



Rushcliffe
Borough Council

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

Our reference:
Your reference:
Date: Wednesday, 10 July 2024

To all Members of the Council

Dear Councillor

A Meeting of the Council will be held on Thursday, 18 July 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

Gemma Dennis
Monitoring Officer

AGENDA

Moment of Reflection

1. Apologies for absence
2. Declarations of Interest

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

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 May 2024 (Pages 1 - 8)

To receive as a correct record the minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Thursday, 23 May 2024.

4. Mayor's Announcements
5. Leader's Announcements
6. Chief Executive's Announcements

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Opening hours:
Monday, Tuesday and Thursday
8.30am - 5pm
Wednesday
9.30am - 5pm
Friday
8.30am - 4.30pm

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



7. Citizens' Questions

[To answer questions submitted by Citizens on the Council or its services.](#)

8. Petitions

9. Approval of the Scrutiny Annual Reports 2023/24 (Pages 9 - 52)

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

10. Productivity Plan (Pages 53 - 62)

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

11. Notices of Motion

[To receive Notices of Motion](#)

a) Councillor Birch

The current first-past-the-post electoral system is unfair and undemocratic. It often results in a discrepancy between the percentage of votes received by parties and the number of seats they hold. This often leads to the underrepresentation of minority parties and the overrepresentation of majority parties, which distorts the democratic will of the electorate.

Proportional representation offers a fairer alternative by ensuring that seats are allocated in proportion to the votes received, thus more accurately reflecting the will of the electorate. Proportional representation is a fairer and more democratic electoral system.

Council resolves to:

1. Formally declare that it supports the principle of proportional representation in UK general elections.
2. Formally declare that it supports the principle of proportional representation in UK local elections.
3. Write to HM Government to request a change in our voting system from first past the post to proportional representation.

b) Councillor Thomas

This Council believes that car park solar canopies could have considerable potential to contribute to solar energy generation in Rushcliffe in an environmentally friendly way. The Council will encourage this by:

1. Including suitable text in relevant policies, strategies, and guidance notes.
2. Undertaking a feasibility study into installation of canopies on its own car parks, with a view to bringing forward a capital project or projects by way of an exemplar.

12. Questions from Councillors

[To answer questions submitted by Councillors](#)

Membership

Chair: Councillor A Brown

Vice-Chair: Councillor J Cottee

Councillors: M Barney, J Billin, T Birch, R Bird, A Brennan, R Butler, S Calvert, J Chaplain, K Chewings, N Clarke, T Combellack, S Dellar, A Edyvean, S Ellis, G Fletcher, M Gaunt, E Georgiou, P Gowland, C Grocock, R Inglis, R Mallender, S Mallender, D Mason, P Matthews, H Om, H Parekh, A Phillips, L Plant, D Polenta, N Regan, D Simms, D Soloman, C Thomas, R Upton, D Viridi, J Walker, R Walker, L Way, T Wells, G Wheeler, J Wheeler and G Williams

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

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 23 MAY 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 D Mason (Chair), A Brown (Vice-Chair), M Barney, J Billin, T Birch, R Bird, A Brennan, R Butler, S Calvert, J Chaplain, K Chewings, N Clarke, T Combellack, J Cottee, S Dellar, A Edyvean, S Ellis, G Fletcher, M Gaunt, E Georgiou, P Gowland, C Grocock, R Inglis, R Mallender, S Mallender, P Matthews, H Om, H Parekh, L Plant, D Polenta, N Regan, D Simms, D Soloman, C Thomas, R Upton, D Viridi, J Walker, R Walker, L Way, T Wells, G Wheeler, J Wheeler and G Williams

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

L Ashmore	Director of Development and Economic Growth
D Banks	Director of Neighbourhoods
C Caven-Atack	Service Manager - Corporate Services
G Dennis	Monitoring Officer
P Linfield	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
K Marriott	Chief Executive
H Tambini	Democratic Services Manager

APOLOGIES:

Councillors A Phillips

1 Declarations of Interest

There are no declarations of interest made.

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 March 2024

The Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 7 March 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

3 Address of the retiring Mayor

Councillor Mason, Mayor of Rushcliffe for 2023/24, thanked Council for entrusting her with the position of Mayor and informed them that she had thoroughly enjoyed her year in office. She reported that she had been incredibly busy and had particularly enjoyed events which had involved children and young people; specifically mentioning Lark in the Park, the Youth

Summit and the silent fireworks display last November. Councillor Mason stated that she had enjoyed meeting a range of community volunteers at the Civic Dinner and speaking with former councillor Mike Cox about the formation of the Council, as part of its celebrations.

The Mayor specifically thanked members of the opposition groups for supporting her civic and fund raising events this year, and Councillor Regan for his assistance with her fund-raising Chinese meal. Councillor Mason thanked her husband Terry, who had accompanied her to many events, her Cadet for his support; her driver, Adam Mote, and her chaplain, Reverend Cannon Bronwen Gamble for her support and friendship.

4 Vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor

The Leader, Councillor Clarke proposed a vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor, Councillor Mason, and noted that she had been an extremely good ambassador for the Borough, attending a huge number of events, sometimes more than one in a single day. Events had ranged from those involving children to war veterans, community volunteers and, of course, those supported by her chosen charity, Riding for the Disabled. The Leader informed Council that he had enjoyed looking through the photo album that had been pulled together to encapsulate Councillor Mason's year as Mayor and commented on the wide range of people she had spent time with, and her recent conversation with King Charles at the Royal Garden Party. The Leader concluded by thanking Councillor Mason for her tireless service and calming presence during her year as Mayor and presented her with her photograph album, Mayor's portrait, past Mayor's badge and flowers.

Councillor J Walker congratulated the Mayor on a very successful year including the funds she had raised for Riding for the Disabled and for bringing a uniquely warm touch to the role. Councillor Walker also thanked the Mayor for chairing Council meetings fairly and impartially.

Councillors Bird, Thomas and Birch also thanked the Mayor for her even-handedness in Council meetings and the positivity and good humour that she brought to the role.

Councillor S Mallender thanked the Mayor specifically mentioning the wonderful singers from Plumtree School at Christmas time and her presentation of the Pride of Rushcliffe Award to Nicola Brindley at the Community Awards last November.

5 Election of Mayor 2024/25

It was proposed by Councillor R Walker that Councillor Brown be elected as Mayor of the Borough of Rushcliffe for the civic year 2024/25.

Councillor Walker stated that he was delighted to be asked to nominate Councillor Brown again after his nomination for the position of Deputy Mayor last year had earned him several rebukes due to the inclusion of aviation puns. Councillor Walker stated that this year he was choosing instead to focus on Councillor Brown's love of Rugby Union because if you had heard one Rugby

Union pun you had heard 'em-maul! Councillor Walker listed the core values of Rugby Union to be teamwork, respect, enjoyment, discipline and sportsmanship; all values that he saw in Councillor Brown and all directly relevant to serving as Mayor. As good 'ruck' would have it, Councillor Walker personally testified that Councillor Brown was an excellent teammate citing their working relationship across the Gotham ward and his personal support during recent challenging times. Councillor Brown was also respectful and accustomed to avoiding needless 'scrums', genuinely listening to concerns, empathising with circumstances, and 'tackling' problems with steely determination.

Councillor Walker stated that Councillor Brown was enjoying the second half of his political career and was relishing serving the community that he loved. He informed Council that watching all those rugby matches had instilled in Councillor Brown the ability to control his emotions, which made him well prepared for chairing Council meetings firmly yet fairly, and referred to the value of sportsmanship which underpinned all that. Councillor Brown understood the privilege of office and the corresponding duty involved in being the First Citizen of the Borough; and Councillor Walker felt that he would make a fine ambassador for the Council, the Borough and its communities.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Barney focused on Councillor Brown's professional background as an engineer, a role which had enabled him to travel extensively. He also mentioned Councillor Brown's more recent role as a driving instructor, his passion for music and all things aviation related. Councillor Barney informed Council of Councillor Brown's work on a local radio station, his position on the Airport Consultative Committee, his extensive charity work, and his love of the local community. He described Councillor Brown as a man of great conviction, determination, and compassion. In conclusion, Councillor Barney urged Council to support the nomination of Councillor Brown to the position of Mayor where he felt sure he would serve with humility, be impartial in his decisions and act in kindness.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Brown be elected as Mayor of the Borough of Rushcliffe for the civic year 2024/25.

Councillor Brown then read and signed the declaration of acceptance of office and after thanking his proposer, seconder, and fellow Councillors, took the Chair and was invested with the Chain of Office.

The Mayor welcomed past mayors and invited guests to the meeting before paying tribute to the hard work of his predecessor, Councillor Mason. He claimed that she would be a hard act to follow and thanked his proposer and seconder for their kind words.

The Mayor outlined his intention to visit all corners of the Borough through his year in office, celebrating 50 years of the Borough as well as drawing attention to its wonderful residents. He thanked his nominated Cadet from 209 Squadron in West Bridgford in advance for his assistance with his fund raising attempts this year. Councillor Brown spoke passionately about his chosen charity, explaining the decision to support SSAFA as a result of both his own experiences and a chance meeting with Chris Lewis, an ex-paratrooper

walking the entire length of the UK coastline to raise money for SSAFA and highlighted the difficulties of ex-service personnel in re-entering civilian life. The Mayor invited Council and invited guests to visit the SSAFA stall in the foyer after the meeting and outlined some of the fund-raising events he was planning for his year in office. He also made it clear that any references to Madam Mayor or interrupting mobiles would be subject to a charity donation.

6 **Election of Deputy Mayor 2024/25**

It was proposed by Councillor Butler, that Councillor Cottee be elected as Deputy Mayor of the Borough of Rushcliffe for the civic year 2024/25.

Councillor Butler first congratulated the Mayor on his appointment and pledged his support for his chosen charity. He informed Council that he was very pleased to nominate Councillor Cottee, who had always lived in Nottinghamshire, first moving to the Borough aged nine. He played a range of sports through school including cricket, rugby and cross country but football still remained his passion. Councillor Cottee started his working life in a local textiles mill before setting up a textiles business with his family. He was active in his local community, playing football, working evenings behind the bar and DJ-ing at the youth club before joining the parish council and then progressing onto the Borough and County Councils. John was married to Lorraine, who was a teacher, and has two grown daughters and two granddaughters.

Councillor Inglis added his congratulations to Councillor Brown in his new role as Mayor and recognised the hard work of Councillor Mason in the role over the past year. In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Inglis stated that Councillor Cottee was in his view a Chippendale, not the shirtless kind, but rather a classic piece of old and valuable furniture. Councillor Cottee had been both a Borough and a County Councillor for a very long time and was responsible for encouraging many others into the role. Councillor Inglis felt that Councillor Cottee would be an excellent ambassador for the Borough, citing the passion and commitment he had shown over the years to the Council, his community and Keyworth United Community Football Club.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Cottee be elected as Deputy Mayor of the Borough of Rushcliffe for the civic year 2024/25.

Councillor Cottee congratulated the Mayor on his appointment, thanked Councillors for entrusting him with the position of Deputy Mayor, and was then invested with the Chain of Office by the Mayor.

7 **Leader's Announcements**

The Leader, Councillor Clarke congratulated the Mayor and Deputy Mayor on their appointments.

He went on to inform Council that six members of staff had recently participated in the East Midlands Councils annual Leadership Challenge event and had received the award for Top Leadership Team demonstrating that the authority was in excellent hands moving forwards. The officers were Paul Taylor, Tiffany Freeman, Mark Needham, Michelle Rudkin, Nicola Wells and

Luke Colaluca.

The Leader also drew Council's attention to the exhibition in the foyer highlighting the creation of Rushcliffe Borough Council 50 years ago. He informed Council that three councils had been joined together by the 1972 Local Government Act to become Rushcliffe Borough. The Leader stated that he was delighted to see so many former Mayor's and two previous Chief Executives in the public gallery and encouraged all present to take a look at the display after the meeting.

8 **Chief Executive's Announcements**

The Chief Executive had no announcements to make.

9 **Appointments of Committees and Member Groups 2024/25**

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide Leadership, Councillor Clarke presented the report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services, outlining the nominations for the appointment of committees and member groups for 2024/25.

It was proposed by Councillor Clarke and seconded by Councillor Brennan and **RESOLVED** that the nominations to committees and member groups for 2024/25 be approved as follows:

A. Scrutiny Committees

Corporate Overview Group

Councillors Combella (Chair), Edyvean, Matthews, Plant, Polenta, Way, Williams

Governance Scrutiny Group

Councillors Edyvean (Chair), Polenta (Vice Chair), Birch, Calvert, Om, Regan, Thomas, Wells, G Wheeler

Growth and Development Scrutiny Group

Councillors Matthews (Chair), Way (Vice Chair), Chewings, Dellar, Grocock, Mason, Parekh, Soloman, R Walker

Communities Scrutiny Group

Councillor Williams (Chair), Plant (Vice Chair), Barney, Billin, Ellis, Fletcher, R Mallender, Parekh, Phillips

B. Regulatory Committees

Licensing Committee

Councillors Parekh (Chair), Billin, Chaplain, Chewings, Cottee, Fletcher, Grocock, R Mallender, Mason, Om, Phillips, Regan, Simms, Soloman, Williams

Planning Committee

Councillors Butler (Chair), R Walker (Vice Chair), Calvert, Chaplain, Edyvean, Ellis, Georgiou, S Mallender, Mason, Thomas, Wells

Employment Appeals Committee

Councillors Clarke (Chair), Bird, Brennan, J Walker, J Wheeler

Interviewing Committee

Councillors Clarke (Chair), Brennan, Dellar, Polenta, J Wheeler

Standards Committee

Councillors Simms (Chair), Bird, Birch, Matthews, Plant, Phillips, A Wood (Parish Members) and K White (Independent Member), H Richardson and C Richards (Independent Persons)

C. Member Groups

Local Development Framework Group

Councillors Upton (Chair), Butler (Vice Chair), Calvert, Chewings, Ellis, Georgiou, Gowland, S Mallender, Plant, Simms, Soloman, Thomas, R Walker, Wells, G Wheeler

Member Development Group

Councillors Soloman (Chair), Birch, Combellack, Gaunt, R Mallender, Om, Polenta, Wells, Williams

Rushcliffe Strategic Growth Board

Councillors Clarke (Chair), Bird, Brennan, Grocock, Gowland, Upton, Viridi, Way, J Wheeler

Civic Hospitality Panel

Councillor Brown (Chair), Brennan, Clarke, Cottee, Fletcher, Georgiou

West Bridgford Special Expenses and Community Infrastructure Levy Advisory Group

Councillor Viridi (Chair), Chaplain, Dellar, Gowland, R Mallender, Matthews, Phillips, G Wheeler, J Wheeler

Councillor J Walker wished for it to be formally noted that the Labour Group continued to object to the appointment of Councillor Combellack as Chairman of the Corporate Overview Group in light of her relationship with the Leader of the Council.

10 Approval of Timetable of Meetings 2024/25

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide Leadership, Councillor Clarke presented the report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services, setting out the timetable of meetings for the municipal year 2024/25. Councillor Clarke informed Council that following the announcement of the General Election on 4 July yesterday, there would now not be a meeting of Council on 27 June and that further information would follow in the next few weeks.

It was proposed by Councillor Clarke and seconded by Councillor Brennan and **RESOLVED** that the timetable of meetings for the municipal year 2024/25, as

attached at the Appendix to the officer's report, be approved.

11 **Appointment of Representatives to Outside Bodies 2024/25**

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide Leadership, Councillor Clarke presented the report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services setting out the appointments to Outside Bodies for the municipal year 2024/25.

Councillor Clarke noted that there were three contested positions and moved that Council accept the nominations of the uncontested positions as one vote before moving on to consider the three contested positions.

Following the voting, it was **RESOLVED** that the appointments to Outside Bodies for the municipal year 2024/25 be as follows:

City of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Economic Prosperity Committee
Leader / Deputy Leader (Substitute)

East Midlands Councils (including other representative roles within this appointment) Leader / Deputy Leader (Substitute)

Greater Nottingham Joint Planning Advisory Board
Appropriate Cabinet Member

Local Government Association – General Assembly (including other representative roles within this appointment)
Leader / Deputy Leader (Substitute)

Health and Well Being Board
Appropriate Cabinet Member

D2N2 Joint Leaders Board
Leader / Deputy Leader (Substitute)

Nottinghamshire Joint Leaders Board
Leader / Deputy Leader (Substitute)

Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Panel
Appropriate Cabinet Member

Development Corporation Board
Leader / Deputy Leader (Substitute)

Nottinghamshire Waste Management Board
Appropriate Cabinet Member

Freeport Board
Leader Deputy Leader (Alternate Board Member)

Local Area Forum – West Bridgford
Councillors Calvert (Abbey ward), Philips (Compton Acres ward), Parekh

(Edwalton ward), J Wheeler (Gamston ward), R Mallender (Lady Bay ward), Matthews (Lutterell Ward), Polenta (Musters ward) and Plant (Trent Bridge ward)

Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board

Councillors Billin, Combellack, Fletcher, Wells

Nottinghamshire East Midlands Airport Independent Consultative Committee

Councillor Brown

Rural Community Action for Nottinghamshire

Councillor Inglis

Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park

Councillor Wells

Councillor Gowland wished for it to be formally noted that the Labour Group were dissatisfied that only one seat was available on the West Bridgford Local Area Forum for the Abbey ward despite there being three Borough Councillors for this community. She informed Council that the Labour Group was speaking to the WBLAF about this matter.

12 Appointment to the Monitoring Officer Role

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide Leadership, Councillor Clarke presented the report of the Chief Executive, detailing the appointment to the role of the Council's designated Monitoring Office.

Councillor Clarke informed Council that Mrs Gemma Dennis, the Council's Monitoring Officer, was leaving the Council and that following a competitive recruitment process Mrs Sara Pregon had been appointed in her place. As the role of Monitoring Officer was a statutory role it was necessary for Council to approve this appointment, the details of which were outlined in the report. The recommendation to confirm Mrs Pregon as the Council's new Monitoring Officer was proposed by Councillor Clarke and seconded by Councillor Brennan, who also thanked Mrs Dennis for her support.

Those thanks were echoed by Councillors around the chamber.

It was **RESOLVED** that Mrs Sara Pregon be appointed and designated as the Council's Monitoring Officer from 26 August 2024.

The meeting closed at 8.17 pm.

CHAIR



Council

Thursday, 18 July 2024

Approval of the Scrutiny Annual Reports 2023/24

Report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services

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

1. Purpose of report

The Scrutiny Annual Report, attached as an Appendix, provides a review of the work undertaken by the Council's four Scrutiny Groups during 2023/24.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Council endorses the work undertaken by the four Scrutiny Groups during 2023/24.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

To enable Council oversight of the work and operation of its statutory Overview and Scrutiny function, the function's effectiveness and contribution to the work of the Council.

4. Supporting Information

During the year, the following subjects have been scrutinised and monitored:

Corporate Overview Group

- Consideration of Scrutiny Work Programmes
- Finance and Performance Management
- Health and Safety Annual Report
- Customer Feedback Annual Report
- Corporate Strategy.

Governance Scrutiny Group

- Internal Audit, including quarterly Progress Reports, Annual Report and Strategy
- Risk Management
- Going Concern Assessment
- Capital and Investment Strategy

- Approval of Statement of Accounts
- Capital and Investment Strategy Outturn 2022/23
- Capital and Investment Quarterly Updates
- Draft Risk Management Strategy 2024-27
- Annual Fraud Report
- Annual Audit Letter
- Annual Audit Completion Report
- External Audit Annual Plan 2022/23
- Annual Governance Statement 2022/23
- Revision of the Council's Constitution and Councillor Code of Conduct
- Review of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act Policy
- Asset Management Plan.

Communities Scrutiny Group

- Review of Canal and Rivers Trust Partnership Funding
- Social Housing Models
- Smoke Control Areas in the Borough
- East Midlands Airport - impacts of future flight path changes and aircraft noise in general
- Carbon Management Plan Update
- Streetwise Update

Growth and Development Group

- Review of Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium
- Biodiversity Net Gain – New Legislation
- Development and Infrastructure
- Review of Growth Boards
- Management of Open Spaces
- Sewerage Infrastructure and Discharge within Rushcliffe
- Connectivity and Communications.

5. Risks and Uncertainties

None.

6. Implications

6.1. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

6.2. Legal Implications

The Council is required by the Local Government Act 2000 to have scrutiny arrangements in place. This report demonstrates the Council's compliance with these requirements.

6.3. Equalities Implications

The role of the relevant scrutiny groups includes monitoring the Equality and Diversity impact of the Councils policies and strategies.

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

There are no Section 17 implications.

6.5 Biodiversity Net Gain

There are no Biodiversity Net Gain implications.

7. Link to Corporate Priorities

The Environment	Effective scrutiny is an essential element of the delivery of the Corporate Strategy and Corporate Priorities
Quality of Life	
Efficient Services	
Sustainable Growth	

8. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Council endorses the work undertaken by the four Scrutiny Groups during 2023/24.

For more information contact:	Peter Linfield Director – Finance and Corporate Services 0115 9148439 plinfield@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	
List of appendices:	
	Appendix – Annual Scrutiny Reports 2023/24

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Annual Scrutiny Report 2023/24



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Corporate Overview Group

Chair's Foreword

This annual report summarises the main work undertaken by the Corporate Overview Group 2023/24 focusing on the impact of scrutiny. The Corporate Overview Group oversees the Council's other scrutiny group work programmes based on concerns highlighted by quarterly financial and performance monitoring reports, as well as items on the Cabinet Forward Plan and priorities within the Corporate Strategy.

The Corporate Overview Group have ensured that the executive be held to account by approving topics to be discussed at scrutiny groups. Additionally, the Group have scrutinised financial and performance management reports on a quarterly basis to ensure the smooth running of the Council.

Councillor Tina Combellack Chair



What we are responsible for?

The Corporate Overview Group responsibilities include:

- Implementing identified improvements to scrutiny including training of scrutiny members, construction of new work programmes and reporting methods.
- Creating and receiving feedback on work programmes for the Growth and Development, Communities and Governance Scrutiny Groups based on the Cabinet Forward Plan, Corporate Strategy, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Investment Strategy and Transformation Plan.
- Scrutinising financial and performance management reports on a quarterly basis to ensure the smooth running of the Council and delegate any necessary investigations into concerning elements of these reports to the most appropriate scrutiny group via their work programme.
- Reviewing reports in respect of health and safety, diversity and customer feedback to ensure the Council is meeting its statutory duties.

Our work this year

During this year, the Group considered many service areas and issues within its scrutiny role, particularly:

- Consideration of Scrutiny Work Programmes at each meeting
- Finance and Performance Management at each meeting
- Health and Safety Annual Report
- Annual Customer Feedback Report 2022/23
- Corporate Strategy.

Consideration of Scrutiny Work Programmes

In line with the Terms of Reference, at every meeting the Group's members considered topics for scrutiny that had been put forward by Councillors and Officers. Following discussion, the following items were added to the work programmes of scrutiny groups for the year 2023/24:

- Public Protection in respect of Smoke Control Areas in the Borough
- Review of the Growth Boards
- Use of Community Facilities
- Review of Canal and River Trust Partnership Funding
- Parking provision funded by Rushcliffe – to be placed on the scrutiny work programme for two years' time
- Infrastructure Delivery
- Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium
- Connectivity and Communications
- Accessible Housing.

The Group agreed that training or provision of information would be more appropriate methods of gaining a better understanding in relation to items for 'Retrospective Planning Applications' and 'To clarify and review Rushcliffe's local offer for care leavers' in the first instances.

The Group agreed that information about 'Councillor diversity, recruitment and allowances' was already covered by other Council Groups and that the item in relation to 'Local Power Generation' would not move forward to scrutiny as there were other avenues to be pursued.

The Group agreed that it would be more appropriate for the item on 'Housing density in new housing sites' to be taken forward through the LDF Group.

The Group agreed that questions in relation to 'Sustainable Drainage Systems on New Estates' be put to the relevant Director in the first instance.

In relation to 'Management of open spaces within new developments' and 'Management Charges Actions Review' matrices, the Group asked for these to feed into the Open Spaces document being prepared by Officers and for a progress report be brought to the Corporate Overview Group in September 2024.

The development and improvement of scrutiny continues with those submitting a scrutiny matrix now being invited to attend the Corporate Overview Group meeting to present their proposed topic to the Group in person.

Quarterly Finance and Performance Management

A report focusing on the Council's finances and performance was delivered at each meeting by officers. Officers provided a summary of the key points in the meeting and the Group was able to discuss any concerns. Over the course of this year, the following issues have been discussed:

- Impacts from changes in interest rates on costs, investment balances and underspend
- The value of the Council's Multi Asset investments (pooled funds)
- Delivery of targeted events and health and sports development programme across the Borough
- Performance in relation to householder planning applications and planning enforcement inspections
- Gypsy and traveller sites within the Borough
- S106 and CIL funding from developer contributions and plans for spending this in the Council budget
- West Bridgford Special Expenses
- Performance of Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium
- Monies allocated to provide affordable housing
- Underspend for the Disabled Facilities Grant
- Expenditure of the funds for Homes for Ukraine and Homelessness
- How Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) and Local Authority Delivery Grant (LAD3) monies were used
- Reporting on usage of community facilities
- Customer Services response to telephone and email enquiries.

Health and Safety Annual Report

The Strategic HR Manager presented the Health and Safety Annual Report which summarised the Council's occupational health and safety performance during the period 1 April 2022 to end March 2023, including health and safety policies, procedures and activities which have taken place during this period. The report also set out the training programmes delivered, provided numerical and statistical data and the proposed health and safety objectives for the year.

The Group asked specific questions relating to:

- health and safety audit of Streetwise and asked how soon the follow up work within the action plan would be completed
- reporting of accidents at play parks and in particular open space areas of new housing estates
- whether the Council provides training for residents and staff at Rushcliffe Borough sites in using defibrillators

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
Consider the detailed information contained within the annual Health and Safety Report	<p>Due to the increased risk profile a decision has been made to recruit permanently into the Corporate H&S Advisor role with the post being filled from 1 April 2024. This will ensure sufficient resource is in place</p> <p>Significant progression has been made in relation to completing the objectives set for 2023/24:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy reviews are ongoing, not all reviews completed in the year but are prioritised for Qtr 1 of 2024/25 - H&S audits – areas completed include pesticide use, vehicle movement at Bingham Depot, Fountain Court, Rushcliffe Country Park - Significant level of support given to Streetwise including training, risk assessments, tree team, land drainage - Inspection at Rushcliffe Oaks completed - DSE e-learning moved to Certification <p>A variety of workplace health initiatives have been delivered throughout the year</p>
Note the change to the health and safety risk profile as a result of both Streetwise coming back in-house and the opening of Rushcliffe Oaks	
Note the significant progress made against the health and safety goals and objectives previously agreed by Corporate Overview Group for the financial year 2022/23	
Endorse the proposed health and safety objectives for 2023/24 as set out in the report	

Annual Customer Feedback Report 2022/23

The Service Manager Corporate Services presented the Annual Customer Feedback Report for 2022/23 which provided information about complaints and compliments received by the Council about the services that it delivered. The Service Manager Corporate Services summarised that there were no matters which caused alarm and that the overall picture was one of steadiness and stability.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
Scrutinise and, subject to any comment, accept the report as a true record of customer feedback in 2022/23	The Group said the data showed that performance was excellent. No action was necessary as a result of this report

Corporate Strategy

The Service Manager Corporate Services presented the Corporate Strategy Report and explained that a very draft form of the Strategy had been brought to a previous Corporate Overview Group meeting which had been updated following public consultation and consultation with Councillors. Feedback from the Group would be submitted to Cabinet before the report moved to be presented at Council.

The Group asked specific questions relating to:

- the Council’s five Leisure Centres
- terminology in the document in relation to delivery and measurement of some targets
- wording in the document to reflect that the actions of Council had led to an increased benefit for residents
- updating wording for the two recommendations (as below).

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
Consider the draft Corporate Strategy for 2024-2027	The Group asked that Cabinet reflect on the wording for the delivery and measurement of the various targets
Endorse the design of the Corporate Strategy 2024-2027 and forwarded it to Cabinet for consideration and reflection upon the wording	The Corporate Strategy 2024-2027 was approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 14 November 2024. It was adopted by Council at its meeting on 7 December 2024, which requested scrutiny to oversee the delivery of the Strategy and its action plan over the next four years

Member Panels

The Group did not establish any Member Panels this year.

Call-ins

The Group did not discuss any call-ins this year.

Looking forward to the year ahead

Following a busy year for the Council's scrutiny functions, all members of Corporate Overview Group are looking forward to developing comprehensive work programmes for the scrutiny groups in 2024/25.

Governance Scrutiny Group

Chair's Foreword

This annual report summarises the main work undertaken by the Governance Scrutiny Group 2023/24 focusing on the impact of scrutiny. The Governance Scrutiny Group scrutinises and approves the Council's finances, approach to risk, as well as other corporate issues. I am pleased to report that despite another challenging year, the Governance Scrutiny Group have proceeded as planned and all items programmed for 2023/24 were considered.

The Group has explored the Council's responsibilities in lined with the Council's priorities within the Corporate Strategy, which include:

- Reviewing the outcomes of both internal and external audit investigations to ensure the Council is compliant with legislation and best practice;
- Monitoring the Annual Governance Statement to ensure compliance with the Council's Code of Corporate Governance
- Scrutinising and approving the Statement of Accounts
- Reports on the Council as a 'Going Concern'
- Considering the Council's Risk Management Framework annually to ensure current risks are being monitored, and effective controls and mitigating actions are in place
- Considering regular reports on Asset and Investment Management to ensure prudent use of Council resources is being made to fulfil the objectives of the Investment Strategy and Annual Capital Programme
- Monitoring the operation of the Council's constitution to ensure that it is being upheld and to recommend to Council any necessary fundamental changes.

Councillor Andy Edyvean
Chair Governance Scrutiny Group



Councillor Andy Edyvean
Chair



Councillor Penny Gowland
Vice Chair

What we are responsible for?

The Governance Scrutiny Group's responsibilities include:

- **Statement of Accounts** To examine the outturn and statement of accounts resulting in its approval.
- **Annual Governance Statement** To consider the annual report on applying the Council's system of internal control. This statement ultimately comprises a key element of the Council's Statement of Accounts.
- **Going Concern** To consider the report of the Council's S151 officer on the status that the authority, its functions and services will continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future.
- **Capital and Investment Management** To consider the annual and interim reports on capital and investment management activity. Ensuring that practice has complied with the approved Capital and Investment Strategy, making recommendations to Cabinet or Full Council as appropriate. Including changes to the Capital and Treasury Management Codes of Practice, which includes reporting on the position concerning both treasury and non-treasury (commercial) investments.
- **Asset Management Plan** To consider the biennial report on the performance of the Council's commercial property assets and forward any comments to Cabinet
- **Protecting against fraud** To consider the annual report on fraud and irregularities in order to make an informed judgement on the corporate governance and internal control statements, making recommendations to Cabinet on improvements. To consider any matters arising as a result of irregularity referred to it by Cabinet.
- **Internal Audit** To consider the three year internal audit plan and periodic reports on the progress of audits undertaken throughout the year in order to make an informed judgement on corporate governance and internal control statements, making recommendations to Cabinet on improvements.
- **External Audit** To consider the annual report of the external audit and consider significant findings and the Value for Money opinion and to agree the annual audit plan for the forthcoming audit.
- **Risk Management** To consider periodic reports on controls over key risk areas as identified in the risk register in support of making an informed judgement on the corporate governance and internal control statements, making recommendations to Cabinet on improvements.
- **Annual Constitution Review** To monitor the operation of the Council's constitution and recommend to Council any necessary changes in accordance with section 37 of the Local Government Act 2000, including any amendments to the Councillor's Code of Conduct.

Our work this year

During this year, the Group considered many service areas and issues within its scrutiny role, particularly:

- Internal Audit, including quarterly Progress Reports, Annual Report and Strategy
- Risk Management
- Going Concern Assessment
- Capital and Investment Strategy
- Approval of the Statement of Accounts
- Capital and Investment Strategy Outturn 2022/23
- Capital and Investment Quarterly Updates
- Draft Risk Management Strategy 2024-27
- Annual Fraud Report
- Annual Audit Letter
- Annual Audit Completion Report
- External Audit Annual Plan 2022/23
- Annual Governance Statement 2022/23
- Revision of the Council's Constitution and Councillor Code of Conduct
- Review of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act Policy
- Asset Management Plan.

Internal Audit, including quarterly Progress Reports, Annual Report, and Strategy

The Governance Scrutiny Group considered the Council's internal audit executed by BDO the Council's Internal Auditors. Representatives from BDO attended each meeting to present the quarterly Progress Reports and at the meeting in February 2024 they presented the Internal Audit Strategy report for 2024/25.

Across all four meetings the Group debated:

29 June 2023

- The Channel Shift Audit and recommendations to improve the Council's arrangements for Channel Shift.
- The Safeguarding Audit and the Council's processes to ensure relevant staff are periodically DBS checked and to ensure key personnel raise any safeguarding concerns at internal steering groups.
- The Sustainable Warmth Audit including key documents from external partners responsible for delivering the Sustainable Warmth Grants.

28 September 2023

- The Main Financial Systems which focused on Treasury Management and looked at the financial controls in place.
- Hybrid Mail reviewing the implementation and ongoing management of the hybrid mail project.
- Markets and income for charging market traders and the collection and banking processes.

23 November 2023

- Reconciliation review which highlighted there was some lack of evidence for the separation of duties between officers preparing and reviewing financial transactions. The Service Manager – Finance had assured the Group that

substantial support was in place and that the verification and authorisation of financial transactions are completed by separate officers.

22 February 2024

- The Country Park Income highlighted low level recommendations in respect of cash receipts and procedural notes.
- The Governance of Partnership focused on the Community Safety Partnership and its Terms of Reference.
- The Grant Management Controls focused on fraud prevention and highlighted a delayed payment from Eon.

At the meeting in June 2023 Mr Dulay from BDO the Council’s internal auditors presented the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2022/23, including the annual opinion of the Head of Internal Audit required by the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

At the meeting in November 2023 Mr Armstrong from BDO provided a sector update from the Chancellors autumn statement and advised the Group of some changes to the planning process and a freeze on business rates to support the retail and hospitality sector.

At the meeting in February 2024, Mr Rubens from BDO presented the Internal Audit Strategy for the period 2024-2027 which focused on the planned audits due to take place in year two of the new cycle of audits.

The Group discussed the Council’s Internal Audit Strategy 2024/25 based on a multi-year approach, in order that areas of key risk are looked at over a three year audit cycle.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
Approve the quarterly Internal Audit Progress reports	Management take audit findings and recommendations onboard as a scope for improvements within the Council’s systems and processes. Follow up on agreed management actions take place throughout the year
Approve the Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23	
Approve the Internal Audit Strategy and Plan for 2024-2027 and the Internal Audit Charter contained within the Internal Audit Strategy Plan	

Risk Management

The Governance Scrutiny Group considered the Council’s Risk Register at its meetings in September 2023 and February 2024. The Service Manager – Corporate Services updated the Group about the Council’s risk management activities as well as changes to risks in the Council’s risk register. The Group debated:

- New risks and those for which the risk rating had been reduced
- Risks relating to the Transformation Strategy
- Risks regarding ICT loss or failure of service

- Cost of defending appeals for large scale residential developments and potential award costs

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
Considered and made recommendations on the risks that had a red alert status	Feedback from the Group has been relayed to the Council's Risk Management Group. Risk Management Training for Group Members was delivered in September 2023

Going Concern Assessment

At its meeting in November, the Director – Finance and Corporate Services presented the Council's Going Concern status. The Group were advised that as a requirement of the Code of Practise on Local Authority Accounting the Statement of Accounts are prepared with the assumption that the Council will continue to operate within the current and anticipated resources available. The main factors that underpin the going concern assessment were discussed as follows:

- The Council's current financial position
- The Council's projected financial position
- The Council's governance arrangements
- The regulatory and control environment applicable to the Council as a local authority

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
Approve the outcome of the assessment made of Rushcliffe Borough Council's status as a 'Going Concern' for the purpose of the Statement of Accounts	The Council's position is monitored throughout the year with the 2023/24 assessment due to be seen by the Group in September 2024

Capital and Investment Strategy Quarterly Updates

The quarterly updates are presented by the Service Manager – Finance and provide the Governance Scrutiny Group a summary of the Council's capital and investment activities during the year and in line with the Council's Capital and Investment Strategy 2023/24-2027/28. The Group were asked to consider the Council's commercial investment activity ensuring there is both transparency and scrutiny in terms of treasury and investment decision making.

At its meeting on 29 June 2023, the Group commented on the various financial institutions and in particular other authorities and green and social investments and whether the Council were doing their best to invest in greener and more ethical companies.

At its meeting on 28 September 2023, the Group discussed the Council’s green rated investments, other local authority investments and diversified funds and commented on the loan to the West Midlands Combined Authority.

At its meeting on 23 November 2023, the Group discussed the interest return on S106 and CIL contributions and noted this is passed on to the beneficiary of the S106 or CIL agreement.

At its meeting on 22 February 2024, the Group discussed the UK’s weakening economic outlook and the uncertain political climate due to the upcoming general election.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
Note the Capital and Investment Strategy quarterly updates provided at each of its meetings during 2022/23	Capital and Investment training is provided annually by the Treasury Management Advisors and was last provided in January 2024 as part of the Councillor Training programme

Capital and Investment Strategy 2023-2024 to 2027-2028

At the meeting in February 2024 the Finance and Business Partner presented the Council’s Capital and Investment Strategy 2024/25 to 2028/29 which focused on traditional treasury activity and the Council’s commercial property investments in light of CIPFA’s updated Prudential and Treasury Management codes.

The Group discussed the Treasury Training delivered by Arlingclose the Council’s Treasury Management Advisors and members expressed the training had provided a greater understanding of the complexity of the Council’s Treasury Management activities.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
Note and approve the Council’s Capital and Investment Strategy for 2024/25 to 2028/29 including the Capital Prudential Indicators and limits, the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement, the Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Indicators and the Commercial Investment Indicators and limits for 2024/25 to 2028/29	Annual training last provided in January 2024 with the next planned for January 2025

Approval of the Statement of Accounts

At its meeting in November 2023 the Director – Finance and Corporate Services presented the Council’s statutory Statement of Accounts for the financial year 2022/23.

The Group noted there had been no significant issues arising from the audit and the Council was in a good position in comparison to other local authorities.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
Approve the Statement of Accounts for 2022/23, including the Annual Governance Statement	The Statement of Accounts was approved by external audit with no significant issues arising. The 2023-24 Statement of Accounts will be published on 1 June 2024 and will be scrutinised at the September meeting

Annual Fraud Report

In June 2023, Mr Dulay from BDO the Council’s Internal Auditor presented the Council’s Annual Fraud report, which summarised the incidence of fraud and fraud prevention activities undertaken by the Council during 2022/23. The Group were provided an overview of fraud related issues that had arisen at the Council during 2022/23. These included:

- Preventing and Detecting Fraud
- Whistleblowing Policy
- National Fraud Initiative (NFI)
- Council Tax Single Person Discount
- Council Tax Energy Rebate payments
- Fraud Awareness Training and Counter Fraud Staff Survey

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Approve the Annual Fraud Report for 2022/23, including the approval for further fraud awareness training in 2022/23	The Annual Fraud Report 2022/23 (29 June 2023) recommended that a Fraud Risk Assessment be carried out by the Council within the next 12 months. This review has taken place and will be assessed and reported on to the group at its September update

Annual Audit Letter and Value for Money Conclusion

In June 2023, Mr SurrIDGE from Mazars the Council’s External Auditors presented the Annual Audit Letter including the Council’s Value for Money arrangements.

In the debate that followed the Group noted that no actions were required other than a misstatement and an unadjusted misclassification as a result of new guidance in relation to infrastructure assets. The Group commented on the Council’s cash reserves which were earmarked for the medium-term financial strategy linked to risk and the Council’s future capital plans.

At its meeting on 22 February 2024, Mr Surridge presented the Council’s audit arrangements for the financial year 2022/23. The Group discussed the Auditors observations that the Council consider having an ‘Audit Committee’ instead of Governance Scrutiny Group and questioned the proposals from the Redmond Review for independent members to sit on the audit committee to ensure there is the adequate skills and experience.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
Approve the Annual Audit Letter and Value for Money arrangements	The deadline for audit to sign off the accounts is 30 September. The audit is planned to commence over the summer and conclude by the end of September. The Annual Audit Letter and Value for Money conclusion will be presented to the group later in 2024

Annual Audit Completion Report

In November 2023 Ms Frudd from Mazars the Council’s external auditors presented the Audit Completion Report and Management Representation Letter which provided the key conclusions in the audit process for 2022/23. The Group discussed some of the key risks that were highlighted including:

- Management Override
- Net defined benefit liability valuation as the audit was ongoing as they had not received the assurances required from the pension fund audit
- Valuation of land and buildings and investment properties, here two immaterial misstatements had been identified which the Council will correct for 2023/24
- Insourcing of Streetwise.

The Group discussed S106 contributions where planning conditions had not been met, and the accuracy of officer valuations in regard to Council owned land and buildings.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
Note and approve the Audit Completion report and approve the Management Representation Letter	There remain national issues with Pension Fund variations and audit resources which could delay the signing off of the accounts
Receive a follow up letter from Mazars in relation to the significant matters that are outstanding	The Annual Audit Letter was taken to the Group on 22 February 2024

External Audit Annual Plan 2023/24

In June 2023, Ms Frudd from Mazars the Council’s External Auditors presented the External Audit Plan which summarised the Council’s approach to external audit activity

in relation to the financial year 2022/23. In the debate that followed the Group questioned the audit of Streetwise having only been back under the control of the Council for 6 months would provide a realistic view of its performance.

In February 2024. Mr Surridge from Mazars the Council's External Auditors advised the Group that due to consultation and amendments to the Code of Practice that has required extra time to complete the audit, the External Audit Plan is likely to be completed over the summer and would be brought back to the Governance Scrutiny Group at its meeting in May 2024. The Group discussed comparisons with other similar local authorities and noted Rushcliffe were in a favourable position going forward.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
Approve the External Audit Plan	The external audit of the 2023/24 accounts is planned to conclude by September 2024

Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

At its meeting in June 2023 the Group were presented the Council's Annual Governance Statement which reflects the requirements of the updated CIPFA/SOLACE principles within the Local Government Code. The Group asked specific questions relating to; Ratcliffe on Soar Power Station, the Freeport and Development Corporation projects and the likely influences these may have on the Council's business rate income and the risks associated with emergency planning and the Council's carbon zero targets.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
Approve the annual Governance Statement 2022/23 and any actions for the forthcoming year	Nothing to update

Revision of the Council's Constitution

At its meeting in June 2023 the Group were asked to consider and recommend for adoption by Council revisions to the Council's Constitution, including amendments to Part 3, Responsibility for Function and Scheme of Delegation and Part 4, Standing Orders, Rules and Financial Regulations in relation to Planning. The Group did not reach a consensus on some of the proposed changes.

At its meeting on 28 September 2023 the Group decided to create a Planning Committee Working Group to finalise the proposed changes to the constitution in relation to Planning.

The Planning Committee Working Group met on 7 November 2023 and at the Governance Scrutiny Group meeting on 23 November 2023 the proposed changes to

the constitution in relation to Planning were approved. A further change with regards to extending the timescales within which the submission of motions for full Council are received by the Chief Executive.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
Approve the recommendations for adoption by Council, including the additional amendments in Part 3 and Part 4 of the Constitution as proposed by the Group	The revisions and amendments in Part 3 of the constitution were approved by Full Council at its meeting on 7 December 2023

Review of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act Policy

At its meeting on 23 November 2024 the Monitoring Officer presented the Review of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act Policy and explained the Investigatory Powers Commissioners Office (IPCO) which requires that Councillors are updated annually on the Council’s use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA).

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024
Endorse the Council’s RIPA Policy in line with the IPCO inspection regulations	Nothing further to add

Asset Management Plan

At its meeting on 22 February 2024 the Senior Property Surveyor presented the biennial report of the Council’s Asset Management Plan which provided a review and assessment of the Council’s commercial property portfolio, how properties are performing and what the expectations are for the next five to ten years in terms of income and cost. The Group discussed improvements to energy performance of some of the properties and the sub-letting of land at Candleby Lane.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024
Approve the review of the Council’s commercial property portfolio and its reporting to Cabinet	The report was discussed at the meeting 22 February 2024

Member Panels

The Group established a Member Panel to support amendments to the Council’s Constitution at, Part 3 - Responsibility for Function and Scheme of Delegation and Part 4 - Standing Orders, Rules and Financial Regulations in relation to Planning Committee.

Call-ins

The Group did not discuss any call-ins this year.

Looking forward to the year ahead

The Governance Scrutiny Group is looking forward to developing a comprehensive work programme for the year ahead.

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Communities Scrutiny Group

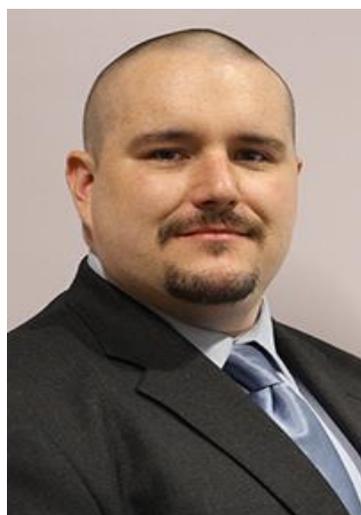
Chair's Foreword

This annual report summarises the main work undertaken by the Communities Scrutiny Group 2023/24 focusing on the impact of scrutiny. This Group specifically focuses upon the Council's community partnerships, areas of community concern and the Council's responsibility to be environmentally sustainable.

The Group has explored the Council's Communities responsibilities in line with the Council's priorities within the Corporate Strategy, which include:

- Reviewing the Council's partnerships to ensure that community needs are being met and the partnership is providing good value for money.
- Identifying areas of community concern, exploring how this can be met and making recommendations to that effect.
- Considering concerns specific to the local area in terms of health and wellbeing and making recommendations to improve the health and wellbeing of local residents.
- Considering projects and initiatives to further the Council's efforts to protect the environment of the Borough and promote environmental sustainability to our residents.

Councillor Gareth Williams
Chair



Councillor Liz Plant
Vice-Chair



What are we responsible for?

The Communities Scrutiny Group's remit is to consider relevant topics, in line with the Council's priorities, taking into account the Corporate Strategy and those of officers and councillors for inclusion in a work programme agreed by the Corporate Overview Group.

Both Councillors and officers are required to complete a scrutiny matrix to outline a topic they would like to be considered for scrutiny. The matrix summarises the issue of concern as well as the key lines of enquiry for review.

Our work this year:

During this year, the Group considered many service areas and issues within its scrutiny role, particularly:

- Review of Canal and Rivers Trust Partnership Funding
- Social Housing Models
- Smoke Control Areas in the Borough
- East Midlands Airport - impacts of future flight path changes and aircraft noise in general
- Carbon Management Plan Update
- Streetwise Update.

Review of Canal and Rivers Trust Partnership Funding

The Group received a presentation from the Canal and Rivers Trust which provided an overview of the geographical area and the work of the Canal and River Trust Partnership. The Group learned that Rushcliffe Borough Council had signed a twenty year service level agreement with British Waterways in 2003, which was due for renewal in 2024, and were presented with four possible options to consider for a future agreement.

The Group learned that the Canal and Rivers Trust had received one off UKSPF funding to cover reed clearance in specific areas of the canal but that ongoing clearance would require a reed clearance management plan. In relation to water, the Group was informed that whilst works such as reed clearance would support water retention, to make a significant difference would require separate culvert repairs at approximately £100k per culvert.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024
Receive a summary presentation of the work that has been undertaken by the Council in partnership with the Canal and River Trust (CRT)	The Group said that the canal was well used by a wide section of the community and noted the positive difference in funded maintenance of the canal in Rushcliffe. The Group noted that maintenance of the canal barriers was funded though the current funding

	agreement and that removal of any would require consultation
Comment on the strategic ambitions of the CRT for any future Service Level Agreement and the associated funding required for this work	The Group recommended a future funding agreement with the Council for 'Enhanced Environmental Management at £78,265', which would be reported into the Council's budget setting process. The council's budget challenge workshop decision was to reduce the funding to £24,000. The budget was endorsed by Cabinet on 13 February 2024 and approved at Full Council on 7 March 2024 see also <u>Enc. 3 for 2024/25 Budget and Financial Strategy</u> . A new SLA based on this figure is being negotiated with the Canal and Rivers Trust

Social Housing Models

The Group received a presentation from the Strategic Housing Manager which set out the Council's approved policy and operational framework for the provision of affordable housing, the different delivery models and the current approach to meet housing need.

The Group was informed that in 2003 the Council had transferred its housing stock to Metropolitan Housing Thames Valley who were currently the largest registered housing provider in the Borough, of approximately 15 in total. The Group was informed that the Council was responsible for managing the allocation of social rented housing in the Borough which it did through the housing register.

The Group asked a variety of questions, in particular about affordable rented properties, shared ownership, and the number of empty properties in the Borough.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024
Scrutinise the information provided by officers on the Council's current approach to the provision of social housing	The Group scrutinised the information presented, in particular regarding affordable housing. Further information on affordable housing needs will be published in the Greater Nottingham and Ashfield Housing Needs Update (March 24) in the Autumn 2024

Smoke Control Areas in the Borough

The Group received an update from the Environmental Health Officer about Smoke Controls Areas who explained that smoke control areas were first introduced as part of the 1956 Clean Air Act and that Rushcliffe had had smoke control areas in place since the 1970s. Whilst legislation had had an impact on air quality, it continued to pose the biggest environmental risk to public health.

The Group was informed that the Council had signed up to the Nottinghamshire Clean Air Strategy and had its own Clean Air Strategy Action Plan.

The Group was informed that there was a legal requirement for the Council to undertake a public consultation exercise before introducing a smoke control order. As part of that process the Council was seeking for the Group to indicate its preferred option which would be considered as part of the consultation.

In response to questions, the Group was informed that a list of Defra approved stoves and fuels could be found on the Defra website and that authorised fuels could continue to be burnt on approved stove appliances. The Group learned that businesses selling appliances and fuels would be managed by Trading Standards.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024
Consider the options provided for smoke control areas within the Borough	<p>The Group voted unanimously in favour of Option D - Revoke the existing Smoke Control Orders and seek to declare a Smoke Control Order to cover the entire Borough. A six week public consultation on a proposed Borough wide Smoke Control Area indicated approximately 80% of the 1206 respondents did not agree with the proposal.</p> <p>At Cabinet on 14th May 2024 it was resolved that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the existing Smoke Control Area coverage remains unchanged for a period of two years, at which time it will be reviewed; and b) the development and delivery of a public awareness campaign around domestic burning be approved
Indicate a preferred option enabling public consultation to take place	
Recommend its preferred option to Cabinet for adoption	

East Midlands Airport

The Group received a presentation about East Midlands Airport’s passenger and freight travel, noting that passenger numbers in summer 2023 had returned to 95% of pre-pandemic levels but that there had been a drop in air freight volume due to changes in the economy and the war in Ukraine

In relation to East Midlands Airport’s Corporate Social Responsibility, the Group were informed that it included supporting decarbonisation of the entire aviation industry to be net zero by 2038, supporting career and employment opportunities, and providing funding and support to community groups and community projects.

In relation to noise, the Group were informed that there were six noise monitors positioned around the airport boundary and that new actions were being considered,

including a ban on the noisiest rated aircraft at night, noise charges to incentivise quieter aircraft and a reduction of jet aircraft training flight hours.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
Consider the information presented and provided feedback to the EMA representatives	In response to concerns expressed regarding noise disturbance, the Group were asked to direct resident complaints directly to the EMA website
The Council running a publicity campaign to promote the EMA complaints procedure	A publicity and accompanying social media campaign ran in early February successfully and was also covered across the council's weekly newsletters to residents and stakeholders. Information about the EMA Community Fund and Insulation Grant Fund was promoted across the Council's social media channels
Request that the EMA Community Fund and Insulation Grant Fund be shared and promoted across the Council's social media channel	

Carbon Management Plan Update

The Community Development Manager presented an update on the Carbon Management Plan to the Group and explained that the Council had developed a roadmap towards achieving net zero by 2030 and had also made a commitment, in line with national and international governments, to be Net Zero as a Local authority Area by 2050.

The Group was updated on the successful completion of a number of projects and was advised that the Council was mapping its transport and emissions to inform its vehicle replacement programme. The Group learned that the Council was looking at further installation of EV charge points across the Borough and was considering its supply chains. The Council was also looking at how it collected waste, its data centre emissions, staff travel and had moved to procure its electricity from renewable sources. In relation to carbon sequestration, the Group was informed that a report had been completed for the Borough, which had identified that approximately 46 hectares of tree planting would be required to achieve neutrality by 2030.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024
Consider the progress to date of the adopted carbon management action plan	Following discussed at the meeting further information was shared with the Group, including information on how many homes had received solid wall insulation, information about BNG measures and information about housing providers and their decarbonisation plans
Contribute towards the emerging carbon management actions for 2024/25	The Group supported the move towards introducing HVO powered refuse vehicles

	<p>but cautioned the need to monitor where the HVO was sourced. The Group thought it important to remain open to technology developments and to promote education around waste reduction as well as waste management. The Group also commented on use of electric powered hand tools, expansion of the EV charging network across the Borough and providing communications for towns and parishes and residents. Mandatory BNG was enacted on all major developments (apart from those exempt) from 12 February 2024 and all minor developments (apart from those exempt) from 2 April 2024 This requires the delivery of 10% BNG on developments with applications made from that date</p>
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Streetwise Update

The Group received a high level overview on the insourcing of Streetwise from the Streetwise Manager, including future focus and performance information. The Group learned that initial tasks of the Council had been to review operations, including the management structure, the existing business including asking customers for feedback, scheduling of works, forward planning of works, the consistency and quality of work and the embracing of technology to improve and streamline operations.

The Group was informed that the Council had invested in depot improvements and had created a new website which allowed it to streamline enquiries through the Customer Contact Centre and create a resource for all Streetwise related information.

In relation to the future, the Group was informed that Streetwise would continue to prioritise works in the Borough, build relationships with key partners and build its sales and marketing Strategy to better sell services, look at cost reduction and explore apprenticeship options.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
<p>Consider the information provided and provide feedback on the overall performance of Streetwise</p>	<p>The Group referred in particular to the litter picking stations, promoting information to schools about littering and recycling, provision of sandbags during recent flooding and future resilience through local stores. Further information about litter picking groups and Streetwise educational material has been circulated to all Councillors through Councillor Connections</p>

Member Panels

The Group did not establish any Member Panels this year.

Call-ins

The Group did not discuss any call-ins this year.

Looking forward to the year ahead

The Communities Scrutiny Group is looking forward to developing a comprehensive work programme for the year ahead.

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Growth and Development Scrutiny Group

Chair's Foreword

This annual report summarises the main work undertaken by this scrutiny group during 2023/24 focusing on the impact of scrutiny. I am very pleased to note that despite another challenging year, the business of scrutiny has proceeded as planned and all topics programmed for 2023/24 were considered.

The Group has explored the Council's Growth and Development responsibilities in line with the Council's priorities within the Corporate Strategy, which include:

- Overseeing significant projects contributing towards growth in the Borough to ensure deliverables are met and growth-related outcomes achieved
- Scrutinising infrastructure development which acts as a catalyst for growth in the Borough to ensure such developments progress in a timely fashion and any obstructive barriers are removed or negotiated
- Reviewing the growth in demand for Council services ensuring all residents can access the services they need in a timely and cost-efficient manner
- Considering projects and initiatives to promote economic vibrancy, local democracy and community leadership within local towns and villages contributing towards the overall Council goal of creating Great Place and Great Lifestyle
- Reviewing the Council's policies and strategies as appropriate prior to adoption.

Councillor Phill Matthews
Chair Growth and Development Scrutiny



Cllr R Walker
Chair 2023-2024



Cllr Phill Matthew
Chair - 2024



Cllr Lesley Way
Vice Chair

What are we responsible for?

The Growth and Development Scrutiny Group's remit is to consider relevant topics, in line with the Council's priorities, taking into account the Corporate Strategy and those of officers and councillors for inclusion in a work programme agreed by the Corporate Overview Group.

Both Councillors and officers are required to complete a scrutiny matrix to outline a topic they would like to be considered for scrutiny. The matrix summarises the issue of concern as well as the key lines of enquiry for review.

Our work this year

During the year, the Group considered many service areas and issues within its scrutiny role, particularly:

- Review of Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium
- Biodiversity Net Gain – New Legislation
- Development and Infrastructure
- Review of Growth Boards
- Management of Open Spaces
- Sewerage Infrastructure and Discharge within Rushcliffe
- Connectivity and Communications.

Review of Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium

At its meeting on 19 July 2023, the Group received a presentation from the Rushcliffe Oaks Manager, which provided a brief background of the Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium project, together with an update on its position, future plans and areas for development and the Group had a substantial debate covering:

- memorialisation, how quickly were items on offer likely to fill up and plans to future proof those facilities
- waiting times for funeral services, where current user were coming from and ways to increase usage
- the number of services being conducted compared to the target and what measures were in place to increase business to fulfil that target
- other crematorium facilities nearby and whether Rushcliffe Oaks costs for services were competitive.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
Provide comment on the operation of the crematorium to date and proposed that Rushcliffe Oaks was brought back to the Group at a later date for further comment and feedback	A further update will come to the Group to capture the first 12 months of business in July 2024

Shared their aspirations for the future development and growth of the crematorium	
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Biodiversity Net Gain

At its meeting on 19 July 2023, the Group received a presentation from the Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer, which provided information on the Environment Act 2012, the new Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements for planning under the Act and the implications for the Council and the Group discussion covered:

- how detailed the proposals were and the difficulty in endorsing them without seeing the Government’s final legislation and guidance first, and how some members felt compelled to reject the proposals until that information was provided
- concerns over the 30 year management of BNGs and who would be responsible for checking when developments were passed over to management companies
- the possibility of using town and parish councils to act as agents to support the management of the 30 year monitoring
- Statutory Credits and ways to benefit from them going forward
- concerns over the lack of detail being provided by the Government, together with the proposals being subject to change and asked if there were comparisons from other authorities
- the need for the policy, together with a concern for the limited resources available and the lack of detail about the statutory requirements in the proposals being put forward.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
Acquaint itself with the new BNG in Planning rules and the proposals on how this will be implemented in Rushcliffe	Presentation given at the Growth and Dev Scrutiny Group – updated details available online at https://www.rushcliffe.gov.uk/environment/ecology-in-planning-and-biodiversity-net-gain/#BNG .
Approve the proposals for assessing strategic significance	Proposal approved at Growth and Dev Scrutiny and published online at https://www.rushcliffe.gov.uk/environment/ecology-in-planning-and-biodiversity-net-gain/#BNG . This methodology is now being used for assessment of planning applications where BNG is relevant by the ecology team
Endorse the proposals on the consideration, assessment, delivery and monitoring of BNG in Rushcliffe	Proposal approved at Growth and Dev Scrutiny and published online at https://www.rushcliffe.gov.uk/environment/ecology-in-planning-and-biodiversity-net-gain/#BNG . This methodology is now being used for assessment of planning applications where BNG is relevant by the ecology team

Recommend to Cabinet that the proposals require careful consideration for officer resources before being adopted by Council	I am unaware if any further consideration has been undertaken
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Development and Infrastructure

A scrutiny matrix had been submitted to the Corporate Overview Group on the topic of how the Borough works with partners to plan for the infrastructure required to support growth. At its meeting on 4 October 2023, the Group received a presentation from the Planning Policy Manager, which explained how the Council worked with infrastructure and service providers to identify and deliver infrastructure to support the delivery of new housing and growth and the Group discussion covered:

- the rationale behind the CIL Levy charges and zones and that detailed explanations should be included in the training session on 11 October 2023
- stakeholder engagement and if Town and Parish Council were contacted to provide their views on infrastructure needs
- the need for Councillors to have a better understanding of infrastructure triggers, and for there to be a more transparent approach with some kind of tracking or enforcement process, to ensure that developers delivered the require infrastructure
- the flexibility of the current system to adapt to change.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
Comments from the Group would be fed back to Planning officers for comment	Comments made were shared with planning colleagues and a further report is being brought to Scrutiny in July 2024
A further report on infrastructure delivery be brought to a future meeting of the Group	

Review of Growth Boards

At its meeting on 4 October 2023, the Group received a presentation from the Service Manager – Economic Growth and Development on the review, including survey fundings, work completed, together with considerations and options for the future of the Growth Boards. The Group was provided with a brief background of the Boards and what they had delivered since being established, together with more recent additional areas of work.

The Economic Growth Manager provided an illustrative example of the preferred option, with the Strategic Growth Board overseeing three other threads of Groups/Work:

- Development Boards at Fairham, Bingham, Newton, Sharphill and Gamston
- Task and Finish Groups/work

- Meetings with the six largest Town/Parish Councils at Bingham, Cotgrave, Radcliffe on Trent, Ruddington, Keyworth and East Leake and the West Bridgford Local Area Forum.

The Group discussion covered:

- the importance of being realistic and not over ambitious or over promising ideas
- that the review was taking an improved approach and appeared to be heading in the right direction
- the inclusion of smaller parishes
- whether there was a distinction between housing delivery and economic growth
- the need for more clarity around the new Development Boards and the Task and Finish Groups
- that the options being proposed should be accepted providing the work streams were clear on what was to be achieved by way of outcomes
- having more engagement with private external landlords and businesses, plus ward councillors and parish councillors.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
Consider the priorities contained in the report, for any future Boards and suggested areas of focus and any additional priorities	The group were happy with the proposed areas of focus and priorities and recommended to Cabinet the proposed new structure for the Boards
Based on the preferred option, the Group made a recommendation to Cabinet for the new structure of the Growth Boards	A report went to Cabinet on this, which included comments made by Scrutiny, the new structure was approved and is now being implemented

Management of Open Spaces

At its meeting on 3 January 2024 the Corporate and Commercial Projects Officer updated the Group on the Management of Open Spaces on New Developments and reminded the Group that in 2011 the Council approved a recommendation to no longer adopt open spaces, an approach commonly taken by other local authorities.

The Group received a presentation from a representative from Greenbelt Management Company who had been operating in the management of open spaces business in the UK for 25 years.

The Group discussed some of the main concerns raised by residents about management company practices, including, transparency and fairness in respect of fees and billing, quality of maintenance work and poor customer service.

The Group discussed alternative options with regards to transparency and governance of management companies and the relationship of the Council with developers to develop proposals for determining good practice codes and guidance.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
<p>Acknowledged the complexities of the management of open spaces and the multiple factors at play leading to no simple solution</p> <p>Support the proposal for the Council to take a more active role working with developers to establish the Council's expectations regarding the service expected for its residents</p>	<p>A report went to Cabinet in May 2024 and contained the following recommendations which were approved:</p> <p>a) reaffirms the Council's position not to adopt open spaces on new developments due to the significant financial burden this entails;</p> <p>b) supports the proposal for the Council to take a more active role working with developers and management companies to encourage good practice, as outlined in section;</p> <p>c) requests that Growth and Development Scrutiny Group reviews progress against the proposal set out section 4.6 in spring 2025; and</p> <p>d) lobbies the Government to regulate the governance of management companies to ensure transparency, remove charges unrelated to the management of open spaces, mandate engagement with homeowners and to expedite the adoption of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Bill</p>
<p>Support officers to work through the emerging issues with developers, management companies and residents, with the aim of providing greater transparency and governance for homeowners of new estates, whilst recognising the Council has no authority over the operation of management companies</p>	<p>The proposed action plan shared with scrutiny was included as part of the Cabinet report and accepted</p>
<p>Seek to raise the general issues and concerns raised by residents on new housing estates with developers and management companies to raise the profile of the issues being experienced</p>	
<p>Investigate the legal position on whether a commuted sum to cover maintenance for 15 years could be legally enforced by the Council</p>	<p>The Council's Monitoring Officer has considered this and confirms that the Council cannot forcibly adopt open space on new developments</p> <p>The Council can offer to adopt spaces with a commuted sum paid by the developer but cannot force the developer</p>

	<p>to do this. If the developer were to agree to hand the open space over to the Council, the calculation of any commuted sum would be a matter for negotiation. Once a developer signs a s106 agreement then they would be legally bound by the terms as per any contract and the Council would have various legal remedies to enforce any breach</p>
<p>Investigate the work carried out by Stratford on Avon District Council and invite a representative from the District Council to attend a Growth and Development Scrutiny Group meeting</p>	<p>RBC officers have spoken with officers from Stratford, who confirmed that their Cabinet took a decision in 2020 that the Council would adopt open space (in the event that a Town or Parish Council do not)</p> <p>It has taken a number of years for Stratford to work through the complexities associated with implementing this decision. In April 2024 Stratford published a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) setting out their approach to the management of open spaces</p> <p>The SPD sets out that:</p> <p>Where the Parish/Town Council do not accept the transfer, the District Council will consider the management of certain types of public open space (not including SUDs, allotments, community gardens), with a 30-year commuted sum. This will be subject to ensuring the open space can be effectively maintained under the current management programme in operation. Where any of these types of spaces cannot be managed by the Town/Parish Council or District Council, they are to be retained by the developers or transferred to a management company</p> <p>While Stratford has established a willingness to adopt certain types of open space under the right circumstances, this approach still leaves developers free to hand open space over to management companies and creates an even more mixed picture for residents in terms of who maintains what and at what cost. NB</p>

	Stratford will only take on land with a 30-year commuted sum
Provide a detailed forecast for revenues received by the Council from an example development over the 15 year period	<p>Officers have provided more information in the report to Cabinet, which demonstrates the financial impact of adopting an open space on the scale of Fairham</p> <p>Whilst housing growth results in additional Council Tax receipts this also creates additional demand on statutory Council services which the Council Tax receipts are not sufficient to cover</p> <p>The maintenance of open spaces would be an additional (and discretionary) service, the costs of which would have to be found from new revenue streams</p>

Sewerage Infrastructure and Discharge within Rushcliffe

This item had first been considered by the Group at its meeting in September 2022. The Group had requested a further update from Nottinghamshire County Council, in its capacity as Local Lead Flood Authority (+), from Severn Trent Water and the Environment Agency. At its meeting on 3 January 2024, Mr Smith from the County Council attended; however, the other representatives were unable to attend due to commitments with flooding at that time. Mr Smith presented an update about the County Council's role as LLFA, which included information on:

- Storm Babet and the properties affected in Rushcliffe
- the role of the LLFA in coordinating flood risk management across the county, and that it was responsible for surface water only
- the register of assets that had a critical impact on flood risk in the county
- the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan
- the Capital and Revenue Flood Risk Management Schemes programme
- the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment Review, which was published very six years
- property flood resilience and how that supported properties
- Community Flood Signage Scheme
- education sessions for schools
- Natural flood management measures.

The Group discussion covered:

- Communication about the Community Flood Signage Scheme
- SUDs on privately managed estates
- Flooding from water coming off fields and how to influence landowners

At its meeting on 6 March 2024 two representatives from the Environment Agency attended the meeting to provide the Group with information on Strategic and Development Control Planning and Sustainable Growth.

Strategic and Development Control Planning

A presentation was delivered to explain the Environment Agencies response to strategic and development control planning consultations when commenting on planning applications. These include:

- Fluvial Flood Risk (river flood risk)
- Groundwater and Contaminated Land
- Land and Water (surface water quality)
- Fisheries, Biodiversity and Geomorphology
- Regulated Industry (power stations, anaerobic digestion plants etc).

As well as the above the Environment Agency are also asked to comment on strategic planning documents that form part of a Local Authorities Local Plan, for example:

- Water Cycle Strategy
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
- Surface Water Management Plans
- Strategic Infrastructure Plans
- Environmental and/or Blue and Green Infrastructure Studies
- Strategic Housing and employment Land Availability Assessments.

Sustainable Growth

A presentation was delivered to explain the Environment Agencies Adaptive Investment for Growth document which had been produced alongside Nottinghamshire County Council's Inward Investment Framework which aims to provide an engagement platform with District and Borough Council's on environmental constraints and creating sustainable growth.

The Group were provided with information covering environmental risks around:

- Heatwaves – the increase in frequency, drought and wildfires
- Increased health vulnerabilities and exposure to poor air quality
- Increase in summer flash and winter rainfall events
- Water scarcity and threats to intensive agriculture and competitiveness.

The Group discussion that followed covered:

- The recent winter and storms and flooding incidents
- Mechanisms and interventions to create and improve the Council's biodiversity net Gain
- Mechanisms to regulate whether the sewerage infrastructure can cope with the increase in sewerage capacity due to housing development.

The Group expressed their disappointment that Severn Trent Water had not attended the scrutiny meeting.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
Invite representatives from Severn Trent and the Environment Agency to its meeting in March 2024	Discussions are ongoing with the Environment Agency about future areas of focus for Scrutiny Severn Trent Water had advised that they did not have capacity to attend individual district scrutiny meetings. A follow up email has been sent and a response is awaited
Review the scrutiny matrix and asked questions of the expert witnesses	
Identify areas where further work or updates are required	
Invite Representatives from Severn Trent and the Environment Agency back to a future meeting of Growth and Development Scrutiny	

Connectivity and Communications

At its meeting on 3 January 2024 Councillor Combellack addressed the Group about her concerns around broadband and mobile network coverage across the Borough. Mr Stoddart, Digital Connectivity Manager at Nottinghamshire County Council attended the meeting and presented the Nottinghamshire County Council’s ‘Better Broadband for Nottinghamshire’ and the latest national programme ‘Project Gigabit’, including a project role out of GigaHubs’, funded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLHUC), which aims to connect public sector buildings to a fast, reliable internet connections.

The sites selected within Rushcliffe being:

- Bingham Library
- Cotgrave Library/Cotgrave Hub
- Keyworth Library
- Radcliffe on Trent Library.

Mr Stoddart advised the Group that the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) will be switched off and BT have announced plans to migrate the old analogue network to digital by the end of 2025.

The Group discussed the Rushcliffe Borough Council’s involvement in supporting residents to minimise any disruption and the alternative solutions available to residents going forward.

The Group agreed:	Progress Update – June 2024:
To review the Scrutiny matrix and ask questions of the expert witnesses	There is nothing to update on this topic

Identified that there were no areas for further work or further updates	
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Member Panels

The Group did not establish any Member Panels this year.

Call-ins

The Group did not discuss any call-ins this year.

Looking forward to the year ahead

Growth and Development Scrutiny are looking forward to a comprehensive programme of scrutiny topics in 2023/24 that will deliver economic growth and ensure sustainable, prosperous and thriving communities.

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Council

Thursday, 18 July 2024

Productivity Plan

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 Council's Productivity Plan, which is a new requirement from Government. The Productivity Plan is based on the Council's Transformation and Efficiency Plan (TEP), already approved by Full Council in March 2024, as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 1.2. This report seeks Councillor endorsement of the Productivity Plan, which is to be submitted to Government by 19 July 2024.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Council adopts the Productivity Plan and supports its submission to Government.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has requested that all Local Authorities submit a Productivity Plan by 19 July 2024.
- 3.2. The Council sought approval for the content of the Productivity Plan in March 2024, as part of the adoption of the Transformation and Efficiency Plan. For transparency, Council is being asked to formally adopt the Productivity Plan, prior to its submission.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1. The Government is currently reviewing productivity across all public services, including local government. The requirement to submit a Productivity Plan was announced as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement.
- 4.2. Although Government did not, at this stage, set out its requirements for the Productivity Plan, it did provide an overview and the four key themes:
 - Transformation of services to make better use of resources
 - Take advantage of advances in technology

- Reduce wasteful spend within systems (The Council has taken the decision to use the term 'reducing discretionary expenditure' moving forward, which is felt to be more appropriate than 'reducing wasteful spend,')
 - Barriers preventing activity that the Government can help to reduce or remove.
- 4.3. The Transformation and Efficiency Programme was revised to align with these key themes, ahead of being adopted by Full Council in March 2024, and to serve as the Council's Productivity Plan. The TEP has been condensed and put into the format required for the Productivity Plan to be submitted to Government.
- 4.4. There have been two changes to the content already approved as part of the TEP. Firstly, there is the Council's response to the fourth key theme regarding barriers. These can be viewed in full in section 4.1 of Appendix A. Barriers listed include:
- Government wide/legislation changes - not yet fully aware of implications, we will await further information from the Government, examples include potential changes to waste collection and planning and the overall future financing of local government
 - Timescales associated with bidding for and spending grant funding
 - Volume of new burdens on local government without proportionate funding
 - Referendum limits on Council Tax
 - Lack of freedom and flexibilities with regards to raising income (i.e. a desire for less statutory charges)
 - Internal Drainage Board levies not having a separate precept
 - Resource shortages in the labour market resulting in pay inflation
 - Challenges in recruiting to a number of key professions and disciplines including Finance, ICT, Planning and Environmental Health
 - Lack of consistent data with which to benchmark costs of services against performance.
- 4.5. The second change is contextualising the environment the Council has been working in. The graph at paragraph 1.4 of Appendix A, demonstrates that the Council's Core Spending Power (i.e. the funding it receives to provide services from Council Tax, Business Rates and Government Grants) in real terms has reduced as the increase is less than inflation. This is over a period of time when population and housing have increased, and the Council has reduced staffing levels. There has been no obvious diminution in service provision or the quality of services.
- 4.6. As with the existing TEP, the Productivity Plan will be fluid and evolve each year as the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy is updated.

5. Alternative options considered and reasons for rejection

The Council could choose not to adopt the Productivity Plan; however, this is not advisable as Government requires local authorities to submit a Productivity Plan.

6. Risks and Uncertainties

There are no risks directly associated with the submission of the Productivity Plan; however, the Plan is based on the adopted TEP, so there is an inherent risk in the deliverability of that programme. This risk is managed through the governance reporting process for the budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

7. Implications

7.1. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications directly associated with this report; however, the savings targets set out in the TEP are included in section 3.2 of Appendix A – Productivity Plan.

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 Section 17 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	No direct impact
Quality of Life	Ensuring that we remain able to delivery services which enhance the quality of residents' lives.
Efficient Services	Ensuring the Council remains productive is essential to delivering on our commitment to efficient services.
Sustainable Growth	No direct impact

9. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Council adopts the Productivity Plan and supports its submission to Government.

For more information contact:	Peter Linfield Director – Finance and Corporate Services 0115 914 8439 plinfield@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	Report to Cabinet 7 March 2024 - 2024/25 Budget and Financial Strategy – Appendix 7 Transformation and Efficiency Plan 2024/25-2028/29
List of appendices:	Appendix A – Productivity Plan

Rushcliffe Borough Council Productivity Plan 2024

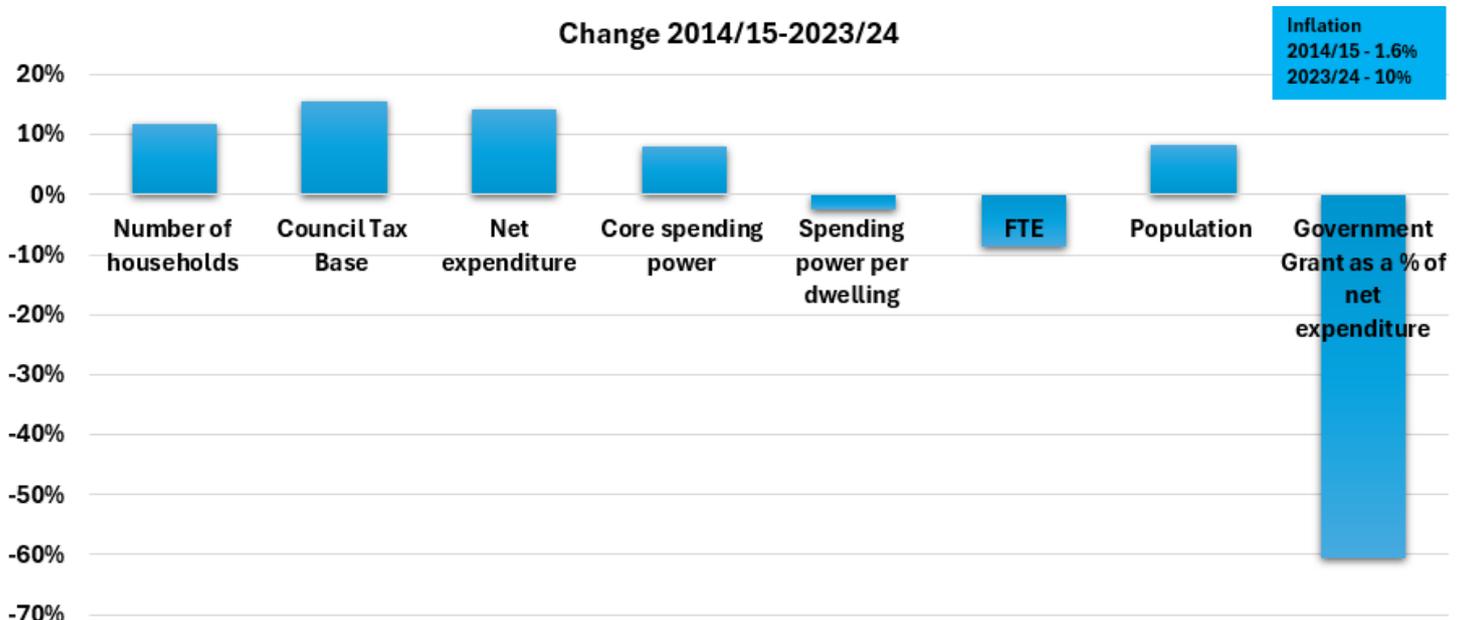
1. Introduction and Background

1.1 This document sets out a condensed version of the Council’s [Transformation and Efficiency Plan \(TEP\) 2024/25 – 2028/29](#) which was adopted by Full Council in March 2024. This document serves as the Council’s Productivity Plan, which is a new requirement from Government for 2024/25.

1.2 The full TEP outlines the Council’s approach to identifying and working with partners, recognising and maximising opportunities, and leading the way in delivering high quality services that match the needs of residents. It is clear that as the organisation becomes leaner and the Borough grows, it will become increasingly challenging to find further savings. Delivering consistently good services for our residents, while achieving necessary savings will require a more strategically focussed way of thinking.

1.3 The Council’s approach to Transformation and Productivity must be considered in the context of a number of important factors, including but not limited to: pressures to the budget as a result of cost of living crisis, rising housing benefit costs, high inflation rates, reduced funding, lack of long term financial settlement creating uncertainty, a growing Borough (20% household growth in the next 20 years), our commitment to achieving carbon net-zero by 2030 and protecting our more vulnerable residents.

1.4 The following reflects, at a high level, the changing position over the past 10 years, considering a number of key factors. While Government grants and Core Spending Power (relative to inflation) have decreased, the Council has had to serve an increasing population, with more properties, and a relatively smaller staff establishment.



- 1.5 The Transformation and Efficiency Programme sets out the Council's threefold approach to meeting continuing financial challenges while maintaining performance, through:
- Identifying cost efficiencies
 - Increasing income opportunities
 - Developing transformational alternatives for the future delivery of services
- 1.6 Since its inception in 2010, the TEP has set out to support the delivery of over £7m in efficiencies. In making savings to date, services to residents in some cases have been changed from universally free services towards chargeable choice-based services e.g.
- Garden waste collection
 - Car parking charges
- 1.7 Other services have been streamlined or transformed, to be even more productive e.g.
- Introduction of Hybrid Mail, reducing the amount of mail that is printed/posted in-house
 - Bringing street cleansing and grounds maintenance service back in-house, making savings and improving performance.
 - Outsourcing of ICT help-desk and support service
 - Reducing number of printed publications, moving to digital
- 1.8 Costs have been reduced through rationalisation of assets and staff, with the sharing of both posts and key services e.g.
- Joint waste depot with Nottinghamshire City Council
 - Building Control partnership with South Kesteven and Newark & Sherwood District Councils
 - Payroll with Gedling Borough Council
- 1.9 At the same time the Council has made it easier for customers to transact their business with online through 'My Account', at a time and in a way that suits them. This has been done without significantly impacting on service quality or resident satisfaction. Latest resident polling data (2021) shows that 84% of residents are satisfied with Rushcliffe as a place to live, compared to 83% in 2018.
- 1.10 Use of technology has been vital to delivering efficiencies in recent years. The Council introduced its Digital by Design Strategy in 2019 with the objective of understanding the Council's digital needs and delivering a programme to improve productivity. This strategy promoted four areas has successfully delivered a total of 18 projects to date, with cumulative savings of approx. £74k per annum thanks to initiatives such as:
- 'My Account' portal for our residents
 - Councillors portal for our elected Members

- Improved website
- New online venue booking system
- New workflow and automation

1.11 There is clearly still significant scope for transformation and improvements in productivity through the use of technology and AI. This will be captured in the next iteration of the Digital by Design Strategy which is currently being drafted. We are interested in exploring opportunities around the use of AI and are engaging in the Local Government Association’s cyber, digital and technology support offer.

1.12 The Council has also made good use of external funding wherever possible, including Home Upgrade Grants (HUG) and Local Area Delivery Grants (LAD), SALIX, UKSPF totalling £5m. These have been particularly valuable in supporting the Council’s goal to be carbon neutral in its own operations by 2030.

2. Addressing the funding gap:

2.1 Savings will continue be a key component of productivity moving forward:

	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000
Cumulative Savings in TEP	(5,100)	(5,833)	(6,223)	(6,457)	(6,598)
Additional TEP Savings	(733)	(390)	(234)	(141)	(240)
Cumulative TEP Target	(733)	(1,123)	(1,357)	(1,498)	(1,738)

2.2 The TEP also focuses on the generation of additional income mainly from car parking, garden waste and the digitalisation of home alarms to cover increasing costs of the service. Officers continue to seek efficiencies wherever possible and look for wider projects to improve value for money and several projects are being assessed for feasibility to deliver potential future savings.

2.3 Each year, officers undertake an internal programme of investigations looking specifically at improving efficiency through different ways of working. Budgets are challenged every year to drive out further savings whilst minimising the impact on front-line services.

2.4 The culture at Rushcliffe has been to ensure different services are reviewed regularly to make sure they are as focused upon the customer and as streamlined as possible, any identified inefficiency removed from the system and where appropriate services are moved online. The way the service is delivered is also investigated and consideration is given to potential partnership opportunities or alternative methods of delivery to protect the services that residents value without a pre-determined view.

3. Transformational Projects 2024-2029

3.1 The TEP is a continuation of the Council's original Transformation Programme and consequently, several key projects which influence service delivery and finances over the next few years are already in progress. Good progress has been made with new Transformational Projects as mentioned above. Going forward, the three major transformational projects are:

- Increase in fees for garden waste and car parking to cover increasing costs of providing the service.
- Full year effects of the Bingham Arena and Enterprise Centre and Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium. These project are both examples of where the Council has invested capital to meet the needs of our communities (both residents and businesses) to respond to growth in the Borough and to generate additional income. In the case of leisure the Council is constantly striving to improve its offer to residents and gain the benefit of contract efficiencies with Lex Leisure (it's leisure partner).
- Review of Assets, with a focus on investment and operational assets.

3.2 The current transformation and efficiency projects are detailed below and aligned with the themes of the Productivity Plan: transformation, technology and reducing discretionary expenditure (which we believe is a more appropriate term than 'waste').

	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000	26/27 £'000	27/28 £'000	28/29 £'000	Total £'000
Transformation of Services						
Leisure Strategy	(207)	(35)	(28)	23	0	(247)
Crematorium	170	(47)	(70)	(64)	(40)	(51)
West Park (Special Expense)		(39)	1	1	1	(37)
Customer Contact Centre Relocation		(50)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(53)
Country Park Car Park Charges	(50)					(50)
Charging for New Bins	(50)					(50)
Car Parking	(164)	(15)			(100)	(279)
Green bin Scheme	(238)	(98)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(636)
Bingham Enterprise	(35)		(8)			(43)
Cotgrave Phase 2	(1)	(1)	(6)			(8)
Charge for Street Naming and Numbering	(1)					(1)
Edwalton Golf Course	(21)					(21)
Streetwise insourcing	(100)					(100)
Technology						
Marketing Services	(2)	(8)				(10)

Home Alarms Digitalisation	57	(81)	(21)			(45)
Reducing Discretionary Expenditure						
Young	(26)					(26)
Remove obsolete internet content software	(8)					(8)
Grantham Canal	(26)					(26)
Reach Rushcliffe	(5)					(5)
Public Conveniences	(15)	(15)	(1)			(31)
Rushcliffe Community Voluntary Services	(8)					(8)
Mayor's Christmas Party	(4)					(4)
Total	(733)	(390)	(234)	(141)	(240)	(1,738)
Cumulative Savings To Date	(5,100)	(5,833)	(6,223)	(6,457)	(6,598)	
Cumulative Savings Carried Forward	(5,833)	(6,223)	(6,457)	(6,598)	(6,838)	

3.3 The Council gathers performance data from 250 performance indicators monitored across the authority on a monthly basis. Monthly reports highlight areas of particularly good performance for the period and areas where performance is falling below the expected standard. These exceptions are challenged at each stage of the monitoring process. A condensed version of these performance indicators is presented to the Council Corporate Overview Group (Councillors) on a quarterly basis, alongside a quarterly budget position. This information is then in the public domain and available to all Councillors and residents.

3.4 Budget monitoring is a critical part of the financial resilience process. Performance Clinics are produced every eight weeks (reviewed by Executive Management Team) and include capital and revenue financial projections, review of performance indicators, task progress and updates to risk assessments. Quarterly, finance and performance is reported to Corporate Overview Group and Cabinet. Expenditure and income variations are reported to Cabinet.

4. **Barriers**

4.1 There are a number of clear barriers which are inhibiting transformation or productivity, these include:

- Government wide/legislation changes - not yet fully aware of implications, we await further information from the Government. Examples include potential changes to waste collection, planning and the overall future financing of local government.

- Unreasonable timescales associated with bidding for and spending grant funding and a perception that Rushcliffe does not need funding when as with all authorities it is aiming to improve 'place'.
- Increased burden of requirements of current audit regime both time and financial.
- Volume of new burdens on local government without proportionate funding.
- Referendum limits on Council Tax.
- Special Expenses are part of Council Tax referendum limits. Removing these would ensure local tax setting is consistent with parish councils and enable Rushcliffe to maximise Council Tax income.
- Lack of freedom and flexibilities with regards to raising income (ie a desire for less statutory charges).
- Internal Drainage Board levies not having a separate precept and Councils having to absorb significant cost increases.
- Significant national minimum living wage increases with a 'domino' effect on pay scales. Because it hasn't been affordable to pay comparable percentage increases to more senior officers, the differentials between salary scales have been eroded making the appeal of taking on additional responsibilities more limited to staff.
- Resource shortages in the labour market resulting in requirement to pay market supplements to attract candidates.
- Challenges in recruiting to a number of key professions and disciplines including Finance, ICT, Planning and Environmental Health. Finding people with the right skill set, matched with the salaries offered in the public sector (in comparison to private sector) can be difficult. The Council appoints agency staff or consultants due to short term vacancies and lack of specialist knowledge. The cost of this is exacerbated by the aforementioned labour market recruitment challenges.
- Lack of consistent data with which to benchmark the costs of services and performance.
- Appropriate recompense for Councillors – this limits the pool of Councillors willing to stand.
- Procurement regulations – with greater reporting requirements which are barriers to productivity and pace.