

MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY GROUP
THURSDAY, 23 JANUARY 2025

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

PRESENT:

Councillors G Williams (Chair), L Plant (Vice-Chair), J Billin, S Ellis, G Fletcher,
R Mallender, H Parekh and A Phillips

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

D Burch	Head of Neighbourhoods
E Palmer	Communications and Customer Services Manager
E Richardson	Democratic Services Officer

9 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

10 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations on interest.

11 Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 July 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2024 were agreed as a true record and were signed by the Chair.

12 Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 October 2024

The minutes of the Joint Scrutiny meeting held on 17 October 2024 were agreed as a true record and were signed by the Chair.

13 Residents Survey

The Communications and Customer Services Manager presented the Report of the Director for Finance and Corporate Services to the Group and provided a presentation overview of key aspects of the report, which covered the following:

- Response rate and trends compared with 2021
- Headline results
- National versus local indicators
- Open text comments
- Responding to communities' needs and aspirations
- How the Council currently engages and listens

- Proposed actions

Councillor Ellis noted the low response to the survey and thought that unless participation could be increased the survey did not serve much purpose.

Members of the Group said that residents often did not know which council or organisation provided which services and asked whether a covering preamble could be added providing clarification, particularly information about street cleansing and litter picking and that the Council did not have responsibility for highways.

The Communications and Customer Services Manager confirmed that an introductory explanation had been added before the previous two surveys but that residents had still responded in relation to highways as something they wanted to comment on, even though the Council was not responsible for that service.

Councillor Billin asked whether the Council had information about where people who responded were located in the Borough. The Communications and Customer Services Manager said that previous surveys had asked for postcode information but that this had been seen as a barrier to people completing it. He noted however that location and demographic information was important in helping to understand the needs of the Borough.

Members of the Group suggested perhaps collecting broad location data, such as whether the person lived in a rural or urban area, large or small village. It was suggested that identifying residents living in managed housing developments would be helpful as they may be responding in relation to managed estate services and parks rather than Council services.

Councillor Parekh asked about stakeholder collaboration and the Communications and Customer Services Manager said that the survey had been shared with a range of town and parish councils, the County Council and with business contacts. He said that it wasn't know how that impacted on response rates, which was something that the Council would look at for future surveys.

Members of the Group referred to using social media to engage with different resident demographics. Councillor R Mallender said that different media was used by different age groups and demographics and suggested that the greater the range used by the Council the wider the potential interaction. The Communications and Customer Services Manager explained that part of the Council's Engagement Strategy related to exploring social media channels. He said that a key response demographic was females aged 30-65 who most widely used Facebook, which was a factor in why the Council used that channel rather than alternatives, as posts on there impacted through to the community and generated greater engagement.

The Communications and Customer Services Manager said that the Council would review and take external advice as to how it could best reach a wider audience for the Borough's demographics.

Councillor Fletcher asked about paper copies and in person response collection for the survey and noted that there were members of the community who were not digitally engaged. The Communications and Customer Services Manager confirmed that the survey had been printed in Rushcliffe Reports magazine but that there wasn't resource to gather in person responses at the present time. He said that the Council was looking at other ways of capturing feedback, perhaps for example at Council events.

Councillor Phillips asked about including the survey with Council Tax bills and the Communications and Customer Services Manager said that the Council was looking at how best to contact people and in light of the contact permissions they had given.

The Chair asked about conducting targeted surveys about specific services at different times of the year as the length of a survey and weather conditions may impact responses. The Communications and Customer Services Manager confirmed that the Council was looking at having specific questionnaires about specific services through the year, perhaps focussing initially on the issues raised through the text box feedback from the recent surveys. He said that the most recent surveys had been conducted over the summer months although wider national circumstances often played a role in responses, such as the pandemic and cost of living crisis.

Councillor Plant referred to the recent peer review regarding increasing communication with the elderly and minority demographics and also thought that the Council needed to engage with and involve residents on some level to increase response rates. She noted that 26% of respondents felt that they could influence Council decisions.

The Communications and Customer Services Manager confirmed that the Council was looking at communicating with harder to reach parts of the community and referred to an upcoming Lunar New Year event and getting feedback from that. In relation to holding a focus group, he said that it had previously been discussed and that it may involve people who already engage.

Councillor Plant referred to feedback from events such as the West Bridgford lights switch on with residents saying that it was very crowded. The Communications and Customer Services Manager said that the Council was looking at various avenues of gathering feedback, he said that social media responses had been positive and that the Council was looking at how to gather dedicated feedback from people who had attended the event, including through wider contacts such as the press.

Councillor R Mallender asked whether the Council had received any enquiries about Local Government Reorganisation and the Communications and Customer Services Manager said that it hadn't as yet and that there may be more local press on this matter over the coming months.

Councillor Billin asked about issuing communications through local press and suggested issuing communications focussed on a you said/we acted basis. The Communications and Customer Services Manager said that the Council had good contacts with Nottinghamshire local newgroup and could put out

targeted surveys to focus activity and provide specific response about what the Council had done.

In relation to specific local communications, the Communications and Customer Services Manager said the Council wanted to listen for any emerging problems to be responsive as they arose.

The Chair asked about video and audio output for people who did not want to read information and the Communications and Customer Services Manager agreed that short form video was an increasingly popular way of communicating and that the Council tried to do as much as possible within resources.

Councillor Parekh asked about providing QR codes at events to gather feedback as people may be more inclined to respond whilst at an event than later on and it may also encourage young people to respond. The Communications and Customer Services Manager said that the Council had trialled QR codes previously with low responses but would explore using various avenues of collecting feedback to try to maximise the number of respondents.

Councillor Ellis asked whether the Council published anything on its website asking for feedback from the public and the Communications and Customer Services Manager said that the Customer Services Team received comments from the public every day and that the Council was listening to and responding and acting on feedback all of the time, although it was not always visible to the public.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Communities Scrutiny Group:

- a) Discussed the results and identified if any further actions should be taken as a result of the survey findings
- b) Agreed for the Council to include relevant follow up actions in its Communications and Engagement and Customer Access Strategies 2025-2028 relating to ways in which residents can contact engage and feedback on services.

14 **Work Programme**

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

3 April 2025

- Carbon Management Action Plan Review
- Nottinghamshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Work Programme

The meeting closed at 20:01.

CHAIR