity Net Gain Implications

There are no biodiversity net gain implications associated with this report.

8. Link to Corporate Priorities

The Environment	The CPC is designed to ensure that the council is meeting its corporate priorities across the board.
Quality of Life	
Efficient Services	
Sustainable Growth	

9. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet accepts the LGA's feedback report as presented in Appendix A.

For more information contact:	Kath Marriott Chief Executive 0115 914 8291 kmarriott@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Cabinet – April 2024
List of appendices:	Appendix A – Progress Review Feedback Appendix B – RBC Progress Update

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review

Rushcliffe Borough Council

Wednesday 6 November 2024

Feedback

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Summary of the approach	3
3. Progress Review - Feedback	4
4. Final thoughts and next steps	12

1. Introduction

Rushcliffe Borough Council (Rushcliffe) undertook a Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) during Monday 15 to Thursday 18 January 2024 and promptly published the full report and an action plan.

Progress Review is an integral part of the CPC process. Taking place approximately ten months after the CPC, it provides space for the council's senior leadership to:

- receive peer team feedback on the council's early progress against the CPC main recommendations and the council's RAG (red, amber, green) rated action plan
- consider peers' reflections on any new opportunities, challenges and support needs that may have arisen since the peer team was onsite for the CPC
- discuss any early impact or learning from the progress made to date.

The LGA would like to thank the council for its commitment to sector led improvement. This Progress Review was the next step in this ongoing, open and close relationship the council has with LGA sector support.

2. Summary of the approach

Rushcliffe's Progress Review took place onsite on Wednesday 6 November 2024. The review focussed on each of the CPC's main recommendations:

1. take a strategic/corporate approach to programme and project management, building on and aligning with your existing corporate performance management function
2. invest further in staff and councillor training; ensure councillors in particular take up mandatory, essential and other training, including that on councillor/officer roles, political awareness, code of conduct and other internal processes
3. create further time, space, resource and capacity with your strategic partners to identify what could be needed in future regarding changes in the landscape that affect you and your communities, notably the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) Development Corporation and Freeport

3

18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ www.local.gov.uk Telephone 020 7664 3000 Email info@local.gov.uk

Local Government Association company number 11177145 Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number 03675577

Chair: Councillor Louise Gittins

Chief Executive: Joanna Killian

President: Baroness Grey-Thompson

4. further develop and align your capital programme with your economic growth strategy once you have agreed the latter for 2024/25, with clear outcomes for both
5. use your respected position with all your partners to deliver further defined outcomes across the whole council
6. explore options through your climate change action plan to maximise delivery of environmental outcomes across your strategic development and growth sites
7. integrate climate change ambitions in all your service areas
8. reduce the number of RBC values, eg to a maximum of five, working with your employee liaison group and trade unions
9. build up your future, annual or mid-term, light-touch corporate strategy refreshes from community level to best understand and respond to your communities' needs and aspirations for the future.

For this Progress Review, the following original CPC team members were involved:

- Member Peer - Peter Fleming OBE, former Leader, Sevenoaks District Council
- Chief Executive Peer – Scott Logan, former Chief Executive, Basildon Council
- LGA Peer Challenge Manager – Vicki Goddard
- LGA Project Support Officer – Suraiya Khatun (offsite).

3. Progress Review - Feedback

Of the CPC's main recommendations, the council's RAG rated action plan reports that 100 per cent of actions are completed/progressed.

Overall comments

Rushcliffe has experienced and responded to much local change since its last CPC. This includes: elections of a new Member of Parliament for Rushcliffe and EMCCA's first Mayor (both of whom the council is building further relationships with), further establishment of EMCCA since it went 'live' this year, and the announcement during this Progress Review of Nottinghamshire County Council's (NCC's) Leader resigning from that role. Rushcliffe is the only Conservative controlled district council within the

4

18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ www.local.gov.uk Telephone 020 7664 3000 Email info@local.gov.uk

Local Government Association company number 11177145 Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number 03675577

Chair: Councillor Louise Gittins

Chief Executive: Joanna Killian

President: Baroness Grey-Thompson

EMCCA region, and the council's Chief Executive is leaving, with Rushcliffe recruiting to that post.

In light of such significant change, the peer team was particularly impressed with the council's:

- work already undertaken to progress all the main CPC recommendations
- careful consideration of, and building on, these recommendations to best enhance Rushcliffe's agenda, rather than just actioning them at face value
- recognition of how to progress each main recommendation further, to get the fullest value out of them. Details of this thinking are outlined in this report.

The peer team's key reflections on the council's progress against each main CPC recommendation – outlined above in full, and shortened here for brevity - are:

Recommendation 1 - take a strategic/corporate approach to programme and project management, building on and aligning with your existing corporate performance management function

Rushcliffe has undertaken significant work on this since the CPC. It has established a Corporate Project Management Office, appointed its manager who has gained further project management qualification and recruited an additional officer. The manager has identified and is co-ordinating projects across Rushcliffe with colleagues, and has started reporting and discussing their progress to the council's Executive Management Team (EMT). This is enabling EMT to identify and support further improvements, including within Rushcliffe's carbon offsetting programme.

The manager has also refreshed Rushcliffe's project management approach with colleagues and is due to roll it out across the council this month. Additionally, the manager is organising related training for officers already delivering projects. All this will enable the council to deliver such work consistently and compliantly.

Rushcliffe has not been able to introduce its new performance management framework including staff appraisals due to key staff absence. It has however scheduled the rollout for November 2025, alongside which the council will align its programme and project management processes. **Rushcliffe should continue to**

plan as much as possible for this rollout and alignment in advance so that performance, programme and project management complement and support each other to best effect from the outset. The council should also look to embed these three management elements together across all its service teams.

This will require the Corporate Project Manager to work closely with the head of corporate performance management as soon as possible. This alignment will continually support and skill officers to deliver projects, and monitor progress, in the most efficient and effective ways.

Recommendation 2 - invest further in staff and councillor training

Rushcliffe has commissioned a training provider, and scoped out training courses, for officers and councillors, especially on political awareness, councillor and officer roles, and working in a political environment. This training will take place in early 2025.

Officer training – at introductory and further levels, as per officers’ experience of working with councillors - will include senior officer and councillor input. This will enable participants to consider different perspectives. **Rushcliffe’s should look to measure the impact of this training through its revised appraisal processes**, so any related future training and development can be improved as required.

Councillor training will be open to all councillors and involve Rushcliffe’s Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer (director of finance) to consider their perspectives.

Sharing councillors’ and key officers’ perspectives through all these training opportunities will help Rushcliffe enhance these joint relationships and work.

The council has also updated all its individual councillor learning records, renewed its push on mandatory training, and attendance on its Councillors’ Training Programme this year is above 50 per cent. All this may be contributing to councillors asking fewer questions, being more proactive, whilst also becoming more experienced.

Recommendation 3 - create further time, space, resource and capacity with your strategic partners to identify what could be needed in future

Amongst its work on this recommendation, Rushcliffe’s Leader, Deputy Leader, Chief

Executive and other senior officers are acquiring specific EMCCA, freeport, power station sub (regional)-committee roles as these committees develop. These are crucial roles for the council due to the related, complex border/co-terminosity issues. Rushcliffe's ownership of, responsibility for, and advocacy of these issues via these sub-regional roles will enable it to best act on its communities' behalf. The council and its partners, through these sub-regional committees, have built time in their agendas for more strategic thinking. This is already enabling Rushcliffe to further build its relationships and trust with its partners, so that partners can take up Rushcliffe's offers, as well as its asks.

As outlined earlier in this report, Rushcliffe is undertaking all this work in a complex, changing, sub-regional, political landscape. **The council cannot afford to lose its current influence in this space. It should therefore build on its positive roles within its sub-regional structures to continue developing strategic space, time and relationships with all its sub-regional partners.** This will enable the council's new Chief Executive to progress the existing Chief Executive's highly regarded relationships, trust and work in this environment. It will also ensure Rushcliffe's communities best benefit from and contribute to this wider sub-regional agenda.

Recommendation 4 - further develop and align your capital programme with your economic growth strategy, with clear outcomes for both

Rushcliffe developed its economic growth strategy in 2024 to address its identified challenges and opportunities in this work area. The council's Cabinet adopted the strategy in October 2024. Rushcliffe has also devised an action plan to deliver the strategy. The action plan includes: defined actions, officers leads, target dates, progress and next steps to support each of the strategy's ambitions.

The council recognised that its EMT needed greater oversight and alignment between its economic growth strategy and five-year capital programme to ensure best use of resources and best outcomes. Rushcliffe therefore set up a new capital programme working group to report quarterly to EMT, including the Section 151 Officer, through budget update reports. This is already enabling the working group and EMT to: review the capital programme, identify current pressures and future projects, reprioritise resources accordingly, sign-off new requests, and focus on

jointly delivered projects. The council's new strategic/corporate approach to programme and project management is also assisting the ongoing successful delivery of Rushcliffe's economic growth strategy and capital programme. This includes the council committing defined financial and staff resources to these and other work areas. Rushcliffe is also working with other local borough and district councils on economic development work.

The council recognises that it is early days on this work. **There are for example immediate opportunities to work with local big businesses and EMCCA to further support areas of mutual priority and interest.** Rushcliffe has however got off to a good start through this work.

Rushcliffe is also reviewing the health and progress of its high streets. These can be too small to implement effective business improvement districts but **the council is open to reconsidering the concept with its existing local business partnerships and should do so**, whilst re-establishing its group of big businesses.

Recommendation 5 - use your respected position with all your partners to deliver further defined outcomes across the whole council

Amongst its work on this recommendation, Rushcliffe has co-led work to secure funding from EMCCA's Mayor for the Local Area Energy Plan, which has since been commissioned. This funding enables all Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire local authorities to be involved, and significantly reduces – if not avoids - significant gaps in this essential energy mapping project.

The council has agreement from its Fairham site's developer to fund a community development worker to foster community activities and relations in the new settlement, prior to the setting up of a potential new parish council in 2027.

The council should further develop all this work with its partners, especially EMCCA, local councils and businesses including key developers. This will keep Rushcliffe involved in related, ongoing sub-regional negotiations, so the council, its partners and communities contribute and benefit from each other's input.

Recommendation 6 - explore options through your climate change action plan to maximise delivery of environmental outcomes across your strategic

development and growth sites

Most Rushcliffe strategic sites have acquired planning permission, and the council is exploring and processing its housing design codes and other improvements.

Rushcliffe hopes the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan (GNSP) will be adopted in 2026, further to its strong, cross-party political work with the other councils involved.

The council's housing design codes, including those in the GNSP, currently include eco credentials and targets far higher than their current equivalents and building regulations. This is to meet Rushcliffe's ambitious climate change agenda for its communities. The codes notably build on the council's successful Abbey Road housing development, whereby Rushcliffe and the developer have agreed many environmental features. These include: a fully electric site, solar panels on all suitable roofs, rainwater harvesting, electric vehicle charging and cycle storage for each house, and air source heat pumps, which the peer team saw for itself during this Progress Review. The council knows it needs to review these aspirations against the latest National Planning Policy Framework consultation's results, once published, to ensure Rushcliffe's and Greater Nottingham's plans are compliant.

Rushcliffe has been awaiting various announcements from the previous and new Governments to check and ensure all its related work is compliant.

Recommendation 7 - integrate climate change ambitions in all your service areas

Rushcliffe's carbon management group continues to meet quarterly to review and progress its corporate-wide carbon management plan and performance. The council's Communities Scrutiny Group also scrutinises this work. All Rushcliffe's services contribute to the plan through their aligned service area action plans. Notable examples include reducing Rushcliffe's refuse fleet's carbon emissions by 90 per cent by replacing diesel with biofuel, and securing external grant funding to improve carbon efficiency of the Cotgrave Leisure Centre and Gamston Community Hall. Through such work, Rushcliffe is making much progress towards its 2030 climate related targets, with more to come.

The council is also updating and streamlining its climate change action plan to

include carbon related service and sub-service plan tasks for all its teams. As a living document, this includes Rushcliffe considering the very latest issues, for example any possible implications for farmland as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Budget. Additionally, Rushcliffe produced, approved and is actioning its own carbon offsetting framework this year, particularly focusing on offsetting within its borough.

Rushcliffe has been able to deliver what it has on its climate change ambitions because it has prioritised finances, staff and other resources accordingly. This includes making the most of its existing highly experienced and long-standing staff.

Given its experience, focus and progress on climate change, not only for the borough but the wider sub-region, **Rushcliffe is planning to work with its partners more. It should continue to do this, especially on joint agendas.** The council is already the district lead on the Nottinghamshire local nature recovery strategy; Rushcliffe's Chief Executive chairs the strategic oversight group. The council should therefore make the most of its own expertise, experience and resources, and share work with, and benefit from, the wider sub-region's climate change agenda.

Rushcliffe's climate change agenda includes significant programmes, such as buildings, equipment, technology, vehicles and a variety of land uses. **The council should therefore fully utilise its new, enhanced programme and project management approach throughout its climate change work.** This will help ensure Rushcliffe organises, delivers and aligns all options, activities and programmes to maximum effect, making the most of resources and future opportunities.

Recommendation 8 - reduce the number of RBC values, working with your employee liaison group and trade unions

Rushcliffe's Employee Liaison Group (ELG) has led this work to review and reduce the council's previous 11 values to a more focused set of five: commitment, collaboration, excellence, inclusivity and integrity - each with examples of what they look like in practice.

ELG started by reviewing the 11 values themselves, and values from elsewhere, before creating, sharing and updating an initial draft of revised values with EMT. ELG then shared the revised set with all council staff and unions to gather and respond to

10

18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ www.local.gov.uk Telephone 020 7664 3000 Email info@local.gov.uk

Local Government Association company number 11177145 Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number 03675577

Chair: Councillor Louise Gittins

Chief Executive: Joanna Killian

President: Baroness Grey-Thompson

feedback before presenting a next draft to EMT, then Cabinet for final agreement.

Rushcliffe is ensuring the values are continually communicated to, and practiced by, all its councillors and staff, to make the most positive difference. Formally branded, the new values already feature in the council's corporate induction process, and in the weekly Staff Matters newsletter, highlighting good examples of the values in practice. Rushcliffe also intends to build the values into recruitment, performance management and appraisal, celebratory and other processes.

Recommendation 9 - build up your future, annual or mid-term, light-touch corporate strategy refreshes from community level

A key point behind the peer team's thinking for this recommendation was that Rushcliffe has many diverse and interconnecting communities that it did not seem to be engaging with as well as it could. The council may therefore have been missing out on opportunities to work with and empower those communities, to identify and address their needs and aspirations, via Rushcliffe's corporate strategy.

The council has however responded to this challenge in many positive ways. It has, for example, developed various initiatives to identify and engage more with its younger stakeholders, potential service users and hard to reach groups. The peer team was particularly impressed with the council's work with high schools, whereby students articulately present and discuss issues they want to address. Rushcliffe is continuing to engage communities – and empowering local stakeholder representatives to lead on projects – in specific work areas such as the environment. The council also undertook its latest residents survey in 2024, which it will scrutinise in January 2025. Additionally, Rushcliffe is following up opportunities to make the most of initial engagement, and increasing ways for communities to contact and provide feedback.

Through this work, Rushcliffe is in the process of identifying areas to improve, as well as many areas that are already strong. The council is aligning areas that need improving to service plans, to enhance delivery, budget and further survey work. This work is also informing the council's revised communications - and now also engagement – strategy and action plan, which Rushcliffe is launching in January 2025. The council will also conduct an enhanced mid-term review in 2025 with a view

to plan more comprehensive community engagement activities.

In terms of areas to improve, and in relation to this recommendation, Rushcliffe and the peer team identified that increasing opportunities for local communities to influence local decisions could be a key area to focus on. Additionally, Rushcliffe's diverse groups make up a notable proportion of the borough's population but their specific needs, and the council's response to them, are not yet clear. If those needs were clear and addressed, this would make even better use of Rushcliffe's resources, and potentially build more trust in, and participation with, the council.

Rushcliffe should therefore further progress all its latest communications and engagement work, especially with its various demographic groups, to help address this and make the most of this momentum in responding to this recommendation more generally.

The peer team recognises however that the council has made notable progress on this recommendation in the round, especially regarding community engagement.

The council and the peer team also recognise that some of Rushcliffe's current methodology for engaging/surveying its residents is not statistically valid; respondents for example can be self-selecting. **Rushcliffe should therefore undertake work to ensure such future results reflect the communities, including various demographic groups, whom the council serves.** These opportunities include targeted approaches for different demographic groups, to ensure their feedback is collated and responded to.

The council already holds cultural events and services such as its Lunar New Year event and Mandarin translation. **Rushcliffe need only therefore continue its good work on this.** This will ensure the council genuinely strives towards, and delivers, the best services and outcomes for all its communities. In doing so, it will make the best use of Rushcliffe's resources, and likely enhance communities' perception and trust in the council to deliver for and engage with them. This could potentially be positively reflected through feedback in the next residents survey.

4. Final thoughts and next steps

The LGA would like to thank Rushcliffe for undertaking this Progress Review.

We appreciate that senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions to determine how the council wishes to progress.

Under the umbrella of LGA sector led improvement, there is an ongoing offer of support to councils. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas identified for development and improvement, and we would be happy to discuss this.

Mark Edgell - Principal Adviser - is the main point of contact between the council and the LGA, and his email address is mark.edgell@local.gov.uk.

This page is intentionally left blank

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

	RECOMMENDATION FROM PEER TEAM	November 2024	RAG Status
1.	Take a strategic/corporate approach to programme and project management, building on and aligning with your existing corporate performance management function.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Project Management Office has been established. • CPM in post and has recently undertaken Association of Project Managers, Project Management Qualification. • CPM has recently appointed a Project Officer to the team. • CPM is engaging with external contacts, gathering best practice to feed in to RBC's new PM framework. • EMT have already received an initial update report on Corporate Projects. • New PM framework to begin roll out in January 2025. 	
2.	Invest further in staff and councillor training; ensure councillors in particular take up mandatory, essential and other training, including that on councillor/officer roles, political awareness, code of conduct and other internal processes.	<p>Work has been undertaken over the summer to identify a suitable training provider and scope out training courses for both officers and councillors in respect of political awareness / working in a political environment. These courses will take place in the new year.</p> <p>Officer training will include input from senior officers and councillors so that different perspectives are presented. There will be an introductory level session online for team leaders and officers who have occasional contact with councillors and a more in-depth face-to-face interactive session for those who work with councillors more frequently. The councillor training will be open to all councillors.</p> <p>In addition, work has been done to bring all councillor individual learning records up to date and there has been a renewed push on mandatory training which is now all up to date and complete. The delivery of the Councillors' Training Programme</p>	

		for this year continues and attendance is a above 50% which is 'healthy'.	
3.	Create further time, space, resource and capacity with your strategic partners to identify what could be needed in future regarding changes in the landscape that affect you and your communities, notably the East Midlands Mayoral County Combined Authority (EMMCCA), Development Corporation and Freeport.	<p>A joint Cabinet and Executive Management Team workshop was held in summer 2024 to consider this in more detail.</p> <p>The Leader, Deputy Leader and Chief Executive are taking active role in devolution meetings wherever possible. The Leader is Board Member of the Freeport. The Leader and Deputy Leader both sit on EMCCA committees.</p> <p>Other officers e.g. s151 Officer sit on Freeport Sub-Committees. The Development Corporation is now being subsumed within EMCCA.</p>	
4.	Further develop and align your capital programme with your economic growth strategy once you have agreed the latter for 2024/25, with clear outcomes for both.	The Economic Growth Strategy was adopted by Cabinet in October 2024. An Action Plan has been developed and funding is currently being repatriated, for example £0.5m to help pump-prime, and use to attract, investment, from partners in relation to the pedestrianisation of the Borough's main shopping centre (Cabinet Quarter 1 2024/25 Finance Report) as well as £70k to improve signage into Rushcliffe. This will continue as the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy evolves and financial commitment is balanced against other priorities. The newly formed Capital Programme Working Group will assist with ongoing successful delivery of the Capital Programme given the challenge of scarce resources.	

5.	Use your respected position with all your partners to deliver further defined outcomes across the whole council – you are already using your environmental partnerships to lever in additional funding to support delivery... You should therefore maximise financial potential via these partnership routes.	Since the CPC, the council has secured funding from the Mayor for the Local Area Energy Plan. We also have agreement from CWC the developer of the Fairham site to fund a community development worker to foster community activities and relations in the new settlement prior to the setting up of the new parish council in 2027.	
6.	Explore options through your climate change action plan to maximise delivery of environmental outcomes across your strategic development and growth sites.	<p>The Design Code is currently being processed; however how much we can deviate from the current policy position needs to be explored following the current NPPF consultation.</p> <p>The majority of our strategic sites have been granted planning permission however we will continue to seek improvements across reserved matter applications where possible. The Gamston site SPD is currently in process and the environmental sections are still being worked upon.</p> <p>The GNSP (hoped to be adopted in 2026) includes a climate change policy which is more ambitious than the current policy. This has been worked upon with the other Nottinghamshire Councils. It is hopeful that this policy will achieve a significant improvement in the carbon footprint of developments moving forward. If agreed by the Planning Inspector then when adopted this will give greater requirements to developers when submitting planning applications.</p>	
7.	Integrate climate change ambitions in all your service areas.	The Council's Carbon Management Group has continued to meet on a quarterly basis and the latest performance of the plan has been scrutinised by the Communities Scrutiny Group. The group were very positive about the progress being made by the Council towards its 2030 target.	

		<p>Particular highlights have been the introduction of biofuel as an alternative to diesel for the Council's refuse fleet which has reduced their carbon emissions by 90%. The Council has also been successful in securing external grant funding to improve the carbon efficiency of our Cotgrave Leisure Centre and Gamston Community Hall.</p> <p>The Council is also in the process of updating and streamlining the climate change action plan as a living document which will contain relevant carbon related service plan tasks and other sub service plan tasks for teams across the Council. Furthermore the Council now has a carbon/climate impact check box on all Council reports to ensure that any implications are fully understood by councillors.</p>	
8.	Reduce the number of RBC values, eg to a maximum of five, working with your employee liaison group and trade unions.	<p>This work has been taken forward by our Employee Liaison Group. The Council has now adopted 5 refreshed values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment • Collaboration • Excellence • Inclusivity • Integrity 	
9.	Build up your future, annual or mid-term, light-touch corporate strategy refreshes from community level to best understand and respond to your communities' needs and aspirations for the future.	<p>We will conduct an enhanced mid-term review (2025), with more comprehensive community engagement activities.</p> <p>We are currently evaluating the Corporate Survey results and aligning to service planning and budget work as well as other specific surveys</p>	

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS:

	OBSERVATION FROM PEER TEAM	November 2024
10	RBC could build in regular constructive, supportive challenge of its income generation and financial plans, and commission an external, independent review of its assets and their future commercial potential	Strategic Asset Review has now commenced, with the first report on Operational Land and buildings to be presented to Scrutiny in Summer 2025. This will take into consideration commercial potential.
11	RBC should continue monitoring and enhancing planning service and its resources to ensure it remains fit for purpose. This includes developing staff as needed to support delivery of RBC's significant strategic sites including Ratcliffe-on-Soar and facilitating joint working to address gaps in provision such as infrastructure.	A new Planning Manager for Development Management has started and will be reviewing the service. We have also set up a series of meetings with other strategic site officers within LPAs to learn and understand what is happening elsewhere and how we can improve our service with this knowledge.
12	Identify additional land for carbon offsetting, as reception sites for BNG credits and so forth, when developers cannot provide increased biodiversity on their sites. RBC however, as a predominantly rural council, has a range of potential tree planting, agricultural land.	A report presenting the Council's approach to Carbon Offsetting was presented and approved by the Council's Cabinet in April 2024. In addition to identifying appropriate financial support the report provides a tiered framework to how the Council will seek to identify and if necessary, acquire to land to achieve its offsetting target. An internal task and finish group has been formed to take this programme of work forward over the next 12 months

<p>13</p>	<p>RBC does not have an engagement strategy but having one would help the council understand and address its communities' immediate and future needs and aspirations. It would also enable more residents to provide feedback and inform council and sub-regional approaches and get involved in council activities. An engagement strategy could also inform and contribute to the council's annual or mid-term, light-touch corporate strategy refreshes from the community level.</p>	<p>The new Communications and Engagement Strategy 2025-2028 is now being drafted with a specific focus on communities' needs and aspirations and that could help shape corporate strategy reviews going forward. The Council is currently assessing its most recent public consultation results to inform its 'direction of travel'.</p> <p>The strategy will aim to identify where our existing consultations and communications can build on more extensive connections including fellow local authorities, partners, communities, charities and hard to reach groups, schools and youth organisations</p>
------------------	--	--