

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL**

THURSDAY, 5 MARCH 2026

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 J Cottee (Chair), R Butler (Vice-Chair), M Barney, T Birch, A Brennan, A Brown, S Calvert, J Chaplain, K Chewings, N Clarke, T Combellack, S Dellar, A Edyvean, S Ellis, G Fletcher, M Gaunt, E Georgiou, C Grocock, R Inglis, R Mallender, S Mallender, D Mason, 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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

L Ashmore	Director of Development and Economic Growth
D Banks	Director of Neighbourhoods
R Clack	Legal Services Manager
A Hill	Chief Executive
P Linfield	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
S Pregon	Monitoring Officer
E Richardson	Democratic Services Officer
H Tambini	Democratic Services Manager
S Whittaker	Assistant Director of Finance

APOLOGIES:

Councillors J Billin, R Bird, P Gowland and P Matthews

47 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Upton declared an interest in Item 13b) Motion and advised that he would be presenting a report to Cabinet on 10 March, and therefore any comments that he made on this motion this evening would be general, made with an open mind and not predetermined.

48 Minutes of the Meetings held on 20 and 27 November 2025

The minutes of the meetings held on Thursday, 20 and 27 November 2025 were approved as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

49 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor referred to the afternoon tea that he and the Deputy Mayor had

hosted for 12 volunteers from the East Leake Community Association, to celebrate the Group winning the King's Award for Voluntary Service. It was a very enjoyable afternoon talking with the volunteers, and hearing about the valuable work they did. He had also recently attended a fundraising concert in support of the Ukrainian School Band, celebrating talent, culture, and community.

50 Leader's Announcements

On behalf of Councillors, the Leader welcomed back the Monitoring Officer and wished her well as she continued her recovery. The Leader was sad to announce that former Councillor Jean Smith had recently passed away, and she would be greatly missed. The Leader referred to Mr Keith Sayers, who had worked for the Council for over 40 years and thanked him for his hard work and excellent service during that time. The Leader mentioned the recent Lunar New Year celebrations, which had been very well received.

51 Chief Executive's Announcements

The Chief Executive echoed the Leader's comments in welcoming the Monitoring Officer back and thanked the Deputy Monitoring officer for her hard work and support during the Monitoring Officer's absence.

52 Citizens' Questions

No citizens' questions were received for this meeting.

53 Petitions

No petitions were presented at this meeting.

54 2026/27 Budget and Financial Strategy

The Mayor advised that it was proposed that the speaking times be extended to permit the mover of the report 15 minutes to speak on the matter, and to allow 7 ½ minutes for the seconder and other Group Leaders and this was agreed by the meeting.

The Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide Leadership, Councillor Clarke MBE presented the report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services outlining the Council's Budget and Financial Strategy for 2026/27.

In presenting the budget, the Leader thanked the Director – Finance and Corporate Services, the Finance Team and Councillor Viridi for their hard work producing the budget, during very challenging times. He referred to the substantial changes to Government funding, and late changes to the financial settlement, which he felt had led to unfair rather than Fair Funding. The Leader expressed disappointment that financially well managed councils were being punished, and that the Government had forgotten the great work councils such as Rushcliffe did.

The Leader confirmed that due to the Council's continued prudent financial management, freezing Council Tax for 2026/27 was proposed, he referred to the modest increase to the Special Expenses budget, and that West Bridgford had excellent facilities and events, thanking the Community Facilities Team for organising those for everyone. The Leader confirmed that Rushcliffe's Council Tax would remain in the lowest 25% in England and the lowest in Nottinghamshire, which everyone should be proud of. The Leader referred to the proposals to introduce a Council Tax Discount for the terminally ill and advised that the effectiveness of the Second Homes Premium and revocation of the Policy was being reviewed, with both items intended to go to Scrutiny. It was noted that Rushcliffe had been hit with a significant Business Rates reduction, and there was no longer any New Homes Bonus (NHB); however, the budget remained committed to further economic growth. Risks remained, including Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and international conflict; however, the budget mitigated such risks. The Leader referred to changes linked to Government policy, as detailed in paragraph 4.2 of the report, including Simpler Recycling and changes in funding formula, which had led to more Revenue Support Grant, to help offset reductions in Government funding.

The Leader referred to the Transformation and Efficiency Programme, and to Council's earmarked reserves, used to manage risks and opportunities. The Council was committed to funding economic growth masterplanning across the Borough, Radcliffe on Trent was advanced, with a wish to look at other main settlements. Council was reminded that Rushcliffe remained debt free, whilst retaining an ambitious Capital Programme, demonstrating the Council's commitment to providing excellent services, supporting the vulnerable and improving the environment.

In conclusion, the Leader stated that Rushcliffe remained under financial pressure; however, it was continuing to improve services and grow the Borough, having a virtually balanced budget over five years. Despite the poor outcome of the Fair Funding review, the Council was well set to continue providing excellent services and maintain stable finances, and the Leader hoped that everyone could support this budget.

Councillor Viridi seconded the recommendation and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Thomas thanked officers for their support and Councillor Viridi for taking forward the Group's suggestion to provide tax relief for terminally ill residents. She advised that the Group's alternative budget contained three proposals.

Firstly, the West Bridgford Special Expense loan should be repaid before LGR took place, rather than over the current three year period. West Bridgford should be expected to balance its books, particularly as the Special Expense was very reasonable compared to other precepts. She also supported calls for West Bridgford to have a Town Council. The second proposal was to raise Council Tax up to the referendum cap, as she believed this freeze was not in residents' best long term interest. The Conservative budget would hand over a deficit to any new council, whilst this alternative would result in an overall surplus after five years. Councillor Thomas noted comments about poor Government funding; however, freezing Council Tax demonstrated that more

funding was not needed, and she questioned if this could impact future settlement and grant funding chances. The third proposal related to investment in local centres, which had already taken place in some areas, with plans for Radcliffe on Trent due to be considered at Cabinet. She agreed that the NHB should be used to improve infrastructure in areas where homes had been built; however, that had not happened in East Leake. Councillor Thomas stated that the NHB could have provided an investment pot to allow Rushcliffe to adopt and maintain open space and other facilities on new estates. She referred to the £50k earmarked in the budget proposals to East Leake towards work on a masterplan and felt that equal sums should be put aside for Keyworth and Ruddington, by earmarking an additional £100k of NHB. Councillor Thomas also called for the return of the Growth Boards, to provide regular strategic oversight.

Councillor Way seconded the alternative budget and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Birch welcomed back the Monitoring Officer, thanked the Finance Team for their help with the Group's alternative budget, which suggested additional efficiencies, to reduce Council Tax, and thanked Councillor Thomas for putting forward the suggestion to help the terminally ill. He stated that the Council should not be paying for members' catering allowances, the HR budgetary allowance should be reduced and Rushcliffe Reports should be published once rather than twice a year. Councillor Birch stated that by reducing Council Tax, tax income would also be reduced; however, that would only apply if savings were not put in place, but savings were there. This alternative budget proposed a tax cut, it would decrease the deficit, with no impact to frontline services. He referred to previous comments that Rushcliffe was in the lowest quartile nationally for Council Tax; however, Rushcliffe had the highest Council Tax per household in the County, as a result of having a disproportionately high number of higher band Council Tax properties. He hoped that this budget would be supported to cut taxes for hardworking residents.

Councillor Chewings seconded the alternative budget and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor J Walker stated that she had hoped to be presenting an alternative budget, seizing opportunities presented by new Government funding to be ambitious, use resources more fairly, strengthen the local economy and support the most vulnerable. She would have proposed the development of a local power plant, allowing the Council to generate renewable energy, reducing long-term energy costs, increasing resilience and creating jobs. Secondly, using strategic investment to modernise and improve sporting facilities across more deprived areas, particularly for women and girls. Thirdly, new funding to tackle homelessness, specifically focusing on women who had suffered from domestic violence, with targeted housing, emergency, and long term support. Councillor Walker welcomed the inclusion of the £1m allocated to Radcliffe on Trent; however, she questioned why the same commitment was not being made elsewhere. £50k had been allocated to West Bridgford again, after being shelved last year, and she was concerned that this could happen again, and it would be helpful for all Councillors to be involved collaboratively in strategic

fund investment. Turning to the proposed freeze on Council Tax, Councillor Walker felt that this would not change financial pressures on residents, given that Rushcliffe's element only made up 5% of the total bill and that the Council must have received enough Government funding if it could afford this freeze. She believed that a modest increase, ring fenced for targeted investment and support, to deliver longer term benefits for residents would be preferable.

Councillor Edyvean stated that on balance he would be supporting the proposed budget, as he could not support the Rushcliffe Independent budget proposal to remove non-essential spending, as that often impacted and shaped organisations, and in respect of the Leake Independent budget, he felt that expenditure in West Bridgford benefited residents throughout the Borough. He had mixed feelings about the proposed Council Tax freeze, feeling that it was being done for political reasons, and welcomed the review of the Second Homes Premium. Whilst welcoming investment in local communities, he was surprised that £1m had been allocated to Radcliffe on Trent and believed that other areas were missing out.

Councillor R Mallender thanked officers, referred to the interesting options being proposed but expressed concern that in the future this local decision making would be lost, as well as local expertise. He was pleased to see that climate change monies remained, hoped that there would be future investment in council housing and agreed that West Bridgford should have a Town Council.

Councillor Plant thanked officers; however, she expressed concern that there was continued reference to the poor deal that the Council had received from the Government, and reminded Council that Rushcliffe was an affluent Borough, with little deprivation, and would therefore receive less funding. She stated that it was a choice to freeze Council Tax, which would have financial implications going forward, and questioned if it was prudent or sensible, and that local residents deserved better.

Councillor Polenta stated that there were elements in the budget that everyone could agree on, although she would have liked them to go further and be more targeted. In respect of regeneration and masterplans, she referred to the need for accountability and democratic involvement, particularly with Ward Councillors and residents, especially in areas like West Bridgford, which had no Town Council. She felt that the budget lacked a transformative vision and failed to treat residents as active participants in local issues, believing that residents would pay more Council Tax, to improve services, to ensure equality and social inclusion for all. She agreed with the idea of community energy schemes, stated that housing should be treated as a fundamental human right and called for national funding to be utilized to tackle domestic violence. Councillor Polenta questioned if the Council was prepared to govern differently, by shifting power and deciding collectively how resources were used.

Councillor Soloman thanked officers and Councillor Viridi for their hard work in preparing this budget, during very challenging and uncertain times and welcomed the proposed Council Tax freeze, which had only been possible due to the Council's strong financial position. She welcomed continued investment in services and projects and hoped for more investment in other key local

centres. Councillor Soloman also welcomed the proposed discount for the terminally ill and thanked the Leake Independent Group for putting that forward. However, she noted the cumulative impact of increased fees and charges, questioned second green bin charges and advocated for changes to car parking charges. Councillor Soloman referred to the structural pressures building into the budget, including the introduction of mandatory food waste collection, increased National Insurance, and was concerned that Government grants would only cover a portion of that. She also acknowledged the reduction in Business Rates, with the end of all transition funding. Councillor Soloman referred to LGR, stated that Rushcliffe would enter from a good position and confirmed that she would be supporting the proposed budget.

Councillor Upton referred to the Capital Programme, which he felt everyone could be proud of and to the Radcliffe On Trent Masterplan, which local councillors had spent years working on, liaising with partners to reach a point where a consultant was appointed to produce a scheme. Councillor Upton hoped that other key settlements would do the same, because the Council would support them and funding was available. He referred to the importance of keeping assets up to date, in particular in relation to climate change, and felt that in a difficult economic climate, having a five-year £24.3m programme was a great achievement.

Councillor Brennan was pleased to note the resources allocated to economic growth priorities and reminded Council that the first Economic Growth Strategy published in 2025, included an action to create masterplans for the Borough's seven largest areas. She stated that significant investment had already taken place in Cotgrave and Bingham, with support being provided on masterplans and visions for Bingham, West Bridgford and Keyworth. Councillor Brennan confirmed that the Radcliffe on Trent Masterplan was also well advanced, with work commencing in 2017, and like many other settlements in the Borough, Radcliffe on Trent was a growing community, suffering from a lack of parking, with no central community space for events, causing people to go elsewhere. Councillor Brennan stated that local Councillors had worked in partnership with many different groups for years and had external support to design a deliverable scheme. She expressed disappointment that this work had been criticised, with some suggesting that the village had been prioritized, and advised that since the Strategy had been published last year, she had not been approached as Portfolio Holder to discuss any new masterplans. However, resources were available in the budget, and Councillor Brennan confirmed that she had recently written to all Ward Councillors, and relevant parish councils, inviting them to begin this process, and stated that there would be a review of the Growth Boards.

Councillor G Wheeler welcomed back the Monitoring Officer, reiterated thanks to officers and Councillor Viridi and agreed that the Council had received a very poor settlement from the Government, and that every penny mattered to residents.

Councillor Om reiterated thanks to officers for producing the budget in very challenging circumstances, as it provided stability and freezing Rushcliffe's portion of the Council Tax bill showed the Council had chosen restraint and responsibility. Having the lowest Council Tax in the County provided real

support for residents, whilst doing this from a position of strength, with no debt and strong reserves. He commended the ambitious five year Capital Programme and stated that residents could already see the benefits.

Councillor Brown welcomed back the Monitoring Officer and welcomed the Council Tax freeze, made possible by sound financial management and reiterated that the cut in Government funding was unacceptable. He welcomed the £125k investment to update facilities at the East Leake Leisure Centre and that funds were available to refurbish East Leake village centre.

Councillor J Wheeler reiterated thanks to officers, referred to Government funding cuts, with many district councils being forced to increase Council Tax. He referred to over £1m being allocated to leisure facilities, which the whole Borough benefitted from. Councillor Wheeler clarified that residents had raised the issue of discounts for the terminally ill with Councillors across a number of parties, and he looked forward to this being scrutinised and implemented, if feasible. In respect of West Bridgford having a Town Council to improve democracy, Councillor Wheeler advised that decisions were democratically made here at Rushcliffe through various committees. Events held in the town were for all residents and he felt it disingenuous to say that residents did not pay their fair share. He confirmed that offers to support local centres had previously been made, without receiving any response and he encouraged them to come forward now.

Councillor Chewings thanked officers for their support, referred to comments made about the Labour Party's funding formula, and agreed that deprivation should be prioritised. He welcomed the £1m investment in Radcliffe on Trent, although the announcement of the amount was a surprise, happening soon after the announcement of the proposed 180% increase in the village precept. He referred to the Group's alternative budget, proposing cutting Councillors' own expenditure, including a £4k catering budget. Councillor Chewings referred to previous cuts to Council services, as part of the Transformation and Efficiency Plan, as well as increasing costs for residents, and he stated that Councillors had a choice to make savings by cutting this expenditure budget, and he welcomed the proposal to reduce publication of Rushcliffe Reports to once a year.

Councillor Birch reiterated that the Group's alternative budget proposed cutting back on non-essential expenditure and benefits, and the Council should ensure that any savings and efficiencies were always passed on directly to residents. He reiterated that Rushcliffe was fortunate as it had the highest Council Tax base, and the lowest overheads in the County, which the Conservative Group should acknowledge. He felt that Rushcliffe Reports was a propaganda piece and cutting its publication would save money for residents, and this was an opportunity to agree a tax cut through the suggested additional savings.

Councillor Way stated that leaving any future West Bridgford Town Council with inherited debt would be irresponsible, and it should not pay less than other councils, whilst its infrastructure and community events were supported by the rest of the Borough. Councillor Way stated that West Bridgford was not easily accessible for many, with residents preferring to support their own community events, which did not attract the same levels of funding. Councillor Way felt that

it was unfair how funding and support was distributed through the key settlements and questioned the purpose of giving Radcliffe on Trent £1m. West Bridgford was to receive £500k, with East Leake offered £50k and the Group's alternative budget asked for £50k to be offered to Ruddington and Keyworth. Councillor Way stated that East Leake Parish Council and Ward Councillors had worked on village centre plans, which had been halted by the Covid pandemic, followed by the disbanding of the Growth Boards, and she welcomed news that they would return and that support was available. She advised that increasing Council Tax this year would result in a surplus rather than a deficit in 2027-28, which might provide more support for those in need.

Councillor Thomas reiterated that West Bridgford was in debt, with Rushcliffe lending it money and she felt that it was important that West Bridgford sorted out its finances before LGR. She referred to the importance of Rushcliffe Reports in keeping residents updated and agreed with the proposal to cut the catering budget. Councillor Thomas suggested that the Council had no external borrowing due to the revenue it had received from the NHB and was concerned that there now appeared to be a rush to spend the remaining money before LGR.

Councillor Viridi thanked Councillors for their constructive debate and officers from the Finance Team for their hard work. He referred to the Council's ongoing strong financial management, was proud to be debt free, with strong reserves and robust governance. He referred to the current repayment programme for West Bridgford's loan and advised that it had been considered by the West Bridgford Special Expenses and Community Infrastructure Levy Group. He also stated that the Council was able to freeze Council Tax because it was well managed and responsible, and questioned the claim of any future projected deficit, stating that Rushcliffe would pass on significant reserves and be debt free. Councillor Viridi referred to the proposal to reduce Council Tax further and stated that this would be a small reduction, reducing the Council's Tax Base and if efficiencies were identified, those savings should be applied to strengthen the Council's financial position. Councillor Viridi stated that Rushcliffe Reports provided important information and the Council should not be reducing its communication with residents. Councillor Viridi referred to the savings delivered through the Transformation and Efficiency Plan, and reminded Council that although Rushcliffe did have a high Council Tax base, it had the lowest Business Rates and Revenue Support Grant funding in the County, which was unfair funding. Councillor Viridi stated that ultimately a choice had to be made between a carefully constructed, responsible budget designed to support residents, or amendments, which either increased taxation or weakened the Council's financial resilience, at a time when stability was more important than ever. This budget protected residents, sustained investments and ensured that Rushcliffe remained well managed, especially with LGR approaching.

The Leader thanked everyone for their reasoned debate. In answer to points raised, he stated that the NHB was a payment for additional development, which was needed to provide additional services. In respect of money for settlements, Radcliffe on Trent had put forward a proposal, other settlements could do the same, and he reiterated that Councillor Brennan had written to all parish and town councils about this, and there was a propriety action in the

Economic Growth Strategy. In respect of the additional charge for an additional green bin, the Leader advised that the increase was to cover the additional weight in the lorries. He concluded by stating that freezing Council Tax was not a political stunt.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a recorded vote was taken for this item as follows:

FOR: Councillors M Barney, A Brennan, A Brown, R Butler, N Clarke, T Combellack, J Cottee, A Edyvean, S Ellis, E Georgiou, R Inglis, D Mason, H Om, H Parekh, N Regan, D Simms, D Soloman, R Upton, D Viridi, R Walker, T Wells, D Wheeler, J Wheeler and G Williams

AGAINST: Councillors T Birch, S Calvert, J Chaplain, K Chewings, S Dellar, G Fletcher, M Gaunt, C Grocock, R Mallender, S Mallender, A Phillips, L Plant, D Polenta, C Thomas, J Walker and L Way

It was RESOLVED that Council:

- (a) accepts the report of the Council's Responsible Financial Officer on the robustness of the Council's budget and the adequacy of reserves (as detailed at attached Annex A to the report);
- (b) adopts the budget setting report and associated financial strategies 2026/27 to 2030/31 and appendices (attached Annex B), including the summarised Special Expenses budget at Appendix 1, Budget Summary at Appendix 2, use of Reserves at Appendix 4, Transformation and Efficiency Plan at Appendix 5, Core Spending Power at Appendix 6 and Report of the Nottinghamshire Finance Officers on the Business Rates Pool at Appendix 7 to the report;
- (c) adopts the Capital Programme as set out in Appendix 3 to the report;
- (d) adopts the Capital and Investment Strategy at Appendix 9 to the report;
- (e) sets Rushcliffe's 2026/27 Council Tax for a Band D property at £161.77 (no increase from 2025/26, a freeze for one year);
- (f) sets the Special Expenses for 2026/27 for West Bridgford, Ruddington and Keyworth, resulting in the following Band D Council Tax levels for the Special Expense Areas:
 - West Bridgford £67.40 (£64.84 in 2025/26);
 - Keyworth £3.35 (£3.21 in 2025/26);
 - Ruddington £3.40 (£3.14 in 2025/26);
- (g) with regards to recommendations e) and f), sets the associated Bands in accordance with the formula in section 36(1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992;
- (h) adopts the Pay Policy Statement at Appendix 8 to the report;

- (i) supports consideration of the Second Homes Premium policy by scrutiny, with the outcome of such review to be reported to Cabinet for approval and ultimately the decision to be reflected as part of the MTFS 2027/28; and
- (j) supports development of a policy for a Council Tax discount for the terminally ill by scrutiny, such policy to be reported to Cabinet for approval, to apply from 1 April 2026.

55 **Council Tax Resolution 2026/27**

The Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide Leadership, Councillor Clarke MBE presented the report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services outlining the Council’s position on Council Tax for the year 2026/27.

The Leader advised that this was a technical process to set the Council Tax and moved the recommendation as detailed in the report.

Councillor Viridi seconded the recommendation.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Council Tax Resolution for 2026/27 as detailed in [Appendix A](#) to the report be approved.

Councillor Grocock left the meeting at 9.15pm.

56 **Update on the Political Composition of the Council and Committee Membership**

The Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide Leadership, Councillor Clarke MBE presented the report of the Chief Executive providing an update on the political composition of the Council and committee membership.

The Leader advised that this was a technical item to reflect recent changes to some political groups and moved the recommendations set out in the report.

Councillor Brennan seconded the recommendation.

Councillor Chaplain referred to the make-up of the West Bridgford Special Expenses and Community Infrastructure Levy Advisory Group and stated that the Labour Group continued to believe that membership should be based on proportionality of West Bridgford and Edwalton Councillors rather than the entire Council and requested that the Constitution be reviewed to reflect that.

It was RESOLVED that:

- a) the revised allocation of committee seats as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be confirmed;
- b) the change to the appointment of the Vice-Chair of Growth and

Development Scrutiny Group as set out at paragraph 4.8 of the report be confirmed; and

- c) the changes in membership of committees as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, in line with Group Leaders' wishes be confirmed.

57 **Barton in Fabis Community Governance Review**

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Business and Growth, Councillor A Brennan presented the report of the Chief Executive detailing the Barton in Fabis Community Governance Review.

Councillor Brennan stated that with the growth of a significant new community in Fairham, currently in the parish of Barton in Fabis, a petition was brought forward to trigger a Community Governance Review, to ensure that local governance arrangements better reflected these communities. She advised that a Task and Finish Group had undertaken the review, with its findings detailed in the report. The Group had met three times, an initial consultation had taken place, with details of that process set out in paragraph 4.5 of the report. Councillor Brennan confirmed that the majority of respondents were in favour of establishing a new parish for Fairham. Following on from that, a further consultation had taken place, with the final meeting of the Group considering responses to that consultation, together with discussions on boundaries, and the name and makeup of the new council. Councillor Brennan thanked fellow members of the Task and Finish Group and officers for their support and confirmed that the Group was recommending that a separate parish council be established, named Fairham Parish Council, comprising of nine Councillors. If agreed, then a Reorganisation Order would be sent to the Secretary of State, with a view to the first elections being in May 2027.

Councillor R Walker seconded the recommendation and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Plant stated that as a member of the Task and Finish Group she had found the legislation and processes very interesting and hoped one day that a review would take place for West Bridgford. She agreed that Barton in Fabis and the new development at Fairham would be two completely different communities, with differing needs and priorities, which would be best served by having two separate parish councils.

As a member of the Task and Finish Group, Councillor Thomas agreed that this had been a very constructive process and stated that Fairham Parish Council would initially need to be supported, particularly by local Ward Councillors.

Councillor S Mallender was pleased to see this sensible approach being taken, with two very different communities having their own representatives, and agreed that this was needed in West Bridgford, especially with LGR coming forward.

Councillor Chewings supported the report and its findings, he stated that there was a clear process to trigger a Community Governance Review, which the

residents of Barton in Fabis had followed and he suggested that residents in West Bridgford did the same and started a petition.

Councillor Brown stated that as a Ward Councillor and a member of the Task and Finish Group he fully supported the recommendation, and that he looked forward to working with the new Parish Council.

Councillor Barney agreed that the two communities were very different, he fully supported the recommendation and thanked members of the Task and Finish Group for putting forward this proposal.

Councillor R Walker was pleased that there was broad support for this proposal and agreed with Councillor Chewings that other communities who wanted to take the same approach needed to take the initiative and follow this process.

Councillor Brennan thanked everyone for their support this evening.

It was RESOLVED that:

- a) a separate parish for the area defined by the map in Appendix Three be created and that:
 - this area be named Fairham;
 - this area has a parish council;
 - this council be called Fairham Parish Council;
 - Fairham Parish Council has nine members; and
- b) delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive to undertake the necessary steps to formalise the creation of a separate parish for Fairham.

58 Notices of Motion

The following notice of motion was proposed by Councillor Birch and seconded by Councillor Chewings.

Prior to presenting the motion, Councillor Birch informed the Mayor that he wished to make an amendment to the motion to refer to Council-owned and operated premises, and to clarify the referral process to scrutiny. After outlining this alteration, consent was given by the meeting and Councillor Birch proceeded to move the following motion.

Council therefore resolves to:

- Guarantee that physical cash will continue to be accepted as a payment option at all Council-owned and operated premises where on-site payments are taken.
- Require an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and referral to the relevant scrutiny committee for consideration before any move to cashless operation is considered for a Council service or venue.

- Instruct the Chief Executive to review current payment arrangements and report within three months on:
 - Where cash is currently accepted;
 - where it has been removed in the last five years;
 - options to reinstate cash access where appropriate.
- Write to relevant partners and contractors to encourage the continued acceptance of cash in council-affiliated services.

In moving the motion, Councillor Birch stated that he had brought this motion for two reasons, an element referring to Rushcliffe itself, and a wider, ideological debate. He stated that cash was vital for a liberal democracy and it was inclusive, given that some communities disproportionately used cash more than others, particularly the elderly. It was also important to mitigate against systems failures by having the option to take cash payments. Councillor Birch referred to the issue of fairness and confidence, with people on low income relying on cash more and the motion was asking for good housekeeping, as detailed above. Turning to the wider debate, he felt that losing cash gave inordinate power to faceless corporations and the state, and it was important to keep cash, to retain privacy, as digital transactions could be monitored, and to ensure resilience. He stated that cash was a technology currency, allowing people to physically see their outgoings and it helped trades people and small businesses. Councillor Birch stated that voting for the motion was the kind and humane thing to do, helping elderly and disadvantaged residents and as a democratic institution, the Council had a duty to act against the 'creep' of digital currency.

Councillor Chewings seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Virdi thanked Councillor Birch for bringing forward the motion, recognising his genuine concerns; however, he felt that the motion failed to reflect the current position, with it suggesting that residents risked being excluded from Council services, which was not the case. He confirmed that cash was accepted across a number of Council services and locations, with cash payments for bills still accepted. The Council had adapted specific services, which supported digital payments, including leisure centres, with this model adopted during Covid, together with around 99% of Council Tax payments made digitally. Councillor Virdi stated that this was not a policy choice, it was customer preference, and that using cash was not cost free, it required additional infrastructure, staffing and insurance coverage, and for those reasons businesses and public sector organisations have been moving towards digital payment models. Councillor Virdi referred to the three requests detailed in the motion and reiterated previous points regarding the need for additional infrastructure and operational costs, despite there being very low demand. In respect of requiring an EIA, it was noted that the Council's existing governance processes had steps in place, and introducing a blanket requirement would create unnecessary bureaucracy. In respect of reviewing current payment arrangements, he advised that officers already monitored this information. Councillor Virdi confirmed that the Council's external partners already made decisions based on customer usage and efficiency and were performing well. The Council provided cash options, whilst it carefully managed public resources to avoid introducing unnecessary costs, and he believed that

the motion was seeking to solve a problem that did not exist.

It was proposed by Councillor Thomas that the meeting be extended to allow the last motion to be heard, and to move to the vote on this motion.

On being out to vote, the motion to extend the meeting was lost.

The Chief Executive advised that the Mayor did not feel that there had been sufficient debate and that Councillor Polenta, who had indicated that she wished to speak on the matter, should be allowed to speak and then move to the vote.

Councillor Polenta agreed with the ethos of the motion and to the importance of EIAs during decision making and ensuring when any changes were made that all voices were heard. She appreciated going forward that digitalisation would increase but this was still the transitional stage when barriers could widen. Accessibility could be reduced, with some groups marginalised and feeling uncomfortable.

On being put to the vote, the motion was lost.

The Monitoring Officer advised that as there was insufficient time to hear the next motion and that would be carried over to the next ordinary meeting of the Council.

The meeting closed at 9.58 pm.

CHAIR