

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY GROUP
WEDNESDAY, 28 JANUARY 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 T Combellack (Chair), A Brown, R Butler (Substitute), S Calvert,
J Chaplain, S Ellis and D Mason

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

L Ashmore	Director of Development and Economic Growth
N Berry	Senior Property Surveyor
G Carpenter	Assistant Director Public Protection
T Coop	Democratic Services Officer
S Soar	Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES:

Councillors L Way and R Walker

5 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

6 Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 July 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 16 July 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Following the agreement of the previous minutes, the Chair referred to the time elapsed since the July 2025 meeting and expressed concern that a follow-up meeting and/or presentations with representatives from the Freeport had not yet been arranged. The Chair noted the importance of maintaining momentum given the strategic and economic importance of the Freeport to Rushcliffe and more widely to the whole country.

The Director of Development and Economic Growth advised that they could arrange for external representatives to attend a future meeting to provide an update. The Director asked that, ahead of a future external update session, Members identify the specific lines of scrutiny they wish to pursue to ensure the meeting is focused with specific lines of scrutiny. The Director stated that work had continued in the background, including regular meetings with the Freeport, EMCCA and Uniper. The Council also hosts a quarterly forum involving partners including Nottinghamshire County Council, a representative from MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) and the Department for Transport. This forum is used to align issues at the Freeport site.

The Director highlighted key matters at the site that continue to be discussed in these forums. Junction 24 (M1): work ongoing to address a transport cap relating to vehicle movements and capacity, with the Freeport leading engagement involving the Department for Transport, National Highways, local highways authorities and other partners to actively find a solution for this issue. The Director suggested an update could be provided on this specific issue. Local Development Order (LDO): a review is due in summer 2026 following the three-year review period. Uniper has commenced a masterplanning process aligned to the review timetable, considering market changes and demand linked to skills, jobs and green growth. Data centres / AI Growth Zones: consultation had taken place to amend the LDO to enable data centres on land to the south of the site; EMCCA had submitted a bid to Government for an AI Growth Zone and a decision is awaited. The Director emphasised that planning should support delivery and avoid becoming a barrier if the site is selected. Grid connection: securing sufficient grid connection capacity remains a constraint. Uniper has submitted applications and continues engagement with National Grid to progress this. This process is complicated and can be slow.

Councillor Chaplain asked whether the meetings referenced by officers were minuted and whether information could be accessed. The Director advised that the quarterly forum meetings are minuted but contain commercially sensitive information and circulation is restricted to partners; however, Members could raise questions with officers.

Councillor Calvert sought clarification on the nature of the Junction 24 transport cap and the bodies involved, noting the junction is located in Leicestershire. The Director confirmed it is a capacity issue linked to permitted development thresholds, and some development can happen within the current cap. Engagement of National Highways and relevant local highways authorities, alongside the Freeport and EMCCA partners, are all working together to find a solution.

Councillor Calvert also asked whether EMCCA funding could contribute. The Director advised the cost and funding options remain under discussion, and that EMCCA faces challenges allocating funding outside its boundary. Potential funding mechanisms could include a combination of approaches such as Section 106 contributions, an SPD approach and private sector involvement.

The Chair confirmed the group would look forward to future dialogue and meetings with representatives from the Freeport.

7 Asset Management Strategy Refresh

The Chair introduced the item, noting it had been taken by this Group following workload pressures in the Corporate Governance Group. The Chair advised that scrutiny should focus on whether the Strategy provides a suitable framework for effective economic management and that discussion should be about process and approach rather than detailed local issues.

The Chair referenced questions submitted by Vice Chair, Councillor Way, regarding assets located outside the Borough (Castle Donington and Coalville)

and stated these were considered sound investments and this was a matter of public record. The Chair also noted that questions relating specifically to East Leake would be more appropriately addressed separately and that officers were attending an East Leake Parish meeting the following day (29th January 2026).

The Director of Development and Economic Growth presented the refreshed Asset Management Strategy and Plan, explaining it replaces the 2020–2025 version and aligns with the Council's Corporate Strategy. The Director outlined that work had been undertaken across the authority to ensure service delivery needs are central to the building estate and to support wider economic outcomes, including town and village centre masterplanning.

The Director summarised achievements from the 2020–2025 period, including disposal of surplus land, acquisition of offsetting land for carbon commitments, delivery and performance of Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium, and projects including Bingham Arena, the Bingham Enterprise Centre and regeneration work at Cotgrave.

Key changes in the refreshed Strategy and Plan were highlighted. Inclusion of work relating to local government reorganisation (LGR) and associated preparatory activity; updated terms of reference for the Asset Investment Group reflecting a shift from revenue-return acquisitions to consideration of new opportunities; refreshed carbon management content in support of the Council's carbon neutral commitment.

Councillor Calvert sought clarification regarding the relationship between the Strategy, Plan and the Action Plan, and whether Members were commenting formally on the Action Plan. The Director advised that Cabinet approval relates to the Strategy and Plan, and the Action Plan is a live document that will change over time as priorities evolve and actions are delivered, though Members were welcome to comment on it.

Councillor Calvert asked what preparatory LGR work was being started now. The Director advised a checklist had been received from MHCLG and current work involves preparing and sharing information (e.g., asset base and contracts) with partner councils, with more detailed work dependent on Government decisions expected later in the year. Councillor Combella noted that the Council was planning ahead in case LGR progressed as expected.

Councillor Ellis asked about measuring progress towards the Council's 2030 Net Zero target. Councillor Ellis raised his concerns with this target and its economic impact. The Director advised monitoring is undertaken, led by the relevant officer, and updates are reported through appropriate channels; further discussion could be taken as part of the carbon management strategy item at the relevant scrutiny group, an update of the Carbon Management Plan is currently scheduled for 2 April 2026 at the Communities Scrutiny Group.

Councillor Chaplain asked about the £4.8million capital allocation for affordable housing and whether plans exist already to use it. Officers advised it relates to committed sums and that delivery can be affected by the willingness/ability of registered providers, with some uncertainties. Officers noted an action could be

considered to reflect this work and reflected in the action plan.

Councillor Chaplain asked about the acquisition of the Co-op on Trent Boulevard and disposal of the Hilton Crescent site. Officers advised the Co-op acquisition formed part of the asset investment strategy and had a return-on-investment case; Hilton Crescent related to land ownership only and generated a small annual rent, and disposal provided a better return.

Councillor Chaplain raised whether the Strategy should more explicitly reflect non-commercial/community benefits. Officers advised this could be reviewed and, where appropriate, reflected within actions. Officers also note such benefits are sometimes linked to other work by the Council such as masterplanning.

Councillor Calvert asked about the West Bridgford Vision Plan. Officers advised Citrus Design (including Leonard Design and Box Property) had been commissioned; stakeholder engagement is underway (businesses, ward councillors, community groups), with a report expected by end of March 2026 to inform further decisions. Officers noted the work also supports future readiness and enables the Council to respond quickly should external funding streams become available. Officers noted these plans were pro-growth and focused on making sure the Boroughs centres were fit for the future.

Councillor Calvert asked about the woodland project at Upper Broughton and whether it related to wider woodland/flooding considerations. Officers advised the primary purpose is carbon offsetting, with wider environmental benefits also recognised. The Chair also referred to additional benefits including habitat creation, landscaping and potential flood mitigation features.

Councillor Butler commented on the scale and spectrum of the Council's asset portfolio and suggested the Council could communicate achievements more widely and how the asset deliver benefits to residents. Councillor Butler also noted minor proofreading errors in asset listings. Councillor Butler championed the success of the Crematorium and how residents are noticing it as a success.

Councillor Brown also raised spelling errors and separately asked about officer support to East Leake and Ratcliffe-on-Trent health centre projects. Officers clarified that the support is officer time rather than financial support, noting that health centre provision is the responsibility of the NHS and ICB; the Council's role has been convening and facilitating discussions and exploring enabling options, unfortunately the officers reflected with the East Leake project currently appearing stalled.

Councillor Ellis asked whether the Council used spell check in producing their reports. Officers assured Councillor Ellis that they are thorough when producing these large reports.

It was **RESOLVED** that Growth and Development Scrutiny Group supported the Asset Management Strategy Refresh and **RECOMMENDED** approval to Cabinet.

8 **Work Programme**

The Group noted the next scheduled item is Shared Ownership and Affordable Housing including Park Homes on 25 March 2026.

Councillor Chaplain raised whether external contributors could be invited, notably the local MP for Rushcliffe, including reference to the MPs casework support relating to Park Homes. Officers advised any external attendance would need to be considered through Democratic Services and would need to relate directly to the scope of the scrutiny item. It was noted that Members could provide input and suggested questions relevant to Park Homes within the wider item scope.

The meeting closed at 7.56 pm.

CHAIR