



MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE OVERVIEW GROUP
TUESDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2024

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

PRESENT:

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

C Caven-Atack	Service Manager Corporate Services
J Wilkinson	Strategic Human Resources Manager
S Clivery	Health and Safety Advisor
E Palmer	Communications and Customer Services Manager
K Brennan	Katie Brennan – Senior Finance Business Partner
E Richardson	Democratic Services Officer

9 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

10 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

11 Minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and were signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman referred to concerns raised at the July Full Council meeting in relation to Councillor understanding of the scrutiny process and confirmed that the Council was looking to organise training through East Midlands Councils and also a workshop to support with understanding.

12 Health and Safety Annual Report

The Strategic Human Resources Manager presented the Health and Safety Annual report for the period of April 2023 to March 2024 and provided an overview of the key points.

The Strategic Human Resources Manager referred to sections two and three of the report which covered the increase in the health and safety risk profile for the Council, which was due to the Streetwise services coming back in-house and the opening of Bingham Arena and Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium. In light of this, the Council had reviewed its health and safety provision and

determined to recruit a permanent Health and Safety Advisor.

The Strategic Human Resources Manager updated the Group about key activities that had taken place over the last twelve months, including the annual review of Health and Safety policies.

The Strategic Human Resources Manager said that Health and Safety Audits and visits had been conducted by the new Health and Safety Advisor at the Streetwise Depot, Rushcliffe Country Park and the R2Go Depot to both familiarise herself with the sites and carry out hazard spotting.

The Strategic Human Resources Manager noted that the Health and Safety Executive had visited the Streetwise Bingham Depot in October 2023, which had been an announced visit from an Inspector from the chemical regulation division, in relation to plant protection products. She said that the Inspector had reviewed the Council's training and risk assessment procedures and had carried out a comprehensive inspection of the Council's chemical storage and compliance with the legislation. Overall, the Inspector was pleased and submitted a few minor written recommendations, suggesting a reduction in the amount of stock held in storage and that the chemical store be modernised and relocated inside.

In relation to progress towards achieving health and safety goals, the Strategic Human Resources Manager said that all six goals had been achieved with the exception of some outstanding policy reviews which would be rolled over in the 2024/25 programme. She said that e-learning compliance was not as high as the Council would like and that this would be a focus for the coming year. In relation to performance, she said that accidents had increased slightly, in part due to increased understanding from training and toolbox talks about reporting of accidents.

In relation to work days lost due to accidents, the Strategic Human Resources Manager said that this had increased significantly in comparison to previous years, but that although many of these were for minor accidents, due to the nature of manual work had nonetheless meant that staff members could not work. She said that all had been reported to the Health and Safety Executive and none had triggered any follow up from them.

The Chairman asked about the number of days lost to injury and asked if these were due to any particular reasons. The Strategic Health and Safety Manager said that the Council did review whether it was at fault for any of the accidents and said that the majority had not occurred on the Council's premises, often caused by trips and slips on roads and pavements, and as such were not within the control of the Council. She said that sickness absence levels had increased in general and wider discussions had suggested a link to problems with accessing NHS services which were impacting employees returning to work. She explained that it was easier to accommodate officer workers returning to work than it was for manual workers.

The Chairman asked about reference to accidents for eleven members of the public and the Strategic Health and Safety Manager explained that these related to low level accidents, often from slips and trips, and that the Council

had reviewed whether these were caused by the facilities. She said that none had been at a level reportable to the Health and Safety Executive.

The Vice Chair of Governance asked about the training completion rates. The Strategic Human Resources Manager explained that one employee had attended emergency first aid training last year due to there being only one employee who required training in that year, but did not reflect the total number employees who were first aid trained overall. She explained that some training was also voluntary and the Council could not dictate how many would attend.

The Vice Chair of Governance referred to the workplace assessments and asked whether the reasons for absence such as for mental health and stress were recorded. The Strategic Human Resources Manager explained that Health and Wellbeing was a large part of the Human Resources work and that that the Council had appointed Workplace Health Champions and did record different types of sickness absence, including for stress.

The Health and Safety Advisor informed the Group about her focus of work for the coming year and said that key aspects of this would include reviewing Health and Safety policies, carrying out a campaign at the R2Go Depot regarding slips and trips and manual handling and going on site visits with refuse crews to look at how they were working. She said that she would be visiting all Council sites, including Rushcliffe Country Park and West Bridgford Library to ensure that all were Health and safety compliant and would carry out an audit of the Council's risk assessment process. She added that she would also review the Council's training programme to check if there were any gaps in provision.

The Vice Chair of Communities Scrutiny Group asked about support for the Workplace Health Champions and the Strategic Human Resources Manager said that she was the Lead Workplace Health Champion for the Council and that the scheme had been set up approximately seven years ago. She said that the Council had Workplace Health Champions across all of its service areas and that training and support was provided for them. She explained that a focus for the Champions was looking at national campaigns and thinking about to implement and embed them within the Council.

The Vice Chair of Communities Scrutiny Group noted that there was no mention of health and safety work with Councillors and the Health and Safety Advisor said that she would take this away for review and asked Councillors to contact her if they required any health and safety support or briefing.

The Chair of Communities Scrutiny Group asked about Health and safety at the Council's leisure and community facility sites and the Health and Safety Advisor said that her role covered all of the sites that the Council managed and that the leisure centres were managed by Lex Leisure who were responsible for their day to day running and which the Council reviewed through its contracts team.

The Chair of Communities Scrutiny Group asked about chemical storage, including expiration dates and the Health and Safety Advisor said that the teams had a very good understanding of chemical storage and had good

management systems in place.

The Chairman thanked Officers for their reports being easy to read and welcomed the information being set out in a way that was understandable and easy to digest.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Corporate Overview Group:

- a) considered the detailed information contained within the Annual Health and Safety Report
- b) noted that a new permanent Health and Safety Advisor has been appointed
- c) noted the significant progress made against the health and safety goals and objectives previously agreed by Corporate Overview Group for the financial year 2023/24; and
- d) endorsed the proposed health and safety objectives for 2024/25 as set out in the report.

13 **Business Continuity Strategy**

The Chairman explained that due to unforeseen circumstances this agenda item had been postponed and would be carried forward to the next meeting of the Corporate Overview Group on 19 November 2024.

14 **Financial and Performance Management**

The Senior Finance Business Partner presented the Q1 position for the Council's financial and performance monitoring for 2024/25.

The Senior Finance Business Partner said that there was currently a projected underspend in both revenue and capital which were proposed to be earmarked for additional cost pressures. She referred to the variances set out in Table 1 of the report, notably favourable variances due to interest on income, additional funding and grants, and business rates. She also noted the most significant adverse variant arising from planning, due to appeals and enforcement. She explained that the Council did have a reserve fund for planning variances but that as there were in year efficiencies it would be covered through those.

The Senior Finance Business Partner referred to Table 2 for the earmarked proposed uses for the underspend.

In relation to the capital programme, the Senior Finance Business Partner said that the Council proposed to rephase £3.756 of the underspend to 2025/26 as summarised in Table 3. She said that the remaining underspend was mainly due to £1m allocated for the travellers site acquisition which would potentially be removed later in the year as no sites had been identified, and underspends on Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium and Bingham Arena, where funds had been allocated for possible VAT liability and post opening enhancements, but which could potentially be released later in the year.

The Senior Finance Business Partner informed the Group that the Council did not have any external borrowing and was in a healthy financial position, but that this could change. Over the longer term, she noted that capital resources were diminishing and that the Council had big environmental objectives which needed to be met.

The Chairman said that she thought the Council's underspends and efficiencies to be good given the recent fluctuations in interest and inflation rates.

The Vice Chair of Communities referred to the efficiencies from staff positions not being filled and the Senior Finance Business Partner explained that the majority of these had occurred where there had been changeover of staff and a period of time between the outgoing staff member leaving and the new employee starting. She said that there were also some posts which the Council did not plan to fill.

In relation to Table 2, the Vice Chair of Communities referred to the underspend from West Bridgford Town Centre regeneration and pedestrianisation of Central Avenue and the Senior Finance Business Partner said that this project was on the Council's radar and so it was holding the funds as potential.

The Vice Chair of Communities referred to Table 3 and asked why projects weren't being taken forward if the money was available and the Chair of Growth and Development Scrutiny Group echoed this sentiment. The Senior Finance Business Partner referred to Appendix D which provided more information on the capital programme. In relation to Hound Lodge, she said that the Council was waiting for a review of the facility to be completed before undertaking any works and in relation to the West Park Kiosk, she explained that the Council was waiting on building regulations and would need to tender for the works and that there were various aspects that needed to be in place before work could take place. She said that the Council sought to set out realistic timeframes for completion of works.

The Chair of Growth and Development Scrutiny Group asked whether a sentence could be added to the report explaining why projects were being carried forward and the Senior Finance Business Partner said that she would take this back for review.

The Vice Chair of Communities asked about the Transformation Plan being achieved in one quarter and the Senior Finance Business Partner explained that this target was for Q1 rather than for the full year.

The Chair of Growth and Development Scrutiny Group asked about registered housing providers and the Senior Finance Business Partner said that there was a national shortage of land available and a shortage of developers calling on this funding as there were other pots of money that they could access more easily. The Service Manager for Corporate Services added that developers found it more difficult to sell the affordable housing and so were not motivated to build them. She said that it was a matter of supply and demand and that the

Council did not control the mechanisms.

The Chair of Governance asked about Edwalton Golf Course showing a loss and whether this reflected a post pandemic fall off in usage or a longer term problem. The Senior Finance Business Partner said that the Golf Course had experienced problems linked to flooding but that the position may recover. She said that she would provide more information about usage trends to the Group.

The Chair of Governance asked about Streetwise income from external contracts and the Communications and Customer Services Manager said that whilst the Council was still in the bedding in process, there was increased social media presence and that it was moving to increased marketing for its services.

In relation to traveller sites, the Chair of Governance noted that the Council had a statutory duty to provide sites and asked whether this meant that a development site would have to have a traveller site as part of it. The Senior Finance Business Partner explained that the Council had been out to market testing twice and had also instructed an agent which had not resulted in any interest and as such provision would be accommodated within sustainable urban extension sites allocated in the Local Plan.

The Chair of Governance asked for more information in relation to the planning costs and the percentage of costs awarded against the Council versus the cost of enforcements and the Senior Finance Business Partner said that she would report back to the Group.

The Vice Chair of Governance asked about the underspend on the homelessness grant and the Senior Finance Business Partner said that whilst there was currently no draw on that money it would not disappear and would be held in reserves until called on. In relation to Homes for Ukraine, she said that this was allocated for when people were placed within households and that whilst there were not currently any claims the money would be held for any future claims. She said that where funding was given as ringfenced it would be held as ringfenced so that it could not be used for anything else.

The Vice Chair of Communities asked for an update on progress regarding the East Midlands Devolution Deal and the Service Manager said that she would take this away for review.

The Communications and Customer Services Manager presented the Q1 Performance Scorecards, as found at Appendix F, and noted the new format for the Scorecards which followed the priorities as set out in the Corporate Strategy and provided greater context to strengthen the link between task and performance.

The Communications and Customer Services Manager explained that the Council was still experiencing high levels of demand for some services but that performance was stabilising and was above target in general.

The Communications and Customer Services Manager took the Group through the seven indicators which had not reached target, being housing waste for

recycling which was in line with a national reduction in waste for recycling; contamination of recycling waste which it was hoped would be reduced with the introduction of changes to bins in 2026 and which the Council was attempting to improve through a media campaign; use of community facilities which was showing signs of growth in some areas and which was being promoted through communications and potential improvements to the booking experience.

The Communications and Customer Services Manager said that Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium had achieved higher income than this time last year and was actively promoting its services through adverts and social media and building relationships with funeral directors and local partners.

In relation to complaints, the Communications and Customer Services Manager said that two had missed the target but that this was an anomaly and the first time that it had occurred in the last two years. In relation to Streetwise, he said that a number of external works had been won and the team was now looking at creating a balance between core work and new business. He said that Streetwise had also been awarded a £27.5k grant from Keep Britain Tidy which would help achieve its annual income target.

The Chair of Governance referred to recycling contamination and noted that potato starch packaging was an increasing source of contamination. Members of the Group asked about work taking place to educate residents, including using imaging as well as text. The Communications and Customer Services Manager said that it was hoped that the Environment Act would help educate people and also influence producers and suppliers. He said that the Council tried to produce communications that were easy to digest and understand in a few seconds and would continue to review its approach and the channels that it used to reach a wide audience.

The Vice Chair of Communities asked about levels of air quality and the Service Manager for Corporate Services said that there were two Nitrous Oxide readers within the Borough at Trent Bridge and Nottingham Knight and said that as emissions were decreasing and were below where they needed to be, they may be removed.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Corporate Overview Group scrutinised:

- a) the expected revenue budget efficiency for the year of £1.106m and proposals to earmark this for cost pressures given at para 4.5 and Table 2
- b) the projected capital budget efficiencies of £5.968m including the reprofiling of provisions totalling £3.756m (para 4.8 and Table 3)
- c) the expected balanced outturn position for special expenses (para 4.6); and
- d) exceptions to judge whether further information is required.

The Chair of Growth and Development Scrutiny Group reported that the last meeting had received two items, on Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium and Infrastructure Delivery. In relation to Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium, he said that the majority of the Group had been pleased with the report and the positive surplus and growth that had been delivered. He noted that the Group had asked for further information about finances. In relation to Infrastructure Delivery, he said that the Group had received detailed explanation about s106 and Community Infrastructure Levy monies and had raised questions about the variations process and had fed back that parish councils felt uniformed and powerless in the variations process. The Group had asked for additional methods for feeding back information to be put in place and for the Infrastructure Delivery report to return to the Group on an annual basis.

The Chair of Governance explained that the next meeting of the Group was scheduled to take place at the end of this month and that an update would be provided to Corporate Overview Group in November.

The Chair of Communities Scrutiny Group reported that the last meeting had received a report in relation to the Use of Community Facilities and Managed Spaces which had included an update about facilities at Gresham and West Park. He said that the Group had learned that sporting provision was performing well and meeting targets.

16 Feedback from Lead Officers

The Service Manager for Corporate Services confirmed that there was no update from Lead Officers.

17 Consideration of Scrutiny Group Work Programmes

The Chair of Communities Scrutiny Group presented the scrutiny request for The health of our town and village centres.

The Chairman agreed that West Bridgford Central Avenue be included as part of the scrutiny item.

The Group agreed for this item to be taken forward in the scrutiny work programme.

The Chair of Communities Scrutiny Group and the Chair of Growth and Development Scrutiny Group presented the Housing association customer service and maintenance request on behalf of Councillors Parekh, Brown and Upton.

The Service Manager for Corporate Services said that Officer feedback on this scrutiny request was to ask for more clarity about what outcomes Members would wish to achieve from the scrutiny work, with the suggestion that Members identifying the main problems and what the scrutiny hoped to achieve would be beneficial to focus work. She said that as there were many housing providers in the Borough it would not be possible to invite them all to attend a meeting and as such Members may wish to highlight specific ones that they were having issues with or perhaps specify if they would wish to invite the

largest ones. She suggested that clarification of objectives would be helpful and that discussing requests with Officers before submitting them also helped to focus what the scrutiny process could achieve.

The Chair of Communities Scrutiny Group explained that when Councillors were approached by residents with problems with their housing it could be difficult for Councillors to make contact with the housing providers and they were often frustrated about how to best help them. The Chair of Growth and Development Scrutiny Group said that residents expected Councillors to be able to influence outcomes but that they often felt that there weren't able to do anything and wanted to understand how they could help residents and address their issues.

The Chairman said that the Council had a duty of care to its residents and that as the Council had appointed housing associations to provide social housing, Councillors needed to be able to scrutinise the system. She suggested that Councillors could assess what the main issues were and which providers they had most issues with and then filter who to invite to attend a meeting. She suggested contacting the Director for Neighbourhoods to help clarify the function of the scrutiny request.

The Service Manager for Corporate Services confirmed that contact details for the Borough's housing providers were available on the Councillors Portal and agreed to circulate a link to the Group and include it in Councillors Connections.

Members of the Group asked if it would be possible to have information on which housing providers were working in which areas and the Service Manager for Corporate Services said that she would take this request back to Officers.

The Chair of Communities Scrutiny Group presented the scrutiny request for Playgrounds built on new developments. He said that whilst he had received feedback from Officers that this information may be covered through existing documents such as the Design Guide, he also wanted to scrutinise how playgrounds were developed and the stipulations that were put on developers and how those stipulations were identified, and once built, how playgrounds were inspected and how Councillors could contribute.

The Chairman noted that this request cut across the Open Spaces Management item and also that the Council was consulting on its Play Strategy. She suggested that as such it may be too early to review this request as it may duplicate work already taking place. She suggested also that this may be a matter for the Local Development Framework Group.

The Chairman confirmed that the Leader had written a letter to the Right Honourable Angela Rayner MP about Open Spaces and had called a round table meeting.

Members of the Group said different approaches to play areas were taken on different developments and that play areas were often installed in new developments in places where the local community didn't want them or where they were of poor quality. Members expressed concern about maintenance and

inspections and liability for costs. The Chair of Communities Scrutiny Group said that he did not want this matter to become lost in the wider discussion about management companies.

The Service Manager for Corporate Services confirmed that this item had crossover with the Open Spaces Management item programmed for the March Growth and Development Scrutiny Group Meeting. She suggested that perhaps the Play Strategy could be brought to Scrutiny for review in the future.

The Chairman suggested that this scrutiny request be held until after Open Spaces Management scrutiny had taken place.

The Service Manager for Corporate Services said that she would ask the Service Manager for Planning to provide a briefing note about the current situation for how decisions about play areas and decisions about s106 monies were taken and what standards the Council could hold developers to, to provide more information in the immediate term.

In relation to The health of our town and village centres item, the Group agreed for this to be programmed for January 2025 and that as it crossed the remit of both the Communities and Growth & Development Groups there was potential for it to be held as a joint scrutiny meeting. The Group agreed to confirm whether to hold it as joint meeting at the next Corporate Overview Group meeting in November.

The Service Manager for Corporate Services advised that Officers were reviewing possible areas of work that could come forward for review.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Corporate Overview Group:

- a) considered any additional items for scrutiny from the current Cabinet Forward Plan, Corporate Strategy, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Capital and Investment Strategy and Transformation and Efficiency Programme/Productivity Plan (Appendix One)
- b) determined any additional topics to be included in a scrutiny group work programme for 2024/25 for each of the scrutiny groups as presented on newly submitted scrutiny requests (Appendix Two)
- c) reviewed the current work programme for each of the scrutiny groups (Appendix Three).

Work Programme 2024/25 – Corporate Overview Group

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

Work Programme 2024/25 – Governance Scrutiny Group

19 September 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Risk Management Update ● Going Concern ● Capital and Investment Strategy Update ● Internal Audit Progress Report ● Statement of Account 2023/24
28 November 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internal Audit Progress Report ● Annual Audit Completion Report 2023/24 ● Capital and Investment Strategy Update ● RIPA Review
20 February 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internal Audit Progress Report ● Internal Audit Strategy ● Risk Management – Update ● Capital and Investment Strategy Update ● External Annual Audit Plan ● Asset Management Plan ● Annual Audit Letter and Value for Money Conclusion ● Capital and Investment Strategy 2024/25
x May 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internal Audit Progress Report ● Internal Audit Annual Report ● Annual Fraud Report ● Annual Governance Statement (AGS) ● Capital and Investment Strategy Outturn

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitution Update • Code of Conduct
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Work Programme 2024/25 – Growth and Development Scrutiny Group

23 October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moved to 17 October 2024
29 January 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The health of our town and village centres [TBC at November COG]
26 March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of Open Spaces on New Developments
x July 2025	

Work Programme 2024/25 – Communities Scrutiny Group

17 October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible Housing Briefing (Joint Scrutiny Group)
23 January 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The health of our town and village centres [TBC at November COG]
3 April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carbon Management Action Plan Review
x July 2025	

18 Update on Management of Open Spaces

The Chairman noted the two documents which had been provided as an update for Members of the Group.

Actions

Minute No.	Action	Officer Responsible/ Update
14.	The Chair of Growth and Development Scrutiny Group asked whether a sentence could be added to the Financial and performance management report explaining why projects were being carried forward.	Senior Finance Business Partner
14.	The Chair of Governance asked for more information about golf course usage.	Senior Finance Business Partner
14.	The Chair of Governance asked for more information in relation to the planning costs and the percentage of costs awarded against the Council versus the cost of enforcements.	Senior Finance Business Partner
14.	The Vice Chair of Communities asked for an update on progress	Service Manager for Corporate Services

	regarding the East Midlands Devolution Deal.	
17.	Councillors asked for a link to the contact information for housing providers in the Borough to be emailed to them and included in Councillors Connections.	The Service Manager for Corporate Services has shared the information with Councillors.
17.	Members of the Group asked for information on which housing providers were working in which areas.	Service Manager for Corporate Services
17.	A briefing note about how decisions about play areas and decisions about s106 monies are taken and what standards the Council can hold developers to.	Service Manager for Planning / Service Manager for Corporate Services

The meeting closed at 21:25.

CHAIR